

Thomas Popkewitz and Robert Tabachnick.
THE STUDY OF SCHOOLING: FIELD BASED METHODOLOGIES
IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION.
New York, N.Y.: Praeger Publishers, 1981.
301 pp. \$34.60.

When people learn that I have been trained as an anthropologist to work in the area of education, they often ask me to give a talk about the anthropological approach to studying education, or the ethnographic method in educational research. I often get the impression they are seeking the latest fashion in research methodology, or worse yet, looking for a saviour - one to show them the sure path to truth. Usually, they are kind people who mean well. I worry about disappointing them when I say that the anthropological approach to studying education does not exist. Rather, there are substantial methodological and philosophical disagreements among the anthropologists, as well as other field workers, who apply their craft to the arena of education. One method does not exist, but many.

Because of such experiences, I heartily welcome and recommend *The Study of Schooling* edited by Popkewitz and Tabachnick. Their collection of twelve essays is a "deliberate effort to present statements of competing perspectives that are ideologically and sometimes methodologically at variance" (p.x). The portrayal of variance is part of the book's strength. Another source of strength comes from questions posed by the book's contributors. Any book that brings to light a few good questions is worth more to the serious student than one full of trivial answers. This book raises more than a few good questions.

In two essays Thomas Popkewitz questions the philosophical assumptions and implications of three prominent theoretical orientations in field studies, and suggests that topics of study and methodological approaches are tied to larger movements in social history. Five essays deal with the beginning and ending of field research. Louis Smith, Rachel Sharp, and Daniel Kallos each wrestle with the ever troublesome issue - how one goes about defining a research problem. Gary Wehlage and David Hamilton write about the latter stages of research, namely the processes and purposes of drawing generalizations. Anyone looking for easy, quick answers to questions about defining a problem for research or pulling generalizations together should not look here. Everyone willing to take their study seriously, should.

Sandwiched between defining the problem and making generalizations are several questions about doing field work. Harry Wolcott raises often ignored questions about training people to do observational research. Ray Rist probes the critical area of negotiating with gatekeepers who control the access to field settings. Thomas Romberg wonders why quantitative and qualitative research

Reviews

are not more frequently blended when the benefits can be so great.

The questions raised in this volume are among the most significant that face today's researchers in education. When it comes to answers, beware; this is not a cookbook of neat recipes. You will find that earnest scholars disagree about what should be studied and how.

This is not a "how to" manual with step-by-step instructions on the conduct of field research. It is a volume that reflects on the nature of field work. It reminds us of the importance of stepping back from our work, surveying its shape, sensing its trends, and accounting for its assets and liabilities. Socrates said an unexamined life is not worth living. One might extrapolate that an unexamined field of work is not worth pursuing.

Alanson Van Fleet
University of Tennessee

Hugh Munby, Graham Orpwood, Thomas Russell.
SEEING CURRICULUM IN A NEW LIGHT:
ESSAYS FROM SCIENCE EDUCATION
Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1980.
184 pp. \$8.50 paper.

The authors use as a central metaphor for their essays the idea that philosophy can be used as a "lens" to deal with a wide range of problems typically encountered in the field of curriculum. These problems, although diverse and intractable, can be made to yield when approached philosophically; this is the promise of the book, and one can imagine a wide readership for it. Although the focus is on science education, the book is really about important curriculum problems. It contains ten articles which have been divided naturally into three areas - teaching; curriculum; research.

What sort of a tool does the book offer to the perplexed? At heart, the essays attempt to show how teachers and others who make decisions about the curriculum can do so in a rational manner; the book is about a rational approach to problems. Now there are many approaches to understanding rationality; these essays mostly reflect an approach which has been called by Toulmin "The Philosopher as Geometer." Central to this approach, Toulmin notes, is the idea that "Our beliefs and arguments must be both rigidly structured and anchored to firm ground... The initial acceptance of a geometrical model... was regarded as setting a pattern for all intellectual criticism." Thus, one of the authors notes, "Conceptual Analysis (has) all the promise for looking at educational phenomena... that natural philosophy had for looking at natural phenomena..." (p.6)