

Kill Your Own Snakes

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This paper has not been written in the usual academic tenor, style or format. It was conceived with Rifkin's (1995) notion of the power of 'silence' in mind. In fact I'm not sure its even a paper and I have no intention of writing it! You the reader will have to reconstruct the contents to create the meaning for yourself!

What, I see you musing?

Why, I hear you thinking?

The answer to these two questions is in itself twofold. Firstly, for as long as there has been a vehicle to carry teacher's complaints in both the United states and Australia (I'm not sure about other countries?) there has been a constant cry that, Much of what is learnt in college is neither conceptualised not taught in a way that builds a bridge between theory and practice. (Cortis and Brent 1970:868)

This is an 'old' reference but is representative of how the tertiary students, 'beginning teachers' and 'old hands' that I interviewed felt about their training. This is especially true in regard to key teaching concepts such as 'the development of quality classrooms' and 'classroom management' . This leads me to the second point concerning the nature of this document.

Just as there has been an almost century old plea for help from teachers there has been a huge volume of research done in these areas, but these two facets have never fully gelled. Obviously there has been a breakdown in communication somewhere. If educational researchers and the clientele they serve have not rectified this problem then obviously someone has not been listening. So, rather than talk (or write) at you the reader, I want you to listen and reflect.

Rather than provide a format that you simply read (this has been the problem I think), I'm going to supply a representation of an historical overview of other's research and writings, leading up to a sample of the data that I've collected. Along the way see if it means anything to you. Let's start.

Reflective Task 1

Having talked to sixty highly respected teachers both experienced and fresh from college, I was able to collect only four pieces of advice that they had been given to them by more experienced teachers or teacher trainers in regarding to classroom management.

- Kill your own snakes
- Treat them keen to keep them keen.
- Iron fist, velvet glove
- Never smile till Easter (first term in NSW, Australia used to end at

Easter time)

- What do you think the philosophy is behind these statements?
- What do you think these classrooms would look like in regard to teacher-pupil interaction?
What does this tell you about the teacher training institutions?
- How were you trained?

Reflective Task 2

- What do think Lortie (1966) meant when he wrote that beginning teachers fall into the 'Robinson Crusoe Model' of induction into the profession.
- Do you think things have changed?

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Reflective Task 3

In the same article Lortie wrote;

My impression is that teachers possess very little in the way of a set of shared terms or concepts about the subtleties of teaching as an interpersonal transaction."

- Do you think interpersonal transactions are important?
- What forms do you think they should take?

Reflective Task 4

- Consider the following statement made by a highly experienced teacher discussing her approach to classroom management. She had never received any formal training in this area.

"Phil, I love them till it hurts. Any kid will respond if they know you love them. They simply look into my eyes." (Joy 1994)

- What do you think her philosophy is?
- How would it manifest itself in the classroom?

Reflective Task 5

- What do think is the difference in approach between the comments made in Reflective Task 1 and the comments made by Joy

References

Cortis, G. A. and Brent, E. (1970) From College to Classroom, New Society. (424)

Lortie, D. C. (1966) National Education Association: National Commission on Teacher Induction and Professional Standards, The Real World of the Beginning Teacher. Washington D.C.:N.E.H.

Rifkin, W. (1995) 'Silence' Workshop, cited Anderson, L., ACER Conference Workshops, Australian Journal of Experiential Learning, (34)