

AAHE
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A strange thing happened on the way to understanding the impact of college on students. In some 25 years of intensive study, we have learned quite a bit about the influence of those factors in the college environment that are most difficult to direct and control, and we know very little about those experiences for which most people hold us, as educators, responsible. We seem to know, for example, what kind of learning takes place **outside** the classroom, but we don't know very much about what students learn **in** the classroom. We know, for example, that students' out-of-class contact with faculty members has a positive effect on students' personal and intellectual growth (Pascarella and Terenzini, 1982), persistence in college (Kramer et al, 1985; Pascarella and Terenzini, 1980), and satisfaction with their college experience (Brown et al, 1975; Brown and Decoster, 1982). We know very little about the in-class influence of teachers on students' values, growth, and intellectual development.

We know that the development of self-concept is heavily the result of interaction with peers (Feldman and Newcomb, 1973; Madison, 1971; Katz, 1968), that increased levels of involvement in campus activities and events lead to enhanced personal growth (Smart and McLaughlin, 1986), and that the most consistent predictor of personal development during the college years is social and non-academic relations with faculty (Terenzini et al, 1984).

What we seem to be finding is that it is the uncommon rather than the common experiences of students that make the difference. Because all students take classes and relate in formal ways to their teachers, those experiences wash out, and our research shows that it is students who go the extra mile who get the most out of college. Those who take classes and get to know faculty personally grow more than those who just take classes. Those who get involved in the life of the campus show more growth and satisfaction than those who don't.

I don't suppose there is anything very surprising about those findings, but they are not altogether happy news for several reasons:

In the first place, it would appear that today's increased demands for accountability should correspond in some rough way to where we spend our money and how we organize student learning experiences. The lion's share of the budget goes for instructional costs, by which we mean faculty salaries for teaching classes. I think it is fair to say that legislators are representing the public interest when they ask for assessment and accountability from the **classrooms** of higher education.

True, the assessment movement is now giving long overdue attention to students' knowledge of subject matter, but do we know or can we find out what impact classroom teachers have on student values, intellectual growth, and motivation for learning? Do we know what day-by-day classwork contributes to our cherished concepts of the "educated person?" If immersion and involvement are critical concepts, do we know or can we find out what classroom teachers can do to immerse students in the learning experience? In short, if

we are to be held accountable for what students learn in college, shouldn't we be about the business of finding out what precisely the classroom experience contributes to the overall education of students?

A second reason for urging new directions in research on college students is that the major advances in research on student development were made in the 1960s and 1970s when the majority of college students were full-time, 18-24 years of age, and free to immerse themselves in the college experience. Everything that is happening now is moving away from college as immersion toward college as a part-time, commuter experience. Today's majority of commuting, working students do not participate extensively in extra-curricular activities, do not live on campus, do not see much of their teachers out of class, do not generally establish close and intimate associations with their classmates. More than half of today's college freshmen attend community colleges; the classroom is their window to education, and whatever they learn in college will be learned in the classroom or not at all. What do we think they should learn in the classroom? Most would agree that they should learn subject matter, but should they learn more than that? Will mastery of subject matter in even the most carefully balanced curriculum make them "educated persons?" If the burden of education is falling increasingly on the classroom teacher, what do we know about teachers' perceptions of their role in the education of college students?

What I know about the perceptions of classroom teachers regarding their responsibility for the education of students isn't

altogether reassuring. Last year, we administered a Teaching Goals Inventory to some 2000 college teachers from 22 community and four-year colleges. We asked them to select one class they were currently teaching and to rate the importance of 48 different teaching goals to the teaching of that class. We found an amazing diversity in what teachers said they were trying to accomplish. In fact, each of the 48 items drew the full range of responses. Every item rated "essential" by one or more teachers was rated "unimportant" or "irrelevant" by someone else. In a way, that's heartening. We are assured that someone somewhere is teaching to a goal that has been considered important in the literature of higher education. But an amazing variety of responses was typical of most colleges, and that raises questions about whether the quite individualistic goals of teachers **add up to** the mission of the college.

What constitutes a critical mass of influence from classroom instruction? We know, from past research (Feldman and Newcomb, 1969) that certain colleges have distinctive cultures that make a profound impact on students. But that influence is usually attributed to influences beyond the classroom. How does the culture of a college get transmitted through the classroom? Or does it? Jamie Escalante had a profound impact on his students, one that transcended school and home environment. In this case, one teacher, teaching subject matter in the classroom was, seemingly all by himself, a critical mass for teaching self-confidence, achievement motivation, and the ability to achieve "success against the odds."

In the case of Escalante, we get the impression that it would make no difference what he was teaching. But we found in our

administration of the TGI that teachers' goals are significantly influenced by the subject matter they teach. Despite all of the recent emphasis on "writing across the curriculum," for example, most teachers still think that teaching writing is the function of the English department. Whereas 68 percent of teachers in the humanities considered the development of students' writing skills an "essential" goal of their teaching, only 13 percent of those teaching science considered it equally important. When teachers were asked to rate the importance of the presumably universal goal of "developing respect for others, including persons of different backgrounds," 46 percent of those teaching career-related courses, such as education, allied health, and communications, considered it an essential teaching goal, compared to one percent of science teachers.

Higher education is facing massive demographic changes between now and the year 2000 in the constituency of the faculty. Almost everyone has talked about the need for better representation in the faculty of previously underrepresented groups, especially women and minorities. But almost no one has looked at what a very significant shift from a older to a younger faculty will do to the values and teaching goals of the faculty as a group.

Our data show that older faculty about to retire have different teaching goals and priorities from the younger faculty who will replace them. Faculty 56 and older are significantly more likely to try to teach academic honesty, love of lifelong learning, and respect for others from different backgrounds than faculty 35 and younger. Younger faculty, in contrast, are more likely to try to teach students creativity, analytic skills, and problem-solving skills, which are, it

must be admitted, the buzz words of our era. George Bush's "kinder, gentler nation" may be retiring in favor of the tougher, more competitive, more analytic faculty emerging from the graduate school cultures of today.

To some extent, the recruitment of more women will retain the softer values of the mellow older generation of college teachers. Women in our sample were more likely than men to rate as essential to their teaching, the development of respect for others, collaboration, openness to new ideas, development of a sense of personal responsibility, and listening skills. My point in citing these findings is not to answer the question about the impact of teachers on students in the classroom, but to point to the growing importance of the classroom as our major point of contact and influence on students. Are faculty, across the disciplines, prepared for their futures as shapers of values and attitudes,, as well as critical thinking and mastery of subject matter?

As institutions grow larger, more complex, more multi-cultural, and less able to immerse students in the college culture, the likelihood of the potency of the campus climate grows more remote. We really don't know what the impact of the classroom is on students because we haven't studied it. What do students learn, and how do they learn it, from classroom teachers? Amazingly, given the structure of American higher education, where the classroom is the presumed center of learning activity, these are questions to which we have given very little attention.

In conclusion, I suggest that the toughest challenge to research in education is the continuous study of the impact of teaching on

learning Clearly, educational researchers and social scientists will need not only the cooperation of discipline-based teachers, but their full participation as well.

My continuing suggestion, as many of you attending AAHE for the past several years know, is that college teachers should be enlisted as Classroom Researchers to study the impact of their teaching on the students in their classes. Until we gain some understanding of the impact of the education that we are held accountable for, we are powerless to improve the quality of undergraduate education, and powerless to prepare for a seemingly inevitable future in which classroom teachers bear increasing responsibility for shaping the attitudes and values, as well as the skills and talents of future generations of educated persons.