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TO TEACH

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Editors Note: *Shubel Owen, professor of Agricultural Education at North Dakota State University, was signally honored by his colleagues when he was selected to deliver the twelfth annual faculty lecture. Professor Owen has granted The Visitor permission to present in this issue a digest of his excellent address. To Professor Owen, a teacher of dedication and distinction, The Visitor extends its congratulations and its thanks for his contribution to the teaching profession.*

To teach is to guide or to direct the learning process. Learning is an individual experience resulting in changed behavior. Learning is the result of teaching. If there is no learning, there has been no teaching.

For the teacher there are two significant implications in the teaching-learning process. The

first is that learning is a result of individual activity by the learner. A teacher cannot learn for his students. He must stimulate those actions within his students which result in desired changes in behavior. To do this the teacher must know what actions are needed to produce the desired changes and how to activate the learning process. The teacher must know what to teach and how to teach it.

A friend has a garage door that opens at a signal from a transmitting unit located in his car. A mechanism in the garage is activated to open the door. The transmitting unit in the car alone will not open the garage door. Likewise, the mechanism in the garage will not open the door unless it is activated. Not all mechanisms for opening garage doors are activated by the same signal. So with teaching. The teacher initiates the procedures needed to activate learning. The teacher who is going to open learning doors must teach on several wave lengths for not all students respond to the same stimuli. There is no opening of the garage door without activity of the mechanism within the garage. Likewise, there is no learning without activity on the part of the learner.

A second implication of this capsule summarization of the teaching-learning process is that learning results in changes in the learner's behavior. The task of the teacher is to facilitate the adoption of desired changes in student behavior. These changes in behavior may be changes in feeling, knowing and doing.

Changes in feeling behavior are commonly described in terms of interests, attitudes, appreciation and ideals. Because they are intangible and not easily measured, teachers frequently ignore changes in feeling behavior. Rare is the teacher who in grading his students considers the changes in feeling behavior which may have resulted from his teaching. Perhaps the most significant contribution teachers can make to the education of students is in changes in attitudes or feeling behavior. Within this category are the strong

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motivators of learning. With the development of interests, attitudes and ideals favorable to the attainment of our aims as teachers, changes occur within students which will keep alive their quest for learning.

Changes in knowing behavior are expressed in terms of understanding. To understand a thing is to see why it is true. To see why a thing is true the learner needs to grasp the relationship between that which is being taught to other knowledge which he already possesses. When the student understands something he is able to fit it into his own life experiences. To understand implies more than rote memorization or recall. It implies the ability to apply. Understandings are closely related to the development of concepts and the ability to think. Learners come to understand through the relationships they establish between that which is new and that which they already know.

Changes in doing ability are expressed in terms of abilities developed by the learner. To teach an ability implies the development of the corresponding changes in feeling and knowing behavior on the part of the student. It calls for the learner to know the answers to the questions WHAT, WHY and HOW. To omit the WHY and to settle for knowing the answers to questions WHAT and/or HOW is to train rather than to educate. Guiding students to supply answers to the WHY is more difficult and time consuming than leading students to be able to answer the WHAT and HOW. In haste to cover ground teachers frequently move on when the students are able to supply answers to the questions of WHAT and HOW. This assumes that if the student knows WHAT he will understand WHY. Such teaching is training rather than educating.

To teach effectively the teacher must have clearly in mind the changes in behavior he seeks. These are his teaching objectives. In preparing a course the teacher's first step is to select those

objectives that support the course and will be of the greatest value to students.

Teachers must go beyond mastery of subject matter if learning is to occur. Knowledge makes up the particles of learning which combines to form concepts, understandings and abilities. These are products of real teaching. Students may have knowledge and not know how to use it. Teaching knowledge for its own sake is incomplete, even futile. For knowledge to be of value to the student, he must see its relationship to other things he already knows. He needs to use it to solve his immediate problems and meet his life goals. Knowledge is taught for use, not to be stored away.

In determining objectives for a course, the teacher is setting the limits upon his own achievements and the worth of the course. Master teachers develop their teaching objectives from the immediate needs of the students. The best preparation for living tomorrow is effective living today.

It is probable that much of the knowledge needed for living ten years from now is unknown today. We are told that the total body of knowledge will double in the next ten years. Thus today's knowledge has built-in obsolescence. Since we do not know the problems of tomorrow and since the body of knowledge is increasing rapidly, the skillful teacher's objectives will be those most significant to students in meeting their immediate problems.

The adaptive function of education will be highly significant in teaching students to live in the world of tomorrow. To fit into a changing world and to meet presently unidentified problems requires a person who can adapt without becoming frustrated. To meet this challenge teachers must develop problem solving ability in their students. In good teaching, emphasis is placed upon using knowledge as a means of developing the ability to reason.

To teach is to direct learning experiences which result in changes in behavior. Three principles of learning psychology are present consciously or unconsciously in good teaching. They are the principles of practice, effect, and association. In capsule form these three principles may be described as follows:

1. **The principle of practice** means that we learn what we do. Practice is necessary for learning and retention. Mere repetition is non-productive; it implies precisely that — repetition. Learning depends more on the vividness of the practice than the number of repetitions. There are degrees of intensity of practice and differences in personal ability to acquire a particular learning. Unless

a student has his heart in what he is doing little will be learned. A learner must do if he is to learn.

2. **The principle of effect** takes place when a response to a situation is followed by a feeling of satisfaction. Such a response tends to be repeated, but when it is accompanied or followed by a feeling that is annoying, the response tends to be eliminated. The learner tends to learn behavior that leads him to goals which satisfy his motives. He tends to eliminate, or not to learn, behavior that fails to lead forward his goals.

Satisfyingness promotes learning by making learning experiences more rewarding to the learner and by encouraging further application. We tend to do those things which we enjoy and which satisfy. Annoyingness promotes learning by teaching the learner what not to do. However, as a motivator of learning, annoyingness hinders learning because it acts as a deterrent to further practice. In good teaching the emphasis is placed on teaching what to do rather than what not to do. The theme song of the effective teacher is "to accentuate the positive - eliminate the negative."

Learning is achieved most effectively when both satisfyingness and annoyingness are wisely used - satisfyingness when the responses are right, annoyingness when the responses are wrong.

Teachers who seek to bring about changes in feeling behavior give attention to the early establishment of goals and ideals on the part of the learner. The ideals and goals of the learner are his own and are not given to him by a teacher. They become powerful motivators of learning, for we tend to do those things we like to do and refrain from doing those things which we dislike. The good teacher makes learning a satisfying experience to his students.

3. **The principle of association** implies that experiences learned together tend to recur together. When relationships are perceived, the rate and the permanence of learning are increased. The teacher who applies the principle of association will teach new facts in connection with facts already known by the student. He will relate facts being taught to the immediate life needs of the learner. If the learner is to make use of what is being taught he must see the relationship between that being taught and his previous learning.

Too frequently teachers assume that because they see the relationships between the new and the old, students will also perceive this. This is not the case and failure to "clinch the nail" lessens the effectiveness of teaching.

The basic psychological principles of practice, effect, and association in teaching may be compared with planning a board. The woodworker can plane a board against its grain, but the job is easier and his efforts are more rewarding when he planes with the grain. Teachers can teach without involving these basic principles, but their effectiveness will be greatly increased if they consciously involve these principles in their teaching.

The master teacher sees in each boy the coming man, then shapes him to a splendid plan. To make an analogy, the master teacher may be compared with an artist. Several years ago while in attendance at the North Dakota Winter Show, I had an opportunity to observe the work of Ole the Hermit who was a master whittler and wood carver. Ole loved to whittle as the master teacher loves to teach.

As I observed Ole demonstrate his proficiency as a wood carver, I compared him with the master teacher. Before Ole started whittling he formulated a mental picture of what the final product would be. So it is with the master teacher. Before he starts his teaching he has his desired outcomes, or teaching objectives, clearly in mind. Ole's objectives were pictured in terms of the carving he planned to make; the master teacher's objectives are pictured in terms of the changes in behavior he wants to bring about in his learners.

Not all of the pieces of wood in Ole's stockpile were equally easy to work with, for some were even-grained while others were knotty with the grain running in many directions. Before starting to carve a particular piece of wood, Ole made a careful appraisal to envision its potential. Without this evaluation it could have been only by chance that the full possibilities in a piece of wood would have been realized. In all probability many blocks of wood which had in them the potential of real art would have been discarded. The ability to see in each piece of wood some splendid design of art, and then know how to bring out the full potential in the finished product, was one of the distinguishing marks which made Ole an artist rather than just a whittler.

The hallmark of the master teacher is his ability to take the students who come to him, to appraise their capabilities, to envision in each the coming man, and then shape him to a splendid plan. This is to teach.

What are the marks of the master teacher? The qualities of humor, fairness, knowledge of subject matter, tolerance and other similar qualities are frequently listed. The presence of these qualities will not alone identify the master teach-

er, for they are qualities common to other professions. A more descriptive reply was given by the student who described the distinguishing characteristics of his "best teacher" as one who "had the touch of teaching". The mere merchandising of information is not the purpose of the ideal teacher; kindling of the will, enrichment of emotions, lighting up the imagination, making students sensitive and eager, are more important to one who has the touch of teaching.

He who has the touch of teaching has empathy, the ability to enter into the feeling and spirit of his students. He feels their needs, he shares their attitudes, aptitudes and aspirations. The teacher who has empathy will be regarded by his students as understanding, sympathetic, and considerate. His teaching will touch directly on the immediate needs and problems of his students; he will prepare students for living tomorrow by teaching them how to meet the problems of living in the world of today.

A second component of the touch of teaching is enthusiasm. Much that the master teacher teaches is caught rather than taught. Unless the teacher emits a radiance there will be little catching by the learners. The truly permanent products of good teaching, namely, ideals, attitudes, appreciation and interests are for the most part caught.

A third component of the touch of teaching is sincerity. To the master teacher each individual in his class is a person of worth. Each student in our classes is precious to his parents — and in many instances, to his wife and children. In a democratic society we believe in the unquestioned worth of the individual. The master teacher teaches to serve each individual in his classes. To teach is to reach, to shape each to a splendid plan. If the teacher has a feeling of true empathy and genuine enthusiasm for his work, then in all probability sincerity will be present.

A final component of the touch of teaching, but by no means the least important, is humility. The humble teacher recognizes that he is privileged to participate in the development of future engineers, agriculturists, homemakers, scientists, doctors, artists, statesmen and teachers. Through his students he has the high privilege and responsibility of shaping the world to come.

The humble teacher recognizes the need for continued growth. If I am to become a better teacher I must do something to improve myself. I must constantly bear in mind that being a good teacher today does not insure my greatness as a teacher tomorrow. Teaching methods and techniques that are adequate today will be outdated tomorrow.

The humble teacher fully recognizes the importance and the challenge of the task. He recognizes the truth in the words of Horace Mann who wrote, "Teaching is the most difficult of all arts and the profoundest of all sciences. In its absolute perfection it would involve a complete knowledge of the whole being to be taught, and of the precise manner in which every possible application would affect it."

Recently I was asked to complete an information form. One of the questions on the form was, "What is your occupation?" By habit and without much thought I replied, "Teacher."

Later, in a reflective mood I paused to consider the answer I had given to the question, "What is your occupation?" I asked myself, "Am I truly a teacher? Does my title of Professor of Agricultural Education qualify me to consider myself an educator? Does meeting my classes make me a teacher?" As I pondered the matter, the following questions came to my mind:

1. Does my teaching touch the lives of those in my classes? In my teaching do I touch on the real problems of my students? Does my teaching better prepare them to meet their life needs?

2. Does my teaching bring about changes in the behavior of students? Have I contributed to the development of interests, attitudes, ideals, understandings and abilities needed by my students for successful and rewarding living?

3. Have I contributed to the development of the ability of my students to think? Do I grade students to assimilate knowledge and to use it habitually in purposeful thinking?

4. Have I kindled a genuine love for learning within my students? Have I developed an appetite for further learning? Will their learning continue to grow after they leave my classes? Do I meet Einstein's requisite to be called a teacher when he wrote, "Only he can be called a teacher who can teach interestingly; who can present his material, even though it be an abstract subject, in such a manner as to awaken a response in the soul of his students and keep alive curiosity?"

5. And finally I asked myself: Has my professional growth kept pace with my subject field and with the new developments in teaching methods? Am I contributing to the profession of teaching? Am I doing my part to add to the dignity and honor of the teaching profession to the end that future teachers may be better teachers and that the educational experiences provided youth of the future will be more rewarding?

If I can honestly answer all of these questions with an unqualified affirmative — then I may with all honesty consider myself a teacher.