

TRANSFORMING UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

BY DR. R. A. ARIYARATNA*

Let us begin this paper¹, as it should be in delivering a formal class-room lecture, in a lighter vein by depicting a few well-known campus anecdotes. Admittedly, what is recounted here represent some extreme cases. Nevertheless, all of them are based on genuine experiences, perhaps with some frills added.

- 1) A retired graduate teacher glanced through his undergraduate son's lecture notes and found, to his amazement, them to be identical to the notes he himself had taken down more than two decades earlier. Even the mid-lecture satirical references, or so-called "jokes", had been repeated verbatim. His exasperation grew manifold when he learned from his son that it is the same university teacher who had taught both the father and the son.
- 2) A senior don, who prided himself on his uncanny prowess of disciplining students, had discovered an ingenious ploy, which he used with utmost ruthlessness almost bordering on masochism, to attain his goal. Invariably, he begins his maiden lecture for the "freshers" by discreetly choosing an innocent-looking student in the class to be his "whipping boy" or "sacrificial lamb", and

* Dean, Faculty of Arts, University of Colombo, Colombo 03, Sri Lanka.

(This paper was presented at a seminar on Teaching Methodologies in Undergraduate Courses in Humanities and Social Sciences organized under the auspices of the UGC on March 15, 1996 at the SLFI)

¹ Though I am writing this paper as my own reflection, I wish to place on record that both motivation and inspiration to write this piece came from the wonderful opportunity I had in participating in a two week-long workshop conducted in the U.S from 9th to 20th October, 1995 under the aegis of the "Transforming Teaching and Learning programme" organized by the Management Frontiers (PTY) Limited, Australia. My own participation in it was made possible by a generous grant jointly sponsored by the Australian High Commission in Sri Lanka and the University of Colombo.