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## **TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCES: RECOGNIZING AND ENHANCING THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING**

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The 1997 Special Research Forum on Teaching Effectiveness in the Organizational Sciences represents an effort both to recognize the role of the scholarship of teaching and to enhance teaching effectiveness via empirical research. We sought to advance research about good teaching and effective learning in the organizational sciences. We first discuss the changing climate for effective teaching and learning in business schools. Then we provide a brief overview of the current state of knowledge and our view of future needs for research about teaching effectiveness in the organizational sciences. Next, we describe the history and purpose of this forum. Finally, we give an overview of the articles it includes.

Business professors are trained experts in many areas—accounting, finance, strategic management, organizational behavior, marketing, and human resource management. For the most part, the development and training of a future professor follows a well-established and arduous path through a doctoral program of study. Not unlike a fledging warrior, a new recruit enters the program, enthusiastic but relatively clueless, and through a series of challenges and learning experiences eventually enters the “men’s hut.” Those who are welcomed to the hut have learned a theoretical body of knowledge, are able to articulate research questions that may extend the body of knowledge, and can execute and interpret the results from a well-designed research study. Typical established members of the academy spend roughly one-third to one-half of their time continuing this pattern of activity during their careers.

Contrast this careful grooming process with the way many business professors are prepared for how they spend the remaining two-thirds to

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We are most grateful to both Angelo DeNisi and Joanne Martin, who had the vision for this highly unusual research forum, and we thank all the reviewers who did such a fine job for us and for the field. We also thank Cynthia Rée for her excellent administrative support and Estelle Scaiano, former managing editor of *AMJ*, for her wise and invaluable guidance.

one-half of their careers, in teaching. Many business professors are introduced to the job of teaching while pursuing their doctorates. Either because their doctoral programs consider teaching experience an essential attribute of the "trained" professional, or because their universities need doctoral students to staff undergraduate courses, or both, graduate students are often granted teaching assistantships and assigned to teach one or two courses per term. The preparation provided to these novice teachers resembles teaching a child to swim by throwing it out of the boat and into the water. Armed with perhaps only experiences gleaned from teachers they have had, newcomers to the game are left to swim or to sink, often by themselves. These early experiences likely have long-lasting effects, good and bad, on the future attitudes and expectations professors hold for the classroom.

### **THE CHANGING CLIMATE FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN BUSINESS SCHOOLS**

Having noted these rather haphazard and almost indifferent approaches to the craft of teaching in professional schools, it is fair to say, nevertheless, that recent initiatives have sought to address imbalances in the preparation of new faculty as researcher-teachers and to improve the teaching capabilities of more experienced faculty members. Professional institutions, such as the Academy of Management, have provided, in the past several years, financial, organizational, and moral support for the development and recognition of teaching excellence. Deans of professional schools and other university administrators now make teaching performance a priority in their reports and statements about progress in their institutions. This is in large part a result of the pressures for good teaching coming from students, legislatures, and other stakeholders of universities, but it is also a result of the belief in the inherent value of good teaching that some academics and administrators hold. Many universities have formal prizes to acknowledge teaching excellence. At our own institutions, the University of British Columbia (UBC) and the University of Denver, for example, research and teaching prizes are awarded each year. The teaching prizes at UBC include one for pedagogical innovations and two others for extended contributions to this craft. Summer stipends are awarded at UBC to both deserving teachers and researchers to support their work as scholars. Some institutions could, however, improve their symbolic, if not their actual, support for teaching. One institution with which we are familiar grants an annual award for teaching excellence. The award includes one year of release time from teaching!

Doctoral programs in some business schools have added attention to teaching through formal teaching seminars and workshops for doctoral students. (Examples include Georgia State University, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the University of British Columbia.) Besides such formal programs, there are countless instances of informal support provided for novice and experienced teachers by faculty mentors and peers. Simple exchanges of ideas for textbooks, syllabus entries, exam formats and ques-

tions, responses to cheating incidents, and ideas for active learning can be commonplace. Boyer (1990) described a program at Northwestern State University in Louisiana called "teaching circles"; these were groups of five to seven faculty members who voluntarily came together to observe and review each other's teaching. At the University of Denver, a biweekly informal brown-bag series on discussion in the classroom was held for one year. Such innovations take place in an increasing number of schools, but they are difficult to operate for any length of time without formal administrative support. In the broader context, organizations such as the Organizational Behavior Teaching Society (OBTS) and the Management Education Division of the Academy and journals such as the *Journal of Management Education* have provided outlets for dialogues on teaching and havens for those who have wanted to explore and renew their teaching competence.

All of these developments auger well for an improved climate for good teaching in professional schools. They are a necessary but, in our opinion, insufficient basis for establishing the status, support, and competency of teaching in such institutions. In his important work, *Scholarship Reconsidered*, Boyer (1990) elevated teaching from an important activity for professors to an element of scholarship. He thus asserted that the pursuit of excellence in teaching is legitimate not only because professors have an interest in that pursuit, but also because scholarship is at the heart of the academy. In his presidential address to the Academy of Management's annual meeting, Mowday (1997) endorsed this broadened view of scholarship for our profession. However, for teaching to be taken seriously in academia and for improvements in its development and delivery to occur, there needs to be a body of work, both conceptual and empirical, on which it can be based and communicated.

### THE CURRENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE ON TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCES

The dilemma in business schools is that there is not much systematic research work available on teaching in such contexts. A database search of the contents of the three journals published by the Academy of Management revealed that literally a handful of articles on teaching and teaching-related issues have been published in these distinguished outlets.<sup>1</sup> We identified approximately 5 articles on the scholarship of teaching published in the *Academy of Management Journal (AMJ)* since 1974. Teaching issues were slightly more prominent in the *Academy of Management Review (AMR)*, where approximately 12 articles were identified in our search. In fact, *AMR* actually contained a section for articles on pedagogy in its first four volumes. Finally, the *Academy of Management Executive* appears to have published approximately 4 articles on teaching-related issues.

<sup>1</sup> Given the vagaries of the database search process, it is difficult to be precise about these data. However, even if we are incorrect by a magnitude of 10, we believe our point still holds.

Professors of business need to expand and enrich the empirical as well as the conceptual bases upon which their teaching is established. Part of this effort involves knowing more about what has been published about teaching and learning by experts in the field of higher education. We suspect that this is a literature that, as scholars, professors of business could seek out much more frequently than they do.

But professors of business also need to have a sound basis of knowledge about what effective teaching and learning means in their own disciplines, as both the context in which they teach and the subjects about which they teach are unique. Perhaps more than in most fields, in management, *how* teachers teach and the tools they use closely mirror important aspects of *what* they teach about the nature and functioning of the phenomena. And, because of the nature of this field, management scholars have strong potential to contribute to the understanding of teaching in other disciplines as well.

Much writing and some research on the scholarship of teaching in business disciplines has already been accomplished. For example, there are journals on teaching issues in the fields of accounting and international business. In the specific domain of the organizational sciences, the OBTS has held annual meetings for 25 years and has published a journal, first called *Exchange*, then the *Organizational Behavior Teaching Review*, and currently, the *Journal of Management Education*, published with Sage Publications. A review of these publications, the program of the OBTS's most recent meeting, the general literature of the field, and the submissions to this forum revealed roughly four themes in the current body of knowledge: teaching practice, technology in the classroom, evaluation, and the classroom-as-organization. Each will be discussed in turn.

### Teaching Practice

In the area of teaching practice, published work can be identified that explores such diverse issues as teaching to adult learners (Carrier, 1987), the use of team teaching (Slater, McCubbrey, & Scudder, 1995), global learning issues (Sullivan & Tu, 1995), pluralism and diversity in the classroom (Gallos, 1995), enhancing teaching in doctoral programs (Forray, 1996), teaching styles and student learning styles (Thompson, 1997), and "nuts-and-bolts" issues like class participation (Mello, 1997) and grading (Bilimoria, 1995). By far the largest amount of research in this area has been done on specific pedagogical devices. There is an extensive literature on the use of games and simulations (Curry & Moutinho, 1992), experiential exercises (Ball, 1995), videotapes and movies (Padget & Luechnauer, 1997), and even humor and cartoons (Sankowsky & Ornstein, 1989) in the classroom.

### Technology

A rather dramatic trend in the literature on teaching is related to the increased number of publications on the use of technology in the classroom and its results. Articles can be identified on classroom implications of the

use of computer-mediated technology (Shinkins, 1995), multimedia (Langley & Porter, 1994), the World Wide Web and the Internet (McCulley, 1995), and distance learning (Hogan, 1993). It is noteworthy that two of the four articles published in this forum provide research on technology in the classroom.

### **Evaluation**

The broad topic of teaching evaluation can be divided into two main categories: research on student evaluation of teaching and research on the evaluation of the impact of teaching. An abundant literature, predominantly in the field of higher education, investigates the area of student evaluation of teaching (Cashin, 1995). Research has examined how student evaluation of teaching quality is best measured and whether it is valid, reliable, and related to expected grades, among other topics. An emerging line of research is investigating whether teachers achieve our established goals in the classroom (Thompson, 1991). Outcome-based evaluation, as it is commonly called, has been increasingly invoked as a way of assessing student learning, and hence teaching effectiveness.

### **The Classroom-as-Organization**

In the organizational disciplines, students often recognize the parallels between the content teachers are delivering on effective management and the process used to manage the classroom. As noted above, of these four research streams this is perhaps the one that is most closely aligned with the management discipline itself. Commonly referred to as "classroom-as-organization," this research applies concepts directly from the core of the discipline to classrooms. Recent examples of this area include research on total quality management in the classroom (Meisel & Seltzer, 1995), the use of systems theory for the design of curricula (Bardoel, 1997), and a very large and interesting literature on the use of teams and the nature of teamwork in the classroom (Lerner, 1995). Again, we note that two of the four articles published in this forum report results of research on this theme.

### **FUTURE NEEDS FOR RESEARCH ON TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL SCIENCES**

Although much literature exists on the scholarship of teaching, there are many areas of teaching and learning distinctive to the organizational sciences that would benefit from more, and more rigorous, research. We will report our view of what these needs are in the same four streams we noted above.

### **Teaching Practice**

There is a growing trend toward interdisciplinary treatments of managerial and organizational issues. This is in part due to practices in organizations, including General Motors, General Electric, and others, designed to break down barriers between various functions, such as research and devel-

opment, marketing, and production, and to operate businesses through teams of managers and specialists coming from the functional areas of the organization. In some business schools this integration is reflected in both the material taught and the way it is taught. In particular, team teaching involving different disciplines of business is emerging as a more common practice than it was in earlier times. We know of such innovations anecdotally. In the Faculty of Commerce and Business Administration at UBC, for example, the master of business administration (M.B.A.) program starts with a four-month integrated core taught by a team of seven instructors. (The team had five instructors in 1997–98.) Core program classes frequently involve the entire teaching team (from accounting, finance, management information systems, marketing, operations, organizational behavior, and strategy) working together in the classroom with the student group. Similarly, integrated teams of instructors teach students in the Daniels College of Business at the University of Denver. The M.B.A. core is delivered in seven transdisciplinary, team-taught courses, where as few as two or as many as five faculty members representing different disciplines work together in the classroom. This approach is described and discussed in a series of four articles published in the *Journal of Management Education* (Fukami et al., 1996).

If this approach or some variation involving smaller teams is becoming more attractive to business schools—and we believe that it is—then it would be very helpful to instructors and administrators to know what distinguishes successful from unsuccessful team instruction. Given the high investment costs for teachers and schools in this kind of instructional practice, there is a clear need for careful investigation of team processes and outcomes.

## Technology

As is evident from some of the research published in this special forum, technological innovations of the past decade have opened windows on alternative modes of communicating knowledge and of acquiring information and understanding. It is now possible to study for an M.B.A. through virtual universities and programs such as the one created at the Fuqua School of Business at Duke University. Such programs are expensive to create and are high-priced. We see a need for these programs and their impacts to be studied. Are there significant gains to learning that stem from computer-based instruction? What are the limits of such approaches? We sense that there may be optimal blends of virtual and real organizations for delivering professional education and for using technology and humans to facilitate learning. Research is needed to help identify and to evaluate such combinations and to assist in understanding the future roles of those who teach in and around virtual degree programs.

On a smaller scale, research on the use of technology as a tool to facilitate teaching and learning in the traditional classroom would also be welcomed. As teachers have progressed from the use of blackboards and chalk, to overhead transparencies and computer-aided presentations, and now to



multimedia, more research is needed to help guide the use of these tools to enhance learning.

### Evaluation

How do professors of business evaluate learning under conditions of continual and even rapid change? What should/can they impart to students in professional schools who are likely to face challenges and to make decisions in contexts that may be very different both from those familiar to their instructors and from those described in the texts, cases, and so on used in the classrooms of today? These are pressing questions that deserve imaginative research designs, competently executed. We expect that some of this research will be focused on active learning situations, such as those found in internships, cooperative learning programs, and the like. One of the learning issues involved will be the extent to which the learning taking place reflects what has been anticipated in the design of the programs.

We also wish to flag a dimension of evaluation that has plagued teachers and administrators for years (some might say decades) and that urgently requires rigorous investigation. We refer here to the issue of grade inflation. Over time, there appears to have been increasing pressure to inflate grades.<sup>2</sup> Sources of such pressure include administrators ("The average GPA must be competitive . . . to attract recruiters; to attract students to courses" [Mahoney, personal communication]), teachers' desires to be popular or to avoid hassles, students' desires to get good jobs, and so on. Outcomes of this trend include an inability to differentiate among students on the basis of performance, given that, in fact, only "A" and "B" grades exist. If President Clinton's promise to give scholarships to students with "B" averages materializes, it will likely cement this condition of only two grades.

Research is needed to establish the actual effects of this trend. What is the nature and extent of grade inflation? What effects do grades have on learning? On subsequent performance? What effect does inability to differentiate students on the basis of performance have? For example, could the lack of measures recognizing differences in performance lead to their elimination in assessing the worth of students to recruiters and others? What, then, might be the bases of differentiation? Contacts? Personality? Research on such issues may be difficult to undertake, given their sensitivity; nevertheless, we believe them to be important.

### The Classroom-as-Organization

We expect an increase in attention to teaching students the craft and skills of improvisation. We think that it will become more important to the craft of teaching as well. We note the attention to improvisation in organizations in an article in a special issue of *Organization Science*, "Jazz Improvisation and Organizing" (Meyer, Frost, & Weick, 1998). Research on

<sup>2</sup> We thank Thomas Mahoney for his cogent thoughts on this issue.

these skills and what effects they may have on learning will become important. We draw the readers' attention to an interesting and provocative article related to this topic by Weick (1997). He articulated important, researchable aspects of improvisation in the learning process. One such issue is whether teaching through polished routines leads to better learning than does the delivery of knowledge through improvised teaching.

### THE HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE FORUM

This special research forum in the *Academy of Management Journal* was a partial response to this perceived need to develop further the body of empirical research about teaching in the organizational sciences. It was intended to contribute to the knowledge base and to signal to those who might see teaching as simply a set of tricks that comprise a technology that it is a serious academic pursuit, legitimately one of the components of scholarship that Boyer and others have described.

The origin of this special forum was an invitation from Angelo DeNisi, then editor of *AMJ*, to Peter Frost, then chair of the Standing Committee on Teaching for the Academy of Management, to submit a proposal to *AMJ* on this topic. Peter recruited Cindi Fukami, the current chair of the Teaching Committee, to join him in editing this project. Once the proposal was accepted, Peter and Cindi sent out the call for papers and invited a number of researchers to join the editorial board for the project. The positive response to the invitation to review was overwhelming. In all, 48 individuals reviewed one or two manuscripts each, as members of the review board (their names are listed on page 1398 of this issue). Many of them are highly visible and respected scholars in the field of organization and management.

We were very gratified by the response to the call for papers. As we have already argued, this arena, teaching effectiveness, is not a mainstream one in the organizational sciences. Despite this fact and the relatively short lead time provided for developing and reporting on empirical findings on teaching effectiveness in the organizational sciences, we received 21 empirical papers for review. Our call specified some potential topics (such as those outlined above) and some parameters for the papers we were interested in receiving. We welcomed naturalistic as well as laboratory studies and qualitative as well as quantitative methodologies. We also stipulated some approaches to research that we would find less persuasive, such as studies that reported simple correlations between teaching styles and performance and the like.

Many of the papers we received dealt with important issues that were researched in interesting ways. In selecting the set for inclusion in *AMJ*, we were guided by our desire to choose papers on relevant topics where the research conducted met a very high standard. We believed that it was important to contribute to the accumulation of a body of research on teaching effectiveness that matched in quality other work that appears in the pages of *AMJ*. In this way, we hoped to add understanding about teaching effectiveness in the organizational sciences and to showcase research that would encourage others to engage in inventive and rigorous research on the topic in



the future. The four papers included in this forum met these criteria, in our view. We also hoped that, for authors of papers not accepted for publication, the reviews they received will have proved helpful to them in publishing their work and will have spurred them to continue to work on these and related issues. We thank all the authors who submitted their work to us. Simply by doing so, they affirmed the value of the call. They moved forward the cause of understanding the nature of good teaching.

### OVERVIEW OF THE FORUM

As noted, four papers were accepted for publication in this forum. Two address an emerging frontier for higher education, especially in professional schools: technology in the classroom. The first of these two articles, "Teaching Effectiveness in Technology-Mediated Distance Learning," by Jane Webster and Peter Hackley, recognizes that although distance learning is becoming more prevalent in our business schools, it has remained a largely unstudied phenomenon. Webster and Hackley drew upon research in the disciplines of communication, education, and information systems to develop a model of distance learning. The results of their study indicate that instructors in distance learning classrooms can enhance their effectiveness by exploiting the richness of their media, by building in opportunities for students to become comfortable with the technology employed and by themselves learning to control the technology, by projecting positive attitudes, and by using interactive teaching styles. These authors found that, even under high-technology circumstances in the classroom, the most important influence on the involvement and participation of the students was the teaching style of the professor. The second of these two articles, "Using Information Technology to Add Value to Management Education," by Maryam Alavi, Youngjin Yoo, and Douglas R. Vogel, describes a case study of the design and delivery of a graduate information systems course that linked students and faculty at two universities. The authors predict that these types of partnerships will increase as universities seek to provide more value to student education with less overall cost.

The other two articles in this forum integrate concepts gleaned from mainstream scholarship in the organizational sciences to achieve a better understanding of the classroom-as-organization. The first of these, "Designing Effective Learning Systems for Management Education: Student Roles, Requisite Variety, and Practicing What We Teach," by Cynthia A. Lengnick-Hall and Martha M. Sanders, describes the application of process design principles from organizational science to the construction of learning systems that produce consistent, high-quality management education. The results of this study suggest that if professors apply what they know about complex systems in general to the design of management education systems in particular, they can enhance effectiveness in the classroom. The second of these two articles, "The Social Fabric of a Team-Based M.B.A. Program: Network Effects on Student Satisfaction and Performance," by Timothy T. Baldwin, Michael D. Bedell, and Jonathan L. Johnson, applies social network theory to the attitudes and performance of students in a large M.B.A. pro-

gram. The results of this study have important implications for the enthusiastic use of teams in our M.B.A. programs. Baldwin, Bedell, and Johnson found that centrality in friendship, communication, and adversarial networks affected both student attitudes and grades. In addition, patterns of relationships within and between teams also had significant effects on student perceptions of team effectiveness and objective team performance. In short, teams in M.B.A. programs need to be designed and managed so that their considerable effect results in more productive learning. As a set, all four articles strongly suggest that professors can apply concepts and theories from organizational science to better understand and manage learning in the classroom.

We close this introduction with an expression of our pleasure at having been involved in such a worthy undertaking. We hope that the cause of scholarship has been enhanced and that appreciation of the value of competent research on teaching has been heightened. If, as a result of the publication of these papers in this special research forum, more scholars are encouraged to do research on the teaching and learning processes, and more administrators are persuaded to provide support for teaching and learning about teaching, this will have been a worthwhile undertaking for all who contributed to the project. If, in addition, this forum helps foster a more accepting and tolerant culture for the practice of teaching in business schools, then, as co-editors who care passionately about the topic, we will feel most gratified indeed.

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