

Samle

DESCRIBING TEACHING QUALITY: TOWARDS AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL  
OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

A proposal for research within the E.S.R.C. programme  
**Innovation and Change in Education: the quality of  
teaching and learning** by Professor John Elliott, Centre  
for Applied Research in Education, School of Education,  
University of East Anglia.

March 1990

## AIMS

The primary purpose of this project is to generate an empirical and credible account of teaching quality. Emerging systems of quality assurance fail to resolve the dilemma between accountability and professional autonomy. The behaviourist assumption that attributes of teacher competence are predictions about effective teacher behaviours is at the root of the accountability/autonomy issue.

The research would have implications for quality control policies that have emerged as a consequence of teacher appraisal, national curriculum and assessment, and competency-based initial and inservice training. In particular it would enhance our understanding of the relationships between teaching competence, the quality of student learning, and responses to the demands of the national curriculum.

In developing a non-behaviourist but empirically grounded model of teaching quality, the research should inform the debate about the adequacy of competency-based approaches to professional education and training. A non-behaviourist and cognitively orientated account of teaching quality offers the possibility of developing a form of competency-based teacher education which has both an obvious location in the H.E. sector, and high credibility for teachers.

With these considerations in mind the proposed research will explore the following hypotheses:

-intuitive peer appraisals represent more accurate and useful evidence of what constitutes good teaching than attempts to produce agreed operational definitions in the form of performance indicators.

-teachers who are judged to be good by their peers will manifest a structure of abilities which distinguishes them from those designated as average.

-the acquisition of subject knowledge and technical skills are necessary conditions of good teaching, but do not characterise the difference between good teachers and others operating at minimally acceptable levels of competence.

-teachers who are judged to be good by their peers will manifest certain shared and distinctive beliefs about what constitutes quality in learning and curricular experience. These will differ from the beliefs which underpin the practices of other teachers.

-teachers who display the distinctive characteristics of the good teacher will interpret and respond to National Curriculum and Assessment requirements quite differently from other teachers.

-the abilities which distinguish good teachers from others are not fixed attributes but capable of development, and that this development proceeds through a series of identifiable stages.

-the culture of the school is a significant influence on the development of teachers' ability structures, and the way in which national initiatives impact on their classrooms.

By articulating the criteria underlying intuitive and informal judgements of teacher quality, the proposed research offers the prospect of developing a systematic form of teacher appraisal which supports, rather than undermines, the practical knowledge of teachers by representing their private knowledge in a private form.

#### THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK.

The conceptual resources for creating an alternative account of teaching quality, which is consistent with the action prerogatives of a professional occupation, already exist (see Elliott 1990), as do the methodological resources for a research strategy aimed at describing its basic structure. What follows is a brief summary of key ideas, and a research design which synthesises two relevant methodologies.

Pearson (1984) argues that the behaviourist assumptions underlying the competency based education movement have resulted in misconceived attempts to reduce 'intelligent skill knowledge' to 'habitual skill knowledge'. He claims that in attributing competence, in a context of complex activities like teaching, we refer to qualities of situational understanding and intelligent action. Such attributions do not predict what an individual will do but rather assert that whatever they decide to do they will do it well.

A similar distinction to Pearson's has formed the basis of a Job Competence Assessment method developed by the Harvard psychologist D.C. McClelland (1973, 1975, 1976) and his colleagues (see Klemp 1977 and Spencer 1979) at Mcber & Company, a management consulting and training firm. McClelland and his associates have demonstrated that technical knowledge and skill, although necessary, do not

characterise the difference between doing something well and doing it at a minimally acceptable level.

McClelland argues that competence is not so much a characteristic of the job as a characteristic of those who do it well. The implication is that one cannot describe competence on the basis of a job tasks/functions analysis which has been the main method used by behaviourists for producing competency statements. From the perspective of McBer and Company competence is characterised by abilities to produce intelligent operant (unstructured) as opposed to respondent (structured) behaviours.

In a summary of Job Competence Analyses carried out by McBer from 1972-77, Klemp identified a number of critical abilities which generalised across professional/administrative occupations. They are highly consistent with Pearson's view that competence consists of abilities involved in developing insight into practical situations, and how to respond intelligently in them.

Klemp's review findings are also highly consistent with a model of the development of management competence produced by Dreyfus (1981). According to Dreyfus capacities for situational understanding lie at the core of management competence. He distinguishes capacities of 'component', 'salience' and 'whole situation' recognition and of decision-making. Five stages in the development of situational understanding and decision-making are described by Dreyfus; namely: NOVICE, ADVANCED BEGINNER, COMPETENT, PROFICIENT AND EXPERT.

What McClelland calls respondent behaviour plays an important role at the novice and advanced beginner stages but the competent stage is characterised by capacities to grasp the practical significance of aspects of the situation and to analytically build them into a model of the total situation. Subsequent stages represent a movement from analytic to intuitive/holistic understanding of situations. The kinds of cross-occupational competencies identified by Klemp from the McBer studies appear to correspond to the competent stage in the Dreyfus model.

The Dreyfus stage model illuminates a possible relationship between the kinds of competencies identified by the McBer method and ideas like 'action-research' (see Elliott 1985,1987 and Carr and Kemmis 1986) and 'reflective practice' (see Schon 1983,1987 and Zeichner 1981). Such ideas reflect a widespread (both nationally and internationally) contemporary development in Higher Education based teacher education. The proposed research

offers the promise of being able to describe with some precision the structure of abilities developed through action-research approaches to the inservice education and training of teachers. This form of teacher development would therefore be integral to the design of quality assessment and assurance systems which are concerned with the generation and maintenance of 'intelligent skill knowledge' in the teaching profession.

#### RESEARCH DESIGN.

McBer's Job Competence Assessment Method can be summarised as follows:

- 1) Identify the most effective performers of the job via immediate supervisor and peer rankings into groups of above average and average individuals. (Such rankings, it is claimed, are high in validity). Together the two groups constitute a first criterion sample.
- 2) Establish performance characteristics hypotheses via an Expert Panel. (See below).
- 3) Conduct behavioural event interviews with members of the first criterion sample. These are in-depth interviews in which interviewees are asked to describe one or more critical situations they have recently handled.
- 4) Analysis of interview protocols to identify characteristics distinguishing good from average performers. Two or more analysts work on the data to infer patterns which characterise the good performers.
- 5) Follow-up observations of selected individuals from each group.
- 6) Cross-validation of findings against a second criterion sample. This involves another series of behavioural event interviews, the data from which is coded for the presence or absence of patterns which distinguished the two groups in the first criterion sample.

The research design outlined below synthesises McBer's Competency Assessment Method with Naturalistic Methods of Educational Inquiry developed in CARE's research and evaluation projects over the past 20 years. It draws on both the proposer's long experience of naturalistic inquiry and his more recent experience of using the McBer Method. Such a synthesis will hopefully contribute to the further development of a research methodology for generating empirical models of good professional

practice, and enable us to explore the potential of naturalistic methods in an area where experimental and survey methods have predominated.

#### Establishing an Advisory Group and Expert Panel.

Given the sensitivity of the proposed research, the project director would from the start establish an Advisory Group in which a number of interested parties would be represented, e.g. Teachers' Associations. The group would have an advisory only function, and operate within the parameters of an independent investigation.

Volunteers from the Advisory Group would constitute an Expert Panel for suggesting hypotheses about Teacher Quality for the research team to examine.

#### Establishing Samples.

The basic methodological principles which underpin the sampling procedures outlined below are as follows:

- 1) Whenever possible adopt procedures which reduce observer bias.
- 2) Minimise the extent to which the research is experienced by teachers as personally threatening or disruptive to staff relationships in schools.
- 3) Adopt an open and responsive stance to data about the influence of context on the models of competence which underpin both the performances of teachers in classrooms and appraisals by their peers.

With respect to the third principle, the research will adopt the 'Constant Comparison of Cases' (see Glaser and Strauss 1967) as the method for identifying the generalisable features which characterise good practice. Through the constant comparison of individual cases one generalises across contexts in contrast to generalisation through the aggregation of decontextualised attributes. The comparative method will enable the researchers to describe the range of contexts in which a particular model of competence operates, and to identify some of the factors which explain its generalisability across this range.

The method will also enable us to identify and explain contextual variations in the abilities which characterise good teachers.

Previous experience of using the McBer approach in a study of police patrol officers (see Elliott 1986) suggests that fruitful comparisons can be made on the basis of quite small criterion samples.

The first criterion sample will consist of 32 teachers, classified according to self, peer/senior teacher ratings as follows:

16 above average  
16 average

The above average and average sub-samples will be selected from 2 secondary schools (one urban with a mixed intake in terms of ethnic and social class background, and one predominantly rural) and 2 primary schools (set in similarly contrasting social environments). Given the sensitive nature of the research the Project Director will negotiate participation with L.E.A. officials, headteachers and senior staff who have prior experience of collaboration with research in CARE.

In each school 4 above average and 4 average teachers will be identified, on the basis of self and peer appraisals. All will be intuitively appraised as operating at or above minimally acceptable levels of performance, and only this will be known by the researchers until after the analysis of the behavioural event interviews.

The procedures for selecting and allocating teachers in each school to a particular category will be co-ordinated by a senior teacher, appointed by the headteacher on the criterion that (s)he has the trust and respect of the staff.

Data collected from the first criterion sample will be supplemented by data collected from a sample of 8 probationer teachers, who are perceived by their school and L.E.A. supervisors to be falling below minimally acceptable standards. The members of this sample may or may not be drawn from schools represented in the first criterion sample.

The purpose of this sample is to clarify the criteria for differentiating acceptable from non-acceptable levels of performance. A study of a sample of probationer teachers judged to be underfunctioning is likely to prove more acceptable in schools, than a study of an underfunctioning group of experienced teachers.

A second criterion sample of 32 teachers will be selected for cross-validating the competence model derived from the first criterion sample. Although selected by similar procedures to those used in constructing the first sample, it will represent a larger number of schools, with fewer teachers involved in some of them. This will enable a greater range of contexts to be taken into account in exploring the generalisability of the competence model derived from the first sample, and contextual variations in its constitutive components.

The second criterion sample will not be finally constructed until the analysis of the data from the first and supplementary samples has been completed. This analysis will raise issues about contextuality which need to be taken into account in constructing the second criterion sample, e.g. factors operating in small rural schools, and in curriculum areas and organisational cultures not covered in the first sample.

#### Collecting and Analysing Data.

The following kinds of data will be collected during the course of the research:

-Expert Panel statements about the key characteristics of good teachers will be listed and rated by panel members to determine their general view of which qualities

a) distinguish above average teachers, and

b) are possessed by teachers operating at minimally acceptable levels of ability.

-Behavioural event interview data elicited from all members of the first and second criterion samples, and supplementary sample.

Each individual would be interviewed once, and the interviews transcribed. Interviews with members of the first criterion and supplementary samples will be semi-structured, with respect to a set of broad, open kinds of questions. The questions would be generally informed by Klemm's 'three dimensions of competence' framework and by the Dreyfus' model of skills acquisition.

Interviews with members of the second criterion samples would be more structured. They would be specifically designed to test hypotheses derived from the first criterion and supplementary sample data. Nevertheless



they would have unstructured features, with respect to the elicitation of narrative detail.

-Observational data on the classroom practices of selected members of the first and supplementary samples.

These will be theoretically sampled in the light of themes/issues which emerged from the behavioural event interviews. 10-12 individuals will be observed on three occasions over a period of 6 months.

The observations will focus on

a) the extent to which the abilities evidenced in the interview data are manifested in the practices of a sub-sample of interviewees spread across the three rating categories, and

b) the relationship between the levels of competence observed and the quality of students' learning experiences. With respect to the latter, observational data will be collected on the quality of the learning tasks provided in the classroom and the teachers' ability to sustain students' participation in those tasks. The proposer has previous experience of qualitative task analysis in classrooms based on observation schedules derived from the work of Kemmis et al (1977) and Doyle (1979).

-Interview data about students'

a) interpretations of their experiences while working on learning tasks,

b) assessments of the quality of their experiences, and

c) accounts of the ways in which the quality of their task experience is evidenced in the products of their learning, e.g. written work, paintings, models and other artefacts.

The students of the 10-12 teachers observed will be interviewed following each observation. The data will be elicited using observational evidence (captured on audio and video recordings or in photographs), and samples of learning products.

The student interview data will be used in conjunction with the observational data to explore the relationship between the different levels of ability displayed by teachers in classrooms and the quality of students' learning experiences.

-Interview data about teachers' responses to evidence about the quality of learning in their classrooms.

The teachers represented in the observational sub-sample will be asked to provide commentaries on evidence gathered through observation and student interviews. The purpose of this triangulation procedure is to enable the research to examine the relationship between levels of teacher performance, reflective practice, and the quality of learning.

-Life history data elicited in interviews with teachers in the observational sub-sample.

This data will be used to explore common patterns in the biographical experiences of teachers (both personal and professional) and their significance for the development of teaching competence. Particular attention will be given to teachers' perception of the influence of school cultures (experienced as students and teachers) on the development of their teaching abilities.

-Data on the impact of national initiatives on school culture, gathered through participant-observation in the schools represented in the observational sub-sample.

## REFERENCES

- CARR, W. & KEMMIS, S. (1986) Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research. Falmer Press: Lewes.
- DOYLE W. (1978) The Tasks of Teaching and Learning. Invited address at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, April 1979.
- DREYFUS, S.E. (1981) Four Models v Human Situational Understanding: Inherent Limitations on the Modelling of Business Expertise U.S. Air Force Office of Scientific Research, Contract No F49620-79-C-0063.
- ELLIOTT, J. (1985) 'Educational Action Research' in Nisbet, J. (Ed) World Yearbook of Education 1985: Research, Policy, and Practice. Kogan Page: London.
- (1987) 'Educational Theory, Practical Philosophy and Action Research' in British Journal of Educational Studies Vol XXXV No 2 June 1987
- (1988) 'The Great Appraisal Debate: some perspectives for research', in Eggins, H. (Ed) Restructuring Higher Education, Open University Press/Soc Res Higher Ed.
- (1990) 'Competency Based Training and the Education of the Professions: is a Happy Marriage Possible?' Mimeo, Centre for Applied Research in Education, School of Education, University of East Anglia, March 1990.
- GLASER, B.G. and STRAUSS, A.L. (1973) The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research, Chicago, Aldine Publishing Co. (first published in 1967, London, Weidenfield and Nicholson).

- KEMMIS, S. et al (1977) How do Students Learn: working papers on Computer Assisted Learning Occasional Publications No 5, Centre for Applied Research in Education, University of East Anglia, Norwich
- KLEMP, G. O. (1977) Three factors of success in the World of Work: Implications for Curriculum in Higher Education. McBer & Co: Boston.
- McCLELLAND, D.C. (1973) 'Testing for Competence rather than for Intelligence' American Psychologist 28, pp1-14.
- (1976) A Guide to Job Competency Assessment McBer & Co., Boston.
- PEARSON, H. T. (1984) 'Competence: an historical analysis' in Short, E.C. (Ed) Competence: Inquiries into its Meaning and Acquisition in Educational Settings University Press of America: Lanham, New York, London.
- SCHON, D. (1983) The Reflective Practitioner. Temple Smith: London.
- (1987) Educating the Reflective Practitioner Jossey-Bass: London.
- SPENCER, L. M. (1979) Identifying, Measuring, and Training Soft Skill Competencies which predict performance in professional, managerial and human service jobs. McBer & Co: Boston.
- ZEICHNER, K. M. (1981) 'Reflective Teaching and Field Based Experience in Teacher Education' Interchange, 12, 4, pp 1-22.