

Book Reviews

E.C. WRAGG *An Introduction to Classroom Observation.*

London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

\$19.95. 136 pp. ISBN 0-415-096278

The strength of this volume rests in its very practical presentation amply illustrated with relevant check lists, educational transcripts, and numerous black and white photographs showing pupils and teachers interacting in classroom situations. Furthermore, the author sets an important tone and direction for the book as a whole when he notes, in the *Preface*, that "skillfully done, classroom observation can be a valuable tool for improving the quality of teaching; badly handled, it can be a menace." Visually, this volume is very appealing as the numerous charts, lists, transcripts, photographs, cartoons, illustrations, and diagrams are all interestingly spaced around a very readable running text.

Professor Edward Conrad Wragg, the Director of the School of Education at the University of Exeter, has divided this 136-page book into six succinct chapters that cover — in an introductory and yet thorough manner — the basic elements of classroom observation. This volume is not intended for the "expert" but is specifically designed to appeal to regular elementary and secondary classroom practitioners, teachers-in-training, and those who are just entering the profession.

Chapter one sets out the main benefits and some of the pitfalls associated with school observation, and Wragg does an excellent job in setting this often complicated and/or poorly handled task into a proper professional perspective. The next two chapters deal with quantitative and qualitative research/observation methods, respectively. The author is careful not to pass judgment on the validity of these two basic research methods and sets out, for the novice, how each can be effectively handled in the classroom. Both of these chapters are replete with numerous illustrations and classroom examples to illustrate the various points. Furthermore, keeping his primary audience in mind, Wragg is very careful in his use of book and article references and does not overload the text with bibliographic citations.

Chapter four, entitled "Classroom Observation in Context," deals with seven specific classroom contexts, such as, initial teacher training, in-service training, curriculum development, and teacher appraisal. Generally speaking, this chapter deals with the informal ways of observation that attempt to improve the quality of the teaching and learning in the classroom setting. The next chapter is devoted exclusively to the topic

of research in classrooms. While somewhat ironically noting the poor governmental and industrial funding available for appropriate local in-school classroom research, the author does point out that "classroom observation research can make a significant contribution to the improvement of teaching competence, especially if teachers and schools, as a matter of policy, research their own practice and act on their findings" (page 101).

The final chapter, the shortest in the book at only seven pages, is aptly subtitled "the dynamic school." In this closing appeal, Wragg reiterates his contention that effective and sustained classroom observation will improve the quality of classroom teaching, raise the educational awareness of schools, and generally improve the overall effectiveness of the teaching profession. To Wragg, classroom observation is simply not something that is done by a few folk on a whim, but is a necessary part of the professional life of all teachers and administrators and must become a part of each community school's ethos.

JON G. BRADLEY *McGill University*

THOMAS J. SERGIOVANNI *Leadership for the Schoolhouse:*

How is it different? Why is it important?.

San Francisco: Jossey-Bass (1996).

203 pp. US\$28.95 (hard cover). ISBN 0-7879-0119-9.

Imagine the following scenario: you are the leader of a cannon crew and your job is to hit fixed targets. You identify such a target, then carefully guide the crew to aim the cannon, and give the order to fire. If the landscape of schools approximated the image or mindscape of the cannon (or baseball) metaphor, existing theories and practices of school leadership that rely on these metaphors would be a success. As the school leader, the principal would effectively guide teachers to hit most of the educational targets. But what happens if you encounter constantly moving targets, or if you spot a more attractive target just as you are ready to give the order to fire?

Continuing in the tradition of John Dewey, Thomas Sergiovanni (1990, 1992, 1994, 1995) asserts that schools primarily consist of moving targets and that it makes little sense to base school leadership on the cannon or baseball metaphors. He sees the fashionable trends of educational reform of the last fifteen years as efforts to reinforce a mindscape that is incompatible with the school landscape. These trends are part of the problem rather than the solution. Instead, he proposes the surfing