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T E R R I T O R I A L I T Y

IN

E D U C A T I O N A L S E T T I N G S

A Thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Education at
MASSEY UNIVERSITY

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A B S T R A C T

The concern of this thesis was territorial behaviours in classroom settings, namely:

1. The teacher's use of geographic space, and
2. Verbal interaction patterns resulting from teacher - pupil exchanges.

One expectation held was that the teacher would occupy a particular location in preference to all other areas. Another expection was that the centre of the classroom would be the focus for interaction between the teacher and pupils, with diminishing numbers of verbal exchanges toward the outer edges of the room. The effects of changing the pupils' location was also investigated it being thought that following such change the number of interactions received by the pupils would vary considerably.

Observations were made in two classrooms and data collected. A trained Observer recorded the teacher's use of classroom space and the pupil 'targets' of all verbal exchanges between teacher and individual pupils. The verbal behaviour of the teacher was recorded and later encoded into five qualitative categories.

Analysis of these data revealed that:

(a) both teachers occupied the centre front of the room in preference to all other areas.

(b) the distribution of verbal interactions by the teachers was uneven, and

(c) the changing of pupil location had inconclusive effects upon the numbers of verbal exchanges they participated in.

The teacher's verbal behaviour, when considered qualitatively, was found to be little affected by the position occupied by the teacher and was democratically distributed over the classroom.

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

The completion of this thesis would have been impossible without the assistance of the following people in whose debt I stand.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

For some considerable time, research workers in the field of teaching have been concerned with teacher effectiveness. The dominance of this concern has been reflected in many reviews and summaries on teaching (e.g. Watters 1954; Mitzel 1960; Ryans 1960; Flanders 1970 etc.) The paradigm that has dominated such research has been called the "criterion of effectiveness" paradigm (Gage 1963) which involves for the researcher the following general strategy:

1. Identify and select a criterion of teacher effectiveness which becomes the dependent variable, then
2. measure ramifications reflecting this criterion and
3. measure the potential correlates of this.

The paradigm is basically an input-output one with the intervening process largely ignored. However despite numerous such studies following this organisation (e.g. Mitzel 1960; Ryans 1960) the yield has lacked consistency and educational meaning.

More recently, commentators have suggested that the kind of research undertaken has been inappropriate for the purpose in mind. Thelen (1962), Biddle (1965) Adams (1965, 1967) and others state that a way out of the input-output impasse lies in the study of the "process" of education, thereby viewing the classroom group as a social milieu in which instruction and learning occur. This view adds up to a much more complex process than has previously been employed

because classroom processes are complex. They comprise a dynamic interaction of learner and teacher, the content to be learned and the artifacts of the educational setting.

Despite the complexity of the classroom situation however, in recent years this viewpoint has been heeded. Research into the "real" world of the classroom has increased and books are now appearing which focus exclusively upon this context. (c.f. Jackson 1968; Adams and Biddle 1970). This suggests that knowing about what is actually happening in the classroom may lead to a better understanding of how the learning process is promoted and hence how it may be controlled.

Predictably then, empirically-based knowledge about contextual influences on education is beginning to accumulate. For example, Barker and Gump (1964) demonstrated relationships between school size and pupil participation, Corwin (1966) showed relationships between organisational characteristics in schools and the professionalism of its teacher staff, while Fraser (1967) demonstrated that school characteristics predicted to teacher happiness and commitment. Within the classroom Adams (1965) discovered that nearly seventy per cent of all verbal exchanges occurred in a narrow band that extended from the centre front of the room directly towards the centre back. He also discovered that, within this band, the closer the pupil is to the front of the room the greater the likelihood that he will be involved directly in the verbal action

of the classroom. Loflin[1] has noted the teacher's mode of address to pupils changes with physical distance from each other. Pupils near the front tend to receive terms of endearment while those toward the rear tend to be addressed more formally and impersonally. Adams and Biddle (1970) found evidence of the coercive influence of the classroom environment with respect to teacher location and pupil participation. Some of the findings of this study are described in greater detail later in this paper.

Descriptions of environmental factors which influence classroom behaviours raise the problem of explanation. In the present study "Territoriality" has been used as an organising concept to describe and explain the use of space by classroom inhabitants. However, the patterned use of space in this context is not attributed to innate behavioural tendencies, the view shared by many ethologists. (c.f. Ardrey 1967). Instead the territorial aspects of behaviour are seen to reflect cultural influences whereby forms of behaviour have been developed in accordance with norm and convention.

The present paper attempts to examine one potential source of explanation ... but one that has been given greater credence by ethologists. In their investigations of bird and fish behaviour (e.g. Howard 1920; Noble 1939; Tinbergen 1951) they have found the concept of territoriality useful. It is not impossible that the concept has relevance for the explanation of human

behaviour in general and perhaps classroom behaviour too. Consequently this paper discusses some possible relationships between territoriality and classroom behaviour. An outline of the organisation of this thesis follows:

Chapter 'one' reviews some of the interpretations of territoriality found in the literature. The discussion is primarily concerned with the two major interpretations given, namely, "geographic" space and "personal" space. Chapter 'two' outlines the "territorial" characteristics of classroom behaviour. Four types of territory are described, the forms of encroachment and possible reactions to these are given. In Chapter 'three' the methodology for the empirical investigation is described and three hypotheses stated. Chapter 'four' presents the findings of this investigation and the summary and concluding discussion are given in Chapter 'five'.

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Footnote.

1 Loflin: personal communication