

November 22, 1988

**OBSERVATION GUIDE:**  
**UNIVERSITY COURSES AND WORKSHOP**

This observation guide is designed to follow a full-length faculty interview, and to be accompanied by a brief pre-observation interview and a brief post-observation interview. During the full-length faculty interview, you should establish agreement with the faculty-staff member about what session you will observe. The session you observe should be a complete unit rather than a convenient segment of time that is unrelated to the program. A session may be a one-hour meeting of a university course, an afternoon of a 18 three-week summer institute, a two-hour discussion section of a larger course, or some other coherent, self-contained unit.

From your observation, and from the pre-observation and post-observation interviews that accompany it, we want to learn five things:

- the content and organization of the session;
- the academic process employed to promote learning;
- the roles, responsibilities and involvement of participants;
- how the content is related to practice; and
- any explicit or implicit messages the faculty member conveys about topics of interest to the center:
  - (a) teaching
  - (b) learners and learning,
  - (c) subject matter, or
  - (d) learning to teach.

The details of what we want to know about these five topics is elaborated below in a series of specific questions. Your task is to answer these questions as fully as possible on the basis of your observation.

You may find yourself observing a wide range of learning opportunities; group discussions as well as lectures, summer workshops as well as one-hour university classes, sessions covering math methods, educational psychology, English, writing, or mathematics. To accommodate these variations, we have posed the questions rather generally, and rely on your good judgement to determine the specific meanings the questions have in each context.

To simplify this observation guide, we have used some simplified language to refer to participants. We refer to A professors, for instance, when the session may be lead by an inservice staff member, a mentor teacher, a graduate student, etc. and we refer to students, even though the learners may in fact be practicing teachers. You need not confine yourself to this language. Use the terms that seem most appropriate for the context in which you are observing.

With regard to the pre-observation and post-observation interviews, these can be done either on the telephone or in person, whichever is most convenient. It may be useful to tack the pre-observation interview onto the end of the full faculty interview, and to do the post by telephone. If possible tape record these as well. We will transcribe all tapes of interviews.

Study these questions closely before your observation, so that you have a good sense for what you should be watching for. After the observation, your task will be to answer the questions as completely as possible, and to provide documentation (ie., specific descriptions of behaviors you observed and sentences you heard) for your answers. You will also need to describe some things you did not see, that these questions ask about.

The best strategy is to tape record the verbal interactions during this session and write notes that will supplement the tape recording. For instance, if you use a wireless microphone, you will have a good tape of the professor's speech, but will not have much on tape of what students say. So your notes should cover that aspect of the interaction. Also, your notes should cover non-verbal behaviors, words or problems written on the board, or activities going on that won't be evident from an audio tape. You should also collect copies of any handouts.

After the session, write as complete and detailed an answer as you can to each question. Use specific quotes and examples to illustrate each answer. Draw on your tape, your notes, and your memorabilia to get the detail you need.

When you turn in your answers to these questions, you should also turn in the tape of the class, the tape or write-up of the pre-observation and post-observation interviews, and your

copies of handouts and other memorabilia you gathered.

Begin your observation notes with appropriate forms of the following statements:

This is an observation of (name of course or workshop) provided at (site). It consists of (weekly, biweekly, etc) (one-hour, two-hour) sessions.

The particular session I observed occurred on (date, time,) which was (at the beginning of the term, just before final exams, or the time when teachers are expected to break out into groups to discuss the issues raised earlier in the workshop.)

Present are (number of faculty, mentors, teacher trainers, grad assistants) and approximately (number) teacher-learners. They are arranged as follows: (describe room arrangement--theater style, round-table style, etc).

This observation should be read in conjunction with the following interview materials:

(List relevant full faculty interview, pre-observation interview or post observation interviews. If the observation can be analyzed independent of the full faculty interview, do not list that here.)



## **I. THE CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION**

This section of the observation report is designed to provide an overview of the session. It asks three questions:

- What were the main events that occurred during the session?
- What is the general subject of discussion? and
- How are the issues or topics organized for students and what transitions does the professor use to indicate organization to the students?

Your response to these questions should accomplish two purposes. First, they should enable someone who has not observed the session to gain a reasonably good sense for what actually happened. Second, they should define issues, events, or sequences in sufficient detail that you yourself can refer back to them in later sections of the report, and locate the data you will be providing later on.

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The main purpose for this question is to provide a road map through the session so that you can place events you refer to in later questions. Do not get bogged down in details. But do describe, for instance, if the session vacillated between student presentations, faculty presentations, and group discussion, and how these portions related to one another (For instance, there is a lecture first and then a class discussion about the lecture, or there is a series of student presentations and then small groups form to discuss each presentation, etc.)

If the session is entirely one event--entirely discussion or lecture, for instance, describe any segments you discern within this format. If a lecture is organized around three big issues, or if a discussion is punctuated at times by the professor summarizing where they've been and what remains to be discussed, describe these partitions.

## 2. What is the general subject of discussion?

In answering this question, be sure to indicate the following:

First, give more than a summary of topics addressed; give a sense for the questions or issues that guide the discussion. For instance, is the lecture or discussion organized around a problem, such as how to explain fractions to fourth graders; around a list of techniques, such as the five main techniques for responding to student disruptions; around an intellectual problem, such as the relationship between Plato's sensorial and ideal worlds, etc.

Second, indicate whether the content throughout the session has any thematic continuity. That is, is there an issue that drives the entire discussion, or perhaps one or more organizing questions? Or, conversely, does the session appear to wander through a series of distinct, generally unrelated, topics?

3. Does the professor indicate any purpose for, or order to, the session?

Here we are interested in the extent to which the professor specifically tells students what will be covered and how, if at all, it fits with other content. For instance, we are looking for answers to questions such as:

3a. Is there any advance organizer or promise about what to expect today? If so, was there any follow through on these promises, or any wrap-up at the end of the session?

3b. Does the professor use intermediate summaries or other forms of transition to indicate progress to students, or to indicate where they are in the overall plan for the session?

3c. Is there any apparent effort to tie this material to material covered on other days?

3d. How do the tie-in to other sessions, and the advance organizer, if any, compare to what the faculty/staff person said in the pre-observation interview about the purpose of this session relative to other sessions in this component?

If these three questions permit you to describe the logic of the session, use them to organize your discussion. However, if these questions do not seem appropriate to the



session you observed, do not feel constrained by them. Try to describe the events, statements, and so forth that seemed important to you in regard to organizing the content for students.

Try to refrain from making judgments in your descriptions of these events. If you feel a particular organizer or tie in was inappropriate or weak, be sure to provide all the evidence that would enable someone else to see the same thing. If you feel something was lacking, be sure to state what you did not see as well.

## **II. WHAT IS THE ACADEMIC PROCESS EMPLOYED TO PROMOTE LEARNING?**

In this section, we ask these questions:

-What is knowledge and how does the professor help students gain knowledge?

-What academic standards appear to be operating during this session? and -What are the students' main tasks as learners during this session?

This section asks for data that we hope will enable us to learn more about the meaning of such terms as intellectual demand, and academic rigor as they apply to university learning. Because these terms are so difficult to define, it is important that you provide as much specific evidence as possible in your answers to each question. The data you provide will enable us to make more fine-grained distinctions than we are now able to make about the academic aspects of teaching and learning.

Also, if you feel you see evidence regarding the academic process that is important but that does not respond to these specific questions, please volunteer those data here.

4. How does this professor seem to construe knowledge and how does the he or she help students gain knowledge?

This question gets to the heart of the academic enterprise. Through your answer to this question, we hope to get a sense for the following:

First, the extent to which knowledge seems to mean a fixed body of facts or ideas, ready to be transmitted to students, or the extent to which knowledge appears to be an uncertain and changing set of ideas that needs to be continually re-examined. These two options represent extremes on a continuum, however, and your task will be to present as much evidence as possible to help us better define the kinds of knowledge students are learning.

Next, the way in which professors help students gain knowledge. One way to do this is to tell it to students. Another is to ask a series of leading questions designed to help them arrive at the appropriate conclusion themselves. Another is to engage them in some sort

of problem solving activities that require them to grapple with certain ideas.

Finally, we hope to get a sense for the extent to which the professor seems to view students as learners. They may be construed, for instance, as empty vessels, into which new understandings or as active inquirers.

We are especially interested using actual interactions between professors and students to study these issues for two reason. First, we expect that many professors won't have articulated their views about these matters, and consequently we cannot expect them to provide useful answers in an interview. Second, even if they have thought about it and can articulate a view, they may not actually practice the view they espouse. The point is, knowing that these fuzzy issues are the point of this question, be as explicit as possible in describing the interactions you see.

For lectures: describe and illustrate the extent to which material is presented in a way that suggests that it is open to inquiry, argument, or criticism, or the extent to which it is presented as closed, finished, or final. Provide examples. If students asked questions, indicate their tenor, and indicate the professors response: did it encourage or suppress the inquiry, for instance?

For discussions: describe and illustrate the extent to which discussions consists of argument, pursuit of ambiguities, weighing of evidence or clarification of facts. Provide examples.

For recitations: describe the extent phrasing of professor's questions, illustrate the number and kind of responses students provide, and show how the professor responds to these student responses.

Provide at least one, and if possible several, verbatim examples of academic interactions.



## 5. What are the students' main tasks as learners during this session?

Here we are interested student activities that are relevant to learning the material. We want to know, for example, the extent to which they appear to be

- mainly listening;
- critically examining ideas or examples,
- deliberating over possible courses of action, or
- practicing a technical skill.

There may be more than one answer to this question. For example, if a professor gives a lecture in which he or she contrasts two view points in such a way as to pose a dilemma to students, you may feel a need to say that they are mainly listening, but that they are also, presumably, critically examining ideas or examples. Again, it is important for you to describe the evidence, rather than stating your assessment of what is happening.

5. What academic standards appear to be operating during this session?

This question refers only to what can be learned from observing interactions, not what may be learned from the interview or from perusing the final examinations for the course. You should describe here such things as the kind of student behaviors or comments that are reinforced, if any. For instance, do students appear to be complimented for effort, for critical commentary, for compliance, for correct answers to questions, etc? If the professor appears unsatisfied with a student response (or a student question), what does he or she convey to the student about what is wrong or what sort of response (or question) the student should have offered.

### **III. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND INVOLVEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS**

In this section, we pose three questions:

- What kind of teaching is demonstrated by the professor?
- How do you think participants define their responsibilities in this session? And
- How does the professor draw students into the content?

In answering these questions, you will notice two things.

First, you will realize that the evidence for your assertions has often already been described in an earlier section of your report. If this is so, you need not repeat the evidence here; you can refer back to it. However, if you choose to refer back to it, make sure that your original description is adequate to show how it relates to this question as well as how it relates to the question it responds to.

The second thing you will notice is that these questions require more judgements than earlier sections have, for neither roles nor responsibilities may have been explicitly articulated. Do not be afraid to submit your judgment, but try to back it up with the behaviors, nuances, or off-hand comments that led you to these judgments.

6. What kind of teaching is demonstrated by the professor?

In asking this question, we are interested in a number of aspects of the professors role:

1. The professor's role vis-a-vis the content of this session: Describe the extent to which the professor appears to be, for instance, the authority, a guide to other authoritative sources, one of many resources, or a facilitator of students who must struggle through the material themselves? Give examples of the behaviors that lead you to this conclusion.
  
1. The professor's role vis-a-vis the students: Describe the extent to which the professor seems, for instance, to adopt the role of a purveyor of content, a disciplinarian, an evangelist, a moderator, a friendly pal, a disinterested or harried researcher whose job requires him to spend time with students, a professional colleague, a lover of power, or a wise, experienced guide? Give examples of the behaviors that lead you to this conclusion.
  
1. Is the professor heavily task-oriented, or does s/he digress often into anecdotes or side issues? Give examples of each type of behavior.



2. Does the professor convey humor, cynicism, or respect toward him or herself and toward students? Give examples.
  
3. How fluent does the professor appear to be with the subject matter: does he/she handle it easily, with much stumbling, or with evasion? Does the prof convey ignorance honestly, and if so how does this bear on his/her substantive authority? Give examples.
  
4. How fluent is the faculty/staff member with the English language? Give examples.
  
6. What responsibilities do participants appear to accept and what responsibilities do they appear to expect one another to accept?

Here we are interested in responsibilities that have apparently been adopted, rather than responsibilities claimed in interviews or in other documents. We are interested in the responsibilities the professor seems to assume and the responsibilities he or she seems to expect students to assume. In addition, we are interested in the responsibilities students appear to assume and the responsibilities they seem to expect one another and the professor to assume.

Does the professor appear to take responsibility for:

- (a) exposing students, so that they can do what they please with the content;
- (b) making material intelligible to students;
- (c) altering students' regards for, or conception of, the material? or
- (d) enhancing students' ability to work with the material

Show the evidence for your conclusions and say how your perception compares with what the faculty member said in the post-interview.

Do the students appear to take responsibility for:

- (a) little or nothing;
- (b) listening and remembering what is said;
- (c) putting in effort, even if learning is not satisfactory;
- (d) developing new skills
- (e) understanding ideas;
- (f) contributing to the development of knowledge in the classroom by raising hypotheses, challenging the faculty/staff member, or challenging other students?

What does the professor appear to expect from the students, and what do students appear to expect from one another? Provide evidence.

7. Does the professor try to involve students in the content? If so, with what effect?

In responding to this question, you should provide three kinds of evidence.

First, give all examples in which the professor appears to be trying to draw students into the content through:

- use of examples, analogies or metaphors;
- asking questions;
- repeating points frequently;

Second, give examples in which students ask questions or volunteer ideas, and indicate such things as:

- whether the professor invited the questions, ideas or examples, and if so, how;
- the type of comment or question the student presents; that is, whether he or she seeks

or offers, for instance, factual clarification, procedural guidelines, understandings, speculations or arguments; and

-how the professor responds to the student's comment or question; that is does s/he encourage, tolerate, or ignore it? When answering student questions, does the professor provide facts, discuss issues, provide speculations or arguments, or does s/he provide still other questions?

Finally, you should address the students' involvement in this task. To the extent that you can, indicate how many of them seem actively engaged in the learning task.

If lecture: Do they appear to be attentive and interested, or bored and disinterested?

If discussion: Do many participants or only a few? Is participation moderate or enthusiastic? Do those who participate seem to respond to the teacher's methods for drawing them into the subject or do they resist, and appear to prefer other ways of being drawn into the subject?



#### **IV. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTENT AND THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING**

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8. Are students informed of the relationship between content and practice? If so, how are they informed?

With this question, we are interested in how professors go about trying to indicate to students the relationship between the content and their eventual practice as teachers. For instance,

- are they told explicitly what the content is for or how it should help them;
- is the value of the material demonstrated through examples;
- do students have opportunities in class (or through their assignment, if you can determine that) to examine the content themselves for its possible value to practice, or to actually practice it; or
- are they expected to determine its value later on, on their own?

In addressing this question, describe in detail the specific language used in telling students how the content is relevant, and describe the examples in detail.

6. How does the content as presented here appear to bear on practice?

In this question, we do not want your views on how this content could or should bear on

practice, but rather the apparent assumption of the professor about how this content bears on practice: For instance, does he or she treat the content as

- prescribing practice,
- providing ways to interpret practice,
- providing guidance for making decisions about practice, or
- providing content to be taught?

(Give examples to support your conclusion. If you see no apparent bearing on practice, state this also)

You should also mention here how your perception of this compares with what the professor said during the pre- and post-observation interviews.

## **V. WHAT EXPLICIT OR IMPLICITLY MESSAGES ARE CONVEYED ABOUT TEACHING, LEARNERS AND LEARNING, AND SUBJECT MATTER?**

This last section may also require a good deal of observer judgment. In this section, we ask for an account of the variety of messages the professor may be conveying to students, about the particular topics of interest to the center:

- what constitutes good teaching;
- learners and learning
- the place of school subject matter in teaching; and
- learning to teach.

In addressing these questions, it is as important to indicate things that were not said as to indicate things that were said. We are interested in implicit messages, and these may be conveyed by omission as well as by commission. This is also important in that, when other people read your notes, they may not be able to tell whether something was never said or if, instead, it was said but not recorded.

### 7. What views of good teaching are conveyed in this session?

With this question, we are not interested in the kind of teaching that is actually modeled by the professor in this situation, for you should have described that in response to

question. Here, you should confine your remarks to such issues as the following:

Does the faculty/staff member make any recommendations regarding pedagogy at all? If so, is it recommended that teachers be effective classroom managers, warm and caring adults, people who keep children busy, or people who foster cognitive development through carefully designed problems and questions? Describe these.

If recommendations about appropriate pedagogy are made, on what basis are they justified? Are they held up as inherently valuable, as shown to be effective by research, as justified by a theory of learning, or in some other way?

If the faculty/staff member does not make explicit recommendations regarding pedagogy, are there any implicit messages about what constitutes good (or bad) teaching? For instance, smug remarks about teachers, anecdotes about teaching that appear to have morals to them, etc. If so, describe these remarks and anecdotes and try to identify the type of teaching that appears to be valued or derided by them. Describe these.



### 13. What views of learners and learning are conveyed in this session?

Is the nature of learning and of learners explicitly discussed? If so, what messages are put forward regarding:

- learner capacity, potential, or motivation,
- strategies of learning
- the sources of learner diversity that are relevant to teaching
- labeling or categorizing learners in general

Describe the messages about each of these aspects of pupils as learners, giving specific examples of comments wherever possible.

If the nature of learners is not discussed explicitly, are any implicit messages about learners conveyed? For instance, smug remarks about particular kinds of students, derogatory language, or anecdotes about particular kinds of learners that have morals to them? If yes, describe these remarks and the implicit kinds of learners or learning that are apparently valued or derided in them.

### 8. What views about school subjects are conveyed in this session?

Is school subject matter discussed at all in this session? If yes, is subject matter

portrayed as given, either by the textbook or in some other way, or is it portrayed as something that teachers must attend carefully to? Describe these discussions.

If school subject matter is not discussed explicitly, are there other implicit messages about subject matter. For instance, are there off-hand references, anecdotes or other remarks that implicitly characterize subject matter as important or unimportant, or that characterize different subjects differently? Describe these implicit messages.

9. What views about learning to teach are conveyed in this session?

Is learning to teach discussed at all in this session? If so, is teaching portrayed

-as something for which there is one best way to do it, or as something for which there are many equally-valid ways to do it?

-as something that can be learned by acquiring a known set of skills and knowledge, or as something that is still not well understood and must be learned on your own?

-as something that can be learned in a short time, or as something that one continues to learn throughout one's teaching career?

-as something that is easy or hard to master?

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**Post-Observation Interview**  
**for Program Faculty and staff members**

10. How do you think the session went?

-How did it compare with what you expected?

-How could it have been better?

-What would have made it worse?

11. When I interviewed you before, you said your goal for this session was \_\_\_\_\_ . Do you think you accomplished that?

12. Was this session typical of the sessions you generally have in this (course, workshop, etc.)

3a. Is the content you covered today more or less familiar to you than the content you cover on other days?

3b. Is the pedagogy you used today more or less comfortable to you than the pedagogy you use on other days.

13. What sort of careers do you imagine these students will have?

4a. (In the event that any of your students become teachers.) Do you view this particular session as relevant to your students' (teachers') teaching practice?

-How?

-Did you do any particular things in this session to make the material more relevant to their teaching?

14. In this next question, I'm trying to learn something about your goal as a teacher. I have a multiple choice question, but you don't have to use these options in your answer. They are here to give you an idea of what I'm after. If you were to characterize your goal as a teacher, would you say you were mostly trying to:

assure mastery of this content;

improve understanding of the content;

change perceptions of the content; or

assure exposure to the content?

15. In the session I observed, I noticed \_\_\_\_\_

Can you tell me your rationale for doing that?

Use this space to pursue any pedagogical issue they feel needs probing related to center's central issues. For instance,

-If you saw the prof giving messages about student diversity, ask about those.

-If you saw the prof using a particular example of good teaching or bad teaching, ask where it came from or why s/he chose to use it, or what point s/he was trying to make or something.

-If you saw the prof giving differential attention to students, ask how s/he makes decisions about whom to call on.

16. Are there any other questions you think I should have asked you about this session or about your role or responsibilities as a teacher?



November 22, 1988

**Pre-Observation Interview**  
**for Program Faculty and staff members**

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NOTE 1: This interview is designed to follow a regular faculty/staff interview.

NOTE 2: Before beginning this interview, establish an agreement with your interviewee about what session you will actually be observing. Try to observe complete units rather than dropping by to observe a convenient segment of time that is unrelated to the

program.

17. Tell me a little about what you will be doing during the session I will observe?

Probe: What will you be doing?

Probe: What will the students (teachers) be doing?

18. How does this fit into the overall course (workshop, etc)?

Probe: Where does this fit into the sequence?

Probe: How does this contribute to your overall objectives?

19. Is there anything in particular you are hoping to accomplish in this session?

20. How likely is it that (the goal mentioned in question 3) will happen?

Probe: What will it depend on?

Probe: What might upset your plan?

21. Will this be difficult for any of your students (teachers)?

Probe: Why?



22. What did students have to do to prepare for this session?
23. Is there anything I should pay particular attention to while I'm observing?

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Begin your observation notes with appropriate forms of the following statements:

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24. What are the main events that occurred during the session?

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25. What is the general subject of discussion?

In answering this question, be sure to indicate the following:

First, give more than a summary of topics addressed; give a sense for the questions or issues that guide the discussion. For instance, is the lecture or discussion organized around a problem, such as how to explain fractions to fourth graders; around a list of techniques, such as the five main techniques for responding to student disruptions; around an intellectual problem, such as the relationship between Plato's sensorial and ideal worlds, etc.

Second, indicate whether the content throughout the session has any thematic continuity. That is, is there an issue that drives the entire discussion, or perhaps one or more organizing questions? Or, conversely, does the session appear to wander through a series of distinct, generally unrelated, topics?

26. Does the professor indicate any purpose for, or order to, the session?

Here we are interested in the extent to which the professor specifically tells students what will be covered and how, if at all, it fits with other content. For instance, we are looking for answers to questions such as:

3a. Is there any advance organizer or promise about what to expect today? If so, was there any follow through on these promises, or any wrap-up at the end of the session?

3b. Does the professor use intermediate summaries or other forms of transition to indicate progress to students, or to indicate where they are in the overall plan for the session?



3c. Is there any apparent effort to tie this material to material covered on other days?

3d. How do the tie-in to other sessions, and the advance organizer, if any, compare to what the faculty/staff person said in the pre-observation interview about the purpose of this session relative to other sessions in this component?

If these three questions permit you to describe the logic of the session, use them to organize your discussion. However, if these questions do not seem appropriate to the session you observed, do not feel constrained by them. Try to describe the events, statements, and so forth that seemed important to you in regard to organizing the content for students.

Try to refrain from making judgments in your descriptions of these events. If you feel a particular organizer or tie in was inappropriate or weak, be sure to provide all the evidence that would enable someone else to see the same thing. If you feel something was lacking, be sure to state what you did not see as well.

## **II. WHAT IS THE ACADEMIC PROCESS EMPLOYED TO PROMOTE LEARNING?**

In this section, we ask these questions:

-What is knowledge and how does the professor help students gain knowledge?

-What academic standards appear to be operating during this session? and -What are the students' main tasks as learners during this session?

This section asks for data that we hope will enable us to learn more about the meaning of such terms as intellectual demand, and academic rigor as they apply to university learning. Because these terms are so difficult to define, it is important that you provide as much specific evidence as possible in your answers to each question. The data you provide will enable us to make more fine-grained distinctions than we are now able to make about the academic aspects of teaching and learning.

Also, if you feel you see evidence regarding the academic process that is important but that does not respond to these specific questions, please volunteer those data here.

27. How does this professor seem to construe knowledge and how does the he or she help students gain knowledge?

This question gets to the heart of the academic enterprise. Through your answer to this question, we hope to get a sense for the following:

First, the extent to which knowledge seems to mean a fixed body of facts or ideas, ready to be transmitted to students, or the extent to which knowledge appears to be an uncertain and changing set of ideas that needs to be continually re-examined. These two options represent extremes on a continuum, however, and your task will be to present as much evidence as possible to help us better define the kinds of knowledge students are learning.

Next, the way in which professors help students gain knowledge. One way to do this is to tell it to students. Another is to ask a series of leading questions designed to help them arrive at the appropriate conclusion themselves. Another is to engage them in some sort of problem solving activities that require them to grapple with certain ideas.

Finally, we hope to get a sense for the extent to which the professor seems to view students as learners. They may be construed, for instance, as empty vessels, into which new understandings or as active inquirers.

We are especially interested using actual interactions between professors and students to study these issues for two reasons. First, we expect that many professors won't have articulated their views about these matters, and consequently we cannot expect them to provide useful answers in an interview. Second, even if they have thought about it and can articulate a view, they may not actually practice the view they espouse. The point is, knowing that these fuzzy issues are the point of this question, be as explicit as possible in describing the interactions you see.

For lectures: describe and illustrate the extent to which material is presented in a way that suggests that it is open to inquiry, argument, or criticism, or the extent to which it is presented as closed, finished, or final. Provide examples. If students asked questions, indicate their tenor, and indicate the professor's response: did it encourage or suppress the inquiry, for instance?

For discussions: describe and illustrate the extent to which discussions consists of argument, pursuit of ambiguities, weighing of evidence or clarification of facts. Provide examples.

For recitations: describe the extent phrasing of professor's questions, illustrate the number and kind of responses students provide, and show how the professor responds to these student responses.

Provide at least one, and if possible several, verbatim examples of academic interactions.

**5. What are the students' main tasks as learners during this session?**

Here we are interested student activities that are relevant to learning the material. We

want to know, for example, the extent to which they appear to be

- mainly listening;
- critically examining ideas or examples,
- deliberating over possible courses of action, or
- practicing a technical skill.

There may be more than one answer to this question. For example, if a professor gives a lecture in which he or she contrasts two view points in such a way as to pose a dilemma to students, you may feel a need to say that they are mainly listening, but that they are also, presumably, critically examining ideas or examples. Again, it is important for you to describe the evidence, rather than stating your assessment of what is happening.

28. What academic standards appear to be operating during this session?

This question refers only to what can be learned from observing interactions, not what may be learned from the interview or from perusing the final examinations for the course. You should describe here such things as the kind of student behaviors or comments that are reinforced, if any. For instance, do students appear to be complimented for effort, for critical commentary, for compliance, for correct answers to questions, etc? If the professor appears unsatisfied with a student response (or a student question), what does he or she convey to the student about what is wrong or what sort of response (or question) the student should have offered.

### **III. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND INVOLVEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS**

In this section, we pose three questions:

- What kind of teaching is demonstrated by the professor?
- How do you think participants define their responsibilities in this session? And
- How does the professor draw students into the content?

In answering these questions, you will notice two things.

First, you will realize that the evidence for your assertions has often already been described in an earlier section of your report. If this is so, you need not repeat the evidence here; you can refer back to it. However, if you choose to refer back to it, make sure that your original description is adequate to show how it relates to this question as well as how it relates to the question it responds to.

The second thing you will notice is that these questions require more judgements than earlier sections have, for neither roles nor responsibilities may have been explicitly articulated. Do not be afraid to submit your judgment, but try to back it up with the behaviors, nuances, or off-hand comments that led you to these judgments.

29. What kind of teaching is demonstrated by the professor?

In asking this question, we are interested in a number of aspects of the professors role:

1. The professor's role vis-a-vis the content of this session: Describe the extent to which the professor appears to be, for instance, the authority, a guide to other authoritative sources, one of many resources, or a facilitator of students who must struggle through the material themselves? Give examples of the behaviors that lead you to this conclusion.

1. The professor's role vis-a-vis the students: Describe the extent to which the professor



seems, for instance, to adopt the role of a purveyor of content, a disciplinarian, an evangelist, a moderator, a friendly pal, a disinterested or harried researcher whose job requires him to spend time with students, a professional colleague, a lover of power, or a wise, experienced guide? Give examples of the behaviors that lead you to this conclusion.

1. Is the professor heavily task-oriented, or does s/he digress often into anecdotes or side issues? Give examples of each type of behavior.
2. Does the professor convey humor, cynicism, or respect toward him or herself and toward students? Give examples.
3. How fluent does the professor appear to be with the subject matter: does he/she handle it easily, with much stumbling, or with evasion? Does the prof convey ignorance honestly, and if so how does this bear on his/her substantive authority? Give examples.
4. How fluent is the faculty/staff member with the English language? Give examples.
6. What responsibilities do participants appear to accept and what responsibilities do they appear to expect one another to accept?

Here we are interested in responsibilities that have apparently been adopted, rather than responsibilities claimed in interviews or in other documents. We are interested in the responsibilities the professor seems to assume and the responsibilities he or she seems to expect students to assume. In addition, we are interested in the responsibilities students appear to assume and the responsibilities they seem to expect one another and the professor to assume.

Does the professor appear to take responsibility for:

- (a) exposing students, so that they can do what they please with the content;
- (b) making material intelligible to students;

- (c) altering students' regards for, or conception of, the material? or
- (d) enhancing students' ability to work with the material

Show the evidence for your conclusions and say how your perception compares with what the faculty member said in the post-interview.

Do the students appear to take responsibility for:

- (a) little or nothing;
- (b) listening and remembering what is said;
- (c) putting in effort, even if learning is not satisfactory;
- (d) developing new skills
- (e) understanding ideas;
- (f) contributing to the development of knowledge in the classroom by raising hypotheses, challenging the faculty/staff member, or challenging other students?

What does the professor appear to expect from the students, and what do students appear to expect from one another? Provide evidence.

7. Does the professor to try to involve students in the content? If so, with what effect?

In responding to this question, you should provide three kinds of evidence.

First, give all examples in which the professor appears to be trying to draw students into the content through:

- use of examples, analogies or metaphors;
- asking questions;

-repeating points frequently;

Second, give examples in which students ask questions or volunteer ideas, and indicate such things as:

-whether the professor invited the questions, ideas or examples, and if so, how;

-the type of comment or question the student presents; that is, whether he or she seeks or offers, for instance, factual clarification, procedural guidelines, understandings, speculations or arguments; and

-how the professor responds to the student's comment or question; that is does s/he encourage, tolerate, or ignore it? When answering student questions, does the professor provide facts, discuss issues, provide speculations or arguments, or does s/he provide still other questions?

Finally, you should address the students' involvement in this task. To the extent that you can, indicate how many of them seem actively engaged in the learning task.

If lecture: Do they appear to be attentive and interested, or bored and disinterested?

If discussion: Do many participants or only a few? Is participation moderate or enthusiastic? Do those who participate seem to respond to the teacher's methods for drawing them into the subject or do they resist, and appear to prefer other ways of being drawn into the subject?



#### **IV. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONTENT AND THE PRACTICE OF TEACHING**

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8. Are students informed of the relationship between content and practice? If so, how are they informed?

With this question, we are interested in how professors go about trying to indicate to students the relationship between the content and their eventual practice as teachers. For instance,

- are they told explicitly what the content is for or how it should help them;
- is the value of the material demonstrated through examples;
- do students have opportunities in class (or through their assignment, if you can determine that) to examine the content themselves for its possible value to practice, or to actually practice it; or
- are they expected to determine its value later on, on their own?

In addressing this question, describe in detail the specific language used in telling students how the content is relevant, and describe the examples in detail.

6. How does the content as presented here appear to bear on practice?

In this question, we do not want your views on how this content could or should bear on practice, but rather the apparent assumption of the professor about how this content bears on practice: For instance, does he or she treat the content as

- prescribing practice,
- providing ways to interpret practice,
- providing guidance for making decisions about practice, or
- providing content to be taught?

(Give examples to support your conclusion. If you see no apparent bearing on practice, state this also)

You should also mention here how your perception of this compares with what the professor said during the pre- and post-observation interviews.

## **V. WHAT EXPLICIT OR IMPLICITLY MESSAGES ARE CONVEYED ABOUT TEACHING, LEARNERS AND LEARNING, AND SUBJECT MATTER?**

This last section may also require a good deal of observer judgment. In this section, we ask for an account of the variety of messages the professor may be conveying to students, about the particular topics of interest to the center:

- what constitutes good teaching;
- learners and learning
- the place of school subject matter in teaching; and
- learning to teach.

In addressing these questions, it is as important to indicate things that were not said as to

indicate things that were said. We are interested in implicit messages, and these may be conveyed by omission as well as by commission. This is also important in that, when other people read your notes, they may not be able to tell whether something was never said or if, instead, it was said but not recorded.

7. What views of good teaching are conveyed in this session?

With this question, we are not interested in the kind of teaching that is actually modeled by the professor in this situation, for you should have described that in response to question. Here, you should confine your remarks to such issues as the following:

Does the faculty/staff member make any recommendations regarding pedagogy at all? If so, is it recommended that teachers be effective classroom managers, warm and caring adults, people who keep children busy, or people who foster cognitive development through carefully designed problems and questions? Describe these.

If recommendations about appropriate pedagogy are made, on what basis are they justified? Are they held up as inherently valuable, as shown to be effective by research, as justified by a theory of learning, or in some other way?

If the faculty/staff member does not make explicit recommendations regarding pedagogy, are there any implicit messages about what constitutes good (or bad) teaching? For instance, smug remarks about teachers, anecdotes about teaching that appear to have morals to them, etc. If so, describe these remarks and anecdotes and try to identify the type of teaching that appears to be valued or derided by them. Describe these.



### **13. What views of learners and learning are conveyed in this session?**

Is the nature of learning and of learners explicitly discussed? If so, what messages are put forward regarding:

- learner capacity, potential, or motivation,
- strategies of learning
- the sources of learner diversity that are relevant to teaching
- labeling or categorizing learners in general

Describe the messages about each of these aspects of pupils as learners, giving specific examples of comments wherever possible.

If the nature of learners is not discussed explicitly, are any implicit messages about learners conveyed? For instance, smug remarks about particular kinds of students, derogatory language, or anecdotes about particular kinds of learners that have morals to them? If yes, describe these remarks and the implicit kinds of learners or learning that

are apparently valued or derided in them.

8. What views about school subjects are conveyed in this session?

Is school subject matter discussed at all in this session? If yes, is subject matter portrayed as Agiven, either by the textbook or in some other way, or is it portrayed as something that teachers must attend carefully to? Describe these discussions.

If school subject matter is not discussed explicitly, are there other implicit messages about subject matter. For instance, are there off-hand references, anecdotes or other remarks that implicitly characterize subject matter as important or unimportant, or that characterize different subjects differently? Describe these implicit messages.

9. What views about learning to teach are conveyed in this session?

Is learning to teach discussed at all in this session? If so, is teaching portrayed

-as something for which there is one best way to do it, or as something for which there are many equally-valid ways to do it?

-as something that can be learned by acquiring a known set of skills and knowledge, or as something that is still not well understood and must be learned on your own?

-as something that can be learned in a short time, or as something that one continues to learn throughout one's teaching career?

-as something that is easy or hard to master?

November 22, 1988

**Post-Observation Interview**  
**for Program Faculty and staff members**

10. How do you think the session went?

-How did it compare with what you expected?

-How could it have been better?

-What would have made it worse?

11. When I interviewed you before, you said your goal for this session was  
\_\_\_\_\_. Do you think you accomplished that?

12. Was this session typical of the sessions you generally have in this (course, workshop, etc.)

3a. Is the content you covered today more or less familiar to you than the content you cover on other days?

3b. Is the pedagogy you used today more or less comfortable to you than the pedagogy you use on other days.

13. What sort of careers do you imagine these students will have?

4a. (In the event that any of your students become teachers.) Do you view this particular session as relevant to your students' (teachers') teaching practice?

-How?

-Did you do any particular things in this session to make the material more relevant to their teaching?

14. In this next question, I'm trying to learn something about your goal as a teacher. I have a multiple choice question, but you don't have to use these options in your answer. They are here to give you an idea of what I'm after. If you were to characterize your goal as a teacher, would you say you were mostly trying to:

assure mastery of this content;

improve understanding of the content;

change perceptions of the content; or

assure exposure to the content?

15. In the session I observed, I noticed \_\_\_\_\_

Can you tell me your rationale for doing that?

Use this space to pursue any pedagogical issue they feel needs probing related to center's central issues. For instance,

-If you saw the prof giving messages about student diversity, ask about those.

-If you saw the prof using a particular example of good teaching or bad teaching, ask where it came from or why s/he chose to use it, or what point s/he was trying to make or something.

-If you saw the prof giving differential attention to students, ask how s/he makes decisions about whom to call on.

16. Are there any other questions you think I should have asked you about this session or about your role or responsibilities as a teacher?



November 22, 1988

**Pre-Observation Interview**  
**for Program Faculty and staff members**

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NOTE 1: This interview is designed to follow a regular faculty/staff interview.

NOTE 2: Before beginning this interview, establish an agreement with your interviewee about what session you will actually be observing. Try to observe complete units rather than dropping by to observe a convenient segment of time that is unrelated to the program.

17. Tell me a little about what you will be doing during the session I will observe?

Probe: What will you be doing?

Probe: What will the students (teachers) be doing?

18. How does this fit into the overall course (workshop, etc)?

Probe: Where does this fit into the sequence?

Probe: How does this contribute to your overall objectives?

19. Is there anything in particular you are hoping to accomplish in this session?

20. How likely is it that (the goal mentioned in question 3) will happen?

Probe: What will it depend on?



Probe: What might upset your plan?

21. Will this be difficult for any of your students (teachers)?

Probe: Why?

22. What did students have to do to prepare for this session?

23. Is there anything I should pay particular attention to while I'm observing?

## **LIBERAL ARTS FACULTY INTERVIEW**

**July 1988**

**NATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON TEACHER EDUCATION**

**116 ERICKSON HALL**

**MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

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