CAN TEACHERS BE EVALUATED?1

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IT IS unnecessary to elaborate on the importance of high quality teaching. The fact is undeniable that the speed with which a society progresses and the effectiveness with which a country solves its social and economic problems are influenced to a great extent by the quality of its college teaching.

But something has happened in our educational system. Teaching today lacks prestige. In some groups the very word "teaching" suggests inferiority on the part of an individual. There seems to be some agreement with the inaccurate epigram, "He who can does, he who cannot teaches."

The Teaching Problem

Apparently there is some dissatisfaction among college teachers and a real concern about their profession. It is not uncommon to hear teachers express discontent, discouragement, or apathy; they believe that resident teaching does not get recognition on a par with research.

It is difficult to make a comparison between teaching and research on the basis of salaries paid, however, because of the differences in age, experience, tenure, and academic rank. There are those who insist that no valid comparison can be made; that research workers and teachers often are of different types, perform different functions, and that there is a different demand and supply situation so that they cannot be compared on the basis of salary scale.

A comparison of the relative salary, rank, and recognition given to resident teaching and to research personnel is not easy. Data obtained from a questionnaire sent to all Agronomy Department heads in our Land Grant Colleges and Universities indicate that there is a difference in top salaries paid to research men and to teachers but that the difference is not as great as is frequently believed (5). Other data indicate that the salaries of teachers and researchers are about equal up to the rank of associate professor. At the rank of associate professor and professor the salaries of research men are slightly higher than those of teachers. The men regarded as most valuable, and consequently the highest paid, are those good in both research and teaching (1).

The thought often is expressed that teachers do not advance as far in the academic world as research men because they do not continue "to grow." Perhaps this is true, and perhaps the teachers themselves are at fault. On the other hand, this might be true because they are not given the encouragement and recognition accorded those in research.

Perhaps it is but natural that, in the past, more emphasis has been placed on research than on teaching. The American acceptance of research as a necessary evil to the extent that it interferes with research and writing. The reason for this is their belief that good teaching is not likely to be taken seriously and rewarded to the same degree as good research.

When instructors are selected for college teaching, emphasis is put too often upon research, and small attention is given to the quality of the prospective candidates have demonstrated.

It has been said repeatedly that teaching cannot be evaluated as readily as research. Perhaps this is true. In the past several years many studies have been made of teacher evaluation.

Evaluation Difficult

The evaluation of a teacher's work is difficult. There is not good agreement as to the results desired, as to instruction nor is there a reliable means of measuring results. Before any attempt is made to evaluate, the objectives should be clarified. We need to have a clear statement of the aims and the nature of higher education. It must be recognized, however, that any objectives must be only opinions; they would not have the approval of everyone.

Objectives in education vary from the very specific, from the professional to the personal, from the ultimate to the immediate. Some insist that the objective in education should be to uphold democracy. Others are concerned with ideals of culture and the better life and maintain that spiritual development and the "whole" man are the true objectives; that the "whole" man should be developed rather than a specialized producer. To some, the objective should be to teach the student to a thousand questions. But in contrast, others insist that the primary purpose of a college is to incorporate the thinking power of a student and that the objective should be treated more as a workshop than as a storehouse.

In the process, the student becomes a different, more effective, more useful, and happier person than otherwise he would be. This objective is achieved when the student develops his intrinsic ability to perform in the manner the work he wants to do and to integrate through the work he wants to do and to integrate through the work he wants to do.

Education must help students to help themselves, with his particular qualities and his family and childhood background; and his own inherited philosophy, in whatever particular future may be his

Garnet's statement "The best teacher is the one who kindles an inner fire, arouses moral enthusiasm in the student with a vision of what he may become, and reveals the worth and permanency of moral and cultural values," will be recognized by many.