

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS ACHIEVEMENT IN BUSSINESS EDUCATION*

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INTRODUCTION

Evaluation, the continuous checking on the state of the investment, plays an indispensable part in any efficient commercial or industrial enterprise to-day. In education, which is an investment in human beings, evaluation is not less essential; without it the educator can do no more than muddle along, hoping that, somehow or other, things will turn out for the best.

In this respect our educators are less realistic than our businessmen, and it is therefore not surprising that many people whose opinions command respect hold the view that education, in spite of relatively better teaching facilities and more degreed staff, is going downhill. They will instance the fact that instructional supervision, for instance, which used to be a serious business, has now been reduced to a mere class visitation and a friendly chat with the teacher afterwards.

Some of our more energetic and enterprising directors do, of course, strive for improvement in instruction, and every teacher is required to administer tests for the purpose of assigning grades. But very few of them really understand and utilize an evaluation program in their teaching.

In vocational education, particularly in business education, the need for constant evaluation is greater now than ever. The reputation of our Commercial School, which has steadily striven for higher standards ever since its establishment, is at present being threatened by the existence of privately-run "retail-shop-type" schools where diplomas in typewriting or stenography can virtually be bought over the counter. Our graduates find themselves working side by side with the "graduates" of these enterprises, and it is not surprising if the uninformed person, infuriated at the incompetence he finds in offices, lays the blame entirely on the Commercial School. But what steps has the Ministry of Education taken to safeguard the reputation of its own school — to say nothing of the national interest — by controlling and supervising these private schools?

The task of the Commercial School has not been an easy one, and the challenge is becoming greater. For years to come the School will continue to enjoy its leadership in business education, but this leadership is not an inheritance to be enjoyed undisturbed for all time to come. In order to maintain that leadership it will have to keep on improving its educational offerings through evaluation and the feeding back of the results of evaluation into its instructional program.

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CONCEPTS AND MEANING OF EVALUATION

Evaluation is a process by which one either assigns a value or makes a choice among values. In our discussion, the term 'evaluation' is used to designate a procedure by which results of instruction in business education are appraised. Here it must be emphasized that evaluation is something more than mere measurement. There must also be a weighing of values, and it is here, in the weighing of values, that the professional judgment of the teacher comes into play.

Furthermore, "Evaluation is an integral part of teaching, not an adjunct to teaching for the sole purpose of grading. Important as grading is, evaluation has an even more important function than merely providing a basis for marks. It is the concomitant of learning in the mastery formula (teach, test, reteach, retest), for without testing there is no basis for reteaching. This means that evaluation must occur throughout the teaching and learning process, not merely at the end of it. Evaluation is a continuous process."¹

In line with the above school of thought, a concept of self-evaluation deserves our attention because, in my opinion, it has been denied a place in many aspects of teaching in our educational system. Our students are noted for their ingenuity in devising escape-mechanisms, especially for their failures. It is not uncommon to hear an under-achiever blaming his teacher for playing favorites, sometimes even going the length of questioning the competency of his teaching. To get rid of such undesirable traits, it is essential to develop in our students the ability to evaluate themselves. Let us offer them standards by which they may criticize their own achievement or lack of it.

Here is one example of a technique that might be used in helping students learn to evaluate their own work. At the end of a 30-minute transcription period, the student checks his own paper as the teacher reads the dictation materials. Then the student completes the following form.

STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION FORM²

1. What is your transcription rate?
2. Is this an improvement over your last transcription period?.....
How much?
3. If you made any of the following errors, indicate the number in the blank below: Typewriting Spelling
Inability to read notes Punctuation
Paragraphing Arrangement on page
Total number of errors Was this an improvement over last time?
4. Were you punctual in getting to class?

1. Herbert A. Tonne, et al. **Methods of Teaching Business Subjects** (New York: McGraw-Hill)
2. Faborn Etier, "Evaluation in Clerical Office and Secretarial Practice", (American Business Education Year Book, 1960, p. 225, cited by Herbert A. Tonne, et. al., Ibid.) p. 100.

5. Was it necessary for you to leave your typewriter during transcription?
6. Which of the following supplies did you have on your desk?
 Dictionary Typewriting paper
 Second sheets.....Correction strips.....
 Carbon papers Eraser
 Shorthand notebook Envelopes
7. Did you proof read your letters before removing them from the typewriter?.....
8. Did you have difficulty reading your shorthand notes?

Note in the above self-evaluation form that question items such as those in items 4 and 7 may not have a direct relation to the learning of the skill. And no course or subject can teach such abstract attitudes as punctuality, accuracy and cleanliness. These attitudes, therefore, must be taught through subjects such as transcription and typewriting, since training or development of neural-muscular coordination is, in a way, nothing but a habit formation. Abstract habits desirable for efficient performance should not be neglected in the course of our teaching.

This evaluation form should be treated as a learning aid rather than a test, providing the teacher with a means of realization of the student's progress and the student's weakness. Those of us who think this additional task is a waste of time, are missing the point. The time spent in facilitating self-evaluation is a desirable activity. Secondly, a good self-evaluation program can contribute to efficient class operation. As a student develops the ability to evaluate his own progress realistically, his teacher's evaluation becomes more meaningful.

However, a self-evaluation program has limitations of its own.³

1. Students tend to rate themselves too low. This may result from a modest student wanting to give the impression that he is a model person. This may be controlled through careful discussion with the class or the individual student. Actually, this tendency and the educational opportunity it affords is one of the reasons why such an evaluation program is so desirable.
2. Students tend to rate themselves too high. This is not as common as might be suspected. It does, however, become more common when course grades are based almost completely upon self-evaluation procedures.

The teacher must guard against these undesirable characteristics which easily creep into the program. On the other hand, whenever a teacher considers such evaluation a waste of valuable instruction time or sees little value in the program, it should be dropped. Student self-evaluation requires teacher supervision and assistance and completely fails when he doesn't have an appreciation of the values developed.

3. G. Harold Silvius and Ralph C. Bohn, **Organizing Course Materials For Industrial Education**, (Bloomington, Illinois, McKnight and McKnight Publishing Company, 1961), p. 351.

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

An evaluation program of student achievement in business education is undertaken by teachers for various reasons. Teachers would like to check the effectiveness of their teaching via the accomplishment of their students. They can determine if they have succeeded by noting the amount of information and the degree of skills students have acquired.

Secondly, teachers evaluate students to let their students know how well they have succeeded. Every one likes to know the progress he is making or his position in class, whether he is average, below or above. This information may serve as an inspiration to greater accomplishments.

Thirdly, teachers evaluate students to find out whether objectives established for a particular course are met. Every teacher hopes each student will achieve the objective to the utmost of his ability.

This must be undertaken with the objectives of the course or unit of instruction at the time of evaluation clearly in mind. For instance, if the aim of a lesson early in the teaching of production typewriting is to have every student type an entire letter without looking up, evaluation would be based on that objective and not upon a mailable letter, (although that would be an ultimate objective).

Fourthly, teachers are required to assign grades. Important as good teaching is to teachers, so is a grade to the student and his parents. Grades are a prestige-gaining mechanism, especially if the student is an outstanding one. At any rate, student grades provide a basis for discussion in guidance and counseling; colleges determine who shall be admitted by grades earned in class, and business and industry decide whom to employ by referring to school grades.

Because of these consequential factors, the assigning of grades has been given undue importance in the overall evaluation. Consequently, the greatest difficulty in evaluation and in the assigning of grades is the teacher's desire to spare student feelings and his own belief that his teaching is near perfect. To overcome such difficulties, every teacher must develop a systematic and acceptable approach to evaluation of student achievement.

AN APPROACH TO EFFECTIVE EVALUATION

Before one attempts to develop any kind of approach to effective evaluation, he must know the things he should look for and then decide upon a valid approach. In teaching the various business subjects, a teacher is concerned with four types of learnings :⁴

1. Basic skills (neuro-muscular coordinations)
2. Facts (knowledge and understanding)
3. Attitudes and ideals (business ethics, cooperation, loyalty, etc.)
4. Problem-solving (application of all above)

4. Tonne, et. al., op. cit., p. 31

Granted that these are what a teacher of business subjects should look for, the problem of evaluation is still not simple. There is no one method of evaluating these. Nonetheless, the situation is not hopeless.

Generally speaking, knowledge and understanding can be most effectively evaluated by objective and controlled subjective questions, as will be seen later. Skills, especially during the early stage of teaching a motor-skill, are best evaluated by controlled observation. When the objective is the development of technique, how else can the teacher measure the student's accomplishment than by observing him at work? Too many skill teachers make the mistake of evaluating the work of the student at this stage rather than the student at work. That is why a small class size is recommended in shops and laboratories. And observation of students at work will be controlled only if the teacher develops instruments for measuring each element to be evaluated. One such instrument is shown below.

In the second stage of evaluating a student's progress in a skill-building subject the student's work is evaluated. The work is evaluated, however, by learning standards, not by ultimate job standards. During this period an ultimate standard is evolving, not only in the teacher's mind, but, let us hope, in the mind of his class as well.

In the final stages of skill building, practically all tests are of the performance type. The subject matter is challenging, for it involves problem-solving and job competence. The transcription must be mailable. The typewriting test involves not only a letter containing problems in arrangement but also carbon copies and envelopes, possibly errors in grammar and punctuation; it may require decision-making, such as which item to prepare first. Skills and knowledge are tested in use.

Also, attitudes and ideals are best evaluated through controlled observation. Does the student show increased consideration for other members of the class? Does he strive for higher standards of quality in work submitted? Is he learning to evaluate both his work and his work relations? Self-check forms such as the one shown on page 40/41 may assist to carry-out this task.

On the other hand, if a student knows what preferred types of behavior are, he only acts in the preferred way. The teacher may then use objective questions to measure understanding of accepted behavior. Although it is true that knowing the right answers about behavior does not ensure that a person will necessarily act in the preferred way, it also seems probable that a person would be more likely to behave better than one who does not recognize the preferred pattern. Here again, there is no substitute for the teacher's controlled observation in evaluating the student's behavior. The following type of form to carry out this task may reduce the subjectivity of the teacher's observation:

NAME..... GRADE OR SUBJECT DATE.....

Very Poor Poorer than most About same as most Higher than most Very High

WORK HABITS

1. Industry
2. Accuracy
3. Promptness
4. Concentration etc.

GROUP ATTITUDE

1. Reliability
2. Cooperation
3. Leadership
4. Respect for others' rights etc.

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. Friendliness
2. Neatness
3. Courtesy
 - a. in person
 - b. in work
4. Self-confidence
5. Poise
6. Self-control etc.

Lastly, how should a student be evaluated in problem-solving, the fourth element in business subject teaching? This evaluation involves performance according to standards that have evolved to a high level. Skills and knowledge will be merged into situational paper and pencil tests requiring judgement and decision of a progressively higher order. There is no one tool that evaluates all elements of problem-solving. Nonetheless, essay questions involving organization, explanation, comparisons, etc., may be employed. More will be said about essay questions in the following paragraphs.

TYPES OF TESTS AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

Educational measurements are classified under two broad categories. They are subjective questions and objective questions. A third type which cannot be classified exactly with either subjective or objective questions is a performance test. In business education and in industrial education, all three are used.

The subjective tests may be exemplified by **essay** examinations. In our field we have not used essay questions as much as objective questions on the grounds that a measure of ability or accomplishment can be determined more accurately and in less time by objective tests. It is also true that the judgement of a scorer is involved in correcting essay examinations and that the human element allows

error. However, essay examinations for either teaching or evaluating make students (1) recall information, (2) organize facts and concepts, (3) promulgate hypotheses and proposals, and (4) spell words and write sentences.

The realization of the last three advantage makes an essay examination vital. Hence, an essay question which requires relatively specific responses and which can be scored objectively according to a predetermined scheme of values is best.

EXAMPLE: "Discuss the chief functions of money".

is a better question than

"In not more than words, discuss money."

Objective tests are preferred by most teachers of practical education. Objective tests, with the help of keys or master sheets, can be accurately scored by anyone. Except in creating the test itself, judgement or subjectivity is removed. Even though objective questions are easy to correct and save the teacher's time, they do not promote analysis and self-expression as in the case of essay questions. However, it is not impossible, if difficult, to construct an objective examination in which an ability to solve problems can be tested. In this case, a multiple-choice type of objective test is best.

A **multiple-choice test** is either a question or an incomplete statement followed usually by four or more possible answers. One of these answers is correct; the others appear or sound correct but are wrong. It is suitable for measuring both simple factual information and a complete process of reasoning and problem-solving. One must admit, however, that an element of guessing does exist, but it is proportionally reduced to the number of possible answers. The higher the number of responses, the less is blind guessing.

Multiple choice examinations are the most difficult to construct, particularly if they seek to test application, judgement and discrimination, rather than just memory. A multiple-choice question that involves understanding relationships follows :

The purpose of stock as part of a savings program is recommended because it:⁵ (check one)

- () a. Provides a means of hedging against inflation.
- () b. Produces more stable income than bonds.
- () c. Makes the stockholder a debtor of business.
- () d. Is guaranteed by the government.

Note that in constructing multiple-choice questions, (1) the main statement should be intelligible without the support of the possible answers; (2) the main body of a question should be in a positive form if possible; (3) in writing the alternatives, the distractors should be so plausible that the students who do not know the correct answer will choose them; (4) the length of the alternatives should be approximately the same; (5) care should be taken to use parallel con-

5. Tonne, et. al., op. cit., p. 103

struction; and (6) the position of the correct response should be scrambled or scattered.

After the examination is corrected, the teacher can inspect the papers to see which items were successful in distracting the students and which questions were almost universally answered correctly and which were almost universally answered incorrectly. Notations should be made on the test, which is then filed for later revision and reuse.

The second type of objective test is the **true-false**.

A true-false question is a statement which is correct or incorrect. Students are asked to read the statement and indicate whether it is right or wrong by writing an "F" if false or "T" if true.

It is quite obvious that a true-false test permits a fifty-fifty chance of guessing the correct answer. Students therefore tend to use any of the techniques of guessing from flipping a coin to plucking eye lashes. Testwise students look for clues such as "always", "never", and "every" which label a question as probably false. Thus, guessing poses a difficulty for construction of true-false examinations.

The right kind of true-false tests, however, possesses the extra value of containing questions that require reasoning or justification for the choice of true or false. Nonetheless, the greatest strength of a true-false question is in its use as a teaching aid for reteaching a large area of subject matter. It creates student interest and motivation as the teacher discusses the questions with the class.

Example of a True-False Question :

Directions: Read the statement. If the statement is true, circle T;
if false, circle F

T F 1. Gregg's shorthand materials were originally prepared for science-type presentation.⁶

Note that complete directions written in language simple and familiar to the student precede the examination. Also, approximately half of the questions should be true and half, false. Of course, a pattern such as making every other question false should be avoided. It is not appropriate to use the same terminology as a textbook (as I did in the above example) in order to de-emphasize memorization. Furthermore, no teacher should dare to include a controversial statement in a true-false question; the reason is obvious.

The third kind of objective test is called **matching**. Here, students are required to match words, statements, figures, dates or sketches which are related. Usually, the examination is structured in two columns, the one on the left representing the original statements. The items in the column on the right are matched with those on the left. To be effective, there should be more possibilities on the right than there are statements on the left.

6. Tonne, et. al., op. cit., p.

An example⁷ of a matching test:

Directions : Match the following magazines (left column) with their descriptions (right column), placing the letter of the magazine in the parentheses before the appropriate description.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| (A) Balance Sheet | () Gregg professional magazine. |
| (B) National Business | () Commercial magazine for office managers. |
| (C) Today's Secretary | () Magazine of the Administrative Management Society. |
| (D) The Secretary | () NBEA general magazine. |
| (E) The Office | () South Western magazine. |
| (F) Administrative Management | () Independent Professional Magazine. |
| (G) Business Education World | () Commercial Magazine for Secretaries. |
| (H) Business Education Forum | () Publication of the Chamber of Commerce. |
| (I) Journal of Business Education | () National Secretaries Association. |
| | () Trade Magazine of IBM Corporation. |

A matching question is much like the multiple-choice test, but is much easier to construct. Guessing is eliminated if the test is properly constructed. One of the weaknesses of the test is that it causes students to over-emphasize the memorization of facts. To be effective, the test must be limited to homogeneous information.

The fourth type of objective test is the **completion test**. It requires the student to supply a missing word or words in a statement. The statement, when completed, is always true.

One of the major values of this type test is that it requires students to recall information. It may also require them to use judgement and problem-solving ability. Mathematical problems can be stated. Writing and spelling are required and, in some instances, sentence structure as well.

AN EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETION TEST

Directions : Read the questions over carefully. Place your answer in the blank provided at the end of each statement.

1. The first step toward good typewriting technique is the development of good
2. The expert operates the typewriter with great economy of.....

7. Tonne, et. al., op. cit., p. 102

3. If a plant is growing so that its rate of growth is constant by 40% (per week) of its weight, the actual percentage increase in weight in a week is
(Use reverse side of this page for computation.)

Completion tests should be so written that only one answer is acceptable. Writing a good completion examination is quite a challenge.

Some of the things to remember when writing completion tests are: (1) words to be inserted in a statement should appear at the end or near the end of a sentence; (2) a statement quoted from a book enables the student with a retentive visual memory to insert the correct word; (3) provide plenty of room to insert the required word, figure or sketch; (4) all blank spaces should be approximately the same length; (5) if two words are required, two blank spaces should be indicated.

PERFORMANCE TEST

All student abilities of an academic nature can be tested and evaluated by either subjective or objective tests described above. But other abilities of a non-academic nature cannot be adequately tested by either of these. For this reason, in business education where the teaching of manipulative skills is one of the aims, skills or manipulative ability can be checked by a performance test. It enables the teacher to determine quite objectively how much manipulative ability a student has mastered at the time of the test.

When preparing a performance test, the first task is to determine what skills or operations are to be checked. Next, a detailed direction is prepared for the student to follow in demonstrating the skills in question. Check sheets and rating scales must be prepared to achieve objective scoring of ability and effort.

AN EXAMPLE OF A RATING SCALE FOR A TYPEWRITING PERFORMANCE

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|---------|
| Margin | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2* |
| Indenture | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 |
| Spelling accuracy | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 |
| Comparative word weight | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 |
| Space after a period | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 3 |
| Space after a comma, semi-colon, etc. | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 3 |
| Neatness | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 |
| Speed-words/minute | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 3 4 5 |
| Promptness | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | 1 | 2 3 |

30 points maximum

| | |
|---------------|---------|
| Excellent | 27 - 30 |
| Above Average | 22 - 26 |
| Average | 16 - 21 |
| Below Average | 10 - 15 |
| Failing | 0 - 9 |

* N.B.: Scale values are merely suggestive.

The evaluation of the performance should provide information regarding the (1) physical skill of the student, (2) knowledge of operations to perform, and their sequences, (3) quality of workmanship, and (4) time required to do the test.

GUIDE LINES FOR TEST CONSTRUCTION

Although much has been already said about testing, the following guidelines for test construction are given to assist beginning teachers of business education :

1. Define the purpose of the test. For instance, is it to test skills, knowledge, attitude; or is it to test the integration of all these through problem-solving ?
2. Outline the domain to be covered by the test. For instance, it may be decided that in a basic business test on savings and investments, five questions will be asked about savings accounts, three about common stocks, two about bonds, and two about building-and-loan associations.
3. Decide what type of test to use. Remember that each type of test has its advantages and limitations.
4. Write the test in student language. Avoid catch words and big rhetorical words as well.
5. Avoid dependent questions. Very little will be accomplished if a test asks a student to name types of savings and later names them in asking another question.
6. Write questions that are as specific as possible.
7. Avoid clues.
8. Directions should be simple and as short as possible.
9. Provide the student plenty of room to write in.
10. Write tests so that they can be scored easily and as objectively as possible.
11. Reproduce questions so that they can be easily read.
12. Write answers to your tests before you administer them.
13. Tests should evaluate the entire class.
14. Test construction is a continuous process.

Furthermore, we would be remiss if a few common terms used in evaluation were not defined. The terms most used in an evaluation program are the following :⁸

1. Validity. A test or test question is valid if it measures that which it purports to measure.

8. Adopted from Emanuel E. Ericson, **Teaching the Industrial Arts** (Peoria, Illinois: Chas A. Bennett Co., 1960), pp. 221-222.

2. Reliability. A test must be so written that it will accurately and consistently test students for specific knowledge and manipulative ability. A test can be reliable and at the same time not valid; yet it must be reliable to be valid.
3. Objectivity. Tests should be so constructed so that several teachers or even students, with the help of the key, may arrive at the same score.
4. Mean. Teachers call it average. It designates the number determined by dividing the total value of all student scores on an examination by the number of students. This score represents the typical student in class.
5. Median. Median is another term used to designate a typical score. It is the value or score which represents the middle of a spread; half of the scores are above and half below.
6. Mode. Mode is a term used to describe central tendency in student scores. It is the most frequently occurring score in the distribution of scores earned by any group of students on a test.

The last three descriptions of central tendency listed above are of value to the teacher. But it is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate upon them.

INTERPRETATION OF TEST RESULTS AND ASSIGNING OF GRADES

Every course must have a plan for arriving at fair and impartial grades for the students. When the plan is objective it permits the rapid determination of grades. Subjective grades determined on "the spur of the moment" are too easily influenced by the mood and attitude of the teacher. Grades awarded one day might be completely different if awarded a few days earlier or later. A grade should be earned by the student and not determined subjectively near the end of the semester.

The Ministry of Education and Fine Arts has standardized the marking system. When used properly, it is objective, students are familiar with it and is simple to implement during grading periods. According to the system, each activity, test and other class contribution is evaluated against a common base (highest achievement is 100 per cent) and given a relative weight in relation to the other activities. The total is averaged and the final grade is based on predetermined limits :

| | | |
|----------|--------------|---|
| 90 - 100 | Excellent | A |
| 80 - 89 | Very good | B |
| 60 - 79 | Satisfactory | C |
| 50 - 59 | Poor | D |
| below 50 | Fail | F |

Statistical distribution and rank order (percentile) are also used, not in the schools but in the Examination Department of the Ministry.

It must be noted that educational measurement is far from perfect; final grades assigned to students are questionable because of their validity and reliability. In order to validate grades we should see to it that grades are based on students' personal achievement and nothing more. And the tests should measure the information they are designed to measure. To make the grades reliable,

more than one test and more than one of the factors of instruction must be included. One or two examinations given during the semester hardly give a true picture of the achievements or the worth of a student.

For example, in a beginning transcription course the following grades are received (equated on the basis of 100 being the highest possible score). In this example the major examinations are considered twice as important as any of the Unit Tests and are, therefore, given twice their relative weight.

| | |
|-----------------------------|----------|
| Unit Test I | = 80 |
| Unit Test II | = 85 |
| Unit Test III | = 75 |
| Mid-Semester (double value) | = 70 |
| | = 70 |
| Course Examination | = 90 |
| (double value) | = 90 |
| Performance Test No. 1 | = 60 |
| Performance Test No. 2 | = 70 |
| Performance Test No. 3 | = 90 |
| | 780 ÷ 10 |

= 78 per cent Average grade

It is apparent from the above test results that a student may do well one day and poorly the next. Therefore, a grade assigned on the basis of two or three tests is not reliable and not valid as well. That is why as many tests as the teacher deems necessary is recommended.

In conclusion, although evaluation has not yet become entirely scientific, progress is being made in developing instruments for evaluating student achievement. In its present state it offers much help to teachers who conceive of it as vital to good teaching. The great teacher will not feel he has failed if one of his students fails, but only if the student has not wanted to succeed.

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THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS — A SHORT REVIEW

This is the title of Chapter II of the Report on the Current Operation of the Education System in Ethiopia with special reference to Secondary Education and the Twelfth Grade Examination prepared for the Council of Ministers of the Imperial Ethiopian Government, November 1966. The chapter is reproduced in its entirety below.

The review is no less accurate now than when it first appeared almost three years ago. Pessimists will find in that ample justification for their gloom. Optimists, on the other hand, may find comfort in the reflection that the review, with its articulate and reasoned criticisms of the school system is largely the work of Ministry Officials.

"15. Any educational system is made up of five component units: (a) students, (b) teachers, (c) facilities, (d) curriculum, (syllabuses) and (e) administrators (finance is omitted since all of the five component units involve finance for their implementation) whose duty is to create a climate which is the most conducive to learning. A vigorous and flourishing education system is one where these component units are healthy and where there is an effective and lively communication among them. If any one of these five integral parts is diseased, the other four are bound to be affected.

16. In the case of Ethiopia, our study has revealed that not one, but all five, of the integral units mentioned above are inadequately developed.¹ The result is that Ethiopian education is today facing a serious dislocation. It is known that many students are restless and undisciplined, and those who do take their studies seriously are handicapped by obstacles beyond their control. To mention a few of these obstacles: in the provinces, students have to leave their homes and parents in pursuit of education and live in crowded and unhygienic conditions where there are not even the minimum facilities (such as electricity and a table and chair, not to mention privacy) that are indispensable for effective study. It is usually impossible for a student to do any quiet reading, private study or even his homework. More often than not, students live so close to 'tej' and 'buna bets' that the temptation to frequent them is irresistible. After all, the child is several miles away from home, far from the watchful eyes of parents and relatives. The detrimental effect of such living conditions on the student's morals, on his health and on his studies is too obvious to warrant comment.

17. This Report deals at length with the condition of the teachers, the second of the five component units of education. As a summary, we can say here that about two-thirds of the elementary school teachers are below standard and a sizable number have less than 4th grade education. Only 40% of the secondary school teachers are Ethiopian and of these only 10% are qualified.

¹ An indication of present conditions is revealed in the Reports of Recent School Visits. (see Appendix 6).

In other words, 90% of the secondary school teachers should be replaced — tomorrow if qualified Ethiopians were available. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract qualified and experienced expatriate teachers to Ethiopia since our salary scales (now twenty years old!) are not competitive with salary scales in other parts of Africa. In 1958 alone, we lost 71 of these experienced expatriate teachers largely to other African countries. As a result, our secondary schools depend to a large degree on volunteer teachers, Peace Corps and University Service, who are, to say the least, transient teachers. Similarly, we lose, on the average 10% of the better elementary school teachers to other professions and vocations every year.

18. The typical Ethiopian elementary or secondary school teacher is a disgruntled individual, who views the Ministry as his enemy and his duty as chore, who is constantly on the look-out for another job and who has been embittered by the lack of regular salary increments and by the absence of any appreciation of the conditions of hardship in which he teaches. It would not be an exaggeration to say that his morale, along with his status in society, has reached rock-bottom. It is unfair to the students — and dangerous to the future of Ethiopia — to entrust our children to a group of individuals in this frame of mind.

19. The third component part of the education system consists of teaching aids (textbooks, libraries, laboratories, etc.) and the school plant itself. The report shows that the per capita expenditure has declined from \$145 per child in 1948 to \$86 per child in 1957. The study also shows that very little is left of the recurrent budget, after salaries have been paid, for the purchase of even essential teaching aids. The little money that is left is not available in time to purchase books and equipment. As a result, except for some of those in Addis Ababa and Asmara, schools have hardly any libraries or laboratories to speak of. The few textbooks that somehow manage to trickle down through the maze of bureaucratic red tape extending from Headquarters via the Provincial Education Offices to the District Education Offices and finally to the school directors are, more often than not, securely locked in storage rooms.

20. Of the physical plant itself, the less said the better. A few solid buildings were built by the Ministry a few years ago; but these are now falling apart for lack of money for maintenance and minor repair work. In recent years, money for building and capital expenditure has not been available and communities have been left to put up elementary school buildings themselves. The lack of funds for constructing secondary schools has forced some of the newer secondary schools to offer classes in improvised quarters, or even in rented buildings scattered all over the town, as in Decamere. So we are not speaking here of the absence of special rooms like laboratories, assembly halls, geography rooms, etc., but of bare necessities such as classrooms with large windows, decent desks and ample blackboard space.

21. Fourthly, there is the curriculum. The Committee welcomes the introduction of Amharic as a medium of instruction in the elementary grades. Sound educational principles require that the child starts his education in his vernacular so that the transition from home to school will not be too abrupt. Even though Amharic is not the language of the home for many Ethiopian children, it is certainly much nearer to it than a European language. However, the 12th grade examinations so far do not show the effect of the introduction of Amharic since most of the candidates up to the present are products of the old system.

22. Nonetheless, the Committee feels that the textbooks written so far in Amharic need radical revision and that more need to be written. The secondary school curriculum, which was revised recently (1956), has not yet been implemented for lack of an adequate supply of textbooks and other teaching materials related to the culture and background of Ethiopian children. In short, we have a long way to go before we can claim to have a curriculum which is permeated by the Ethiopian ethos, meaningful to the Ethiopian child and related to his experience.

23. The fifth component unit of any education system is an effective administration, at all levels which will create the best possible climate for teachers to teach in and students to learn in. This Report deals with this aspect of the educational programme in sufficient detail. It also shows that there is an instability and constant changeover of school directors as well as senior Ministry officials at Headquarters. Even at the very top, the Ministry has had eight leaders in eleven years. Less than 20% of the elementary school directors are trained for their job and as for the secondary school directors, their only claim to the job is the degree they hold rather than their experience and seniority as secondary school teachers in the school system. The Committee was encouraged by the attempt in recent years to upgrade the Provincial Education Officers but there still remains the urgent need to clarify and delineate their responsibility vis-a-vis Headquarters. The Report says very little of the District (Awraja) Education Officers, as their lack of modern education (most of them have only a church education) and their unfamiliarity with modern concepts of administration are unfortunately only too obvious. At any rate, the position of the Awraja Education Officer has to be reconsidered in the light of the new local administration law.

24. All in all, the picture one gets of school administration is one of instability and general inefficiency. It is indeed a miracle that any education at all should be taking place in such circumstances.

25. Hence, there is a serious dislocation — one is tempted to say crisis — in all five of the component units of education: students, teachers, facilities, curriculum and administration. It would have been all too easy for this Committee not to be so blunt and critical, but this would have been self-deception and contrary to the real interests of Ethiopia and her people. Moreover, the Council of Ministers, who requested us to undertake this study, needs to have the full picture of Ethiopian education, however dark that picture may be. For, after all, an appreciation of actual facts is that first and indispensable step towards solving the problems that face us.

26. The members of the Committee are aware of the fact that Ethiopia is a developing country with limited resources. They are equally aware of the fact that the country has many other commitments besides education. Among many objectives, roads have to be built to open up the rich hinterland, hospitals and clinics have to be built, the defences of the country have to be strengthened, modern agriculture must be introduced, commerce and industry have to expand, Ethiopia's peaceful intentions and her leadership in the political field have to be given widespread publicity and her international commitments have to be honoured. All these commitments cost money. Education has to compete with other national programmes for its due share of public funds.

27. Although it is fully aware of Ethiopia's limited resources and the many commitments she has undertaken, the Committee has recommended various steps

that will need large sums of money over and above the present education budget. Moreover, in the course of the Report, it has been made clear that foreign assistance should supplement, and not replace, national effort.

28. The Committee realizes that the Council of Ministers is faced with a very difficult decision. Certainly it cannot close schools, or even slow down the expansion of schools, for at present Ethiopia has one of the lowest percentages of school enrolment in Africa. There is no alternative but to expand at least the elementary school enrolment while at the same time the whole school system must be improved and upgraded.

29. The Report implies that perhaps the present largely foreign pattern and alien philosophy of education is not appropriate to Ethiopia's requirements and doubts whether Ethiopia can afford to make this education free and universal. But this basic question has been left for another commission which it is hoped the Government will sponsor. Even if the country were able to afford a first-rate educational system (elementary and secondary), it is not certain that the nation's rate of social and economical development is such that it can utilize the products of the school system effectively. These are basic questions to which the Government must seek the answer sooner or later. But clearly these questions are beyond the competence of this Committee and of its terms of reference.

30. Within the limited time that it had at its disposal, the Committee has done its best to acquaint the Council of Ministers with what is basically wrong with the schools as they are at present and what should be done to rectify the situation. The Council of Ministers has the panoramic view of the whole nation that is needed to examine the Report in the context of Ethiopia's past achievements, present programmes and future plans. It only remains to say that its panoramic view of the country's needs and resources should enable the Council of Ministers to make bold and courageous decisions, for no piecemeal approach or half-hearted gestures will lift the schools from the sub-standard condition in which they now find themselves.

31. The future of Ethiopia and her people will depend to a large extent on the quality of her schools and quality of citizens the schools produce. To fortify Ethiopia's strength from within by building a vigorous and flourishing school system is a task comparable only to maintaining the security of the country against attack from without."