

“Embedded” is the wrong verb, and in the passive mood. “Criteria” should be “criterion.” “Faculty’s” must mean “faculty members’.” And a plain English version might read:

How often is merit a deciding factor in salaries of unionized faculty members?

Another gem (p. 5):

Influence may involve ongoing, proactive efforts within one’s program or department to update and reform the subject matter and intellectual work of higher education.

I wonder if he means:

One may gain influence by helping with curriculum reform.

Subject-verb agreement is approximate throughout (see the amazing second paragraph on p. x, if you get the chance). Rhoades’ imprecision in the use of ordinary concepts and terms is at some points bothersome, and at others utterly confusing. To give a straightforward example, people are, according to Rhoades, “involved” in things; but in this book, that could mean anything from doing them, to opposing them.

Meanwhile we have objects and ideas “speaking to” each other: data “speak to” themes, people “speak to” situations (!), but rarely to each other. And from hundreds of examples, here is a noun turned into a verb (whose imminent demise I forecast):

The contract of the University of Nebraska, Kearney, recently transitioning from a state college to part of the University System, reveals the pressure to incorporate a similar merit clause.

I was not even tempted to “transition” my way to the conclusion of this review.



Westhues, K. (1998). *Eliminating Professors: A Guide to the Dismissal Process*. Queenston, Lewiston, Lampeter: Kempner Collegium Publications. Pp. x, 218.

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The issue of dismissal of tenured faculty in a university arouses indifference in almost no one knowledgeable about the university system. Tenured academic staff can be dismissed only for just cause, including gross misconduct, persistent neglect of duty or incompetence. Most view this reality as necessary, given the very lengthy probationary period; the rigorous evaluation process to be granted tenure; the continual evaluation by students, peers and superiors; and the need for academic staff to be free from institutional censure in their course of research and teaching. Tenure is the vehicle by which the academic freedom of the faculty member—the ability to criticize the accepted orthodoxies of one's disciplines, the ability to challenge the wisdom of government, industry or even the university administration—is protected. The university is an environment where the right to speak freely is held with great importance, and where the academic staff are, by virtue of their own self-selection and temperament as well as through conscious institutional planning, very diverse in outlook and thinking. Westhues acknowledges that the dismissal of a tenured professor in such an environment is not a small matter. His "how-to" guide to the dismissal process approaches the matter from the perspective of the social dynamics within the university community, and suggests a method to manage the process. He does so by offering up the dynamics of shunning, excommunication and witch hunts as a model for institutional (or at least managerial) conduct.

Westhues proposes that the "elimination" of a professor is not — need not be — dissimilar to the elimination of undesirables in any social circle. He suggests a ". . . five-stage process by which a university comes to define a professor as undesirable and then gets rid of him or her" (p. viii). Essentially, the stages are: ostracization; harassment by superiors; the incident; aftermath; and elimination. The book is organized to follow these stages: it is set out in five sections with 40 very brief chapters. Interspersed are autobiographical chapters diarizing the author's own experience of having run afoul of university policy and being subjected to a seriously mismanaged process of adjudication.

The first part of the book, "Overview and Objective," outlines the reason for the approach, the intended readership, and the identification of a fictitious character: Dr. PITA, who is an individual irascible in nature, who "displays an intense commitment to ideas that are contrary to the

basic principles ingrained in the department, faculty or university” (p. 23), and whose personal, physical, ethnic or other characteristics place him or her outside the social group. The intended objective is to remove Dr. PITA from the department, faculty or university where he or she is causing serious disruption. The list of possible “exit doors” include resignation, fabricated resignation, transfer, death, long-term disability under physical or mental illness, early retirement, dismissal for cause, downsizing/financial exigency, or constructive dismissal. The second part of the book, “Ostracization and Harassment,” explains how an administrator determines whether Dr. PITA can be isolated from the support of his or her peers, and outlines methods of achieving further isolation (stage one of the five stage process). A course of administrative harassment is recommended, including intentional delays, re-assignments in teaching responsibilities, laboratory and office space, and the like (stage two). Stage three outlines what Westhues terms “the incident,” an act or omission by Dr. PITA which calls for administrative action. Sanctions — disciplinary measures — are explored, and the processes of internal review or steps of administrative authority are canvassed. Stage four examines the “aftermath:” appeals, arbitration, and interventions by third parties, including individuals, faculty associations and the national Canadian Association of University Teachers. Stage five is elimination: the removal of the offending professor from the workplace. An “afterword” which follows the Notes suggests a number of popular fiction films which dramatize the elimination process in various human situations.

One of the chief difficulties of the book is its very unclear purpose. Having identified its purpose as an endeavour to identify a pattern in conflicts involving individuals facing sanctions in universities (p. x), Westhues does not proceed to describe the pattern. Rather, he provides a how-to guide for those in power in universities to eliminate those they identify as undesirable. Yet this second stated purpose is confounded by the inclusion of a collection of quotations (at the opening of each major section) which implicitly condemn the institutionalized social behaviour the chapters seem to advocate. The “Afterword” again suggests that the book raises questions, is “an invitation to action, and to study, reflection, and research” (p. 205). These conflicting directions make the result less than serious, but also short of satire.

As a review of the social phenomenon it purports to describe, the book is very problematic. It is too self-consciously didactic to be a descriptive piece. As a how-to guide for administrators seeking the dismissal of certain members of the academic staff, it is fraught with errors of the most serious kind. For example, in outlining the process of applying discipline against a faculty member, the author suggests that "administrators need not concern themselves further with the actual empirical truth of the charges against Dr. PITA. The point is to keep hard, physical evidence off the table and out of play" (p. 67).

As a contribution to the knowledge of discipline and dismissal in the university, the book unfortunately does not canvass in any way the fact that a large majority of academic staff in Canada work either in unionized institutions or under special plans with binding dispute resolution mechanisms. This is an unfortunate omission, since the internal, circular and ad hoc procedures which form the backdrop of many of Westhues' scenarios are not seen in most collective agreements. As blunt an instrument for justice as external binding arbitration is, it has proven to be more fair and just than the less used procedures Westhues describes. The author similarly makes no attempt to review the principle of progressive discipline as a tool to point an individual to a higher standard of performance, or to call an individual to conduct which is non-discriminatory.

Westhues alludes to but does not seriously address the human or institutional costs of the actions contemplated by the "how-to" guide. The author does note that "mobbing," as he describes this process, exacts a toll on the individual and the institution:

Mobbing entails sizable costs to the organization. Sometimes a person is paid for years, without being assigned any real work to do. There may be long periods of sick leave, lowered rates of production, and a heavy drain on the time of managers, health professionals, and external consultants. (p. 75)

In other words, eliminating professors by using this guide is very bad business practice, and an inhumane one.

Perhaps most importantly, the book does not acknowledge the possibility that tolerating the occasional Dr. PITA who is fulfilling his or her job to teach and do research is sometimes necessary in order to maintain the integrity of academic freedom within the university. While it is often

protected through collective agreements, academic freedom actually infers in the individual and not in the collective judgement of the peer committee, the administrative superiors or the Board of Governors of a university. Those individuals who might be impossible to convince of the majority view in an approach to a particular academic program; those who are vocal in challenging the accepted orthodoxies of their discipline; those who are vocal in challenging any challenges to the orthodoxies which they themselves hold — all of these academic staff can from time to time incur the resentment and wrath of colleagues and administrators alike. Yet for the university to function, it is critical for academic administrators to recognize this very essential principle and to disentangle legitimate academic conduct from culpable misconduct.

Had the book engaged in this debate, its contribution to our knowledge of these complex matters may well have advanced. However, Westhues touches on these issues only in passing. The book is ultimately a rather sardonic approach to a very serious topic, and unfortunately does not advance our understanding of the honest difficulties and important considerations of the university as a distinct workplace.



Mitchell, S. (1998). *Reforming Educators — Teachers, Experts and Advocates*. Westport, CN: Praeger Publishers. Pp. 261.

Reviewed by Rod Evans, College of Education, Texas A & M University-Corpus Christi.

As a Canadian — with 25 years experience in public and higher education in Canada and now living and teaching (for the past 5 years) in the American system of education — the opportunity to read and review Sam Mitchell's book, *Reforming Educators-Teachers, Experts and Advocates* was an opportunity too good to turn down. Though I have known Sam as a faculty colleague at The University of Calgary for several years — and imagined that I knew him well — a careful reading of his book revealed just how little I really knew of him. By a quirk of fate our paths have gone in parallel though opposite directions. A sociologist by profession, Mitchell is American, born and raised in Memphis, Tennessee, who came to Canada in 1965 and who has remained ever