

WHAT IS A STANDARD OF EDUCATION?

or

LET'S GET WITH IT

by Carolyn Duffy

What is an educational standard and who is responsible for its effectiveness or ineffectiveness?

In a recent statement released to the local press, John Keaveny, president of UPEISU, commented on the low standard of education at UPEI. It would be interesting to know what criteria he assessed which enabled him to make such an evaluation. Any discussion of a standard is ambiguous and I feel that Mr. Keaveny ought to have clarified and justified his statement.

How does one assess the quality of education one receives at a particular university? It's a difficult question but I would like to examine it from the student's point of view. Students are given an op-

portunity to play a significant and vital role in helping determine the quality of education they receive.

The first couple of years at university are disillusioning for most people. They find themselves in large classes and feel depersonalized. The emphasis seems to be on lectures, examinations and assignments, and the curriculum doesn't offer a real personal challenge. There comes a point, however, when one begins to question the relevance (validity) of the whole learning situation. Am I being dictated to and victimized by the system or have I chosen to be a bored non-participant? Once one reaches this point of critical evaluation then he can do one of two things: he can choose to sit around and bitch about the system until he qualifies for its stamp

of approval (a degree) or he can decide to be challenged by the system with an aim to improving it through participation. It's easy to blame the system but how many times have we chosen not to exercise our personal freedom within the educational framework? Surely you can't deny that you do have a personal responsibility in determining what the learning experience will mean. You have freedom to choose your curriculum, your professors and are given an opportunity to voice your concern in all areas of university administration. If your experience in the academic milieu proves to be meaningless and frustrating then the onus is on you and not the system. Can we accept that responsibility? Many apparently can't. It is very demanding of the individual in terms of time, energy, tolerance and patience and even with that, any change you may have affected will seem to only have scratched the surface. However, if we all were to play our part then the situation would be radically different.

We all have our own personal vision of what a situation ought to provide for us. The decision to fight for personal independence within an educational system demands that we avoid the group poop; abandon the attitude of clinical sophistication; be less tolerant of mediocrity and be more critical of our own attitudes. Decide not to be a bored non-participant because it's easy to sit around under the pretense of learning and tear down the system.

It is, therefore, my contention that to a large degree, we, as students are responsible for help-

ing create a "standard" of education. We determine the quality of our educational experience and possibly because of our own participation while here at university we have helped create a better situation for those who will follow us.

Participation is demanding, frustrating and downright depressing at times but it is also challenging, interesting, and a real learning experience. It is what you choose to make it!

KEAVENY CLARIFIES

When something is referred to being low, this indicates that in relation to other somethings there is a degree of inferiority present. Miss Duffy requests that I clarify and justify my statement. Your question is, as I see it, "Where is UPEI's inferiority most pronounced

To answer this question I would refer to the AUCC report on their visit to UPEI and offer as your answer their remarks which indicated to me that there was some room for various improvements in our UPEI.

"Some upgrading would be desirable in some of the humanities and social sciences departments" (referring to teaching staff) "The consolidated university library appears adequate for the present and immediate future, provided some selective filling is carried out."

Further quotes from the report. "The committee felt that in general, the new institution was well embarked on the process of merg-

ing the academic programmes of the two pre-existing institutions. It was felt however, that a good deal of sorting and sifting of offerings should take place in individual departments over the next few years. At present, there seems to be more courses than are necessary or desirable for the undergraduate liberal arts and science programmes which the university is in a position to offer. On the other hand, there are significant gaps which can be filled when unnecessary dispersion has been reduced."

"The Visiting Committee recommended that UPEI be re-visited in two years time to assist in the process of consolidation and upgrading."

It seems to me that when I made a statement concerning standards I said they were low, and in various way they certainly are — please realize that in some departments we have good faculty and accordingly, AUCC said, "The qualifications of the teaching staff in science appear to be quite adequate".....

There is a tendency of the media (Radio, TV, commercial newspapers) to include "raw statements", which when examined in a cursory manner (as I feel Miss Duffy has done) tend to mislead the listener, viewer or reader.

It is apparent to me that Miss Duffy is concerned with my statements and indeed has been considerably mis-lead. Suffice it to say UPEI has the possibilities to offer a higher standard of education, I said it was low — perhaps lower than it should be, would be more correct.



Commission of Inquiry into the Non-Medical use of Drugs

Public Hearings Charlottetown

The Commission is investigating every aspect of the non-medical use of mood-changing drugs in Canada.

Drugs under study are sedatives, stimulants, tranquilizers, narcotics, hallucinogenic and other psychotropic drugs or substances.

The Commission is holding public hearings across the country to determine the extent Canadians are involved with these drugs and the effects.

The Commission is also taking evidence in private and anonymously. These arrangements should be made with Mr. James J. Moore, Executive Secretary of the Commission, during the public hearings.

Submissions — signed or anonymous — may be sent to Mr. Moore, c/o the Commission, Vanier Building, Nepean Street, Ottawa, Canada.

The agenda of these hearings in Charlottetown is as follows:

Saturday, February 21

9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Lecture Theatre, Confederation Centre

1 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the Junior Common Room, Montgomery Hall, University of Prince Edward Island

In due course the Commission will recommend to the Federal Government measures designed to deal with problems raised by the non-medical use of drugs.

The quality and impact of these recommendations will depend mainly on the Commission's exposure to every point of view on the subject. The Commission therefore invites and encourages written and/or verbal submissions — formally or spontaneously — from any individual or group.



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