TRAINING IN LIBRARY SCIENCE (5)

(Continued from p 173)

LECTURE vs TUTORIAL

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[Lecture method of teaching library science is effective only for students with prior university discipline of the right kind. Tutorial method alone is effective for non-university men and for graduates of purely examining universities not providing for the intellectual discipline of thinking.]

1 Progression from Normative Principles

The search for the starting point in the teaching of library science led us in the preceding article of this series to the Five Laws of Library Science as a helpful set of normative principles. Normally progression from these principles should be easy in the class room. But a handicap has to be reckoned with. It is due to different causes in the different regions of the world.

2 Post-Graduates with University Discipline

In some regions, the course in library science is conducted by university. The students admitted are post-graduates with a prior discipline in scientific method and rigorous thinking in the undergraduate stage. In such a case, lecture method cum practical work proves effective.

3 Post-Graduates without University Discipline

In some other regions too, the course in library science is conducted by university; and the students are post-graduates. But these have not had adequate discipline in scientific method and rigorous thinking. This anamoly is largely evident in India to-day. This is due to historical causes. The present universities were largely founded as pure examining bodies, during the British period. The examination was a purely impersonal written one. Training of rote memory was all that was necessary. Teaching itself degenerated to dictation of extracts from books or digests. There was little attempt
to accustom students to rigorous thinking or to the use of scientific method. The back-log of this method of university education has not yet left; in fact, it continues to be dominant even to-day. This makes lecture method ineffective even in a post-graduate course.

31 IMPOVERISHMENT IN MEN OF ABILITY

A further cause militates against the efficacy of lecture method in post-graduate courses in library science. Positions in government service are protected positions; they carry a higher scale of pay; they carry power and prestige. Government service, therefore, lures away most of the men of ability; in fact it forms the sink of the best of the human resources of the country. Men of poorer ability alone are attracted and retained by the teaching profession; with the result, the back-log of the faults mentioned in section 3 gets perpetuated. The library profession attracts and retains only persons whose general intellectual ability and competence in the use of scientific method are too poor even for retention in the teaching profession. As a result, a school of library science suffers acutely from impoverishment in men of ability.

32 NON-GRADUATES WITHOUT UNIVERSITY DISCIPLINE

In some other regions, the majority of the students of library science are drawn from those who never entered the university. No doubt they join library schools only after the completion, or at the last stage, of their adolescence. But they had not been prepared to learn a science through reasoning from normative principles as the starting point. This belongs to a plane of abstraction, in which only the exceptional few can be at home with their unaided native ability. In these regions too, the library profession is not made attractive enough for men of such exceptional native ability.

4 Futility of Lecture Method

These facts should be reckoned in the choice of the method to be adopted in teaching library science. The lecture method is hardly favourable. To a large extent, it ignores the individual. Its speed and standard cannot be adjusted to individual needs. Its pitch of abstraction is too high for the class of students described in sections 3 to 32. A few occasional lectures to rouse curiosity will be appropriate. They may also be of use in stepping up students to a
higher level of intellectual alertness. But beyond that, lectures prove futile.

5 Efficacy of Tutorial Method

The method of discussion is more suitable than that of lectures. Discussion in small groups is even more efficacious. This is tutorial method. Tutorial guidance can not be profitably taken by students for more than two or three hours in a day. During the rest of the formal hours of the school, the students should be turned to practical and/or observation work in a well-organised library doing its work along rational lines. This is a much-needed concrete corrective to the inevitable abstraction in tutorial discussion.

51 Field of Application

Tutorial method demands considerable resourcefulness on the part of the teacher. It requires considerable ability and thoroughness of grasp on his part. On the part of the student also, it requires single-minded devotion and hard and continuous work. All this means great cost. This cost should not be incurred light-heartedly or in a mood of blind enthusiasm. It should be incurred only in the strict measure of demand. All the members in the library profession will not have occasion to exercise the ability acquired at this high cost. Here we must turn our thought to the levels of the profession enumerated in section 8 of the first article of this series published in volume 3 of the Annals part of the Abgila (1953). That section mentioned three levels:—leaders of the profession, technicians, and semi-professionals. Leaders and technicians alone need be given this costly course of training; the much cheaper and shorter course of training mentioned in that section will be sufficient for semi-professionals. According to section 831 of my Library legislation (1953), the proportion of leaders, technicians and semi-professionals in a national library system will be roughly as 3:12:185. Thus the costly tutorial method will have to be employed only in the training of 7½% of the trained personnel needed for the library system of a country.

5 Stages in Tutorial Work

Tutorial method of teaching library science has been practised by me for nearly 25 years; it was carried over from the teaching of
mathematics and physics during the preceding 7 years. Three distinct stages can be recognised in tutorial work:

1. Preliminary work with the whole class;
2. Intermediate team work and individual work by the students; and
3. Final work with small groups.

6 Work with the Whole Class

In the first stage, the teacher elicits from the whole class an analysis of the theme of pursuit. The headings arrived at are put on the black-board. A vigorous discussion follows with the teacher as the chairman. The usual rules of debate are followed. The teacher trains the students in separating the steps in argument into semantic and logical steps. The terms used should be from the accepted terminology. The necessary books are used. Whenever called upon, a student making a proposition should cite the authority.

61 Multi-Purpose

Work at the first stage is multi-purpose:

1. to arrive at sound conclusions on the theme discussed;
2. to train the students in clear and alert thinking;
3. to bring the use of technical terminology to the level of reflex action.
4. to familiarise the students with the detailed contents of the basic books in library science; and
5. to train the students in thinking in concert.

7 Team Work and Individual Work

One of the subjects arising at the first stage is set as the subject for the week’s essay. The volumes of the periodicals on library science are divided more or less equally among the students; these are cyclically rotated among them. Each student makes a search in the volumes falling to his share for the articles bearing on the subject of the week’s essay. The leader for the week consolidates the findings of the class and puts up the bibliography on the notice board within two days. Each student peruses or studies the articles and the relevant pages in books. In the week-end, he writes out his essay. He writes it at one sitting. He records the time of
beginning and finishing the essay. Half an hour is the normal time to be taken. A bibliography of the documents actually consulted is added at the end of the essay by each student.

71 Multi-Purpose

Work at the intermediate stage is multi-purpose:—
1 to train the students in team work, rather than competitive work alone;
2 to make each student familiar with periodical literature by purposeful use;
3 to train each student in thinking systematically;
4 to train each student in organising his thought for effective communication; and
5 to train each student to express himself with economy and precision.

8 Work with Small Groups

Each week a group of three students meets its tutor with the essays of the week-end. These are read out. The tutor and the students criticise each essay and make suggestion for improvement.

81 Multi-Purpose

Work at the final stage is multi-purpose:—
1 to train each student in evaluation work;
2 to develop in each student sensitiveness to faults in expression and fallacies in thinking;
3 to train each in correcting faults in expression;
4 to train each in correcting fallacies in thinking; and
5 to develop in each capacity to put ideas across.

9 Over-All Aim

The main aim of the tutorial method of teaching is to make each student become well-informed about the current library practices and the trends in the development of Library Science. But the facts learned and the propositions absorbed will soon get outmoded. Each student will have to make his own decision and improvise his own practices in actual life. The secondary purposes achieved at the different stages of tutorial work will help him in this essential matter.