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SUPERVISING STUDENT TEACHERS: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

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Introduction

Preparing a quality future teacher is a pressing concern of teacher education institutions, school systems, and state departments of education. It is almost impossible to train effective teachers unless these educational agencies share their responsibilities in the total teacher preparation process. This is becoming a greater reality as each agency recognises its identifiable and distinct role.

Student teaching is an important component of teacher preparation and is frequently taken for granted. This internship plays a significant role in the making of a teacher who has acquired confidence in short— and long-range planning, communication and classroom management. This can be done only if co-operating teachers, college faculty member and student teacher all do their respective jobs professionally, dutifully and, above all, humanely.

The Co-operating Teacher

The importance of the cooperating teacher's role can be seen in three ways: the growth of the profession through the preparation of a qualified teacher; the renewal that comes from participating in this process; and the influence this new professional will have on children (Needham, 1982).

How are co-operating teachers selected? This process varies greatly and has an influence on the student teaching experience. It is not sufficient that the prospective co-operating teacher be an outstanding teacher; he or she must be a skilled mentor. Special skills in communication, observation, openness and critical analysis are required, as well as a willingness to share (Lamb, 1965).

How has the co-operating teacher prepared for the arrival of the student teacher? The co-operating teacher must introduce the student teacher as a partner rather than a college student (Henry & Beasley, 1972). Facilities, materials and children must be prepared for the addition of another teacher to the classroom. The co-

operating teacher must consider what will be expected of the student teacher. How will the first day be structured? How will the student teacher be introduced to the policies of the school? What rules will be maintained? How much freedom will be allowed?

While the college supervisor may suggest a calendar for the gradual introduction of student teachers, co-operating teachers are in a much better position to judge their readiness. In a secondary classroom, the assignment of each new responsibility may depend upon both the academic ability and the behavior of the children. 'The probability of success in the first 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 new teachers to test the waters.

Consider two extreme types of co-operating 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 co-operating teachers stimulate initiative without casting student teachers adrift? Student teaching differs from all previous field experiences in that prospective 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 the student teachers are to grow.

Co-operating teachers serve as both facilitators and evaluators in the observation conference. These conferences permit positive feedback on a regular basis. In the daily rush of activity, student teachers and co-operating teachers may lose touch with each other. Skilful co-operating teachers act as facilitators, encourage self-analysis, include constructive criticism, end observation conferences on a positive note and help student teachers plan some steps for the next task.

At some point in the experience, co-operating teachers need to serve as evaluators. The early identification of strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement can assist student teachers in professional growth. Some may upgrade their skills and others may explore careers other than teaching.

The gradual assignment of responsibilities implies that co-operating teachers fade from the environment while continuing to assess progress. Are the children on the task? Is there a respectful atmosphere in the classroom? Are smooth transitions being made? Are explanations clear? Is the tempo appropriate? Co-operating teachers are concerned with children as well as student teachers.

College Supervisor

The college and the schools maintain a guest-host relationship. School administrators, co-operating teachers, and student teachers view the experience as a co-operative effort rather than simply a course supervised by a college faculty member. The mutual concerns of all parties, including principals, are children and the teaching profession.

Frequently, co-operating teachers and principals have been exposed to a variety of student teaching programs. They expect supervisors to outline college expectations and provide direction throughout the experience. This is especially important prior to the arrival of student teachers. Alluding to a student teacher's background often helps the co-operating teacher approach the student teacher intelligently and humanely.

Supervisors are more effective when they are peacemakers, listen to both parties, and act with care. Good supervisors get ideas and feelings into the open for discussion. When personality conflicts occur, effective supervisors take immediate action, remedy the conflicts, and avoid hard feelings. If a change of assignment is warranted, they safeguard the rights of both the student teacher and the co-operating teacher, involve the school administration and the college placement office, keep all parties informed, and avoid unnecessary disruptions.

Close supervision, regular observations, and specific feedback are essential ingredients, but a supervisor's major contribution may be that of a mediator. How can supervisors create an atmosphere where student teachers have opportunities to try new techniques, make mistakes, and develop more effective teaching behaviors? How can supervisors help both co-operating teachers and student teachers reach their potential? These represent the important issues for college supervisors.

It is essential to make weekly visits to the site. Experienced supervisors can attest to the hours required to deal with situations

that have been neglected. Co-operating teachers and student teachers look forward to these visits. Student teachers expect and need feedback on their progress. Immediate feedback, that includes co-operating teachers, is especially productive.

Weekly seminars are frequently a part of the student teaching experience. Such meetings provide an opportunity for student teachers to share their experiences, concerns, and gripes. An open discussion of problems faced by student teachers is appropriate and removes anxiety. This sharing environment encourages student teachers to help each other and stimulates self-analysis. Seminars provide opportunities to discuss employment prospects, college expectations, control techniques, long range planning, new ideas in teaching, observation foci, and certification procedures. Preparing resumes, and conducting mock interviews are also valuable topics (Glassberg and Sprinthall, 1980).

At the conclusion of the student teaching experience, both supervisors and the co-operating teachers make final evaluations. These assessments may be translated into grades and may involve the completion of rating forms. Regardless of format, final assessments need to be fair to both prospective employers and the student teachers. Appraisals, including areas for future development, should be made. There is a need to mention both strengths and weaknesses without overdoing either.

Close co-operation between college supervisors and co-operating teachers can provide opportunities for student teachers to develop to their full potential. Collegial teams can guide learning through doing and reflecting. Observations, conferences, and seminars are important ingredients.

The Student Teacher

Preservice teachers cannot ignore the importance of student teaching; however, the anxiety over this experience should not be exaggerated. One way of reducing the anxiety is to minimize outside demands. The intensity of this internship and the necessity of assuming full responsibilities make it essential that family, job, and other academic obligations be kept to a minimum.

Student teachers must guard against a fatalistic attitude about this teaching experience. Success depends more upon what student teachers do than on any outside influences. The planning, initiative,

preparation, enthusiasm, effort, and energy that student teachers put into those ten to fifteen weeks are the significant elements of a successful experience.

First impressions are as crucial in student teaching as they are in any professional setting. Dress, reliability, vitality, and curiosity are assessed early in the experience. On the first day, student teachers should go to the principal's office rather than to the co-operating teacher's classroom, arrive thirty minutes before the students, get acquainted with the site, and adjust to the schedule of the co-operating teacher.

Teaching duties begin gradually and anticipation can be overpowering. While waiting to begin teaching responsibilities, learning students' names and individual differences can pay big dividends. Becoming familiar with classroom materials, curriculum guides, and textbooks help student teachers determine what they will be expected to teach. An early acquaintance with the policies and procedures followed by co-operating teachers and the expectations of college supervisors can also be productive.

When problems or concerns develop in the classroom, student teachers should go to co-operating teachers. However, when concerns develop related to the assignment of co-operating teachers, student teachers should contact college supervisors. Ten to fifteen weeks are too short to allow concerns to be neglected. Mistakes are expected but the student teaching experience represents an opportunity to use these mistakes to refine existing skills and develop new ones. Student teachers need to be open, responsive, willing to learn from everyone, and receptive to constructive criticism. These should be their guiding principles.

More than in any other field experience, student teachers are expected to be active rather than passive, initiators rather than observers. While co-operating teachers and supervisors need to be consulted regarding new ideas, they are looking for examples of resourcefulness, originality, and creativity. This active role also implies that student teachers engage in continuous self-analysis and self-evaluation.

Probably nothing equals the persistent complexity of classroom management. All teachers wrestle with this perennial concern and student teachers often find it their greatest hurdle. Establishing a management policy or assuming an existing policy early in the

internship is crucial. Many times student teachers find themselves reacting to situations without guidelines. This is especially awkward if a student teacher threatens to call parents or imposes detention and fails to consult the co-operating teacher. Once a policy has been established, the fair, firm, and consistent application of management procedures is essential.

The natural desire to be accepted can easily undermine a student teacher's classroom control. As a stranger in a new environment, student teachers can allow this desire to interfere with their professional role. They may not exert enough control and may approach their students as peers. Student teachers are making the transition into the profession and have spent many more hours as students than as teacher. It is not surprising that many of them feel a greater fellowship with their students than with the teaching staff.

Student teachers assume an instructional role rather than a tutorial role. They are asked to diagnose, select materials and techniques, and make instructional decisions for a wide variety of children. This instructional role becomes more and more distinct as the internship progresses and they gradually relinquish the tutorial role.

Student teachers need to be cautious when they discuss the school system, school, faculty, and children. As newcomers, they may find themselves in awkward situations. In an effort to get to know student teachers, some faculty members may ask, "What do you think of our school?" Some comments may be even more provocative, pointed, personal, or "loaded." From the uninitiated such questions can bring dramatic responses. When student records, rumours about family problems, and personal anecdotes are discussed, it is wise for student teachers to speak with care.

A unique element of student teaching is assuming the full responsibilities of a teacher. Aside from the planning, implementation, and evaluation that occur within the classroom, student teachers have numerous obligations outside the classroom. Many student teachers become involved in the supervision of homerooms, study halls, lunch rooms, bus loading and unloading, and recess. They frequently attend faculty meetings, open houses, sporting events, musical and dramatic performances, field trips, and conferences with parents. These are opportunities which help student teachers cope with the demands of their first year of teaching.

Conclusions

Preparing a teacher is a shared responsibility. An attempt has been made to outline who benefits, how they benefit, and most importantly, the collegial relationship that can make this a fruitful experience for everyone.

Co-operating teachers improve their own teaching skills as they critically examine the art and science of teaching. They also have an impact on the profession.

Student teachers have an opportunity to experiment with new techniques and make the transition from college students to teachers. While this initial induction into a professional career is traumatic, an effective co-operative effort can lessen the trauma, enhance their experience, and contribute to their growth.

Supervisors have an opportunity to influence the profession. By preparing individuals to enter the profession, college supervisors influence administrators and classroom teachers as well as teaching candidates. No other effort provides such rich opportunities for developing enduring ties with the local schools.

The school administration, local community, and children are potential benefactors in a thoughtful, co-operative effort to prepare new teachers. State departments of education recommend expectations; local schools, through co-operating teachers, help implement the field experiences; and college faculty members work co-operatively with each of these agencies to ensure that the experiences are productive and that expected competencies are developed.

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THE ATTITUDES AND VALUES OF MELBOURNE ADOLESCENTS TOWARDS SCHOOLING AND THE FUTURE

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It has been long evident in the research literature that students in different countries hold quite different views about school and about learning at school (e.g. Husen, 1967; King, Moor & Mundy, 1974). Likewise, their value orientations towards life in general, as well as towards school in particular, vary (e.g. Jackson, 1968; Robinson, 1973; Himmelweit and Swift, 1969). Only recently, however, have such issues been widely researched in Australia (e.g. Anderson, 1978; Batten & Girling-Butcher, 1981).

The present study explored the emerging views and perspectives of adolescent views and perspectives concerning schooling and life generally. Attitudes towards the curriculum were sought, since the literature suggests curriculum decisions are critical to future plans and goals. In addition, however, a wide variety of general, social and educational issues was investigated to tap student affective concerns since there is much recent evidence to suggest that cognitive and affective factors interact to influence schooling outcomes (Marjoribanks, 1981). More general attitudes towards the school in terms of what it does, fails to do, and should be doing from an adolescent perspective were tapped in line with a growing emphasis in Australia on policy-oriented research (Anderson, 1980), and a desire to improve the quality of educational offerings (Williams et al, 1982).

Sex differences in attitudes and perspectives have been reported in some studies. For example, girls were found to be more positive in their attitudes towards school but such satisfaction did not correlate with ability and achievement measures (Tenenbaum, 1940; Leipold, 1957; Jackson and Getzels, 1959). In Australia, Keeves (1974) found that girls were more favourably disposed towards school than were boys in New South Wales, but that in Victoria, no differences emerged. A study conducted in the Australian Capital Territory also found that girls held more positive attitudes towards school than did boys (Keeves, 1972). Anderson (1978) found in South Australia and Queensland that females were more satisfied