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# The Follow-Up Studies Project: A Brief Report

Ho Wah Kam

Studies following up on student teachers who have started full-time teaching constitute part of the programme evaluation scheme at the Institute of Education. Since 1982 two surveys have been conducted to find out the perceptions that former Certificate and Diploma students had of their training programmes and whether there was any noticeable shift in their views about teaching.

In one of the surveys, the Certificate-trained teachers reported that although on the whole they managed adequately, they had their worries. These young teachers ranked in order of seriousness the following problem statements.

**TABLE 1 — LIST OF “MOST SERIOUS” PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED**

Problem	Rank Order
Handling pupils with behaviour problems	1
Having to maintain classroom discipline all the time	2
Coping with paperwork required by the school administration	3
Having a great deal of homework to mark	4
Being unable to get pupils to understand concepts	5
Being unable to motivate pupils to work hard	6
Keeping track of pupils' progress	7

The rank order of the problems that the Diploma students faced is given in Table 2. The most serious problem the Diploma teachers encountered was finding effective ways of motivating pupils to learn. This problem is linked to the next two, which have to do with the task of teaching pupils with special problems. Another difficulty faced by the young graduate teacher was in coping with paperwork required by the school administration.

A subsequent follow-up study (carried out in 1984) using the interview method sought more detailed

information about the nature of the problems encountered by a sample of beginning Certificate teachers and the coping strategies developed by them in dealing with their problems. Although this focus on problems and coping strategies might well mask what was productive and exciting in the experiences of young teachers, there was much that was positive which came through in the interviews. For detailed information arising from this stage of the study, readers may wish to refer to two earlier reports, viz., “Continuity and Discontinuity Between Training and School Experience: Follow-Up Studies of Former Students of the Institute of Education” (by Ho Wah Kam *et al*, published in *Singapore Journal of Education* 5(2), July 1983) and “The Experiences of Beginning Teachers: A Follow-Up Study Report Based on Interview Data” (by Rita Skuja and Muriel Lim-Quek, Nov 1984).

**TABLE 2 — FREQUENTLY MENTIONED PROBLEMS FACED BY BEGINNING DIPLOMA TEACHERS**

Problem	Rank Order
Motivating pupils to learn	1
Handling pupils with behaviour problems	2
Helping pupils with learning difficulties	3
Coping with paperwork required by the school administration	4
Maintaining classroom discipline	5.5
Organizing and conducting ECA	5.5
Making effective use of teaching aids	7

The questionnaire survey was continued with Diploma students who had completed their programme in May 1984. This revised questionnaire tapped rather detailed information about former students' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of each component of the Diploma programme in the context of their experience as beginning teachers. Analysis of the data is under way. ■