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0521689864 - Teaching Management: A Field Guide for Professors, Corporate Trainers, and Consultants

James G. S. Clawson and Mark E. Haskins

Excerpt

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Why this book on teaching management?

JAMES G. S. CLAWSON AND
MARK E. HASKINS

I (Jim) remember my first calculus course. It was at a school recognized by many as one of the top two or three schools in the world. The instructor was a graduate student, a gentleman working on his Ph.D. in mathematics. He was a nice enough man, soft-spoken and relatively congenial before and after class. He even seemed mildly interested in the various nonmathematical events happening around him – Watergate, Vietnam, and the pollution of the environment. Yet when class began, he turned into a creature from another planet: he turned his back on the class and began lecturing (speaking into the board rather), bouncing his words off the board in a spray pattern that drifted over us and settled ever so lightly on our young heads. He wrote fast, and we wrote fast. Sometimes we'd stop writing and raise our hands, but the instructor, his eyes somewhat glazed over by the beauty of the equations and mathematical connections he was painting, often did not see us, or ignored us, and continued until his cognitive cantata was completely composed and the final chord sounded. Then, holding the chalk lightly like a baton between his thumb and index finger, and characteristically giving an ebullient wave of his writing hand, he would turn and face us with a thin, satiated smile and ask, "Any questions?" the true meaning of which was, "True mathematicians (musicians) will have understood and felt the beauty of this development and will appreciate its elegance. Let's not disrupt the effect of the whole by dissecting its parts for the less-educated or -sophisticated."

I've lost count of how many times I've sat in such classes at a business school or a corporate university or talked with others who have. Although good people and good scholars, instructors of this kind are ill-prepared to initiate others into their fields. One wonders how they were able to grasp the subject and become enamored of it, assuming they met similar initiations.

I (Mark) remember my first year as a faculty member at the Darden School. If imitation is the greatest form of flattery, Ray Smith, a veteran

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Darden School professor whose fifty-eight accounting classes I sat in on and tried to emulate later that day in my own, was flattered probably more than he ever had been in his life. I will admit it now, some 20 years later, that I was clueless. I had never taught MBA students before. I had never taught case method before. I had never taught a class with 60 students in it before. I had never taught such bright and gifted students before. Not only was I clueless, but I was also willing to try almost anything I saw Ray do. Alas, that was not a good idea. Not because Ray was not a great teacher – he was. Rather, it was because I was not Ray. I did not have his personality, his manner, his unique experiences, or even his opinions and views on the subject matter.

Fortunately, I survived that first semester and learned an important lesson – there are indeed certain teaching fundamentals, nuances, and “tricks of the trade” that can be learned, *and* I had to have the courage, the professional dedication, and the willingness to work at operationalizing those fundamentals in ways that fit who I was. To this day, it continues to be a process of exploration and experimentation. Classroom ideas get tested; some are discarded, some are kept. I wish I had had this volume when I first started teaching, if for no other reason than to have accelerated and enhanced the development of my teaching. My one hope for this book is that it does that, in some small way, for those who read it. I believe, like Jim, that we have a sacred trust as teachers to foster our students’ learning of subject matter but also their interest in learning itself. Therefore, I invite you to dedicate yourself to the teaching craft – to envisioning the classroom as if it were full of your own children (or full of your best friends) for whom you want to deliver your very best. I invite you to use this volume as both a call to arms to invest in your teaching and as a modest collection of ideas to spark your own discovery of how to be a bit better at teaching than you already are.

This volume is intended for several audiences. As we have written the chapters and distilled some of the teaching insights we wanted to share, we had business school doctoral students and newly appointed business school instructors in mind. Also prominent in our thinking were business school faculty who were not necessarily new to the teaching profession but who were still (or newly) interested in raising their game, so to speak. We also have spent many years working with corporate trainers and consultants who are regularly called on to instruct others to design instructional experiences and/or materials and who

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face the challenge of creating memorable, powerful learning experiences. To all of them, we offer some insights we've developed over the years to increase teaching effectiveness. Each of the groups faces some interesting challenges.

Doctoral students

Stories like the ones we shared, even though they are our own, worry us. They worry us in light of emerging data on the relative academic preparation of American students compared with students of other countries. They worry us in light of the number of Ph.D.s who are produced and annually enter the ranks of university faculty. They worry us when we see students in class who are unable to demonstrate ability with subjects they've taken before. They worry us when we leave a classroom and walk back to our office wondering how many came away from our classes with a similar experience. They worry us because we do not believe we have had atypical educational experiences.

The widespread lack of attention in the United States to university teacher training is unfortunate and, we would even assert, unethical. Roughly 600 colleges and universities in North America offer doctoral programs in business. Some of those schools have a practical teaching requirement – that is, one that requires students to teach courses before they leave. But even those schools leave learning about teaching to onthejob training. Only a small number of business school doctoral programs require formal education in adult learning theory, teaching theory, and teaching techniques. In the end, graduate business schools certify to the world that their doctoral graduates are two things – researchers and teachers – yet virtually all of those graduates' formal training is focused on research methodology and technique.

One argument says that Ph.D.s are primarily researchers and therefore don't need instructor training. We believe that presents a falsely narrow view of the careers they will lead. Yes, they will (we hope) conduct research and add to the body of knowledge in their fields. They will also, however, be put in the classroom almost immediately, often by administrators who don't understand their field, and be confronted with a room full of students, sometimes as many as 700 at a time. That is not a formula for a world-class learning experience. If instructors are not interested in, or well prepared for, facilitating their students' learning, is not sensitive to variations in learning styles, and is

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not committed to student learning more than instructor professing, the all too frequent and deplorable consequences are that students merely endure the class, cram for the exam, pass by the skin of their teeth, and leave the course unchanged, perhaps even jaded, by the experience. That experience may significantly shape their interest in the subject matter, their ability to build on basic concepts for higher level training, and eventually impact the shape of their careers. Rather than turning students onto a field, we are, in many cases, turning students off because we ignore, or at best, marginalize, the teaching craft.

Graduate business schools, we believe, have a responsibility to teach their graduates not only how to do research, but also how to teach. For some schools that responsibility is manifest in nothing more than cheap labor to staff introductory courses. In others, courses on teaching are offered only in the related school of education for those students who choose to swim upstream across departmental boundaries. Few graduate business schools require course work on adult learning and pedagogy for the doctoral degree – despite the fact that most of those graduates will soon be teaching.

The underlying philosophy seems to be that if a doctoral student is bright, experienced in attending classes, and – by virtue of his or her research and academic training – has something to say, that person will be an acceptable teacher. The related underlying assumption is that learning about teaching is not worthwhile, that teaching is simple and easy. In some schools, that philosophy is taught explicitly. Doctoral students and new professors alike are told that they should focus their time on research and not worry about the quality of their teaching above some sadly minimal level. Indeed, the message is often sent that time and energy spent on teaching is not merely a non-career-enhancing endeavor, but actually a negative effort since it diverts time from research. In such a milieu, learning about teaching, talking about teaching, practicing teaching, and developing skill at teaching are posited as a waste of time.

One thesis of this volume is simply that newly minted Ph.D.s in business should be taught how to teach. We ought to require all Ph.D. candidates to receive formal training in teaching. We ought to grade them on how well they can teach, and we ought to encourage them, as we do in regard to their research, to plan on continuing to learn about teaching throughout their careers. We ought to hold conferences and circulate published insights about how to teach more effectively.

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Teaching should not be isolated to the purview of the schools of education. Biologists, chemists, physicists, accountants, mathematicians, historians, language instructors, and management scholars should all have teacher training including an emphasis on the value of excellent teaching as part of their doctoral-level certification.

There are others who feel that way. Ph.D. program teaching requirements at the Harvard Business School, the University of Virginia, Babson College, Georgia Tech, and Texas A&M, among others, demonstrate the growing awareness of the need for such training. This book was written in part as an effort to provide doctoral program administrators and instructors elsewhere a readily available resource for initiating teacher training in their programs. It is an attempt to provide doctoral level instructors with some practical materials for classroom use. It is an attempt to bring a rigorous concern about the quality of teaching to doctoral programs worldwide. It is, in summary, an attempt to provide a little balance between the heavily research-oriented focus of most doctoral programs and their common lack of attention to quality teaching.

University instructors

For instructors who have some years in the saddle, to use an old cowboy expression, this book is also germane. Who among us cannot benefit from some reflection on our teaching after having been at it for 5, 10, 15, or even 30 years? The contents of this book are intended to serve as a stimulus for reflecting on what we do in the classroom, why we do it, and how it might be done more effectively. It is not uncommon, especially if our teaching has met with a modicum of success over the years, to keep on doing what we have always done. Why change? Why do anything different? Well, subject matter changes, students change, the business environment changes, and perhaps more significantly, we change. Maybe the youthful connection we had with our students when we first began teaching is gone as we have aged and they have not. Perhaps the unbridled enthusiasm we could hardly mask when we simply anticipated standing in front of the classroom in our early years has morphed into a comfortable, mildly taken-for-granted routine. And is it possible that when we hear the same question, in the same course, at the same juncture in the topical flow, we might seem a little less patient in our demeanor and a little more terse in our explanation than when

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we first bumped up against such a question from a student 19 years earlier? And who hasn't experienced the moment in a discussion when you pose an example or make a reference to something that you realize pertains to a world that existed before the students in your class were even born? Ah, yes, a bit of reflection and personal evaluation can be a good thing in order to put the full measure of our early years' joy of teaching back into our experienced years. Writing this book was certainly such an experience for us. We hope that reading it can be for you, too.

Corporate trainers and consultants

This volume is also intended to serve others who teach managers – not just those who address them in business school, degree-program classrooms. Consultants and corporate trainers work almost daily with practicing managers in the field. They hold seminars, retreats, conferences, training sessions, coaching sessions, and a myriad of other events designed to educate people about how to better run their businesses.

There are hundreds of consulting firms whose primary focus is teaching practicing managers how to do their jobs more effectively. Many of those instructors do not hold Ph.D.s, nor have they been trained in learning or teaching theory. As consultants, perhaps they were once corporate trainers and have set out on their own to bring their services to a wider range of clients. Perhaps they have access to some proprietary assessment tool or perhaps they have developed a model that makes sense to them and have been able to convince others of its worth. However they began, many of those consultants, even ones we've observed who have been conducting training sessions for decades, seem to need some insight on how adults learn and how they might best be taught. One does not have to travel far in interviewing employees who bemoan how sleepy their last consultant-based corporate training experience was. We see it often in our work – and though it is sad, there's a certain relief that it won't take much to delight those customers – their level of expectation has been so lowered, they no longer expect "education" to be fun, exciting, or even productive.

In many ways, corporate trainers face a more difficult challenge than consultants. At least consultants have the opportunity to see a variety of corporate cultures and propensities to learning and extract from those lessons about how adults best learn. Except for conferences,

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corporate trainers typically live in the same environment most of their professional lives. Their values, assumptions, beliefs, and expectations about how to teach, what to teach, and how to develop people tend to be reinforced, both negatively and positively, from their day-by-day experiences with the same management, the same guidance, the same participants, and the same imperatives. They swim in a cultural sea that may not, often does not, understand nor reinforce the principles of effective adult learning.

Perhaps you think we're being a bit hypercritical – taking on universities, consultants, and corporate learning environments. Yet to us, it seems ironic that the very channels that purport to teach others often seem so unimaginative and uninspiring in their approach to teaching. Regardless of the quality of teaching that you've personally seen and experienced and perhaps done, we hope that the ideas and approaches introduced here will help you become a better teacher. If you're just beginning, perhaps it will save you some time in the school of hard knocks. If you're an experienced teacher, perhaps you'll see some familiar themes and maybe some new ones that will help you continue to refine your craft. We intend that the concepts included here will be useful to doctoral students in all business related fields who will one day be teaching future managers. We also hope they'll be useful consultants who present to, strive to persuade, try to motivate, and ultimately teach practicing managers all over the world. We hope these ideas will be helpful to corporate trainers who toil in the bowels of the bureaucratic beast to educate their fellow employees how they all can do better.

Do not mistake our point. We are not saying that anyone who didn't have formal training is not a good teacher. We know many teachers who have never had formal training in teaching yet who are excellent teachers, take it seriously, and have a significant positive impact on their students. Nor are we saying that process supersedes content. Of course process without content is worthless; we do not advocate a focus on the teaching of something at the expense of having something to offer. And we conclude there is little danger that the constituencies mentioned above will err in that direction. Our interest in writing and compiling this volume is to say simply that: (1) doctoral students will be teachers as well as researchers and they ought to be required to learn something about teaching and learning so they will be better prepared to fulfill the demands made of them by their profession; (2) current

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business school faculty can benefit from reflecting on their craft and considering new and different approaches; (3) consultants are teaching their clients almost every day and they would be more effective if they understood how to teach more powerfully; and (4) corporate trainers could have a bigger impact if they studied and learned how to teach more effectively.

To that end, the schools we have mentioned and perhaps others, as well as consultancies and corporate training departments, have begun to work hard to develop programs or courses that explore how people learn, how best to teach, and how to develop graduates with skills as teachers as well as researchers. We are aware of several consulting firms, for example, that offer seminars and training devoted just to the process of instruction, not to any specific content. In most cases, perhaps, that has not yet become an institutional value, but is being developed by highly motivated individuals. In other cases, the schools have developed broad acceptance of the idea that doctoral students should be trained in teaching as well as in research, and companies have determined that their corporate trainers and consultants should become better teachers.

Teaching and learning

Because this book is about teaching, it is also necessarily about learning. Teaching as professing is often thought of unilaterally: you teach (profess “knowledge”) and your responsibility ends there. If the students get it, well, good. If they don’t, something must be wrong with them, not you – after all, you are the subject-matter expert.

But teaching by itself isn’t worth much. You can “teach” all day long and cover an extensive amount of material, but if your student hasn’t learned the material, the exercise is an enormous waste of time and energy for both of you. This volume takes the view that instructors have multiple responsibilities, and key among them is the facilitation of learning. For many readers, this will not be a new concept, but for others, it is. Those who teach should understand that learning is their “bottom line,” not how much material they have covered, or how good a show they put on, or even how well their students like them.

Although the topics addressed here relate to instructors in all disciplines, this book will focus more particularly on business examples and disciplines. Many of the references and most of our experiences come

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from that setting. Yet the principles outlined here apply to a variety of disciplines and colleges. If you are a graduate program administrator or instructor whose interest is piqued by the prospect of teaching doctoral candidates about teaching or the thought of developing incoming new faculty, or of working with more experienced teachers, this book may provide a set of materials that you could use to initiate a doctoral candidate course or a teacher development seminar.

Structure of the book

This book has four areas of emphasis: things that happen before class, things that happen during class, a brief after-class section dealing with grading and counseling students, and finally a section on managing professional teachers. The first section explores issues related to planning for teaching: adult learning theory, planning a course, planning single class sessions, and developing syllabi. The second section addresses the major methods and channels of teaching including lecturing, discussion, and case method. Chapters on the techniques of using audiovisual materials and various kinds of tactical teaching tips (e.g. role playing and experiential methods) also appear here. The third section has a chapter each on grading students and counseling them. Although those chapters are focused on academic environments, many of the principles appear in the private sector as well: force curve evaluations and guiding participants on career and related issues. The last section steps back from the classroom and explores a challenge that most teachers eventually find themselves dealing with: administration. One either gets promoted from the corporate training classroom to the management office or the assistant professor finds him- or herself suddenly in charge of a department or executive education program.

This lineup is clearly not exhaustive. We could think of several topics that also would bear careful attention, but we just did not have the space to deal with them here – perhaps in a later edition. Further, we mix theory and practice so that readers will see the frameworks and research beneath our approaches. Nevertheless, our primary interest is more in helping instructors understand and teach better than in presenting an arm’s length, detached, purely conceptual perspective.

We don’t believe there is a single recipe for becoming a world-class teacher. Rather, we include here some research, some ideas, what we think are “fundamentals,” some habits or tendencies, a few

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admonitions, some recurring dangers to be aware of, and a ton of lessons learned from 50 years of collective experience that we want to share with readers. While these ideas have helped us, the real key for you is to take these ingredients and adapt them to your personality, to your students, to your institution, and to your subject matter. We invite you to customize. We hope the contents will be thought-provoking and stimulating. We suggest that as instructors (or soon-to-be instructors), you might consider that there is an unwritten classroom covenant linking instructors, students, students' future employers, and the institutional sponsor of the educational experience: namely that all parties involved should do their best to ensure that the learning is efficient, powerful, and long-lasting. Whatever the nuances of your particular situation may be, and however it may differ from ours, the common element is undeniable: the people in our classrooms ask us to be the best instructors we can possibly be. We view that challenge as hugely important, a professional privilege, even a sacred stewardship.

We have been colleagues at the same institution for over 21 years. That in itself is special and all the more so when we recount all the conversations we have had with one another, and with other colleagues, over the years on the subject of teaching. We have shared teaching stories of disappointment and pure excitement. We have pushed one another on how to be better on this or that dimension. We have collaborated on and debated instructional designs and celebrated instructional successes. Indeed, we have been the beneficiaries of a culture and an environment where that is supported. To that end, we are grateful for the support of the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration and the Darden Graduate Business School Foundation, whose generous support over the years has made this book possible. We're grateful to many people who have read and edited many versions of this book, including Barbara Richards, Karen Harper, Gerry Yemen, Amy Lemley, and others. Kathie Amato, director of Darden Business Publishing, has been a wonderful support. We're thankful, too, to Katy Plowright and Chris Harrison at Cambridge University Press for their guidance, support, and encouragement through the publishing process.

Lastly, I (Jim) am grateful to Tony Athos, formerly of the Harvard Business School and since passed away, and to Sherwood Frey, of the Darden School, for their examples and instruction. Their examples and direct coaching have been very powerful in my life and in the development of my teaching philosophy. I (Mark) am grateful to Bill Rotch,