

# The New Integrated Teacher Training Programme and the Teaching of English

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It is common knowledge that there is now an integrated teacher training programme in this country. Traditionally, teacher training was carried on in separate institutions for primary and secondary teacher. It was felt, however, that with the introduction of the comprehensive system of education with automatic promotion from primary to secondary schools, there is a lot to be said for an integrated teacher training system. Moreover, primary and secondary teacher trainees are now required to possess the same minimum educational qualification, namely, the school certificate.

English language teaching is now fast becoming 'second language teaching' in accordance with the national education policy. It is important therefore that the teacher training syllabus should reflect this new consideration, in marked contrast to previous practice when English was a medium of instruction as such in one segment of our education system. In the old syllabus, we find that English language and literature were subjects in their own right in the training colleges, day training centres and the normal classes as well. In the new syllabus, English is purely a methodology course. It is assumed that the level of proficiency attained by the entrant into the training college is sufficient and that what is needed is some exposure to teaching methods.

In the original draft by the Syllabus Review Committee, a general framework for any subject methodology was established in three parts, namely teaching methods, teaching techniques, and teaching aids. The first part appears to be intended to provide the trainee with an awareness of well-known methods, past and present, such as the Dalton Plan and Montessori Method. It is hoped that this will not become a mere theoretical treatment,

with students learning off masses of educational jargon and not grasping the true spirit of the methods mentioned. A common criticism heard of all teacher-training programmes is that they are too theory-ridden and students take the easy way out by cramming for exams and resorting to the familiar 'chalk and talk' in classroom work. Students must be shown how to apply these methods in real classroom situations.

The second part of the methodology involves various aspects of teaching techniques: exposition, narration, drill, dramatisation etc. All these if properly dealt would certainly be of great value to the trainees, as well as providing them with a deeper insight into the varied resources available for enlivening the English language lesson. This portion of the syllabus cannot be 'covered' through the traditional lecture method. What is needed is a good collection of films, as well as demonstration lessons. This is where a real effort ought to be made to obtain materials that have proved their worth in second language teaching and its methodology in other multi-racial nations.

The third segment of the methodology is titled 'teaching aids'. In this we note that mention is made of every conceivable aid, from textbooks to language laboratories. The projected materials mentioned consist of the latest gadgets in educational technology. One wonders whether all this is readily available in every teacher training college in the country and whether there is enough expertise to demonstrate the operation and communicative role of these gadgets. Again to what extent would teachers be able to have access to such sophisticated teaching tools, in our rural schools for example? Far more attention ought to be paid to guiding our young

teacher trainees on exploiting the resources of more readily available materials such as newspapers, television advertisements and even ordinary public notices. Everything of course will depend on the extent to which the college lecturer is prepared to take his students on a journey of innovation in the teaching of English. A mere acquaintance with gadgetry will be next to useless. The colleges should strive to train teachers who can make use of such gadgets available and who can readily use whatever else is available if gadgets are not to be found.

One notes with gratitude that testing techniques and test construction are not grouped with teaching method but fall within theory of education. For far too long in our schools, testing methods have been employed as teaching methods, and the new arrangement is as good a way as any of making new teachers see the difference. It is understood that no syllabus is intended to be in use for all time. Changes have to be introduced in the light of experience and the influence of new ideas. I have a few suggestions for inclusion in the current syllabus.

**Children's Reading** When we examine the syllabus of teacher-training colleges in other Commonwealth nations, we find that some attention is paid to the subject of children's reading. A language methodology that concentrates on the teaching of grammar and literature is

too restricted. It is an accepted function of the teacher of English to encourage his pupils to read widely on their own. Few teacher trainees can be expected to guide their pupils in this important aspect of informal language learning and intellectual growth unless they themselves have been exposed to the potentialities in well-chosen fiction and literature. Here again it is all too easy for a new and enthusiastic teacher to expect adolescent pupils to respond eagerly to difficult books meant for adults. As a result, discouragement sets in and pupils do not read, while teachers for their part cease to stimulate general reading. Hence the need to include a course on 'Children's Reading' in every teacher training syllabus.

**Life-long learning** The syllabus should incorporate some features of 'life-long education' theory. This would be necessary for all methodology courses. For the prospective teacher of English, it ought to take the form of recommended reading lists of books and journals as well as an introduction to the values inherent in the study of good literature.

**Evaluation** Finally, a thorough evaluation of the new syllabus and suggestions for reform should be undertaken within two years. This evaluation should involve training college lectures, classroom teachers and university lecturers in education.