



Stonebridge

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF TEACHING CERTIFICATE COURSE

Sample Pages

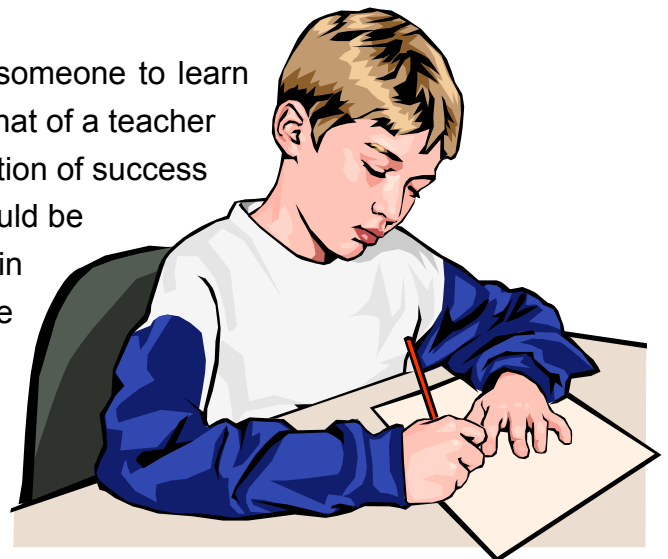
THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING – PART 2

Lesson Four dealt with the practice of teaching in general terms: discussion, aims and methods. In this lesson we shall deal with the more practical aspects of teaching and the general principles which underlie effective classroom practice. Teaching is an art and there are no cut-and-dried rules for success. However, there are some general considerations which should be noted by a prospective teacher.

PUPIL INVOLVEMENT

Teaching means deliberately setting out to get someone to learn something, and the normal teaching situation is that of a teacher working with a class of pupils. An essential condition of success in this situation is that the teacher and pupils should be mutually cooperative: the pupils must participate in the lesson, be involved in it. Without this they are not likely to learn anything.

Pupil involvement depends on several factors:



- i. A good personal relationship must exist between teacher and pupils. This is connected with the problem of discipline discussed later in this lesson. If teacher and class do not get on well, it is unlikely that the class will identify themselves with whatever the teacher wants to accomplish. But if there is a personal rapport between them, this feeling will help to get the teacher working with the pupils and encourage them to take part in the proceedings.

This good personal relationship is not easy to characterise precisely, nor is it easy to give hints on how to achieve it. Much depends on the character and the personality of the teacher. A teacher who is pleasant, friendly, good humoured and firm can carry the class along. Such a good relationship, based upon mutual respect and tolerance, rarely happens right away, the teacher has to work for it. While cultivating the ability to be friendly, helpful, though slightly detached from the class the teacher should get the reputation of being reasonable, fair, but not easy to fool. Pupils will co-operate cheerfully with almost any idiosyncrasies of temper and character if the teacher is seen to be dependable and just in dealing with pupils.

- ii. Pupils must find the work purposeful, interesting and within their capacity.
 - a. *Work must be purposeful.* The teacher must make sure that pupils see the point of whatever they are required to do. Lesson aims and objectives must be made clear to them. Nothing checks enthusiasm more than having to do tasks which seem to have no particular reference to what has been done earlier, or no particular point. The teacher should avoid giving time-consuming tasks to round off periods or to fill in odd half hours. Whatever the class is asked to do must be seen to be relevant to the course of studies, and the teacher should always explain how new work connects with previous work. If you want the co-operation of pupils, their work must be significant to them.
 - b. *Work must be interesting.* Co-operation and involvement quickly follow on work that interests the class. This may cause problems because much that has to be learned may not seem very interesting. It is difficult to believe that learning short forms or the conjugation of verbs has much interest for the average pupil. The teacher should link what has been learned with something which interests the pupil. This can be done by associating the material with an activity which interests the learner. Learning short forms could be linked with writing news reports containing such words, the conjugation of verbs can be linked with reading passages in the language that involves those words. Interest can also be stimulated by competition, challenging exercises or by showing that the new material is useful in some way.

The stimulation of interest is not an easy task. The teacher must keep in mind that some pupils, like adolescents who have not had much success at school, will not find schoolwork interesting. Pupils' interest nevertheless remains most important. The principle is: wherever possible associate the material to be learned with something of immediate interest to the pupil. Use the pupil's interests as motivation.

- c. *Work must be within the capacity of the class.* No class can co-operate for long if the work is too hard for them to do. The tasks must be such that all the pupils can manage most of the work, and that *everyone can manage some of it*. This is most important. It is essential that every pupil should have a chance for some success in every lesson. Success is a strong motivation for going on and for repeating the effort. Even the least able pupil should achieve some success.

The work must not be too easy for the class as a whole, or some children will lose interest, especially the more able students. It is a good idea to provide work at different levels of difficulty, so that all the pupils are stretched according to their abilities. This can be done by group work or by giving individual assignments. The teacher should aim to give work at a level within the pupil's capacity, but just above his average level of effort.

When setting work for a whole class it is a good idea to grade the tasks or problems, so that the first examples are relatively easy and the later ones more difficult. This gives everyone a chance at some success, but will challenge the more able to push on to the more difficult work.

There are two further factors bearing on pupil involvement: the need for *activity* by the pupil and the role of *questioning* in the class.

[i] Pupil Activity

Pupils participate in a lesson by *doing* something, and it follows that they should be given a great deal to do. We shall see that this has bearing on the maintenance of good discipline in class. It is not only essential that pupils have plenty to do, but their activities should be varied too. The attention span of most pupils is relatively brief. After a short while attention flags, and the young pupil will need a change of activity. This is particularly true of young children and pupils of low general ability: and less true of bright children and adults.



The teacher should try to arrange the work so that a fairly short period of listening is followed by a period of writing, reading or another practical activity. These changes of activity should take place in each lesson. The practical activities should also be relevant to the pupil's interests, appropriate to the lesson and aimed at increasing knowledge and skill. This is expressed in the slogan *no impression without expression*. This means follow up the learning of new material by giving the pupil a chance to use it, to express his mastery of it in some practical way.

[ii] Questioning

This must form an integral part of teaching since it is an important way of securing pupil involvement. Questions come from the teacher and the pupils.

Questions from Pupils may arise:

- a. from a genuine need to get information
- b. to enable the pupil to parade knowledge or show off
- c. to divert attention to another topic.

It is usually quite easy to distinguish these in practice. Those in categories [b] and [c] should be warded off tactfully but firmly. The teacher may use those in [a] as an opportunity for teaching. What puzzles one pupil is likely to be puzzling others, and the *whole class* may gain from the question. Another way would be to invite answers or explanations from other pupils to see how many other pupils were also puzzled. The pupil's questions should be used to involve the whole class in the topic, concentrating their attention on the point.

It is hardly necessary to say that if a pupil's question is a genuine request for enlightenment, it should never be used to mock or scold.

Pupils may occasionally interrupt a lesson to ask. This should be accepted cheerfully, since it shows that attention is being maintained. If the question anticipates a point to be made later, the questioner may be praised for his interest but the answer postponed until the proper place for its answer.

Questions from the Teacher – This is an important teaching aid. The teacher can ask questions:

- a. as a way of finding out how far the lesson has been understood
- b. as a way of varying the form of a lesson. An explanation can be stopped and questions put to test the pupils' degree of concentration and comprehension.
- c. for involving individual pupils in the lesson. The possibility of being singled out to answer a question will usually keep the pupils alert. A few quick questions, directed to different parts of the class, will keep individuals observant, give the teacher a psychological initiative and help with general class control.
- d. for bringing the less forward and less extrovert pupils into the general activity.
- e. as a way of revising and recapitulating earlier work.

Questions by the teacher should be clear and unambiguous. It is better not to frame them so that there is a clear choice between two alternate answers, or merely needing 'yes' or 'no'. Such questions let pupils guess and let them know immediately that if one answer is wrong the other must be correct. Questions should be put so the pupil reveals what he knows, and does not get the chance for lucky guesswork.

Pupils should not be encouraged to call out answers indiscriminately, as this can lead to a lack of discipline, and a situation where a few keen pupils do all the answering. In a class of young pupils those who think they can answer usually put their hands up. Even then it is not always good to ask the noisiest. It is a good idea to put questions to those whose hands go up slowly, or not at all. Everyone should be called on fairly frequently to answer questions, so that the more enthusiastic also get their turn.

With adults it is better to give the question first and then call on a student to answer. Be careful not to embarrass adult students with questions they cannot answer. The teacher should move quickly to another student if the first seems at a loss. Here are some general hints about questioning to conclude this section.

1. Never repeat incorrect answers, or draw attention to them. Correct a wrong answer as soon as you can, so that everyone can hear it.
2. Where answers are partially correct, single out the correct element for repetition, correcting what is wrong.