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FALSE METAPHORS IN PRE-SERVICE LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION

Oliver Seet Beng Hean

Paper presented at the Conference on
Colloquium on "Future Directions in Language Teacher Education in Southeast Asia"
RELC, Singapore, 1987
Introduction

I believe that at this particular moment in time, we are standing at the threshold of a momentous breakthrough in LTE. For too long now, language teacher education or LTE has been stagnating in the backwater of neglect or seeking a way out of the labyrinth of orthodox practices, while paradoxically great and innovative strides have been made in ELT, TESL and TEFL. Teacher trainers have, for some strange reason, not rigorously investigated their own practices in pre-service teacher education or else have been straight-jacketted by tradition.

To quote Cyphert (1977: 162),

"The research literature regarding teaching is vast, but the data-based literature regarding teacher education is considerably less; much of the knowledge garnered from research in teaching begs for translation into research in teacher education. Some of these implications have been logically drawn but almost never empirically tested".
Like Rubick's cube, the solution has eluded many because of the mind-set that has prevailed and still prevails in many teacher training institutions. Continued subscription to concepts and formulas that were, in the first place, based on pure speculation and that have no basis in reality continue to serve as prison wardens of progress. It is time to investigate our own practices and to look hard at some of the sacred cows of LTE.

**Balancing Theory and Practice or Translating Theory into Practice**

I do not honestly believe, for a start, that one can "balance" Theory and Practice. This see-saw or balancing scale metaphor seems to be widely accepted as encapsulating the means of improving the quality of teacher education. However, I see this metaphor as altogether false and misleading and continued belief in it is the root cause of our dilemma. Another popular metaphor suggests that Theory must be "translated" into Practice, suggesting at once that they constitute two different and distinct languages that are unintelligible to the audience and that, inevitably, in the process of translation something is lost.

Gaies (1980: 88) has observed that

"one of the dominant preoccupations within the field of language teaching in recent decades has been the search for ways to translate theory into practice".
I believe that both metaphors are false and misleading because they imply that theory and practice are either dichotomous or two separate and unrelated entities - which they are not. In reality, it has been sagely observed that there is nothing more practical than a good theory. Good practice is a realization of good theory and certainly not a translation. It may be said that good theory informs good practice and good practice makes theory sound and valid.

Nevertheless, the pragmatists complain about the practical inconsequence of 'pure' theory ensconced in its ivory tower; theory they claim pays far too little attention to the conditions of the actual teaching situation at any given time and, in the same breath, that theory contains too much other matter, of general interest only and of no real relevance in present-day conditions. The theoreticians, on the other hand, deplore the fact that practitioners are notoriously indifferent to theory, have a narrow-minded enmity to it or are flippantly oblivious to it.

Brinkmann (1983:8) states,

"I start from the premise that pedagogical theory and educational practice in the teaching profession are not diametrical opposites like day and night but belong indissolubly together like light and shade and are held together by none other than the teacher himself - provided he combines reflection and practice".

Widdowson (1984) also notes that

"there is no conflict between theory and practice, only between particular theories and particular practices".
Teachers who claim otherwise are diminishing the status of teaching as a 'profession' — reducing it to an occupation with fixed practicable routines unenlightened and unmotivated by theoretical considerations.

Widdowson (ibid.) argues that even the most practice-oriented teachers use techniques that are "based on some principle or other which is accountable to theory" even though they might attribute what they do to 'common sense'. But 'common sense' Widdowson points out is "a complex theoretical construct". Teachers of this ilk, tend to rely on formulas which may be ossilized version(s) of some earlier innovation". (ibid.) These teachers show all the signs of stagnation since they reject all ideas that do not conform to what Keith Wadd calls "contextual theory". Wadd (1982:220) defines "contextual theory" as

"that body of diagnostic procedures and recipes which structures ... (a teacher's) handling of pupils and organization of their learning situations, and is the cumulative experience of knowing 'what to do' ".

It is this body of accumulated contextual theory that constantly guides a teacher's activity. This practical theory

"is accumulated through the trial and error process of nding what works best" (ibid.:224).

Widdowson bemoans the fact that,

"Repeatedly, we see an urge to reduce ideas to basic formulae in the name of practicality". (ibid.)

He suspects that the motivation for this may arise from a need for
self-protection rather than a genuine intention of helping the learner learn more effectively.

There is a tendency for teacher training courses to yield to this 'urge' for 'practicality' and to reduce the importance of theory.

This is clearly undesirable; teachers

"need to be trained in practical techniques, but must also be educated to see those techniques as exemplars of certain theoretical principles and therefore subject to continual reappraisal and change" (Widdowson 1984:88 (my emphasis)).

Without this 'education' they will not be able to derive expertise from experience and will not be able to "act as mediators of ideas" (ibid.), either their own or others. To merely follow a set of routines, Widdowson maintains will hardly lead to a sense of fulfilment. He states explicitly that

"adherence to formulae is unnatural, stultifying, and an enemy to incentive, in teaching as in any other human activity". (ibid.)

The student-teacher needs to extend his pedagogic horizon so that

"can become capable of moving between speculation and empiricism and of understanding that pedagogic theory is not a doctrine of salvation, demanding belief in dogma, but is a principle of thought and knowledge which has to be made real in an independent productive capacity when dealing with persons and facts". (Brinkmann, 1983:3) (my emphasis)
Putting Theory before Practice

Yet another misleading metaphor is based on the horse-and-cart configuration - the premise that Theory must necessarily precede Practice.

The basic procedure in many teacher training courses is to provide students with theoretical input prior to practical experience. This procedure seems to be logically and intuitively supportable. In practice, however, it often leads to a predictable outcome, viz. students complaining that the course is "too theoretical". This allegation seems to be almost perennial in many pre-service teacher training courses conducted both by the former Teachers Training College as well as the present Institute of Education in Singapore as a perusal of the end-of-course feedback reports by students will reveal. It is symptomatic of a malaise which seems particularly to afflict teacher training courses.

The root cause for such a complaint lies in the inherent inability of students to relate theory to practice; it seems well-nigh impossible for them to relate theory which they have heard propounded from the rostrum to authentic experience through this procedure.

It has been pointed out

"that an outpouring of theory in the lecture room would never be a genuine part of the students' professional attitudes. They will not take it on board in their professional careers, and will relegate theory to the examination hall and the interview room. For theory to inform their actual practice, they have got to
appreciate its relevance when they are confronted with the complexity of a practical situation in the classroom". (Ashton, et al, 1983:50)

Some courses attempt

"to concentrate not on the content of either theory or practice, but on the relationship between them as shown in the attitude of the tutors". (Widdowson, 1979:68).

Such courses, however, will at best succeed marginally; they can help perhaps to develop some perception of the link between theory and practice, but this perception is inevitably 'external' or 'extrinsic' in nature since it does not arise from actual experience. Perceptions that develop from directly experiencing a method, for example, at first hand are 'internal' or 'intrinsic' in nature. The introspective process, once activated, leads the learner to form hypotheses of his own. It encourages him to form generalizations based on his own observations of what he has experienced personally. The interactional process between these derived perceptions and those provided by the encounter with existent theory is valuable in the formation of concepts.

Courses need to provide training in

"the process of generalizing from experience in order to adapt and improve, together with the experience of speculating on the basis of new ideas and applying those to the classroom". (Brumfit, 1983:208).

Such courses according to Brumfit provide "a firm basis for professional education". (ibid.) He notes, however, that in order to achieve this "time is necessary". To become a good teacher requires extensive development over a long period. Brumfit
observes that teachers with "a vast fund of techniques" but who never ponder over the underlying principles "will not be able to create new ones nor adjust them to changing circumstances" (ibid.). It is possible, of course, for teaching to occur quite independently of the application of theory but a teacher who wishes to improve will have to look at "the underlying generalizations which derive from successful practice". (ibid.)

**Putting Practice before Theory**

Another metaphor which suggests that Practice should precede theory - the cart before the horse - on the basis that this would provide "a known context in which to apply the theory" later (Widdowson, 1979:69) are, in the writer's view, flawed from the outset. Placed in a situation where they have to begin to teach without the benefit of guidance, most students will fall back on the only resource they have, i.e. the methods used by their own teachers. This can often be undesirable if the teachers they had in the past had skills, methods and attitudes which were less than exemplary. Hence, they rapidly adopt traditional modes of teaching. With the passage of time, this becomes 'set'; they develop what Wadd (1982:220) calls their own "contextual theory", i.e. theory that arises from day-to-day practice within an actual teaching context. The formation of such a theoretical set will require much effort on the part of the teacher educator to undo. The resultant damage from a procedure such as this may be so extensive in some cases that any attempt to ameliorate it will not
succeed: some students become impervious to new methods from the very beginning since they think that the 'old' methods are perfectly adequate for them.

Practising What We Preach

There are other factors that account for ineffectiveness in LTE.

In many teacher training courses, for instance, one might readily observe a strange contradiction between what is advocated or condemned and what is actually done by the lecturers themselves. There seems to be an inherent hypocrisy in the advice to students that they should not lecture in class when, before their very eyes, the person who advocates this is lecturing to them himself. The advice seems to lack credibility because such lecturers never seem to practice what they preach. Nuttall (1979:20) has pointed out that,

"It is no new observation that teacher trainers are the last to follow their own advice, nor that the activity we advocate in our trainees's classes is so often absent in our own".

Keeler (1982:259-60) also notes that:

"In teacher training we too readily adopt the indefensible position of using the very medium whose effectiveness we are (implicitly, if not explicitly) challenging, as a vehicle for the propagation of alternatives: which is to say no more than that our medium is not our message. Of course, the medium is the message: the message received by our teachers in
training is that learner-centred approaches, whilst 'obviously desirable', must be held on a tight rein; that students cannot be trusted to set their own objectives and to evaluate their own work on the basis of these objectives without teacher dominance; that certain 'basics' have to be imposed; that self-directed learning may correspond to, and therefore assist, certain cognitive development processes in the young child, but is not suitable for the more serious motives of more mature learners; that it may not be worth the enormous effort and hard work involved in setting up a full-scale self-access environment but that teaching 'tricks' (tips, techniques) can be extracted from these approaches and applied in isolation. In short, teachers in training are thereby encouraged to pay mere lip service not only to self-directed learning but to the fundamental concept of learner-centred approaches, regarding both as methodologies rather than philosophies with methodological implications.

This refusal to see that "the medium is the message" whether one likes it or not, may be one of the major reasons why teacher training courses fail to bring about desired change in students' pedagogical competence or in their teaching behaviour. It may explain why classrooms still remain teacher-dominated and why there is still a preponderance of teacher-talk in most English lessons. The old axiom that actions speak louder than words is still undeniably true. Because in many teacher training courses, the lecturers tend to be too dominant and to do most of the talking it should come as no surprise that it is their example that students remember best and emulate in their own classes and not their precepts which they seem unable to give realization to, in any case, in the lecture room. The teacher trainers are no different from the lecturers they had in the university and their example merely helps to reinforce this image of what a teacher should be since students have no other models to draw inspiration from unless they were to recall the school teachers they had. This could, as has been pointed out, have quite an undesirable effect.
especially if the teachers they had were of indifferent calibre. Welsing (1978) has noted that:

"Teaching teachers about methodology is like teaching foreign language students about the foreign language. In their training courses teachers must be given the opportunity to experience the methodology and to put it into practice themselves. Training courses should be 'do'-courses." (my emphasis)

O'Brien has also observed that:

"Teachers have ideas presented to them all the time, both formally and informally. It is what they do with these ideas, and in particular the extent to which they incorporate them into their classes, that is important for the trainer. Surely the only ultimately valid evaluation of a teacher-training course is in terms of how it affects the teachers' performance in their classrooms and the learning that takes place there".

Welsing further notes that:

"A fear ... to expose themselves and a lack of experience in a creative approach often causes teachers to limit themselves to narrow and unimaginative procedures. In our re-training courses, 'do'-courses, not discussion groups, we try to let the participants first experience the pleasure and efficiency of a more creative approach and then familiarize them with a number of techniques, which will help them in the organization of their lessons".

This approach is a more enlightened one although in the writer's view it does not go far enough. While providing students
with a first hand experience of the approach advocated, Welsing fails to take the most important follow-up step which is to actively encourage the act of introspection and self-analysis - the act of forming their own hypotheses on what they have just experienced or what Neather (1983:2,7) has called the act of "theorizing". Instead, Welsing presents his students with "a number of techniques, which will help them in the organization of their lessons". (ibid.)

This merely satisfies students' immediate need for teaching formulas or recipes and does nothing to develop their pedagogical competence or their insight and understanding of the underlying principles. It encourages what Gilpin, Haill and Mathur (1984:3) have referred to as "imitative behaviour".

The RSA Diploma in Teaching English in Secondary Schools which is conducted by the British Council in Singapore, as described by Gilpin, Haill and Mathur is not dissimilar to the one described by Welsing. Where it differs from Welsing's approach is that participants are encouraged to examine their own responses to the approach and to discuss the underlying principles of the approach, its efficacy, how it might be adapted, etc. This process of introspection, of forming hypotheses of their own, should always precede a presentation of existent theory. It is also my belief that such theory is best encountered through reading given in the form of self-access materials rather than through lectures alone.

Such approaches are more likely to 'educate' rather than merely 'train' participants. They are certainly superior to what Gilpin,
Haill and Mathur (ibid.:3) call "the PPP (Presentation, Practice, Production) method", which to the trainees means:

"Tutor presents new theories and methods, teachers practice these through peer teaching / microteaching, teachers use the 'method' in their schools".

This type of approach "gives rise to imitative behaviour" (ibid.).

The Danger of Demonstration Lessons

Another type of activity, highly espoused in many teacher training courses, that encourages imitative behaviour is the demonstration lesson. Extensive use of demonstration lessons encourages 'modelling' - the tendency for students to attempt to shape their teaching behaviour to approximate that of the model teacher.

This is more likely to happen when the same lecturer demonstrates a series of diverse techniques for various lessons: the personality of the lecturer begins to dominate and to influence their concept of what constitutes good teaching style. This is undesirable as the purpose of a teacher preparation course is not to perpetuate a stereotypical style of teaching but to develop the unique, inherent abilities of each student.

Brumfit (1979:3) warns of the inherent danger of demonstration lessons. He observes that 'brilliant' teacher trainers probably do more harm than good, and brilliant
demonstration lessons put off many students who see them as setting an unattainable standard. Anyway,

"teacher training is not about brilliance - the talented need it least - it is about helping the initially less talented to become as effective as possible".

It is important not to lose sight of the objective that

"students should be free to remain themselves within the course structure; the course is about being themselves, not about becoming somebody else". (ibid.) (my emphasis)

Rinvolucrì (1979) shares the same view; he maintains that a good demonstration widens the gulf trainees might imagine exists between his/her own competence and that of the lecturer or demonstrator. The "slicker the demonstration", the easier it becomes for the trainee to claim that "s/he can do it but I can't". The trainee will find it difficult to 'appropriate' the technique which has been 'mediated' by the lecturer's personality; instead he/she is forced to 'expropriate' it from the lecturer.

The Ineffectiveness of Lectures in a Methodology Course

Candlin and Murphy (1976:5) in looking at the findings of Bligh (1972) and Montgomery (1975) note that they suggest that

"lectures are not an effective way of stimulating thought or bringing about a change in the opinions of an audience; they are about as effective as other methods (such as tape-slide) for conveying information".
Bligh (1972:167) states explicitly that,

"Lectures are not usually effective in teaching students to think; this objective is better achieved by using lectures in conjunction with other methods".

He points out (ibid.:32-3) that compared with discussion methods the role of the student is relatively passive.

"He sits listening; his activity usually consists of selecting information from what is said, possibly translating it into his own words or 'shorthand', and then writing it down".

Bligh also quotes the work of Asch (1951) and James, Johnson and Venning (1962); in using a non-directive form of discussion, students displayed wider thinking and considered more solutions to problems than those who received traditional teaching, viz. lectures. If students are to learn to think, they must be placed in situations where they have to do so.

"The situations in which they are obliged to think are those in which they have to answer questions because questions demand an active response". (ibid.)

Candlin and Murphy (ibid.) also quote Peter Smith's comment (THES 30 April 1976) on the use of lectures (ibid.):

"(it) is arguably the most widely used (and abused) method of teaching and learning used with groups, irrespective of whether it is successful, effective or valid".

At best then, it would seem that lectures are useful only for conveying information although the lecture method is the "most dogmatic" of means available (ibid.). Lectures, according to Bligh's
findings are,

"on the basis of experiments in teaching, ... relatively inappropriate to teach values or to change attitudes. The more analytical findings of psychologists ... confirm, and to some extent explain this relative unsuitability". (ibid.:177)

This is a serious disadvantage since the modification of attitudes, opinions and beliefs is essential to the process of educating would-be teachers.

Bligh (ibid.:182-5) provides the following "psychological" reasons to explain why the lecture method by itself is ineffective. These are, inter alia, as follows:—

1. Verbal feedback is usually not obtainable from students in a mass lecture except in a limited way.

2. Lectures are usually given without pause or interruption and this does not permit students to rehearse what they have learnt; this rehearsal is important to consolidate their memory trace, to develop concepts by their use, and to relate different items of information to obtain a holistic view of the topic.

3. Because the concepts used in a lecture are likely to be similar, 'negative transfer' is more likely to cause confusion than if opportunity is provided for students to clarify what they have heard.

4. An early opportunity to reconsider and organize the information before it is forgotten, will make it mean something in terms of the students' background knowledge, and thus reduce the amount to be remembered.

5. There is also a tendency for lecturers to move too rapidly over their subject matter and this results in psychological interference; this is less likely to happen in self-paced teaching methods where less intensity of learning is demanded.

6. Active methods of learning are more effective than passive ones, and while the amount of activity involved in listening to lectures is a relative question and can be considerably increased if students are trained in how to listen, the
method remains a relatively passive form of learning.

7. The lecture method is relatively poor for maintaining attention. Compared with the uninterrupted lecture, variation in teaching methods will usually provide greater novelty, more arousing auditory stimuli, changes in posture and opportunities to take occasional microsleeps without serious loss in efficiency.

8. In contrast to the performance of a solitary lecturer, the provision of problems and ways of involving the students fosters motivation.

9. The lecture method stifles the desire for self-expression instead of using it, and disregards the natural desire for social interaction especially with one's peers.

10. Thought and feeling are best encouraged by methods other than lectures. Cognitive skills, such as the ability to apply principles, to analyse or synthesize complex data, to make decisions or to make fine judgements, require active learning before the memory of detail received during a short period of lecturing dies away. Thus intellectual development in a subject requires mixing the cognitive processes involved. Unless special care is taken, the lecture method normally places the student in a position in which he is only effectively concerned with virtually one process — the acquisition of information.

11. Experiments by Bane, et al, show that retention of information presented in lectures is inferior in delayed tests of recall than the same information taught by more active methods such as a discussion. This was not the case on immediate tests or when combination of the two types of method was used. (Bane, et al 1931).

12. If students differ in the methods by which they learn best, and teachers should adapt their methods to maximize their effectiveness, it seems reasonable to think that teachers should use a variety of methods to cater for the differences between students. This is not easy to do in a systematic way because of course pressures and the difficulty of knowing students' needs, but it is a further reason for adopting a general policy of using a variety of methods.

**The Experiential Approach to LTE**

What then, you might ask, is to replace lecturing and demonstration as these are ineffective methods? My hypothesis is that in the preparation of language teachers, it is more important
to develop their internal cognitive structures or their 'competence', viz. to focus on cognitive mapping, than on their 'performance' or behavioural change per se. Behavioural change, however, may serve as an indicator of internal cognitive change although this might not always be the case.

The best means of bringing about the development of internal cognitive structures is not through the employment of the lecture-demonstration-imitation method but through methods that expose participants to authentic learning experiences from which they can select, transform and encode "the nominal characteristics of experience into functional meaningful representation" (Wittrock and Lumadaine, 1977:417-8).

O'Brien has pointed out that:

"It is noticeable that the teachers who are most enthusiastic about new ideas, those who try the idea out with their students, are often those who have had direct personal experience of the approach or technique rather than secondhand contact through journals or colleagues...If a trainer can demonstrate that the idea works for these people when put into the position of learners, then the battle is more than half won: at least the participants will be convinced that the technique demonstrated is worth trying".
Student teachers need to be presented first of all with 'authentic learning experiences' which involve working with materials that are not merely illustrative of the types of materials for use with school pupils in simulated situations but which are designed for the participants themselves, viz. pitched at their level of difficulty. Participants should not be required to 'pretend' to be secondary school pupils - surely an unrealistic requirement in any case since they will be much older and more sophisticated and since the majority of them at the pre-service level would not have had much contact with secondary school pupils.

It is expected that the lecturer should actually teach the participants employing the very modalities he advocates, not for the purpose of demonstrating to them a particular method or technique but for the purpose of providing them with an authentic experience of the approach and method advocated. The participants will then experience for themselves at first hand the actual methods they are being taught to use, obtaining as a result, an inside view of the method. In this sense, therefore, the method is experiential: it has to be experienced by each participant so that the participant will be able to obtain an 'interior' view of the method. Most methodology courses provide an external description of the method and the worst of these courses are reduced to providing participants with recipes or formulas for teaching. Each participant is equipped with 'a bag of tricks' to use in class. This type of course has little value. Stevick (1982:50) observes that,
"Just knowing a few techniques won't get you very far ...
... The trick is to fit the technique to what is going on at the moment, and for this purpose it won't be enough to know one technique or another. You will also need to understand it – to see what's behind it and how it's related to other techniques. Then you will be able to generate for yourself as many techniques as you need and you will begin to develop an instinct for choosing rapidly and wisely among them".

Stevick is implying the need for developing pedagogical 'competence'.

To initiate the process of transformation and encoding into meaningful representation, participants will take part in discussions immediately after the experiential activity in which they will be encouraged to 'theorize', to formulate their own hypotheses to account for certain aspects of the learning experience they have just had.

E.J. Neather (1983:27) has noted that,

"The point about training teachers is not to give them a theory, but to enable them to theorize, to think critically ... the sort of theorizing about practice which I want to promote can only emerge from practical situations".(my emphasis)

An analytical assessment of an authentic learning experience will help to stimulate the process of introspection which is essential if internal cognitive structures are to be affected. It is also important that participants be made to form their own hypotheses, to theorise first before they encounter existent theories found in the literature on the subject. This helps greatly to develop a critical attitude to these theories; the
inverse sequence often leads to a passive, mindless acceptance of the theories presented. Encountering theory after the initial attempt at theorizing has taken place will probably help to enrich or expand participants' perception of the teaching/learning process.

Having understood the underlying principles, participants could then usefully attempt to produce their own teaching materials. The attempt is of itself useful since in the process, participants become familiar with the difficulties of producing suitable materials for specific groups of pupils and at specific levels; they will probably learn that adaptation is a necessary process since no set of materials can be universally applicable. This process also provides participants with practice in problem-solving. Only the development of a problem-solving approach will equip would-be teachers with the ability to adapt to new situations and to apply basic principles to new teaching contexts and rapidly changing settings. Participants must learn to adapt intelligently to new situations.

Another crucial stage in bringing about internal cognitive change is the use of practice teaching. Because it may not be possible to arrange for this to take place immediately at the completion of each component of a course, an activity similar to microteaching might serve as an interface to the real thing. However, if this activity is to have some degree of psychological
reality, it is necessary that the materials used by students are authentic for the group and not materials requiring them to role-play. Getting students to pretend to be secondary school pupils, as I have pointed out earlier, is a waste of time as it will inevitably be seen as play-acting rather than useful practice. In any case, it does not make material difference if this form of practice teaching takes place outside the microteaching laboratory.

The most critical stage, of course, is the practicum, when students are placed in a real teaching situation. This is the crucible. This is where the success or failure of the course is to be measured. However, the instruments available for the job are usually gross, imprecise, unreliable, ambivalent and highly subjective.

Factors such as personality, rapport with pupils, speech and voice projection, while undeniably important, are variables which are essentially idiosyncratic in nature and which methodology courses can do little to change. Moreover, skill in using the techniques or methods taught in a methods course, to a large extent, depends on practice and on personality variables. While these need to be assessed, they do not indicate to the observer the extent to which a methods course has succeeded in changing internal cognitive structures. Instruments need to be developed to identify manifestations of students' understanding of the key
principles and concepts underlying the teaching of the subject. This task becomes possible only if first of all these underlying principles can first be identified and defined in observable classroom terms. The observer can then look out for realizations of these in the classroom and in post-lesson discussions find out if the student can account for why he was doing what he is did. I am not suggesting this form of observation as a substitute for present systems of assessment but as a complement to the existing global system that takes into account those variables mentioned earlier that I described as idiosyncratic in nature.

An often heard complaint by student-teachers taught by traditional lecture methods which tend to be prescriptive in nature is that the course is 'unpractical' or 'not effective or applicable'. This reaction is predictable as no lecture course can prescribe methods effective for every type of situation.

A course that attempts to develop an informed problem-solving attitude to the teaching situation, that attempts to develop pedagogical competence, will probably stand a greater chance of producing teachers capable of handling new and unexpected situations. This is a particularly desirable goal to aspire towards in countries such as Singapore where rapid change in the education system seems to be the order of the day.
Conclusion

Brumfit (1979:2) has stated quite explicitly that,

"In the end, teacher training must be about the principles for teaching, rather than what to do in particular circumstances, for no two sets of circumstances are the same and there are few rules for all occasions, and those that are there are vacuous (e.g. 'Don't stand in front of the blackboard when you have written on it.'). This suggests that the best training course must therefore be based on principles rather than practice... However, the principles do not exist as abstract generalizations; they only have value insofar as they are seen to be based on successful practice and insofar as they produce successful practice".

Widdowson (1984:88) also expresses a similar viewpoint. He states that

"an over-emphasis on technique in teacher training, without indicating its links with theory, will be ultimately self-defeating. We need a recognition that what is at the heart of teaching is intellectual enquiry and experimentation".
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