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"Teacher evaluation," a perennial educational red herring, is not a valid means of significantly improving educational quality. Raising the level of teaching performance nationwide will first require (1) a doubling of labor costs to establish a manageable maximum class size and to reduce teaching hours so that teachers have the time and energy to be true professionals, and (2) a raising of entry standards through an improved process of teacher selection and certification which should include greater academic content in teacher training, a master's degree, examination before internship, and a 2- or 3-year internship with gradual assumption of full teaching load under supervision by training teachers who also teach a reduced load. When progress is made in those areas, we might begin to pursue other ways of improving teacher performance. Most abuses of the teacher evaluation process arise from attempts by administrators and supervisors to use their evaluative power to enforce discipline and conformity within the school bureaucracy. Some independent means of evaluation could be devised which would do more than merely pass judgment on the worth of a teacher. For example, a panel of teachers, supervisors, and college people not employed by the district might observe a teacher for perhaps a week, interview him, review records, and give a written evaluation, available to the teacher, which would emphasize his strengths and weaknesses. (JS)

AFT QuEST Paper 4. Occassional Papers from the AFT Program for Quality Educational Standards in Teaching (QuEST)

WHAT IS THE AFT-*QuEST* PROGRAM?

Persistent and emerging problems face the nation's schools:

Effective teaching
Use of paraprofessionals
Decentralization and community control
Teacher education and certification
Implementation of the More Effective Schools concept
Eradicating racism in education

As the teacher revolution sweeps through urban America, the American Federation of Teachers becomes increasingly aware of its special responsibilities to offer solutions to these other problems. In January, 1968, the AFT's executive council, with representatives on it from most of the nation's big cities, held a special two-day conference to consider these problems and the AFT's responsibilities.

Out of this conference came a mandate for a *continuing body of active and concerned AFT educators* who could—

Anticipate some of the emerging problems resulting from the rapid social changes in our society;

Meet on a regular basis;

Stimulate and initiate confrontations between teachers and these problems at state, local, and national levels;

Organize and coordinate regional and national conferences;

Prepare tentative positions for action by AFT legislative bodies; and

Suggest action programs to implement their findings.

Thus was born QuEST.

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EVALUATE TEACHERS?

David Selden, President
American Federation of Teachers

A perennial educational red herring is the Question of "teacher evaluation." It usually arises from the anguish of superintendents and school boards over the problem of How-to-Get-Quality-Education-Without-Really-Paying-for-It. A good teacher is a pearl without price, they say, but (obviously) some teachers are better than others. The problem is to find and reward the good teachers, meanwhile continuing to depend on the average and bad teachers to carry on most of the enterprise of teaching--but at a lower salary.

Most teachers have learned to recognize and beware merit-rating salary schedules and "professional advancement" schemes. We are agreed that the salary of a teacher must not be tied to an evaluation of his pedagogical worth. But many of us are still susceptible to the idea that, if we really purify our own ranks, our sanctity will be recognized by the public and our employers and we will be appropriately rewarded; we must "cleanse our own ranks." These puritanical proclamations then lead to the conclusion that we must devise more stringent ways for evaluating teachers. Very often they lead to the further conclusion that the hand of the administration must be strengthened in weeding out the unfit. The higher one's status in the educational power pyramid, the more self-righteous one is apt to be in calling for more rigorous evaluations.

Preoccupation with teacher evaluation is a red herring because it turns the attention and energies of teachers inward, against themselves, rather than outward against the complex of educational mores and economic forces which are the real obstacles to improving the quality of education.

Educational Quality Cannot be Significantly Improved by Teacher Evaluation

The basic attitude of school boards and administrators is that the schools must be operated regardless of the amount of money and manpower provided by state legislatures and local taxpayers. When it comes to a choice between (a) maintaining teacher certification standards and professionally sound teaching conditions or (b) evading standards and "making do," the rules of the Establishment will try to make do every time. Massive restriction of educational quality results from the failure of our school managers to demand more money and higher standards. In comparison, the amount of bad teaching which can be eliminated through more stringent evaluation has little significance.

It is much easier, of course, to indulge in moralistic exercises against ourselves than to demand solutions of the basic problems confronting education. Raising certification standards, and enforcing them, means finding much more money for schools, because better qualified people command higher salaries. When you try to get more money for schools, you have a fight on your hands. On the other hand, teacher "evaluation" costs nothing.

What It Takes to Improve Educational Quality

Raising the level of teaching performance nationwide will require, roughly, a doubling of labor costs. To establish a maximum class size of 20 pupils means setting the average at somewhere around 15 pupils. A teacher will be able to give precious little individual attention to pupils in a class as large as 20, and yet there is not a major school district in the country with a true average class size of even 30, let alone 20. On the elementary level, where small classes are needed most, the averages are much higher than for systems as a whole. Thus teaching staffs must be increased at least 50 percent to bring class sizes within professionally sound limits. And that will cost something!

Add another 50 percent to reduce teaching hours. College teachers are expected to teach nine to 12 hours a week, so that out-of-class time can be devoted to study and research. Perhaps there is less need for elementary and secondary school teachers to be so scholarly, but certainly they should not be placed in a situation where 25 to 35 hours must be spent in classroom instruction. Add to this 10 to 30 hours of out-of-class paper marking and lesson preparation, and it is plain that under present conditions teachers do not have the time or energy to be true professionals.

Taking the two items of lower class size and reduction of teaching hours together, the teaching force of the nation must be vastly increased before we can expect much improvement of educational quality. But even this does not give the whole cost-analysis picture, for, along with this expansion of the teaching force, we must also become more selective as to those who are permitted to become teachers in the first place. And we cannot be more selective unless more people want to become teachers than there are teaching jobs. This condition will not come about until teaching is more attractive to people of intellectual attainment than other career opportunities.

As an aside, to clinch this last point, most people concede that the best teachers ever to come into the classroom, relatively speaking, came in during the depression era, when teaching was in a superior competitive positing among career choices. Since we certainly cannot advocate another depression as the solution to the selectivity problem, the only alternative is to make teaching more attractive again, and again, that will mean finding more money--lots more--for teachers' salaries.

Raise Entry Standards Before Going for Stricter Evaluation

Certainly the teaching profession, as distinguished from the *administering* or *supervising* professions--or that nebulous profession called "educator," has the primary obligation to insist on professional certification standards and professional teaching conditions before it becomes involved in developing a more stringent system of teacher evaluation. When we begin to select teachers of true professional potential and when we begin to establish conditions which will permit successful teaching, then we can begin to consider other ways of improving teacher performance.

If and when we are in a position to set up a system of teacher evaluation, what would it be like? In the first place, there must be a new approach to the

problem of teacher selection and certification. The main elements of an improved process of teacher selection should include:

1. Greater academic content in teacher training.

2. Master's degree.

3. Examination *before* going into internship.

4. Two- or three-year internship; gradual assumption of full teaching load; supervision by training teachers who also teach a reduced load.

A teacher who survives such a rigorous selection process will not need year-by-year evaluation; nor should he be under "continuing evaluation" of an indefinite sort, where he never really knows where he stands. The "continuing evaluation" process is often merely a matter of allowing an antagonistic supervisor or administrator enough time to compile a record against a teacher he wishes to attack.

Evaluation is now required for the purpose of deciding whether or not a teacher will achieve tenure, of course. If the process of teacher selection, including the probationary period, is properly carried out, there should be little need for further evaluations of this make-or-break nature.

Administrators Abuse Evaluation Power

Most abuses of the evaluation process arise from attempts by administrators and supervisors to use their evaluative power to enforce discipline and conformity within the school bureaucracy. It is the teacher who criticizes school policies or the actions of members of the school hierarchy, the teacher who wears a beard, the teacher who does not submit a detailed planbook, the teacher who is consistently tardy, or the teacher who simply doesn't like his supervisor, or vice versa, who gets the black marks on the evaluation. These nonconforming actions may be contrary to the rules of the bureaucracy, and they may even be indicators of personality weaknesses which raise doubts about the teaching ability of the teacher, but they are not indicators of teaching *performance*.

The work perspectives and value systems of supervisors and administrators are different from those of teachers. Supervisors and administrators have as their primary interest the functioning of the bureaucracy which supports and nourishes them, while teachers have as their primary work-interest the solving of educational problems. The success of a teacher is dependent on the success of his pupils, in a very direct, emotional way. The success of the administrator and supervisor, while remotely dependent on the aggregate scholarly success of the pupils, is measured more by the orderliness of the school and the success of activities which require organization, such as the athletic program, the school play, band, and orchestra, or building new schools, or getting the annual budget approved.

A Proposal for Independent Evaluation

One way to avoid abuse of the power to evaluate teachers might be to take this function away from supervisors and administrators altogether. Experimentation should be carried on to see if some independent means of evaluation, where evaluation is necessary, could be devised. Although the procedures of the great school evaluation associations--The North Central and others--are certainly not foolproof, they provide a guide for establishing teacher-evaluation procedures. Panels of evaluators could be made available for this purpose, consisting of teachers, supervisors, and college people, none of whom would be regularly employed by the district of the teacher being evaluated. A team would observe the teacher for perhaps a week, interview him, look over his records, and give a written evaluation which would be available to the teacher. Members of the panel from which the evaluating team is selected would be practising teachers and supervisors in the geographical area, approved by the teachers' organization and the various administrator organizations. When assigned to an evaluation, they would, of course, be freed from their regular duties.

Evaluations would be performed at least once every five years, at the request of the teacher. Three objections to this idea immediately come to mind. First, the independent committee would be a more cumbersome device than simply allowing the supervisor or administrator to do the evaluating. Second, could an adequate evaluation be made in a week of observation and interview? Finally, many teachers would rather be evaluated by someone with whom they have a personal relationship than by a committee of outsiders.

However, these objections are not overriding. A committee is certainly more cumbersome than one individual, but since evaluations would be made far less frequently, the added bother would not be an insurmountable handicap. As for the length of time needed to analyze the technique of a teacher, experimentation might show whether moreor less time would be needed. One advantage of the proposal is that it gets away from the "continuous evaluation" concept. Perhaps the third objection--"evaluation by strangers"--could be overcome by giving the teacher the option of being evaluated by his supervisor or by the evaluation committee, although one function of the independent evaluation would be to reduce any tendency on the part of teachers to curry favor with their supervisors and administrators.

Accent the Positive

Those who advocate stricter evaluation of teachers stress the constructive function criticism can serve. They agree that evaluation should not be used as a disciplinary or punitive device. Certainly no benefit can be gained from merely passing judgment on the worth of a teacher. The emphasis in an evaluation should be on analysis of the teacher's strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps the term "evaluation" should be dropped altogether and the term "critique" or "analysis" substituted.

In spite of the uselessness of present evaluative procedures, we can expect a renewed push toward tighter evaluation and salaries based on merit rating, judging by discussion at recent conferences on educational problems.

Graded certification and differentiated staffing, for instance, are really merit-pay schemes. The AFT has taken various piecemeal actions to oppose merit salary schedules, master teachers, and secret files on teachers, but we have never worked out a comprehensive philosophy which effectively answers the pro-evaluation forces. Perhaps this essay may lead to the development of such a comprehensive policy. At any rate, it ought to provoke discussion.