

*Op simposium van KUH
oor die aansluiting tussen
skool en univ., Pretoria, 19/9/78*

Geagte Mnr. die Voorsitter, Dames en Here,

191.T.7(98)

Laat my toe om eers my hoedanigheid hier te identifiseer. Ek doen dit met 'n historiese verwysing. Toe Jan van Riebeeck, ná sy kommandeurskap aan die Kaap, as ekstra-ordinarislid sy plek in die Raad van Indië in Batavia inneem en ook die woord wou voer, het die Voorsitter hom saaklik toegevoeg: "De extra-ordinarisleden zitten hier om toe te luisteren!" - Dit is ook my hoedanigheid: Ek sit hier om toe te luister - en ek vind dit 'n interessante ondervinding. Maar nietemin maak ek graag gebruik van u vriendelike uitnodiging.

Ek wil nie op die meriete ingaan van alles wat vanoggend hier gesê is nie; dit sal van my kant miskien ongevraag wees, hoeseer ek ook met aandag geluister het. Maar u sal my vergun - wat ons as universiteitsmense mekaar altyd gun: die reg van eie oordeel.

Ek wil graag by enkele punte kortliks stilstaan.

Dit het my opgeval hoe dikwels hier gepraat is oor metodes van tersiêre onderwys - meer bepaald universitêre onderwys - en veral oor die taak van jong lektore wat met hulle akademiese loopbaan begin. Daar is vanselfsprekend verskillende metodes van onderwys, en 'n mens kan ten aansien daarvan baie voordeel trek uit besprekings soos hierdie. Een baie bekende metode is om gewoon lesings vir studente te dikteer en hulle dan notas te laat afneem.

Ek herinner my egter die uitspraak van 'n bekende ou professor aan die Universiteit van Berlyn, toe ek jare gelede daar student was en dit destyds die gebruik was van baie professore om bloot te dikteer. Die gevaar met notas is - só het hy verklaar - dat dit, by sowel student as professor, deur die pen gaan, maar nie deur die kop nie! - Die waarskuwing het in my gedagtes bly steek; en ek dink dit is 'n waarskuwing wat ons vandag gerus maar almal ter harte kan neem.

Verskeie gesigspunte wat hier in verband met die metodiek van universitêre onderwys na vore gebring is, het my baie getref. Sprekers het verwys na bepaalde metodes of sisteme, en dit is verstaanbaar, maar een spreker, prof. Van der Stoep, het van die verhoog af die wyse woord laat hoor dat dit dikwels nie soseer om 'n metode of sisteem gaan nie, maar om die man wat die doseerwerk doen. 'n Swak metode kan, al is dit ook swak, in die hande van 'n goeie dosent goeie resultate lewer; 'n goeie metode kan, al is dit ook goed, in die hande van 'n swak dosent swak resultate lewer. Per slot van rekening gaan dit dikwels nie om 'n stelsel as sodanig nie, maar in die eerste plaas om die persoon, die mens, wat die stelsel toepas.

Daarmee wil ek natuurlik nog nie sê dat stelsels of metodes nuttelos is nie - al het Williamson ook oor die Britse koloniale uitbreiding geskryf: "We never had a system but we always muddled through". Ons kan immers nie 'n premie op ongekwalfiseerde pragmatisme plaas nie; feit is dat dit die goeie dosent is, die bekwame, hoogstaande mens, wat die deurslag gee.

Mnr. die Voorsitter, u was so vriendelik om my ondanks 'n tekort aan tyd 'n paar minute toe te staan; en nou wil ek graag heel informeel nog by enkele ander punte kom.

In die jongste tyd, sê maar vanaf die begin van die ondersoek van die Van Wyk de Vries-kommissie, is ons besig met 'n intensiewe gedagtewisseling i.s. universiteite en universiteitsprobleme. Ek meen stellig dat ons vandag in ons land in die midde staan van 'n tyd wat vir ons universiteite van die allergrootste belang is en dat ons huidige gedagtewisseling en bespreking veel goeds vir die toekoms beloof. Miskien is ons nou nog te naby daaraan; en as 'n mens so naby aan iets staan, is jy gewoonlik nie in staat om objektief die diepte en betekenis na behore te peil nie. Die feit dat ons hier byeen is en ernstig oor die onderhawige probleme besin, getuig daarvan dat ons besig is om onself van die vraagstukke van ons universiteite rekenskap te gee.

En dit is nie net ons wat hiermee besig is nie; universiteite en regerings van die Weste is hiermee besig, en met name ook in die Verenigde Koninkryk eis universiteitsprobleme vandag baie aandag op.

Mr. Chairman, reference has been made by a number of speakers to the failure rate at universities. This is, of course, today an urgent question for all of us. We hear on all sides that the failure rate at universities is far too high. It has been pointed out - and quite correctly too - that people talk about the failure rate but very rarely about the drop out rate. These are two different things, but most people - also people in high places - fail to distinguish between them and simply regard figures of the drop out rate as representing the failure rate.

People apply their arithmetic:

X failures (drop outs) at universities, at RY per failure (drop out) = RXY , i.e. the dead loss for parents and state per year; and the amount of RXY is then calculated at R31 000 000.

I cannot agree with such simplistic reasoning. Some time ago I discussed this matter at a symposium arranged by the University of Pretoria for its new academic staff, and pointed out the main factors qualifying the failure rate and the annual financial implication. Without entering into details here, I can say that a balanced view and proper perspective lead to a very different result, bringing the real failure rate down considerably. We also have to bear in mind that we are dealing with universities, and that universities, jealous of their standard^s, will always have a fair percentage of failures.

However, while saying this, I must stress that I do regard it as fit and proper that university men and women should constantly keep an eye on their failure rate in order to make sure that it does not rise unduly, and to consider measures to improve the situation whenever and wherever necessary. It is an important

duty of the university teacher because it helps him to maintain a high standard in his teaching.

There is another point which to my mind merits serious consideration and which has not been touched on this morning. I think the time has arrived for university teachers and all those in authority in this country, to sit down and devote serious attention to the question whether all the students annually admitted to our universities are, in fact, suitable university material. Let me candidly say that I am not so sure about that.

It has been my good fortune to discuss this problem with quite a few university principals; it was gratifying to take note of the open, frank way in which they expressed their views and especially their candid doubts and their willingness to cooperate in order to strive genuinely for university excellence. In so far as we have an unnecessary number of failures, I think this is an area where a good deal can be done to eliminate waste of parent and state money.

After all, universities are institutions where the emphasis is on academic, theoretic study and investigation; and only students mentally and intellectually sufficiently equipped, will be able to cope successfully.

I wish to thank you most sincerely, Sir - and through you the C.U.P. - for the opportunity you have given me to attend this symposium and to say these few words. I am sure that Dr. Van Wyk, Secretary of National Education, and Professor Steyn, Director of University Affairs, will whole-heartedly agree with me when I say that we are delighted to be here and to listen to the views of university representatives regarding very real problems with which they find themselves confronted.

I also wish to take this opportunity of thanking the C.U.P. for the ready assistance which we at the U.A.C. have in a variety of difficult matters received from them. We have established

a fine and happy relationship, which to me represents one of the ~~next~~ ^{best} developments of recent years in our university life. Of course, we have to be objective on both sides, and it is to be expected that we shall sometimes end up with a difference of opinion; but that is the usual characteristic of university people and we accept it in good faith, realising as we all do that we have one common goal, viz. to serve our universities to the best of our ability.

Unfortunately Professor Steyn and I, due to other commitments, will not be able to attend this afternoon, but I understand that Dr. Van Wyk will be back.

I trust that the significance of this symposium will not be limited to the discussions as such, but that findings will be reached which will prove valuable to all of us. As far as the U.A.C. is concerned, we would like to be kept properly posted; and that is why, Mr. Chairman, we sincerely hope to receive all recommendations and publications emanating from this symposium.

Ten slotte, mnr. die Voorsitter, ons wat vandag hier sit, of ons van die Departement van Nasionale Opvoeding kom, of van universiteite - sy dit blank of nie-blank - ons het een groot gemeenskaplike taak: ons wil kennis en wetenskap laat gedy, egter nie net ter wille van kennis en wetenskap as sodanig nie, maar ter wille van diens van blywende waarde wat ons wil lewer aan ons hele land en al sy mense. Ek is my oorheersend bewus van hierdie gemeenskaplike taak; en ek hou my terdeë daarvan oortuig dat dit geleenthede soos hierdie is wat ons sal help om daardie gemeenskaplike taak met welslae te volvoer.

Ek sluit af met 'n woord van hartlike waardering, namens myself en my vriende van die Departement. Ons wens u alles van die beste toe op u verdere verrigtinge.

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