

Meeting Teachers' Needs (2)

Effects of change: In-service education and training (INSET)

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In-service education for teachers in Malta is older than initial training. The induction courses for emergency teachers (1957—59), the maturity courses for serving teachers (1962—65), summer vacation courses of the late sixties, the evening courses for teachers and instructors in the trade schools and in further education schools (1965—68), as well as to some extent, the first share of the five year B.Ed (Hons) programme, are all examples of education and training of teachers which is both initial and inservice. In some cases it is difficult to find a line of demarcation between initial and in-service as well as between education and training.

INSET Modes

Perhaps the major weakness of most INSET courses is that they take the form of single lectures or a short series of lectures. In some cases the lectures are supplemented by workshops and discussion groups.¹ However most courses focus on the teaching of specific subject areas and are mostly content based. There are advantages in this present approach to INSET, and the benefits of existing courses should be maintained. However, a more systematic and scientifically based reform of methodology which relates theory and practice would be more beneficial. Such reforms which will include problem-solving projects²,⁴ school-based⁵ and school-focused INSET⁶, as well as application of heuristic methods⁷ will enhance the reputation of the Faculty of Education as a Tertiary level educational institution concerned with and involved in functional research for the benefit of the local educational community.

Need of Collaboration

This does not mean that the primary initiative will be that of the Faculty of Education. The necessity for further collaboration of the various government departments, educational institutions and teachers' associations should be given full consideration. There are two main reasons why there should be further growth in the commitment to INSET on a national scale in Malta. There are inherent needs and there are needs that are brought about by the effects of change. "Teachers

of all people"⁸ need to continue their personal and professional education.

Effects of Change

Change is happening in social, economic, cultural, technological and political life and this has an effect on knowledge and on the curriculum. It is essential therefore for the teacher to regularly review and modify methods of teaching and curricula. The introduction of secondary schools for all (1970), the extension of the school leaving age to 16 years (1971), and the re-introduction of the selective system for secondary education present curriculum problems which are clearly related to the needs of the 10—16 age group. There are new demands on the teacher in the secondary schools which result from the radically changing nature of the relationship of the school community which include the demands for a secondary school to be accountable for its standard. There are also needs associated with particular subjects notably Physics, Arabic and another foreign language, a proficiency in which is required for entrance to the University of Malta via the New Lyceum. These subjects together with science and mathematics present curricular problems especially to the less academic students.

For many teachers who have little understanding of modern practice in special education, the presence of an under achiever or a handicapped child will create problems. The above mentioned problems create needs which cannot be ignored if future 'shock' is to be avoided. These needs make imperative the provision of INSET for both teachers and educational managers at every level. There is an urgent need to focus on managerial, administrative and teacher manpower problems. Perhaps one of the most necessary first steps in bringing about the changes required to provide better INSET is the re-deployment of human and material resources.

Most Paramount Need

What must be emphasised at this point is that although in-service education and training is in the interest of all educational institutions and of the teaching profession in their contemporary search

for higher status, it is the needs of the children and students in schools and colleges that are paramount. Another point to be emphasised is that, although INSET problems will be identified, this does not imply a criticism of the Maltese educational system or of the teaching profession. The majority of teachers are effective with a clear understanding of their work. Others inevitably are less professional in their approach. However, all teachers, at every level, everywhere, need in-service education. New knowledge and new methods, new school and economic factors lead to a need for in-service education.

Lifelong Learning Needs

The purpose of INSET can be seen in the concept of lifelong learning which is found in the writings of great educational thinkers.⁹ Everyone, not only teachers, need lifelong learning but it is only recently that the concept of lifelong education, continuing education, adult, recurrent or l'educatione permanente has come to be widely advocated as a principle applicable to the whole of education¹⁰. Teachers need lifelong learning more than others. INSET, within the concept of lifelong learning should however, emphasise with the content of the curriculum and methodology. Teachers need to be involved in discussions about curricular objectives and school organisation, changes in curricular content and new methods in teaching their specialism. The concept of continuing education is generally thought to enhance two broad components — personal and vocational training. It is the latter that is most relevant to INSET but the former cannot be ignored. One cannot ignore that there is also a potential conflict between the needs of the system and those of the individual teacher. INSET activities which improve teacher performance as a whole most likely satisfy the needs of the educational system and those of the individual institution. However, as Henderson states¹¹, it should be recognised that, although any one INSET course may have several purposes, it is useful to distinguish between the main and incidental purposes and outcomes of such an activity.¹²

Needs

The primary need must be to organise all available human and material resources to develop an 'appropriate machinery' to negotiate and agree upon general and specific INSET needs. Teachers should be seen as professional adult learners so that their INSET needs will be better understood. The general agreement amongst both theorists and practitioners is that INSET needs can be more effectively and validly identified if the teachers involved participate collaboratively.

Specific Local INSET Needs

A collaborated effort will help to identify those demands, tasks and constraints from which INSET needs will arise.

Educational change and innovation, whether brought about by an individual teacher in a school, by a head of a department, by an education officer, a group of teachers in different schools or brought about on a larger scale through the implementation of a national policy decision, will bring with it new needs on the teacher. The following are examples of some of the specific needs for INSET to satisfy Malta. The list is not presented in order of priority. The categories indicate needs for all teachers in general and for a specific group in particular.

A: All Teachers

1. All teachers should have the opportunity to acquire a better understanding of the principles and methods of educational technology especially if this was not imparted to them in the initial training.
2. All teachers need to keep well informed of the results of educational research and experience.
3. All teachers should be informed about the use of new books, materials and equipment.

B: Teachers in Primary Schools

1. Teachers of general education in the primary schools will need to widen their knowledge of the content of what they teach.
2. The introduction of new approaches to the teaching of reading, mathematics, science, religious knowledge, environmental and social studies will pose INSET needs.

C: Teachers in the Secondary Schools

1. Teachers who specialise in a subject need to refresh and extend their knowledge of their specialism.
2. A teacher in the secondary school, who is asked to teach a subject which is not really his/her own field of specialisation needs INSET as induction and orientation into the new field.
3. Sometimes it may be a teacher's own choice to make a change. This should not be encouraged unless the teacher is found competent enough to teach the chosen subject. A choice of subsidiary subject, or of a special responsibility (i.e. remedial teaching) demands participation in INSET activities which will provide the teacher with opportunities to update the pedagogical competence and to upgrade the content of the respective subject.

D: Teachers of Pupils with Special Needs

1. Teachers who are faced with illiteracy or semi-illiteracy problems in their pupils will need to continue their understanding

and competence of the language arts i.e. language development and the teaching of reading and writing.

2. Teachers of handicapped children are required to possess special qualifications. All the practising teachers in special education follow a one-year diploma course in the UK. The need is now being felt to provide further in-service facilities in Malta for those teachers who need refresher courses. Qualified and experienced teachers from this field may be asked to contribute in the organisation and running of INSET activities.

E: Teachers who change posts or who occupy posts for which they may have not been specifically trained.

1. In case of a move from primary to secondary school teaching the argument presented in C: 3 also applies.
2. During the years 1981—84 groups of married women teachers have re-entered to teach after an absence of some years. An average of about seven years from teaching has left them out of practice and out of touch with developments in curriculum and method. INSET needs are obvious.
3. There are also specific INSET needs closely related to the existing teacher establishment especially for Post Graduates, Instructors, Kindergarten Assistants and Teachers/Instructors in the various government departments and in parastatal bodies such as the Nursing School, the Armed Forces, Banking, Broadcasting, . . . etc. A number of post-graduates who were automatically established as teachers after qualifying in a one year full time BA General course, would benefit from courses which focus on curriculum development, educational material development and resource utilisation. The same argument applies to instructors who are employed to teach in trade schools and the technical institutes. These are generally recruited from among persons with the required trade qualifications and a period of experience in industry. Although Kindergarten assistants do not require initial training qualifications, they are given accelerated in-service training by Education Department personnel during the summer period.
4. The Education Department also employs part-time teachers and instructors who work for a stipulated maximum number of hours per week. Their term of service can be terminated or renewed at the end of each scholastic year. I came in contact with many such teachers who voiced the

need for in-service courses.

5. The organisational changes that happened especially at secondary school level created a considerable number of promotions to heads of schools, heads of departments and various other responsibilities. It is right for these people themselves and for the place in which they work that they should be given adequate and systematic preparation for the larger responsibilities that they have to assume. They would benefit from courses which focus on Staff Management techniques, the co-ordination of Human and Material Resources as well as professionally related kind of training.

F. Effects of change

1. Curriculum change may result in making certain knowledge obsolete. Other types of changes in the curriculum may make methodological demands which the teachers have to be equipped to meet.
2. There are numerous demands emerging which require further training of other skills which are not normally given extensively in initial education and training courses. Resource management, career and counselling responsibilities, librarianship, general paternal care . . . all require further INSET activities as they would be better developed on the basis of some experience in teaching.
3. Non-graduate teachers who possess a teacher training certificate (up to 1974) are keen on INSET which could lead to degree qualification. The emergence of the transition towards an all-graduate profession has threatened their chance of career development.
4. One of the elements of change is growth which usually implies more growth. Within a few years some of the B.Educ. qualified teachers will voice the need for INSET which will lead to M.Ed. Degree.

The above mentioned examples present, in the writer's opinion, an overall view of the local situation with regard to INSET needs.

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