

Perry, R.P., & Smart, J.C. (Eds.). (1997). *Effective Teaching in Higher Education: Research and Practice*. New York, NY: Agathon Press.

Reviewed by Rebecca Priegert Coulter, Faculty of Education, The University of Western Ontario.

In the field of education, teacher effectiveness research lingers as a reminder of unfruitful efforts to develop a narrowly empiricist science of teaching. Even as such research shifted to school effectiveness, it could not escape the critiques that revealed work on "effectiveness" as little more than the obvious dressed up in fancy quantifications but with nowhere to go. Indeed, by the 1970s, many of the strongest proponents of teacher effectiveness research openly acknowledged its inadequacies and its lack of educational meaning. Critics noted confusions between correlation and causation, simplistic views about the uni-directionality of instruction, and narrow measures of teaching success, namely student achievement on tests. It is disappointing, then, that the contributors to *Effective Teaching in Higher Education: Research and Practice* do little to address these concerns; nor, in fact, do they appear aware of the lively scholarship on pedagogy emanating from faculties of education, cultural studies, and women's studies. Rather, they remain vested in the belief that "effective teaching can be studied scientifically, its qualities systematically documented, and its 'secrets' successfully imparted through proper training programs" (p. 4). As a result, there is an oddly dated tone to this volume.

Let me hasten to add that I am in complete sympathy with the contributors' views that more attention ought to be given to the teaching dimensions of professorial work. Despite the fact that a number of the contributing authors make completely unsubstantiated claims about what professors think about teaching, a strange approach for those who claim to be "scientific," it is easy enough to acknowledge that university teaching could do with some improvement. And who could seriously reject the technical-rational prescriptions for enhancing the epiphenomena of teaching performance? It just seems like common sense to suggest, as Murray does in his chapter, "Effective Teaching Behaviors in the College Classroom," that enthusiastic, expressive professors who have good rapport with students and explain things clearly, will contribute to student learning. Similarly, while the check list of concrete behaviours that

illustrate those characteristics is mundane – addressing students by name, gesturing with hands and arms, moving around the room, writing out key points, signalling transitions to new topics, using humour – there is little doubt such behaviours will enliven classrooms. Who can argue with Perry when he recommends professors adopt clearer assessment practices and evaluation strategies that allow students to feel that they have some control over their learning and achievement? And Keiwra's suggestion that professors use approaches that make explicit the organization of course content and the connections among ideas is useful but hardly revolutionary.

Somehow, the very scholars who want to advocate for improved teaching in postsecondary institutions make the whole business sound so banal and simplistic that it is little wonder professors are said to evince minimal interest in developing their pedagogy. Surely, as current educational theorizing demonstrates, taking teaching seriously means understanding the complexity of the activity and addressing questions about power and authority in the classroom, about the multi-directionality of teaching and learning, and about the part played by student and teacher identities. Exploring the importance of professors' own deep understandings of the structures of their disciplines, their philosophies of education and concomitant pedagogical practices, and their positioning within the social relations of specific classrooms seems central to research on teaching in universities, but this volume contributes little on these matters.

To be fair, some of the contributing authors acknowledge the dead-end at which teacher effectiveness research has arrived. For example, while repeating the call for "more research and more rigorous empirical design of the research" (p. 236), Weimer & Lenze also admit that there is "*a need for different kinds of inquiry*" (p. 236, their emphasis). They go on to argue that "Quantitative inquiries are not enough. They are by their nature ill-suited to answer all that needs to be known" (p. 236). In their helpful descriptive review of the variety of approaches used to improve university instruction, Weimer and Lenze also mention the largely atheoretical nature of teacher effectiveness research, a flaw which is occasionally alluded to in other chapters and which goes a long way to explaining why, in the end, this collection is intellectually unsatisfying.

Three chapters, those by Marsh & Dunkin, by Abrami, d'Apollonia & Rosenfeld, and by Feldman, summarize the research on students' evaluations of instruction and provide a great deal of information on the

state of scholarship in that domain. The first article, in particular, is very thorough in its review of several decades of literature, and impressive in the breadth of topics it tackles. It will be of great consolation to those negotiating collective agreements for professors in these times of performance indicators and accountability to learn that even teacher effectiveness researchers believe that student evaluations of instruction “should not be used indiscriminately for summative decisions about teaching effectiveness” (p. 357). At the same time, it must be said that however useful these chapters are in providing an over-view of research on student evaluations of teaching, they, too, lack the critical edge and probing questions one might expect of a collection appearing in the midst of the flurry of post-modern debates about understanding, meaning and method.

For those interested in the central content of this volume, I recommend the concluding chapter by Weimer. She thoroughly summarizes the essential content of eleven chapters, covering 400 pages, in less than two dozen pages. By this act, a great deal is inadvertently revealed.



Rhoades, G. (1993). *Managed Professionals: Unionized Faculty and Restructuring Academic Labor*. Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1998. Pp. x + 347.

Reviewed by William Bruneau, Faculty of Education, The University of British Columbia.

It is a commonplace to say that social “facts” are value-laden, that any one set of them may yield entirely disparate inferences and interpretations, and that explanations of them will depend in part on the academic and political outlook of the explainer. None of these complications releases social scientists from the requirements of ordinary reason, nor does it permit them to ignore the standards of argument and inference of the discipline or disciplines from which they come, nor does it mean they can get away with bad writing.

Gary Rhoades’ work is satisfactory on a couple of these scores. He reasons carefully and believably, and his arguments draw successfully on the fields of educational sociology and educational administration. On the other hand, he gives his “facts” too narrow an interpretation, he underplays