

Toward a Better Definition of Teaching

The two developments that over the last 25 years have most enriched our conception of teaching are not easily reconciled. The search for alternatives to conventional didactic teaching, which peaked in the 1960s, stimulated invention of an array of methods suitable for various instructional purposes. More recently, the "effective teaching" research has established a firm connection between traditional teacher behaviors and student achievement on tests (Rosenshine, 1983). Reinforcing this second strand is the work of Madeline Hunter (1984), whose sensible interpretation of psychological research has been the basis for numerous inservice programs.

The apparent discrepancy between the two paradigms has been highlighted by the current interest in teaching for thinking. Supervisors who have been urging teachers to maintain a businesslike atmosphere, give explicit directions to students, and ask recitation-type questions to check for understanding are reminded that thoughtful discussion requires a somewhat different climate (Dillon, 1984).

John Barell (p. 18) and Janet Kierstead (p. 25) demonstrate that one approach is not right and the other wrong, both are right—but for different objectives. No single model of teaching is sufficient to achieve all the aims of schooling.

Commenting on the awakening interest in teaching thinking, Bruce Joyce (p. 4) points out that teachers have a storehouse of models they can draw upon to teach students to think. He and Marsha Weil codified these alternative procedures in their respected book, *Models of Teaching* (1980). Several have since been modified to make them more accessible to teachers by Richard Strong and his associates (p. 9), who call their simplified models "strategies," following Hilda Taba and her interpreters (Eh-

renberg and Ehrenberg, 1982).

Other differences in terminology are evidence that our definition of teaching remains inchoate. Muska Mosston and Sara Ashworth (p. 31), who have spent years refining a spectrum of teacher-student decision-making modes, refer to these patterns as "styles," although others reserve that term for the enduring ways that different types of individuals perceive and process experience and information (Mamchur, 1984; McCarthy, 1985).

The effort to sort these things out may seem picky, but it is worthwhile. Building on the work of writers, researchers, and innovators such as these, we are constructing a common language as we enlarge our vision of what it means to teach. We are learning what processes are most suitable for what ends. We are refining a body of knowledge and a set of procedures that are the marks of a profession.

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