

AN ADMINISTRATOR LOOKS AT TEACHING

A TEACHING - LEARNING SYMPOSIUM

EDITORS NOTE:

On September 5-7, 1967, the Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, College of Agriculture, held a teaching-learning symposium for the Kansas State agricultural faculty.

This symposium was planned and sponsored by the Committee on Effective Teaching, Arlin Ward, chairman, and under the direction of Carroll V. Hess, Dean of the College of Agriculture.

The symposium was held off the campus at Rock Springs Ranch at Junction City, Kansas. The symposium staff included:

Dr. David G. Danskin, professor of psychology and director of the Counseling Center at Kansas State University.

Dr. Carroll V. Hess, dean of the College of Agriculture, Kansas State University.

Dr. R. Stewart Jones, professor and head of the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Illinois.

Dr. Richard E. Owens, assistant professor of education at Kansas State University.

Objectives of the committee that planned the symposium were given by John Sjo, Department of Agricultural Economics, Kansas State, as follows:

1. To help the participants develop new insights into their performance as teachers;
2. To emphasize the importance to the participants of improving the effectiveness of their instruction.

Dean Hess and the staff were highly pleased with the results of this symposium and have continued to conduct monthly seminars throughout the current year.

At the symposium Dean Hess addressed the group on the topic, "An Administrator Looks at Teaching." He has given us permission to use his address in this issue of the NACTA JOURNAL, and it is quoted below with only minor editorial changes.

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CARROLL V. HESS
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I welcome the opportunity this symposium provides for us to share views on teaching. The faculty, I believe has a right to be explicitly informed of administrator's views on the teaching function.

My objective here is three-fold, to outline very briefly:

- (1) my views on the changing philosophy of the modern, evolving Land Grant University and its changing role in higher education,
- (2) the mission of the college teacher and forces operating to change his role, and
- (3) the implications of this changing role for teachers and administrators in attempting to strengthen and enrich teaching

Higher education, long a repository for knowledge, has become the chief instrument to expand and to apply knowledge. Its clientele has become the whole of society, which has increased the number and weight of its responsibilities. Research has moved to the center of the educational stage. This pursuit of knowledge has brought a new pattern of qualifications, expectations and conditions of work to the academic professions. The new pattern of academic success calls for more emphasis on research, less

on teaching. Thus, teaching, once the major responsibility of higher education, must now serve a co-existing function with research and public service. Debating the relative priorities no longer is meaningful. Now it is both possible and necessary to search for knowledge, to disseminate and deposit it, and to apply it.

Society is becoming one vast school, with higher education a less distinguishable part of society. No longer can we think of a university simply as a community of scholars (faculty and students) separate from the community. Now learning must continue throughout life. We, as members of university faculties, must help our institutions release our energies more effectively so society may utilize our many services more perceptively.

Knowledge Belongs to the Public

The newly emerged higher education with its specialized knowledge has become, in a sense, a public utility, serving indispensably the entire population. It can no longer withhold services, because those who need its services cannot do without them. Thus, the activities of higher education are guided by the needs of those whom it can serve. As a servant of public interests, higher education is no longer free to determine either the kind or the quantity of services or the conditions under which they will be provided. Like a public utility, higher education has become subject to those it touches and to those who require its direct services. Through federal and state intervention and support, higher education is being brought to the consumer — with the establishment of community colleges and other urban institutions of learning. Areas once lacking higher education now will have it available, much as the REA made electricity available to farmers. New programs will be created to channel "hard" knowledge of higher education into solving every conceivable kind of problem. Broadening cooperative agricultural extension and other continuing education efforts are good examples.

Also, a world dimension is being introduced into U. S. universities. The International dimension will permeate more and more facets of our educational process. The State, the Nation is no longer our campus. The world becomes our campus. Teachers must recognize this in their teaching where their subject matter has international relevance. It is quite likely today that any given university class now has students in it who will serve abroad in other than military pursuits.

The Mission of the College Teacher

Over 326,000 college instructors this fall will be teaching the nearly 6½ million full-time degree credit college and university students.¹ Within the next decade, nearly another 6½ million faculty will have to be recruited to replace those who retire, die, or leave college teaching and to expand the staffs to accommodate the ten nearly 10 million degree-credit college students.

Who are these college teachers and what are they trying to accomplish? Are their roles changing significantly over time as they face their unprecedented challenges? Although some studies have thrown some light on their characteristics and their roles as teachers, there is a considerable gap in our knowledge. Rarely has our research centered on these academic men and women, even though they prepare the highly educated persons to serve our society.

Historical observations suggest that college teachers share three basic and closely related concerns, namely:

- (1) to develop the student's full human capacity,

- (2) to provide a continuous stream of educated manpower, and
- (3) to pass on the human legacy of culture and civilization.

Most faculty would generally underwrite those functions although their relative stress on each would vary among subject matter fields, level of instruction, professors' interests, and institutional expectations.

To be more specific, the teacher's first task is to free the student from ignorance, prejudices, fears, anxieties and other restrictive influences so he might be free to learn and to know the truth. All professions and disciplines contribute to this great goal of liberal learning.

Second, the teacher is responsible, whatever his particular competencies or specialty, for helping students prepare for some kind of specialized service(s) which requires collegiate or graduate education. This may be accomplished by extending the array of the student's possible career choices, or his perspective for evaluating choices and making decisions, by developing basic understandings of the field or by cultivating specific job competencies. Thus the student and teacher play important roles in sorting and identifying as well as in developing specialized talents.

Third, the student is a kind of bridge, with the teacher, between the past and the future. Together they insure a vital link in our culture and civilization. The teacher's efforts, the capital stock of facts, ideas and values is transmitted through students to oncoming generations. If the teacher senses fully his responsibility, he will see that this heritage is passed on, enriched and extended through his and other scholar's work and through creative applications of principles and other knowledge to problems of his own time.

These cardinal responsibilities may be fulfilled in a great variety of ways. The term teaching as used here suggests far more than a performance before a class with a teacher "giving" and a student "taking" a course. If the aim is to develop self-sufficient and responsible, free people, teaching can and must make a potentially great contribution. The task of teaching grows in importance as students' learning expectations are heightened.

The Changing Role of College Teachers

Strategies for attaining those three primary objectives change from time to time as tensions within and outside the academic community change and thus sharply modify methods and roles of college teachers. The factors that demand some redefinition of the college teacher's role include the following:

- (1) The dramatic explosions in knowledge calls for constant updating of both the teacher's insights, skills, understandings, and values as well as those of the students. We have scarcely begun to cope with the powerful counter-forces arising from this doubling of knowledge every eight to ten years in many fields. Not only must students learn more in specialized and applied fields, but they must also enlarge their understandings of developments in related sciences, and gain far broader insights into their nonvocational roles — as family members, as citizens, and above all, as reflective and sensitive human beings.

- (2) The sky-rocketing number of students seeking college educations and the increasing diversity in their social origins, their abilities, and their life goals also pose new challenges. Much more must be known about who these students are (including the most vocal and bearded ones), why they are in college, and how pro-

grams can be developed to serve them better. This applies to professional colleges as well as liberal arts colleges. Today's students differ notably from those of a generation ago, even from the generation that included you younger instructors. It is therefore difficult for most college teachers to understand, let alone respect, contemporary students' powerful search for identity, for personal freedom, and for vigorous involvement in social action. The Berkeley student rebellion reflected the values of a segment, at least, of the current generation of students. The present generation of agricultural students is not likely to insist upon their demands in such a vigorous manner, but in time, they too will expect and demand a role in educational planning. I support increased opportunities for students, professors, and administrators to talk and think together, to reflect more comprehensively on the strengths and weaknesses of our educational system and to invent and implement ways to make our colleges more humane, more personable, and above all, more stimulating to growth for both faculty and students.

If the gaps between the administration, teacher, and student can be bridged, a vital source of energy and insight into important educational and social issues can be constructively used. Students don't want their hands held—they want a really good education. They want access to the faculty as we continue to provide access in our College of Agriculture. Students resent faculty alienation. I believe the major task facing higher education today is to redefine a really good education for today's youth and to determine the extent and manner of student participation in the evaluating and redefining process. I think colleges and universities must listen with critical attention to these revolutionary voices, especially when they emanate from young men and women who are brighter and better informed and more serious than any of their American predecessors — and most of their classmates.

- (3) Fresh insights gained, particularly since World War II, into the nature of human development, the learning process, and individual differences, to select only a few significant areas of socio-psychological theory, are similarly affecting our concept of the college teacher's role. Such insights have been the major focus of attention at this symposium. With far more knowledge today about the strong influences on learning of motivations, of students' early family and school experiences, of their peer society, and of college environment, the really perceptive college instructor knows that he is but one of a complex of forces, which, if not coordinated, are likely to be ineffective. Teachers must therefore search for and utilize several avenues of influence to stimulate students' learning. Clearly this requires that they be more than competent scholars in their fields, although this remains a basic qualification.

- (4) The past twenty years has been marked by an almost incredible multiplication of new media and technologies for recording, storing, retrieving, distributing and presenting materials to students. These developments seem to threaten some teachers, most probably those teachers who B. F. Skinner has suggested *should* be replaced by teaching machines. However, the new technologies and media provide undreamed of ways to extend the talents of good teachers. Television, for example, still in its early stages of educational development and showing up quite well, can unquestionably take over some tasks that now claim teachers' time and efforts. This should allow more time for what machines can never provide, namely spontaneous interactions between teachers and students. My concern here is that persons with a sound philosophy of education quickly adapt these new teaching and learning media before the gadgeteers and culturally illiterate take over.

(5) Most faculty members, particularly in professional colleges, do more than teach. Most spectacular has been their scholarly and research roles. The "publish or perish" dictum has caused many young instructors to rush into print prematurely, while thousands of their senior colleagues have become entrepreneurs on a mass scale, bargaining to attract and administer large research grants. While others have simultaneously promoted their own disciplines on and off campus and to a lesser degree have become policy makers in the academic and governmental communities. There has also been a notable flight off campus as faculty members are increasingly drafted for services as consultants and demonstrators. These other roles can become so luring and financially attractive that they crowd out time for teaching preparation and for any real dialogue with students. Yet these experiences can and very often are used imaginatively to add color and vitality to college teaching. While research and teaching are essentially competitive for the same limited time and institutional resources, they can be pursued to be mutually supportive. Teaching and research are extricably related. The major aspect of teaching is to encompass and integrate the lessons of research. This intimate relationship negates the assumption that teaching and research must be performed by different people.

The professor who himself has stood perplexed before problems may establish a closer relationship with students struggling to achieve understanding than can the teacher who simply purveys other people's ideas. Thus research and teaching, although they can be incongruent in nature, can become mutually supportive. Our task as scholars and teachers is to make research and teaching complement and support each other.

(6) Last, teachers must be brought under close scrutiny in this age of uncommonly urgent problems. Henry Adams wrote so prophetically in 1910 that as we live in years marked by sharp and fateful "acceleration of history", we must search out ways of using "history in the making" to enrich students' learning. But unless many college teachers also participate directly in its shaping, students may fail to discover worthy models for enlightened social action. Signal examples at high policy levels are James Conant, Walter Heller, McGeorge Bundy, John Galbraith, Arthur Schlesinger, and many other such faculty members of today's colleges and universities who are more involved than ever in national and international affairs.

These are the major factors, which I believe force changes in the college teachers' role in today's society. As scholars and teachers, you must be cognizant of such forces that are altering the strategies for attaining the objectives you have set forth.

Teacher Shortage

Successful college teachers, by overt testimony before students, are the best recruiters of able minds for the college teaching profession. Supplementing the successful college teachers with monetary aids to support graduate assistants working toward Ph.D. degrees and college teaching will go far to remedy the teacher shortage. Of course, improved salaries and fringe benefits for outstanding teachers will need to be competitive with those for outstanding researchers. The two are so closely related that salaries should not vary widely between them. However, higher salaries will not immediately solve the present shortage of competent college teachers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

What implications then does the present shortage have for college teachers? I believe teachers should be quick to sense the necessity of exploring approaches to teaching

that conserve scarce teaching resources. Alternatives to the conventional lecture or lecture-discussion-laboratory already exist and have often proved superior for contributing to students' educational experiences and/or stretching teaching resources. I refer here to such efforts as programmed instruction or independent study, either as part of an honors program or simply to provide flexibility and opportunity for independent study and growth.

Conventional honors programs at the junior-senior level for gifted or even good students, involving as they do small classes, much counseling, and a low student-faculty ratio, are expensive. General honors programs that reach down into the freshmen-sophomore classes with fewer but larger sections are somewhat less expensive. Independent study programs, where the objective is to involve the student in the learning processes as much as possible and to encourage him to think more and to use more critical methods of study, are one answer. Most such experimental efforts have given very satisfactory results, as judged by students' learning experiences. Programs explicitly pointed toward the goal of self-directed learning merit the term "independent study", whatever form they take, to distinguish them from conventionally organized instruction where teachers are said to "give" and students to "take" courses.

WASTEFUL INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Somehow we must "break the academic lockstep" that today dominates instruction. We are all aware that students learn at different rates and by different means and that rate and amount of learning vary with such complicated matters as motivation, perception, organization, feedback mechanisms, active participation rather than passive submission. Knowing those variables makes it obvious that the established pattern of instruction in lecture-discussion groups of medium size meeting at regularly specified intervals in conventional classrooms is gearing instruction to a tiny homogeneous minority, and is a wasteful, inefficient system in a country committed to educating the vast and heterogeneous majority. The conventional classroom-lecture type of instruction must give way to the inescapable fact that already we have too few qualified teachers and too few classrooms to accommodate present enrollments, much less the anticipated surge of the future.

Perhaps a better reason for more independent study is that persons in all professions must expect to continue learning throughout life. Mere acquisition of facts and abstract principals is far from enough to produce an educated man. The body of knowledge in agriculture, as in most fields, is increasing at a dazzling pace. To remain effective in a profession, students must free themselves from relying on instructors and digested textbooks and perfect at least some tools of independent study.

The President's Committee on Education Beyond High School recommended vigorous and objective exploration and application by faculties and administrators of methods to increase the effectiveness and productivity of teachers, including instructional procedures which place more responsibility for self-education on individual students, with subsequent diminished emphasis on formal instruction time.

NEW COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA AND CLASSROOM FACILITIES

Also we must seriously explore the new media in communication equipment and data processing. I refer to closed-circuit television and devices for recording, storing, retrieving, or reproducing information in a manner that encourages learning. Specific examples are instructional and research films, programmed learning, language laboratories, film loops, audio tapes, video tapes, and presentation and feedback systems.

We should also be cognizant of recent improvements in teaching auditoriums for large classes and in learning resource centers. These new media and facilities should be viewed as having great significance to education. The full

range of ways to transmit what is to be learned must be assessed. This means that campus buildings and classrooms can no longer be designed with the janitor and maintenance staff in mind rather than the student and teacher. The focus of any "systems" approach to planning for and using media must be on student learning activities and how they affect student development. We are seeking the least cost per unit of learning, with fewer teacher-student contacts required compared with the conventional classroom-lecture method. There is, of course, an important place for the lecture approach. But often alternate programs should be considered where teaching resources are available. Competition for scarce teaching resources must be recognized.

FLEXIBILITY AND INNOVATION NEEDED

Flexibility and innovation should dominate teaching approaches. There ought to be lively and persistent inquiry in your department, on how instruction might better capitalize the talents of teachers and students. Instead of accepting what has been merely habitual, the entire academic community — including students, teachers, counselors, librarians, researchers, systems specialists and administrators — should be dreaming up and testing hypotheses relating to instruction. Phillip Coombs suggested that in no other area of the academic enterprise is there a greater need than for a Vice-president or a Dean of Heresy. But such a person's best efforts are futile unless those on the "front lines" are constantly letting their imagination and ingenuity run loose to generate ideas worthy of study. Since most experiments to date have operated within the context of the systems in which we have grown up or in which we are caught, we do not actually know what teachers could accomplish if they were freed from many of the "givens" such as the neat packaging of knowledge into courses and set patterns of class attendance and credits. Students, colleague and community expectations are that teachers will continue to provide easily assimilated academic pabulum while devaluation of the teaching role of faculty continues on many campuses. To offset this, Ruth Eckert at the University of Minnesota says three things are needed:

- (1) faculty members and students must be willing to take some risks to improve college teaching;
- (2) administrators must courageously support such efforts; and
- (3) an informed public, including college trustees, must underwrite what John Dobbin of the Educational Testing Services has colorfully referred to as "a retirement system for outmoded educational assumptions."

Implications for Administrators

What are the implications for administrators of student enrollment pressures, program proliferations, and teacher shortages? The administrator is faced with three responsibilities:

- (1) to provide high-quality instruction,
- (2) to recruit and hold a portion of the finest minds in the academic community, and
- (3) to establish an academic climate that encourages scholarly and innovative work by the faculty.

Administrators can use rewards to sharpen the sensitivity and sense of judgment of faculty members to divide their time between research and teaching. The two are mutually supporting so both can be met adequately. Too frequently, despite realizing the crisis in teaching, administrators set up and faculty members respond to the publish-or-perish system. The result is continued deterioration in

instruction. Academic administrators can no longer be content or quiescent about the situation. They must upgrade teaching while enrollments increase so youth can benefit from the knowledge explosion. Criteria and instruments to accurately appraise effective instruction need to be developed and utilized by administrators to reward outstanding teachers. Excellence in teaching must be rewarded alongside excellence in research and public service. Special efforts to provide prestige and stature to good teachers are essential for high morale and prolonged tenure on a campus. Also, the link between good teaching and good scholarship must be strengthened and preserved. This is not just a problem for administrators but for individual faculty as well. This is where the battle for effective teaching will be won or lost. I wish also to make the point that funds must be provided to improve physical facilities for the teaching process (visual aids, office, library, classrooms, teaching resources, etc.) as well as funds to support both research and publications that are related to improved teaching.

Opportunities should be provided in graduate programs for aspiring college teachers to incorporate formal course work such as college teaching methods, psychology of learning, and educational psychology as part of their course requirements, not as supplemental course work, and supervised teaching opportunities should be provided for such graduate students.

Administrators who create an academic atmosphere in which teaching is considered as important as research and public service will find potential teacher-scholars emerging to march side by side with research-scholars. This is the climate in which scholarly work thrives best. Without such a climate we find a continuing serious vacuum in the undeveloped talents and capacities of students.

In short, administrators must exhibit greater willingness to reward, to support, and to display proper respect for excellence in teaching if teaching is to improve. I can assure you that your administration subscribes to that philosophy.

Summary

In summary, I sense a spirit of genuine criticism of American education, a forerunner of improvement. I feel that our national conscience is troubled by the realization that in general we have failed to establish and maintain quality educational programs. There is an increasing concern for our failure to cultivate fully the talents and capacities of our people and a realization that we are not adequately satisfying the demands that our national life places on our educational processes. We are often guilty of sacrificing excellence because we have been unwilling to pay the price that excellence demands — rigor, discipline, and genuine hard work. Too often, as teachers, we have failed to challenge the full capacity of our students and thus have betrayed the great democratic principle in our educational process, which is that all men are not of equal capacity but all are entitled to develop fully the capacities they have. We must seek the kind of education that will open their eyes, stimulate their minds and unlock their potentialities.

We have great teaching, but the quality of teaching generally is lower by far than it should be, and lower too, than it need be. The reason lies in a stubborn refusal of our society to commit to the teaching profession a large enough measure of the best that we have in human resources. Thus I conclude that the quality of teaching is our basic educational problem.

In the last analysis, the quality of our schools will depend primarily on the quality of our teachers. Here, without any question, is the heart of the problem; and here is our central task — to bring to the classroom, seminar, and laboratory a large number of teachers with the high qualifications necessary for the full success of the educational enterprise. One of the keys to the quality of our educational enterprise is the conviction held by the faculty to teach effectively. Class size is not the critical factor in teaching effectiveness in higher education, but rather the quality of the teaching.

Perhaps the near panic of recent years will awaken a new concern for achieving quality in the face of increasing students and teacher shortages. I believe that we have begun to examine critically some of the long-held assumptions as to the nature and organization of the teaching and learning processes. Your participation in this symposium is symbolic of this.

President Johnson recently declared, "Education is the first business of our society." This appears correct for it is our enormous capacity for learning that sets us apart from other forms of life and makes us distinctly human. And, it is through good teaching, as conceived in this symposium that these unique abilities are discovered, cultivated and put to creative use. What greater reward can one expect from his life's work than to help students realize their full humanity? As counselor or friend to prospective college students, what greater contribution can we make than influencing and cultivating proper attitudes in youth toward learning, education, achieving, or toward intellectual activity. Our resource persons have singled out these attitudes as major determinants of how well students perform in college and in life.

Permit me to close with a quotation from Dr. Sterling M. McMurrin, former Commissioner of Education in the U.S. Office of Education. He says, "Quite certainly the key to the quality of our entire educational enterprise is the intellectual strength of our teachers, their grasp of the aims and purposes of education, the quality of their own liberal education, and their competence in the subjects they teach."³

I share this conviction, just as, I am certain, each of you does. The challenge before us in this symposium and in subsequent instructional seminars is to improve our understanding of the principles undergirding the learning process and their application in our instructional approaches in the constant quest for quality teaching. Let us return to campus, stimulated and committed to achieving this task.

¹ Projections of Educational Statistics to 1974-75, 1965 Edition, U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, OE-10030-65.

² Talent and Tomorrow's Teacher, The Honors Approach, New Dimensions in Higher Education, Number 11, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education.
