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A Study of Associate Teaching

A thesis presented in partial  
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## ABSTRACT

This report covers a two-year study of associate teaching.

Information was obtained from two main sources:

- (i) research reports and
- (ii) a descriptive case study of associate teaching in one region of New Zealand. The case study of associates, conducted in the Palmerston North area, depended upon information from a sample of paired associates and trainees. Sixty associate teachers completed a questionnaire and many were observed in classrooms practising associate teaching. Some were interviewed. The trainees who were posted to the associates in the sample for a six-week teaching practice section in the first half of term two 1975 completed two questionnaires. In addition, trainees kept a diary of their section experiences, much as a participant observer carefully and systematically records his observations. Information from all questionnaires was processed by the Burroughs 6700 computer at Massey University.

The principal outcomes of the study are tied to the four objectives discussed in Chapter 2; a summary of the literature on associate teaching (Chapters 3 and 4), a description of associate teaching (Chapter 5), a study of matching and mis-matching of associate and trainee (Chapter 6) and an attempt to formulate general statements about associate teaching (Chapter 7). Observations confirm that the tasks of the associate teacher are more demanding than is commonly recognised. His dual roles of classroom teacher and trainer of teachers can lead to conflicts of interest. Many of the findings appear to reflect a lack of systematic training for associates. Recommendations for changes in associate teaching practices based on the findings of this research are presented in Chapter 8.

Frequently, this study reaffirms the importance of associate teachers in pre-service teacher education. Associates who bring to the task anything less than the necessary professional expertise, may doom the exercise to mediocrity. The inadequate associate will burden the trainee with his own conflicts and his own narrow perception of the nature of teaching and learning. At worst, an associate can do a great deal more harm to a trainee's image of teaching than he does good. At best, and it has been evidenced many times in this study, associates can transform teaching practice into a creative, co-operative enterprise.

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since the practice of associate teaching was imported from Britain a hundred years ago it has become fully accepted as an integral part of pre-service teacher training in this country. Though some educationists have advocated alternatives, teacher trainees and teacher organisations alike strongly support its continuation and from time to time press for the colleges to allocate a greater proportion of the three-year pre-service programme to practical training.

The stimulus behind this study of associate teaching has its roots in a variety of educational experiences over the last twenty years. As a teacher trainee and as a classroom teacher between 1955 and 1964 I was closely associated with some of the rituals of associate teaching. On reflection, I had very little idea of the appropriate associate teaching practices and even less of my own objectives. More recently, as a supervisor of student teaching in four teacher training institutions in New Zealand and the United States I was able to observe associate teaching from a different perspective. In 1970 I was asked to prepare a report on pre-service teacher training in Christchurch. It was clear from the responses of trainees and teachers that there was considerable doubt about the responsibilities and the effectiveness of associate teachers. Associate teaching lacked a theoretical base. It was fully accepted as an essential component of teacher training but had not been the subject of educational research or evaluation. Associate teachers lacked time and training to do justice to the job. Many teachers were, as I had been, unsure of the nature of associate teaching.

During the years of the Educational Development Conference the place of practical training in the schools and of educational research in the colleges provoked considerable discussion, but submissions were frequently strong on intuition and weak on background research. It became clear that in teacher training, administrators seldom were able to make decisions with the comfort and support of relevant research. The following study is a modest attempt to overcome this substantial problem.

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## A STUDY OF ASSOCIATE TEACHING

### Chapter 1. Associate Teaching and Practical Training

#### Introduction \*

Teaching practice and associate teaching are as old as teacher training itself. More than five centuries ago, when he founded the first school for teachers in England, William Byngham insisted on school practice taking a prominent place in the curriculum. Since Byngham's day, associate teaching has become a world wide phenomenon, involving thousands of practising teachers. Currently though some doubts are being expressed about the quality of the process, the weight of teacher and trainee opinion is decidedly for its continuance and expansion. Indeed, practical training has consistently attracted more support from teachers and trainees than any other part of pre-service training (e.g. as reported by Morrison and McIntyre, 1968; Leeds University Institute of Education, 1974; Wilson, 1975). Yet, the literature on practical training is noteworthy more for its unsubstantiated claims about the effects of school experiences on trainees than for its reliance on disciplined inquiry. (e.g. Taylor, 1969; Bennie, 1972; N.Z.P.P.T.A., 1974). One can only conclude that our conceptions of practical training have been shaped largely by ad hoc experiences, theoretical speculations and a measure of pedagogical opinion and folklore.

In 1969, Taylor claimed of practical training; "It seems likely that the time a student spends in schools during the college course may have a greater influence on attitudes and personal development than any other single aspect of post-school education." (Taylor, 1969, p.144). If school practice is as influential as Taylor claims it to be, the more important it is to understand the underlying processes and to identify the outcomes of practice experiences. Unsubstantiated assertions like those of Taylor, and a decade of close association with teacher training, led the writer to attempt a study of one aspect of teaching practice.

#### Orientation and Scope

The purpose of this study is to examine the various tasks of the associate teacher, his special responsibilities and commitments towards teacher training, particularly his supervision of trainees during

\* The reader is referred to Appendix I for definitions of teaching practice terms.

teaching practice, known as associate teaching. Primarily, the study is an overview of associate teaching, though it does explore some evaluative and theoretical questions: evaluative because of the urgent need in this country for a critical examination of teaching practice and its influence on prospective teachers (Educational Development Conference, 1974 b, p.65); theoretical because of current conceptual inadequacies in the field of practical training. Hence, in practical terms, the study aims, from a descriptive base:

- (1) to provide information about school practice useful for educational decision making locally, and
- (2) to augment the meagre fund of grounded theory relating to school practice.

#### Associate Teaching: Some Underlying Assumptions

The rationale for associate teaching may vary from college to college, but a common element pervades the system throughout New Zealand. Trainees are placed with experienced teachers to learn useful classroom behaviours and to provide opportunities for trainees to translate ideas from college courses into educational practice. (Stones and Morris, 1972). Behind it all lies the expectation that the associate teacher will somehow encourage trainees to perceive and establish sound relationships between educational theory and classroom practices.

The apprenticeship model of teacher preparation places all of the responsibility and power in the hands of the associate teacher, a practitioner who presumably has been chosen because he achieves high standards of pupil management and is capable of demonstrating proven teaching skills to the trainee. For his part the trainee is expected to assume some teaching responsibilities, the amount and nature of which are ultimately determined by the associate.

Unfortunately, observations confirm that associate teaching fosters modelling, a form of apprenticeship that may not encourage trainees to discriminate between good and bad classroom practices (Stolurow, 1965).

In these circumstances, the trainee is unlikely to develop an independent teaching style and only on rare occasions will he be encouraged by his associate to master a range of teaching models (Moskowitz, 1967, p.272).

Wilson (1975) finds teaching practice in its present form, difficult to justify and concludes that perhaps the reason for most trainees

valuing it so highly is that they want to "know what teaching is like" and "be used to it." Teaching practice will increase the trainee's confidence by reducing the shock effect of facing a class of thirty pupils alone. The gains are more likely to be of this order than the more demanding tasks of bridging theory and practice, or cultivating creativity in teaching.

The apparent dangers of teacher training by apprenticeship have evoked concerned reactions from Dewey (1904), Stolurow (1965), Stones and Morris (1972), Hunkin (1974) and others. But practical training continues to enjoy favoured status among trainees and teachers. Trainees frequently press for a greater proportion of their training to take place in the schools. (Morrison and McIntyre, 1969, p.64). Similarly, teacher organisations and teachers' colleges have, from time to time, proposed school-based training programmes (e.g. Blampied, 1972). And in a recently published report of the Education Development Conference (1974 b, p.65) special mention is given to increasing the teaching practice component of pre-service programmes. Potentially at least, teaching practice is seen as something more than a superficial apprenticeship.

Is there in fact a sound theoretical basis for teaching practice? Those who question teaching practice suggest that it inspires conformity, restricts student initiatives. Trainees are limited by inadequately understood guidelines from the college and the predispositions and shortcomings of the associate teacher. (Kaltsounis and Nelson, 1968). They must observe and comply with the wishes and biases of the associate, since the trainee's management, planning and personal behaviour are more likely to gain credits when they match the expectations and wishes of the associate teacher. (Price, 1961, p.475).

A further criticism points to the apparent divorce of theory from practice during practical training. Once in the schools a trainee can experience defensiveness and diffidence from an associate when he seeks permission to try out practical applications of learning theory or illustrations of a particular teaching model. Moreover, the classroom teacher who is unfamiliar with the theoretical component of the college programme is less likely to be able to offer support and guidance to the trainee. Student initiatives may be quietly, but firmly, put down. This catch-22 situation in New Zealand has led Hunkin to claim that "perhaps the most challenging problem that faces the primary teachers' colleges is that of resolving the relationship of theory and practice in the college

course." (Hunkin, 1974 a, p.4) Hunkin found that when trainees entered the schools they often encountered negative attitudes amongst teachers towards educational theory, and towards the college responsible for disseminating it. It seems that the backlash against theory drives teachers to put more stress on practice, for many teachers stereotype the college staff as "pushers" of educational theory and the schools as defenders of the importance of classroom practice. (Wilson, 1975, p.130). This particular form of unproductive tension between the colleges and the associate schools in New Zealand dates back at least to the 1930s (Personal communications from teachers).

In 1904, John Dewey noted that teacher training institutions were failing to build their programmes on theoretical principles (Dewey, 1904, p.13). His concern was directed at the predilection of trainers and trainees for copying teaching methods without understanding the underlying educational principles. He exposed some inadequacies of apprentice-type training and proposed a much closer planned association of theory and practice. Practical experiences, he argued, should be used to illustrate educational theories and subject matter. School experiences should be laboratory experiences. (Dewey, 1904, p.30). It was not enough simply to know how to teach, claimed Dewey. Every teacher should become an autonomous, professional person and throughout his career continue to be a student of teaching.

The distinction between apprenticeship and professional styles of training is perhaps most vividly illustrated in teaching practice, for in the schools trainees face the choice of following the behaviour patterns of the associate or translating the theoretical principles from the college course into a realistic classroom teaching sequence. Those who advocate more and more practical training in the pre-service programme seem to be unaware of this fundamental problem. They assume that more practical experience will, ipso facto, provide better training. The quality of the experiences in schools is seldom questioned.

Teaching practice is not simply a question of providing trainees with the skills of performing the day-to-day tasks of teaching. If we follow Dewey's reasoning, it is more important to provide classroom experiences which help trainees to develop a closer relationship between principles and practice and encourage mastery of a range of teaching models. Teaching practice should offer more than a practised list of ways and means. It should foster research into classroom problems,

encourage trainees to be "students of mind-activity." (Dewey, 1904, p.15) and give high priority to teaching based upon educational principles.

#### Practical training in New Zealand

Teacher training in New Zealand was given official recognition when, in the 1870's, the first colleges were established and an annual grant was approved by government specifically for teacher education. Teachers and trainees alike made considerable use of instructors' manuals (directives on school method and school management) that told the reader how to teach, how to obtain and keep order and how to reward and punish (e.g. Gladman, 1877). From 1880, the main source of supply of teachers was the pupil-teacher system. Pupils who had passed the standard five examination and were thirteen years of age or older could apply for an apprenticeship to teaching. If selected they were required to combine the duties of teaching with the exigencies of training. Inspectors prepared courses of study in the various school subjects and classroom management and lessons were frequently given to pupil-teachers by the school headmaster before and after school. In some centres classes were held on Saturday mornings. During the school day pupil-teachers were expected to work as apprentices under the watchful eye of a certificated associate teacher.

The system was strong on practice but weak on understanding the educative process. It was strictly on-the-job training aimed at providing teachers at minimal cost. As early as 1880 signs of serious misuse were showing. An Auckland school with more than 800 pupils was staffed by eight teachers and seventeen pupil-teachers. A school in Christchurch had six teachers and fourteen pupil-teachers. By 1899, there were five pupil-teachers to every two adult teachers in the country and many pupil-teachers taught classes of forty pupils, (Ewing, 1972, pp.52-3).

Apprentice type training of teachers continued for many years into the twentieth century. Though a college requirement of two years was added to that of pupil teaching in 1905, it was only in the latter part of the 1920's that school-based apprentice training was superseded by college-based professional training.

Since then, teachers' college staff have assumed that a trainee's understanding of educational theory gained in the college will translate into appropriate classroom practice. The truth is that trainees have not responded to this passive approach to articulation of theory and practice

Stolurow, 1976). As Hirst has recently reminded educationists in New Zealand, theoretical considerations must be made in the context of practice. Hirst has called for a closer interdependence of teachers colleges and the associate schools to enable trainees, associate teachers and college lecturers to give practical substance to educational theory. (Hirst, 1976).

Current pre-service programmes in New Zealand employ various combinations of educational theory and classroom practice. But the problem of articulating theory and practice remains. Demanding enough of college lecturers, it currently represents an insuperable difficulty for associate teachers. Their training and their practical experience have conditioned them to be pragmatic; to solve the countless classroom problems in each teaching day without reference to the prescriptions of various educational theories. Perhaps Jackson is correct when he claims that the teacher is just too busy to consider the pedagogical and intellectual demands of learning theory (1968, p.166).

The size of the associate teaching industry in this country is commonly underestimated. Figure 1. All of the eight thousand teacher trainees in New Zealand at the moment must complete teaching practice requirements the details of which are stipulated independently by the colleges. At Palmerston North Teachers College for example, Division A students (c.900) are expected to complete eight teaching practice postings in their three years of pre-service training i.e. one-fifth of the training programme is spent in schools supervised by associate teachers. Each year Palmerston North Teachers College uses about 400 associate teachers in its teaching practice programme.

In a recent survey of teaching practice in New Zealand Hunkin found some discontinuities between associates and the colleges (Hunkin 1974). Frequently, the involvement of associates in the development of training programmes in the colleges is minimal. Opportunities for discussing issues and problems of teacher training with college staff are restricted to pre-section briefings and short visits to schools by college lecturers. Pre-section meetings are not always well attended and are used more to inform associates of college needs rather than for discussions of procedures and policies in teacher training.

The choice of associates leaves a lot to be desired. Proven teaching ability appears to be the dominant criterion, thereby reinforcing a current bias towards master teaching. However, not all associates are rated highly by the inspectorate. Hunkin (1974 b) found that fewer than

Figure 1. Students Enrolled in Teachers Colleges at 1 July 1973.

Scheme	1973		Total
	Male	Female	
Kindergarten		476	476
Primary			
Division A	1433	4449	5882
" Grads	56	169	225
Specialist	4	53	57
TOTALS	1493	4671	6164
Secondary			
Division B	243	183	426
" BS	51	44	95
" C	448	371	819
" M		3	3
Outpost	5	13	18
Division W	37		37
Adult Commercial		20	20
Division H		179	179
TOTALS	784	891	1675
Total Trainees in Teachers Colleges	2277	5562	7839

Source: Department of Education, 1975, p.83.

one quarter of all associates for one college received the highest inspectorial rating.

Selection of associates is frequently governed by geography. That is to say, those schools closest to the college tend to have a higher proportion of associate teachers. Headmasters of schools within a thirty mile radius could be disappointed if any of their eligible staff were not given associateships (school principal : personal communication).

In their annual applications, associates are required to furnish details of their teaching experience, teaching interests, and other relevant qualifications. No mention is made on the application form E.2/126 of any associate teaching courses and associate teaching qualifications. Presumably, teachers are not expected to have maintained contact with a teachers college, neither are they expected to have gained any post diploma professional qualifications.

The conditions of appointment are summarised on the application form. "An associate teacher is required:

- (a) To be in full charge of a class in order to qualify as an associate teacher.
- (b) To attend meetings, as required, with inspectors and teachers college staff outside school hours, to consider matters relating to the practical training of students by associate teachers.
- (c) To provide each student attached to his class with a satisfactory programme of observation and practice in all aspects of teaching, including both short and long-term planning, preparation, marking and evaluation.
- (d) To co-operate with teachers' college staff in guiding students in their practical training and study programmes.
- (e) To provide the teachers' college with reports on students along lines required by the principal." (New Zealand Department of Education, Form E.2/126, refer to Appendix II).

It seems then that matters of economy and convenience (i.e. proximity to the college) play an important part in selection. Hence, a student teacher cannot guarantee:

- (1) that he will be placed with a good teacher
- (2) that he will be matched with an associate with whom he will be able to communicate satisfactorily
- (3) that his associate will have sufficient contacts with the college to bridge any gaps between in-college courses and teaching practice.

Teaching practice programmes in the primary colleges of this country show many similarities. "In the patterns of observation in normal schools and practice in associate schools is seen the approach to teaching practice that has remained virtually unchanged since the abandonment of the pupil teaching system in the mid-thirties. The same assumptions appear to be basic to these programmes --- spaced practice with sections increasing in length over three years --- directed observation and teaching --- increase in teaching requirement from groups to full class control, from one content area to the total curriculum, and from single lessons to weekly programmes. The work in the schools is guided by written directions open to interpretation by students and associates." (Hunkin, 1974 a, pp.4-5).

Hoping to ensure a translation of the theoretical component of a student's training, into school practice, the colleges have sought to impose their views on the associate schools. Consultation with associate teachers is minimal. Before each school posting from Palmerston North Teachers College, printed guidelines inform the associate of the college requirements. Pre-section meetings of associates are held to ensure that the guidelines are understood. It is assumed that associates should and will abide by the wishes of the college - that they are able and willing to do so. There is little done to suggest that associates are regarded as anything more than servants of the colleges. Perhaps the reluctance of some associates to support college programmes stems from their lack of involvement in curriculum developments and policy formulation pertaining to teaching practice.

#### Summary

Teaching practice remains a widely accepted, but virtually unresearched component of teacher education. In this section some important features of practical training in New Zealand have been discussed; some of the pressure points in teaching practice identified. While it is claimed that teaching practice in its present form has out-lived its usefulness, the majority of teachers are pressing for more time and effort to be devoted to it. Inevitably, the individuals who will be affected most by any changes and who currently carry the major work load and responsibility for practical training in the schools are the associate teachers.