

The path to self-efficacy in teaching: a longitudinal study of beginning teaching

Graham Nimmo and David Smith, Queensland University of Technology

INTRODUCTION

This paper draws on data obtained in a longitudinal ethnographical study of the enculturation of four beginning secondary school teachers in Queensland state schools. The paper focusses on the professional growth of one of these teachers whose development shows the complex interplay of biographic and contextual factors which characterise the development towards greater self-efficacy. We aim to demonstrate that an interactionist perspective provides a more authentic perspective in terms of which to analyse beginning teacher enculturation than those based on teacher socialisation or teacher development theories.

Teacher enculturation may be viewed in terms of two broad perspectives, teacher socialisation and teacher development. Teacher development perspectives tend to emphasise the existence of identifiable stages in the process of professional growth while socialisation perspectives stress the role of colleagues and workplace culture in the enculturation of beginning teachers. Both perspectives find some support in the burgeoning literature on beginning teaching.

Enculturation as a Socialisation Process

Teacher socialisation has been conceptualised as taking place not only during preservice education and through the early professional experiences of the novice teacher, but also through those experiences which precede preservice teacher education. Zeichner (1986: 25-26), for example, highlights the powerful influence of biography on teacher socialisation, noting at the same time that little is known about the particular sources of this influence. Goodson (1992:114) also endorses the importance of biography and advocates a 'capturing of the teacher's voice' in a way that will illustrate the importance of the teacher's biography in the enculturation process. A major component of biography in this context is the anticipatory teacher socialisation of the beginning teacher's own school experiences. Thus Lortie (1973:487) 'suggests that the protracted exposure to potent models [during teachers' own schooling] leads teachers-to-be to internalise (largely unconsciously) modes of behaviour which are triggered in later teaching'. This preparation, claims Lortie (1975:67), favours continuity rather than change, and a corresponding strongly

biographical orientation to pedagogical decision making. In similar vein Britzman (1986) refers to the role of compulsory mass education as an exemplar in making teaching one of the most socially familiar professions, arguing that prospective teachers bring to teacher education their implicit institutional biographies - the cumulative experience of school lives - which, in turn, 'inform their knowledge of the student's world, of school structure, and of curriculum' (Britzman, 1986:443).

Another source of teacher socialisation is the preservice teacher education course undertaken although, according to writers such as Zeichner and Tabachnick (1981), its impact is uncertain. As Martinez

(1992:60) points out, the extent to which teacher education experiences socialise students into the teaching profession probably depends upon the particular orientation of their teacher education course - whether it is intended to be and is experienced as predominantly adaptive or predominantly socially critical in relation to school practice.

The extent to which student teachers' practicum experiences contribute to socialisation into the culture of teaching is also problematic. Despite its perceived importance for many student teachers, it should not be forgotten that practice teaching experiences can be very diverse, and the degree of support and types of demands placed upon the student teacher are extremely varied. Thus Kagan (1992:150) argues that practica 'appear to be structured idiosyncratically according to the kind of relationship that develops between a novice and a seasoned teacher who acts as host'.

Many schools have an induction program to help ease new teachers into the profession. Formal induction programs may contribute to teacher socialisation but their influence is limited and variable (Smith, Cook, Cuddihy, Muller, Nimmo & Thomas, 1991). While the informal influence of colleagues is likely to be significant in beginning teacher socialisation, the professional isolation of teachers is relevant in this regard. Several writers, including Denscombe (1982), Little (1990), Lortie (1975), Nias (1989), and Zeichner and Tabachnick (1986), attest to the individualistic nature of teaching.

Because of the 'cellular organisation' of schools (Lortie, 1975:72), teachers are isolated and insulated for the majority of their working day from one another's work. The physical separation of teachers into self-contained classrooms can also mean professional, psychological and social isolation which lessens the degree to which teachers are able to develop shared professional knowledge and values.

Enculturation as a Developmental Process: 'stage' theories

While theoretical frameworks emphasising teacher socialisation vary in the emphasis which they place on particular socialising contexts, ranging from experience prior to preservice education to beginning teaching, they all tend to view beginning teachers (or student teachers) as relatively passive agents in the socialisation process. A contrasting theoretical perspective is that underpinning models of stage development. While no fully developed theory of teacher development exists (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986), in essence, stage theory views the teacher enculturation process as an invariant sequence of orientations towards teaching as practitioners gain experience. Thus teachers 'develop' by passing through a series of predictable 'stages'. The manner in which this occurs is dependent on a number of factors and consequently the time taken to move through one stage and into another varies among individuals.

Among the better known stage theories of teacher development are those of Berliner, 1988); Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Marshall, Fittinghof & Cheney, 1990; and Ryan, 1986. The number, duration and labelling of stages differ from theorist to theorist. Thus Ryan (1986), for example, building on the theory of Fuller and Bown, distinguishes four stages: a fantasy stage (preceding school teaching), a survival stage, a mastery stage, and an impact stage. Berliner distinguishes five stages viz. novice, advanced beginner, competent teacher, proficient teacher, and expert teacher. Despite such variations there is a large degree of consistency in the way stage theorists account for the process of beginning teacher professional

development. Having reviewed 40 'learning-to-teach' studies, Kagan (1992) refutes criticism that this literature is too idiosyncratic to provide generalisations about the process of teacher development. She claims that the studies yield 'remarkably consistent themes that partially confirmed and elaborated both Fuller's and Berliner's models' (Kagan, 1992:130).

Nevertheless, while the notion of being able to explain teacher development in terms of a series of identifiable stages has some appeal, doubt must exist as to the precise nature of the actual stages themselves. Developmental stages are not observable entities with water-tight boundaries. In practice, the difficulty of determining an individual's precise stage of development should help dissuade us from casting teachers in rigid, overly simplified categories (Levine, 1989:85).

The notion of progress through and across the stages is also problematic. Huberman's professional life cycle literature review (1989) claims that, while there are some reasonably strong trends that recur across stage theory studies, the empirical literature identifying stages and phases in teaching is uneven and inconclusive.

Career development is ... a process, not a series of events. For some, this process may be linear, but for others there will be plateaus, regressions, dead-ends, spurts, discontinuities. So the identification of phases and sequences must be handled gingerly... (Huberman, 1989:32)

Bullough (1989) notes similarly that 'human development defies easy categorisation. It is seldom smooth, never conflict free, and frequently characterised by backsliding' (Bullough, 1989:17). The broad picture of teacher career development and human development, described by Huberman and Bullough respectively, is just as applicable to beginning teacher development. Novices obviously do not all have identical enculturation experiences. Nor do they all proceed through developmental stages with robot-like precision. 'Stage theories' provide one explanation for how neophytes develop but uncertainty exists as to how well the neatly packaged 'stage models' reflect actual teaching experiences; the career paths of individuals are neither invariant nor universal.

In summary, both socialisation and stage theory perspectives have limitations. While socialisation perspectives overemphasise the uniformity of a culture of teaching and the passivity of the novice teacher in the enculturation process, models of stage development do not address the matter of how teachers progress from one stage to another, nor why they develop a variety of forms of culture.

THE STUDY

Method

As previously indicated, the teacher featured in the present paper has been selected from a group of four secondary school teachers who were included in an ethnographic longitudinal study undertaken by the first named author. The teachers commenced their teaching in secondary schools in South East Queensland in 1993. During this year, data on the teachers were gathered using participant observation, verbalised

thinking and in-depth interviews. These were analysed by isolating both common and different enculturation experiences of the participants and attempting to account for them in terms of developmental 'stage' theories and the personal and situational factors which influenced the participants' development.

The path to self-efficacy: the case of Roberta

Preparing for teaching

After several weeks of teaching, Roberta expressed her teaching schema largely in terms of fostering student development, especially social development. Her image of self as teacher similarly had strong nurturing overtones. As a child, Roberta had enjoyed showing and teaching things to younger siblings, cousins and neighbours. A love of teaching seemed to be a natural part of her psyche, though not one featuring prominently in her consciousness. Even as a child, she had a nurturing, even mothering disposition, which found natural expression in teaching-related activities.

Roberta's Bachelor of Arts studies followed by studies in a Graduate Diploma in Education course were a useful preparation in terms of school curriculum content, but inadequate in helping her develop a sophisticated teaching schema that could guide her practice during her hectic, often difficult introduction to teaching. The gulf between the propositional knowledge she gained during her preservice course and procedural knowledge that would be effective away from the 'safe' environment of her university classrooms proved problematic on a number of occasions. Thus the limited impact of Roberta's preservice teacher education course seems to bear out Wubbels' contention that 'one reason for poor transfer from teacher education programs (to the school) is that they fail to influence the conceptions that they (students) bring to the teacher education program' (Wubbels, 1992).

Roberta's practicum experiences were similarly limited in value: 'Even prac. teaching just can't prepare you for what happens during your first year'. She realized quite early in the year that her preservice field-experiences in a private boys' school would have limited application in her beginning teaching situation, particularly since she 'inherited' the classroom climate which had been established by the supervising teachers.

Thus for much the same reasons as the beginning teachers described in a study by Johnston (1992), Roberta's practice teaching experiences did not seriously challenge her teaching schema. Her preservice education had done little to dispel the 'unrealistic optimism' described by Weinstein (1988:53), which characterises most preservice teachers, and which is largely the product of a well-established 'teacher role identity' based on memories of previous teachers, former teaching experiences and childhood events. In Roberta's case, the realities of her first year of teaching saw her preferred image of nurturer competing with the more pragmatic images of process worker or technician (one who passes information on to students), or disciplinarian (even 'slave driver').

The broad context of Roberta's induction into teaching

There is a general acceptance among educators that secondary school teaching in Australia, as in many Western countries, is a stressful occupation. Among the chief reasons for this are the pace and scope of the economic and social changes which have impacted significantly on

Australian education in recent years.

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw economic recession adversely affect almost every aspect of Australian life. Reduced spending at both state and federal levels resulted in tighter education budgets, and contractions in staffing at classroom level and in support services. The economic downturn also saw increases in school retention rates, as students with poor employment prospects opted to continue their education beyond the minimum leaving age. This situation, along with the government's drive for a more efficient workforce, led to major curriculum changes in terms of content and subject choice and to an intensification of teachers' work. Teachers were asked to 'do more and differently, with less'.

Issues of accountability have already made an impact on the working conditions of teachers. Secondary teachers in particular have found that increasingly, they have to be all things to all people. Teachers are called upon to play a complex variety of roles for a society which seems to leave them vulnerable when trying to exercise authority commensurate with those roles. Quoting the State Education Minister, Brisbane's daily newspaper summed this up by reporting:

..stress among teachers was increasing because 'society expects far more accountability, and students are not as disciplined as they were 20 years ago'.

(Southorn, Courier Mail, May 4, 1994)

It was in this climate of frequent change, with pressures such as heavy workloads, high levels of accountability and discipline challenges, that Roberta accepted her appointment.

Roberta As Beginning Teacher: the work context

Roberta began teaching in a school in Brisbane's Metropolitan East Region. Her school served a diverse population, including one area with shanty style dwellings and caravan parks. Many of Roberta's students were in what she described as 'a constant state of flux, with no supportive family environment...'.

Like most of the teachers who shared her staff-room, Roberta taught English, and speech and drama. Trained as an English/history teacher,

she was initially appointed as an English/speech and drama teacher. Anxious to obtain a teaching position at a time of high teacher unemployment, Roberta had advised the Education Department that she had expertise in teaching speech and drama. Undoubtedly she did, but when her school's administration learned she was not formally trained in the area, they relieved her of her senior school classes in this area. The consequent reshuffle saw Roberta making initial contact with some of her classes two weeks after the start of the school year.

One of these was a Year 9 English class, a difficult class by most standards, and referred to in more detail later. Roberta was very sanguine about being allocated such a class in her first year of teaching, but the oppositional behaviour of many of the students did cause her great anxiety for much of the year. Many writers note that inexperienced teachers are likely to fare poorly with class allocations. Berliner (1987:60), for example, claims that beginning teachers 'are often given equal or more difficult assignments than 10-year veterans, and they are expected to perform as if they are very experienced'.

Roberta was given a 'full' timetable. In a 40 period week, she had 32 student contact periods. She would also lose, on average, two or three spare periods a week to supervise absent teachers' classes. Throughout the year, Roberta also had a heavy extra-curricular and co-curricular involvement, much of it related to her speech and drama teaching.

Roberta's Development as a Teacher

Two methods were used in the study to investigate Roberta's development as a beginning teacher viz.

a) Data gained from the three methods used throughout the study, viz. participant observation, verbalised thinking and, in particular, in-depth interviewing were analysed, partly in the light of 'stage' theory.

b) A Problems Conceptualisation approach adapted from the work of Scardamalia and Bereiter (1989) and Bullough, Knowles and Crow (1992) was also used. Given the consistency with which stage theorists (eg. Fuller and Bown (1975), Ryan (1986)) describe the early phase of teaching in 'survival' terms, special attention was given in the present study to deciding if Roberta's behaviours exhibited 'survival' tendencies. In terms of this approach, a teacher in 'survival' mode is one who:

- 1) has a poorly developed teaching schema corresponding to a limited conception of teaching
- 2) frames problems in a way that attributes their causes to influences

- beyond the control of self
- 3) has a problem-set which avoids core problems or which pursues a problem-minimising approach
 - 4) does not progressively tackle more complex problems

Beginning Teaching: the first year out

a) If Roberta's development as a teacher can be described at all in terms of 'stages', her first phase would most properly be referred to not as survival, but rather as a 'fantasy' stage (Ryan, 1986). More than a 'stage', however, it would be better defined as a long-developing, simple schema of teaching. It was born out of childhood experiences of playing school and teaching things to other children, sustained through high school, where Roberta developed something of a collegial relationship with some of her teachers, and reinforced by experiences during her teacher education course and the practicum.

This sustained period of fantasy was shattered approximately two weeks after Roberta accepted her first teaching position. At this time, it became apparent that Roberta's biographical experiences in general, and her university studies in particular, had contributed to a teaching schema and an image of self as teacher which was unsuited to some of the experiences she encountered as a beginning teacher. The limitations of her schema and its unsuitability for a significant portion of her daily work gave rise to feelings of inability and insecurity. Consequently, Roberta found herself adopting 'survival' strategies. In doing this, she was acting in keeping with the contention that because of the difficulties of relating theory to practice

the beginning teachers remain locked into apprenticeships of

observation and by-pass their pedagogical knowledge for less valid and less effective alternatives which they perceive will ensure survival. (Kane, 1994:1)

Roberta herself frequently spoke of her beginning teacher experiences in 'survival' terms, even during our first interview shortly after she started teaching. It was a perception of first-year teaching which coloured her professional development throughout the first year of teaching. Referring, for example, to her need to be disciplinarian when she wanted to be nurturer, Roberta said

But unfortunately, it's the only way I could survive. Other than doing that (being a disciplinarian), I found that at the beginning of the year, the class just ran riot, and I had to put my foot right down, so there seems to be no way I can let up on that without having the same

thing happen to me again. I know that they don't like it, and I don't, but it's survival.

Roberta found herself in survival mode also because of the sheer weight of work she was doing. While she derived satisfaction from the thought that others had confidence in her, as a novice teacher, she also felt vulnerable.

...I felt it was unfair because I felt in my position I couldn't turn around and say, 'I've got too much on at the moment. I just can't do that'. I just felt as if I couldn't say that to people - that I had to take on everything that was given to me.

When Roberta finally 'drew the line' at taking over responsibility for the school magazine, she also had misgivings. In December, 1993, she reflected on this stressful period:

...at that time, I was actually out four afternoons per week with various meetings, and the principal then asked me to take on the school magazine as well. I was involved in about three or four extra-curricular activities at the time, and I just had to say to him 'Look, I don't know if you're aware of the things I'm involved in, but even if I wanted to do it, it would be quite impossible', and even though he was really good about it, I felt really bad and I felt that he would have a low opinion of me. So I guess that was the main thing with time-pressures - I couldn't say no this year.

b) The Problem Conceptualisation approach to teacher development used in this study corroborated the view that Roberta was in survival mode for much of her first year of teaching, but also provided convincing evidence that she moved beyond that stage towards the end of that year and through her second year of teaching.

In relation to this approach, Roberta's preoccupation with her unruly Year 9 English class dominated our discussions. Her propensity to set problems within a framework of establishing and maintaining classroom control is noted by Bullough et al. (1992) as a common indicator of a 'survival' approach to teaching. Her struggle to establish order with this class coloured her thinking about her total first year experience and put considerations of different approaches to teaching, and addressing a broader range of problems, at the periphery of her thinking. By practically any standard, Roberta's association with this difficult class was, for much of her first year of teaching, a struggle for survival.

Roberta's response to her predicament throughout the year was to enlist the help of her subject master and staffroom colleagues. She willingly

embraced suggestions made by these people, discarding those which proved unhelpful in gaining and sustaining order in the classroom. This 'trial and error' approach, instituted without a coherent, well developed teaching schema, is, according to Berliner (1988), characteristic of a 'novice' (survival) approach to teaching.

Perceiving her first year of teaching largely in survival terms, Roberta wholeheartedly subscribed to a 'learn by doing', 'experience is the best teacher', 'use what works' mode of development. Britzman (1991) claims that the origins of this belief may lie in the perception among preservice teachers that experience is objectified as a map, and that becoming a teacher is largely a matter of following that map (Britzman, 1991:7). This perception gains support in relation to first-year appraisal schemes such as that used in Queensland's State education system, whereby neophytes can feel under pressure to use their experience to chart a course mapped out by the administrators who will evaluate their performance. Unless understood and challenged, it can contribute to a process of 'acritical occupational perpetuation' and the 'attendant maintenance of bureaucratic power relations' (Martinez, 1992:6).

The perception that teachers develop best through a 'trial and error' approach fails, in some ways, to recognise the complexity of teaching in that it reduces it to a somewhat mechanistic endeavour. In terms of Scardamalia and Bereiter's (1989) model, it is indicative of a poorly developed teaching schema corresponding to a limited conception of teaching.

The perception also runs counter to prevailing theories of education and teaching which encourage teachers to look beyond their own practice to the wider context in which they operate. In this way, from a social reconstructivist view of reflective teaching, '...[teachers'] attention is focussed both inwardly at their own practice (and the collective practices of a group of colleagues) and outwardly at the social conditions in which these practices are situated' (Kemmis, 1985, cited in Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1991:8).

As noted by Eisenhart et al. (1991), beginning teachers usually have little time to be reflective. Roberta's comment, in June, 1993, seems apt in this regard. Speaking of an 'unsuccessful' activity in the classroom, she said:

...my main concern was to, as quickly as possible, get rid of that activity and get into something that has been tried and true, [something] that works.

The impression that Roberta was, for the most part, 'muddling through' (Berliner, 1988:61) as she attempted to fulfil all of her commitments, including meeting a myriad of deadlines, was unmistakable. The sheer amount of work she did in the form of planning, preparing, teaching,

disciplining, reporting, attending meetings, clerical work and extra-curricular activities left her with little time to engage in the type of socially critical reflection recommended in her preservice courses.

Roberta initially framed her management problems in terms of factors beyond her control, attributing her difficulties in establishing her expectation of students from the start of the year to timetabling changes which occurred at that time. In March, after commenting favourably on the self discipline of a Year 8 class she taught from the

start of the year, Roberta observed: 'I haven't had these Year 9s for long, and there was no time to establish a rapport with them'. During our August interview, she framed her problem largely in terms of the students' anti-social behaviour, claiming also that other teachers were voicing concerns about their behaviour.

I think now the problem is that some students in the class have a self image of always being in trouble, and they're kind of proud of it. It is kind of like their badge. Most of the teachers in the school have problems with the particular children I have problems with. Most of the problem is that they never want to be seen as being liked by the teacher, or doing something that the teacher would want them to do in front of the other students, and that's a problem.

The August interview, however, also revealed a small, but significant shift in Roberta's thinking. While attributing her management problems to factors largely beyond her own locus of control, Roberta also acknowledged that her management problem was 'internal' to the extent that her yelling and attempted domination of the students were 'just adding to the confusion'. Roberta also reported on a significant discovery she had recently made, namely that she had gained a better understanding of her students after reading their autobiographies, many of which revealed an unsettled homelife. Roberta noted, for example, that only five out of thirty-two students in this class came from a two-parent family, many of her students' families being dysfunctional, and unsupportive of the school.

This finding seemed to be a turning point for Roberta in the way she viewed this class. While, with justification, she still attributed the cause of her problems largely to sources beyond her control, her better understanding of her students broadened her conception of teaching and enabled her to frame her problems in a way which accorded a greater role to herself in behaviour management. To this extent she was making some progress along the road to self efficacy, particularly in the light of Ross' literature review of teacher efficacy in which he found higher efficacy associated with attribution of student success to factors within their control (Ross, 1994).

The August interview also revealed other changes in Roberta's development as a teacher. Roberta said the quality of the students' assignments and time on task had improved, signs which gave her the feeling that she was improving as a teacher. 'It's very heartening', she said. 'Even though they're a ratty class, I feel very proud that I've been able to overcome some problems with them'. She agreed that she was more 'street-wise' with regard to their behaviour and excuses: 'I feel as if I'm not a soft touch any more'.

Roberta's involvement with the difficult Year 9 English class was a crucial factor in her development throughout the year, retarding it in the sense of narrowing her conception of teaching to that of the enforcement of discipline, but probably advancing it later in the year, and in her second year of teaching, in another way. This positive view of Roberta's difficult experience is that of the 'rite of passage'/baptism of fire' notion of stressful situations in classrooms described by Ball and Goodson (1985:16). With commendable resilience, enthusiasm and determination, Roberta perceived her first year experiences in terms of a difficult but helpful passage towards a greater self efficacy in her second year of teaching.

In our December, 1993 interview, Roberta revealed how her understanding of the nature of teaching had improved during the year. She spoke of her lack of confidence through the year which carried overtones of

Corcoran's 'not knowing' (Corcoran, 1981). This feeling had put her under pressure to follow schedules organised by others closely. A conversation with an admired colleague late in the year gave her a useful lesson in achieving self efficacy, as well as an understanding of what Clandinin (1989) refers to as the 'rhythm' of the school year. Referring to the school's assessment schedule, the experienced teacher pointed out that '...being a week behind schedule is fine as long as it's valuable learning that you're doing in the process'. Roberta vowed to 'loosen up' the following year and not to 'get in a big panic' when schedules became tight.

Beginning Teaching: the second year out

Roberta was transferred to another school in the same Education Department Region in 1994. The school was in a relatively stable, middle class area, which had changed recently through the enrolment of students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. She taught social science, speech and drama, and English on a timetable with minimum spare periods. While she did supervise sport one afternoon per week, she had no extra-curricular involvement. Her classes differed in the degree of commitment and cooperation exhibited by the students, with year 11 English described as 'a dream' and a year 9 speech and drama class as 'a nightmare' (because of the ethnic rivalry that surfaced

periodically).

In January, 1995, we conducted our final interview with Roberta. Reflecting on her approach to teaching, Roberta drew once again on her experiences with the Year 9 English class of 1993.

I've actually thought often about that class because I'm having a lot of success with my discipline in this past year. I can see the results of a totally different policy as far as discipline goes.

The fact that Roberta was reflecting upon her first year experience in light of her subsequent experiences, in itself represents a significant landmark in her path to self-efficacy. In the words of Featherstone (1993:108), 'We learn not from having experience but reflecting on it'.

Stressful though her association with this class had been for much of the year, it did, nevertheless, serve as a watershed in her problem conceptualisation. The more experienced classroom manager was now creating a secure learning environment rather than trying to salvage something from a situation out of control. Referring to her management approach in 1993, Roberta explained

The bad behaviour had to occur before the discipline did, which was the wrong way round....I was waiting for the (inappropriate) behaviour to happen and then trying to do something about it, which was really too late.

In terms of framing problems, Roberta noted that her search for solutions to her management problems had been somewhat limited.

It's funny, because when I reflect on the things that I said during that first year, I seem to put a lot of the blame on the students. But when I reflected on that after the interviews, I seemed to feel more and more that I wasn't dealing with the situation appropriately....I think it's that the interviews have helped me to reflect on my practice as a teacher rather than just getting back to the staffroom with the other members of staff and saying 'those ratbag kids'. I'm looking at myself (now) rather than looking at the kids.

Roberta also set her problems differently. As well as noting that she was not 'having any earth shattering problems', she also said that those problems she did have were mainly related to matters outside the classroom, especially some connected with staffroom politics. Where she did have problems with discipline or subject matter, her solutions were more reasoned and reflective.

I'm also much better at seeing exactly very clearly what I'm doing wrong, rather than just hysterically going at the kids all the time or

getting very upset about it.

Roberta claimed that her image of self as teacher was 'very different (in 1994) to what it was in 1993'. She referred to the pressures she had been under during that year and revealed that she was more her own person and more a self-sufficient curriculum decision-maker in 1994. Correspondingly, she said that

I find that I feel like much more than a technician or process worker: I feel like I'm stimulating learning in my students.... I'd say I feel like less of a nurturer, but I'm happy about that, because I now feel more of an academic mentor to my students.

Roberta's changed schema was a more realistic representation of the reality which she faced and a more productive redefinition of her role. She did not view her new schema as fixed. Further professional growth would, it is hoped, result in a richer self concept and teaching schema which can embrace a range of approaches to teaching. Roberta's changing perception of herself exemplifies Featherstone's comment that beginning teachers see themselves as struggling to change who they are rather than just what they do (Featherstone, 1993:110). Roberta's more mature view of teaching enabled her to anticipate events better than she had during the previous year, and to adjust more readily when faced with the unexpected. She described this in terms of having a 'teacher mind set', explaining it as being 'on top of things before they happen'. Her approach to teaching also involved taking more initiative when faced with problems in the classroom. The tenor of the whole interview suggested that Roberta was not referring only to discipline problems. This constituted a broadening of her problem framing which was of significance in terms of her development as a teacher.

I feel very much more secure with myself as a teacher....I feel like a better teacher all round for taking the initiative myself.

Indications that Roberta had developed a more sophisticated teaching schema during her second year of teaching emerged when she explained in more detail how she became a better teacher. This development is attributable to reflection on past practice, teaching experience, a realisation at times that her practice was based on sound theoretical underpinnings, and drawing inspiration from a teacher she had admired in her first year of teaching. This had taught her that effective teaching lay not so much in processing information for transmission along the learning assembly-line, but more in helping students actively construct meaning for themselves.

Roberta's reaction to an audio excerpt from one of her Year 9 English lessons from 1993 is apposite in this regard:

When I heard that excerpt from my lesson last year where I told the students to put down their pens, close their books, fold their arms and

be quiet, I felt that I was treating them like children, but that I should really be encouraging them to take responsibility for their own

behaviour. I think I was making myself into more or less their behaviour modifier. I think this year I have taken a lot of that on board and I've consciously gone out of my way to make them feel responsible.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Roberta's development as a beginning teacher demonstrates that growth as a teacher is a multi-faceted process which cannot be represented adequately by either socialisation theory or stage theory - or even some sort of amalgam of both. Biographical factors interact with dispositional and situational factors to result in a process of personal and professional growth which is non-linear and in many respects unique. Nevertheless, Roberta's growth as a teacher does reflect a number of generic aspects of beginning teaching which have wider implications both for teacher educators and school based personnel interested in beginning teaching. In the remainder of this paper we propose to consider briefly five of these implications, which in our view merit particular attention:

1) Roberta's assignment to a difficult class appears typical of the fate of many beginning teachers (Berliner, 1987). Yet as Raudenbush et al. (1990) found, assignment of teachers to 'low track' classes makes it difficult for beginning teachers to maintain high levels of self-efficacy. In this regard it is worth noting the results of a study by Coladarci (1992) who found general and personal efficacy to be the two strongest predictors of commitment to teaching. There is also abundant evidence that teachers' beliefs in their ability to affect student learning - their personal self-efficacy - is positively correlated with their subsequent teaching effectiveness (Benz et al., 1991). Clearly school administrators should, wherever possible, avoid assigning 'difficult' classes to beginning teachers.

2) Roberta's inadequate schema of teaching which she brought to her first teaching assignment was not seriously challenged, either by her preservice course or her practice teaching. As Anderson et al. (1995) point out, teacher educators need to take far greater account of the schema of those entering their courses:

The instructor must continuously assess the ways that prospective teachers' entering beliefs and conceptions affect their interpretation of the content of the course. When entering beliefs and conceptions pose barriers to understanding and using the ideas under study, then one instructional goal might be conceptual change.

(Anderson et al. 1995:150)

3) The availability of someone who prompts the beginning teacher to reflect on his/her experiences can assist the teacher to evaluate his/her teaching schema and concept of self-efficacy. Such reflection may occur unprompted, particularly in the second and subsequent years of teaching as was the case with Roberta (though Roberta implied that the interviews which occurred as part of the present study were at least partly responsible for this) but as Featherstone (1993:107) suggests, an experienced teacher can act as a catalyst in this process. Featherstone also illustrates how, as a result of reflection, propositional knowledge acquired during the preservice course which had previously been ignored may suddenly be recalled and assume significance.

4) Roberta's development as a beginning teacher supports Featherstone's

assertion that teacher development is far more than the development of greater competence. Learning to teach represents the highest level of learning in the hierarchy developed by Marton and his colleagues. (Marton et al.:1993). It involves changing as a person. Featherstone, in a case study of a beginning teacher, cites a number of instances where, in learning a particular approach to managing or teaching, the beginning teacher learned something about herself. Featherstone (1993:101) also emphasises that such learning was often affective as well as cognitive:

...These two points - that self-knowledge is one of the major fruits of the beginning teacher's experience, and that the learning involves not simply observation but genuine struggle with portions of yourself - link closely with a third: Learning involves work that is emotional as well as intellectual.

5) Perhaps the main implication of the present study lies in its illustration of the almost insignificant part played - at least at a conscious level - by the preservice education curriculum in the approaches used to solve problems. The limited use of propositional or even procedural knowledge by beginning teachers has of course been demonstrated in other studies of beginning teaching (eg. Featherstone, 1993; Johnston, 1992; Smith et al.:1990). The present study reinforces this finding but, as in the case of Featherston's investigation, suggests that with prompting, knowledge constructed during preservice teacher education courses can assume relevance. We believe that the desirability of establishing collaborative mentoring systems for inexperienced teachers merits greater consideration than it has thus far received.

In recent years there has been increasing recognition of the need to provide prospective teachers with authentic experiences which embed

concepts in a variety of situations more closely related to those which will be encountered by the student in 'the real world'. Anderson et al. (1995) claim that in many educational psychology courses, theory has been presented out of context and has reflected a transmission - reception model of learning. They comment that such courses do not 'promote learning that helps teachers take deliberate action in complex circumstances outside the college course' (Anderson et al. 1995:152). Anderson states that, even where vignettes or case studies are incorporated into courses, they are often used to illustrate a specific concept or limited number of concepts. This procedure does not do justice to the complexity inherent in the teaching - learning situations which teachers are likely to encounter. Case studies such as that which has been described can themselves become useful learning experiences for preservice students of teaching, particularly if they are used as a sounding board for the students' own beliefs concerning teaching and the basis for discussing alternative perspectives on and approaches to teaching. Such case studies and biographies may be particularly useful if they are revisited several times as the student proceeds through the course.

The cries for competency based teacher education - even allowing for a broader definition of competencies than that characterising earlier attempts to establish competency-based courses presents a challenge to those who view teaching as far more than the enactment of a repertoire of competencies. In our view, authentic teacher education should be premised on the tenet that teacher development involves an interplay of personal and professional growth in a complex, only partially predictable environment.

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