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DURING AN INTERNSHIP***

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## **IDENTIFYING THE DEVELOPMENTAL PHASES ENCOUNTERED BY BEGINNING TEACHERS DURING AN INTERNSHIP.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Throughout the 1990's there have been reports world-wide that have requested teacher education programs to closely consider their courses for beginning teachers in better preparing them for the world of teaching and in providing the teaching profession with competent practitioners.

Internships were seen as a possible means of achieving this and providing teaching with the practitioners to fulfil the pre-requisites of a beginning teacher. The question remained though, how do we know that the graduates of a teacher education program are "ready to teach" and to play their part as a team member in the education of children?

This paper investigates the developmental phases encountered by beginning teachers through their involvement in an internship program. This internship is a component of an initial teacher education course at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. The paper describes the nature of the research and reports the results of a five-year study of the internship program.

This research identifies five developmental phases through which interns progress over their 10 -week internship experience. Each phase is identified and explained utilising the range of data available. These data were collected utilising qualitative methodologies including focus groups, intern reflective journals, semi-structured interviews with participants and field notes of intern classroom practices and behaviours collected during the internship.

A process of triangulation was utilised to confirm, describe and interrogate the patterns and relationships identified in the data and to understand the phases of intern development. This paper will contribute to the literature about beginning teaching and the role that an internship approach can play in providing the teaching profession with competent beginning teachers.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

A five year study of participants in an Internship program has provided the opportunity to identify various phases of development that beginning teachers encounter, travel through and ultimately emerge from as confident professionals ready for the challenges ahead. Various literature has investigated the experiences of student teachers and beginning teachers (Calderhead, 1987; Fuller & Bown, 1975; Sitter & Lanier, 1982 and Furlong & Maynard, 1995) and they have identified various stages/phases through which beginners travel from relative beginners/neophytes (novices) to independent/experienced practising teachers (practising professionals).

Furlong & Maynard (1995) stress that these stages do not occur in a simple continuum. Rather the path of progress is a complex intermingling and overlapping of stages and, rather than being continuously forward in a positive direction, is interspersed with periods where there is plateauing or sometimes even regression because of difficulties encountered with

their school/class environment or self doubt. This study supports this view and it reinforces the belief that these factors make each student's experience and progress quite unique and dependent upon contextual issues and the personal qualities of each novice. This paper builds on and extends the literature that surrounds the developmental phases encountered by a series of cohorts of interns over a 5 year time frame.

## **NATURE OF THE RESEARCH:**

The Internship program which was the focus of this study consisted of an in-school experience where the novice teacher (called the Associate Teacher, A.T.) was placed with an experienced teacher (called the Colleague Teacher, C.T.) for one school term (10 weeks). The A.T. and C.T. worked together in the planning and implementation of an educational program for their class. The Associate Teacher had full responsibility for teaching the class for 3 days each week and the Colleague Teacher took the remaining 2 days each week. The C.T. acted as mentor for the A.T. and assisted in their induction into the teaching profession through continuous support and advice.

This study was established to investigate the pathways travelled by Associate Teachers involved in an Internship where they received a mentored experience in a supportive and encouraging environment. The principal research question was to "identify the various phases that Associate Teachers experienced in an Internship when moving from a student teacher role to one of a class teacher with a shared responsibility for that class".

The Interns were already 3 year trained and qualified teachers. They could have been in schools already "teaching". However, they chose to continue with university to gain their 4<sup>th</sup> year qualification of a Bachelor of Education. The Internship program is one pathway from which students could choose to complete their fourth year of pre-service education. This paper reports findings over a 5 year timeframe from 52 Associate Teachers working with 35 Colleague Teachers across 30 schools in the western region of Sydney, Australia.

Data were collected for this research on the internship experience before, during and after the actual 10 week internship experience. Over the 5 years of internship programs various qualitative data collection methods were utilised. Among these were focus groups, associate teacher reflective journals, individual semi-structured interviews with Associate and Colleague teachers, participant observation field notes of teacher behaviours and classroom practices of Associates and their pupil's reactions and responses to these practices. Final reports written for each Associate Teacher by their Internship school were included as additional data. Each of these methodologies have wide acceptance in the qualitative research literature as providing data that "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 2).

These data collection methods provided a large amount of rich data that were analysed utilising a constant comparative methodology (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz and Le Compte, 1984; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The variety of methods utilised to collect data, the settings utilised and the number of years over which the study was conducted facilitated a process of triangulation to ensure trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln 1985). The triangulation process allowed for cross validation and comparison of information to occur and for the researcher to assess the sufficiency of the data according to the convergence of multiple data sources or multiple data collection procedures (Wiersma, 1986). This process was used to confirm, describe and interrogate the patterns and relationships identified in the data and

to understand the phases of intern development during the 10 week in-school internship program.

## **RESULTS:**

Data analysis indicates five phases that Associate Teachers encounter in their Internship experience. These phases have been categorised in this study as: Establishment-Apprehension; Early Development-Cautious Progress; Accelerating Confidence-Consolidation; Fulfilment – Completion; and Moving On - Looking Ahead.

As the literature indicates (Sitter & Lanier, 1982; Furlong & Maynard, 1995; Calderhead, 1987) these phases are not necessarily linear or sequential. There are periods of fast growth and development, periods of stagnation and sometimes periods of regression for the beginner in their learning about teaching. It appears that this progression is individually determined by the context in which each novice finds themselves and their personal characteristics and make-up. However, in analysing the data over the five year time frame there have been significant trends that when considered from a variety of contexts and over fifty Associate Teachers that indicate that there are identifiable phases that each Associate encounters.

The phases identified from this research are overlapping and interdependent. While Associate Teachers travel through these phases in their own time and in their own way, the research found that they all have travelled a reasonably similar pathway.

## **ESTABLISHMENT – APPREHENSION PHASE**

### ***"GETTING TO KNOW YOU"***

This phase is where the Associate begins their relationships with the participants in the Internship. They meet their Colleague Teacher and begin the development of what is to be a most significant relationship that is central to the professional success of their internship.

This Establishment - Apprehension Phase begins when the Associate begins visits to their school placement for at least one day each week. The Associate Teacher is a participant in a Professional Development program with two full days spent with their Colleague Teacher in furthering their relationship through activities that encourage:

- getting to know each other
- discussing teaching philosophies and approaches
- beginning initial preparation of a teaching program for Term 3
- developing a professional, collegial relationship where working together, sharing ideas and valuing each others points of view are central.

Each Associate has to get to know and learn about their school; class; other staff (other than their C.T.); the physical layout of the school; organisational features of their school including timetable, specialist teacher requirements; and the political scene within the school. As several interns mentioned "to know where the power lies".

Most Associates have reported that several features or activities located in this Establishment Phase were extremely important to their success at the beginning of their involvement with the school/class. These were:

- meeting and getting to know the class and avoiding pre-judging individuals in it ;
- establishing an initial rapport with the class through such things as getting to know names and to address the children as individuals; being open and friendly and displaying consistency of behaviour in dealings with the class as a whole and each pupil within it ;
- setting standards and expectations with the class, communicating these clearly to them and being consistent in their application ;
- maintaining expectations of student behaviour. Several AT's reported they needed to "hang in there" when it came to enforcing requirements for student behaviour ;
- familiarising themselves with essential aspects of class organisation such as class routines, school/class policies that impinge on what can be done and how it needs to be done.

The central feature of the Establishment-Apprehension Phase was identified as the establishment and growth of the relationship between the Associate Teacher and the Colleague Teacher. This relationship is essential to the quality of the experience for the Associate and directly effects the degree of growth that the Associate exhibits throughout the Internship with regard to their teaching and other aspects of professional development as a teacher.

However, most of the Associate Teachers also reported in this phase that they held feelings of apprehension about entering the Internship and their potential for success in it. This apprehension centred upon the perceived enormity of the task in taking on a class as a full-time teacher. Even though there had been a significant emphasis placed on the fact that each intern would be supported by their Colleague Teacher and others in the school, the Associate Teachers were still concerned.

Over five years, all but two Associates (from a total of 52) have had extremely positive experiences in their internship. Even though there is a range of quality within these positive experiences the Associates report that the essential ingredient for the success of their internship was the relationship and working partnership developed between themselves and their Colleague teacher. The two Associates who reported relative negative learning experiences from their internship identified the poor quality of the relationship between themselves and their Colleague teacher as the main determinant for the negative experience and consequent relative lack of growth in their teaching.

## **EARLY DEVELOPMENT – CAUTIOUS PROGRESS PHASE**

### ***"SETTLING IN and FEELING ACCEPTED "***

The Early Development – Cautious Progress Phase begins for the Associate with the initial contacts with the class and its students. These include both formal contacts, i.e., in classroom situations and informal contacts such as playground duty, school sport and school assemblies.

The Associates reported many early positive experiences within their internship that had the result of raising their morale and providing them with positive reinforcement for their initial efforts. Such experiences were: being welcomed and accepted by the students, not only in the allotted class but in other classes; being made welcome by other staff including the ancillary staff of the administration office.

Examples of representative comments from A.T's regarding their acceptance by children, staff and relevant others are:

"The kids have been very open to me taking over the class this term. Sarah (the C.T.) has set the scene for me to become their teacher ".

"The staff of the school are being really friendly and supportive. I really feel as though I fit in".

"Above all I have been accepted by my C.T. and the staff generally".

"Bill (the school assistant) said yesterday 'I keep thinking of you as permanent staff ' and that made me smile and feel good".

These experiences provided the Associates with a sense of belonging within the school structure and put them at ease with their sense of self as a teacher. Most Associates mentioned that the parents with whom they had contact had also made them feel a part of the school community and were accepting of them as being the teacher of their children. " I got a real compliment from Robert's mum when she said 'it's really good to have you on my son's class. He really likes you and is showing great interest in the class project.....You're up to scratch'. I'm just floating on air after that!"

All schools involved in the Internship were proactive in communicating with the total school community (especially parents) about the nature of the Internship and the roles the Associate Teacher would be undertaking at the school. This has proven to be an excellent strategy and has ensured the open acceptance by parents and others of the Associate Teachers.

Data analysis identified that in the initial period, the Associates reported in reflective journals and focus groups, that there were several important features of this phase that assisted their development. In the initial settling in time, the Associates reported:

- developing relationships with the class

"I love the class, not a behaviour problem child in sight"

"My class is an interesting mix of kids with some that will test me if given a chance. Overall, I'm glad they are the way they are. It is a good class but one with a wide range of abilities in it...that will keep me on my toes".

“Alright, so I am worried about them (the class). It’s only natural, isn’t it?”

- managing students within the class, especially those who present problems for the A.T., either in a behavioural or a learning difficulties sense

"A few of the kids decided they'd try it on. With some rewarding comments I was able to get those kids back to the lesson".

- developing and fine tuning aspects of classroom organisation so that sessions of teaching with the class are organised and implemented in a smooth manner with minimal disruptions. This continued striving for better, smoother running teaching sessions is a skill that carries over to the middle period of the internship in many Associates' experience
- focus group evidence each year has identified that the Associates feel as though they have been placed in a situation where they have to "pass the test" or "get over the bar" in this initial period of time in order to gain the confidence of the class, the school's teachers, their colleague teacher, parents and significant others such as the principal and office administration staff.

Having received this vote of confidence by the school's community the intern feels much more at ease and relaxed. They have been granted a "rite of passage" and are now ready to take on more challenges in their teaching development.

This feeling of acceptance by their peers and the students of the school is a strong theme running throughout the Internship. It is continually mentioned by the Associates in their journals as how this acceptance stimulates them to move on to the next level with their teaching; reinforces their belief that "teaching is for them" and positively assists their development of a sense of self as a teacher. The Associate Teachers report that this "acceptance" can come in a variety of ways: from their C.T. saying how pleased they are with their initial progress; to being given opportunity to "try some of their own ideas"; to conversations with other teachers where it is mentioned that their colleague teacher is pleased with their initial efforts, and conversations with students in class and parents of the children where positive comments are made regarding their teaching. All these sources of information provide evidence to the Associate that they are being accepted by the school community.

Associate's reflective journals identify what an exceptionally busy time this period is for them. They continuously make comment about the nature of their work, how much needs to be done and yet so little time is provided. Comments related to:

- the intensity of a teaching day

"Wow! What an interesting two days of teaching to begin an internship. In general I've felt horribly rushed. I have so much to get through in such a short time. I guess that's what a full-time teacher feels a full-year is also".

"There is so much to do and so little time".

- the continuous nature of the teaching day, with no time often for lunch, coffee breaks or even to visit the toilet

"I've decided there's just not enough hours in a school day. I'm finding I'm just running out of time – for everything. At this rate I'm going to need to come in term four to finish everything".

"I haven't been up to the staff-room for several days in the break-times. I feel the need to get organised for teaching in the next session. But I also need to talk to my peers and other adults and just not talk to seven year-olds all day".

- the number and nature of interruptions that continually interfere with the flow of the teaching day

"I'm so frustrated! All my plans are not being achieved because I can't get enough time with my class because of the interruptions to our day – every day!"

- all the "other" things that a teacher must do in order to have the school operate efficiently, i.e., collecting money, playground duty, sporting teams, bus duty, parental enquiries, collecting/distributing notes etc

This indicates that there definitely is a culture shock experienced by the Associates as they attempt to assimilate into their roles as teachers and come to the realisation that "teaching" is far more than just classroom instruction. Although the Associates admit that there was forewarning about the nature and roles involved in "full-time" teaching there was almost unanimous agreement that their introduction to teaching in the internship was an experience that they were not prepared for and that came as a "shock to the system". It is reported in the data that most Associates see this shock as something that just needs to be experienced and that it is part of the process of being introduced to the profession of teaching.

## **ACCELERATING CONFIDENCE – CONSOLIDATION**

### ***"TRYING NEW THINGS and HAVING A GO "***

It is during this phase that the Associate steadily grows and develops as a teacher.

Buoyed by their initial positive experiences and well supported and encouraged by their colleague teacher, the intern now begins to sense that this is "their class" and feels as though they can experiment with some things that are different for them and the class. These included:

- changing seating arrangements ;
- introducing group work and cooperative learning strategies ;
- utilising more resources in their teaching ;
- introducing student choice in activities ;
- developing positive reinforcement schemes ;
- using an integrated unit approach to planning and delivery of lessons ,

and were indicative of the fact that the class was now "their class" and that they were "in control" of the situation.

Generally, classes responded well to the "new or different" things that the Associate was attempting. Being accepted by their class as an effective teacher was extremely important for the Associate Teacher. The data collected from sources such as participant observations and the Associate's journals, indicated that classes respected and appreciated the

Associates' efforts in offering different and interesting approaches to teaching and learning and this was recognised not only by the Associate but by many of the school staff and in some instances by the parents of the children.

This period of experimentation did not always have positive outcomes. Some of the younger classes were quite happy with their established routines and with "the ways of doing things" and reacted negatively to being moved out of their comfort zone. The Associates who encountered this situation quickly realised that they needed to "hasten slowly" with regard to introducing change to these classrooms. This, however, did not mean any lowering of educational standards or expectations for their class. It was another lesson well learnt for them as teachers.

It is during this period that many Associates realised that they needed to be the "teacher" in the classroom. By this they meant that this was now "real" not just practicum. They could feel themselves becoming "real" teachers. The children were relating to them as "their teacher". This was quite a revelation for some Associates because along with the title "teacher" came the responsibility for them to guide the "learning" in the classroom and to be answerable to child, parent, immediate supervisor, and peers for the learning by the children in their class.

As one Associate reported:

"it never really made an impression on me just what an important role I play in children's lives. From me the children learn not only content but all the social, ethical, behavioural things that make up a person. It is a daunting feeling when you realise this".

Another Associate said:

"Now I realise just what a great profession I am in. To be able to work with children and see them grow and change ... it is so rewarding ... and worrying."

And still another wrote:

"So now you think you are a teacher? Meagan (her Colleague Teacher) asked me yesterday "did I have a good day?" I answered that I had a wonderful day. Then she said "and what did the children learn?" - that really made me think. Yes, we had had a good day, the children enjoyed the lessons and seemed very satisfied and happy because they cooperated with me really well. But what had they learnt? And how could I tell who had learnt and who hadn't? It was a BIG question for me because I don't think "having fun" necessarily means that the children learnt anything."

Another realisation that was widely reported by many Associates was that, as the term moved on and the weeks slipped by, there was a shifting emphasis in their teaching from one of teacher centred class organisation to that of child centred organisation. As the Associates had settled in, proved themselves and survived the initial weeks, they then began to experiment a little. Having mainly positive reactions from the students in their classes they came to the realisation that their lessons were becoming proactive rather than reactive and that the teaching was being based on student needs rather than doing what the teacher felt comfortable in doing. This was an important part of their development as teachers. Having the feeling of safety in the classroom encouraged the Associates to begin

to think of the individuals within the class and what their needs were, now realising that their pedagogical skills could cope with catering for these differences.

During this phase there was also considerable growth in the Associates' relationships. These relationships were especially developing with the class as a whole, its students and with their Colleague Teachers.

The developing relationship with the class was extremely rewarding for the large majority of the Associates. They felt accepted as the teacher through the children's attitudes and behaviours towards them. The majority of classes were interested in what was being offered. The children were making positive comments to the Associates that were recognised by the Associate and used as a motivator to further their efforts in planning and offering interesting activities for their class.

The Associates were also developing meaningful relationships with individuals within the class. Associates and Colleagues regularly reported that the relationships between interns and their classes were becoming trusting and dynamic. As each Associate learnt more about each child as a learner they could target their teaching to better suit the needs of these children. The Associates were learning to individualise their teaching strategies. This had the effect that those children, having had their needs more effectively satisfied, became active learners within the classroom setting and became trusting of their Associate. This did not always occur but it did occur sufficiently often across a range of classrooms that it was a noticeable trend. For those students in classes where the improvement was not as obvious at least these students were not the distracting and disruptive influences that they had been in the earlier Phases of Establishment - Apprehension and Early Development - Cautious Progress.

The Associates' relationship with their Colleague Teachers was consolidating during this phase. After the Establishment and Early Development Phases where the relationship had a tentative beginning and had progressed carefully and sensitively, the relationship was now much more relaxed. Communication channels had been established and were being utilised by both partners in order to ensure that issues were dealt with, problems overcome and successes communicated. In the vast majority of cases the pair (Colleague and Associate) were now a fully functioning, professionally operating partnership. In fact in many conversations with the Colleague teachers it was very evident that the partnership was viewed, at least by the Colleague teacher, as an equal partnership. The Colleague Teachers had been convinced of the talents, abilities and commitment of the Associates and were openly happy to have them working with their classes. The Associates had also identified this acceptance from their Colleague Teacher and this assisted them greatly in developing their sense of self worth as a teacher and in motivating them to aspire to greater heights in their teaching. As one Associate reported "I feel very privileged to have Mollie as my mentor. She makes me feel supported and worthwhile as a teacher. I think of all the things I've learnt by having her as my Colleague Teacher. Our relationship is growing all the time and I'm feeling very confident in my ability as a teacher as Mollie keeps pointing to all the things I'm doing now that I definitely was not doing at the beginning of this experience" and later in the same diary entry the Associate continued "...we are always talking just like two teachers, not as a teacher and a student teacher. Mollie asks my opinion on all sorts of issues to do with the children and the organisation of the class".

It is also in this phase where there were regular comments being made by parents about their child's progress and how much their child was "enjoying" being in the Associate's class. Sometimes these comments were made directly to the Associate by the parent but more often to the Colleague Teacher or other staff at the school. In many instances this

commentary was passed on to the Associate and had a positive effect on their morale and spirit.

The consolidation of the Associate's self concept as a teacher also came from experiences and sources that were sometimes not planned or predicted. This journal entry is an example of an unpredictable exchange that had a significant impact on the Associate. "I felt really good today when Sue (a first year practicum student from the same university) asked me about maths and did I use co-operative groups, the syllabus or maths plus (the text book)? It was really good to be able to explain all the knowledge I've come across – especially as co-operative learning is my action research project with my class during the Internship. I never thought I'd ever be a good enough teacher to teach another teacher. What a buzz!! It really made me realise that I've learnt a lot and I can now pass this on to others who are learning about teaching".

It must also be recognised that during this phase it became apparent to a few Associates that their Colleague teacher "just couldn't let go" of the class. This was evident in the Colleague Teacher always "being around" and "interfering" with the Associate's classroom teaching. This had two negative effects. Firstly, the Associate was made to feel they were not capable of taking the class without some form of direct supervision and this adversely pressured the Associate. Secondly, the class did not recognise the Associate as the teacher of the class because they were constantly reminded that the Colleague Teacher had not really left the scene. These two effects meant that the Associate was constantly under pressure to assert themselves as the teacher and in one case in particular led to conflict between Colleague and Associate. Fortunately this was isolated within the wider context of the Internship, and where it was identified as a potential problem some thoughtful counselling usually managed to quickly rectify this situation and put the relationship back on an even keel.

Researchers have identified that classroom management has been a key concern for student teachers, novices and beginning teachers (Elias, Fisher & Simon 1980; Veenman, 1984; Wilson & Cameron 1996). The Associate Teachers in this study were no different. It was during this Accelerating Confidence - Consolidation Phase where after the settling-in period was successfully negotiated, that the Associates became challenged by the day-to-day operation of the classroom and the behaviour management and organisational strategies that were required for the effective delivery of a teaching program. They had concerns early on about their ability to "control" the students' behaviour. Gradually, with positive experiences supporting them, the Associates grew in confidence in their own teaching abilities and this had a significant influence on them presenting a confident image to the class and in acting as a professional teacher. It was the continuity of contact with the class over a relatively long period of time that the Associate teachers reported as making the difference (as compared to 4 weeks of practicum in the first three years of their course). The Associates also reported that having reasonable autonomy in the classroom as the teacher also played a role in their developing management skills and in providing them with a platform to develop their management strategies.

Analysis of the data has identified that the contributing influences of:

- greater self confidence in themselves as teacher
- a supportive, collegial environment
- continuous contact with the class
- a realisation by the Associate that they were the teacher
- an acceptance by the class of the Associate as their teacher

- a realisation that classroom management revolves around well structured teaching sessions that satisfy children's needs contributed to the development of the classroom management skills of the Associate.

Associate Teachers report that growth in this area of classroom management was extremely rewarding for them and that it contributed greatly to their overall development as teachers. It was also noted in their focus group discussions how the Associates were now identifying the inter-relatedness of the skills in teaching. In this phase teaching was not just seen as a set of skills each with their own subsets but that the act of teaching was dependent upon a continuous reassessment and new configurations of the various skills involved in the act of teaching. This was a new way of thinking about teaching for them and displayed the fact that they were now operating at a higher level of understanding about their role as a teacher and the practices required of a successful teacher. A typical comment from focus groups discussions that reinforces this developing conception of teaching was when one Associate said "You know , as this term has progressed and I've become the class' teacher and they have responded to my ways of teaching and dealing with them, I now realise that working with a class is such a complex activity. Teaching is such a thinking profession". This comment met with a very positive set of comments from the other Associates and a good deal of nodding of heads in agreement.

One really important feature of the Associates' development in this phase was that they all report how necessary it is for them to develop flexibility as a professional skill. Flexibility in dealing with changes and interruptions to regular school or class routines became a central feature of their commentary about what they had learnt about teaching from the Internship experience. In addition the Associates identified that flexibility in classroom practice was also extremely important in dealing with individuals within the class and in maintaining interest and motivation within the classroom on a day-to-day basis through providing a wide range of interesting activities for the students to accomplish. This became extremely important for the Associates as they became more autonomous in their classrooms and it was during the Accelerating Confidence - Consolidation Phase when this autonomy became apparent thus requiring flexibility to be an essential skill in their teaching repertoire.

There were some amusing experiences encountered by the Associates over the years that also indicated that you need to have a sense of humour and to maintain your perspective and composure on teaching as a learning experience throughout your career. One example of such an experience was told by an Associate when she wrote "I was considerably panic stricken when I lost a child today. I was the last to leave the play equipment at the end of the day, so I knew everyone had headed down to their mums and bus-lines. Stephanie's mum came and asked where she was. I sent Allan (another student) to check the equipment and her mum to check the bus-lines. They both came back...no Stephanie!! Then I went down to check the bus-lines and there she was...front leader of the line. I was so relieved. I have to admit I was thinking abduction and all that. Also the thought did cross my mind ' so that was a very short teaching career".

## **FULFILMENT - COMPLETION PHASE**

### ***" I REALLY CAN DO THIS "***

The phase of Fulfilment - Completion occurs towards the end of the Internship. It is during this time that the Associate has received sufficient feedback to feel confident that they have overcome the gap between being a "student teacher" and a full member of the school staff. The feedback received by the Associate comes from several sources and in various forms.

Firstly, feedback from their Colleague teacher is both important to and welcomed by the Associate. Through the commentary (verbal and written) of the Colleague teacher, the Associate has received approval and acceptance as a fellow teacher. Throughout the Internship the feedback usually has been designed and aimed at leading the Associate through various developments. Now towards the end of the Internship the Colleague is providing feedback that indicates their acceptance of the Associate as a teacher and fellow professional. A comment by an Associate is representative of the feelings of achievement and development that has characterised their movement into this phase. "Lesley said to me yesterday that she was so glad that I was working with her class this term. I asked her why? and she said that I was a very good teacher and that she had noticed how the class had developed with me as their teacher and how I had grown in my own skill as a teacher. She then said that a good test of someone's teaching ability is if you would be happy having that person teaching your child and she would be very pleased for me to teach her child or to teach her class...any-time. Was I just floating or what? I couldn't get home quick enough to share this with my mum (also a teacher)".

Secondly, there is feedback from the class and its students. Through their standard of work, behaviour, attitudes and work habits the children have provided very positive feedback to the Associate that their efforts in planning and implementing an effective educational program have been appreciated. Associates regularly commented on how rewarding and stimulating it is for them as teachers to receive these indications from their class. As one Associate pointed out "its so hard to pretend that the kids haven't had a deep mental impact on you – the little things like getting two girls to wear their glasses because I do, seeing Lauren give news to a small group of children (when she has never said news to anyone at all) and getting Matt to read 'with', one word that gives him trouble in every sentence it is written. This work is just so rewarding!"

Thirdly, there is feedback from other staff within the school. Through the acceptance of the Associate Teacher as a member of staff who is treated as an equal, whose views are valued and their skills respected, the Associate develops their sense of self-worth and belonging to a community of professionals. Many Associates report that it is this acceptance by peers that is very satisfying and is an indication that they can now move "safely" and "confidently" into the profession.

Finally, Associates receive feedback from the wider school community. Parents have an important role here. In their acceptance of the Associate as their child's teacher and in "being supportive" of the Associate's efforts they have approved of them as a teacher. The school will have put into operation a reporting procedure in order to confirm the progress of the Associate and to affirm that they have satisfied the criteria established for beginning teachers. The Principal formally writes this report and supplies a copy to the Associate. All Associates have received satisfactory reports over the 5 years of this study. All these sources of feedback have combined to welcome the Associate into the profession and to have them "at ease" with themselves as teachers. They now feel equipped to enter the world of teaching with a degree of confidence in that they have received approval from the main stake holders in education.

It is interesting to note how the Associates during this phase seem to need "approval" of others as to their competence as teachers even though their journals, interviews and focus group data displayed a strong belief in their own competence.

At the completion of the Internship experience there were a number of celebrations to signpost its successful completion.. The Colleague Teacher and the class held a class party, usually as a surprise, for the Associate. There were many Internships that were completed where a summative activity such as a class presentation, the production of a class project

(drama presentations, production of newspapers, school assemblies and sporting afternoons are examples) were utilised. Staff at many of the schools involved in the Internship held morning or afternoon teas on the final day that also marked the conclusion of the experience and provided many teachers with an opportunity to congratulate and thank the Associate on the successful completion of their in-school experience.

These celebratory activities brought into focus the opportunity for the Associate to reflect on their total experience and to come to the realisation that their preservice education was now virtually complete. They were now "ready" to enter the teaching profession knowing that they had successfully completed their Internship and had developed the skills and understandings necessary of them to begin their teaching career. The data are very strong in support of the view that Associates at this stage have very high concepts of themselves as teachers and the confidence to take on the challenges that lie ahead for them in teaching. Reflecting on their experience as a whole an Associate stated " Now I've had time to really think about it all, I've learned a lot. Now I want my own class".

## **MOVING ON - LOOKING AHEAD**

### ***"I'M READY NOW FOR THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE"***

After the completion of the ten week in-school experience the Associates had a period of time to reflect upon their past experience but more importantly to look ahead to their future in teaching.

All Associates had developed very positive views of their future in teaching. The common view was that there was little out there that could not be overcome, as they had a skill set capable of adapting to most situations and attitudes that would allow them to ask for assistance if there were difficulties.

Above all, the Associates had developed a high degree of confidence in their own abilities. Knowing that they will be good teachers transferred to their self belief and self concept and added to their confidence in the future. Most Associates as a result have stated that in the future they will be prepared to take risks, to try out different approaches with their teaching because as they have discovered from their internship "there is no one right way".

The Action Research project that each Associate completed during the Internship had a significant influence on their thinking about their classroom organisation and teaching practices. It was recognised by the Associates that having an "action research" approach to their planning and pedagogy was a way for them to ensure continued learning about their professional practice. In the reflection period at the conclusion of the Internship it was reported that they realised how powerful a tool "looking into your classroom" was for them in adapting their approaches and practices.

The period of reflection allowed each Associate Teacher to re-visit their motivation for entering the Internship and this resulted in many of them confirming the positive nature of the overall experience. The following excerpts are informative as to the reasons for entering the Internship and for what the Associates took away from the experience. "At the completion of last year(3<sup>rd</sup> year B.Tch course) I felt just so un-ready to be a teacher full-time. How can anyone be ready to be a full-time teacher after only 12 weeks of practicum spread over three years" and later in the same journal "something has changed, maybe I've grown up in the last several weeks and realised that teaching and especially beginning teaching

requires a full-on commitment. I've given it that commitment and the rewards have been fantastic".

There were many statements made when reflecting on their Internship that indicated the value that the Associate Teachers placed on the total experience and the role it played in preparing them for their involvement in teaching. Illuminating comments about the Internship were, "...but then I started thinking. This whole program(the Internship) has been the most fantastic thing I've ever done for my teaching career. I've learnt so much in a very supportive environment and I now actually feel ready to tackle full-time teaching" and from another Associate, " I believe I made the right decision to do the Internship. I've gained experience as beginning teachers should – slow and steady and supported by a mentor".

After the completion of the in-school component of the Internship many Associate Teachers returned to their schools and classes to visit with the staff, especially their Colleague teacher, and the children of the class. There were opportunities to maintain contacts and relationships established during the Internship. In many instances long term personal and professional relationships were formed. Many schools have utilised their Associate teachers for casual relief teaching and for longer term teaching replacement positions.

As the Associate Teachers in this study move on from the internship and look ahead to their future teaching careers, there is a realisation among them that learning about teaching is continuous and that being a classroom researcher/teacher is an excellent way to continue to improve their teaching. Above all though the understanding expressed by all the Associates of this study is that "learning to teach" is a career/lifelong journey.

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