

INTERNSHIP: PARTNERSHIP IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

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Principles of the Internship PGCE *

The key principle which has contributed most to the successful introduction of internship has been the close partnership between the University Department of Educational Studies and Oxfordshire Local Education Authority in the development and execution of the scheme. All aspects of the course are planned, carried out and evaluated by university and school staff working in various teams (1).

One of the starting points for the development of the course was an analysis of the problems which might be considered endemic in traditional courses. The following list may be sufficiently detailed:

Student teachers are marginal people in schools, without the status, authority or situational knowledge to be like 'real teachers'.

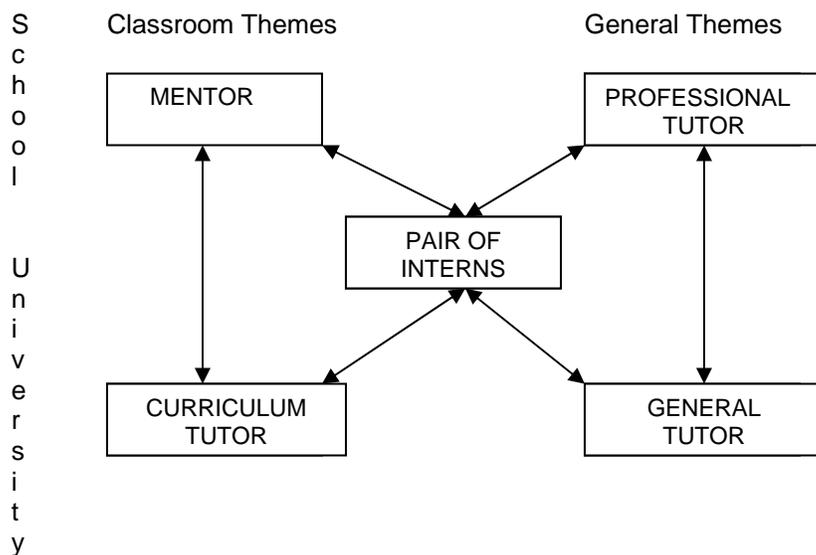
- 'Educational theorising' is often experienced as largely irrelevant to the tasks facing student teachers in schools.
- There is often little opportunity to try out in schools even the practical advice given in college or university.
- Little value is generally attached to the observation of experienced teachers, with apparently little learning resulting from such observation.
- Little help is given to student teachers in critically examining the range of practice they observe in schools.
- There tends to be wide variation in the quality of supervising teachers' diagnostic assessment of student teachers' teaching and their discussion of that teaching.
- School visits from tutors are often seen primarily as occasions for the testing of student teachers' classroom competence.
- Student teachers often learn to meet the different criteria of school and university staff separately, with different performances for different audiences.
- In contrast to the habits of scholarly reflection which graduate teachers have learned in relation to their subjects, much of their learning about teaching is a semi-conscious trial and error kind of learning. (2)
- * The majority of secondary school teachers in the UK, (at the time of the article), qualified by taking a one year Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) qualification following successful completion of a degree.

We have tried to respond to this rather gloomy list by developing a scheme which addresses the problems in a positive way, and which has the following characteristics.

- i) Partnership between university and school staff in the joint planning of the programme. Integration of the programme so that there are clear relationships, and generally short time intervals, between different course components whether they occur in school, university or in private study.
- ii) Concentration of interns in particular schools (in 1989-90, 150 interns in 16 schools, in 1990-91, 186 in 19/20 schools), with the result that the profile of initial teacher education is raised in those schools. The interns have an extended involvement in the school throughout the year, so that they can become more fully established as junior members of the staff.
- iii) Provision of secure learning environments, with learning tasks carefully graded through the year. Interns are expected to glean ideas and strategies from different sources, against the background of the explicit assertion that different perspectives on teaching and learning from different sources will be accepted as the basis of creative discourse. The scheme is definitely not an “apprenticeship” model.

The scheme works through a network of responsibilities indicated by Figure 1.

Figure 1



Responsibility for the work of a pair of interns within a subject department rests with the mentor as an experienced teacher coordinating the classroom-based experience. The professional tutor and the general tutor plan and deliver the General Programme which is described in a later section. In order to provide the school-based personnel with space in which to work with interns, the LEA has provided an enhancement of staffing equivalent to 0.5 of a member of staff for the schools to be used to give time for mentors and professional tutors. They are not financially rewarded for this work, although one might hope that in the long-term this activity would be seen as a contractual one leading to the award of allowances for such work.

Shape of the Course

One of the fundamental differences between the Internship scheme and traditional PGCE courses is the shape of the students' year.

“O” (Orientation) Weeks: The course begins with a three-week period of observation of experienced teachers, which the interns usually arrange to do in their home area, the first week being spent in a

primary school, the other two in a secondary school. Interns are given detailed guidance as to what aspects of school life they should try to observe, and are given specific issues to investigate.

“I” (Induction) Weeks: On arriving in Oxford the course continues with two Induction weeks, during which the interns are based mainly in the university, attending seminars, lectures and workshops in both curriculum and general groupings. They spend the Wednesday of each week, however, in their designated schools, meeting professional tutors and mentors and generally finding their way around.

“Joint” (Joint) Weeks: From the middle of October to the end of June, interns remain attached to their own particular schools, spending every Tuesday and Wednesday there, following a carefully planned programme of observation and initial involvement in teaching. It is intended that, at all stages, interns should be encouraged to observe, and work with, as many experienced teachers as possible and not just their own mentor. Interns are therefore, not apprentices modelling themselves on a single teacher. This format continues until the end of January.

“S” (School) Weeks: From the end of January to the beginning of May, interns spend the entire week in school, with the exception of two university-based days immediately before Easter. It may be tempting to see this period as a “teaching practice”, but S-weeks involve interns in school life in a way which student teachers on more traditional courses can rarely experience. They are, for example, already well known to staff and pupils and can become more immediately involved with classes. As they are attached to school departments in pairs, the scope for joint planning, team teaching and the sharing of classes is greatly increased, and they can take more responsibility for their own learning by observing and debriefing each other when the mentor is unavailable.

During S-weeks, the interns’ involvement in the pastoral curriculum of their schools is given greater emphasis than is possible during J-weeks. They are now attached, individually or in pairs, to tutor groups, and help form tutors with as many aspects of the job as possible.

Throughout this phase of the course, interns are visited regularly by their curriculum tutors. Because all the participating schools are in or near Oxford, tutors are able to keep in close touch. During visits, tutors may be asked by interns to observe specific aspects of their teaching, or – more often than not – are asked to take part in the lesson. It is not unusual to find the teaching of a lesson being shared among both interns, the mentor and the tutor!

“E” (Evaluation) Weeks: The final six weeks of the course are organised on essentially the same structure as the J-weeks, with two days in school each week. This is a period of self-evaluation, during which interns are encouraged to examine their own teaching, to set their own goals and to develop ideas about the sort of teacher they want to be. This period also allows opportunities for more specialised work, for example, all the Geography interns organise a field study week for pupils from London schools using the Inner London Education Authority, (ILEA), centre in South Wales.

Phases of the Year

The internship year has two distinct phases. From their first experience some time in October of working in a classroom, until some time during S-weeks, interns are helped to develop certain abilities necessary if they are to become competent in basic classroom skills. Their progress in acquiring these skills is monitored very closely by mentors and curriculum tutors. Guidance as to what interns should be working towards is given in the form of a “List of important abilities”, which is the normal focus for discussion during this first phase of the course.

At some point, typically around the middle of the S-weeks, the developing intern will be given a clear indication by curriculum tutor and mentor that she/he has achieved reasonable competence in the listed abilities and may confidently expect to be awarded Qualified Teacher Status at the end of the year. The timing of this signal will vary for individual interns, but all those succeeding should make the transition to phase two of the year by the end of S-weeks. The small number each year who do not receive a positive signal are normally counselled to leave the course at this stage.

In phase two of the year, interns should continue to demonstrate basic classroom competence, but should also begin to reflect more on their teaching and to evaluate it in terms of their own goals. It is a time when they can try to put more of their own ideas into practice and think about how they want their teaching to develop. During this period of self evaluation, they begin to work with mentors, tutors and each other in a different way. Now the focus of classroom observation is set by the intern, rather than by tutor or mentor. Typically, the intern asks for one aspect of the lesson to be scrutinised, for the evidence to be made available at the end of the lesson, and for the discussion following to be non-judgemental with evaluation being self-generated. We call this process **partnership supervision**.

The overall assessment of each intern's progress is reported on three occasions during the year. Each pair of professionals concerned with the intern (general tutor + professional tutor, mentor + curriculum tutor) report separately and have to agree on whether or not progress has been satisfactory. The schools thus have equal status in the assessment process with the university. We are presently developing this structure into a fuller profiling approach.

The Department's Modern Languages Programme

The Department currently accepts thirty interns, roughly two-thirds of these offering French as their main language and one-third offering German. Most of the latter offer French as their second language, while an alarming number of the French specialists unfortunately have no other language.

Linguists are attached to the schools in whatever combination of languages the schools want. Some schools like to have a French specialist paired with a Germanist, others prefer a pair offering the same language.

The Department currently has one part-time and two full-time tutors teaching the PGCE course.

The Department-based modern languages programme is presented in the following way:

Plenary sessions (Monday & Thursdays 9.30 – 11.00)

These are the sessions which introduce each topic. Generally, they are led by one of the tutors, but outside speakers are also invited to give expert advice and information in their specialist areas. The Modern Languages Adviser for the Local Education Authority, (LEA), is a regular contributor.

Tutor Groups (Mondays & Thursdays 11.30 – 1.00)

These groups, consisting of the several pairs of interns for whom each languages tutor is responsible, generally meet to follow up the topics raised in the plenaries. The work done in these groups is closely related to that in which interns will be involved in school.

French/German Groups (Mondays 2.00 – 3.30)

Each intern is a member of either a French or German group, depending on her/his main language. (There are no sessions for subsidiary languages). In these groups, language-specific issues are discussed.

The following areas of concern to linguists are dealt with in some detail in the course of the year.

The first section covers a range of basic, introductory information and skills to prepare interns thoroughly before they begin their work in schools, and to give them an insight into a range of topics which they can investigate further through observation of experienced teachers during J-weeks.

Introduction to modern language teaching methods; communicative language teaching; survey of course books and resources; using equipment; lesson planning; introduction to exams; the place of languages in the school curriculum; language acquisition; classroom management and organisation; the use of the foreign language in the classroom; motivation; grammar and communication; differentiation of objectives; pupil grouping; preparation of visual aids and displays; marking and assessment; broadcast materials; information technology.

The second section looks beyond basic competence in the classroom and deals with issues which are designed to raise interns' awareness of wider aspects of language teaching and to encourage them to identify areas of interest which they may follow up individually as part of their phase two development.

“Authentic” teaching materials; language awareness; gender issues; community languages; languages in the sixth form; the teaching of literature; non-specialist courses; languages at work; the foreign language assistant; drama and modern language teaching; computer assisted modern language teaching; intensive language work.

Where appropriate, the themes are linked with more general coverage provided in the General Programme for all interns.

Ways of working with Interns

Helping interns to get at whatever it is that constitutes the “craft knowledge” of an experienced teacher is a difficult and complex process. Observation by and of interns is a vital element, as is the flexibility of ways of working possible in the Internship scheme. Thus, planning can become a shared activity, with pairs of interns working on a joint lesson or giving support to each other's lessons. Mentors and curriculum tutors can also assist at this planning stage.

During lessons, interns can observe their partners, or one intern and compare notes in the debriefing. If an intern wants several aspects of a lesson to be observed, the tasks can be shared out.



A major advantage of having so many subject specialists around lies in the opportunities it offers for really valuable group work to be set up. With as many as four adults available – or even five if a language assistant is included – it is possible to arrange a class into small groups, and have a different activity going

on in each one. Pupils can then rotate through each activity in the course of a lesson, enjoying increased individual attention. Groups can also be created to solve certain problems associated with some mixed ability teaching. Interns can, for example, extract groups of weaker, or more able, pupils from each other's lessons, or from those of their mentor or other teachers, for small group support. Cynics may say that all this creates unrealistic conditions. We would respond by saying that it creates very special opportunities! And we would still want to be very sure that each intern had plenty of experience of teaching a whole class single-handed.

The General Programme

For many of us, the development of the General Programme has been one of the most exciting and liberating aspects of Internship. Gone, we hope for ever, are the stale discussions in tutors' rooms on education issues! Advantage has been taken of the high concentration of interns in one school, and the partnership between professional and general tutor, to create an integrated programme, where the discourse relates to real issues raised in the school environment. The range of topics and issues covered will not surprise the reader, nor will the range of approaches used, although lectures only feature minimally in the delivery of the programme. What may surprise is the extent to which lecturers and seminars in the university, weekly seminars in school, assignments and practical investigations are linked together. The detailed programme for the interns in each school is organised by the professional tutor and general tutor; in this way, it provides opportunities for interns to study in depth issues which particularly interest them; relates an understanding of educational issues with the practice of individual schools; and allows them to share their experiences as prospective teachers of different school subjects. In addition, wherever these issues are important in the classroom, and in the teaching of specific subjects, links are made between the General Programme and Curriculum work.

A summary of how the activities related to just one of the General Programme themes, Education for a multi-ethnic society, are developed, illustrates how the General Programme can be structured for the interns in any school (Table 1):

Table 1

Multi-ethnic workshop	-	Introductory activities, in university, in school groups with general tutor
Introduction to multi-ethnic policies and practice	-	Presentation, and follow up seminar with general tutor in the university
Multi-ethnic considerations in a particular school	-	Investigations and seminars in school organised by general and professional tutor
Multi-ethnic considerations in teaching a specific subject	-	Activities in the university and school organised by curriculum tutor and mentor
Education for a multi-ethnic society	-	Assignments carried out by the intern based on university and school activities together with individual reading and reflection

In one school, we have run sessions as different as:

- Discussing parents' evenings, after all the interns had shadowed a teacher at such a meeting;
- Discussing primary-secondary liaison after spending time in local feeder primary schools and watching the induction process for those entering the school in September;
- Assisting in analysing data from a homework survey being conducted throughout the school;
- Spending two seminars in succession discussing the behaviour in class of one pupil taught by eight of the ten interns;
- Being introduced to the way Oxford Certificate of Educational Achievement (OCEA) approaches to assessment are being developed in the school.
- Drafting a section on Equal Opportunities for the LEAs required four-yearly evaluation of the school.

Remember those tedious and sterile dissertations, drawn kicking and screaming from the educational literature, which seemed to accompany every PGCE course? Well, Internship has helped us to breathe life into the moribund task, by insisting that every dissertation (done between January and June) shall have a theoretical and empirical component, based on some aspect of work in the intern's school. Not all, of course, are fascinating and scholarly, but the commitment to the task, and the liveliness of the products, have both been refreshing. Headteachers have shown great interest in the exercise, hoping perhaps to learn something new about their schools, and copies of the products are now generally lodged with the school.

Into Teaching

Is all of this kind of rhetoric associated with any new course? What measures do we have of the quality of the end product? The answer would have to be – nothing very direct. We are, like most other initial teacher education institutions, developing our own profiling system, which will be both formative and summative, but the real test of the product will rest with the consumer. Some indications:

- a high percentage of our interns do go into teaching, either in this country or abroad (88% in 1988).
- about a quarter of them stay in Oxfordshire schools, many in the schools they have already worked in for one year. Ex-interns made up about one-third of all secondary probationers in Oxfordshire in September, 1988.
- Several local headteachers have indicated that the interns stand out at interview as “knowing about schools and the commitments of teaching in them”.

What we would much like to attempt is the extension of the notions of the internship approach to include the first year of teaching. It may be that the Articled Teachers Scheme currently being promoted by the Department of Education and Science, (DES), will give us an opportunity to work through the principles over a two-year period which incorporates the PGCE year with induction.

References

1. Straw, J., The Times, 9.10.89
2. McIntyre, D., Aims and Principles, in Internship: Integration and Partnership in Initial Teacher Education, ed. Benton, P., Gulbenkian, 1990 (in press).