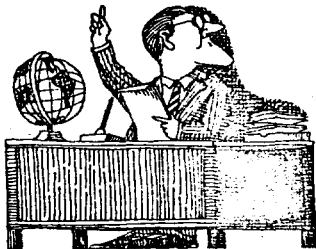


# Research in Teaching Colleges?

*We need a clearer differentiation between 'teaching colleges' and 'research universities,' to highlight the prime mission of each*

By AMITAI ETZIONI



**M**Y BEING CONSIDERED for the presidency of a 30,000-student state college came as no surprise at all; at the rate college presidents were resigning for the last two years, anyone who, like myself, had survived as a chairman of a major department at a nationally visible university was almost automatically considered. Nor did it come as much of a surprise when the trustees, ultraconservative and to the right, did not take to my views about student rebellions and, above all, what to do when a campus newspaper publishes a picture of a well-stacked nude in the name of art. (Why not? I said.)

I was quite surprised, though, to find myself at odds with the faculty before I ever set foot on the campus. The ingratiating chairman of the faculty recruiting committee, who met me at the airport, explained to me the ambition of his colleagues, before he ushered me into a motel which was to harbor me for the night: "We want to become a university," he put it in a capsule form. "Maybe not a Berkeley; we could start as a UCLA. We already are building up our M.A. program; and while we are not allowed to award Ph.D.'s, we did work out an arrangement with a nearby university which entails a 'joint' program, but in effect means we can get our graduates a Ph.D.!" He obviously assumed that this ambition would be shared by all right-thinking persons.

Over the next two days—lunching on campus, standing in two cocktail hours, and keeping awake in a late-late meeting with a committee of faculty and student representatives—it became quite evident that my host was indeed the spokesman for most of his colleagues. Most of them had studied at universities which have a graduate school and a research orientation: Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, etc. About half of the faculty had not completed (and

may well not) their Ph.D. theses; about 80 per cent had not published a paper, or only one in the *South West Late Spring Proceeding and Junior Adult Education Personnel Media*. Most of them were clearly not equipped to conduct original research.

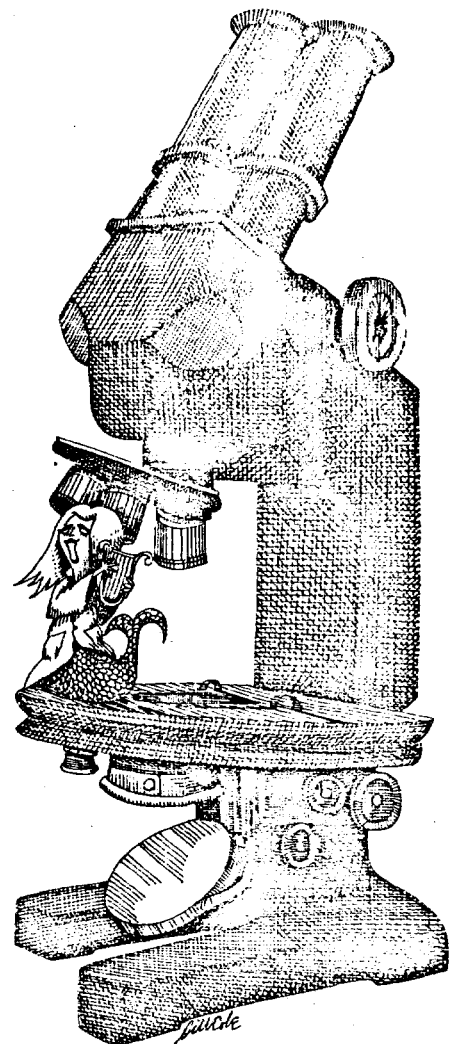
Equally clearly, the professional and self-identity of most had evolved around their graduate professors. They sneered politely at teaching; spoke admiringly about the two guys who got research grants, the one psychologist who ran rats in his classroom turned lab; and obviously hoped to become research professors themselves.

When I asked the provost about the criteria used in promoting faculty members, who are first evaluated by their peers and then by the deans, it became equally evident that research, research potential, and participating in the research game were foremost. Teaching, sighed the provost, was "of course important, but how could you measure it?"

**I**T SEEMED TO ME that while undoubtedly it is much easier to count the number of published papers (or, those "submitted for publication") than to evaluate teaching, there are several ways of assessing classroom performance. Student evaluation forms, if filled out by most students (rather than only by small, possibly unrepresentative groups), if returned unsigned, if they ask to evaluate the teaching not as "good" or "bad" but on a multiplicity of criteria (too abstract? too concrete? class progress too fast? too slow? etc.), are one instrument. Also useful are monthly staff seminars, in which a faculty member reports to his colleagues about his work, but also has an opportunity to show his capacity to present material and conduct a seminar. Where teaching on television takes place, colleagues and deans can tune in. And many faculty members do not object to a classroom visit.

Actually, despite all the claims that "we have not the faintest idea how good a teacher he (or she) is," and "I've never been to his (her) classroom," if the members of a department would be asked to rank its members as to teaching quality, I predict that in most departments this simple peer-ranking would be quite accurate when compared to other measures. The word gets around that X is a great teacher; Y never prepares his classes; etc., etc.

However, evaluating teaching by itself will not be of much consequence until a more basic change of orientation occurs, until a growing number of facul-



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ties are willing to see in teaching the first and foremost mission and ambition. There are some forces at work which make this more likely in the near future than it was in the recent past, and a few steps one may take to help along such a development.

There is a sizable group of students who are now completing their studies, who do not wish to be part of the research rat-race, who question the value of science, who are concerned with people and like to interact. There are more universities which grant degrees to persons who completed all their studies but the Ph.D. thesis. There is a shortage of positions at research universities and, hence, colleges can be more choosy and turn to those more truly committed to the teaching mission.

A clearer differentiation would help; we may refer to "teaching colleges" and "research universities" to highlight the prime mission of each. Most of the 2,300 colleges in this nation ought to be undergraduate teaching colleges, with no graduate programs and no research ambitions. We need mass higher education. A minority of universities, maybe 150 or so, should be divided into undergraduate teaching colleges, professional schools, and research universities (graduate and postgraduate schools). It should be made easier for professors to move back and forth over their life cycles, as their ambitions change, between colleges and universities, or hold positions in both, if they can do both jobs well. However, both professor and student would benefit if it would be clear what is first of all expected in a particular college or division. And hiring as well as rewards should be compatible with this definition.

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