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1974
Johannesburg College of Education
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/27519
Beugger, P. (1973/1974). The school of tomorrow – what is the teacher's role? Symposium: A Journal of Education for Southern Africa, pp. 68-70.

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the school of tomorrow — what is the teacher's role

PETER BEUGGER

Setting the scene

There is much rethinking and prophecy in education today. What is the current mood of education? There appears to be two camps of thought on how to go about changing schools. The **humanist** camp ignores or plays down the effects of structure and emphasises understanding, love, group processes, greater sensitivity toward children, etc. .. . The structuralists place their energies on building in flexibility, choice and "openness" in schools, ignoring the tendency of people to make decisions without being influenced by organisational structure.

Either camp spells the doom of the old egg-carton school building, with its standardised classroom, standardised teaching and standardised curriculum. With it is going the school day dominated by the bell, cut into neat slices of time and packages of learning to be uniformly consumed by all and the idea of a single-teacher-per-age-graded-group.

Re-thinking of the education of children is accompanied by the rejection of the idea that teachers for today's classrooms can be trained to use the same old mould and the same tired formulas. People are recognising that the traditional job description for the classroom teacher is unrealistic and unworkable.

The New Teacher

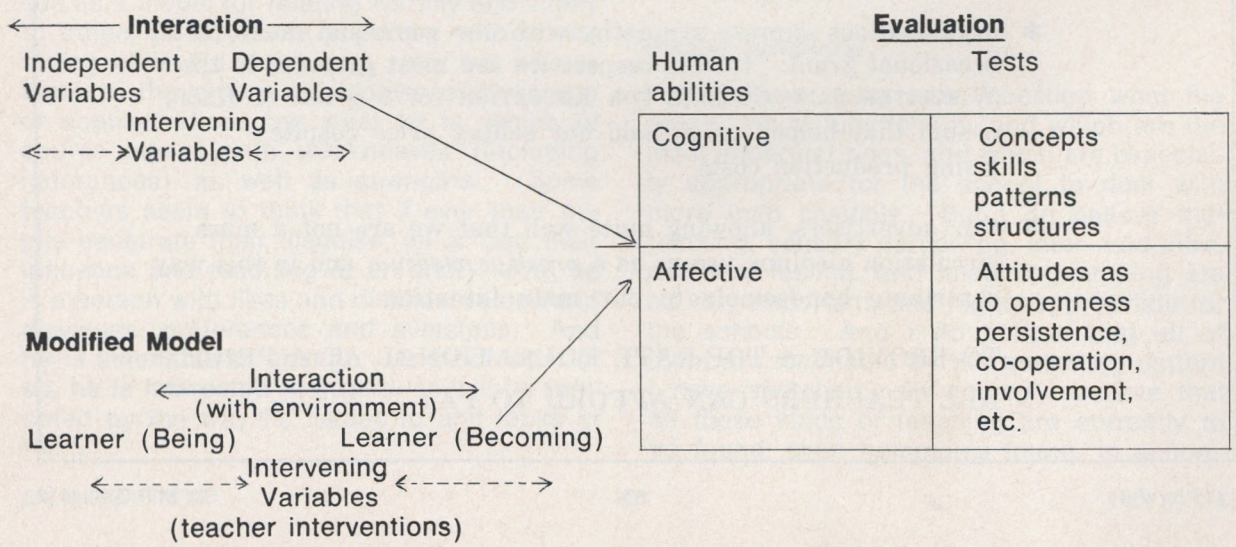
What then will the teacher's function be? Where the teacher was once the entire instructional system for a group of students he might, in future be the director of an instructional system, having at his disposal many instructional supports in the form of para-professionals, specialists, simulators, programmed materials, computer-based learning systems and videotapes. The acceptance of the premise that teachers are moving from being generalists to becoming functional specialists necessitates an identification and description of teacher functions.

Delineation of Teacher Functions

For the purpose of this paper education is seen as a process through which human beings develop their natural powers which enable them not only to adapt and control their personal, physical and social environments, but also to become self-actualising human-beings. The teaching function then becomes one of controlling and regulating the educational process in such a way that each learner's need to develop his own powers is facilitated.

In order to explore more specifically the function of teaching, I propose to adapt a research model of teaching effectiveness as created by Saadeh.

SAADEH'S RESEARCH MODEL



From this model the following teacher functions can be derived:

1. The determination and statement of educational objectives in learner outcome terms.
2. The determination and creation of an environment in which the interaction is to take place.
3. Ensuring that there is within the environment a challenge, a realisable goal that the learner will accept as his own.
4. Making the learner 'open' and 'ready' for the interaction, willing to accept the goal as his goal — "turning him on".
5. Seeing that the raw materials and equipment necessary to a successfull interaction are readily accessible to the learner when he needs them.
6. Selecting a teaching strategy through which the learner will be helped to understand and use or develop a model with which to sort out and structure the elements in the environment with which he is interacting.
7. Making provision for feedback in terms of which the learner can know when the goal is reached.
8. Evaluating the success of the interaction in learner outcome terms:
   (a) The learner has gained a new mastery or a higher level of mastery in a skill area and can demonstrate this by performing the skill.
   (b) The learner can display a grasp of a new concept, pattern or structure and can demonstrate an ability to apply this knowledge to unfamiliar material.
   (c) The learner has developed in character as a result of the interaction — as demonstrated by persistence, co-operation, and engrossment displayed during the interaction and as indicated by heightened self-estaeem after the interaction.
9. Using evaluation results as feedback for planning, designing or providing new interactions, for modifying or redesigning old interactions and for adjusting teaching strategies as necessary to the needs of individual learners or groups of learners.

Thus the professional teacher should be able to accept responsibility for:

— diagnosing the learning situation
— prescribing the learning programme
— implementing the teaching strategy
— evaluationg the whole programme in light of the objectives pursued.

Supportive Functions

In addition to the basic roles of the professional in the teaching function, there are other essential roles to be performed at each of two other levels.

There is the function of leadership and/or co-ordination. The roles are organisational and supportive, including the role of the methods specialist. Teachers must be able to translate learning theory and research into meaningful programmes, and assist other teachers in the design of effective teaching strategies.

The second level includes all of the support roles by auxiliary personnel. These roles include teaching assistants, staff assistants (library, laboratory, etc.), instructional assistants, and markers. Personnel in these roles are likely to interact directly with students.

Non-instructional roles performed by auxiliary personnel can be categorised into four general areas:

— staff support
— plant operation
— community resources and
— special support services.

The **staff support roles** are those associated with, but not directly related to instruction. The tasks might be clerical (collecting money, keeping records, typing, filing, etc.), organisational (preparing instructional materials, arranging work areas, supervision of pupils in buses and on playgrounds, etc.), or technical (ordering audio-visual materials, setting up and servicing of equipment, etc.). These people will generally be called **aides.**

The roles contributing to **plant operation** are those of administration and maintenance: building managers, secretaries, engineers, custodians, technicians, bus drivers, food service employees, etc.

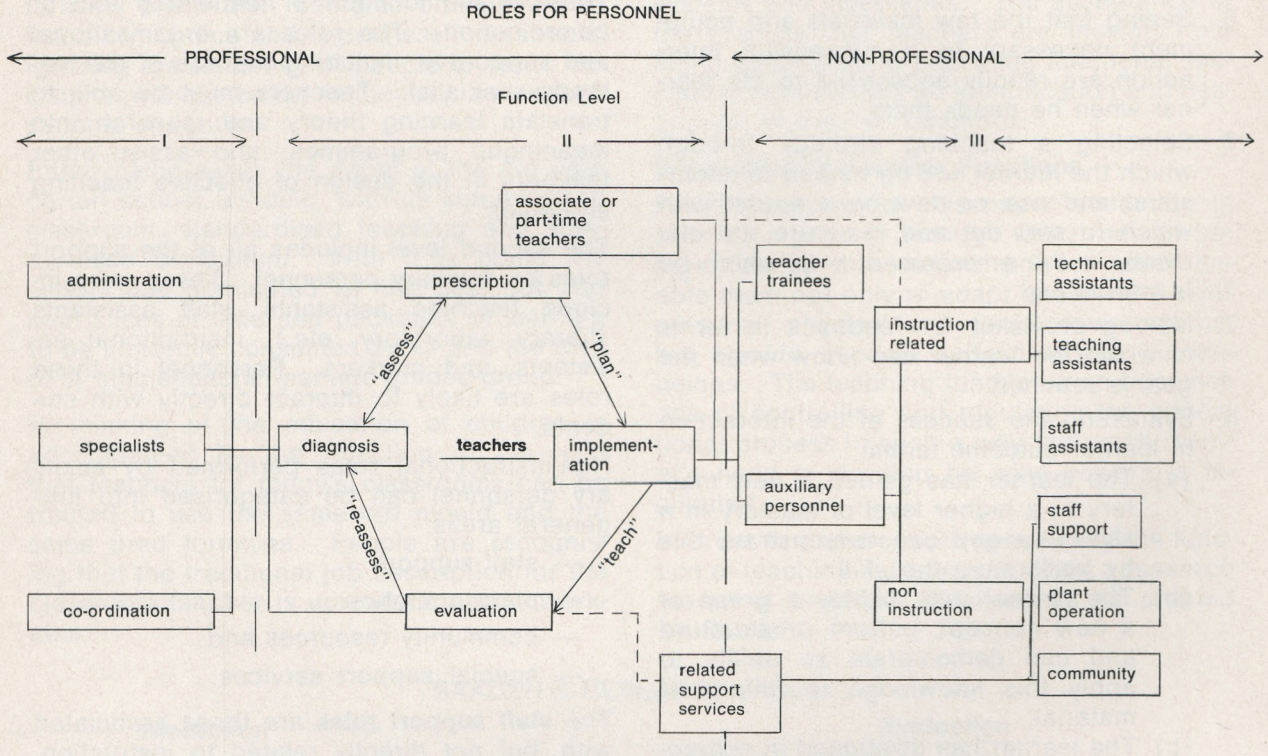
Community resource roles include that of the volunteer, who may perform some staff support roles on an irregular, part-time basis, but also include resource persons whose services are called in the school or during field trips.

Personnel in related support services include those involved in the medical, dental, psychological, psychiatric and social work fields. They contribute primarily to the diagnostic, prescriptive, and evaluative aspects of the teacher's professional role.

SUMMARY

Delineating teaching functions would result in:

1. A programme responsive to the interests, abilities and needs of the individual learner.
2. Greater opportunity for the introduction of innovative programmes or ideas.
3. More effective use of human resources.
4. A more meaningful educational experience and a climate favourable to the development of each child to his full potential.



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