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RESTORING PRIDE AND PASSION TO THE PROFESSION OF TEACHING

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The current high interest in education and teaching started five years ago with the publication of the reform report entitled, "A Nation at Risk," which warned that poor education was endangering the security and economy of the nation. That report kicked off an intense examination of education at every level.

The good news is that teaching is receiving a lot of attention. The bad news — if it should be called that — is that education is being warned to put its house in order. Teacher training for public school teachers is under scrutiny, and national commissions are hard at work defining the "standards" for good teaching.

But it is not just elementary/secondary teachers that are receiving widespread attention. The first sentence in a recent news item in the Chronicle For Higher Education reads, "Making better teachers out of professors is the latest and perhaps most challenging step in the reform movement of higher education."

If the number of blue-ribbon commissions, reform reports, and legislative actions are a valid index of our intentions to improve the quality of education, then classroom teaching has to be our first priority. Quite literally, teachers hold the key to the future — to our ability to compete in world markets, to our capacity to create a humane and caring world society, and to our desire to enrich the lives of generations of citizens, present and future.

I've entitled these remarks, "Restoring Pride and Passion to the Profession of Teaching" because it seems to me that teachers themselves need to take the initiative in restoring teaching to an honored place in our society. Teaching is in need of pride and passion on the part of teachers and respect and support from society.

Just a couple of decades ago, most of the action in education lay in opening the doors to previously unserved segments of the

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population. Community colleges were in the forefront of the access revolution, but it was in the offices of legislators and administrators that the most visible action took place. The major task for education, as it was perceived in the 1960's, was to expand both the size and the options of education and to remove all barriers — financial, social, racial and educational — that prevented certain groups of people from full and equal participation in educational opportunity.

The 1980s reforms set forth a different agenda — a quality agenda that depends heavily on classroom teachers. The movers and shakers with respect to the reforms called for in the 1980's will not be legislators and administrators, but rather the teaching faculty. The task of providing success for students is very different from the task of providing access. The problem is no longer how to expand the facilities and resources of education to accommodate new populations of students, it is how to provide the quality in eduction that makes access worthwhile.

In contrast to the positive expansionist climate of the 1960's, we face some pessimism and frustration in the 1980s. The air is rife with criticism, and resources are limited. But more important, we are uncertain abut what to do to improve the quality of education, and we're equally puzzled about how to measure our accomplishments.

Since some believe that accomplishment in education must be measurable and accountable, assessment seems to be the starting point for action in the 1980s reform. So far, however, assessment, like access, has been largely the province of legislators and administrators. State governments have been especially active in assessment. Just a few years ago only a handful of states had assessment initiatives. Today, two-thirds do (Boyer, et. al., 1987). Campus and local administrators too are making strides toward assessment. A few years ago, most campuses had no procedures for getting feedback on what their students were learning in college. Today, 79 percent of the administrators polled in the recent ACE survey said they expect some form of assessment to be introduced on their campus within the next few years (El-Khawas, 1987). Conferences and workshops on assessment are consistently oversubscribed, and assessment has become the hottest topic in education today.

But, popular and worthwhile as it is, assessment is only a means to an end. To conduct a first-rate assessment is only to make a start toward the ultimate goal of improving the quality of education.

The end goal of quality can become a passion, but it has to be a passion that is widely shared by faculty, students, administrators, and legislators — a passion that is believed in so strongly that legislators and taxpayers are willing to commit the necessary resources, and students, faculty, and administrators are willing to commit the time, effort, and attention that go into creating first-rate education.

While the commitment to quality requires support from all segments of the far-flung educational establishment, the fact is that it is going to be impossible to do much about the quality of education without the full participation — and yes, passion — of teachers in their classrooms. Somehow we must find a way to restore dignity and pride to the profession of teaching.

The professions have had a rough time in recent years. It used to be that doctors, lawyers, ministers, and teachers were the most admired citizens of their communities. They were well-educated, well-known, committed to service, and proud of the colleagues in their profession. That image is a far cry from the spectacle of Watergate lawyers and the evangelistic preachers who have paraded across our television screens in a long series of scandals that have severely damaged the public trust.

Doctors, while managing to keep their faces off the television screens, have been less than admirable in fulfilling their professional obligations to provide responsible medical care for all citizens. The medical profession has been criticized for inflating the cost of medical care, for bilking third party payers, and for lack of concern for patients.

Teachers too have lost ground in the public regard for their profession. But the image problems in education are different from those that beset other professions. Teachers, far from being seen as too clever for their own good, are seen as not smart enough to teach our children. While an occasional philandering college president or corrupt financial administrator makes the front pages of the local press for a brief flurry of scandal, I don't think teachers have estab-

lished any general reputation for being unethical or greedy. Rather, we are perceived as more interested in summers off than in service to students and, rightly or wrongly, teacher's unions are seen as more interested in the industrial model of protecting the worker than in the professional model of protecting the standards of the profession.

While a few mistaken perceptions and well-publicized scandals can be grossly misleading and unfair to the majority of hardworking and highly ethical men and women in any profession, the fact is that teachers themselves have been losing enthusiasm for their profession. Data on the flight from school teaching has been well publicized as has the fact that it is the best and brightest who are leaving the profession first. The Carnegie Survey of 1984 (reported in Change, September/October, 1985) found 39 percent of community college teachers less enthusiastic about their work now than when they began their academic careers, and 29 percent are sufficiently distressed that they are considering another career. When asked about morale in their departments, 40 percent of all faculty respondents across all segments of higher education said it was worse today than it was five years ago.

That doesn't sound like a very happy or healthy profession. The question is, how do we turn this around? How do we restore pride and passion to the profession of teaching? In the first place, this has to be a do-it-ourselves project. We can't lobby for pride, and we can't hire a PR image-maker to change our opinions of ourselves. Professionalism, by definition, comes from within.

Without going into the long literature defining the characteristics of a profession, I'd like to take a few minutes to look at a concept that lies at the root of professionalism. That concept has been defined as "trust." The public trusts its professionals to use their expert knowledge and skill in a competent manner and to stay abreast of new developments. And the public trusts its professionals to put the welfare of those they serve above their own material gain (Sykes, 1987).

If we did not have these two forms of trust, the increasingly specialized and advanced knowledge of the professions would place all of us at the mercy of those who have knowledge that even the

most intelligent and conscientious layman can never evaluate nor achieve. The fact is that we have became dependent on our professionals, and and we have to trust them to be ethical, knowledgeable, and — well, professional.

That trust amounts to a social contract between professionals and the society they serve. One aspect of that contract that is in the forefront of education right now involves the exchange of obligation for autonomy. "A profession," writes Gary Sykes in the fall issue of Educational Researcher (1987, p. 19) "agrees to develop and enforce standards of good practice in exchange for the right to practice free of bureaucratic supervision and external regulation."

Although public school teachers are actively threatened with bureaucratic regulation, college teachers are not immune from demands for accountability and documentation of what students are learning in college. That is evident in the hard line governors and legislators have taken with respect to state-mandated assessment programs.

I want to look at this exchange of obligation for autonomy, not only from the collective stance of the profession, but from the individual perspective of the teacher in the classroom. If we are to restore pride to the profession of teaching, then teachers must be willing to take on the obligation of self-monitoring and self-assessment in exchange for autonomy and freedom from bureaucratic control.

I cannot, in either my heart or my mind, conceive of a bureaucracy or set of regulations that could develop an outstanding teacher. I think it might be possible, and wholly desirable, for a bureaucracy to get rid of incompetent teachers, but my particular interest is in the development of teachers who are good, who know they are good and want to get better, and who bring pride and passion to the profession of teaching.

There are three variables in teaching — the teacher, the students, and the subject matter. Those are unique and special in each classroom. I don't know the number of permutations and combinations represented by the possible variation in those three variables, but suffice it to say that there is no formula that can ever be devised to tell a teacher what to do next in his or her classroom. To be pro-

fessional is to exercise sound judgement, based on skill and the best available knowledge.

Those most directly involved in teacher education and faculty development recognize the limitations of trying to improve teaching by disseminating generic knowledge about the psychology of learning. Yes, there are some "general laws" of learning, and yes, college teachers of subject matter must become familiar with those. It is unconscionable for graduate schools to continue to turn out teachers who enter college classrooms without any background or knowledge in the skill of their profession.

Having said that — with some passion — I must go on to say that knowing pedagogy or the general laws of learning is not enough. A high school or college teacher needs to know how to teach a particular subject matter to the type of students in his or her institution. The goals, the techniques, and the skills needed for teaching history are different from those required for teaching physics. The newest trend in schools of education is to work with teachers in domain-specific or content-oriented teaching.

Indeed, I had occasion to reflect on this recently as I was reading the four-year report of the Educational Technology Center (1987) based at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. While the overall goal of this research consortium is to work toward what they call a "pedagogy of understanding," researchers at the Ed Tech Center are biting off very small, digestible pieces on which to chew. In the first place, their research domain is limited to the study of the uses of technology in the teaching of math and science. But they're defining their task even more sharply by studying, in some depth, very specific questions that have been identified by science teachers as "targets of difficulty" — for example, how student can be taught the difference between heat and temperature or between density and weight.

Those are learning questions that require the participation of classroom teachers. For some time now, researchers on teaching and learning have been moving toward greater involvement of classroom teachers in the design and conduct of research. First it was the use of teachers on advisory boards to help determine the questions for research. Then it was "R and D," standing for the involvement of

teachers in the implementation of research findings, then it was cooperative research, and most recently collaborative research.

I have been proposing a more radical move yet. I believe that teachers in teaching institutions, especially high schools and community colleges, should be doing research on teaching and learning in their subject matter specialities. Classrooms make excellent laboratories for the study of learning, and teachers can learn a great deal by systematically observing how their teaching affects students' learning. I call this Classroom Research.

The focus of Classroom Research is on student learning. All too often in faculty development programs, we have worked with teachers to improve their teaching. Our ultimate purpose in education, however, is to improve learning. Teaching and learning are not necessarily two complimentary aspects of the same phenomenon. Learning can and does go without teaching. More unfortunately, teaching can and does go without learning. While learning has many purposes, teaching has only one. The sole purpose of teaching is to enable or cause learning. No matter how brilliant or well-prepared a lesson, it fails the teaching function if it does not result in learning.

The most obvious way to increase the productivity of education is to reduce the gap between what is taught and what is learned. An analogy can be drawn between teaching and learning and buying and selling. We would not claim that something had been sold unless something had been bought. Similarly, we cannot claim that something has been taught unless something has been learned. The bottom line in education, as in business, is not in what we offer, but in what students take away with them. We could lay out a beautiful program of studies and prepare a well-organized and knowledgeable lesson — all to no avail if students don't learn from it. The reverse is also true, of course. We could have wonderful teachers struggling with a trivial and trendy curriculum, and students could learn it, but it wouldn't be worth their investment.

The gap between curriculum and instruction has been especially prominent in the current debates about what's wrong with higher education. Bloom, Hirsch, and others conclude that the problem lies in the curriculum. We no longer offer the classic common

knowledge that has withstood the test of time. Others maintain that what we offer is okay; the problem is that students are not learning it — or teachers are not teaching it effectively.

Although critics differ on what's wrong with education today, I think the problem lies not so much in what's available in the curriculum as what is bought by students. So one purpose of Classroom Research is to give teachers better insights into the learning motivations of students.

Another equally important goal of Classroom Research is to make teaching more intellectually stimulating and rewarding. Bringing things out of the storeroom day after day is totally predictable and not very interesting. That is why stock boy is an entry-level job with low level educational requirements.

Observing potential buyer's reactions, listening carefully to their questions, collecting data on what they buy and don't buy, experimenting with the never-ending quest for better sales, and then watching the delighted faces of customers who find what they are looking for are the rewards of involvement with the study of one's profession.

Classroom Research offers multiple advantages: 1) it helps to develop competent, knowledgeable classroom teachers who understand the learning process well enough to develop teaching strategies that are effective in promoting maximum learning. 2) It provides the intellectual challenge and opportunities for self-improvement that make any profession fulfilling and intrinsically satisfying. 3) It adds to our cumulative knowledge of teaching and learning.

Classroom Research is different from, but complimentary to, more traditional forms of educational research. When I was in graduate school, educational psychology was dominated by B. F. Skinner and the behaviorists. We believed in stimulus-response or S-R theories of learning. The stimulus evoked the response, and we didn't much care — certainly we thought it "unscientific" to study — what went on in the mind of the learner.

The great contribution of today's cognitive psychologists is that they do care about the learning process. They are finding that one of the major differences between successful and unsuccessful learners is that learners monitor and direct their own learning; they are

aware of themselves as learners. Researchers call this "metacognition."

Good learners, we know, are active learners — not just active participants in class, but mentally active as they study. Some examples of metacognitive strategies are these:

- Rehearsal. Good students are likely to rehearse what they are learning through activities such as repetition and underlining.
- Elaboration. Active learners often elaborate or extend their learning through summarizing or paraphrasing what they read or hear.
- Organization. Grouping similar concepts together or using outlining categories are metacognitive strategies that help students remember through establishing relationships.
- Comprehension-monitoring. Students who study using self-questioning and self-testing are engaging in metacognitive strategies to evaluate their progress as learners (Weinstein and Mayer, 1986).

Most good teachers probably use repetition, paraphrasing, summarizing, grouping, and questioning for comprehension as teaching methods. But we don't often help students to become more efficient learners, and we don't often think about how teaching might make more impact on what and how students learn. We could make our teaching more knowledge-based and professional by defining some learning situations for students and systematically observing how they go about solving problems or addressing ideas.

Classroom Research calls on teachers to obtain feedback from the students in their classes throughout the semester. This approach has been called "formative evaluation," meaning that the results of the evaluation can be used to form or shape the instruction as it is in progress. The information collected in the Classroom Research should be relevant to a given teacher's goals and should be frequent enough and specific enough to enable teachers to know how their teaching is affecting student's learning.

My colleague, Tom Angelo, and I have been doing some research to determine the goals of teachers and to devise some simple feedback devices that will tell teachers whether they are accom-

plishing their goals. We have just sent off to the publisher a Handbook consisting of 30 classroom assessment techniques that teachers can use in their classrooms to get feedback on what students are learning.

The assessment techniques in the Handbook are simple and can be used by classroom teachers without training in statistics or research methods. They are described under three major headings: 1) Techniques to assess subject matter learning and intellectual skills, 2) Techniques to assess students' awareness of themselves as learners and their ability to assess their own learning skills, and 3) Techniques to assess students', reactions to teaching methods, course materials and activities.

Let me describe one concrete and very simple assessment technique. A physics professor at the University of California described this one to us. He uses the simple device of "minute papers" to obtain student feedback on classroom learning. He stops class one minute early four or five times during the term and asks students to write the answers to two questions: 1) What is the most significant thing you learned today? and 2) What question is uppermost in your mind at the end of this class session? He reports that this simple device gives him excellent feedback on whether students are understanding and whether there are important questions to which he should respond (Wilson, 1986, p. 199).

When I described "minute papers" at the Harvard assessment Seminar recently, Fred Mosteller, a distinguished statistician and holder of an endowed chair at Harvard, became intrigued and involved his undergraduate class in Stat 100 in providing feedback on his lectures. After some experimentation, he came up with a modification of minute papers. He now asks students to answer one question at end of his lectures: "What was the muddiest point in the lecture?" Sometimes, he prepares handouts for the next class period to clarify a point or he may take up a difficult concept again the next class period or he may try a different teaching approach.

The purpose of Classroom Research is not to grade students not to evaluate teachers. It is to increase the productive interactions between teaching and learning. If teaching is to become a respected profession, based on skills and knowledge, we must move boldly to

ask what teachers can do to *cause* learning, and we must shift our focus from the detached study of teaching *and* learning to the involved study of teaching *for* learning.

The point is that we should be teaching smarter than we were 50 years ago. We should be accumulating the knowledge that would enable us to move the profession of teaching into the 21st century. Teaching, by and large, still operates on S-R Theories. The test question is the stimulus; the answer is the response, and we don't know what goes on in between.

It is not going to be easy to develop the techniques that will turn those hyphens into windows that give us better insights into learning processes. The tools for Classroom Research are necessarily different from the statistical standbys of traditional educational research. Those of us who were trained in the correlational methods of educational research, for example, cannot explain how teaching *causes* learning, and so we speak cautiously of teaching *and* learning as though they were on parallel tracks that never intersect. Unfortunately that image may be all too accurate in many college classrooms. The teacher who is determined to "cover the material" may be half way down her track before she realizes that most of the students have been left behind on a parallel track.

Another notable difference between methods of classroom research and those of educational research is that educational researchers are necessarily interested in research skills and techniques that will enable them to generalize their findings from the sample they have studied to the population they wish to affect. Classroom Researchers, however, *start* with the population they wish to affect; that population consists of the students in their classrooms. The purpose of the research is not to search for the "general laws" of learning nor to define a "representative sample," but rather to determine the impact of their teaching on the learning of their students. Thus, Classroom Researchers have little need for training in sampling theory and other statistical techniques that enable generalization.

While the primary purpose of classroom research is to improve teaching in the classroom rather than to push back the frontiers of knowledge, I am convinced that the cumulative impact of thousands

of classroom teachers sharing the knowledge gleaned from their classroom research with others in their discipline will do more to advance the quality of teaching than will almost any major research project we can devise.

In conclusion, I believe that the missing ingredients in the profession of teaching today are challenge and hope. Most of us probably believe that we could be better teachers if we had more time, or fewer or better students, or more respect.

No doubt those things would help, but they call on someone else to "fix things," and they assume that we know what to do to improve teaching. I don't think this is the case. We know very little about the impact of teaching on learning. Passion and pride can be restored to the profession of teaching if we, as classroom teachers, take on the challenge of a lifelong study of our profession with the hope and expectation of finding some of our own answers.

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