

Video Tape Helps Students Learn To Teach



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SHOULD a teaching methods course deal with more than teaching theory and other vicarious experiences? Many students and instructors who have had some contact with a methods course might answer with a resounding "yes" when asked this question.

A methods course should prepare the student for the student teaching experience. It is reasonable to expect that the business of teaching, in the modern setting, requires certain skills and techniques that need to be nurtured. Before a potential student teacher has the opportunity to influence "the innocent minds of our young," appreciate and use effectively the mass education media, or protect adequately his charges (and sometimes himself), a sensible approach to good technique is necessary. In order to acquire this, it is essential that a teacher, and especially a teacher in preparation, be tuned into the teaching frequency. The strength of the frequency signal, of course, depends on how meaningful the methods class atmosphere is to the student.

I have taught a methods course, Intermediate Upper Methods, during the past two

summers. The first summer I was dedicated, with much enthusiasm, to making my methods course uniquely interesting. A syllabus was developed that contained an elaborate schedule for utilizing outstanding resource speakers, resource materials, and topics for classroom discussion. At last, I was going to have the opportunity to share my many teaching experiences and observations with those who were willing to help carry the torch of learning.

The first real experience of teaching adults how to teach was full of surprises. The individual differences existing among the members of this summer school class were tremendous. I had students who had not student taught (which was expected); students who had had student teaching experience, but had not taught since; teachers who had taught, under a two-year teaching program; and even a former superintendent of schools who needed my course to become, once again, an administrator. The interests and needs of my class were so diversified that I felt, in the final analysis, I was unable to develop the learning atmosphere that I wanted to create. It was my

feeling that somehow the needed spice had been left out.

The following summer, I again taught the Intermediate Upper Methods course. At this time, the university's first video tape replay equipment arrived. My students and I, during the first two days of class, decided to utilize this equipment in developing a learning situation. A schedule was devised, by which all of us taught twelve-minute concepts to the fifth and sixth graders, at the University Laboratory Elementary School.

The twelve-minute concepts taught were integral parts of curriculum resource units being developed by the students in our class. The following concepts were taught:

- Figures of speech
- Why is wool warmer than cotton?
- What is a unit of measure?
- Measurement in the metric system
- Learning poetry can be fun
- How a bar and fulcrum work
- Figurative language
- The names of parts of a fraction
- Force and motion
- Correct form of writing letters
- An adjective describes a person, place, or thing
- The basic parts of a flower and their functions
- The American Indian gathering food
- How hydroelectricity is produced
- Careful enunciation
- Proper and common nouns
- Use of the globe with day and night.

Students in our methods class were given the opportunity to observe and to be observed by the youngsters they were to teach. These grade school students viewed the TV equipment, in action, in their classroom. Many of the presenters handed out to the children, several days in advance, printed materials pertaining to the concepts to be taught.

It was understood that the students would not be graded on their presentations. The sixteen concepts were taught during a one-week period. I volunteered to teach the first concept to help initiate the project.

There were three basic reasons for teaching the concepts to the youngsters:

1. That we might learn through teaching
2. That we might learn by observing others teach
3. That we might develop a better understanding of the curriculum units being developed, by presenting concepts represented in these units.

Each televised teaching situation was reviewed and critiqued during subsequent sessions of our class. Time was taken to review these lessons thoroughly.

The members of our class discussed and put into writing their impressions of the benefits derived from the TV teaching experiences. They also were asked to describe what they believed this had done to make a better learning situation. These observations follow:

WHAT WAS LEARNED

1. We observed others teaching in a controlled situation.
2. We became aware of the many small habits that develop to make a teaching presentation less effective.
3. It was made evident that extensive preparation is necessary in order to be an effective teacher.
4. The techniques of working and being patient with students were evident.
5. We should never walk into a classroom assuming anything. Expect the unexpected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The concepts should have been taught according to a plan of sequential learning experiences.
2. Better coordination could have been developed between the camera crews and presenters. The camera crews should have a better understanding of what is being presented. Definite plans should be given to the TV crews, before each presentation.
3. There should be more opportunities for getting to know the youngsters, before teaching.
4. Practice sessions, before the cameras, are desirable.
5. Discussions, prior to the presentation, concerning how to use visual aids more effectively, would have been worthwhile.

6. More time should have been made available for teaching the concepts.

The elementary school students who had been taught were asked to express their reactions to being taught and televised. Three of the responses which, I believe, exemplify a cross section of the entire class, follow:

WHEN I WAS ON TELEVISION

When I was on television I had a chance to say a satence [sic] right. This is not my first time on Television. I was on Bozo two times.

WHEN I WAS ON TELEVISION

When I was on television this week I had a wonderful time just being myself. With so many different teachers we were learning so many different things. The teacher I liked best was Miss Lad who taught us the correct way to write a letter. It was sure fun seeing yourself on TV.

ON TV

When I was on TV for my first time I always wanted to look at myself on the television. I thought I looked pretty funny on TV. We had special classes on TV. I learned a lot of new things.

It was quite apparent that the youngsters were self-conscious about being televised. The benefits that they derived from the experience were subjectively evaluated by their teacher. The teacher felt that a number of the concepts presented had carry-over value, for future lessons. The number of questions asked by the youngsters made it apparent that their minds were actively involved.

My evaluation of our experiments led

me to believe that I had found part of the spice I was seeking. Our methods course, by many indications, had proved to be an ongoing experience. Some realism and the give-and-take of our discussion left us all with a better idea of what is expected of a teacher.

A greater challenge now is raised. The imperfections of mastering methods of teaching were many. Our next attempt to use the video tape replay equipment should develop some of the following points (these are, by no means, all-inclusive):

1. This next attempt should be initiated after an extended period of advanced planning.

2. Better coordination among all individuals involved should be attained.

3. Should only certain students from the methods class be required to teach concepts? Fewer concepts taught, with the time available, would allow more time for teaching and reviewing.

4. We have a definite responsibility for doing a better job of orienting the elementary students. There must be a more extensive evaluation of the effects of our instruction on these youngsters.

5. The concepts developed should be sequential.

6. More emphasis could be placed on the fundamental techniques that are most important in learning.

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