

well-demarcated modes of production to the more fluid and multi-skilled ones, but to a knowledge-led economy in which the value added is mainly the result of the application of knowledge and skills, any under-emphasis on such knowledge and skills - and the opportunity to use them productively - becomes not merely undesirable but critical." (p. 156). There are also heresies such as, "There are few occupations which are so tightly professionalized as the academic profession...But if academic courses are a de facto preparation for a professional occupation which few will ever actually enter, how is this rationalized and defended?" (pp. 107-108), and "We tend to assume a little too easily that higher education is a positive affair. But it could have effects or side-effects on its students which are unwanted and undesirable, which limit them as individuals, misfit them for society, disequip them for their jobs and undermine their development as lifelong learners." (p. 146). Academic administrators may well decide not to include these in their public observations.

Even after twenty-five years of university administration, much of it spent in curriculum development and reform, I found this book interesting and informative. Again, much of Squires' data and many of his insights will not be transferable directly to the Canadian university scene, but he raises problems and asks questions that will make any academic think about curriculum matters in some new ways. One person on every committee considering revisions of the undergraduate curriculum should read this book and raise some of its questions at appropriate times.

Seldin, Peter and associates. (1990). *How Administrators Can Improve Teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1990. Reviewed by George L. Geis, Professor, Higher Education Group, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

Systematic problem solving beings with extensive problem explication. Primary questions include: What precisely is the problem? What evidence is there for its existence? Who says it is a problem? What are some probable causes of it?

Poor teaching in postsecondary education is often accepted as a problem and, without further ado, solutions are offered. In fact, the evidence is hard to come by to support the existence of that problem. Students tend to rate teachers rather highly; teachers rate themselves even higher. However, there are public perceptions that the cost of teaching is too high, due in part to inefficient and

ineffective teaching. And, almost daily, we hear that the outputs of education are less than desirable. A problem may well exist; but time invested in explicating the problem would be times well spent. (Of course, proven problem or not, "it is worth reminding ourselves that good teaching is a mother-apple-pie issue—no one is against it." (p. 52).

Most teachers report that they are good teachers; however, they do report that they continue to work to be better teachers. Good teaching is not seen as a static goal; rather it is viewed as a continuing effort, more like that of an artist than of a person mastering a skill.

Typically the premature problem solvers assign the cause of poor teaching to the teacher, assuming a person-blame causality. Recently there has been some attention paid to the environment, context, and organization in which the professor works. Pete Seldin's latest (while it begs the critical questions of evidence for and ownership of a problem, as noted in the Foreword) can be commended for looking at this broader perspective of causality.

The phrase "improving teaching" may convey the negative implication that there is a deficit or failure; the book is, in fact, about providing an environment in which teaching can be continuously developed. Indeed, the authors repeatedly stress that "teaching improvement" should be seen as an on-going activity of the professional teacher rather than as remediation. The book challenges chairs, deans, and other administrators to pay attention to teaching, to value it, and to provide the opportunities and support necessary for professors to develop as teachers.

Peter Seldin has collected a stellar cast of authors for the 11 chapters in this book. They provide, as Russell Edgerton says in his excellent and thoughtful Foreword, "a feast of information and ideas." (p. xi). The chapters are grouped into three sections: "Key Influences on Teaching Quality"; "The Administrator's Role in Strengthening Instructional Quality"; and "Making Teacher Excellence an Institutional Priority."

One theme that runs through the book is that teaching is undervalued. Another is that it finishes a poor second when placed in competition with research. These commonly held perceptions are problematic. For example, there is some evidence that administrators report valuing teaching more than teachers think that they do. Furthermore, many professors are not engaged in research, at least as evidenced by the number of publications per professor per year. The broader term "scholarly activity" may, indeed, consume much of a professor's time but it is generally conceded to be an important component of good teaching. Be that as it may, there is a danger in concluding that teaching would,

almost miraculously, improve were the value system to change. More proactively, several of the authors propose a mix of positive incentives for teaching, the development of a teaching community, and opportunities to systematically explore areas of learning theory and techniques of teaching.

The book serves two important purposes. First, it places some of the responsibility for good teaching on those who manage the environment in which teaching occurs. "Good teaching (is) an institutional responsibility not simply an individual one" (p. 59). The organizational environment, as the chapter by Rice and Austin illustrates, does make a difference. The manager of the college or university (and the professors within it), coupled with the demands of the disciplinary groups, promote research activities. In like manner the administration must assume responsibility for encouraging and supporting exploration of increased expertise in teaching.

The second purpose is equally important: the book demonstrates that administrators can do things that make a difference. They can develop "an organizational environment that affirms the dignity of (the professors') work, rewards teaching and sustains morale over time" (p. 23). Case histories of successful efforts are provided (e.g., McCabe and Jenrette's description of the Miami-Dade Community College project) which suggest that the call for improved teaching need not be an empty exhortation. The assumption of responsibility can lead to real changes. Specific recommendations for administrators appear in several chapters, e.g., those by Madeleine Greene and Ann Lucas.

Interestingly, while the chapters appropriately point out that teachers' performance will be influenced by administrators and the environment they produce, only briefly (e.g., in Chapter 8) is there discussion about the next level: how administrators' performance is influenced by the context in which they live and work. Since a systems analysis is suggested in this book, it might have dealt further with the influences on administrators as well as their influences upon faculty.

As well as addressing administrators, the book provides teachers with direct advice on and examples of how they can move to a level of greater expertise in their teaching, paralleling the expertise they have in their own discipline. Pat Cross discusses classroom research which "consists of any systematic enquiry designed and conducted for the purpose of increasing insight and understanding of the relationship between teaching and learning." (p. 136). Bob Menges describes how self-evaluation can be used for teaching improvement. Bill Cashin provides a look at the variety of evidence which might be included in a comprehensive evaluation of teaching.

It should be noted that the examples and discussions in this book do reflect its origin, the United States. But the issues raised and the advice offered are relevant to Canadian postsecondary education.

Had the authors granted me three wishes they would have been these. First, I would wish that the book had more fully addressed an academic folie a deux which often exists. Administrators complain about the quality of teaching and teachers complain about the lack of support for teaching; yet both parties retain the view that teaching is a private affair for which the teacher has full responsibility. Without some mechanism for public observation of, much less accountability for, the process and outcomes of teaching, it seems unlikely that administrators will or can change their degree of involvement and responsibility. Administrators "are being held responsible for something they cannot control directly." (p. 125). An example of how teaching efforts might be made more public is the development of a teaching portfolio which Seldin describes in the first Chapter. (An early version of such a portfolio, *Guide to the teaching dossier: Its preparation and use* was, incidentally, developed by Teaching Effectiveness Committee of the Canadian Association of University Teachers in 1980.) Chapters by Cashin and Menges provide sophisticated and timely treatment of teaching evaluation.

I also wish that there had been more discussion of the level or sophistication of "improvement" activities. Many postsecondary teachers could benefit from training in specific skills in classroom activities and course design. But many would also benefit from "higher level" discussions of, for example, the epistemology of their field and how it is and can be reflected in courses, of roles in learning, of the research in instructional psychology, and of the influence of evaluation on learning. Having described how the organization might set the stage for teaching improvement, the book provides only a few suggestions on what to do next; the "next steps" are not self-evident. As noted earlier it would be naive to assume that teaching will automatically improve if it is given greater value. Most professors have had no formal education or guidance in developing their teaching role. There are only the beginnings of a well-grounded "technology of teaching." A good companion to this volume would be Maryellen Wiemer's *Improving College Teaching*, another recent Jossey-Bass book (which includes a section on what administrators can do to set an appropriate context for developing teaching.) Pat Cross' chapter in Seldin's book offers one good lead for taking the next step; in it she discusses the use of classroom research as a way for teachers to try-out and obtain information on teaching improvement "experiments".

Finally, I wish that the book, at least in passing, had indicated that “instruction” and “student learning” should be part of the administrator’s concern. These terms are broader than “teaching” and suggest that the development of students (as well as of faculty) is one of the college’s or university’s major functions. One means by which it serves this end is through its teaching faculty, but it also does so through other means, such as non-classroom learning experiences and resources. Administrators of distance learning programs, in particular, are well aware that the teacher is but one component of the broader instructional or learning system.

There is renewed interest in the teaching function of colleges and universities and so the book is timely. It can be a valuable resource not only for administrators but also for faculty developers, teaching improvement committees, and task forces. It is a useful resource when taking the first step toward making teaching an institutional responsibility. *How Administrators Can Improve Teaching* should be in a handy place on college and university administrators’ bookshelves.