Some faculty find their working situations and their careers to be energizing and productive. Others are frustrated, unproductive, and will "burn out" quickly, leaving behind a trail of effort without success and ill feelings toward their institutions and the professoriate. What are the differences between these two types and can we capitalize on the skills and working styles of the "quick starters" to help those less fortunate?

Quick Starters: New Faculty Who Succeed

Robert Boice

Most of what we know about how professors teach comes from studies of already experienced teachers. As a result, we understand little about how teaching is learned or about why some of us master it more readily than do others.

This chapter demonstrates a simple strategy for identifying new faculty who make quick starts and it suggests that we can profit in comparing them to other new hires. The result is a new way of looking at instructional improvement, based on communication of the basics of teaching that work so impressively for "quick starters."

Normative Behaviors of New Faculty as Teachers

In a decade of studying new faculty as teachers, I have made a point of interviewing a whole range of colleagues, even those who would ordinarily avoid faculty development programs. The advantage in this patient style, beyond the eventual rapport it builds, is its potential for uncovering aspects of teaching that faculty ordinarily do not verbalize. For example, when new faculty were interviewed and observed over several successive semesters (see Boice, 1991, for details), they revealed some striking commonalities about how most professors start as teachers. As the following list shows, many of the initial habits of new faculty seem less than ideal:

1. Most new faculty, even those who had taught at other campuses, tended to teach in a facts-and-principles style of lecturing (Fink, 1984). As a rule, new faculty equated good teaching with good content. Almost without exception in my sample, new faculty volunteered plans to teach in

more interactive styles, but not until they felt comfortable as teachers. Curiously, new faculty with considerable prior teaching experience admitted that they had rarely strayed from familiar patterns of lecturing.

2. Most new faculty taught defensively, with the specific aim of avoiding complaints made by students to senior colleagues, especially chairpeople. New faculty at all three study campuses showed an awareness that such complaints, once registered in retention/tenure/promotion reports, could persist and become reasons for termination. Almost invariably, new faculty tried to defend themselves against this potential danger by focusing on content (what they called "getting their facts straight"), the most indefensible criticism imaginable to them was not knowing their lecture material. Incidentally, new faculty almost never worried about the kinds of factors that faculty developers typically assume are critical to excellence in teaching, such as displaying enthusiasm for teaching and assessing student learning.

3. The majority of these few hundred new faculty under study received student evaluations that fell well below their expectations. As a rule, they blamed these mediocre-to-poor ratings on external factors such as the quality of students, teaching loads, invalid rating systems, and class times and sizes.

4. Few new faculty planned improvements as teachers beyond making their lecture notes better organized and error-free.

5. New faculty's most important goal as teachers, a priority revealed only after several semesters of contacts, was to get to the point where teaching no longer took as much time to prepare or as much emotion to conduct. That is, they looked forward to lecture preparation that would not dominate work weeks and to classes where they would feel comfortable. New faculty in their first three years at large campuses expended surprising amounts of time in lecture preparation: Norms for new faculty with two-course-per-semester assignments were thirteen to twenty-two hours per week; with three-course loads, eighteen to twenty-seven hours. One result of this pattern was busyness and stressfulness (Boice, 1989). Another result was a growing aversion to teaching as an activity that took too much time and paid too few rewards.

6. By their own admission, new faculty typically went to class overprepared; that is, they prepared so much to say that they had to rush to say it all. In so doing, they inadvertently discouraged students from active participation in classes.

7. Most new faculty established comfort, efficiency, and student acceptance slowly, if at all, during my two to four years of regular contact with them. Even by the fourth year the majority of inexperienced new faculty reported feeling tense, worrying about not being in control of classes and doubting that students liked them.

Overall, this is a disheartening pattern, one that probably holds true on a variety of campuses. Its generality is easily enough tested. But even where practitioners are not inclined to carry out systematic research, they can profit in interviewing enough new faculty to identify some of the quick starters on campus. These exemplary newcomers provide important relief from the discouraging beginnings of most professors. Moreover, quick starters may suggest simple strategies for enhancing the performance of other teachers.

Characteristics of Quick Starters

So far, my colleagues and I have identified inexperienced new faculty as quick starters, usually during their second and third semesters on campus, when they scored in the top quartile on these dimensions: (1) classroom observers' ratings of new faculty's teaching in terms of classroom comfort, rapport with students, and student involvement, (2) students' ratings of teaching in formal, end-of-semester evaluations and in early, informal evaluations (Boice, 1990a), and (3) new faculty's self-ratings of their enjoyment and comfort as teachers. At the three campuses where quick starters are under study, the incidence of new faculty who meet these criteria is 5 to 9 percent. Incidentally, the rate at which experienced new hires (that is, those with considerable prior teaching) meet these criteria is somewhat lower.

Thus far, eight concomitants of quick starts have proven reliable. Overall, the twenty-two quick starters observed for at least a year (usually during their second and third semesters on campus) showed the following, relatively unique tendencies:

1. They lectured in a facts-and-principles style but in a comfortable fashion that allowed time for student involvement. This more relaxed pacing included verbal and nonverbal cues that encouraged students to participate.
2. They verbalized (to me) uncritical, accepting, and optimistic attitudes about the undergraduate students on their campuses
3. They displayed low levels of complaining and cynicism about their campuses and their colleagues in terms of supportiveness and competence.
4. They showed a marked disposition to seek advice about teaching, from colleagues, via reading and observing, and from faculty development programs. Specifically, they spent an average of four hours per week in social contacts with colleagues that included discussions about teaching.
5. They evidenced quick transitions away from spending the bulk of work weeks on teaching preparation, usually by the end of the first semester on campus. Specifically, they settled into patterns of work allocation that typically included no more than one and one half hours of preparation per classroom hour by the third semester
6. They produced a documented balance of time expenditures among aca-

demic activities so that at least three hours per week (of at least half the weeks during semesters) were spent on scholarly writing by the second semester. Accordingly, quick starters were nearly unique in producing scholarly outputs at levels consistent with tenure standards on their campuses (mean = 1.5 published manuscripts per year). (Recall that, by definition, quick starters also excel as teachers during their first year on campus.)
7. They integrated their research and scholarly interests into undergraduate classes, resulting in enthusiasm for teaching and recruitment of students as research assistants.
8. They displayed high energy, broad interests (for example, singing in choirs), concern with self-presentation, and a sense of humor (see Cole, 1986, for a similar finding).

What can we learn from the pattern just outlined? The obvious answers relate to the greater skill of quick starters in establishing moderation in lecture preparation, in meeting other academic needs including collegiality and scholarly productivity, and in finding comfort with their classes, their students, their colleagues, and their campuses. All in all, quick starters seemed to be more positive, more sociable, and more efficient individuals. A problem in stating the differences from other new faculty in this way is that it can discourage emulation; quick starters may seem like gifted people who are necessarily exceptions.

My own thinking about what makes quick starters different keeps drifting back to my interests in understanding success at writing. There are also quick starters among professorial writers and they display illuminating similarities to quick starters as teachers. Briefly, quick starters as writers, unlike their relatively silent colleagues, postpone attention to the *process* and *product* of writing, concentrating first on regular *practice* and *comfort* as writers.

This postponement of addressing product (final outcomes in terms of writing quality) and process (finding ways to write for an audience, with flow and voice) actually increases the likelihood that writers will eventually deal with process and product (Tremmel, 1989). That is, quick starters begin by establishing the mind set and habits of already productive writers, by working at writing regularly, regardless of readiness (Boice, 1990b). Then, once underway, they seek out related solutions to process and product in a timely and enthusiastic fashion.

Quick starters as teachers, similarly, put off the usual concerns of new faculty about product (for example, the completeness of their lecture notes) and process (for example, attempts to abandon lecturing for discussion-based classes). Instead, they begin by attending to issues of practice in comfortable and efficient fashion. Specifically, they talk about wanting to begin with comfort in the classroom, with acceptance and feedback from students, and with enough time left over to take care of other essential needs such as establishing collegial networks and scholarly productivity. Then, much like quick starters as writers, they build a practical and timely interest in the process and product of teaching once productive practice is underway.

The point in drawing this parallel between quick starters as writers and quick starters as teachers is that, in both cases, the habits, intellectual skills, and attitudes that distinguish these exemplary new hires are basic and teachable. Sternberg and his colleagues call this sort of practical intelligence *tacit knowledge* and conclude that it is rarely taught but nonetheless very teachable (Sternberg, Okagaki, and Jackson, 1990). In fact, much evidence already exists to show that academic writers can profit from emulating the simple basics of quick starters (see, for example, Boice, 1989). In this chapter, the emphasis is on emulating the practices of quick starters as teachers.

Testing the First-Factor Rule with Slower Starters

There is, of course, nothing new about suggesting that new faculty should include the most basic skills in their initial efforts at mastering teaching; the most successful guide for teachers emphasizes basics such as monitoring student note taking as an index of their comprehension (McKeachie, 1986). What may be novel, however, is the notion that new teachers fare best when they address certain basics first.

As a preliminary test of this idea, I have begun studies where slower starters are coached to imitate quick starters. Results of ongoing studies with fifteen new faculty at two campuses indicate that at least some of the practices of quick starters are promising as interventions for other new faculty. In fact, we opted to initiate our program with what quick starters themselves suggested would assist most: helping colleagues find balance in time expenditures. (This is not, I suspect, where I would have embarked on my own, at least in regard to facilitation of teaching.)

Thus, we recruited new faculty who had established clearly distressing beginnings as teachers to participate in a "balance program." These participants represented a wide cross section of faculty who agreed to remain involved for at least an academic year and to (1) keep daily, verifiable records of how they spent their work time (Boice, 1987), (2) decrease classroom preparation to a maximum of two hours per classroom hour, (3) increase social networking aimed at supporting teaching and scholarship, (4) increase time spent on scholarly writing to thirty to sixty minutes per workday, regardless of readiness to write, and (5) integrate their own research and scholarly interests into lectures.

While participants invariably expected these assignments to be difficult and time-consuming, the eventual result was quite different. This un-

complicated paradigm of helping new hires with the "first factor" in teaching—starting with the basics of comfortable and efficient practice before moving to process and product—brought uniform comments about increases in the ease of working and in free time for nonwork.

Tentative Results

The key ingredient in the quick starters program is time, or, more specifically, management of one's time to provide balance among three major areas: preparation for teaching, collegial interactions, and writing. For new faculty, this time management means avoiding overpreparation, seeking dialogue about teaching and scholarship, and committing time to writing.

Preparation Time. The task of cutting back on preparation time was evidently the most difficult of all the changes requested from participants. As a rule, it elicited anxiety about going to class and feeling out of control. The following comment typifies those made by new faculty whom I accompanied to their classroom doors: "This feels risky. What if I draw a blank or what if I can't think of exactly what to say? I felt a whole lot better when I took the time to write out *everything* in advance. Now I'm not sure exactly how I'll say everything. I don't want to look foolish."

Eight participants mastered this step on the basis of what they termed a "leap of faith." They simply went in without having points completely written out in advance; their main goal was to be spontaneous but careful in presenting materials clearly. Five others did not make the transition until they observed one or two quick starters who demonstrated the technique of improvising around a clear structure (for example, an outline on the board or a handout) and of relying on students for some of the explanations and solutions in their own classes. The other two participants proved especially resistant to the change but took the risk of going to class "imperfectly prepared" after I coached them through role plays with small groups of supportive colleagues acting as students.

Two more components complete this tentative picture. First, once in the mode of going to class with moderate preparation, the new faculty invariably reported feeling more at ease. Their students enjoyed the greater spontaneity of presentation and of participation. And the new faculty noted that they left class less exhausted and more satisfied than before. Second, the new faculty's concerns about becoming "lazy preparers" once they learned to teach more spontaneously proved unfounded. Instead, they continued to prepare enough to bring clear structure, definite learning goals (something new for them), and plans for flexibility to class.

So far, proof of the effectiveness of this intervention has been essentially limited to improvements in the early, informal student evaluations of participants (Boice, 1990a), in end-of-semester student ratings, and in the new faculty's self-ratings. In terms of these indices, at least, students and faculty see their classes as more comfortable, interactive, and instructive.

Socialization Time. The requested increase in time allotted for the establishment of support networks was initially resisted, usually for reasons of busyness. Socialization seemed to be an activity that could wait until the new faculty had more time. Resistance also came in the form of concerns about sources of contacts; the participants were ready to suppose that they knew too few potential contacts and that colleagues worth soliciting would feel imposed upon. Practice proved otherwise.

Here again, the strategies of inducing leaps of faith, of modeling, and of role playing successfully induced involvement. Once involved, participants reported that this socialization time was the most enjoyable aspect of their work weeks; documented benefits included advice about practice and opportunities for collaboration in writing and in teaching.

Writing Time. Here too, the new faculty reported feeling unprepared to begin, despite agreeing that writing was critical to their survival and development. The essential problem was to move them past preconceptions about the need to find large blocks of undisrupted time for writing. But once they agreed to try approximations to manuscript writing in brief daily sessions (Boice, 1990b), the value of beginning before feeling ready and of getting something done amidst busy workdays was apparent.

Much like their colleagues designated as quick starters, these new faculty evidenced an average of about three hours of writing per week (compared to an average of twenty-four minutes per week for other new faculty). Equally important, in the view of participants, the increase in the amount of writing done was a boon to their general sense of well-being and coincided with an end to resentment of teaching as an interfering activity.

Implications and Applications

At first glance, the first-factor rule has promise for facilitating teaching. The first factor appears to be an important component in the success of quick starters, and it evidently works when transferred to the habit patterns of slower starters. We may find it easier to consider adoption of this seemingly unusual idea upon seeing its roots in already familiar notions of instructional development.

Kinship Patterns. A striking quality of quick starters and of compensated slow starters is the interest they show in learning more about teaching (Cole, 1986). In many ways, they reflect what Cross and Angelo (1988) call *classroom research*. That is, quick starters, whether spontaneous or converted, actively collect data from their own and their students' experiences as part of making teaching easier. And then they take another step. Quick starters show a special interest in learning what their most successful col-

demic activities so that at least three hours per week (of at least half the weeks during semesters) were spent on scholarly writing by the second semester. Accordingly, quick starters were nearly unique in producing scholarly outputs at levels consistent with tenure standards on their campuses (mean = 1.5 published manuscripts per year). (Recall that, by definition, quick starters also excel as teachers during their first year on campus.)

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leagues do. This typical comment from a quick starter makes the point: "The more I get into this, the more I realize how much I have to learn. I'm fascinated to imagine all the clever ways that master teachers have devised to make teaching easier. They may not be used to verbalizing their savvy, but I'll bet that they can if stimulated by somebody who shares their fundamental excitement for teaching."

A second instance where first-factor thinking finds roots in common practice is in its emphasis on starting with the simplest, most basic elements of teaching. Quick starters make the explicit assumption that the most important keys to finding success as teachers are comfort and enjoyment. They even recognize that many of their colleagues, by virtue of their neglect of these basics, may be doomed to miserable beginnings and chronic disappointments with teaching. The pioneer in charting the experience of new faculty as teachers, Fink (in press, p. 7), observed a similarly unpromising start for those who "developed a teaching style in a time-shortened condition that had no time for creative reflection on how to teach effectively, no time to seek help in this regard, and no prospects for improvement of their time situation."

There is a literature on the importance of starting with basics. Appropriately, most of these beginnings occur within the boundaries of teaching assistant (TA) training. Consider this sampling: One correlate of improved student evaluations is an increase in the teacher's awareness of the affective components of classroom behavior (Abbott, Wulff, and Szego, 1989). Once TAs are comfortable enough to perceive and act on subtle student feedback, they fare better as teachers. Similarly, TAs, no matter what their styles as beginners, prefer personal guidance (mentoring) over instruction on the skills of teaching (Boehrer and Sarkisian, 1985). Stated another way, they want comfort before skills. The best TAs, in the view of their students, are those comfortable enough with students to avoid seeming too busy to help (Wulff, Nyquist, and Abbott, 1989). Finally, TAs who learn to interact in ready, friendly ways with students can overcome other obstacles to comfort and acceptance, including a lack of proficiency in speaking English (Bailey, 1983).

If, then, the first-factor rule generates a modicum of familiarity with the literature on instructional development and pedagogy, the next step is to outline its implications in more detail. A list of eight such implications is presented below.

1. Instructional development properly begins with concerns about comfortable and efficient practice, in contrast to traditional, premature emphases on process and product.
2. Most teachers, no matter how experienced, must resolve first-factor issues before they can make lasting progress in arenas of process (for example, supplanting lecturing with something else) or product (for example, student evaluations).

3. New faculty who begin amid their own and others' concerns for product (that is, avoidance of complaints and of bad ratings) may teach in a defensive, noninnovative fashion, perhaps permanently.
4. Effective, lasting instructional development cannot occur in isolation from collegial development and scholarly development.
5. As faculty confront issues of process and product, they will need to reestablish first-factor practices of comfortable and efficient practice. Without this link, process and product will have no basis for self-efficacious risk taking (Lucas, 1990) or for learning to get past disappointments with students (Tobias, 1990).
6. The first factor is rarely taught. Like many other kinds of practical intelligence, it is not explicitly tutored but is essential to success (Sternberg, Okagaki, and Jackson, 1990).
7. First-factor habits are apparently as amenable to learning as are the related factors tested by Sternberg, Okagaki, and Jackson (1990). In their view, the three essential components that teachers must master are self-management, task management (for example, balancing time), and social management.
8. Because first-factor practice encourages spontaneity, simultaneous activity in scholarly domains, and social inputs, one result should be more innovative and creative teaching.

Reflections About Application. In a way, the kind of information presented here can fall between the cracks in faculty development. This presentation of ideas about the first-factor rule may be too data-centered for practitioners who do not see themselves as prone to collect the repeated observations needed to draw the kinds of conclusions reached here.

But, like our new colleagues, we may fare better if we seek more balance among our activities and attitudes. Why can't we take time for some illuminating but imperfect data collection? Why shouldn't we assume that we have much to learn from the best teachers on campus, including those quick out of the gate? And, why must we exclude ourselves from the discovery process that goes into more formal research?

In conclusion, I suggest the following as starting points in the task of transporting ideas about the first-factor rule to other campuses: (1) Venture into the field and get to know a small sample of new faculty as they adapt to campus. New faculty welcome this attention during what is usually a lonely couple of years. (2) Solicit repeated and reflective observations (from new faculty and from one's own occasional and brief visits to their classrooms) about what distinguishes happy and successful teachers. (3) Compare other observations with mine. It may be that we can learn something about the effects of different campus cultures on what it takes to succeed at teaching. (4) Consider using information about quick starters in revising the instructional development programs at one's own campus (and recruit-

ing quick starters as collaborators in coaching the basics of better teaching). (5) At the least, reconsider Lucas's (1990, p. 113) conclusion about what will most help faculty as teachers: Instead of worrying about *what* to say, they would do better to ask *how* they can present material in ways that create excitement about teaching.

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