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ABSTRACT

Institutions can give support to the teacher's place in the interaction of the teacher, the student and a body of knowledge through the establishment of a separate unit such as a Center on Teaching. This report identifies some tangible means by which such a unit can help teachers sustain and improve instruction. The basic services that are highlighted include the dissemination of information regarding new techniques in instructional development through faculty newsletters; the giving of money and/or advice through special funds for the improvement of instruction and workshops, seminars and consultation; the use of instructional technology through a variety of media and special instructional arrangements; evaluation of student achievement, teacher competence, and impact of instructional and curricular change; and establishment of credibility with the faculty by careful choice of personnel and location of the unit. Some problems and issues that are generally met by such a unit are discussed. They include teacher resistance to change, a lack of general understanding of what constitutes good teaching, and the impact of institutional reward structures. (JMF)

CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION, SUPPORT, AND RECOGNITION OF COLLEGE TEACHERS

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF THE FUND ASSOCIATES IN NATIONAL PROJECT III, PREPARED AT THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON LEARNING AND TEACHING, THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

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Institutional Support for Teachers

Most colleges and universities learned a long time ago how to support good teaching: that is, how to encourage intellectual inquiry in a climate of trust and mutual respect among teachers and students. These intangibles are difficult to maintain, but by both precept and example, teachers foster these indispensible conditions. How might the institution give further support to the teacher's place in the interaction of the teacher, the student and a body of knowledge?

One way is to establish a separate unit, e.g., a Center on Teaching, and this report will identify some tangible means by which such a unit can help teachers sustain and improve instruction. But there are other means: a faculty committee or the appointment of a single person to a special post. To illustrate the variety of these arrangements, reference will be made to specific programs at the participating schools in National Project III. At Earlham College, for example, a senior professor in chemistry, Dr. Gerald R. Bakker, was asked to serve half-time as consultant on Teaching and Learning: to counsel with colleagues requesting help and to work with a committee to coordinate the relevant resources on campus. In contrast, Dr. Charles J. McIntyre, Director, Office of Instructional Resources, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, is responsible for a staff of about fifty persons in the four main divisions of the organization. These specialists work with the faculty, students and the administration on specific problems of teaching, media development, testing and evaluation of students, course and instructor evaluation, besides conducting an active program of instructional research.

One question persists: to what extent are technical and professional specialists needed to implement a service program? Each institution must give its own answer. Presumably, these decisions will reflect anticipated demands and already available resources. The programs underway at Earlham, Ohio Wesleyan and Bucknell are particularly suited to work with individual members of the faculty while units in the larger institutions are more often committed to designing and evaluating instructional rearrangements. The number of "FTE's" in these programs will vary, but the following basic services are among those generally well received by the faculty.

Dissemination of Information

Teaching is individualistic, but certain conditions for learning apply to classrooms generally. Teachers appreciate knowing about changes they might adapt for their own courses. One obvious service, therefore, is to inform the faculty about new instructional developments, locally and nationally.

A local newsletter is one means; the Earlham faculty can now report about their teaching in A Learned Journal, and similar newsletters are prepared by several of the other participating schools—Bucknell, Ohio Wesleyan, Kansas State University, Burlington County College, SUNY, etc. The Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at The University of Michigan prepares a Memo to the Faculty which is similar in length and style to these CRITERIA reports. As a means for dissemination, the local newsletter has the advantage of reporting here-and-now activities by fellow teachers, confirming that faculty colleagues are concerned about teaching and are doing something about it. Dissemination of information about specific accomplishments in teaching is, as in research publication, an important step toward reducing the provincialism of good teaching. As an over-simplified rule, a teacher responds best to an analysis of the process of teaching if it is closely tied to his or her discipline or to the home institution.

A chronic problem in dissemination is the style of language. Most teachers have their own universe of discourse about teaching and resent what they may perceive as the jargon language of a different discipline, especially education ("change agents"), psychology ("self-actualization"), or engineering ("input/output"). A related problem is the matter of how much "cookbook" information to give about instructional methods. A teacher may want to know how-to-do it but still reserve the freedom to modify the recipe, to add the personal touch. These adaptations will be more successful if the teacher has some understanding of the concepts, the logic, and the data supporting a specific change in the conduct of a course. A report about teaching, therefore, should be more than a pedagogical show-and-tell.

The Giving of Money and/or Advice

Providing "background" information is helpful but insufficient for solving the problems of the individual teacher. The impetus for a change of teaching style may be exhortation from administration, examples set by peers, the arrival of new types of students, boredom with old methods, plus all manner of other personal reasons. Sometimes these changes may involve spending money and/or seeking advice and counsel. One is more popular than the other.

Special Funds for the Improvement of Instruction

Every institution is already committing vast amounts of money to maintain its instructional program: faculty

salaries, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, clinics, media services, sabbatical leaves, and the like. This investment, the "big money," almost totally dominates the budget resources of a school, but a supply of "little money" can contribute significantly to the quality of instruction. Departments and individual teachers sometimes need a little financial elbow room to try out new ways of teaching and managing a course of study. For this purpose, special "instructional development funds" should be available as a resource to the faculty, paralleling the familiar "faculty research fund."

The actual amount of money from general funds so designated is a direct function of the aims of the program. If, for example, the fund covers the salary of a professor, a much larger amount of money will be necessary than if the released-time item is excluded. Care should be taken that this special fund not be perceived as an extension of the normal operating budget for the department; i.e., grants should be made on a "seed money" basis rather than as a continuing subsidy.

Five general guidelines are suggested for the evaluation of project proposals:

(1) Experimental or new approach—preference is given to proposals which incorporate instructional arrangements not already well established by other courses in the department or college. New curricular offerings sometimes involve start-up costs.

(2) The purchase of equipment—funding should be very guarded with respect to purchasing equipment. (Renting, leasing, borrowing or drawing from an equipment pool are preferable.)

(3) Released time—for the most part, salary support should be limited to technical, research and teaching assistants. Comprehensive projects may require that the department relieve a teacher from certain classroom commitments—especially at schools with rather heavy teaching loads.

(4) Capability of evaluation—the project must be designed to be reviewable while in progress and finally evaluated by some relevant means.

(5) Commitment to continue—the parent department must confirm its intention to utilize the proposed innovation if it is judged successful.

Any set of guidelines controlling access to money will be the target of considerable debate. In any case, a particular list of constraints is less important than the overriding principle: providing institutional budgetary support for developing new and better arrangements for teaching. The size of the school is not a factor, as illustrated by the support program at SUNY where the central administration awards grants to about forty teachers annually. In the faculty fellowship program at Burlington County College, teachers are paid at their regular salary during the summer, or are provided with released time during the academic year to work on educational projects. The staff of the Office of Educational Development and Evaluation screens competitive proposals prepared by applicant faculty members and selects projects for funding.

It is often helpful if a teacher or department has access to an individual knowledgeable about instructional design and in-the-field data gathering procedures. This person can assist in deriving generalizations for the benefit of other teachers and departments. Ideally, consultation should be available when the project proposal is in the planning stage. This is when the teacher should be aware of special conditions which might interfere with or mask the otherwise significant factors explored in the project. Left to their own resources, faculty may give limited attention to defining their instructional problem(s) clearly. Is the proposed change addressed toward increasing student interest, reducing student attrition, fostering higher levels of conceptual understanding, efficient management of large enrollments, or toward other goals that might be gauged in other ways? The impetus must come from the faculty member. The specialist can provide advice and materials, but unless the faculty member has the desire and motivation to see the new instructional design through, not much will happen. Assistance from a specialist is not a guarantee for success, but will increase the probabilities.

Workshops, Seminars and Consultation

The local institution, even more than the national discipline organization, has the responsibility to make available the means by which the faculty can sustain and improve teaching. Teachers at many campuses seem to be receptive to advice and counsel about the new resources for instruction: media technology, gaming/simulation, self-paced study arrangements, micro teaching, group processes, grading by contract, and the like. These are typical topics for faculty workshops; the advance distribution of "homework kits" to participants can help to provide a starting point for discussion.

While teaching is the common denominator among faculty members the agenda for the usual department meeting does not focus on teaching as a specific process, on the problems you and I may be having in the classroom. While professors like to talk with their peers about teaching, they are not often encouraged to share their own frustrations, conflicts, and feelings of inadequacy—even less so, their successes. It is apparent that many teachers can benefit from interdepartmental group sessions where they can pursue in-depth various problems pertaining to their careers and responsibilities as members of a faculty.

The faculty is the major resource for action on the long-range educational problems of the institution: the dimensions of curricular reform; the reward structure for teaching; the relations between research, service and teaching; attitude and value changes of students and teachers; the reassignment of teachers to meet changing patterns of enrollment; and others. In addition to specific "innovations" in teaching style, consideration of these larger purposes would seem to be a valid justification for a "faculty development" program; this concept, under the preferred name "professional development," will be discussed more fully in the next issue of CRITERIA.

Particular effort should be directed to the beginning teacher—in a graduate university, the graduate student teaching assistant. In a two-year college, she or he may be a part-time teacher from the local community, offering a particular course. At Burlington County College, for example, all new faculty are required to attend a two-week training institute conducted by the Office of Educational Development and Evaluation. A similar

workshop series is conducted for all new adjunct faculty so that this large and important group of teachers can function on the same level as full-time faculty members.

Departments and universities give different amounts of attention to the beginning teacher, but undergraduate students deserve the best possible quality of performance from a person who is just now moving to the other side of the desk. At the minimum, support should include a pre-service orientation program and in-service supervision and counseling. These activities do not usually get started by themselves, nor are they maintained from one year to the next without the active involvement of some person or unit concentrating on the career entr of the college teacher. Oswego has a supervised program for its Master's degree students in psychology who will work as teaching assistants in the large introductory course. The larger universities usually offer courses on "college teaching" but the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (University of Michigan) has found that an effective program of orientation and training for the apprentice teacher often resides in the home department.

From time to time each of us, young, middle-aged or older, is weary of the task of teaching. In any event, senior members of the faculty deserve special attention, not as an act of kindness but because they are an under-used resource for improving the curricular and instructional affairs of the college. Their institutional identification is strong and, in many instances, they are less defensive about "turf" boundaries—departmental or discipline lines of separation. A senior faculty forum, with access to a special budget for implementing experimental programs, might well bring about some significant changes.

Instructional Technology

Instructional technology is important in its own right as well as being a good means for illustrating the specific contributions from a supporting unit. Electronic equipment and mechanical devices seem to have a special lure for Americans and education is indeed a mammoth user of technological aids. Our mass educational (communication) system has access to the technology for delivering information to far places and to an infinite number of students. The simple delivery of information, however, is not a priority problem for most colleges and universities. The real issue is how to use instructional technology for more important educational functions, i.e., to improve the conditions for learning for the individual student. Small is beautiful.

Media

The printed word is the most valued single technology in support of education and the library is the oldest and most widely used "learning resource center." It is an excellent model, serving the individual needs of the teacher and the student, all without a fee-for-service charge. By now, most of us are familiar with the use of slides, films and educational television. The recent development of the video cassette has given the teacher much more control in the selection and production of materials for teaching. The audiovisual media now stand beside the printed word as vital resources in the education of our students. Even a one-person media center is a valued asset at a small college.

The role of the media specialist is changing but is not diminished. Most of our students have always lived in a world of television and have come to expect "broadcast quality," but this expectation should not override the larger principle: the visual image must be appropriate to the learning situation facing the student. The expertise of the media specialist is needed to help the teacher focus the camera on the concept and edit the rough tape down to a concise unit for viewing and reviewing. Who handles the chronic problem of maintaining the equipment?

Accessibility is important; if the teacher or the department must pay a sizable fee for these services, this resource will simply be passed over. Thus, the institution must establish the priorities for its media services. Often this necessitates a choice between providing services for the off-campus community and meeting the requests of teachers and students. Media support must include not only the costs of producing worthwhile instructional materials by teachers, but recognition and reward for these efforts as well. SUNY built large media centers at all state-supported institutions. Many of these are physically impressive buildings but face the continuing problem of maintaining up-to-date equipment and an adequate staff.

Distribution and utilization of instructional media is a further problem and is certainly more complicated than pulling shades and turning on a projector. Teachers should have access to a current listing of available materials and classroom facilities allowing for convenient use of films, videotapes, slides, audiotapes, etc. Otherwise, the same items are overused and duplicated in one course after another. Ideally, students should be able to go to a study site, e.g., the college library, and check out relevant materials for individual study.

The computer is an under-utilized instructional resource at most institutions and few have developed it as a comprehensive learning medium. The PLATO system of the University of Illinois is certainly an exception. For one thing, computer technology is expensive, not only financially, but in terms of the time and effort of subject-matter specialists who must be involved to some degree. However, until teachers are given incentives of released time and support, high quality, exportable instructional computing materials will not proliferate.

Special Instructional Arrangements

Personalized System of Instruction (PSI, The Keller Plan), audio-tutorial instruction, contract teaching, mastery learning, simulation/gaming, group process learning, etc., generally call for technical assistance during the course of their development and for evaluating their effectiveness as teaching modes. An instructor can seldom purchase for immediate application a prepackaged self-paced study course or a simulation game from an off-campus source. Reference to a suitable manual might be sufficient for some teachers but the procedural pitfalls in preparing a modular program for a large introductory class and evaluating its impact generally require that further support be given the instructor. The Learning Resources Center at Burlington

County College, for example, has made a significant commitment to instruction by providing well-equipped individualized learning laboratories.

One of the trainable skills of teaching is the management of small group discussion. Some teachers find it rather difficult to shift from lecturing to group discussion as their characteristic method of conducting a course and will therefore benefit from the contribution of a technical specialist in the small-group process. Good teaching involves the interaction of people and the teacher must be responsive to the sensitivities of students as individual persons both in the classroom and in counseling relationships.

Evaluation

Assisting teachers with problems of evaluation is a priority professional contribution which the faculty should expect from a unit for the improvement of instruction. Nevertheless, the evaluation specialist cannot address these matters in isolation; close cooperation from the subject-matter teacher is required

Student Achievement

Campus-based testing bureaus are evidence that the faculty recognizes the need for technical and professional assistance in assessing the academic achievements of students. Alternate evaluation procedures such as term papers, special projects, reading logs, and case studies require that the teacher work out equitable methods for evaluating the quality of each product and for combining these diverse measures into a single final grade. Via workshops and individual consultation, teachers frequently seek assistance from specialists on matters pertaining to testing and grading.

Teacher Competence

The same standards of technical quality and validity that apply in the evaluation of students must be used in evaluation of teachers. As reported in CRITERIA II, there continues to be considerable controversy over the evaluation of teachers by students. Policy positions must be established by faculty and administration, but the technical quality of the evaluation procedures should be confirmed by professional specialists. Evaluative judgments by peers and by supervisors usually stand by themselves.

Impact of Instructional/Curricular Change

Educational innovation is, of course, no guarantee that students will be better off. Evaluation of instructional or curricular impact is complicated and cannot be accomplished without the cooperation of the teacher who defines the course objectives and who confirms the validity of the criteria used to assess achievement of these objectives. The gathering of empirical data usually involves participation by someone having particular competence in designing an evaluation program. Bucknell has been responsive to this need and Purdue provides such a service for the smaller colleges in Indiana using the CAFETERIA system for the evaluation of teachers. At Kansas State University the Directors of the Offices of Educational Research and Educational Improvement and Innovation help faculty design and evaluate experiments in instructional improvement or change.

Establishing Credibility with the Faculty

There is no sure formula for directing the day-by-day operation of an instructional support unit to assure its acceptance by a discriminating and demanding faculty. The first prerequisite is the appointment of individuals who, through their own personal and intellectual strength, lend credence to their judgments about instruction. Some units have found it helpful to arrange joint appointments so that those who are giving out advice about teaching also experience firsthand the problems of the classroom. This arrangement places the "consultants" in the same forum as other members of the faculty; they teach, serve on faculty committees, attend and participate in faculty meetings and, if they are in a large university, they publish or perish along with their colleagues. The best single guarantee that a central support facility will have credibility with the faculty is to staff this unit with people who justify such confidence according to criteria important to the faculty. The National Project III schools meet this problem in different ways but always with the aim of establishing a close and effective interchange between the faculty and the supporting unit.

The location of a support unit within the institutional organizational chart is not, by itself, a life or death matter. A common practice, however, is to link these units to the office of the provost, the vice-president for academic affairs or the dean of instruction. In any case, an advisory board of respected members of the teaching faculty will serve as a testing ground for new policies and procedures. These experienced teachers also remind instructional specialists of the attitudes and values, the feelings and expectations that are important to the faculty as a whole. After all, the real source of power for action regarding the curriculum and how courses are taught resides in the separate departments.

College professors are sensitive to the meaning and implications of the educational process and guard against oversimplified tinkering with teaching. They are suspicious of projects that emphasize only the technological specifics of instructional innovation and they correctly sense that the teacher as a person has a vital impact on students.

Given this starting point, a consultant-on-teaching must in some way make it clear that he or she does understand and appreciate the teacher's problem and is able to place the specific matter within a larger context that will be meaningful and helpful to the teacher. Presumably, the consultant has access to a resource reserve that can serve to clarify a problem and to suggest what might be done. If the problem, for example, involves the motivation of students, then the consultant should know more about the theory, concepts, and research relating to student dynamics than the biology (or chemistry, philosophy, etc.) teacher who might be asking the question. A similar reserve of information is applicable to many other problems facing the teacher: assessing student performance, teaching abstract concepts and methodology, exploring how attitudes and

values are formed (and changed), and using technological teaching aids to best advantage. Otherwise, the halt are leading the blind and it will not take long for the credibility of the consulting group to be thoroughly erased.

Intellectual leadership is a highly respected concept in academia and this has implications for persons and units serving the teaching functions of an institution. How is leadership established? Insofar as it has the capability, the support unit should go beyond the reactive role of responding to queries, questions and requests from the faculty and should, in fact, advocate specific changes. A new procedure may not "sell" at first and the faculty may not enjoy being on the receiving end of pressure to change, but if the argument is well founded, they will respect the source of the challenge. Leadership by way of instructional research and development is a valid contribution in its own right and it strengthens the credibility of the service program of the unit.

Problems and Issues

Three problems illustrate general issues that will almost inevitably be met by an individual or group trying to support the teaching functions of an institution.

College faculties are understandably suspicious of the fads and fancies that pass through the campus. Teaching is a highly ego-involved activity and teachers resist change. If the new idea is right, then I am wrong—and most of us resist and defend what we are and what we do. Further, the hidden agenda generated by personal and departmental conflicts and frustrations must nearly always be taken into account when trying to understand the pros and cons of a faculty debate about educational change.

The "last in, first to go" principle is likely to be applied to recent additions to the institutional budget. It will be argued that the college got along very nicely for over a hundred years without a "learning resource center" and that this money might better be used to augment faculty salaries. The logic of this position is weak but its power is strong. Sooner or later the issue must be met: in terms of the priority values of the institution, what criteria are appropriate for evaluating the contribution of an instructional service unit?

What is meant by "good teaching?" Good teachers do certain things in common but there are also marked differences in what they do. In a small college successful teaching is probably weighted by the quality of the personal interchange between teacher and students. At a "non-traditional" school, rewards for good teaching may depend on the ability of the teacher to prepare and to manage a competency-based individualized program of instruction. In a graduate university, the talent for teaching is rarely separated from demonstrated ability in scientific and scholarly domains. Traditions being what they are, the charismatic teacher is more likely to be recognized and rewarded than the quiet and less verbal teacher who may, nevertheless, make extremely important contributions toward improving the conditions for learning.

The teachers at all of the diverse National Project III schools find a great measure of intrinsic satisfaction when they know they have done a good job, when they have accomplished their own aims as teachers. The importance of these intrinsic "rewards" varies from one teacher to the next but, in any case, these satisfactions are not enough; each teacher wants, needs, and should expect appropriate recognition from the institution itself. Extrinsic recognition and reward are essential within a community of teachers. The impact of the institutional reward structure for teaching is in evidence almost every day at a "center for teaching." In the final analysis it is the controlling factor in the changes that are made, or not made.

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For further information about
local activities in
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