

Suggestion No. 1702

A. Summary of the Suggestion:

The time the agency can devote to each training course is necessarily limited. The average duration of any one course is about three weeks; only a few courses go as long as five weeks.

The shortness of the courses results in three weaknesses:

1. The courses become "cram" courses, wherein the student is thrown a bewildering array of facts or techniques in rapid succession. Many students never catch up; the course is over before they have mentally adjusted to the subject matter. (All instructors will attest to this phenomenon, which often exists even where the student makes passing grades, subject by subject.)

2. Desirable background material is often omitted. It may exist as a section of the outline or study guide but is not in practice given. All emphasis is on facts, procedures, or techniques for which there is immediate need. The reasons for these are minimized.

3. The span of the course does not permit sufficient repetition. It has been proven by many tests that the length of time the mind retains an impression is directly related to the length of time it took to form the impression and the number of times the impression was repeated.

The obvious solution to these problems would be to lengthen all courses to twice or three times their present length. However, this is not entirely feasible, and it is believed that the courses can be in effect lengthened by institution of the following:

1. That for each course there be established a reading list as a prerequisite to the course. This list would be included in the catalog.

2. That the materials on the list be made available in a "package" which the student or his Training Officer could draw (preferably upon telephonic request) from the OTR library.

3. That either the individual or his Training Liaison Officer be required to certify that all reading was completed prior to admission to the course. Waivers would be severely limited.

4. That a study guide be provided with the package. The guide would indicate to the student what paragraphs, topics, or thoughts were considered especially pertinent.

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Some of the material might have to be of a classified nature, but for every course now in existence there is a substantial body of knowledge printed in unclassified publications. For example, such diverse subjects as communism or budgeting are very well covered. Also to a great degree is basic tradecraft. Furthermore, some items now considered classified could be declassified to the point where they could be taken home for study, by abridgment, rephrasing, or deletion of isolated and unimportant facts.

The advantages would be substantial:

1. More material could be added without increasing the length of the courses, by (a) providing supplemental new material, and (b) in some cases by permitting the instructor merely to make a brief reference to material now covered in some detail.
2. The students would have a "feel" for the material before instruction began. (This is to me the most important point.)
3. The increased time span and the repetition would immeasurably increase the students long-term retention of the material.

B. Evaluation of Concerned Offices:

Chief, Intelligence School stated:

"This suggestion has some merit but for various reasons is only applicable to a limited number of courses. The practice of supplying reading materials in advance is followed by the course on World Communism, the students drawing a kit of unclassified reading matter about a week before the course begins. For other courses offered by the Intelligence School, there is either no material suitable for advance reading or the nature of the course, being one of working on projects and exercises, does not require such advance preparation."

Chief, Operations School stated:

A good idea if DDP students had more time available than required by the course itself. Reading is integrated into most of our operations courses.

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Mr. [REDACTED] of Plans & Policy Staff stated:

"The plan is feasible from library viewpoint granting necessary restriction on the inclusion of certain classified materials.

"Catalog notation should be limited to the fact that the reading materials can be drawn in advance by students and from whom but not be bibliographic in nature due to constant changes.

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"Study guide concept will impose an additional planning burden on all instructors. Perhaps this should be a later step.

"Material should be distributed only to bona fide registrants certified to by Registrar so that a person cannot "take" a course in this manner rather than by attending."

Chief, Basic School stated:

"The content of this suggestion is not new, since the practice of distributing reading materials in advance of training courses has been tried in a few instances in OTR. However, it does contain some novelty and a few new slants on the subject, and hence can be considered as making an added contribution.

"It is recommended that the suggestion be recognized by a token award of perhaps \$20.00, but that the extent and rate of implementation be left up to OTR. The suggestion will apply to only a limited number of general courses, and will necessarily require the gradual development of appropriate materials and procedures."

C. Recommendation of the Executive Secretary:

It is recommended that the type and amount of award be determined by the Committee, **after a verbal report by the OTR member summarizing extent of current implementation of suggestion and its value.**

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