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is little reassurance here for those of us who teach in geographical regions where most teachers will come from just one or two institutions of initial training. The only real solution here would seem to be that introductory courses in philosophy of education really should be introductory and that teachers should come to see their working career as involving a continuous re-engagement with philosophical questions necessarily arising in that career, and with new philosophical perspectives on them. This of course would be more than the solution to a problem — it would be the ultimate mark of success. This returns me to my opening point. Teachers of educational philosophy ought to do much more reflecting and discussing about why we mostly fall a long way short of such success, and about how we might more nearly approach it.

Preservice Classroom Experiences : The Cooperating Teacher's Role

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There was a time when we used to have student teaching as the only classroom experience for an individual who wanted to be a teacher. Such experiences were generally arranged during the last quarter or semester of the person's college education. In these situations, it was a matter of completing it whether one liked it or not. Following this pattern of teacher training we turned out many teachers for whom teaching may not have been a number one priority. Currently, practical school experiences are provided starting in the freshman year. State of Ohio 1980 guidelines require that preservice teachers complete field-based experiences equivalent in time to one full quarter prior to student teaching. Similar guidelines are either in place or being implemented in other states.

Staggered field-based experiences provide for the gradual participation of preservice teachers in practical settings. Such experiences tie theory to practice and involve preservice teachers in their own learning as they have first-hand encounters with children's behaviour, the learning process, and classroom management techniques. However, it has presented a problem for cooperating teachers who were used to the model of one-time student teaching. Roles and responsibilities of student teachers and cooperating teachers are outlined here in order to help both parties cope with different stages of classroom field-based experiences.

The cooperating teacher's role is a crucial one in the preparation of quality teachers and this model of providing preservice classroom experiences in different phases has put new demands and responsibilities on cooperating teachers. They need to be more sensitive and knowledgeable about the nature and level of field-based experiences.

Initial Observations

Field experiences vary a great deal depending upon where they fall in the preservice teacher's program. In the typical freshman experience, the person is placed in an urban, suburban, or rural setting to make observations. Some programs suggest that the preservice teachers become involved in non-instructional activities such as distributing materials, taking attendance, or locating resources; however, many programs restrict them to an observer's role.

Most experiences in the freshman program are tied to specific objectives and there is an integration of a theory course and a field experience. The course often deals with the social and political foundations of education and the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of both regular and exceptional children. Initial experiences frequently focus on classroom activity, interaction, the use of large and small group teaching techniques, the nature of the neighbourhood, class size, availability of resources, and classroom management.

The preservice teacher gradually becomes more observant and develops the ability to focus on specific interactions and processes at work in the school. Rather than being overwhelmed by the environment or being drawn to insignificant events, the preservice teacher becomes more selective. These observation skills are crucial if the preservice teacher hopes to cope with the complexity of a classroom. The 'sink' or 'swim' philosophy, implied by the one-time student teaching experience, is not an effective way to gain a meaningful understanding of the situation.

Preservice teachers are typically placed in an elementary or secondary school for a few hours a week. They may only spend 10 to 30 hours in a classroom setting but this is the beginning of the gradual transition from being a student to becoming a teacher. This will continue well into student teaching and the first few years of teaching. Each year thousands of those who were once students become teachers. The early field experiences partially bridge the gap separating the role of adult as teacher from child as pupil.

During these initial experiences, cooperating teachers need to be sensitive to the difficulties and to the feelings involved in this transition. The assumption of a teacher's role is awkward when preservice teachers still envision themselves as pupils. The classroom environment is essentially the same but the responsibility of the new role is fraught with anxiety. The cooperating teacher must be supportive, sensitive, and willing to help preservice teachers perceive their new role.

Intermediate Experience

This intermediate experience represents a continuation of this rite of passage. Preservice teachers are typically involved with fewer observations and more instructional and non-instructional duties. Non-instructional responsibilities include such things as proctoring tests, monitoring hallways, and supervising lunchrooms and playgrounds.

In instructional areas, preservice teachers assume responsibility for management and control. Uncertainty and self-doubt are prevalent. There is a new tension associated with the classroom as preservice teachers stand and face their students.

In other instructional areas, preservice teachers typically begin to grade papers, read stories in large groups and conduct tutorial sessions. These tutorial settings often involve the preservice teacher in the remediation of specific skills by using plans developed by the cooperating teacher. Preservice teachers are surprised by the range of abilities present in a single classroom and the minimal skills of some students.

Some preservice teachers find that they do not enjoy working with children. Others may have poor interaction skills, lack basic oral or written communication skills, or are over overwhelmed by personal problems. In these situations, they are frequently counselled out of their programs. A few of them, faced with the realities of the classroom, re-examine their career goals and select themselves out of teaching.

Preservice Participation

Preservice participation ushers in the planning and teaching of large groups in conjunction with generic and specific methods courses. Some preservice teachers are capable of such responsibilities immediately.

Others may start with tutorial or small group instruction before they teach a lesson to a large group. Inductive and deductive models are typically implemented with specific content areas, such as reading, english, mathematics, social studies, a foreign language or science. Preservice teachers also refine specific diagnostic and remediation skills in one-to-one tutorial settings.

In certain cases, this level of field experience reveals candidates who are not committed to the teaching profession. The pressure of total class instruction and its accompanying planning and management responsibilities help these preservice teachers make a decision to pursue other career options. As instructional duties increase, candidates with borderline academic credentials also become apparent. During this experience some preservice teachers drop out, mature, and return at a later date.

Preservice participation presents special challenges and opportunities for cooperating teachers. The ability to listen and provide guidance are part of these responsibilities. Sensitive cooperating teachers will perceive these difficulties and help preservice teachers cope with their problems. It is crucial that this occurs prior to the student teaching experience.

Student Teaching

The concluding field experience is student teaching. The nature of this traditional field experience places increasing emphasis on taking initiative, assuming an instructor's role, and gradually accepting full responsibility (Laine and Tanveer, 1984). These requirements separate student teaching from previous field experiences.

More than in any other field experience, student teachers are expected to be active rather than passive, participators rather than observers. While student teachers continue to consult cooperating teachers and supervisors for materials, ideas, and advice; the student teacher must display a much greater degree of resourcefulness, originality and creativity. Part of this initiative is continuous and extensive self-analysis and self-evaluation.

The second component that clearly sets student teaching apart from previous field experiences is the gradual but inevitable increase in teaching responsibilities. This assumption of duties can result in overpowering anticipation for the student teacher. Filling each day with important tasks can help mediate these strong feelings of expectation. While waiting to begin the increasing teaching responsibilities, student teachers can learn students' names, become familiar with materials, and master procedures specific to the building.

Finally, student teaching is unique among the preservice teachers' field experiences in that they eventually assume responsibility for all teaching duties. Aside from the planning, implementation, and evaluation that occur within the classroom, student teachers have numerous other obligations. All student teachers become involved in the supervision of homerooms, study halls, lunch rooms, bus loading and unloading, and recess. They also attend faculty meetings, open houses, sporting events, musical and dramatic performances, field trips, and conferences with parents.

Student teaching generally involves from 300 to 500 clock hours of full time service. Observation quickly expands to classroom assistance, tutorial and small group teaching, and, eventually, total group instruction. Of course, the major component of this full responsibility is the instructional role. It becomes more distinct as the student teacher takes charge of diagnosis, selecting materials, remediation and decision-making for a wide variety of pupils.

The cooperating teacher plays a crucial role during student teaching experiences. The initial task for the cooperating teacher is judging a student teacher's readiness. While the college supervisor may suggest a calendar for the gradual introduction of the student teacher, only the cooperating teacher has the degree of contact that is necessary to make these decisions.

In secondary classrooms, the assignment of each new responsibility may depend upon both the academic ability and the behavior of the pupils. The probability of success in the initial student teaching experience will improve if student teachers begin with tractable youngsters who are interested and involved. In elementary classrooms the task of gradually introducing student teachers may be a bit easier. Small groups and non-instructional tasks provide ideal settings for student teachers to test the water.

Consider two extreme types of cooperating teachers. One quickly abandons student teachers, and the sudden rush of responsibility overwhelms all but the most mature, talented and competent. The second teacher watches over student teachers with extreme care and seldom leaves them alone. All but the weakest student teachers will be thwarted by this approach.

How do cooperating teachers stimulate initiative without casting student teachers adrift? Student teaching differs from all previous field experiences in that student teachers must initiate activities without being told. Student teachers are expected to see that things need to be done and take the appropriate action. This may lead to mistakes, but it is essential if student teachers are to grow.

Cooperating teachers cannot neglect their responsibilities to their pupils. Are they on the task? Is there a respectful atmosphere in the classroom? Are smooth transitions being made? Are explanations clear? Is the tempo appropriate? While cooperating teachers gradually relinquish their responsibilities, they must make sure that student teachers address these concerns satisfactorily.

Some student teachers, unable to cope with the demands of a full schedule or the pressures of managing large groups, are counselled to pursue other careers. The student teaching experience may not be long enough for others to reach their full potential. While they are able to perform satisfactorily in all areas of classroom teaching, a post-student teaching field experience is recommended so that they increase their competence and refine their skills.

Conclusions

Collaborative efforts among college supervisors, school administrators, and cooperating teachers assist preservice teachers in self-appraisal, self-analysis and self-selection. Classroom experiences, designed and arranged in this manner, have the potential for screening preservice teachers in their early training. This screening permits cooperating teachers to be honest with the profession and fair to preservice teachers.

Cooperating teachers have to assume multiple roles at different levels of field experiences, e.g., facilitators, mentors, developers of potential. They also serve as evaluators who help preservice teachers make professional judgments regarding the selection of teaching as a career. Cooperating teachers must not lose sight of the fact that these roles are crucial at each field-based stage of the preservice teacher's experience.

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