
MASTER WEAVER

Z - HANDICRAFTS · FULFORD · QUEBEC · CANADA ·

September, 1953

No. 11

PROBLEMS IN TEACHING

WORKSHOPS

What we call "workshop" in teaching, is a form of condensed instruction given by one (or more) weaver to a small group. It is usually of a very short duration - few days to two weeks. Its program contains three factors: theory in form of lectures, demonstration of weaving techniques, and supervised work of the students. The latter contains both theoretical and practical problems.

The success of a workshop depends both on the lecturer and on the organizers. Even the best instructor cannot do much if the workshop has not been well prepared, and vice versa.

The first step in planning is to decide on the subject or subjects. This is done by discussing the program with the weavers who would like to take part in it. Note all the suggestions and requests, and then eliminate all but a few in which everybody seems to be interested. Then check whether you have necessary equipment for the chosen subjects. If not try again. If the list of subjects is too long, the workshop is doomed from the very beginning to be a failure. The lecturer should resist all attempts to cram a lot of material into a short time. Unfortunately there are no rules as to the choice of subjects, except that if possible the different topics should be somehow connected one with another, and that the theory should find application to the practical problems taken during the same session.

Supposing that the workshop has two meetings of two hours each - a day, one hour may be taken by a lecture, if possible illustrated with samples, slides etc. Another hour is reserved for demonstrations of weaving operations. For the remaining two hours the students do the weaving, warping, or theoretical problems, when the instructor supervises their work, discusses the mistakes, and points out better methods of work.

An ideal group for a workshop would be composed of of students of about the same level, as far as their knowledge of weaving is concerned. If such a selection of students is impossible, the sub-

jects chosen should be adapted to the weakest members of the group, never to the most advanced.

Whatever the level, the students should be advised to get all information available on the subjects of work well before the workshop starts. If a discussion meeting can be arranged a week or so before the workshop, it may help quite a lot. In any case the students must be requested to bring to the workshop note-books, graph-paper, etc., and to make notes not only during the lectures, but during the demonstrations and their own work as well. This precaution may seem to be superfluous, but it is not.

Once the program of work is made, it is transmitted to the instructor, who supplies the group with data for setting up the looms, and with the list of equipment which he may need for demonstrations.

Now the organizers must secure as large a number of looms as possible, even if it means one loom per student plus a few for demonstrations. One loom per two students is a minimum.

It does not matter so much what kind of looms we use, provided that they have sufficient number of heddle-frames, and treadles for the projects discussed. The only exceptions are looms for demonstrations. These should be of the best quality and best adapted for the weaves demonstrated. For 4-frame weaves, counter-balanced looms are best. If the tie-up is unbalanced (not the same number of frames tied to each treadle) they should be provided with shed regulators. For higher number of frames the double-tie-up jack type is the best. As a second choice: plain single tie-up of sturdy construction (not a folding model). Table looms, portable models and so on, are entirely unsuitable for this purposes

The looms should be threaded well in advance according to the instructions given by the lecturer, tied-up, and checked. The length of warps should be sufficient for each member of the group to make a sample of each weave.

If the subjects of the workshop involve warping, there should be at least enough warping equipment for demonstrations. Horizontal warping reel, and a warping frame, bobbin rack, or stand are the minimum, but it would be better to have a warping mill and sectional warping equipment as well.

In all cases for all kind of lectures or demonstrations there must be a rather large blackboard. It helps if one side of the blackboard has permanently marked vertical and horizontal divisions.

From now on the success of the workshop depends on the lecturer. After the workshop is over it would be advisable to have another discussion meeting for the whole group, to compare notes. If there has not been enough time during the shop to make all the samples - this could be arranged in the days following the course.
