DISCUSSION TECHNIQUE IN TEACHING LIBRARY SCIENCE.

(Teaching in library science. 10).

A NEELAMEGHAN *and* G BHATTACHARYYA, *Documentation Research and Training Centre, Bangalore* 3.

Points out that the Discussion Technique provides for keeping each of the students as an active participant, for developing systematic thinking habits in him, for accustoming him to the use of correct terminology, and for inducing in him a co-operative and participative attitude. Mentions the role of the teacher in the discussion.

1 PARTICIPATION OF STUDENT

In papers R and S in this issue, it has been pointed out that one-way class lectures and dictation of notes are unhelpful as methods of teaching and that they should therefore be avoided. The few lectures that should necessarily be given are to be designed to inspire the student to see the great potentiality of the discipline and the profession, and to enthuse and help him to see beyond the circumscribed horizon of text-book information and formal class instruction. In teaching work, it is essential to secure the active participation of each student in each and every curricular activity designed for him. A good method for this is to use the Discussion Technique in teaching. This technique helps the teacher to sense the capabilities as well as the drawbacks of each student. The instruction programme can therefore be tailored to meet the specific needs of each student. The particular desirable qualities that get developed in the students through the use of the Discussion Technique are

1 Habit of systematic thinking;
2 Use of correct terminology; and
3 Co-operative and participative attitude.

The development of these qualities helps the student to put his best in the study of the discipline during the course and also contribute to the cultivation of the discipline in his subsequent professional career.

2 HABIT OF SYSTEMATIC THINKING

The success of any teaching programme depends to a considerable extent on the productive participation of each of the

students in the class discussion, group discussion, assignments, colloquia, etc. Productive participation is dependent on the systematic thinking habits in the students. It also develops those habits. Systematic thinking includes

1 Clearly and sharply defining the universe of discourse and being able to confine the discussion within its boundaries;

2 Intellectual analysis to identify all the factors involved;

3 Drawing inferences in conformity with the canons of log c;

4 Correlating the findings with previous experience or with concrete contexts; and

5 Effectively communicating the ideas using correct terminology.

21 OPPORTUNITY FOR PRACTICE

The teaching · technique should provide the student with as many opportunities as possible for conscious drill ng in the process of systematic thinking. Only repetitive practice in as many subject-contexts as possible can develop the habit to the point of reflex action. Use of the Discussion Technique in teaching provides the maximum number of such opportunities.

3 USE OF CORRECT TERMINOLOGY

Every discipline finds it helpful to develop its specialised terminology. Its use facilitates efficient communication among the students of the discipline and also with the practitioners of related professions. Wastage of intellectual potential may thereby be reduced to a considerable extent. An aberration in the verbal plane often leads to a distortion in thinking. Use of correct terminology further helps the student to get a better grasp and assimilation of the subject. This is true of library science also. Therefore, it is necessary to lay the foundation or effective communication between the teacher and the students d among the students themselves, through the conscious use fcorrect terminology in all discussions and writings.

31 OPPORTUNITY FOR USE

In a discussion, each participant is obviously obliged to express his ideas for their communication. The efficacy of communication is increased if the verbal plane is co-terminus with the idea plane. Conscious, regular use of the special terminology of the discipline helps to achieve one-to-one correspondence between the idea and the expression for it. Hence the value of the Discussion Technique for this purpose.

4 DEVELOPMENT OF CO-OPERATIVE ATTITUDE

The discussion method develops in the students the spirit of co-operative participation and trains them in the collective pursuit of the problem on hand. It helps to release and co-ordinate the creative talents of each student. The teaching as well as the learning becomes less boring and more productive. Another important consideration is that when the uninhibited but 'ploughed up' intellect of the student meets the mature, but perhaps somewhat rigid approach of the teacher, it affords a fertile source of new ideas. This source will be plugged up if the class is merely a one-way traffic — either mere lecture or dicta-tion of notes. The co-operative habit should also be developed in group discussions, in tutorials, in the colloquium, etc.

5 ROLE OF THE TEACHER

The teacher's part in a discussion would be to
1 Help each student to keep to the universe of discourse;
2 Help him to use correct terminology;
3 Help in the efficient flow of communication;
4 Put suitable questions at the appropriate stages, and bring back the discussion to the proper focus in the subject, when it goes off the rails;
5 Supply, wherever appropriate and necessary, the back-ground knowledge that would make the discussion on a subject realistic and purposive;
6 Bring out the conformity or otherwise of the findings emerging out of the discussions to the relevant normative princi-ples — specific as well as general principles;
7 Indicate the methodology of the resolution of conflict, if any, between two or more of the principles applicable to the context, with the aid of the Laws of Interpretation and other normative principles;
8 Bring to the notice of the students, at the appropriate stages, the documents relevant to the subject of discussion; and
9 Clinch the discussion by summarising the inferences or findings emerging therefrom.

51 TEACHER SHOULD PREPARE

To conduct the discussion in the proper way, the teacher should prepare in advance. He should have a full picture of the universe of discourse, as far as possible anticipate the devia-tions the students may make, and also be conversant with the current lines of thinking on the problem. This is education for the teacher himself. It may be easier to prepare a lecture or notes on a topic and deliver it in the class. But it helps neither

the student nor the teacher. From this point of view, the curricular load on the teacher should be so adjusted that he has adequate time and energy to fully prepare for the discussion.

6 ASSIGNMENT

The discussion should be preceded and followed by an assignment, for the student to work. The assignment that precedes the class should be preparatory work for class discussion. The one that follows a class discussion should be follow-up on the subject discussed in the class. The tutorial and essay work should be based on this follow-up work.

61 GUIDANCE

The teacher should guide the student as to how he should prepare, what documents should be read, the points to be emphasised upon, and the time allowed for completing the assignment. Co-operatively doing the task by groups or by all the students should be encouraged (*See also* Paper V in this issue). Assignment of this kind and the students doing them in this way make the class discussion as meaningful to the student as possible. It also makes it as productive as possible.

7 REPORT OF CLASS DISCUSSION

A few reports of class discussion have been already published. A list is given below.

1 NEELAMEGHAN (A). Structure of the main entry in an advanced documentation list. (Lib sc. 3; 1966; Paper E).
2 —— and RANGANATHAN (S R). Use of symbolic language in teaching. Case study. (An lib sc. 9; 1962; Paper R).
3 RANGANATHAN (S R). Array change or level change? (Lib sc. 2; 1965; Paper F).
4 ——. Classification of linguistics. (Lib sc. 1; 1964; Paper K).
5 ——. Development in notational plane upto primitive faceted notation. (Lib sc. 3; 1966; Paper M).
6 ——. Documentalist and subject specialist. (An lib sc. 10; 1963; Paper K).
7 ——. Evolution of reference and documentation service. (Lib sc. 2; 1965; Paper Q).
8 —— and NEELAMEGHAN (A). Design of a classification schedule. (An lib sc. 10; 1963; Paper B).
9 —— and ——. Effective decade. (An lib sc. 9; 1962; Paper Q).