

# Instructors in the USA: Many cooks...

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*Education of the instructors in the USA, or as they say here, 'Train the Trainer' or 'Professional Development for Teachers'. In his ninth report from Austin, Robert Egloff deals with this topic on several different levels. Who are the instructors? Where does their education have to start?*

The most important thing first:  
**"Over all, love is a better teacher than a sense of duty".<sup>1</sup>**

Dr. Wilfried Prewo, the CEO of the chamber of commerce and industry, Hanover, writes, "that, in starting an apprenticeship system [that's comparable with the German one], any country first has to generate the trainers. Training the trainers must precede training the trainees. Countries neglecting that and trying to short-cut the first step will never get a high-quality system going. Inadequately qualified trainers contaminate the system like a computer virus and will eventually lead to failure."<sup>2</sup> Now of course the question immediately arises, who is going to train these instructors in a system like the American one, in which there haven't been any apprenticeship sponsors for a long time. The unions, which present really the last bastions of real workforce preparation, put themselves in the offside with the businesses again and again with their socially aggressive slogans. And the educational establishment is concentrated on the schools completely. However, in an occupational education system there are always three partners involved: Students (Learners), businesses (sponsors) and schools (teachers). I want to try to define

the educational need of all three partners.

## 1. The general public

First of all, I feel there is a gigantic need of information and education for the general public. In the last decades the USA have set up the illusion, that only people with a university degree will be happy in life. And accordingly, all efforts go in direction of college and not professions. The fact that the economy of no country needs only 'academia', seems to leave the people unimpressed here. And likewise they ignore the fact, that only about a quartile of the youth reaches this goal, which means that actually all others fail.

" Those who are indiscriminately advising all teens to adopt the one-way-to-win outlook and matriculate in a four-year college program seem to be making - consciously or otherwise - four assumptions: 1) that most students graduate from high school prepared to do legitimate baccalaureate-level work. 2) that most of those who begin a baccalaureate program will graduate. 3) that most of those who graduate will find jobs that they could not have obtained without a degree, and 4) that the whole process is benign, meaning individuals do not

get hurt in the process even if they fail. However, data suggest that none of these assumptions is correct." writes professor Kenneth Gray in the chapter 'Losers in the Baccalaureate Game' of his article 'The Baccalaureate Game' which I have quoted once already, and then he systematically refutes all four of them.<sup>3</sup>

The corresponding education of the general public must happen in the very first place, before serious occupational education programs can be planned and realized. I have proposed to put Mr. Gray's article in our local newspaper every day for about half a year - as kind of indoctrination.

## 2. The school teachers

There is kind of a 'holy war' in the USA between teachers, who want to instruct in the more academically abstract way and those, who favour the more practically applied method. Many here believe, that with somewhat more applied learning the crisis in the American educational system could be solved. At the same time, national skill standards are laughed at both in the academic as in the professional world, much after the motto: 'Give all power back to the communities.'

Here in this country, where education equals schools most 'Train- the - Trainer' activities are focussed on the teachers. During the long summer vacations there is a big offer of opportunities of further education for

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<sup>1</sup> calendar of proverbs, proverb author: Albert Einstein, 1879-1955, German - American physicist, Nobel prize for physics 1921

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Wilfried Prewo in 'School-to-Work Transition and High Performance: The German Approach', speech delivered at 'Education that Work and Work that Educates, International Workshop, June 6-7, 1994, Austin, Texas', page 9

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Gray, The Baccalaureate Game, Is It Right For All Teens?, PHI DELTA KAPPAN, pp. 529 / 530.

teachers, to learn the more applied methods. A selection of the program here in Austin last summer included among other things:

- Applied communication and the integration process
- Applied biology and chemistry
- Principles of the Technology 1 and 2 (= applied physics)
- Applied geometry
- Applied mathematics
- Writing of technical reports in the integrated Curriculum

In these courses teachers are generally trained to integrate more real life examples in their instruction and to have students learn something outside the classroom and on their own from time to time. Partnerships with organizations are encouraged, however it is rarely considered, that the firms should also profit of these relationships. Often times they are simply treated as suppliers of equipment, instruments and case studies as well as mentors, who take care of the weaker students.

In my view, the real educational need in the educational establishment exists somewhere else, both for teachers and even more important for career counselors. They like the general public must understand, that the way into and in some cases through college is neither the one-way-to-win nor in most cases desirable for their students. Career counselors must develop from study to real career counselors, teachers from college to career preparators. For that they must understand a lot more of the world of work and less of college entry requirements. There is a large pent-up demand for the basic training of these persons, which obviously still happens completely in the tradition of the 'One- way - to - win' - mentality.

### **3. The occupational instructors**

And finally there would be the apprenticeship mentors in the organizations. An obviously very

scarce commodity here. I think, however, that it makes no sense to invest too much energy in them, as long as the other two groups are so far away from real occupational preparation. Nevertheless, there are some institutions now, which have discovered the field of apprenticeship mentor training. One of them is the phone company BellSouth, a strong advocate of School-to-Work in Atlanta, Georgia, that now offers an own internal supervisor seminar. And on a national level, Public/privates Ventures, a School-to-Work-Organisation, is actively testing a kind of mentor seminar. Austin is one the testing sites, and so at the beginning of 1997 we will find out with our partner firms, whether the course is of any value. The ten topics, that are treated, are:

Topic 1:  
**Working with Young Employees**

1. Strengths and Styles
2. Knowing your Employees
3. What's in the Job

Topic 2:  
**Coaching at the Workplace**

1. Giving Feedback
2. Coaching 101
3. Developing a Winning Team
4. Promoting Good Customer Service Skills

Topic 3:  
**Enriching the Experience of Work**

1. Mentoring at the Workplace
2. Setting Goals with Employees

### **3. Encouraging Leadership <sup>4</sup>**

We had planned already last year, to have some of the windows at our house repaired. We were told then by a window company that a repair would be rather costly and that we would have to paint whole walls new afterwards. We decided against it then. A worker of an other window company has mended the windows last week now: Cost: \$117.80. The worker is of Mexican descent and has fixed windows for thirty years. He calls his work a 'profession' and is proud about it. He is really good, a genuine exception! In his firm he is doubtlessly on one of the lowest hierarchy levels. He probably makes about 10 dollars per hour. In five to ten years he will retire. And he doesn't instruct any apprentices, never has had apprentices. The USA probably still has a couple of thousand of such workmen; almost none of which have apprentices. Their technical knowledge and abilities will be lost their industry and the country with their retirement. What a pity.

<sup>4</sup> Public /privates Ventures, Workplace mentor training, 1996