

Revista Portuguesa de Educação
Universidade do Minho
rpe@iep.uminho.pt
ISSN (Versión impresa): 0871-9187
PORTUGAL

2001

John F. LeBaron

RHETORIC AND REWARD IN HIGHER EDUCATION: HOW THE PILLARS OF
TRADITION IMPEDE ACADEMIC REFORM AND WHAT MIGHT
BE DONE ABOUT IT

Revista Portuguesa de Educação, año/vol. 14, número 002

Universidade do Minho
Braga, Portugal



Rhetoric and reward in higher education: how the pillars of tradition impede academic reform and what might be done about it

John F. LeBaron

University of Massachusetts Lowell, USA

Universidade de Aveiro, Portugal (Gulbenkian Professorship, 1-7/2001)

Abstract

A contemporary deluge of negative polemic about higher education has resulted in an alarming erosion of public support. This paper examines the organizational traditions of "the university" in the context of improved teaching and academic reform. It takes the position that small scale, individual initiatives to improve university teaching can initially inform a more general population of higher education stakeholders as they re-think their basic purposes, missions, and collective actions, but that systemic change requires system wide commitment. In particular, issues related to university incentives and rewards are examined in the context of structural practice and tradition, with a discussion of the challenges of institutional change and survival.

The Goths and the Romans: holding the fortress safe from reality

If we take seriously the current wave of negative commentary about the ills of higher education, we should rightfully fear prospects for its survival beyond the end of the current decade.

In the first chapter of his much-discussed polemic, *ProfScam*, Charles Sykes (1988) lays out a breathtakingly long, fifteen-item "partial" list of academic "crimes" (Sykes' own words, page 5), placing all the blame for the ills of higher education squarely on the shoulders of the university

professorate. In presenting his case, Sykes is fond of throwing out charged words like "boondoggle," "corruption," and "junkthink" in reference to the professorial targets of his fury.

In another book (*Killing the Spirit*, 1990) Page Smith, a historian and former provost at the University of California at Santa Cruz presents an even more searing indictment of academic tradition — more searing because Smith, a scholar of long and reputable standing, knows well whereof he speaks. Writing as an historian, he holds the entire institutional establishment of higher education, not just the professorate, responsible for a presumed, precipitous decline in American academic quality, although he does not let the professorate "off the hook" lightly. Smith's critique is discussed in more detail later in this paper.

Roger Kimball (1997) abhors the corrupting influence of politics (especially the politics of the "politically correct" left) on the intellectual integrity of academic practice. Kimball laments the corruption of objective academic truth-seeking, as universities have compromised their objective standards of scholarship to partisan pressure. Here, Kimball criticizes the professorate, but he takes sides, against those who seek to bend the university curriculum to their ideals of social transformation and in favor of those who pursue their roles, presumably according to John Henry Newman's (1854) ideal of dispassionate, disciplined, liberal inquiry.

The censure goes on and on (e.g., Martin Anderson, 1992; Lewis Perelman, 1992; Allan Bloom, 1987.) While much of the debate is rooted in the decades-long struggle between the "liberal educators" (exemplified by the ideas of Robert Maynard Hutchins, former president of the University of Chicago) and the progressives (advanced by the thinking of John Dewey) the lines of battle have become more overtly political (although many would agree that the debate has *always* been political) and increasingly personal. Sykes' work, after all, is pretty much an attack on university professors as an undifferentiated class of people, stereotyped as shallow, greedy, regressive, self-serving, stupefying, and hypocritical.

There are at least four problems with these polemical attacks.

1. They contain grains of truth. As anecdotes, each example may represent a real condition. Stacked end-to-end, these narratives paint a rather ugly overall picture.

2. The anecdotes are highly selective. They deliberately ignore evidence that would shed doubt about the negative image portrayed.
3. To a general public lacking the background evidence, the articulate wit with which the cases are made may be taken as general truth, promoting (as probably intended) an erosion of the public support on which education so critically depends.
4. By its nature, polemical invective forecloses constructive dialogue.

To be fair, certain organs of the professorate willingly participate in this spitefully abusive discourse by a rhetorical "take no prisoners" defense of their rights and privileges (whether justifiable or not.) This is a fifth problem — the tendency in academe to fortify the fortress gates in defensive gestures of denial, as though the criticisms have such little merit that they are either intentionally ignored or they prompt responses of incivility that match or exceed the language of the attackers.

There are many structural problems in higher education that mitigate the quality of teaching and the quest for academic reform. These problems are reflected in the system of incentives and rewards by which professors set priorities, structure their work lives, and measure their success. Sometimes their personal measures of success fail to match the institutional measures by which the institution rewards their performance (Oakley, 1995; Hahn, 1990). Moreover, the rhetoric of many institutions often fails to match the real indicators of recognition by which professorial advancement — or even survival — is assured. Professors are no different from other humans; they respond to real criteria of advancement, regardless of institutional rhetoric or personal choice.

A true tale from academe

American culture pays little respect to teachers at any level. Indeed, universities themselves also carry their own "anti teaching" cultural baggage, as illustrated by the real-life vignette reported below. At a recent School of Education faculty meeting, professors were asked to share information about their current research (not work, not teaching, but "research"). An untenured junior professor ventured a description of his book collaboration with two

colleagues, one from another university, and the other from a public school system (This book has since emerged from a top-line educational publisher as a major national work on school leadership).

This manuscript was designed to provide conversational guideposts to school principals facing difficult challenges in their own leadership roles. It was neither intended nor presented as formal research. At the meeting, conversation about this manuscript appeared superficially to be most civil.

"How many pages will the published book be?" inquired a senior, tenured full professor. "Somewhere between 200 and 250," came the reply. "Oh, I see," said the full professor, "so that amounts to roughly sixty-five pages for each author, right?" "Well, yes, it averages out to about sixty or seventy pages each," answered the increasingly uncomfortable junior colleague. The line of questioning continued from the senior professor, "Okay, let's give you the benefit of the doubt and say that you are writing seventy-five pages. What you're really doing is to contribute a monograph to a bound volume of anecdotes. It's not *really* research, right?" (Well, no, that wasn't right at all, but by now any substantive discussion of the manuscript had been lost in the polite but pointed ridicule of the work's scholarly legitimacy).

And so it went. This conversational exchange was fully intended by the senior, tenured professor to remind his peers of his junior colleague's deficiencies in:

1. not producing "real" research,
2. not producing the entire manuscript alone,
3. wrongfully according "book" status to what was arguably "only" part of a monograph series.

Although the majority faculty sentiment seemed to side with the manuscript author, nobody (including myself, I am ashamed to admit) objected to the line or the tone of inquisition. Not a question was raised about the book's content, about the practical problems of schooling it sought to address, or about the power released by the collective work of three highly qualified professionals writing from different but mutually-reinforcing perspectives.

Four pillars of academic value

The anecdote just told illustrates a mindset that characterizes much of the formal conversation occurring in academe. Let us first look at four entrenched higher education traditions. Each of these values influences the university's prospects for developing effective models to enhance teaching and learning. Each seems genetically encoded in the messages transmitted by American higher education to inform professors about the benchmarks by which their success or failure will be determined.

The dominance of academic departments. Throughout academe, the fundamental unit of scholarly organization is the discipline-based department. Evidence suggests that departments are anything but hotbeds of reflection and reform. As Edwards (1999) asserts, "It has been widely noted and lamented that departmental cultures are notoriously resistant to change".

In a relatively sympathetic examination of departmental structure, Wergin (1994) describes academic departments as "bands of individual entrepreneurs, pursuing professional self-interest, driven by discipline-imposed standards". In his book, *The Collaborative Department ...*, Wergin was seeking unconventional models of collective responsibility at the departmental level as model case studies to inform other institutions seeking to change their own structures. He writes, "the gulf between the abstraction and the reality [was typically] distressingly wide" (page vii).

Contrary to the "multiple obligations" and "sense of responsibility to the whole school" described by Theodore Sizer (1984) in his "nine common principles of essential schooling," university departments tend to operate as self-contained fiefdoms. Their "subjects" (member professors), perpetually struggle for advancement or survival. They tend to resist the infection of other disciplines and promote their individual career interests in scholarly isolation, even within their own departments. Safe in their disciplinary modes of inquiry, there is little interest among the departmentalized corps of tenured faculty in breaking down the intellectual barriers that nurtured their own professional careers.

In such a setting, subjecting oneself to the marginal rewards and disciplinary untidiness demanded by interdisciplinary scholarship is uncomfortable at best and downright heretical at worst.

The tyranny of academic tenure. In my personal academic career, I have yet to meet a professorial colleague who would describe American academe's sacred initiation rite — academic tenure — as a treasured professional growth experience. I have carved my own careful path through the tenure process, and have served many times on committees that recommend tenure and academic promotion for other colleagues. Rare is the untenured soul who looks forward to the process, yet virtually all professors accept and accede to its demands.

Academic tenure is the bedrock of academic careerism that, according to Richard Chait (1997 a, b), requires thoughtful reconsideration free from the ideological blinders of its most rabid advocates and opponents. Some of the more formal associations of professorship, however, defend the traditional structure of academic tenure with a passion that occasionally crosses the boundary separating scholarly discourse from personal anger (Perley, 1997).

According to its apologists, tenure assures the academic autonomy that promotes independent thinking and free expression. In reality it often does precisely the opposite (Smith, 1990). Untenured faculty members toil under prevailing attitudes imposed by the cultural values of their tenured colleagues who typically reflect departmental orthodoxies. They spend the first six years of their careers trying to please their senior departmental colleagues. Many become so totally constrained from free and independent expression that by the time they achieve tenure they are well socialized into the value structure that inhibited their intellectual dependence in the first place, adopting its norms and behaving accordingly.

Because the lifetime job security conferred by academic tenure diminishes the pressure of professional accountability, it also reduces the prospect of serious self-assessment on the part of individual professors, in turn removing a major pillar of professional growth. The "academic autonomy" so prized by the defenders of tenure promotes academic isolation, tending to separate professors not only from administrators but also from one another across departments in meaningful dialogue about scholarship, especially teaching. Higher education is alone among kinds of endeavor to sequester the substance of its primary function — scholarship — from administrative participation. In almost any other type of enterprise, this would be considered nothing short of madness.

Publish or perish (or, the relative unimportance of pedagogy). Above all other manifestations of professional work, under the mantle of "research" most American universities prize publishing and grant making. Although the criteria for academic promotion and tenure pay lip service to the value of excellent teaching, untenured faculty demonstrating neither publications nor grants are highly unlikely to find a place among their tenured peers.

There is nothing wrong with publishing or writing successful books, articles, conference papers and grant proposals, and many good reasons to encourage it. In recent years, however, so many journals have emerged primarily as vehicles for academic career advancement that simple, quantitative counts of academic publication are poorly related to authentic manifestations of quality (Fruge, 1993).

In their drive to establish "competitive edge" most universities (oftentimes contrary to their public declarations of commitment to good teaching) send the more private message to their faculty that published research is the only assured path to advancement. Gordon Winston (2000) deplores the increasingly dominant tendency of universities to concentrate their professorial recruitment on "superstar" research faculty, affording them privileges and compensation packages that "reduces the value of teaching in the faculty market" (page 42).

Winston believes that the cause of this inequity is academe's subservience to market forces, which promotes institutional competition whose "winnings" are measured primarily by such things as grants and contracts received, books published, and journal articles peer reviewed. This creates workplace resentment over the generous "discretionary" (that is, non-course load) time given to the superstars so that their lower-paid colleagues consequently carry an unfairly disproportionate share of teaching.

Grant making and writing are exceedingly time-consuming. Time devoted to them is time not dedicated to the improvement of teaching. Since the design of effective instruction into the curriculum demands extraordinary teacher time and effort, especially when it includes the infusion of technology (David, 1996; Bass, 1997). With higher education's reward system favoring research, the relative absence of emphasis on the improvement of teaching is hardly a surprise (Spotts and Bowman, 1995).

The rule of alphanumeric grades. In the USA, the unit that conveys measurement of student performance in higher education is the four-point letter grade system. Every serious student, graduate or undergraduate, engages in the endless pursuit of an "A" grade despite the fact that many course syllabi fail to indicate very clearly how to achieve it.

Since sustained conversations about such things as student assessment rarely occur in university departments, there is little or no institutional agreement on what an "A" requires, even though most universities hold letter grades to be correct and appropriate measures of performance quality. Some professors "end run" the problem by paying scant attention to their grading practices, reducing their awards to the two-point system of "A" (pass) or "B" (fail, but no matter, your transcript will nonetheless show a respectable pass).

As a result, university grades have become inflated (Wilson, 1999) creating a dilemma for educational conservatives and progressives alike. All faculty are bound by the grading system. Progressive professors tend to pursue an egalitarian grading policy by awarding relatively high marks to all students. Conservatives try to "hold the line" imposing traditional standards in their grading practices, discomfited by the knowledge that their students may be quite seriously disadvantaged in comparison to students who enroll in courses taught by "easier grading" colleagues. If "hard grading" professors teach elective courses, they put their own jobs at risk because students, justifiably concerned about maintaining high grade point averages, will tend to avoid such courses and gravitate to the easier ones.

Many professors conscientiously try to compensate for their distaste of grading by providing thoughtful, in-depth verbal feedback beyond the letter grade. This is noble and humane, but such in-depth feedback hardly ever reaches the student's academic transcript. The transcript, on which further academic advancement critically depends, essentially conveys simple grading codes offering little meaning either to the student or to any third party needing to know about the substance and quality of a student's work.

Institutional consequences of prevailing tradition

All of these values tend to discourage professorial risk-taking because the real career rewards (such as promotion and salary) are keyed to the most

conservative behaviors. The orthodoxies of academic departments discourage cross-disciplinary research or teaching, despite the common knowledge that real life does not compartmentalize itself by discipline. Indeed, the disciplinary loyalty within academic departments is often so competitively fierce that the few brave souls who seek to pierce the boundaries risk the wrath of the very colleagues who will form the first line of deliberation over whether or not they will secure their tenure or gain promotion.

Academic tenure itself removes a certain pressure to maintain high levels of professional performance. While it is true that many post-tenure professors remain productively self-motivated, it is equally true that certain other professors are not so self-motivated. Socialized by departmental canon, newly tenured professors typically enter the security of guaranteed lifetime employment unfettered by the inconvenience of any further serious performance review. The resulting life-long assurances of employment provide little incentive for reflection and change. In this kind of environment, the removal of pressure for individual professional growth bodes poorly for institutional improvement.

The pressure to publish often forecloses the devotion of time and energy to pedagogy. To be fair, the thoughtful reflection demanded by good research and writing can contribute powerfully to effective teaching. This argument holds true, however, only under the following three conditions:

- when research and pedagogy are accorded equitable levels of professional attention,
- when deliberate strategies are undertaken to connect the results of research to better teaching, and
- when professors acknowledge and pursue continuous professional development in pedagogy, as well as in their disciplinary fields.

Too often these conditions are not met. Tenured or untenured professors typically seek the respect and recognition of their disciplinary peers. Such recognition flows more readily from published academic research than from excellent teaching. The risk of devaluing research in favor of improving one's teaching almost certainly decreases the potential rewards that professors, like other professionals, are entitled to solicit.

Routine university grading, whether on a twenty-point European or four-point American scale is a lazy form of assessment, yet professors do it and institutions insist on it. Notwithstanding the good faith efforts of some professors to engage in deep, substantive dialogue about student performance, the criterion that matters at the end of the day is the course grade. Students covet top marks. They often perceive anything less than an excellent grade as personal insult, often without reference to their actual performance.

Students usually appreciate a professor's thoughtful commentary about their production, but they *really care* about their grades. Reducing dialogue about the complexities of student performance to a number or an alphabetic letter makes a mockery of scholarly dialogue. University education is supposed to be about scholarship, not wins and losses in a superficial rating game. However, professors can hardly afford the risk of more authentic, conversational assessment because doing so would incur sanctions of the institution and the wrath of students.

What might we do?

To be clear, the conditions described above are tendencies, not universal states. There are noteworthy exceptions to them. In these exceptions, higher education can capitalize on its strengths and institutionalize its best exemplars. Let us now examine a few propositions and case histories that have honestly confronted the four pillars of academic value in actual practice. Although these cases carry their own institutional contexts and are not transferable, wholesale, to other settings, they offer evidence that constructive change is possible.

An alternative to the dominance of academic departments. The discipline-based department is as entrenched as any of the academic traditions. There are many good reasons for this. Highly developed protocols of intellectual inquiry have evolved in — and are protected by — scholarly communities of discipline. The problem, therefore, is not so much in the existence of departments as in their tendency for self-isolation from the beneficial influence of cross-disciplinary thought. With the emergence of popular computer networking, self-imposed intellectual compartmentalization is becoming irrelevant, whether academic departments like it or not. Thus,

disciplinary communities of inquiry are losing control over the rules and the means of research.

Here is how one university has proposed to breach the barriers of isolation while simultaneously empowering departments through the creation of cross-disciplinary academic projects (LeBaron, 1999). It is a proposal, developed at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, to create a new advanced degree program in the study of educational information technology. Since no single department within the University possesses the human talent to support such a program, a coalition of stakeholders across departments, and outside academe, has been proposed.

The project intends to design and adapt methods to apply technology to the distribution of every important academic activity. In such a project, courses, research, advising, student collaboration, and the distribution of study resources would be organized for electronic access and interaction. Capitalizing on a coalition of institutional resources, faculty members and doctoral degree-holding professionals from various academic units within and outside the University would be invited to serve as members of a "virtual meta-department." Appointments would be tendered for limited periods of time, exempt from academic tenure.

This "meta-department" would operate under the administrative academic aegis of the one of the university's major colleges. Members would typically retain their existing institutional affiliations, contributing negotiated portions of their time to the scholarly affairs of the proposed new venture. Therefore, a relatively small number of faculty members (perhaps only one) would devote full time to the administration and academic integrity of the project. All participating faculty — full time and adjunct — would possess the necessary credentials for teaching, research and academic supervision at their respective levels of assignment. Members would enjoy full privileges and voting on departmental matters.

In such a federated model, it would be impossible to avoid the creativity, and the democratic "messiness," of cross-disciplinary dialogue. By nature democratic federalism is "messy," but the more authoritarian alternatives of traditional departmental organization are inimical to the open inquiry on which good scholarship depends.

An alternative to tenure. Notwithstanding the presumed competitive disadvantage of universities that avoid tenure track appointments, several highly successful institutions have done just that. Lesley University in Cambridge, Massachusetts offers one example. Professors at Lesley are not routinely turned out of their jobs by University "thought police." Many world-class scholars at Lesley have enjoyed long careers wherein their achievements have been recognized through promotion and improved compensation.

In informal conversations, many professors agree with the good sense that Chait (1997) proposes, such as the creation of differentiated, untenured professorial functions, say, for teaching, for research, or for development, that trade off the guarantees of tenure for higher salaries and contractual assurances against inappropriate administrative job sanctions.

Various manifestations of post-tenure review are appearing in many of today's universities. Some examples are ludicrously weak. One university, for example, requires review only every seven years, and even then prohibits its use for any kind of administrative job pressure. While reasonable people might agree that the primary purpose of performance review should be the professional growth of the person reviewed, egregious evidence of underperformance should carry consequences. Furthermore, assuming the award of tenure at age thirty-five, a septennial review cycle would produce only four reviews before a professor is likely to retire.

Two alternatives to such a review process come to mind. One would be to review every professor annually or biennially. For underperforming tenured faculty, professional improvement plans could be negotiated over several-year periods, with rewards or sanctions conferred at the end of the period according to success in reaching mutually agreed goals and a realistic accounting of the institutional support provided as part of the negotiation. A second alternative would be to grant tenure for six or seven year stretches, requiring re-submission to full review, with consequences similar to the first review. The success of this option, however, would depend on close faculty-administration trust and collaboration, with progress toward establishing criteria and rewards that support changing institutional missions, and support for the professors whose performance is under review.

For research universities, the issue of tenure confronts them with a riddle. In a culture where tenure the "career coin of the realm," individual institutions that eschew it may risk their competitiveness in recruiting top professorial talent. This argument may be flawed, however. In an increasingly entrepreneurial world, many talented future professors might willingly take on faculty roles at higher salary levels in exchange for lifetime job guarantees. As they face ever-increasing competition for students from outside academe, universities need entrepreneurial faculty able and willing to meet the competition. For such people, the idea of academic tenure may seem quite foreign and unappealing. They might embrace the prospect of untenured facultyhood.

An alternative to the "publish or perish" syndrome. In his discussion of university teaching, Randy Bass (1999) reflects on the nature of the word "problem." When applied to teaching, he laments, the word "problem" connotes crisis, something negative, something to be remedied or expunged. Teaching problems are bad. In the academic world of research, however, "problems" are good. They form an essential part of the overall agenda. A research problem is a challenge, something to be examined. He suggests that this apparent contradiction is ingrained in the higher education value system in a way that devalues teaching. Bass believes that teaching "problems" should be viewed in the same positive framework that research "problems" are considered.

Under the banner of "the scholarship of teaching," scholars such as Pat Hutchings, Lee Shulman, and Randy Bass have initiated a continuing dialogue about the nature of university teaching, and the research that teaching, as such, should generate. Hutchings (1998) suggests the vehicle of "course portfolio" to support such research. As distinct from a "teaching portfolio," the course portfolio focuses on the course as the primary unit of analysis, not on general teaching strategies as scattered pieces of investigation. Course portfolios are therefore more sharply focused as units of study, making research about teaching more viable than would otherwise be true.

When academic courses are treated as a form of scholarship, according to Hutchings, they become more than disconnected snapshot analyses of teaching. Instead of concentrating the teacher's mind on "What shall I do with my class today?" it asks "How does what I do today fit best into

the overall agenda for the course?" and "How does my course fit into the overall agenda of student inquiry?" It also allows the teacher-designer to concentrate more on excellent student learning than on magnificent teaching tactics. Because the course portfolio focuses on a definable unit of enterprise, it offers well-defined vessel for scholarship.

Shulman (2000) believes that the scholarship of teaching should meet the standards of *all* scholarship, namely:

1. that it be public,
2. that it be susceptible to critical peer review,
3. that it offer a contribution to the growing foundation of related scholarship.

In such a manner, teaching abandons its conflict with research by becoming itself research. For teaching to be legitimized in universities on a footing equal to other forms of scholarship, it must itself be subject to all the rigors of objective analysis and scholarly reflection expected in any form of academic discovery.

All of this suggests the need for good-faith institutional support for the resources that support effective teaching. Modern instruction requires infrastructure; it needs strong professional development; it must be reflected in the workplace system of risk and reward; it requires a professional culture of open and frequent dialogue; it demands as much official respect for the scholarship of teaching as for the scholarship of discovery, whatever the practical consequences. In other words, the effective scholarship of teaching, while demanding strenuous personal effort on the professor's part, places even greater requirements on the institution.

An alternative to alphanumeric grades. Benjamin Zander (2000) is the conductor of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra. As such, he is responsible for the musical development of young artists. In a recent book, he and his wife offer the concept of treating their students at the beginning of their development on the opening presumption that they are excellent performers. In other words, if we expect excellence from our students we increase the odds that they will, in fact, perform in an excellent way.

The Benjamin Zander offers examples from his role as conductor-teacher of a symphony orchestra. He believes that assessment based on

personal judgment creates unnecessary competition and intimidation among students, reducing risk and motivation, and discouraging them from "working up" to their own natural expectations of excellence. He tells the story of a university course he taught when he decided to give every student an "A" grade at the beginning of the course.

As a condition, however, all students were expected to produce a letter to Professor Zander, projecting what (in their own minds at the beginning of the course) they expected to accomplish in order to earn the "A". In other words, the students were required to think through their own scholarly expectations of themselves, and to create their own narratives justifying the self-awarded "A". Then the letter grade was forgotten. Subsequent dialogue about student performance was referenced to the student's narrative of self-expectation.

At the end of the course, grades were awarded (supported by narrative feedback) on the basis of students' performance according to benchmarks they themselves had articulated at the beginning of the course. Most of them earned "A" grades. While the Zanders' strategy failed to avoid the letter grading system entirely, it made the best of an institutional mandate that the teacher and the students were required to observe.

There is hope

In 1990, Ernest Boyer published his widely acclaimed book on academic scholarship, *Scholarship Reconsidered...*, in which he argues eloquently for universities to recognize and reward diverse forms of scholarship (teaching, discovery, application, and integration). For decades, the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE) has championed the instigation of educational improvement in colleges and universities. Through its publications, seminars, workshops, Web resources, and lobbying, the AAHE has not only promoted the cause of excellent teaching, it has also put resources behind its commitment.

Several journals have also taken up the cause of better teaching, notably AAHE's *Change* magazine, and several more recent, scholarly online journals such as *Inventio* (George Mason University), and the *Journal of Scholarship in Teaching and Learning* (Indiana University South Bend.) Created in 1998 from the merger of two professional organizations, *Educause*

promotes "transformational change in higher education through the introduction, use, and management of information resources and technologies in teaching, learning, scholarship, research, and institutional management."

Although they have not attracted the attention of the virulent critics of higher education, constructive responses have appeared inside academe, notably Francis Oakley's (1995) work entitled *Scholarship and Teaching: A Matter of Mutual Support*. Oakley, President Emeritus of Williams College, offers evidence supporting the notions that the majority of American professors are indeed devoted to teaching, advising and student support. As suggested earlier research is an important form of learning. As Oakley suggests, not only can the two co-exist peacefully, they can be actively and mutually reinforcing. The problem arises when institutions fail to maintain a creative balance between the two, when career advancement committees ignore one in favor of the other.

These are institutional problems, rooted in politics and policy. The challenge is vast because it is centered in a value structure that has come to dominate higher education nationally and globally. We can take some lessons from the successes and failures of real initiatives chronicled in such publications as AAHE's *The Course Portfolio...*, recognizing that authentic educational innovation is not only possible, but that it often starts at the ground floor, where teaching really happens, rather from than the penthouse suite where policy is made. The challenge for universities is to assure that policy supports good teaching, and that good teaching is a reflection of real policy.

Why are these questions important? One reason is that the organizational practices of institutions teach as much, if not more, about professional behavior as their formal courses of study. Writing about the teaching of values, former Dartmouth College President James Freedman (1997) asserts that "... [universities] do inevitably teach values, and they do so by example." Students learn values by observing how professors perform in the classroom and outside it. The same can be said of how institutions perform — how their rhetoric aligns with their practice; how they allocate resources; how the work of key workforce members aligns with a core mission; how faculty interact with one another; how incentives, sanctions and rewards are administered. If a university fails to "teach" the value of scholarly reform through the rewards accorded professors for sensible risk-taking, the message to students will speak much louder than the rhetoric.

References

- AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (1998). *The course portfolio: How faculty can examine their teaching to advance practice and improve student learning*. Washington, DC: AAHE.
- ANDERSON, M. (1992). *Impostors in the temple: American intellectuals are destroying our universities and cheating our students of their future*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- BLOOM, A. (1987). *The closing of the American mind: How higher education has failed democracy and impoverished the souls of today's students*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- BOYER, E. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.
- BASS, R. (1999). The scholarship of teaching: What's the problem? *Inventio* 1(1). Available online WWW: <http://www.doiit.gmu.edu/Archives/feb98/rbass.htm>.
- BASS, R. (1997). *Course Portfolio: American Literary Traditions*, Georgetown University. Available online WWW: <http://www.georgetown.edu/bassr/portfolio/amlit/cover.html>.
- CHAIT, R. P. (1997). Rethinking tenure: Toward new templates for academic employment. *Harvard Magazine*, 99(6) 30-31, 90.
- CHAIT, R.P. (1997). Thawing the cold war over tenure... *Trusteeship*, 5(3) May/June 1997, 11-15.
- DAVID, J. L. (1996). Developing and spreading accomplished teaching: Policy lessons from a unique partnership. In *Education and technology: Reflections on computing in classrooms*. C. Fisher, D.C. Dwyer and K. Yocam, eds, 1996. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- DEWEY, J. (1916). *Democracy and Education*. New York: Macmillan. Available online WWW: http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/projects/digitexts/dewey/d_e/contents.html.
- EDWARDS, R. (1999). *The Academic department: How does it fit into the university reform agenda?* Available online WWW: <http://www.unl.edu/svcaa/priorities/changearticle.html>.
- FREEDMAN, J. O. (1997). The Teaching of values. *The Boston Globe*, September 12: A27.
- FRUGE, A. (1993). *Skeptic among scholars: August Fruge on university publishing*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- HAHN, R. (1990). What we talk about when we talk about teaching. In D. DeZure, ed, 2000. *Learning from change*. Sterling, VA: AAHE/Sterling Publishing, p. 11-12.
- HUTCHINGS, P. (1998). Defining features and significant functions of the course portfolio. In P. Hutchings, ed, *The Course Portfolio: How faculty can examine their teaching to advance practice and improve student learning*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.
- HUTCHINS, R. M. (1936). *The higher learning in America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- KIMBALL, R. (1990). *Tenured radicals*. Chicago, IL: Elephant Paperbacks.

- LEBARON, J. (1999). *Proposal for cross-departmental graduate online partnership for open and flexible learning*. Available online WWW: <http://gse.uml.edu/lebaron/EdTech.htm>.
- NEWMAN, J. H. (1854). *The idea of a university*. (Source: Essays, English and American, with introductions notes and illustrations. c1910. New York: P. F. Collier & son.) Available online WWW: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/newman/newman-university.html>.
- OAKLEY, F. (1995). Scholarship and teaching: A matter of mutual support. *American Council of Learned Societies Occasional Paper No. 32*. Available online WWW: <http://www.acls.org/op32.htm>.
- PERELMAN, L. J. (1992). *School's out: Hyperlearning, the new technology, and the end of education*. New York: William Morrow.
- PERLEY, J. E. (1997). *Tenure remains vital to academic freedom*. American Association of University Professors. Available online WWW: <http://www.aaup.org/jeped44.htm>.
- SIZER, T. R. (1984). *Horace's compromise: The dilemma of the American high school*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- SMITH, P. (1990). *Killing the spirit: Higher education in America*. New York: Viking Penguin.
- SPOTTS, T.H. and BOWMAN, M.A. (1995). Faculty use of instructional technologies in higher education. *Educational technology*, 35(2): 56-64.
- SYKES, C.J. (1988). *ProfScam: Professors and the demise of higher education*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
- WATTS, G., and CASTLE, S. (1992). Electronic networking and the construction of professional knowledge. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 73(9): 684-689.
- WERGIN, J. (1994). *The collaborative department: How five campuses are inching toward cultures of collective responsibility*. Washington, DC: American Association for Higher Education.
- WILSON, B.P. (1999). The phenomenon of grade inflation in higher education. *Phi Kappa Phi Journal*, 79(4): 38-41.
- WINSTON, G. (1994). The decline in undergraduate teaching: Moral failure or market pressure? In D. DeZure, ed, 2000. *Learning from change*. Sterling, VA: AAHE/Sterling Publishing, p.41-42.
- ZANDER, R.S. and ZANDER, B. (2000). *The art of possibility: Transforming professional and personal life*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

RETÓRICA E RECOMPENSA NO ENSINO SUPERIOR: COMO A TRADIÇÃO IMPEDE A REFORMA DA ACADEMIA E OS CAMINHOS QUE SE LHE ABREM

Resumo

A actual avalanche de polémicas derrotistas sobre o Ensino Superior tem redundado numa alarmante erosão do apoio público. Neste texto discutem-se as formas de organização tradicionais da “universidade” no contexto da melhoria do ensino e na reforma da academia. Assume-se que iniciativas individuais, em pequena escala, podem informar o nível mais geral de decisão quanto aos fins, missões e acções colectivas, sem deixar de considerar que a mudança sistémica requer mesmo assim, envolvimento mais alargado do sistema. Em particular, examinam-se as questões relacionadas com incentivos e mérito académico à luz de práticas estruturantes e da tradição, discutindo-se os desafios da mudança e sobrevivência institucionais.

RHÉTORIQUE ET RÉCOMPENSE DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT SUPÉRIEUR: COMME LA TRADITION EMPÊCHE LA REFORME DE L'ACADÉMIE ET LES CHEMINS QUI S'OUVRENT

Résumé

Dans ce texte on examine les conséquences de la organisation traditionnelle de l'“université” dans le contexte de la reforme de la académie et de l'amélioration de l'enseignement. On considère que les initiatives particulières et de petite dimension peuvent informer des niveaux de décision plus vastes en ce que concerne les objectives, les missions et des actions collectives, mais que le vrai changement exige l'engagement du système. Particulièrement, on examine des questions relatives aux soutiens et mérite académique en ce que regarde les pratiques structuraux et la tradition, discutant les défis du changement et survivance institutionnel.

Toda a correspondência relativa a este artigo deve ser enviada para: John F. LeBaron, Graduate School of Education, University of Massachusetts Lowell, 255 Princeton Street, North Chelmsford, MA 01863, USA. E-mail: john_lebaron@uml.edu.