TEACHER FELLOW AWARD TO GIVE VISIBILITY TO THE COMPETENT TEACHER

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Recognizing, rewarding and encouraging good college teachers has been attempted for a long period of time. Probably the reason greater success has not yet been achieved is because competent teachers have seemed so hard to identify. Various symposia and workshops have addressed themselves to teacher evaluation, however, without any procedure yet being widely accepted. (Acker, et al., 1971; Dickerson, et al., 1961).

Oddly enough, it seems that teachers as a group, especially those in college, have not been known for their eagerness to have their teaching evaluated either in or out of the classroom. This reluctance has frequently, quite justly, however, been based on a lack of agreement on the criteria of judgment and the lack of confidence in the ability of the evaluator to apply objectively the criteria to the teacher's own circumstances (NEA Research Report, 1964).

Methods for evaluating teachers. In seeking after ways to identify outstanding teachers, three types of criteria continue to be used to evaluate teaching competence. It is generally recognized that the ultimate in teacher evaluation would be the improved performance (achievement or behavior) of students after completing the course; this is what the educationists call "product criteria." However, except possibly in some cognitive areas, results of pupil gain measurements have been inconsistent due to the many inputs, in addition to those provided by the teacher, that affect the student's learning (Ackerman, 1954; Musella, 1970). Some have depended on "presage criteria," that is, evaluating the competence of the teacher by considering him as a person – his personality, characteristics and attitudes (Flanders and Simon, 1969; Getzels and Jackson, 1963; Lorimer and Diessel, 1969). Yet others have shown that the teacher's competence can best be measured by "process criteria," that is, by observing what he does with the pupil or the teacher-pupil behavior and activities (Kinney and Kallenback, 1971; Medley and Mitzel, 1963; Stevens and Randall, 1971).

Current students can and do evaluate a teacher's instructional habits by experiencing his mastery of subject matter, teaching skills and grading formulas (Hamachek, 1969). The alumni can best identify the good teaching that sometimes is recognized only after it has experienced a few seasons of testing; alumni can also provide a type of feedback that can help keep the teacher up-to-date and relevant. If the objective is only to identify good teaching, student evaluation has been shown to be a reliable guide (Boyer, 1970; Hildebrand and Wilson, 1970). However, if in the evaluation there is a further goal of improving teacher performance, then peer observation, evaluation and interpretation are necessary because the caliber of a man's mind and work can best be judged by other trained minds in his profession. Introspection and self evaluation help the teacher pinpoint and accentuate those qualities that make for effective teaching (Boyer, 1970).

Factors basic to effective evaluation. The following factors seem basic to any effective program for evaluating the competence of any college teaching:

1. It is impossible to measure something until it has been defined, and once defined in measurable terms it can be measured (Kinney, cited by Deever, Demeke and Wochner, 1971); therefore we must decide on a statement of professional standards that contains a definition of what constitutes competent college teaching. Such criteria must have social and professional acceptability and be mutually understandable and agreeable to both the teacher and the evaluator.
2. An instrument must be available to measure or assess the teacher competence based on the accepted definition.
3. The accessibility of trained observers to objectively use the instrument in making the assessment of the individual teacher. This assessment can probably best be done through both classroom observation and structured interviews.

Such a program for evaluating teacher competence for teacher improvement has been developed and used with considerable success in elementary and secondary schools. In 1952, the California Council on Teacher Education published "The Measure of a Good Teacher." This lead in 1964, to "The Six Areas of Teacher Competence" which was accepted as a definition of the role of the teacher by the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, National Education Association (National IOTA Council, 1970). The IOTA (acronym for Instrument for the Observation of Teaching Activities) was developed by the National IOTA Council to measure the criteria in the definition. The IOTA states in behavioral terms what is expected of the competent classroom teacher. Verifiable data relating to a teacher's competence is based on objective classroom observations and structured interviews by a qualified observer.

Workshops that totally involve participants for 30-36 hours are directed toward understanding the definition and instrument and developing both observation and interview skills (Deever et al., 1971). These workshops provide unusual opportunities for communications concerning the philosophical and operational levels of teaching. The IOTA instrument and the workshop experiences are designed primarily to assist the teacher in self-evaluation for the purpose of professional self-improvement.

Proposed TEACHER FELLOW program. The college teacher – agriculture included – frequently has had an identity problem. As a college professor he has considered himself first a professional within his academic discipline and only secondly (if at all) a teacher. The man is usually hired as a rumen microbiologist or as a reproduction physiologist and then asked to teach a course or two in his field.

It would be helpful to have some program whereby a college teacher might better identify with the teaching profession to enhance not only his prestige but also his personal and professional improvement and fulfillment (Davenport, 1965).

The idea of a special prestigious designation for the more competent professionals has been with our society for some time. Surgeons of recognized skill may be elected Fellows of the American College of Surgeons. Scientists, because of their demonstrated ability within their disciplines, are elected Fellows such as in the American Association for the Advancement of Science or the American Society of Animal Science. Generally, such recognition is more readily available for research in the laboratory than for teaching in the classroom; although recognition for teachers is not completely absent. In the case of the American Society of Animal Science, the Distinguished Teacher Award is one of nine awards presented (ASAS, 1973). Most professional societies for the academic disciplines of agricultural sciences similarly reserve one of their awards for a distinguished teacher. However, as commendable as such programs of teacher recognition are, they remain rather restricted as to numbers involved, procedures and widespread motivation to improve teaching quality.

To overcome such limitations the National Association of Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) has instituted a TEACHER FELLOW Program (Moody, Ajo and Bennett, 1969; NACTA, 1973) to make visible good teaching where it exists and to encourage the struggle for excellence both for the natively gifted and the not quite so gifted (but dedicated) teacher. This Program will also give the poor teacher evidence to suggest that he seek other than the teaching field for livelihood and service opportunities. Important to the overall task of improving the teacher is providing the personal challenge, recognition and

reward necessary to attract imaginative, energetic and intelligent people to the profession and then to keep them there, not because they have no alternatives in research, administration or industry, but because the classroom is where they want to be.

An important facet of the TEACHER FELLOW Program is that it is designed to make good teaching recognizable in the national marketplace, thus making it as easily capitalized and transportable as is the bibliography of good research. Furthermore, opportunities for recognition would be available to all competent college classroom teachers in both large and small institutions rather than only one or two individuals chosen per year. Also, selection would involve more than only a nomination by a few people, but would be based on an evaluation by present and past students, by peers, and by the teacher himself.

The need for such a TEACHER FELLOW Program is pointed out in yet other ways. Recent student unrest has dramatized the need for college teachers to improve performance, especially at the undergraduate level (Wilson, Gaff and Thielens, 1971). Then there is an increasing demand by governing boards and legislators for what is called teacher accountability (Wochner, 1971, Bibliography of Teacher Accountability, personal communication). These people and the public they represent are increasingly insistent on some recognizable form of teacher evaluation not only for teaching improvement but also to provide a basis for retention, promotions and salary increases.

Guidelines for the TEACHER FELLOW are broad enough to recognize the varying contributions of teachers without saying which are the most important, i.e., one teacher can best inspire and motivate, whereas another can best inform, each being important to overall teaching. Since quantity as well as quality is involved, a minimum service time of five years in the teaching profession is expected.

In order to take advantage of work already accomplished in other teaching areas, NACTA for its TEACHER FELLOW Program of teacher improvement and recognition has worked with the National IOTA Council to adapt the IOTA Program to college teaching (Moody and Deever, 1973).

Seven areas of competence defining the "Role of the Teacher in Higher Education" have been identified and recognize the teacher as:

1. Director of learning
2. Counselor and advisor
3. Mediator of the culture
4. Link with the public
5. Member of the faculty
6. Member of the teaching profession
7. Member of an academic discipline

These together with an appropriate instrument for college classroom observation and structured interviews were field tested in a second NACTA-IOTA Workshop at Arizona State University, February 18-22, 1972. A subsequent version was used in a third workshop in connection with the NACTA Annual Meeting, Cobleskill, N.Y., 1973. (Ahlrichs, 1973).

Thus the IOTA provides one means for peer and self evaluation which because it is definition-based is believed to be superior to others reviewed. However, due to problems of logistics and expense associated with its use, yet other procedures and instruments as might be in use at the teacher's own institution can provide acceptable data for the peer evaluation aspect of the TEACHER FELLOW Program (Moody et al., 1972). This, then, together with instruments already devised for teacher appraisal by students and alumni (Moody et al., 1969), will permit the evaluation and recognition of competent teaching for the TEACHER FELLOW award program. In 1973, five outstanding educators in the field of agriculture were first to be so recognized (NACTA, 1973).

Summary. A prestigious award program has been instituted to identify and recognize competent college teachers of agriculture. A definition of competent teaching has been developed together with instruments and procedures for its objective evaluation. Teaching performance and its effect are determined not only by the teacher himself but by his peers and past and present students. Presumably, this award program will contribute to the general upgrading of teaching agriculture in college producing better informed, more highly motivated students and citizens.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is a summary of NACTA's effort to date to recognize good teaching. It will appear in the Journal of Animal Science. Grant Moody is on an assignment in Libya.