

(Allan, R. S. et al., 1945)

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NEW ZEALAND



32222000006987

If this is true, a complete revision of the examination system is required, with the object of giving greater freedom to the specialist approach of the teachers in different centres. Moreover, the role played by examinations in the University is at present greatly overvalued. We believe that written examinations of the type at present in use are an insufficient and inconclusive test of the attainment of a University education'.¹⁾ The educational task of the University must be taken much more seriously than its role in grading students.

The attitude adopted by us may appear to some a radical one, or even, perhaps, Utopian. Yet what we demand is

notl
in t
quo
of t
edu
shoi
of
H.
toul
filli
v
grea
app

Please return this item to:

Document Supply Services
National Library of New Zealand
PO Box 1467
Wellington 6140

Supplied at no charge from the collections of the
National Library of New Zealand



DATE DUE

29 APR 2011

03 OCT 2017

Ch
Jul

PAM
378.007
2093
UNI
1945

Research and the university

ITS
THE NATIONAL LIBRARY
OF NEW ZEALAND
D THE
TY

A statement by a group of teachers in the
University of New Zealand

WE AGREE with Flexner's statement that research and teaching in the University should be 'conceived as hovering on the borders of the unknown, conducted, even in the realm of the already ascertained, in the spirit of doubt and enquiry'.¹⁾ We regard research and teaching not as separate functions of a University teacher, but as complementary parts of a single activity.

We do not accept the point of view that teaching is the main function of the University, but even from this point of view it should be clearly seen that, as the highest school in the community, the University has inescapable duties to the most talented members of each generation, that is, to those capable of making contributions to the development of knowledge. We believe that the University fails in this obligation if the teaching it provides is not imbued with the spirit of enquiry as it is embodied in the tradition of research. Teaching which is not linked with research is on a lower plane, and does not stimulate the best intellects of successive generations of students.

The two activities of the University, teaching and research, should be co-ordinated and combined; and this fusion can, and should, be made a very natural one. Most research workers have a strong desire to teach since, to a considerable extent, teaching is necessary for their research work. Ideas are developed and clarified by imparting them orally to others, and by subsequent discussion in tutorials or seminars. Further, the real research worker feels the urge to hand on the torch of which he is the bearer, thereby perpetuating the tradition of the search for knowledge. On the other hand, teaching on a high level is impossible without research. One reason, in Hill's words, is that 'Where there is no zeal for research there is no vitality in teaching',²⁾ but a more fundamental reason is that, without research, teaching can never reach right to the frontiers of knowledge.

1) A. Flexner: *Universities American English German*. 2nd ed. 1931, p. 242.

2) *Third Congress of the Universities of the Empire*, 1926, p. 81.

Our postulate that teaching and research should be combined does not imply that in individual cases members of the University should not specialize in one of the two activities. We believe, however, that in a University such specialization should never be complete.

If the ideal sketched above is to be realised in New Zealand it is essential that the research function of the University teacher should be fully recognised. The commonly held view that the University is primarily a teaching institution should be abandoned, and the University should be looked upon as an institution in which the spirit of free inquiry is preserved and cultivated.

There are certain basic requirements which must be fulfilled if the University is to play its proper role as a research institution. These are: (1) the University must be supplied with adequate finance; (2) the academic staff must be large enough to ensure individual members sufficient freedom from teaching to undertake serious research; it must be realised that research often demands continuity of effort, and that it may temporarily absorb the whole energy of the worker; (3) the provision of the necessary space, together with the essential apparatus, and of technical and clerical assistance; (4) the provision of adequate library facilities, and, in particular, of periodical literature, on a greatly increased scale; (5) a break with isolationist tendencies, that is, the recognition of the need for contact with colleagues, within and outside New Zealand, by attendance at conferences, congresses, etc.; by visits to other research centres, and by regular sabbatical leave; (6) the provision of the means of publication of research by the institution of a University Press, or by monetary assistance; and (7) the recognition by controlling bodies that research activity should receive due reward in such matters as status and promotion.

The principles outlined above provide the material framework within which a University devoted equally to teaching and research could grow. Beyond providing this framework, no organisation of research within the University should be attempted. University research should be free. It should be directed merely by the initiative of the individual worker, and by his enthusiasm for his chosen problem.

These are the basic requirements, but they are inadequate in themselves. In addition, the right spirit must be present. What we need is the establishment and encouragement of a research tradition.

It is only in very rare instances that one sees the development of a new centre of research which cannot be traced back to the direct personal influence of a man who was brought up in one of the great schools of research. In a comparatively new country where such research traditions

are rare, there is only one way of establishing them: they must be imported. This may be done either by sending promising research workers abroad or by importing research scientists from overseas. An excellent example of the successful importation of a research tradition into New Zealand is the establishment of the Otago School of Geologists by Professor W. N. Benson.

It is necessary to realise that as a rule these methods will be successful only if the essential material conditions for research are already provided, and if the research worker can count on understanding and recognition of his mission. New Zealand has lost many of its most brilliant men because it has failed to provide both the material and spiritual conditions for their work. For example, Rutherford might have returned to New Zealand, instead of going to Montreal in 1898, but he knew very well that there was no hope of continuing and developing his research here. New Zealand has lost opportunities, in recent years, of attracting and keeping established and distinguished workers from Europe; opportunities from which many other countries are at present benefiting greatly. The widespread defeatist view (which at present dominates appointment policy) that New Zealand cannot afford to keep a good man, must be given up. We hold that New Zealand cannot afford to lose a good man.

In this connection we may quote the following statement by Polanyi: 'Modern science is a local tradition and is not easily transmitted from one place to another. Countries such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, have built great modern cities with spacious universities, but they have rarely succeeded in founding important schools of research. The total current scientific production of these countries before the war was still less than the single contributions of either Denmark, Sweden or Holland. Those who have visited the parts of the world where scientific life is just beginning know of the backbreaking struggle that the lack of scientific tradition imposes on the pioneers . . . However rich the fund of local genius may be, such environment will fail to bring it to fruition'.³⁾

In order to remedy the situation as it exists in New Zealand a complete change of attitude is required. It must be recognised that a specialist might achieve much greater educational result by teaching his speciality, than by spreading his teaching over what is traditionally considered the balanced content of his subject. The view that it is the task of the University to hand to the students a definite body of examinable knowledge must be discarded.

3) *Manchester Memoirs*, Vol. lxxxv (1941-48), No. 2.

