

An Application of PBTE Principles in a Humanistic Framework

EDWIN J. CHAMBLISS*

Detailed here is a set of procedures designed to humanize standard evaluation practices by applying basic PBTE principles.

CONCEPTS of performance based teacher education have influenced many teacher education programs during the past few years. Many of these programs have found themselves in conflict both with traditional grading procedures of the college or university and with the humanistic base of faculty philosophies. Reported here is a set of procedures designed to humanize standard evaluation practices by applying basic PBTE principles.

Conventional Letter Grades versus PBTE

Conventional letter grades have commonly rewarded students for early endeavor, skill above average, or quantity of effort. A "good" student is able to earn an "A" which reflects superior status. The "slow" or less skillful student receives a grade which indicates slowness or lack of skill. Many avenues to higher education depend on entrance requirements keyed to grade-point averages. Most graduate schools (including medical, law, and education) use grade averages as an important criterion for admission. Even many public school personnel directors examine grades on transcripts in the desire to hire superior teachers. Educators who wish

their students to maintain access to these advantages have been reluctant to adopt a performance based program that would result in a pass-fail final grade.

Performance based teacher education, as well as other performance based programs, are supported by many educators who feel that normative grades have not served the profession well in determining those teacher candidates who have the essential skills to become effective teachers. All teacher educators have heard stories, ad nauseum, about teachers who can't spell or who make frequent errors in mathematics. Performance, particularly in such critical areas, is measurable and minimum standards are not hard to establish. In fact, these areas are usually reflected even in standard grading procedures. In other equally critical areas which humanists particularly value, such as teacher warmth or consistency, we have made less defensible measurements, or, more likely, none at all.

However, the problem of measuring these qualities should not deter us from raising the level of consistency with which we prepare new professionals to enter teaching in those areas which we can measure. The following scheme for using performance based objectives to achieve letter grades in a less dehumanizing manner has helped New Mexico State University to achieve a working

*Edwin J. Chambliss, Professor of Education, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces

model acceptable to both faculty and students.

An Application of This Model

The objectives for a class of student teachers are stated in behavioral terms. Some objectives are designated Enabling Objectives and others are designated as Terminal Performance Objectives. Fifty Enabling Objectives have been developed and grouped under seven Terminal Performance Objectives in a class which produces five semester credits. Each objective specifies a minimum level of performance that is acceptable for a Pass designation. The letter grade of C is defined as achieving a Pass for all 57 objectives. Grades above C are earned by achieving a Pass-Plus for some or all of the objectives for which a Pass-Plus is defined. It is the development of this Pass-Plus designator which has solved conflicts between performance based and normative grades.

Those objectives which are subject to quantitative or qualitative judgments are selected for Pass-Plus designation. For each objective in this category, two levels of performance are described, one as a minimum, the other as an exemplary level of performance. The minimum performance level is designated as a Pass, the exemplary level is designated Pass-Plus. The course grade is then determined by the number of Pass-Plus evaluations achieved by the student. It is important that in order to achieve a grade of C or better, any student must achieve a minimum of Pass for every objective. The failure to achieve a Pass for any objective reduces the final grade to D or F according to a schedule developed and distributed with the syllabus. Completing several Pass-Plus objectives *does not average* with uncompleted or unsuccessful objectives to permit the student with specific deficiencies to pass the course. However, for the student who achieves at least the minimum standard in all objectives, the availability of the Pass-Plus removes the tendency, found in some performance based programs, to reduce all performance to a minimum level.

Standards of Performance Improved

The most important development in experimenting with this plan has been the discovery that levels of student productivity and the accuracy of skills displayed have been raised to achieve the specifics of the Pass-Plus descriptions. Over a period of ten semesters criteria for the Pass-Plus have been repeatedly refined and revised. With each revision, students have been able to develop materials and performances to meet the new standards.

The result has been that over this span of time, student-developed and demonstrated skills have been improved and standards have been raised to levels that were considered unattainable a few years ago. In general, having only two levels of acceptable performance has apparently created a focus upon achieving exemplary performance as defined in the Pass-Plus descriptors. *Letter grades have changed very little.* Successful seniors in the program still make a preponderance of A's, as they have in most programs, but the level of actual demonstrated proficiency has been raised and raised again until the students appear to feel a real pride in their own accomplishments.

It must be emphasized that this level of motivation and performance was not achieved by the professional staff working alone. Many techniques were employed for achieving cooperative development of the objectives and the grading criteria which involved input from student teachers, cooperating teachers, and the supervisory staff in repeated and frequent interaction. The desired result has been a grading system which allows students to apply themselves systematically to areas of their own choice with sufficient controls to assure that essential skills are being developed to at least minimum levels.

Learner Choice and Pacing

One procedure has developed that has contributed to the raising of standards. Objectives, including those for which the Pass-



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Plus is available, may be evaluated more than one time. Deadlines are established cooperatively between the instructors and the students. Materials or performances to be evaluated may be submitted any time prior to the established deadline. If deficiencies are found, the material may be reworked or more practice applied to the performance to achieve the higher criteria. Although such a procedure adds considerable evaluation time for the instructor, the resulting high morale and motivation have been gratifying. Final deadlines are also established after which no revisions will be considered for Pass-Plus criteria. In this way, procrastinating students may pass the course, but receive less prestigious grades.

Figure 1 shows one example of the conversion of Pass, Pass-Plus, and Fail criteria to letter grades. The 57 objectives included in the course were divided into 50 Enabling Objectives and seven Terminal Performance Objectives. Pass-Plus descriptors were provided for all seven Terminal Objectives and for ten of the Enabling Objectives. The other 40 objectives were evaluated Pass or Fail.

	Terminal Performance Objectives	Enabling Objectives	
A	7 P+	And 10 P+	With No F
A-	7 P+	8 or 9 P+	No F
B+	6 P+ & 1 P 7 P+	8 to 10 P+ 6 or 7 P+	No F No F
B	5 P+ & 2 P 6 P+ & 1 P 7 P+	6 to 10 P+ 5 to 7 P+ 3 to 5 P+	No F No F No F
B-	4 P+ & 3 P 5 P+ & 2 P 6 P+ & 1 P 7 P+	4 to 10 P+ 3 to 5 P+ 2 to 4 P+ 0 to 2 P+	No F No F No F No F
C+	1 to 3 P+ & 4 to 7 P 4 P+ & 3 P 5 P+ & 2 P 6 P+ & 1 P	0 to 10 P+ 0 to 3 P+ 0 to 2 P+ 0 to 1 P+	No F No F No F No F
C	57 P		
C-	Any Combination of P+ and P with one F		
D+	Any Combination of P+ and P with two F		
D	Any Combination of P+ and P with three F		
F	4 or more F		

Figure 1. Conversion of P+ P F Evaluation to Letter Grades.

A Sample Terminal Objective

The following statement is an example of the seven terminal objectives which have been developed for the program discussed:

TPO II, Component Skills of Teaching

Each student teacher will be able to develop a personal performance profile on a form provided by the instructor which reflects peer group and self ratings on the component skills demonstrated in five microteaching sessions. Completion of this objective includes a written analysis of this performance profile and a plan for implementing strengths and improving upon weaknesses as they relate to the development of a personal teaching style.

P+ = a performance profile which reflects a composite peer rating of at least 20 on the five skill areas explored in microteaching, and an analysis of a personal teaching style judged to be realistic and reasonable by the supervisor.

P = a performance profile which reflects a composite score from 15 to 10 on the five skill areas explored in microteaching with no score less than 2 on any one skill and a plan for improving weak skills judged to be realistic and appropriate by the supervisor.

In summary, the widely published conflict between PBTE and humanism has been overdrawn. Performance objectives can be used to clarify and specify the goals of a class in such a way that humanistic concerns can be served. This process, as outlined here, also results in letter grades which contribute to grade-point averages important as entry criteria for graduate schools and other avenues to high achievement.

In keeping with PBTE principles, the following points are noted:

1. Pass-Plus descriptors serve to guide students in establishing desired levels of performance.
2. Utilizing two levels of acceptable performance tends to motivate achievement at the exemplary level when students are given the opportunity for re-evaluation in areas of deficiency.
3. The requirement to achieve at least minimum proficiency in each objective for a



grade of C or better results from eliminating the process of averaging passing and failing grades for various course objectives.

In keeping with humanistic tenets, the following principles are observed:

1. Students are not compared with one another.
2. Students are able to make selections concerning areas of special application and rate of application.
3. Students may govern pacing of the objectives attempted.
4. Student-instructor interface places the instructor in the role of facilitator, helping the student reach the objective.

Throughout, humanism is expressed in the processes utilized to achieve the objectives and the manner of evaluation. A scheme such as this, developed through student-teacher interaction, provides an adequate and defensible means of achieving course evaluation. □

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