

Institutional Effectiveness Begins in the Classroom

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① There are many words that come and go in the lexicon of education. Some vanish without a trace, seemingly worn out by too many attempts to define their uniqueness or contribution to the improvement of education. This is a conference that plays on the newest word in the education lexicon — effectiveness, as in "institutional effectiveness." Will this too play itself out in a couple of years? My best guess is, probably not.

Effectiveness is a strong word that means precisely what it purports to mean. No tricks, no tortured explanations, no prolonged definitions. It means to the lay public what it means to legislators. The dictionary defines "effectiveness" simply. It means "having an effect, producing a definite or desired result." This conference, then, is about producing results. An effective institution is one that produces the desired results.

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This is an era in which there is a lot of agreement on the desired results of education. The one thing that all of the reform reports have in common is that they believe that educational institutions at all levels should produce students who can read, write, and compute, who possess the basic tools to learn new skills and concepts, and who have sufficient appreciation of learning that they can use it throughout their lives to make life richer and more productive. Priorities, points of emphasis, and especially how to produce the desired results, will provide the basis for plenty of discussion, argument, and analysis, but the goal of the reforms of the 1980's is clear. The purpose of educational institutions is to produce educated students. ① ② "successful ✓"

I suppose one could be amazed that so much is made these days of such an apparently obvious conclusion. But by and large, educating students isn't what we have been talking about in education for the past couple of decades. For about a quarter of a century, we have been largely concerned with the expansion and contraction of higher education, i.e. with quantitative and largely administrative matters, as opposed to the qualitative and educational issues that are making their way to the forefront today.

In the 1960's, we were dealing with enormous growth, and administrators directed their energies to the building of buildings, the recruitment of faculty, and the development of new programs and procedures. The 1970's found us still dealing with numbers, but this time it was with the decline or the threat of decline. Harder than the satisfying work of building, was the frustrating task of re-

trenchment — the deferred maintenance of buildings, the retrenchment of faculty, and the contraction of programs.

The 1960's and 1970's called more for "management" of the educational enterprise than for educational leadership. There was a dramatic increase in the number of middle managers, and graduate programs, summer institutes, and workshops directed attention to the preparation of managers who could manage people, money, and organizations. A student could get a doctoral degree in education from the Harvard Graduate School of Education in the 1970's without ever taking a course in teaching and learning. In most respects the training programs for higher education administration became barely distinguishable from the MBA in the business schools.

Most of you are familiar with Peter Drucker's classic distinction between efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency consists of doing things right, whereas effectiveness consists of doing the right things. In many ways educators were more concerned about efficiency in the 1970s than about effectiveness. We gave more thought to the procedures of education than to its purposes — more attention to "running the railroad" than to charting new directions for education in the face of the changing role of education in society.

John Naisbitt in his book Megatrends says that the question of the 1980's is "What business are you really in?" "When the business environment changes," he writes, "a company or organization must reconceptualize its purpose in the light of the changing world" (1982, p. 85). The railroads thought they were in the railroad business in-

stead of the transportation business, and they so acted, tending to the running of the railroads instead of looking at the changes in a world that consisted of expanding highways, the building of the cross-continental trucking industry and the jumbo jet. "Suppose," writes Naisbitt, "that somewhere along the way a railroad company, sensing the changes in its environment, had engaged in the process of reconceptualizing what business it was in. Suppose they had said, 'Let's get out of the railroad business and into the transportation business.' They could have created systems that moved goods by rail, truck, airplane, or in combination as appropriate." (1982, p. 86). In retrospect, "moving goods" was the business of the railroads, but their absorption with running the railroad i.e. "doing things right" prevented them from asking the larger question about whether they were doing the right things.

My not very subtle point is that educating students is the business we are in. That suggests to me that the future leaders of the community college movement are going to have to be educators first and managers second. They are going to have to understand how to make teaching and learning more effective. *But let me be clear --* The significant contribution of the 1980s reforms is not to deemphasize the importance of efficient management, but to restore the balance between efficiency and effectiveness — to reintroduce, if you will, the issues of education to the management concerns that have predominated in recent decades.

If we can determine what results we wish to produce, (which has to do with educational leadership, vision, and mission), invent ways to measure whether we are producing those results (which has to do with assessment and accountability) — and then manage the enterprise efficiently to produce those results, I believe we will be on the road to developing effective (and efficient) institutions.

My assigned topic today is "Institutional Effectiveness Begins in the Classroom." That assertion starts with the assumption already made that the "desired result" of an effective institution is well-educated students. If we are in the business of educating students, the major lever that we have on what students learn in college is the college classroom. Unless we can affect what goes on there, we have little hope of improving institutional effectiveness.

Not inappropriately, I think, the major activity of the 1980's reforms so far has been assessment — trying to get good information about how effective our educational institutions really are. Assessment has attained such high visibility today that most people have some idea — and perhaps some fears — about how institutional effectiveness should be measured. Most people think of assessment as a large-scale testing program conducted at institutional and statewide levels to determine what students have learned in college. I would like, today, to question almost every aspect of the appropriateness of that image. I suggest that we should be giving more attention to small-scale assessments conducted continuously in college classrooms

by discipline-based teachers to determine what students are learning in ^{ose} ~~that~~ classrooms

The advantage of thinking small in assessment is that the classroom is the scene of action in education. If the ultimate purpose of assessment is to improve teaching and learning, then the results of a successful assessment must eventually bear directly on the actions of teachers in their classrooms. This means that the results of any assessment must reach classroom teachers and be perceived by them as relevant to the way they do their jobs. One way to do that, albeit not the only way, is to start in the classroom collecting assessment data that teachers consider relevant.

There are two major models of assessment that are being talked about today. One, "assessment-for-accountability" is illustrated in the remarks of Missouri Governor John Ashcroft, who chaired the Governor's Task Force on College Quality. He said, "The public has the right to know what it is getting for its expenditure of tax resources; the public has a right to know and understand the quality of undergraduate education that young people receive from publicly funded colleges and universities" (National Governors' Association, 1986, p. 154).

The second model, "assessment-for-improvement," is expressed by William Turnbull, late president of Educational Testing Service. He wrote, "The overriding purpose of gathering data is to provide a basis for improving instruction, rather than keeping score or allocating blame" (1985, p. 25).

While the ultimate goal of both types of assessment is the improvement of education, the dissemination of the results of the assessment is handled quite differently in the two models. In the accountability model, results are usually public, normative, comparative, and competitive. As Governor Ashcroft noted, the public has a right to know, and that implies that they have a right to compare programs competing for funds. Assessment-for-accountability is also "summative" in the sense that it provides a "stop motion" summary of the situation at any given point in time. The purpose of the information is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the education and ultimately to correct deficiencies.

In contrast, the role of feedback in the assessment-for-improvement model is to provide a continuous flow of information that is useful in shaping the process of teaching and learning while it is in progress. This is generally referred to as "formative evaluation," and feedback is most effective when it is *not* made public and when it emphasizes competencies instead of comparisons.

A related contrast that I should like to draw in setting the stage for my premise that institutional effectiveness begins in the classroom, is a distinction between what I shall call "direct" and "indirect" models of assessment. Those who, by virtue of their positions, are interested in accountability usually have indirect responsibilities for teaching and learning. That is, they are not on the campus or in the classroom and they must try in whatever ways they can to influence the behavior of those who are in a position to affect teach-

ing and learning. The further removed one is from the scene of the action in teaching and learning, the more one is dependent on manipulating reward and punishment to bring about desired ends. State systems can't do much directly about making institutions more effective, and so they manipulate rewards for institutions. For similar reasons, presidents manipulate rewards for departments, and department chairs manipulate rewards for teachers.

The legacy of behavioral psychology is that behavior can be shaped by the judicious use of reward and punishment — although we are somewhat more likely to talk about incentives and disincentives today. Large-scale statewide assessments will eventually be used to shape policies that reward institutional effectiveness, as defined by the measures used in the assessment. That is why educators are so concerned about measures of institutional effectiveness, and it is why educators should rush to develop their own small-scale assessments that have the potential to shape the behavior of teachers in their classrooms. In short, we as educators should lead the way to the use of the assessment-for-improvement model.

For several years now, I have been urging colleges to conduct their own assessments of student learning in the classrooms where learning is in progress. I call this classroom research. Community colleges have a unique and very special opportunity to take the leadership in developing both the scholarly and practical dimensions of expertise in college teaching. Happily, the new report commissioned by the AACJC on the future of community colleges

seizes this opportunity in their recommendations that "good teaching {should} be the hallmark of the community college movement" and that "community colleges should define the role of the faculty member as classroom researcher — focusing evaluation on instruction and making a clear connection between what the teacher teaches and how students learn." (Commission on the Future.....1988, p. 27).

If community college teachers are to establish their distinction as knowledgeable scholars and practitioners about the educative processes of teaching and learning, it is important that we understand how classroom research can serve as one avenue to carving out this area of expertise for community colleges

I want in the time remaining, to address myself to three questions about classroom research:

1. What is it?
2. Why should community colleges take the leadership in developing the concept?
3. What contributions will classroom research make to improving institutional effectiveness — which I interpret to mean the effectiveness of teaching and learning?

First, what is classroom research? Classroom research is the systematic observation by classroom teachers of students' learning as it takes place in their classrooms. ^{per} It calls for sensitivity, insight, and knowledge of the problems encountered by students as they attempt



to learn a particular subject matter. It does not call for sophisticated research design, statistics, or complex analysis of data. We are not trying to make educational psychologists out of community college teachers, but rather to direct their attention to continuous assessment of how their teaching is affecting the learning of students in their classrooms.

My colleague, Tom Angelo, and I have prepared a book entitled, Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for Faculty, that describes in some detail thirty classroom assessment techniques that can be used by community college teachers in any subject matter to get feedback on what students are learning in their classrooms. Our hope is that this book, illustrating general techniques, will serve to get faculty members started on classroom research and that they will, in cooperation with their subject matter colleagues, gradually develop their own techniques for collecting the type of information that is most appropriate to their students and their subject matter.

2 The purpose of classroom research is to provide immediate information and insight about the effectiveness of instruction — in short, about how much of what is taught is being learned. The premise of classroom research is that as teachers become aware of the impact of their own teaching on students' learning, they can make appropriate modifications while learning is in progress. I have urged community colleges to take the lead in developing both the

scholarly and practical dimensions of expertise in college-level teaching for a number of reasons:

First, community colleges are teaching institutions. Their faculties are hired on the premise that they are first and foremost teachers. Community college faculties must get their intellectual as well as personal satisfactions from teaching well. Thus they are, and should be, curious about learning and the impact they make as teachers on students' learning.

Unfortunately, teaching has taken a back seat to research in the hierarchy of higher education — partly because of the intellectual variety and stimulation offered by research over the demanding repetitiveness of teaching. But teaching is every bit as challenging and demanding as research, and I believe that if community colleges are to make their mark as premier teaching institutions, we must offer faculty the opportunity to establish themselves as authorities on teaching and learning — as seekers after knowledge, as well as practitioners in the art and science of teaching.

Community colleges are the richest and potentially most productive laboratories for gaining knowledge about students' learning—and especially about problems in learning. No other type of institution offers such a wide range of learning experiences for study. The curricular options of the community college, consisting of vocational skills, basic academic skills, and higher level cognitive functioning, offer a rich source of possibilities for study. And the practical orientation of teachers assures that the problems for study are real

problems that affect college teachers in their classrooms. Moreover, community college classes tend to be smaller; personal attention is frequently expected and given, and teachers have an opportunity to observe learning in process with its variety of stumbles and triumphs.

One of the most fruitful ways of learning about anything, from mechanics to education, is to look at examples of what goes wrong when things are not working well. The bright side of the concentration of students with learning problems in community colleges is that we can look at the "errors" of education and experiment with treatments to correct or alleviate them. In summary, the curriculum, the students, and the faculty of community colleges make them ideal laboratories for the study of teaching and learning.

Finally, I want to make a few observations about the potential contributions of classroom research to our knowledge about teaching and learning. There is a desperate need to join research and practice, content and process, curriculum and instruction. The gaps in our knowledge about teaching and learning are enormous. Community college teachers, embarking on classroom research, need not fear that they are moving into a field dominated — or even populated by — experts. After my extensive review of the research literature on college teaching, I can safely say that there are no experts in this field. There are plenty of gaps in our knowledge about how to maximize learning through more effective teaching. Some of the gaps are these

1. First is the gap between teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning are not necessarily two complementary aspects of the same phenomenon. Learning can and does take place without teaching. More unfortunately, teaching can and does go forth 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. For too long now, we have talked about teaching *and* learning as though they were separate functions proceeding on parallel tracks — instead, we should be talking about teaching *for* learning. Questions about what *causes* learning have embarrassed traditional researchers using ~~correlational~~ ^{correlational} methods. As all beginning graduate students are cautioned, "correlation does not mean causation." We need to develop a variety of new research methods — qualitative as well as quantitative — that will give us better insights about the impact of teaching on learning.

Classroom researchers are in an ^{excellent} ~~far better~~ position to observe the impact of teaching on learning, ~~than educational psychologists~~. But most teachers are more concerned about what they are presenting than about what students are learning. Thus teaching and learning proceed along parallel tracks, with teachers performing and students doing whatever students do when the necessary intersections between teaching and learning are absent or unclear. To find approaches that will narrow the gap between teaching and

learning, we need to develop the capacity of classroom teachers for careful observation of students, experimentation with various approaches to teaching, and attention to making the necessary connections between teaching and learning.

2. The second gap I would like to identify is the gap between teaching and testing. Although there is clear evidence that students learn what they think they will be tested on, and almost everyone admits that tests are excellent motivators for learning, tests are rarely used to teach. They are most frequently used at the end of teaching to evaluate learning. They follow the assessment-for-accountability model instead of the assessment-for-improvement model. Ideally, teaching techniques should test and testing measures should teach.

In the Handbook of Classroom Assessment Techniques that we have prepared, virtually every assessment measure is also a teaching tool. If you want to teach critical thinking, for example, we suggest that you devise an exercise that requires students to practice critical thinking and simultaneously to demonstrate their progress in achieving that complex skill. In this model, the teaching method itself provides the assessment. It is unlikely, for example, that critical thinking will be the result of a good lecture by the teacher, followed by a test on critical thinking. It is more likely that requiring students to practice critical thinking in a learning exercise will simultaneously teach the skill and reveal progress in learning it.

3. The third gap exists between the process of teaching and the content of the subject matter. Research on teaching is convincing many of us that content and process need to be joined in both research and practice. Research on teaching will be more productive if it recognizes that methods effective in teaching math may not work in history. Modern research suggests that a major task of the teacher is to bridge the gap between what the learner already knows and what he needs to know. Teachers knowledgeable about the structure and special issues of their subject matter are currently underutilized in research on teaching. Math teachers should have a lot to say about the most effective way to teach students the concept of negative numbers, for example.

For too long we have encouraged education researchers to study process and classroom teachers to study content. Progress in closing this gap is most likely to be made by ^{Teachers} ~~people~~ who know the structure of the subject matter and the difficulties of teaching it to others.

4. The fourth gap — that between curriculum and instruction— has been especially prominent in the debates surrounding the 1980's reforms in higher education. Bloom, Hirsch, and others conclude that the curriculum that we offer is inadequate. Others maintain that what we offer is O.K; the problem is that students are not learning it — or teachers are not teaching it effectively.

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 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.

Throughout history, we in higher education have addressed curriculum reform with enthusiasm and verve. Every 30 years, almost on schedule, we re-address the issues of General Education and the Core Curriculum. In contrast, we never really address the quality of instruction, partly because it is an individual responsibility and partly because we value academic freedom and are reluctant to enter the college classroom. Classroom research makes it possible for classroom teachers themselves to assess the quality of the learning that takes place in their classrooms. More powerfully yet, classroom research can become a collaborative effort, within and across departments, to determine whether aggregated teaching goals add up to a curriculum and how much of that curriculum students are buying.

5. The fifth gap is a familiar one. People have complained for years about the gap between research and practice. Why, ask the researchers, don't teachers use what we go to great pains to discover?

Why, ask the practitioners, don't researchers investigate real problems and make the results of their findings useful to classroom teachers? The envied solution to the closing of the gap between research and practice is the agriculture extension agent who takes the results of research in the universities to farmers in their fields. Although a great deal of money and effort has gone into educational R and D, we have never really come close to matching the success of agriculture in demonstrating the usefulness of research to improve practice.

Perhaps it is time to explore the possibility that the middleman who interprets research to the practitioner is not necessary in education. Practitioners — in this case college teachers — ought to be quite capable of doing their own research on the most effective ways to teach their discipline to others. Classroom research should be, not only a promising route to advancing knowledge, but to disseminating and using it as well.

6. Finally, there is the gap that has become especially apparent recently in the growing discrepancy between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Although most college teachers in every type of institution, except research universities, claim that they are more interested in teaching than in research, the rewards of higher education are moving toward those who give their attention to research (Carnegie Survey, 1985; Schuster and Bowen, 1985).

While research is not a competitor for attention among community college teachers, the intrinsic satisfactions of teaching seem

to be growing smaller, as teachers struggle with the demands of 15-hour teaching loads, enormous diversity in the learning backgrounds and skills of students, and the frustrations of working with many students who are less-than-enthusiastic about learning.

The most commonly discussed method today to increase the reward for teaching is to provide more external rewards — raise salaries, give teaching more weight in promotion and tenure decisions, provide recognition for outstanding teachers through establishing teaching chairs, "best teacher" awards, and the like. I don't want to disparage any of those efforts. As a society we simply must increase the rewards for teaching. But most teachers do not go into and remain in teaching to make money or to achieve recognition; They go into it because of the intrinsic satisfactions of teaching.

The current wave of interest in "professionalizing teaching" is an effort to increase the internal satisfactions of teaching, to treat teachers as the professionals that they are, to trust them, and to provide the opportunities for personal growth and achievement that makes any endeavor satisfying and rewarding. Classroom research is an important dimension of the professionalization of teaching.

The contribution of community college teachers to the improvement of teaching and learning is potentially very great. If we can narrow even some of the gaps that I have described, we will have moved institutions, as well as the profession of education, toward greater effectiveness.

Thus I end where I began. "Institutional effectiveness begins in the classroom." If we as educators are in the business of educating students, then the effectiveness of our colleges must be judged by how well students are learning. Everyone who works in a community college is charged with contributing to an environment that is conducive to learning, but the major responsibility for teaching so as to *cause* learning lies with community college teachers. Institutional effectiveness depends heavily on teaching effectiveness.

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