Book Note

Now What?: Not for TAs Only

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A multitude of teaching manuals are available to the novice college instructor, offering aid and comfort in great variety (e.g., Eble, 1976; Ericksen, 1984; Gullette, 1984; McKeachie, 1986; also, periodicals such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *College Teaching*, and *Teaching of Psychology*). We in the behavioral community can look forward to Jack Michael's upcoming work on the subject; in fact, copies of his Western Michigan University Distinguished Faculty Scholar Colloquium on that topic (Michael, 1989) are currently available (write the Psychology Department at Western Michigan). In the meantime, are any of the alternative works useful to a behavioral practitioner?

One that is worthy of consideration is *Now What?: Readings on Surviving (and even Enjoying) Your First Experience at College Teaching*. As the title implies, *Now What?* is a compendium of selections from a number of sources, many of them manuals for graduate teaching assistants (TAs) from universities around the country. *Now What?*, sponsored by Syracuse University, is also intended for TAs, but college teachers at any stage in their careers should find it useful. The editors' selections are excellent (they were themselves graduate students at the time of publication), and they have succeeded as well in making the book a more coherent whole than might be expected. It is not intended to be behavioral—in fact,

competing theories of education are never discussed—but many of the recommended techniques are in fact just that.

Good teaching demands, in addition to knowledge of the material and organizational and social skills, sophisticated use of such standard behavioral techniques as reinforcement and stimulus control. Coverage of these two topics is not stinted in *Now What?*, and reinforcement has one selection devoted entirely to it. It is mentioned in many other places and contexts as well: for example, "Be supportive to the person who gives a wrong answer" (p. 44) and "When you pose a question, it is tempting to continually pick out from the upstretched hands which are volunteering an answer, the student who will positively reinforce you by giving the correct answer every time" (p. 153). Both of these comments make good behavioral sense. Stimulus control is also a popular guideline discussed in varying guises: "[Students] may assume, mistakenly, that a rapid-fire speaker is purposely moving quickly to avoid questions. To dispel that notion, be sure to take long pauses, so students will have a chance to formulate questions" (p. 19) and "By probing, the teacher requires the student to go beyond his first response. His cue is the student's response" (p. 50). These examples illustrate the book's application of these principles to the instructor as well as the students. Among the other behavioral techniques that come up, frequent testing is encouraged, and writing objectives is a standard that has a section to itself in this book (pp. 95–99)—short but sound.

Other benefits include the discussions of lecturing and its pros and cons, letters of recommendation, and dealing with problem students. Such fine points as

Janes, J., & Hauer, D. (Eds.). (1988). *Now What?: Readings on Surviving (and even Enjoying) Your First Experience at College Teaching* (2nd ed.). Littleton, MA: Copley. Paperbound, 199 pp., \$9.95. Reprints may be obtained from the author, Department of Psychology, St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN 55057.

making room changes, learning students' names, and the importance of humor are also not neglected. Humor is one of the reasons for the success of the book itself—both in the selections, and in the vignettes of three fictional TAs that provide continuity across the different sections.

Some of these sections are fleshed out better than others. For example, "Media," while including good suggestions on the use of the blackboard and overhead projector, has nothing at all on slides or films. The section on grading is also rather thin, perhaps because some TAs don't do much of it. The focus towards TAs makes the book less relevant to full-fledged academics in a few other sections, as well. And I can guarantee that, just as no two teachers have the same style, no one will agree with all of the suggestions provided.

Nonetheless, *Now What?*'s 19 sections, ranging from "The First Class" to "Questioning" to "Self-Evaluation," are sure to offer something to every teacher. My own favorite suggestion compares teachers and actors: "They face the same dilemma of having to repeat the same material over and over again: How do you make it new?" . . . By studying actors' techniques

for controlling their voices and movements, teachers can become more conscious of ways they can control—and improve—their own speaking ability" (p. 20).

To conclude, while *Now What?* is by no means behavioral or comprehensive, it offers enough good, well-organized tips to be worthwhile. In fact, I found it to be just as useful and more readable than McKeachie's venerable *Teaching Tips* (1986). Reading a teaching manual functions at the very least to boost the beginning teacher's confidence; choosing this one should do considerably more.

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