1-1-1993

Challenges for Faculty Developers and Department Chairs: When Faculty Arrive from Professional Settings

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This paper discusses problems encountered by new faculty coming from professional backgrounds to teach in subjects areas that have no academic traditions. Using the case of Bill, the paper describes difficulties these faculty members encounter and intervention techniques appropriate to them. Finally, the paper discusses how these problems are related to similar problems faced by all faculty.

Introduction

As the "Information Age" unfolds, educational priorities are shifting from "knowing things" to "knowing how to find things out." As a result, new fields not traditionally based in the academy are finding places there. New faculty drawn from these fields may come to college teaching through the professions rather than through academia, and thus do not have the academic acculturation that is both assumed and integral to successful college teaching.

Fields are defined, for purposes of this paper, as bodies of knowledge, skill, and acculturation that have become sufficiently distinct to be regarded as suitable for college-level study and professional preparation. Accounting, forestry, medical technology, industrial design, social work, and music therapy are all typical examples of such fields.

Implicit in Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990) is a view of faculty as individuals who hold advanced degrees and who have entered the professoriate with experience as undergraduate students, graduate students, teaching fellows, and research assistants. This range of experiences constitutes an academic apprenticeship and has served to establish and maintain an academic culture with a strong, stable, and implicitly understood (if not explicitly stated) work ethic, code of behavior, and value system (Gardner 1989). This implicit culture is driven by the state of traditional academic practice, which is to say that first, disciplines in which faculty work and teach have an academic tradition, and second, a graduate-school "apprenticeship" is both central to the study of the discipline and widely available as an entry point for individuals entering the discipline.

This is true for traditional disciplines, but emerging academic fields have no such traditions. The people who lead and teach in these emerging fields do not necessarily share common academic apprenticeship experiences. These fields (some might call them professional specialties) constitute an increasing proportion of academic study in colleges and universities around the country. Their rate of growth and change is accelerating. Faculty in these fields do not necessarily fit the template for faculty that Boyer assumes in *Scholarship Reconsidered* (1990). Instead, they often are drawn from professional practice in their fields. Their culture is the culture of the profession and their education often derives from practical experiences and theoretical understandings of the profession. Because of the specialized nature of the courses these faculty teach, they are often adjunct. Adjunct or not, they often do not regard themselves as members of the professoriate but instead as professionals who "teach on the side." Some professionals, such as the teacher in our case study below, decide to change careers and become full-time teachers.

A Case: Bill's Story

Berklee College of Music, founded in 1945 as a school to teach the practice and theory of jazz music, has consistently devoted its primary energies to teaching students about popular music and related issues, including music business and a host of technical specialties including recording engineering, record production, and music synthesis. Popular music does not enjoy an academic tradition (or even general acceptance as a legitimate focus of scholarly activity and study), and many of the fields we teach are no more than twenty years old at best. As a major course of study, music producion (an established career since at least 1950) has been offered for about a decade.

Bill is a record producer who came to teach at Berklee in 1990. Now in his early forties, Bill is a high-school graduate who briefly studied English at a community college. His passion for music led him into professional work with a series of rock bands. Discovering an aptitude for technical systems, he became active in running the sound system for many of those bands, which in turn led him to become the sound engineer for a major touring folk/rock artist. He then became a recording engineer at a new facility in New York that has become one of the foremost recording facilities in the world. An aptitude for working with people led him into record production. As both engineer and producer, he has album credits with some of the major popular artists of our time, on some of their most successful records.

Bill harbored a private ambition to be a teacher, which he feels is a noble calling. A chance meeting at a professional convention led to his appointment as a full-time faculty member in the Music Production and Engineering Department at Berklee. While there were minor concerns about his lack of academic credentials, his professional credentials were excellent and his interpersonal skills, knowledge of the recording industry, and passion for teaching made him an obvious and excellent candidate. Upon receiving his teaching assignments for his first semester, he called his department chair in a panic. One of his courses focused on the production of music for film and video, an area in which he had limited background. In addition, none of his courses dealt with recording engineering, a field in which he felt highly qualified to teach. The chair's view was that Bill's experience and

persona were so strong that these issues were comparatively unimportant and that Bill would do fine if he would just relax and be himself in class, using the material of the assigned courses as the basis for sharing, in an apprenticeship sort of way, his experience and knowledge with students.

Bill arrived on campus a month early and diligently prepared, learning as much as he could about college practices, facilities, and expectations of its faculty. His efforts in this regard were highly professional, and his presence in the department added an exceptional energy level and excitement to the department. Bill also attended a new faculty orientation program that Berklee's faculty developer runs each summer for new teaching staff. In two days of meetings, new faculty members are introduced to important people, resources, and procedures at the College. During the program a half-day seminar on teaching is scheduled, inviting well-known and thoughtful professors and department chairs to discuss with the new faculty the joys and frustrations of teaching at Berklee. Bill met the faculty developer at this orientation, and they agreed to keep in touch.

When Bill began teaching, he had a serious confidence crisis. While the department chair, Bill's co-workers, and his students all felt he was doing fine, he felt disoriented and at a loss. Particularly, he felt he was having trouble connecting with students. He could not bridge the formal gap that existed between himself and the students, and he floundered in his perceived role as a lecturer and disseminator of knowledge. He would go into class, start lecturing the students about the business, and quickly run out of things to say. Further, he was frustrated by his students' passivity in class and his sense that they didn't seem to learn, to "get it." Later, he characterized this in a talk to other faculty called "Who Are All These People and Why Are They Staring at Me?" Midway through Bill's first semester, he met with the faculty developer. This meeting led to a full-scale consultation and mediation in the form of videotaped classes and the preparation of a questionnaire for his students.

Bill decided to ask the faculty developer to videotape one class of each course he taught that semester. With the developer's help, he also designed a student feedback questionnaire. When asked what he was most concerned about learning from his students, he replied "I want

to know if my students feel that I respect them." This led to the question, "Does the instructor treat you with respect and remain interested in your work?" The developer also came up with three other questions: "What are you learning in this course, and is it what you expected to learn?" "Do you understand what is expected of you regarding preparation for and participation in this class?" and a final class discussion question, "Is there anything that you would change about this course or the way it is taught?"

Bill and the developer made plans to videotape one class in each of his courses. At the end of the class, Bill left ten minutes early and the developer handed out and collected the questionnaire, ran the brief discussion and took notes. He typed up the students' responses and sorted them by question and by class.

During the evaluation process, the students themselves turned things around for Bill. They did it, interestingly, by insulting him. Gross insults and "talking trash" are a mark of professional respect and caring in the recording industry, as in professional sports and other popular and visible fields. As Bill relates it, "[the faculty developer] handed out the evaluation questionnaires to the students and they were all silently filling them out while I was packing up my materials to leave so [the developer] could talk to the students in confidence. I was dying inside and couldn't wait to get out of the classroom, when one of the students in the back, in a loud stage whisper, said to the student sitting next to him, 'Is butt-head spelled with a hyphen?' It was so funny the whole class just broke up! For the first time I felt that I could just talk with the students as younger colleagues. It made it all clear and quite comfortable for me!"

This moment of epiphany contributed significantly to a recovery of confidence. Also, Bill came to see his students quite clearly on the videotape. The developer kept the camera on students for at least half the time when making the tapes. Bill noticed that his students were not as engaged in the class as he would have liked them to be. He felt he was supposed to lecture to students and tell them all that he knew about the subject at hand. This led to some rather dull moments in his classes which he easily recognized with his producer's alertness and acid criticism. The tapes gave Bill the opportunity to look closely at the role or "work" of a teacher in a college classroom. It became clear to

him that he had been neglecting his role as questioner and motivator of students in favor of being "the answer man," who students information and answered their questions. This important and fundamental shift occurred quickly and elegantly, in the mathematical sense, through the process of discussingwhat he saw of his class on videotape.

It was clear from the questionnaires that students liked and admired Bill's skills and experience enormously and that they were enjoying the class. Several students mentioned that Bill should relax and be "more himself" in the class, advice which he took to heart. In just two weeks, Bill's teaching style became more relaxed and dynamic, with much greater involvement and activity on the part of the students in his classes. The skills and temperament that led to Bill's success as a record producer also led to success as a teacher. In this case, the use of videotape analysis and written student feedback provided ample information for Bill to make the necessary paradigm shifts and re-frame his experiences and assumptions in order to become a really fine teacher.

This has spilled over into his department work and Bill has emerged as a strong and decisive voice in the department. He has begun to develop an effective teaching craft and to integrate his knowledge, experience and persona into the technical and business aspects of the curriculum.

Commentary on the Case

Bill's story reveals a number of problems and issues that confront colleges seeking faculty from fields outside academia. While Bill's successful adaptation to the academic environment was probably inevitable, given his highly developed interpersonal skills, and while his crisis of confidence was probably a normal part of that adaptation, such success is no sure thing. Also, Bill's problems have broad relevance, and new faculty with academic backgrounds as well as those without often encounter similar problems.

Bill's particular situation illuminates and magnifies a teaching issue that usually is not understood by most faculty in the academy: the growth of teaching craft from an object-oriented mode to a

subject-oriented one or from teacher-of-facts to teacher-of-students. In the case of faculty from outside academia, the issue is rarely even noticed, due to their "teaching-on-the-side" orientation. Faculty coming from within the academy usually have enough teaching craft and academic acculturation that the process and course of their development in this regard is obscured or masked. Still, in many cases this development never occurs.

Nothing in Bill's education gave him the tools or insights to allow him to integrate his knowledge and experience into a suitable teaching model. He is self-taught, with little insight about how his learning occurred or how his learning skills could be passed on to his students. Bill was also in a bind because of his preconceptions about the stereotypical professor of academia: a wise person presenting facts and concepts, illuminating his or her discipline for a group of interested and eager students. Bill lacked knowledge of the development of intellectual self-integration that seems to be inherent in adult learning, as exemplified by the Perry scheme (Perry 1970), because he had never had an opportunity to consciously observe it in himself or to consider it in the abstract. As another faculty member at Berklee with a similar background put it, "I feel that I'm really good at thinking through problems, but I'm terrible at thinking about thinking!"

Bill was also baffled by the vagueness of his charge and the apparently inappropriate teaching assignments. He was being asked to teach things about which he was not an authority, and he had professional knowledge and skills that were not being utilized. Assurances from his department chair rang hollow, particularly in light of the professional pressures to which he was accustomed. While Bill was familiar with the rough-and-ready, lunatic, and improvisational nature of record production, and his professional experience led him to expect situations in which he often had to "fake" what was appropriate knowledge and experience, he believed that college faculty *didn't do that*. Bill had trouble accepting the reality that the curriculum was little more than a framework arbitrarily handed over from predecessors caught in similar binds, working for an institution less knowledgeable than he about the subject matter and its related professional practice. He also had trouble accepting the idea that the college, as represented by the chair, really felt that *he* , Bill, *was the authority* and

the most appropriate person to determine what he should present to the students.

Finally, all of these issues faced Bill while he was shifting professions, with the accompanying stresses of moving, changed economic circumstances and processes, and the inevitable questions: "Is this a mistake? Do I really belong here?" This was a major life-change for Bill, and it proved to be difficult.

Implications for New Faculty

When arriving on campus, any new faculty member from a non-academic profession, like Bill, faces critical questions that usually are non-issues or easily handled when encountered by traditionally trained academics. These include mechanics of testing and grading, academic protocol and lines of responsibility and authority, appropriate relationships between teacher and student, and understanding the structure and culture of the department in relation to the profession. Often, for instance, there is significant dissonance between the profession and its academic paradigm, and, in some cases (popular music is one), the field itself engenders a kind of self-denigration. Consequently, the academic department may tend to discount the culture of the profession. The new faculty member may have no basis for interpreting or understanding these cultural issues.

Also, academic freedom is absent from many professions. The autonomy and intellectual self-reliance that are at the center of academic culture have little place in corporate or professional worlds. The expectation that faculty will use the structural constraints of curriculum as a guide and bridge toward intellectual autonomy is often in direct contradiction to the structural constraints of the "real world," where to stretch or violate these constraints is socially and professionally problematic. The ethical obligation of faculty members to seek knowledge and truth and to engage in a life-long quest for mastery of the discipline is a special, distinct, and attractive attribute of academic life, one for which professional life does not necessarily prepare these faculty.

A broader problem underlies this cultural transition. Collegiality, the assumption of shared authority and intellectual autonomy, consists

of a broad array of learned social and professional behaviors that are neither well codified nor amenable to quick acquisition. While it is possible to acquire some of the surface manifestations of collegiality quite easily and effectively, the underlying value system demands a high level of critical self-regulation coupled with a range of creative abilities to assimilate, synthesize, and educate that is difficult to acquire. Many faculty, not just those from outside of the academy, have trouble acquiring real collegiality, as current difficulties with the concepts of political correctness and the canon of Western Civilization reveal (Graff 1992). New faculty members are doubly challenged here, in that they not only have to cope with the problem of acquiring collegial skills, they also have to discover the collegial culture and try to make a meaningful place for themselves within it.

Implications for Chairs

Chairs and other departmental mentors can help simply by expressing their awareness that a new faculty member goes through a learning and acculturation process, that this process is expected, and that it is understood there will be difficulties and confusion. The chair can offer support and guidance and actively administer it as needed. Further, department chairs are in a good position to illuminate the relationship between the conflicting cultures of a field and the academy, and to assist new faculty members coming to grips with this conflict. Chairs also are in a position to help new faculty understand and effectively engage students and involve students as primary participants in the educational interaction.

Finally, department chairs serve as role models—it is reasonable to assume that their world-view may be comparatively coherent and well-balanced as a result of struggling with the conflicting concerns of the discipline, the institution, and the linked processes of teaching and learning in any particular environment . Chairs, particularly with conscious effort, can serve to support and guide new faculty members through a difficult and unfamiliar passage.

Implications for Faculty Developers

New faculty members who come to college teaching from strong professional backgrounds often have the skills necessary to become enormously successful teachers. When they first arrive, they will predictably use as models teachers they had in high school, professional school, or work settings and use these models as a basis for developing their own roles in the college classroom, whether or not those models will work for them in this new situation. If the faculty developer can create a comfortable, open, and confidential climate for working with new teachers from outside academia, trust can be built that will lead to enormous strides in a new faculty member's development.

As we noted above, professionals who come to teaching often arrive with the expectation that there is a carefully laid out structure within which they will teach courses. They expect that syllabi are clearly defined, course outlines carefully planned and coordinated with the department curriculum, and the week-to-week progression of content logical and orderly. They believe that (1) they will confront students hungry for the knowledge they possess, (2) that they are supposed to know a "body" of knowledge, and (3) that their knowledge is teachable to students within the guidelines and standards of the department. They also believe that both the students and the department have very specific expectations regarding how this knowledge is to be presented.

Such expectations can leave these professionals bewildered and confused when they receive their course assignments and topical outlines. They have never developed a college course before. They have little or no appreciation of the struggle that experienced professors routinely encounter when developing and teaching a course, trying to balance content with process and depth with breadth. There is no recognition that teachers have to make content choices based on the exigencies of time or level of difficulty for different groups of students. Thus, new faculty members can find that they are given a syllabus that someone else devised on the run, or casually put together, hoping it covers the necessary material. It occasionally reflects a

predecessor's idiosyncratic approach to the material and sometimes less than logical and orderly method of teaching.

Colleges usually expect faculty to provide their own teaching structure and approach to the material. Some new faculty are shocked (and even dismayed!) by the freedom and autonomy they are given to devise and construct their courses. They often feel that developing teaching methods for courses is the school's or the department's job, not theirs. For faculty developers, the need for assistance is clear, but what exactly should they be doing in these circumstances?

A number of interventions make sense in this situation, and the case with Bill illustrates the integrated use of observation (of self, through reviewing videotaped classes with the faculty developer) and classroom assessment (in the form of student feedback). These techniques teach faculty members, experientially, an enormous quantity of pedagogy in a very short period of time. They also teach problem-solving skills, and instill an awareness of self in the classroom that is enabling and powerful; they learn that classroom teaching is not an immutable process, and that with careful experimentation, observation and feedback, problems concerning teaching and learning in the classroom can be solved.

For the faculty developer, establishing good working relationships with new faculty members early in their teaching careers provides an important avenue for the development of trust and collegiality. New faculty orientation programs provide an excellent occasion for making the acquaintance of and establishing trust with new faculty members. Orientations, when well done, are an invaluable tool for making these connections and sowing the seeds of collaboration and cooperation for years to come.

Reflections on Learning Models from the "Real World"

The range of non-college models of teaching and learning that may be central to the new faculty's world-view is worth brief discussion. Most primary and secondary education in the United States is still based on a nineteenth century industrial factory worker model, with the teacher placed in the role of shop foreman (Toffler 1980).

Systems are comparatively rigid, mechanical, and fact-based. Educational expectations are closely tied to the multiple-choice test and a bifurcated caste system that divides students into "college material" and "others."

Corporate or in-service job training programs tend to be based on the high school industrial model, except that it is more narrowly aimed at skills to be acquired and may also incorporate an institutional value system that students must subscribe to in order to successfully meet training objectives. Related to such training are the educational offerings available through a number of continuing education suppliers (such as the Fred Pryor organization, which offers one-day seminars for the business world on management and development issues). These concentrated, group-oriented instructional situations provide intensive and stimulating presentations, but little or no time for research, reflection, or in-depth examination of issues or processes. Supporting materials may be marginal in terms of coverage and perspective.

Most important, there is the learning that occurs in the workplace itself, the apprenticeship process that occurs every time we enter into a new work situation and environment. These apprenticeships are as pervasive, influential, and powerful as the graduate-school "professionalizing" process encountered in academia, if not as structured or rooted in educational awareness. What is important to keep in mind here is that socialization experiences encountered outside the academy are going to be significantly different from those within the academy, and that these differences will play an important role in how the new faculty member develops as a teacher.

The experiences, memories, learning paradigms, and roles encountered in various learning experiences become the educational model that new faculty members carry with them to the job. The values inherent in the predominant experiences become central to the new faculty member's approach to teaching. When such values are inappropriate, they can cause serious difficulties in the classroom, leaving the faculty member, the students, and the college bewildered by the dysfunction.

Related to the these value-systems are the problems of protocol related to the classroom. How does the teacher maintain appropriate

order and discipline? What student behavior is tolerable, appropriate, reasonable, unruly? How should class be conducted? How close to on time should students be? What is appropriate dress? How often should one take questions? Ask questions?

What sort of and how much homework should be assigned? What sort of and how many exams and quizzes should be given? What are appropriate grading standards? Should grading be on a "curve"? What is a "curve"?

While these concerns might sound mundane and the answers intuitively self-evident to experienced academic teachers (though infinitely variable and arguable), consideration of them from the perspectives of the different learning models mentioned above will suggest the broad range of educational models and expectations that new faculty bring to the college classroom.

There is also a more fundamental concern to be recognized here. It is especially important because it pertains to all faculty, not just those coming from the professions. The problems new faculty encounter may reveal and magnify these issues of teaching, but in our concern about *teaching* (the active process of initiating and conducting the classroom experience) we often do not explicitly address the more important issue of *learning* undertaken by the student. The act of teaching is such an ego-involving task, it can be difficult to appreciate the gulf between the act of teaching performed by the teacher and the tangentially related act of learning performed by the student.

The new faculty member, in our experience, tends to view teaching as object-oriented and tied to the field; he or she is teaching accounting, for instance, not students. The philosophical shift to an I-Thou paradigm, where the discipline is the vessel through which the act of learning is invoked, where the teacher serves as guide and catalyst, takes time and involves a shift in educational world-view. It also requires a broadening of the educational models a new faculty member knows and uses, and this is where the developer and the chair, as facilitators, can play a important role.

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