LEARNING FROM THE MARGINAL TEACHER

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Introduction

Teacher educators, whether by desire or dictat, are concerned with improving the quality of the teaching force. Indeed the word quality permeates the education literature - we have quality institutions, a quality education, students who are a quality product - we have delivery of the quality curriculum. The concern with quality underpins much of the current work on teacher appraisal - in the UK for example the Department of Education and Science in its 1985 publication 'Better Schools' and in its previous 1983 publication 'Teaching Quality' supports appraisal as a way of improving and sustaining teaching and teacher quality. If quality is so important and if appraisal is to be linked to teacher quality, it is necessary to be clear what we mean by quality. One major focus has been to attempt to identify the characteristics of good i.e. quality teaching by investigating effective teachers and trying to analyse what aspects of their practice underlies their effectiveness so that the concept of quality can better be described.

Another approach which can be seen as complementary rather than antagonistic to the one described above, is to focus on those teachers whom I term *'marginal'*. Marginal teachers are not hopeless teachers; teachers who should be dismissed; nor are they incompetent teachers. Rather they are teachers who operate consistently at the margins of effectiveness. They are less than ideal all of the time and in an ideal world they would probably be selected out. However, for reasons which I discuss below, marginal teachers are present in all educational systems and the problems they experience are ones which we as teacher educators need not only to understand but also to take more into account when we are designing and implementing our teacher education programmes. This article firstly explores some of the reasons that may lead to marginal teachers in educational systems and then reports on-going research that I and my colleagues at the Centre for English Language Teacher Education, University of Warwick are undertaking with marginal teacher trainees.

The Quantity/Quality Equation in educational systems

In many parts of the world the demand for qualified teachers is increasing so rapidly that intake into the profession has had to be broadened - and this applies as much to English teachers as to teachers of other subjects. It has thus become difficult to maintain quality by restricting the numbers entering the profession. Ideally we would like far more candidates to apply for admission to preservice teacher education programmes than can be admitted - then we could select only those with the most talent and promise (even allowing for the fact that we do not have an infallible selection system). The "big pool of fish" approach faces two problems - firstly who gets into the pool and secondly even if it turns out to be a pool full of fish, we may need all the fish. The two factors, that of quality of entrants into the teaching profession and the numbers required by national education systems are of course partly related but not entirely.

Regarding quality, there is little doubt that in many parts of the world, the calibre of entrants into teaching is declining in absolute terms. In a study of applicants to the teaching profession in Turkey between 1982-1986, R. Murray Thomas (1990) showed that whereas in 1982 33% of candidates were in the Grade Point range 61-80 by 1986 this percentage had fallen to 13%. Leavitt (1992) demonstrates that college of education admission requirements are not as rigorous as universities and within universities the Faculty of Education attracts undergraduates in the lowest 10 percent of university admissions. Teaching no longer attracts the most able candidates because for a variety of reasons its status and prestige has declined. Murray Thomas (ibid.) points to the important role of monetary rewards in increasing the status and prestige of occupations. The ILO/UNESCO (1983) survey of teachers and their training and prospects claimed that " *an adquate salary is the principal if not the only means of attracting entrants of the necessary calibre and retaining them - in 15 out of the 32 countries studied the starting salaries of primary school teachers are 10% or more (in nine of them over 20%) below the average level of earning in manufacturing industry and in a considerable number of countries the cost of living adjustments have not kept pace with the rise in the cost of living.*" In Turkey, for example, Murray Thomas (ibid) points out that under Ataturk teachers were viewed as prime agents for reform and high achieving students were sent to teacher training colleges - they experienced a 'golden' age not only financially but morally. Now, however, teachers in Turkey face problems such as low salary, low status, heavy work demands, poor facilities and few opportunities for further professional training. As countries expand their educational systems particularly with regard to the education of women, so alternative careers

besides teaching become available. Lourdusamy and Tan (in Leavitt 1992) writing about Malaysia show that the status of teachers has dropped dramatically for a variety of reasons , not just pay. Teaching is not regarded as a profession - *"if you want work of fairly good remuneration and yet time to spend with your family go into teaching"* (Lourdusamy and Tan 1992:189). Again the explosion of education has meant many stopgap measures have had to be taken to satisfy the demand for teachers - so for example science teachers may be retrained as English teachers. Leavitt points out that this issue of how to recruit promising talent into teaching is not just a problem for developing countries but is also of great concern in, for example, the United States.

Besides the issue of the quality of the entrants into teaching, there is at the same time a demand for increased numbers of teachers particularly in the developing world, through school enrolment growths, explosive populations, the expansion of the tertiary system which then 'poaches' teachers from the upper secondary system. Chang and Paine (in Leavitt op.cit.) for example point out that in China in 1987 the Five-Year Plan revealed that demand would exceed supply of newly trained teachers, both primary and secondary, by some 600,000. Avoseh (in Leavitt op.cit.) shows that in Nigeria the policy of universal free education at all levels has led to an enormous growth in the school population quite unmatched by the growth in teacher supply. In Bangladesh it is estimated that the primary school age group will increase from about 9 million to 17 million with an estimated shortfall of qualified teachers from the primary teacher training institutes of 12000. Add to this the fact that in many instances there is also the problem of teacher wastage - as newly qualified teachers either never take up a teaching post, or leave within the first few years, and we have a problem with teacher supply. This has many implications - but one must be that in terms of recruitment the net may have to be spread wider and wider and less well qualified candidates who may need more training and support will be part of the "pool'.

Thus the changed status, relative decrease in teacher salaries, the demand for a rapid supply of teachers - all these factors mean that students are entering teacher education either academically or professionally less committed than we would like. No longer can quality be maintained by restricting the numbers entering. In addition, whereas in some countries prospective teachers who realised they were perhaps not suited to the career could consider alternative careers, that option is not open to those who have already chosen teaching as the 'alternative'. For many teaching remains a relatively secure career and governments anxious to avoid wastage and keen to increase the number of teachers need training to be successful. Teacher training institutions would not be too popular if they maintained quality by failing large numbers of students.

These problems are not just applicable to developing countries - although the countries of Western Europe have rather different problems of supply and demand as Fullan points out there is often a vicious circle operating such that -

    i. some excellent people interested in teaching do not apply

    ii. many excellent people do apply but their first experiences at the preservice level are less than exhilarating

    iii. in the first five years of teaching the better candiates are more likely to leave. Average or other teachers experiencing dissatisfaction do not leave.

    iv. as the years unfold, dissatisfied teachers become more and more disillusioned, cynical and less motivated to participate in improvements

    v. schools don't improve and remain alienating, unfulfilling places for teachers and students

    vi. full circle ....(see Fullan 1992:335)

So a concern with marginal teachers is important because whilst inservice training and development is to be commended, such courses however developmentally or reflectively structured tend to have most impact on those teachers who are already relatively good practitioners. Inadequate and ineffective teachers benefit most from help during their initial training and during the first two years of their school careers through induction schemes. Whilst we recognise the efficacy of supportive and structured induction schemes, in most cases these are rarely provided. In fact often such novice teachers are put into teaching positions that further demoralise and demotivate. Thereafter it becomes progressively harder to improve the situation.

Our focus has been on those trainees about to finish training and enter their first year of teaching. Trainees who are identified as marginal will not, of course, necessarily become marginal teachers but in our experience trainees who by the end of their course are weak in implementation of classroom skills remain so unless given a great deal of help in their first year. The areas we are investigating and which are described below are :

    a. the identification and personal characteristics of marginals

    b. the classroom behaviour of marginals - observing the skills and strategies they use; how they plan their lessons and make teaching decisions

    c. how an awareness of the key problems that marginals experience could inform initial training courses - in terms of what we do and how we do it.

The first step however is to describe the basis on which marginal trainees can be identified and the way in which data on those marginals was collected.

The identification of marginal teacher trainees

We need therefore to pick out those trainees who we consider are performing at the margins of effectiveness - in future referred to as marginals. How do we decide what those margins are?

One starting point is to consider what we understand by a 'quality' teacher or 'effective' teacher. Whilst research on teacher effectiveness is sometimes dismissed as not coming up with any definitive answers, there is in fact a degree of consensus as to what constitutes effective teaching - though this is not the same as suggesting there is one effective 'method' or that there are teacher characteristics which can predict success on the part of the pupils.(see, for example, Brophy & Good 1986, Rosenshine & Stevens 1986, Anderson, Ryan & Shapiro 1989). The emphasis rather is on effective classrooms and what happens in them seen from three standpoints: what are the personal characteristics of effective teachers; what kind of knowledge do such teachers possess and what do they actually do in the classroom that makes them effective. Identifying the personal characteristics of good teachers has proved difficult but teachers are likely to be more effective in terms of pupil achievement if they have educational and professional qualifications although there is some doubt as to whether the level of the qualifications is crucial (Avalos and Haddad 1989). The length of teaching experience is important - experienced teachers are more effective (see Anderson and Burns 1989 for a discussion of the differences between novice and experienced American teachers). The importance of the content of a teachers' knowledge to the effectiveness of teaching is paramount and certainly in the 90's there has been a move to try to understand the kind of knowledge teachers require *"they (teachers) must have two types of subject matter knowledge: knowledge of the subject field, both writ large and in its particulars and knowledge of how to help their students come to understand ...."* (Wilson, Shulman & Richert 1987:105). In terms of teacher behaviour, effective teachers create a classroom environment which is learner and learning friendly - they are able to adapt their knowledge and skills to the demands of a variety of situations so as to achieve their goals. *" Doing whatever is necessary in order to achieve these goals rather than behaving in certain ways or using certain techniques or methods is the hallmark of effective teachers "* (Lorin Anderson 1991:18). More specifically, the use of tasks appropriate to the pupils' capacity and the involvement of pupils and grouping that relates to the intentions of the tasks seems

to have a bearing on student achievment. . A further important factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows - effective teachers can diagnose the pupils' existing level of knowledge and plan tasks that fit. It is of course difficult to correlate definitively effective teaching and student achievement because of a wide range of intervening variables and it is not the purpose of this article to review the research evidence on this issue. But as trainers we share a common understanding of what characterises effective teaching - and from this base in common with many other preservice programmes we have been able to draw up criteria which can assist and guide us in appraising trainee teachers. We recognise that trainees, one year off qualifying are not the same as experts - trainees tend to be relatively inflexible and conforming whereas competent teachers are more able to decide between important and not important and have developed a 'feel', an 'intuitive' judgement. Allowing for this, however, we can say that effective trainees are those who

> i. at the preactive stage - before the lesson - design a task appropriate to their intentions and to the range of their pupils' capabilities
>
> ii. at the interactive stage - during the lesson - they present the material appropriately, clearly and involve the pupils in a way that realises the task intentions effectively
>
> iii. at the postactive stage, at any time after the lesson, effective trainees are able to assess the progress of the pupils and to evaluate and reflect upon to some degree their own experiences.

Thus in the normal course of events there existed a consensus amongst the trainers regarding the characteristics of effective trainees such that we were able to identify by the second or third year of an initial training course those trainees we felt were likely to enter the profession as marginal teachers.

Methods of data collection

Data was collected in three main ways and I shall briefly describe these before considering some of the implications of the data so far collected.

Supervisors' diaries

When teacher trainers evaluate trainees or when they discuss a trainee's performance there is often a kind of accepted public face. Evaluation sheets give little indication of what really happened in the lesson because they rightly seek to be positive and skill building. Thus comments such as "boardwork needs tidying" or "need to establish better relations with class" whilst unlikely to cause offence are also opaque. The student and the supervisor involved may know what the situation was, but for anybody

reading the report, little information can be gleaned. Was the board just a little messy or was it a total wreck and had it affected the lesson at all? Was the trainee unable to control the class, too friendly, seemingly bored by them, irritated? We cannot tell from such bland comments and in this way the realities of classroom life can remain hidden.

We approached the problem in rather a different way. Each year for the past three years we have had final year trainees on a long teaching practice overseas as part of their initial teacher training course. Different supervisors have made frequent visits to the same trainees and this has enabled us to build up detailed entries in a "diary" on each trainee. This diary I call the "Supervisor's personal diary" because no one sees it except the supervisors involved and it cannot under any circumstances be used for assessment. Supervisors wrote a report on the lesson as soon as it had finished. The reports were unstructured and the writers could be as affective and outspoken as they liked. They also gave very specific information about things that went awry in the lesson as well as things that went well. It did not matter how many incidents were chosen because the aim was to build up a collective picture of the performance of all the marginals not just one. Thus from observation of 45 trainees, 10 were identified as marginal. At the end of the teaching practice the diaries were then collected. Although at this stage the entries referred to the trainee by name, these names were removed when the data was entered onto a computer. In this way I have collected over 140 diary entries for marginals enabling one to categorise the marginal's behaviour in broad terms and also to concretise it.

An alternative guide to teaching practice

However, knowing the perspective of supervisors or observers gives only a partial picture. We need to understand the reality of the teaching experience for the marginal trainee other than through supervisors' descriptions. So the second method of data collection was through formalising a "talking to other future trainees" situation. This was done by getting all the students to compile an "Alternative guide to teaching practice" written by students for students. The trainees who had completed their 3 month teaching experience compiled the guide during a workshop at which each student wrote their own advice for jointly agreed headings and then small groups joined to produce summaries. The final product was fairly innocuous in many ways because the better trainees filtered out what they regarded as over negative and critical comments by the marginal trainees. Our interest was in these comments and what they revealed about the marginal trainees who made them. A sample page from the 'finished' guide is shown in Appendix 1.

Interviews

The final method of data collection was to interview seven marginal trainees some time after their teaching practice in an attempt to lessen the defensiveness that marginals often displayed when talking about their classroom experiences. Questions focused on their affective reactions to the pupils they had taught and to the supervisors. We also were interested in their reasons for entering teaching - if for example we found that marginal trainees revealed that teaching had been very much a second choice career for them, then this fact may need to be addressed on the course, affecting as it must do motivation and attitudes. Interviews proved most effective at eliciting factual information, but rather less effective at gaining any useful information on the teaching process itself - an indication that too much time had elapsed between the experience and the process of publicly reflecting on it in an interview situation. Some short extracts from interviews are given in Appendix 2.

Personal characteristics of marginals

It would be presumptuous to suggest that on the basis of this limited data we can describe the characteristics of all marginal trainees. In fact it is rather easier to say what our marginal trainees were **not** rather than what they were. We found that marginal trainees were not notably lacking in confidence - they were not underconfident people. They may have been anxious in class but outside of it they were no different from more expert trainees. In addition, although marginal trainees had often entered teaching because they had been rejected for other courses, they were not noticeably less able than other more effective trainees. So there was no evidence that marginal trainees were the least able academically.

Regarding motivation to do teaching, of the seven marginal trainees interviewed, not one of them had wanted to do teaching. It must be said that neither had all of the better trainees but there was not one marginal trainee who had been clearly motivated to do teaching. For the women, their parents had often suggested it as a more socially appropriate career than others and for the men it was often a case of ability preventing them from entering more prestigious careers. Many marginal trainees admitted that they hoped the qualification would be useful in getting them eventually into other careers.

When it came to giving advice to other trainees, marginals were negative about most of their teaching experience particularly deflecting blame onto the pupils. This was reflected in comments such as "expect many pupils to be poor at English; not

interested and lazy". Marginal trainees were almost exclusively concerned with themselves - where they did mention pupils it was nearly always to do with discipline which contrasted with better students who whilst equally anxious about their class experiences, were much more interested in their pupil's learning. Such good trainees were creative and full of suggestions whereas marginals gave advice that had little to do with the teaching solutions to problems e.g. "don't be late", "children will be weak in everything", "they won't say anything". This accords with the work of Berliner (1994) who contrasted the approaches of novice and experienced teachers finding that experienced teachers were very concerned that their pupils should learn. In this respect marginals show expected characteristics of all novice teachers but to an extreme degree.

The classroom behaviour of marginal trainees

The diary entries have provided data enabling us to categorise marginal teachers' behaviour not only in very broad terms but also to concretise it. From the very specific actions described by observers a series of "Critical Decision Points or Incidents" have been built up. The example below is a complete diary entry which contains different critical decision points.

A very weak lesson from X. He chose a dull inappropriate poem by Leonard Cohen!. Didn't engage SS at all - just went in and played the fairly inaudible tape (a reading by Y - thus lots of pronunciation and intonational errors). Took centre stage throughout with predictably disastrous results - clearly hadn't understood poem himself. Worked mechanically through text book exercises Little planning in terms of stages. Went on to ask SS to read "Ring out wild bells" (!!) with vague questions on meaning. Students bored, restless and embarrassed. Plus point was he had tried to learn their names.

One critical decision incident here was at the planning stage when the student made an inappropriate choice of poem. There were several other "incidents" at the planning stage which had an effect on the success of the lesson - these words 'critical incidents' thus emphasise that they are important to the effectiveness of the teaching and also require on the part of the teacher some kind of decision. Further examples given at the end of the article (Appendix 3) have been extracted from one type of lesson that marginals were giving - note taking lessons. This is for the sake of clarity only, so that eventual linkage between the original classroom incident and the training materials described later can be seen.

Organising the data

Each diary entry usually yields more than one critical decision point (CDP) and they can be in almost any area. From the original diary entries, over 320 CDP's have been isolated. In order to effectively deal with them there was a need to categorise them in some way. Firstly there were three stages in which CDP's could occur - before, during and after the lesson i.e. pre-, intra- and post- teach. Within each of these stages different competencies are involved. Loosely based on a model of Donald Medley's (1988), these competencies can be described as:

a. Professional Awareness - in order to solve a problem you have to be aware of its existence. By problem in this instance I mean a point at which a decision is called for. If you do not possess such awareness then obviously you take no decisions. What we discovered was that marginal trainees often lacked this awareness or 'withitness'. One diary entry reads *"he seems totally unaware that half the children were asleep - this was confirmed later when he seemed pleased with how things had gone and the fact that he had managed to keep order."*

b. Professional Judgement: Of course, trainees may be aware of what is happening but not unduly concerned about it. One trainee had some children in his class who, after finishing their work ahead of time, were quietly carrying on with their maths homework. In discussions later the trainee seemed pleased that they had quietly got on with other work. He didn't see their behaviour as a problem for him. So awareness doesn't always mean that the implication of the event is recognised - this requires professional judgement. Exercising that professional judgement (knowing whether a situation calls for a decision to act or not) is a crucial area.

c. Professional knowledge: Such decisions are made on the basis of professional knowledge possessed by the teacher ("knowing that"). This includes knowledge of teaching skills (e.g. knowing what an information gap task is, how to organise it, how to round it up)but also most importantly subject content knowledge (e.g. lexical and grammatical knowledge, an understanding of text discourse or, say, the differences between spoken and written text).

e.g. .....*X gave a fairly structure based lesson on phrasal verbs and it would have been good except he isn't himself sure of what a phrasal verb is, so mixed adverbs and prepositions etc. He got the ss. to pick out patterns from a text and unfortunately for X they picked out patterns which didn't conform to his example and he didn't know why or what had happened so made some very dire statements on the board. The SS were very muddled in the end.*

Professional knowledge enables the right kinds of decisions to be made about alternative courses of action. Trainees may indeed be aware that, for example, their

pupils are getting bored with a particular activity and they may recognise that this is a problem they should quickly try to deal with; however, they may simply not know what to do.

e.g. *A poor lesson . Double period devoted almost entirely to 'gap filling'. First on the process of paper-making; then the process of wood-pulp processing, then the process of fish canning! To be fair, he did try to incorporate some listening . Feedback sessions were interminable and pupils were bored but considerate. X looked panic struck and missed opportunities to go in other directions.*

d. Procedural skills: Using professional knowledge appropriately is often the visible part of teaching - procedural skill ("knowing how"). So with note taking for example, the teacher may ' know that' a spoken text has certain characteristics, that for a note taking task it should be of an appropriate length, style, etc. but 'knowing how' at the preteach stage means the teacher can then select texts appropriately. In the intrateach stage the procedural skills and expertise demonstrate themselves in all the teaching behaviours associated with good teaching, such as presenting material appropriately and clearly; involving the pupils in a way that realises the task intentions effectively; dealing with student discipline.

e.g. *A disaster really. Bright lively boys with a fairly good command of English but X only introduced about six very basic language items, gave them repetitive tasks and then sat in a corner for the last ten minutes while SS were supposed to be writing - but there wasn't really anything to write. So most of them just played about - quite a lot!*

The flow chart (Fig.i.) below summarises how problems at any one of the stages has a cumulative effect on the teacher's overall performance. For example, a trainee might demonstrate his professional awareness appropriately and exercise professional judgement in realising that some kind of decision is required. But if he lacks the professional knowledge regarding appropriate action, then his performance is likely to be marginal. A concrete example from the data was one trainee who was aware that many children in the class could not understand her explanations of a grammar point; she realised that something needed to be done but because she did not herself really understand the grammar point in question, was unable to simplify it appropriately.

In this way we have built up a series of critical decision points which can be fitted into pattern (ii) below . For example, many marginal trainees have problems at the pre-teach stage.. They may show a lack of professional awareness in not thinking it important to speak to class teachers about the level of the pupils they will be teaching;

or they may show lack of professional knowledge in their inability to plan for a range of activities. Using this kind of framework, we can identify more precisely what stage of teaching and which competencies are most problematic for marginal trainees.

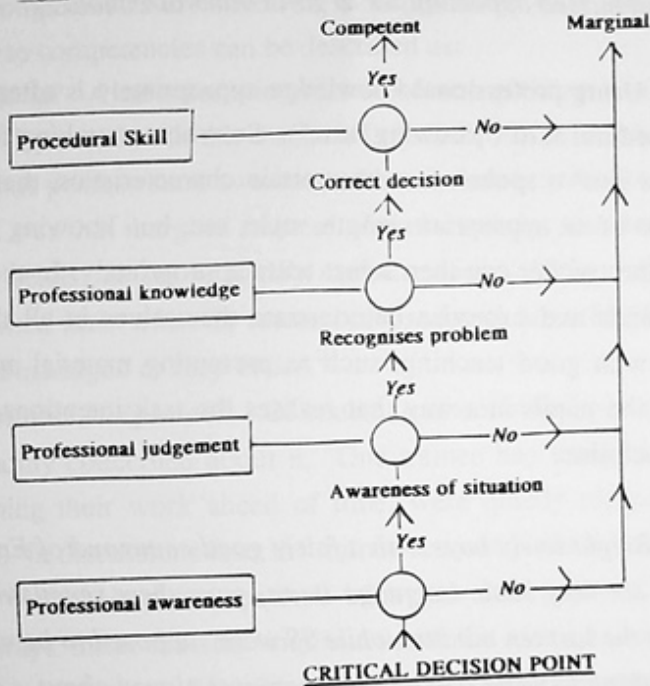Fig. i

CRITICAL DECISION POINT

Fig. ii

Competency	Pre-teach	Intra-teach	Post-teach
Procedural skills	███████		
Professional knowledge			
Professional judgement			
Professional Awareness			

Implications for trainers

Initial selection procedures and ways of dealing with novice teachers in the first years of teaching are important ways of addressing the issue of marginal teachers. In addition, for trainers concerned with the initial training stage, a better knowledge of what characterises marginal teachers could inform courses; both in trainer- led input sessions and the teaching practice itself. Here I will describe how critical decision points can be used as part of course materials and suggest ways in which they could affect the organisation of teaching practice.

Developing training exercises from the diaries

Competencies is not a popular term in teacher education and it is not my intention to suggest that effective teaching can be characterised simply by a finite list of behavioural competencies. But as David Berliner shows in his analysis of novice and expert teachers, experts develop over time starting from a base level of well established routines and practices. Novice teachers lack the intuitive quick thinking of the experienced teacher and as Berliner points out *"automatization of routines provides great economy of effort. Automatization of behavioral routines along with clarity on one's mental script about how things should occur is not expertise, but those factors probably constitute a great deal of the necessary conditions for the development of expertise"*(Berliner 1987:73). Of course, automatization comes with practice and experience but at the very least exercises can be developed which can accustom trainees to the kind of decision making they will face in classrooms. More important however is the fact that every exercise is based on a real event, not the imagined classroom images of tutors who may not themselves have taught for some time. Thus we have developed a series of exercises based on the competencies described above and real classroom events as described in the diaries. We have designed simple "critiquing" exercises using written, taped or videoed data. These are exercises based entirely on problems arising from real classroom events including the texts and exercises, and demand from the trainee a degree of analysis and judgement to decide on an appropriate solution. "Decisive incident mazes" are another way in which I have tried to marry the building up of knowledge with real practice in decision taking. Each step in the maze is based on a CDP and whilst there is not necessarily a right or wrong

answer we hope that reflection will develop professional judgement and performance. Examples of critiquing exercises and mazes are given as Appendix 3.

Developing Teaching Practice

Procedural skills are best developed in performance; that is through teaching practice. Mentoring schemes and peer teaching which help trainees to recognise and understand the underlying basis of their own teaching behaviour. are valuable in this respect. However, for marginal trainees in particular , the use of what I term "graduated teaching routines" has been particularly helpful. In actual teaching situations, handling whole classes, marginal teacher trainees lack expertise in very simple routines. They do not have an easily accessible repertoire of skills to call on. In trying to handle a thousand and one decisions they end up on a downward spiral of wrong decisions, faulty judgements and poor performance and then suffer poor appraisal by supervisors. We need to limit what we ask them to do. A graduated teaching routine is a way of breaking up the teaching process into small steps - starting with very simple ones in some cases. The important thing is that the routines should be ones that the trainee can easily succeed with. Their selection should be a mutual decision between trainee and supervisor. They should be varied and short enabling the trainee to experience different ways of achieving the same aim. This is easier to accomplish with supervisors who are closely involved with the practicum. It is also easier to do with trainees who teach in twos and threes because different trainees can take responsibility for different 'chunks' of the lesson. This is interspersed with trainees taking responsibility for whole lessons as appropriate.

Let me give an example. One trainee, always began lessons in a very peremptory manner. Once he walked into class with no greeting, looked down at his desk , then suddenly left. In fact he had good reason, realising he had left his materials elsewhere, but both the class and the supervisor sat there for some minutes perplexed. When he returned, he then handed out the material to the students without any kind of explanation. This was not an isolated incident. The graduated routine in this case was to focus on the starts of lessons. Other routines that are particularly important for students are giving instructions for activities, different ways of asking questions, and organising students into groups. Contrary to much work on developing reflective practitioners we actually discourage marginal trainees from reflecting too long and hard on what has happened. We prefer to move them on in a positive frame believing that an effective experiential base is built up by building in success from the start and minimising failure.

Conclusion

I have described only part of our work with marginal trainees, focusing particularly on the identification of critical decision points. However, as I said at the start of this article, marginal trainees succeed in many things they do. Whilst I think it is important to seek to understand what "goes wrong" in a marginal trainee's lesson, recognition must be given to what "goes right" . Hopefully as we continue research in this latter area, we will have a fuller understanding of such trainees' behaviour and better able to offer appropriate support. The support must come from more than the initial training period however. The need to see teacher education as a career long proposition involving inservice programmes of teacher development is particularly important for marginal teachers as is the role of the school in promoting and encouraging good teaching.

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4. PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

WHAT DO WE KNOW
NOW THAT WE DIDN'T
BEFORE!!!

1.   It's difficult
to put theories
into practice.

2.   Acting has
something to do
with teaching.

3.   Supervisors
can be unrealistic
and demanding.

4.   Teaching is
not an easy task.

5.   Effort is
rewarded.

6.   The students
can do more for
your ego than any
number of ticks on
that form.

FEELINGS....FEELINGS...

Expect to feel
underconfident,
anxious, worried about
what to expect, shy,
self conscious.

If you feel none of
these things, see your
doctor quickly.
Something is wrong.

Try to socialise after
a day's work and don't
panic.

Don't underestimate or
overestimate your self,
the students, the
schools.

Don't PANIC! Enjoy
your TP and yourselves
and everything will go
well.

You are safe with
Warwick supervisors.

Nowthis is whatyoushoulddoinmyopinion...

Appendix 2

Short extracts from interviews with marginal trainees. I= interviewer S= trainee

Extract 1

S: Miss B. she expected too much. And sometimes she said the lesson was ordinary. She said she expect more.

I: Like what?

S: Like how to deal with students of different ability. She preferred I used different materials with different students. That was impossible.

I: How did you feel when she told you these things.

S: I accepted them.

I: You did?

S: What could I do? And she was quite pleased with my attitude. She said I was fine.

I: Would you have liked to have argued with her?

S: No not really. She was the kind of person you know you couldn't.

I: Yes, so you shut up.

S: Yes, yes, shut up.

Extract 2

S: When I think about it, I would rather the supervisor say it straightforwardly.

I: Do you?

S: Yes, to my face. Say this is wrong. Why it's wrong. And then give me a chance to ... well

I: And leave it at that?

S: And then if I think his advice is not suitable or impossible I would like him to demonstrate - teach the class

I: Supervisors tend not to teach (laughter). Do you think it would help?

S: Yes, it would give support. You know you could see ways of getting round the Problem. It's like sometimes they know what will happen they say nothing. Then I think after .. why didn't they say.

I: But you said before you didn't like being told before.

S: (Laughs) That's true.

Extract 3

S: so I wasn't interested that much.

I: You weren't?

S: I'm not very keen on teaching.

I: Aren't you?

S: I suppose I'll change in the future

I: Well, e...

S.   I have always thought ... I'm a failure... that kind of thing

I: Is that why you think you're not interested? Because you think you're a failure?

S: Well.. both ways really... sometimes I do enjoy it, sometimes I don't

I: Well, it's not a crime not be interested in it or to find it..

S: Yes, sometimes I find it tedious. I would like to change my career.

I: Teaching can sometimes be more interesting the more you put into it.

S: Well, actually I was interested in computer science. I like technical things. I was about to go into that .. you know but well it's a long story..

I: Pity you're not ending up teaching computer science. That would have been a compromise.

S: Yes (laughter) I think once I start things will be OK. You get other interests . a kind of balance ... I will probably change my attitudes (laughs).

Appendix 3

Example of entries from Supervisor's diaries

Critical Decision Points
Notetaking

1. X asked all those who live in flats to put up their hands, and then proceeded to enumerate all the disadvantages and dangers of living in a flat as opposed to a house. By the time she'd finished I shouldl think the poor girls would be scared to go home. X is like that - not exactly tactful and a bit brusque, but at least she's the same with everyone regardless of status (by that I mean she talks to me in exactly the same way as she does to her students). *Notetaking exercise not that great because she never told them why they should take the notes and what they should do with them.*

2. I saw second half of 2 period lesson. *Objective - note taking and note expanding. Original text was a tape recording (with Y's voice) on advantages of learning English. Recording poor and tape recorder was Y's own and not efficient. The main problem was that the text was unsuitable for note taking, being discursive rather than informative. It didn't contain anything we didn't know already and hardly seemed worth making notes on. There were no facts as such to record. This made the whole lesson a bit pointless as the second stage was an expansion from notes that Y herself had made - presumably the perfect answer being a recreation of the text they had listened to and read on the handout.*

3. Activities - following up previous lesson with group work: discussion on causes of unemployment (I think groups had been primed because despite weak, vague instructions and ambitious subject, they produced some first class causes.) *The central part of the lesson was to be note taking from a recorded monologue (he'd made his own). He gave them quite good instructions on what to listen for, but unfortunately there was too much external noise - tape was inaudible. X showed adaptability in reading tapescript but then forgot to ask them to do the notetaking.* He went on to a rather pointless spelling test, then an activity which required students to look up dictionary definitions and copy them out.

4. My heart sank when X showed me the tape on a kidnapping she intended to use. *This was one that Y had used and was very difficult to hear. As introduction she explained the word 'kidnap'. The students had a worksheet similar to Y's i.e. comprehension questions. They were to listen and take notes using questions as a guide. She played a really long tape once; then we read it and then she played it. No attempt to break it up. Students then cf. their notes - pretty hopeless notes. Partly because the guiding questions were guiding them to things they shouldn't have bothered to put in their notes. X then noticed the poor notes - her idea of retrieving the situation was to tell them to make them up. So we got some interesting variations on the kidnapping stories - some of them were much better and more exciting than the original.*

Example of Maze derived from above diary entries

Decision Point Maze 4.

ENTRY SITUATION
You have decided to give a lesson in taking notes from spoken text. You have got another teacher to record a text (see attached) on tape for the pupils to listen to and take notes from. The class is ready and the tape is plugged in.

Do you:-
a. Tell the students why you want them to listen to the tape and what you want them to do whilst they are listening. (1)
or
b. Tell the students what the tape is about and ask them to be quiet and listen. (3).

1. One of the pupils asks you what they will do with their notes. You haven't actually got anything planned.

Do you:-
a. Tell them you are going to give them a mark for the accuracy of their notes. (2)
or
b. Say the notes will be used for a later task. (3)

2. You turn the tape on but notice that no one is taking any notes.

Do you:-
a. Stop the tape and explain the task and rewind the tape. (6)
or
b. Stop the tape but then decide that in any case it is best for them to listen first without writing - you will play the tape a second time. (3)

3. You turn the tape on but you notice that the children at the back are not listening.

Do you:-
a. Stop the tape and ask them again to pay attention carefully. (4)
or
b. Continue playing the tape but go to the back of the class and see what the problem is. (5)

4. You start the tape again but after 2 minutes you realise that the noise from the back of the class is increasing.

Do you:-
a. Decide to read out the text. (6)
or
b. Ask one of the pupils to read out the text (7)

5. You realise the problem is that they cannot hear the tape from the back of the class.

Do you-
a. Stop the tape and decide to read it aloud. (6)
or
b. Give the text to the student to read silently and take notes . (11)

6. The pupils start to take notes but it is obvious that some are having difficulties.

Do you:-
a. Decide to stop every so often and construct the notes on the board as a class activity. (10)
or
b. When the text stops, ask the children to get into groups of four and try to construct one version of the notes. (8)

7. Unfortunately no one can hear or understand very easily what the pupil says. He stumbles and pauses as he reads. The student is very conscious of this.

Do you:-
a. Quietly interrupt the student, thank him and continue reading the text aloud yourself. (6)
or
b. Let the student continue, but as he speaks you write headings yourself on the board. (9)

8. What will you do with the notes each group has produced?

9. Would it have been better to have given the students the headings before they listened to the text.

10. What do think would be an appropriate next step bearing in mind your original objectives?

11. Look back at the original objective of the lesson - making notes from spoken text. How close are you to achieving your objective?

Examples of extracted entries from Supervisor's diaries
Critical decision points concerned with relationships with class

Incident 1
Pretty terrible lesson from Miss X. She seems to object to the fact that the children in her class don't know English already. If they can't get everything correct instantly, she blames them for spoiling her lesson. So a listening comprehension lesson means playing an entire section twice at the most, without pauses and then sighing with despair because they can't answer all the questions.

Incident 2
... she says they don't like her and she doesn't care. I think this is true. She certainly isn't very kind to them, but she controls the class well and makes them work.

Incident 3
...she doesn't find pie charts and graphs and tables interesting and it shows - soon the children responded in similar manner.

Incident 4
..... rather lacks social graces in the classroom - he enters looking rather glum and never shows approval for good work or correct answering. No interst in opinions sought is expressed so why should the boys bother?

> *Incident 5*
> *... she came in and handed out the homework silently without a comment. Some of the children had put a bit of effort into their work, not knowing her and wanting to please but not a single "I enjoyed reading this" to anyone.*
>
> *Incident 6*
> *... some improvement in handling this class although they are slow to settle and tend to ignore him when he gives out rambling instructions. His plan for this lesson would have meant that only 1/4 of the class was working at any one time (a guessing game with only one out of four groups active). Fortunately he couldn't control the class sufficiently to prevent the other groups joining in the game so there was more participation than he'd bargained for!*

Example of critiquing task - development of perceptual skills at preteach and intrateach stages.

> The attached text was used as the basis of a note-taking exercise. It was read twice to the students and the notes of two of the best students appear beneath it.
>
> First, do this task on your OWN>
> Then, join with your partner to reach a JOINT decision.
>
> Mark the following as
> AGREE/DO NOT AGREE

> 1. These notes are acceptable and the students have evidently managed to complete the task.
>
> 2. This was a useful exercise in preparing students for the real life task of taking notes.
>
> 3. It would have helped if the teacher had given the students some help and guidance as to what notes to make.
>
> 4. If the students have not made satisfactory notes, the teacher could have prepared a set of her own notes for them to use.
>
> 5. Looking at the samples of students' work, I would say this was a good choice of text.

TEXT read to students.

Basic Needs

The main elements required for survival are FOOD, FIRE, SHELTER, AND WATER. Their order of importance will depend upon where you happen to be. In the desert water will head the list. In polar regions shelter and fire will be the main concerns. Ordering your priorities is one of the first steps to survival. It takes a healthy person quite a long time to die of starvation, for the body can use up its stored resources , but exposure to wind, rain and cold can be fatal even in temperate climates and death comes in only minutes in the icy waters of the Poles. Food is rarely the first priority. Even in those places where it is difficult to find there are usually other problems to face first. Shelter will often be the prime necessity in extremes of climate or temperature - not just in the frozen polar regions or the baking deserts, but for walkers trapped by mist on a hillside. The need for fire is closely linked. Water is something that most people in the modern world take for granted. They are so used to turning on a tap that until an extreme drought causes water rationing they scarcely think about it. Yet the survivor at sea, or after a flood, though surrounded by water, may be desperate for

drinkable water - and there are many places where, unless it rains, no obvious water is available. The other survival necessities are dealt with later, but water is universally important.

Notes produced by students

Student 1

Basik Needs

People need food fire shelter and water. You need water in desert and fire. People die of starving and death is quick in cold waether. Shelter and fire are important. Water is important but not much water at the sea.

Student 2

Basic Needs

We need food, fire water and shelter. Water is important in the desert and fire is more important when it is cold. It takes a long time to die of stiveation. You can die quickly in the ice weather. Food is important. Shelter is also necessary. Fire is important too. We never think about water but at sea there is no good water. Water is very important.