Extended Review
Teacher Evaluation: Educative Alternatives
A.Gitlin and J. Smyth (1989) London, The Falmer Press

This is an intellectually satisfying and pedagogically practical text on teacher evaluation. Noting the tendency to use concern about education to evaluate teachers' work in ways that are divorced from the understanding and experience of teachers and pupils, Gitlin and Smyth correctly start with an informed critique of current evaluative practices. In accepting external evaluation many teachers and pupils do not use internal inquiry and reflective self-evaluation. They become more concerned with meeting 'minimalist standards of outside experts' (p.viii). The movement away from impositional modes of teacher evaluation to the two alternative 'educative' forms proposed in this text, is based on a just and liberating contestation of the dominant impositional mode. Gitlin and Smyth make a sustained case against this mode, which whilst oppressing teachers does not challenge current (and often conservative) methods and aims of education practice.

The critique is meaningful in the alternatives it implies. Using Bernstein's (1983) idea of the true conversation, the point is made that it is only when teachers can enter into a dialogical relation of equality with other teachers that they can both understand and change their practice. In this process egalitarian and democratic ideals are realised through teacher empowerment. In the educative form of teacher evaluation, many lessons can be learnt. Amongst the most essential is stress on the necessity of taking the point of view of the participant, a principle which teachers can usefully practice in class. With recent constructivist work on children's learning that emphasizes the need for learners to own their own knowledge, Gitlin and Smyth's proposals for teachers enlarged self-knowledge will certainly be a crucial beginning. Moreover, educative evaluation moves teachers towards the consideration not only of better ways of teaching but also to broader questions to do with the moral and educational worth of teaching (p.31).

In developing reflective practice teachers of necessity engage in the questioning of texts and materials. They develop a sense of the history of teaching and break their usual taken-for-granted understanding of it to critically confront tradition. In their own review of these histories and traditions the authors provide an important critique as well as a path to hope in alternatives. Because they show what is and has been they also indicate the road not yet taken. In their proposals for collaborative learning, both the individual voice and the collective needs of teachers, pupils and schools can be addressed. In collaborating with others including their own pupils, teachers can find the solidarity for the courage and vision to embrace new practices in education.

Horizontal evaluation, the first model Gitlin and Smyth propose, encourages participants to analyze the relationship between teacher intention and practice, a process which allows the value inherent in all teaching to be examined (p.63). The chapter is complex and philosophically tight, but the practical implications are clear. Teachers' ask questions about their own and others practice and relate this to past events. In this way they challenge their own assumptions and knowledge, become thinkers as well as doers in the process. In Gitlin and Smyth's words (p.75) teachers can base decisions on reason rather than habit. The second alternative proposed is the clinical supervision method. Gitlin and Smyth have done much to rescue this model from inappropriate application

and subsequent distortions. But it is not clear in their interesting chapters on clinical supervision what advantages could be had over horizontal evaluation. Perhaps the more structured work involved in clinical supervision, including the observing and creating of text about teaching makes this model more amenable to current policy. For example, mentor training is now an important part of both initial and in service teacher education. With pressures for accountability still looming large on the horizon, clinical supervision as proposed here can give very concrete and immediate feedback on the evaluative project. This contrasts with some of the indeterminancy inherent in the horizontal model.

The book has the qualities of a gospel. It is addressed to all people of goodwill. It records past events, calls for reflection and invites promises for improvement. Like a gospel however, its ultimate goal will not be realised unless the practices can actually be implemented by teachers. In the meantime we can all become true believers.

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