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SOME IMPLICATIONS OF A NON-DETERMINISTIC MODEL OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

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Since the 1950s, pre-service teachers and teacher educators have been caught in a quagmire of confusion as teacher education came to be held in increasingly poor repute. More recently, in Britain and Australia particularly, colleges and faculties of education took the major brunt of cuts in spending on education. Most of the old certainties — the certainty of a job at the end of one's training; the certainty of the absorption model of teacher training characterised by the 'give 'em a bit of everything and turn 'em loose' philosophy; the certainty of tenure in a college lecturing position — vanished in a very brief period. Vocal students argued that teacher education was inadequate; academics challenged what they saw as weak content taught by sub-standard staff; some schools tended to treat teacher education as a bit of a nuisance, if not actually totally irrelevant; while employing authorities regarded it as blameworthy for not being more efficient in producing a more desirable product (Claydon and Lovegrove, 1972).

Formal schooling of the kind espoused in most countries, however, ultimately depends for its success upon the ability, the skill and understanding of its teachers. It is through teaching that the educational plans and programmes devised by policy-makers at various levels actually come to exert their influence upon human attitudes, ideas and behaviour. Planners, administrators, advisers and specialists of many kinds may provide the organisation, supporting services and resources that determine the conditions within which the schools must function. But the task of turning educational programmes into influential educative experiences finally depends upon individual teachers working directly with their students at whatever level. The preparation of teachers for this work is thus a matter of prime importance.

While a theory of teacher education and development is needed to fill a vacuum, there is doubt that any all-embracing theory which could be used as a basis for, say, curriculum development in teacher education, would be widely acceptable. The value of theories is that they explicate the constructs upon which practice is (or can be) based. All practice is,

of course, based upon theory of some sort, good or bad, so that the issue really hinges around explication and delineation. No universally or even widely acceptable theory is likely to emerge because, at bottom, approaches to the education of teachers are based not only upon constructs deriving from knowledge of quasi-psychological dimensions, but from values and ideologies as well. What, for example, **should be** the teacher's role? Is the educational philosophy espoused by the teacher meant to be pro-active or re-active of the values, both institutional and normative, of the society? Whose task is it to interpret these values?

Thus, there is clearly a need for the development of cogent theories of teacher education and the contribution of Fielding goes some way towards conceptualising a basis for communication about programme development.

The major thrust of Fielding's position appears to be summarised in his statement that:

teachers should be provided with sufficient institutional freedom and encouragement to allow them to make autonomous, selective responses to the tasks presenting during the pre-service and in-service years . . . The 'role' of the institution in teacher education then becomes one of creating circumstances through programme experiences which foster such individualised role integration.

Fielding argues that a suitable basis for conceptualising teacher development, influencing role definition, is to reference six developmental stages, one or more of which may be occupied by a particular trainee at any time. This model represents an advance on the predominant view which results in the treatment of teachers in training as individuals with identical needs, be they at the novice teacher 'survival' stage, or at the intellectualising, educational theorist stage.

Fielding recognises that both the 'stage level' point of entry and the rate of progress through stages of individuals are likely to vary and individuals may, in fact, operate within several stages simultaneously. Therefore, providing the same programme treatment to all teachers in training, even if it is negotiated with them, would be in conflict with Fielding's conceptualisation of needs. The main value of theories, it can be argued, is that they create constructive intellectual tensions between practitioners which force teacher educators to keep thinking about the

assumptions underlying programmes and the implications of practice within them.

Fielding's 'stage' conceptualisation is clearly one useful way of approaching teacher development. There is, however, the danger that the stages may become, in the minds of those whose task it is to develop curricula around them, fixed in their dimensions as a layer-cake hierarchy, each layer being gently laid atop the others (lest the filling should squirt out), with the icing on top signifying the finished product. One response to this assumption could be streaming of students into courses designed to meet needs 'appropriate to the level'. A far more accurate image of the stages, of course, is the rainbow or marble cake, which is characterised by an inseparable mingling of differently coloured ingredients, the colours appearing in vertical and diagonal strands and unexpected whirls. As colours are mixed in the marble cake, so elements of each stage are mixed in the developing teacher, and this is fully recognised in Fielding's model, the result of which may well be applied in terms of a wide element of choice so that individuals may operate at a particular stage relative to particular content.

Clearly, the stages fall into no simple symmetrical pattern, and while the marble cake metaphor captures the high degree of shared dimensions between the stages, it may still be argued that such a construct represents fixed dimensions. The stages are more like elements in a tangled web of rubber bands — intricate, elastic, capable of accommodating all sorts of contextual pressures. Parts of the whole web exist at all times, and when the final stage, the whole web, is complete, it is capable of retaining its shape under the tension of many forces and counterforces and may be very taut much of the time. The implications of this view for teacher education programmes are that individuals are capable of operating at a number of stages in relation to any given content, but may be influenced in their needs by external influences. For example, it is conceivable that a student whose needs may be appropriate to theorising about the role of teacher as custodian on day (x), may regress to find appropriate instruction in techniques for the transmission of clear disciplinary messages on day (x + 1) if he or she has just experienced a day of unruly classes. Clearly, the 'rubber bands' conception has no utility in programme development, but aids conceptualisation and reminds us to pay careful heed to individual differences.

In reference to programme development, Fielding described curriculum content or 'tasks' as 'prescriptive but flexible means of providing experiences which lend themselves, variously and in individually unique ways, to the construction, adoption and integration of roles which suit particular individuals'. His reference to curriculum design describes a situation in which students make self selective responses to tasks, and devise and integrate roles which are unique, for the individual differences of pre-service teachers upon which we wish to focus our attention.

The issue of individual needs and the problem of catering to these when designing curriculum is not new. Indeed, it is one of the most difficult problems confronting practising teachers.

Compounding the problem is the difficulty that our assumption that pre-service curriculum must move away from institutionally-approved roles to roles invented and adopted by the person for himself or herself is in apparent conflict with the political reality of greater external (parental and administrative) control of schooling.

There would appear to be reasonably clear limitations on the expectations held for teacher behaviour in classrooms; and even clearer expectations that classrooms and schools will remain in existence, in a form not very different from their current state, for the provision of formal education. The development of the power of school councils in Victoria, for example, including considerable influence in staffing (via input into the choice of principal) and curriculum would indicate that teacher roles will be prescribed at the school level (and some teachers' role conceptions will be proscribed). Therefore, any teacher who decides, for example, that his or her role in the school is one of 'therapist' (whose overriding concern is the remediation of psychological damage done to children in the broader community) would be unable to find a great deal of relevant experience in most teacher training programmes, for the simple and compelling reason that programme structures and contents are likely to reflect the fact that such teachers may well remain unemployed.

One can similarly argue that there are, in fact, many tasks which are present in teacher education for which freedom of selection is not appropriate. It would be difficult, for example, to imagine a situation in which future teachers would be encouraged to choose not to learn about approaches to classroom management or facets of diagnostic questioning. Therefore, although it is possible to envisage a curriculum with core

studies and non-compulsory 'electives', it is apparent that the extent of student choice of learning tasks would be, of necessity, relatively limited. It would be possible, however, to develop the core material in a manner that students could interact with it at a level appropriate to their stage or stages of development. This type of structuring would provide for the need to meet community expectations for the teaching of particular content in pre-service education programmes which retain sufficient flexibility to allow students at differing stages to undertake tasks appropriate to their stage.

Consider, for example, the issue of classroom control. The study of this topic for a teacher at Fielding's Stages 3 or 4 could involve practice in communicating admonishments clearly or calmly and might involve analysis of the work of Kounin (1970). It might also involve identification of inappropriate student classroom behaviour. In contrast, a trainee teacher operating primarily at Stage 5 might find greater relevance in issues such as 'locus of control' and the distinction between blind and rational obedience, as defined by Raffini (1980). Finally, teachers who are concerned with the broader issues of classroom management (Stage 6) could consider the extent to which teachers should be adopting roles of 'therapists' vis-a-vis 'wardens' in the education of children. Whether alternative issues in classroom management, relevant to teachers at different stages of Fielding's schema, could be adequately integrated into one curriculum or whether several streams of curriculum or courses need to be established (each dealing primarily with experiences deemed relevant to teachers at particular stages), is a problem of operationalism.

Tailoring core content to the differing needs of individual future teachers may not be feasible for those topics considered paramount — given the expectations prevailing in both the educational and broader community — like 'questioning technique'. Despite the compulsory nature of such curriculum components, however, adjustments to the type of instruction currently offered can be envisaged that would increase the likelihood that future teachers would be able, ultimately, to make selective responses, choosing to critically accept or reject any curriculum component.

The first of these would be value clarification experiences designed to put the teacher in touch with his or her hidden assumptions about education and the role of teachers in the education of children.

In a pluralistic society such as ours, there will not be a single set of values which commands universal support: at best, it may be possible to discern a dominant set and a number of alternatives. This is a consequence not only of the current mix of ethnic and social groups in Australia, but of successive waves of invading ideologies which have gained more or less widespread support. Different basic orientations to teaching may view pupils in terms of an **industrial** conception, in which the focus is upon ensuring that pupils know the basic facts within the subject, clearly defining and enforcing the acceptable limits of classroom behaviour; a **social** view, helping students to establish and maintain suitable personal relationships with other students and adults; an **academic** orientation, emphasising the incorporation of new knowledge into existing frameworks and developing original thinking; and **humanistic** approaches, which aim to assist pupils to choose ways of learning which they think best suit them, and which provide emotional security to the pupils. A second change that would be required would primarily involve the process of instruction. The major innovation to be undertaken is what Buber (1965:59-71) calls **distancing**. The curriculum needs to provide the trainee teacher with opportunities to critically evaluate curriculum tasks so that he or she does not uncritically adopt institutionally-defined roles and resort to maladaptive role playing, but rather determine, after experiencing the task, its relevance to his or her personally defined role.

There are a number of ways in which 'distancing' can be integrated into the process of instruction at two levels. The first could involve structuring the curriculum to allow for reflection by trainee teachers on the core content and tasks. One way in which this could be achieved is to identify four phases in the education of trainee teachers: namely (a), the goals of the procedure; (b), the assumptions underlying the acceptance of those goals; (c), the procedures or techniques appropriate for achieving the goals; and (d), some processes for evaluating the procedure. These stages are common to most of the core content, but they are frequently left implicit rather than made explicit.

For example, the first stage of the presentation of a skill could make clear both the goals of the skill together with the assumptions supporting these goals. However, they would be presented in a tentative manner. The aim is to encourage trainee teachers to tentatively accept the assumptions and goals, on the further assumption that these are believed to be consistent with the community's understanding of the teacher's role, but also to understand that at a later stage in the learning process both the

assumptions and goals will be revisited with a view to investigating their acceptability so that teacher trainees can determine the relevance of the technique to their individually-defined roles.

The second and third part of the presentation may involve what is traditionally done in teacher education programmes — the transmission of information relevant to the understanding and accurate implementation of a technique. To foster critical evaluation of the technique, time would be devoted (either as an integral part of the presentation or during a separate, allotted 'reflection' session) for evaluation of the material being presented. The major question addressed at this time would be — given the assumptions and goals identified — are the techniques appropriate?

The third curriculum component is structured observation of practice. Teacher trainees would be expected to systematically observe practising teachers and to seek information from teachers and pupils in a bid to either justify or challenge the goals, assumptions and practices with which they have become familiar.

At the completion of the third phase, the teacher trainees would be encouraged, in formal sessions, to critically evaluate the assumptions and goals that were tentatively accepted during the first phase. Integral to this phase is the presentation of information about changes in goals and assumptions that have occurred in this content area over time.

To exemplify this process, one can consider an area of content traditionally part of the teacher trainee curriculum; that is, questioning technique. Some of the goals of teaching questioning technique that would need to be made explicit are that the trainee teacher would be able to:

1. Phrase questions unambiguously
2. Nominate respondents before and after staging questions
3. Phrase questions at various levels of cognitive complexity
4. Use questions for a variety of functions
5. Probe pupils' answers to questions
6. Provide support for answers
7. Extend answers.

Some of the less contentious assumptions underlying these goals are:

1. Pupils learn through verbalisation of thought
2. Involvement of non-volunteering pupils is to their educational benefit
3. Pupils need to be directly stimulated by questioning before they will involve themselves sufficiently in learning
4. Teachers are responsible for the initiation of pupils' involvement.

During the first phase of instruction, these goals and assumptions would be detailed and tentatively accepted. The second phase would involve sensitising students to aspects of questioning and providing them with practice in using questioning techniques with pupils. The next phase would allow students the opportunity to systematically observe practising teachers' questioning techniques and to evaluate their impact on pupils. Finally, students would be expected to reconsider the aims and goals, and, through readings critical of the use of questioning techniques, they would be encouraged to critically evaluate the process and to determine to what extent it is of personal relevance given their individual stages of development.

There is a clear need for sustained and integrated research into teacher education — not so much on generalised conceptions of competence, but on specific and limited enquiry into what happens in particular programmes during training. How (if at all) are attitudes changed and behaviours adapted? What, indeed, are the attitudes we wish to sponsor? What are the problems inherent in the delicate triangular relationship of student/school teacher/lecturer? What accounts for the 'regression' phenomenon when, after a few months teaching, the ex-student sheds much of the college-acquired learning? If Fielding is correct — in that the current model of teacher education favours institutionally-approved roles rather than those which are imbued by the teacher in training with some personal value — it would not be surprising to see such roles cast aside in favour of others promulgated by the school system.

It must be borne in mind that teacher education courses for the secondary level are taught predominantly by academics to students who

arrive with definite expectations, having just come out of a degree stressing the handling of theoretical content with reference to a research base. Additionally, the students also expect a recognisably practical training providing immediate ability to deal with the classroom situation. On one hand, students take the standpoint of observers searching for clearly evidenced propositions; on the other, they are cast into the roles of actors (Szorenyi-Reischl, 1982).

It is thus apparent that better teachers are not going to be produced simply by more emphasis on techniques, more exposure to educational issues or more classroom practice. We need, rather, a clearer understanding of how good teachers are produced beyond these measures. Fielding's schema appears to be of value in obtaining further insight into the development of teachers. Teacher development is a career-long process and a partnership responsibility. For the teacher of trainees, the aim is not to achieve identity of emphasis in goals and commitments, but rather to provide those experiences which are appropriate to the stage of professional development reached by the beginning teacher (bearing in mind that, nowadays, the new teacher is often a mature-age person who has 'retooled' in mid-career as a mother, tradesperson, and so on). The ability to more clearly conceptualise stages of development (despite the obvious pitfalls of which the teacher educator must be aware when dealing with individuals or groups) is a considerable advance towards the development of a cogent theory of teacher education, and a guide to research. (It is, of course, clear from the discussion here that no research is going to provide an authoritative blueprint for teacher education.) Healthy competition between theories, however, must go a long way towards reinvigorating tired approaches to teacher education in Australia.

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