

## **Not Even Close: Teacher Evaluation and Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge**

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This paper presents an epistemological critique of the traditional model of teacher evaluation, questioning the view of knowledge underpinning the process and, *what counts*. It is argued that teachers' personal practical knowledge is not recognized or valued in teacher evaluation. Teacher evaluation is revealed as emerging from an objective view of knowledge, guided by principles of scientific management with its goals of efficiency and control. Such a view does not allow for subjective knowledge, particularly the ways of knowing that teachers derive from their practice. A teacher's narrative of her experience of being evaluated (positively) for promotion is woven throughout the critique to provide a focus for questions and argument. A new story of teacher evaluation which values teacher knowledge and which allows for expanded conceptions of knowledge is imagined.

Dans cet article, je présente une critique épistémologique des manières traditionnelles de faire l'évaluation des professeurs. Je questionne en particulier la vision de la connaissance du processus et ensuite je me demande ce qui compte. Je crois que la connaissance pratique et personnelle des professeurs n'est ni reconnue ni évaluée à sa juste valeur dans ce type d'évaluation. L'évaluation des professeurs est perçue comme émergeant d'un domaine objectif de connaissances et guidée par des principes qui proviennent de l'administration scientifique avec des objectifs d'efficacité et de contrôle. Une telle vision ne laisse pas de place à la connaissance subjective, particulièrement aux manières de connaître issues de l'expérience d'enseigner. Lorsqu'un professeur raconte son expérience d'évaluation (positive) en vue d'une promotion, on reconnaît que cette expérience est liée de très près à la critique en vue de questionner et d'argumenter. Je propose alors une nouvelle pratique de l'évaluation qui redonne de la valeur à la connaissance du professeur et qui permet un élargissement des conceptions de la connaissance.

Some things you miss because they're so tiny you overlook them. But some things you don't see because they're so huge. (Pirsig, 1974)

Following an experience of teacher evaluation in 1980 in the New South Wales Department of School Education (Australia), and despite a favorable judgment of my work, I had feelings of unease about being externalized by the process – particularly from decisions about *what counted*. I set aside my unease and accepted a promotion to department head in a large, high school (Grades 7-12) and went on with my work. I dismissed my misgivings by telling myself that it was "just me." I had passed the evaluation. So what was the problem? My next evaluation for promotion in May 1988 was also successful. The evaluator decided I should be promoted to vice principal. But I felt let down by the evaluation that I had expected would value our work – that of the teachers and students I worked with – but which did not.

In this paper I explore the reasons why I, and many other teachers, find teacher evaluation not only an experience in which we feel unvalued, but an empty comment (Brophy, 1984) on our work. I proceed from an assumption that *what teachers know* about their work and *how they know what they know* is important and crucial to the evaluation of a teacher's practice. In my view, a teacher is not a transmitter or deliverer of external knowledge, but is an autonomous and active agent in the classroom whose knowledge is influenced by her/his experience and reflections on that experience. Teachers' knowledge has been described by Elbaz (1983) as practical, experiential, and shaped by a teacher's purposes and values. Elbaz's concept of practical knowledge opened the way for looking at knowledge as experiential, embodied and based on a narrative of experience (Clandinin, 1986). I use Connnelly and Clandinin's (1988) term personal practical knowledge "to capture the idea of experience in a way that allows us to talk about teachers as knowledgeable and knowing persons" (p. 25). I believe with these authors that personal practical knowledge is found in the teacher's practices, in the teacher's past experiences, mind and body, and in his/her future plans and actions.

From a perspective of understanding classroom practice as an expression of teachers' personal practical knowledge, I present an epistemological critique of the traditional model of teacher evaluation and ask: What is the view of knowledge that underpins teacher evaluation? I argue that the traditional model of teacher evaluation (whereby an outside expert, usually of status senior to the teacher, judges the teacher's work on the basis of system-devised criteria), has emerged from a scientific/objective view of

knowledge that does not recognize the ways in which teachers and students use, construct and reconstruct knowledge in the contexts of their classrooms and their everyday lives. Teacher evaluation is revealed as concerned with efficiency and guided by principles of scientific management, including prediction and control. Throughout this critique I weave a narrative of my experience of being evaluated for promotion to provide a focus for questions and argument. The narrative shared and the literature reviewed reveal that the ways teachers use and construct knowledge is not recognized or valued in the teacher evaluation process.

We must question what counts in teacher evaluation and the purpose of teacher evaluation in order to do it differently – in order to create a new story of teacher evaluation which allows for expanded conceptions of knowledge, and which values teachers' knowledge. And so begins my story.

*20th May, 1988*

*A student stood at the door with a message summoning me to the principal's office to meet the school inspector. As I gave quick instructions to my students about continuing the lesson in my absence, I thought about the meanings of being summoned. Something seemed not quite right about the way this evaluation process was beginning. I had asked to be assessed (in reality, inspected) for promotion from department head in a large secondary school to vice principal, but from the moment I completed the application form five months earlier, I had no further say in the process. The inspector came from Head Office in the city 180 km away. As an Inspector of Schools in the state system, she held a position much further up the hierarchical ladder than me.*

*During the next 25 minutes the inspector took me through a verbal list of what I was required to provide in terms of documentary evidence of my work and organization as well as the lessons and meetings she wanted to observe. A copy of my timetable was returned to me with the lessons marked on it that the inspector had decided she would see. Copies of the timetables of the four teachers in my department were also returned with lessons marked and she asked me to inform the staff as to when they could expect to be visited during the week. Among the list of things that the inspector wanted to observe was one of our weekly department meetings. She had decided which topics she would like to hear discussed and provided me with a choice of two. I was left to decide which would be the one most relevant for our group to discuss.*

*The inspector also informed me that the next day she had pressing business to attend to, that I would be left for a day and*

*then she would return on Wednesday to continue the evaluation for three more days. During our conversation I used the word "inspection" and promptly drew a reprimand. "This is not an inspection!" The correct terminology was "evaluation." A further reminder from the inspector stressed that she was there at my request. I wondered at the implications of this remark. Was she implying that I had some control over this process? I did not feel as if I had any input into this evaluation – it was the only way I could get promotion. Finally, I was given the opportunity to say if the interview times that she had selected for us to talk about my work were convenient. Of course they were.*

*In the background I heard the bell ring for the end of period 1 and I thought of my students upstairs and the things I had wanted to tell them before they left. I wondered that their learning was not more important than this process – I did have a free period later in the morning. The inspector continued talking, still planning my week and hers. She announced that she would be starting to go through my paperwork during the next period and would be in my classroom for period 3. We were to meet to talk again in period 4.*

*By the time I got back to my room my first class had left and another class was arriving. My heart was sinking. I could not name what was wrong, but I could feel it.*

My story details the ways in which the school inspector asserted her authority and maintained control of the process of teacher evaluation: initially by removing me from my classroom to meet her, then by the verbal list of what I was required to provide in terms of documentary evidence and organization, and also by explicating what lessons *she* wanted to observe. I had little or no space in setting the evaluative agenda. Being allowed the decision as to which of two topics (chosen by the inspector) our department would discuss in a meeting constituted a token gesture towards participatory decision-making. When I used the word "inspection" which implies a top-down approach, I was reprimanded and informed the word was inappropriate. When I expressed confusion at the inspector's offense, I was reminded that I had asked to be evaluated for promotion.

While I felt something was wrong, I could not name it. On reflection, I realize my negative feelings emerged from my recognition that the process was not going to be participatory – there was not going to be any sharing of power in this judgment of my practice as a teacher and administrator. I was to be measured, but not included in decisions about what was worth measuring.

*The inspector arrived for period 3 after the class had started and found herself a seat at the back of the room. The notepad came out and I watched her writing. I wondered what she could write as she did not know us (the students or me). It struck me I knew little about this woman and she knew little about me. In the space of four days she would make a judgment as to whether I was a good teacher and administrator. She hadn't asked me anything about the lesson or what I was trying to achieve with these students and did not ask if anything special needed to be known about teaching these students, individually or as a group. How could she know who was learning or not in that classroom? And yet, there she sat making judgments and writing comments that would decide whether I was good enough to be promoted in this profession.*

*She did not tell me what she wrote, but in our meeting the next period I sensed she had not seen what she wanted to see. In her comments, a key phrase recurred – "student-centered lessons" – she wanted to see student-centered lessons. I guessed my meaning of student-centered teaching and hers probably differed substantially. As I listened to her talk about teaching, thoughts of fashion flashed through my mind. She wanted to see the latest styles. I had given a great deal of thought to my lessons for this week and had put a considerable amount of time into planning them. However, I immediately threw out those plans and started to develop new plans where the students were "doing things." The inspector didn't seem to know that "students doing things" was only one strategy of many effective teaching strategies I used. Grateful and relieved to have found out early what she had already decided constituted good teaching, I made plans to oblige her.*

In this part of the story I express my concerns that the school inspector did not know what *I felt* she needed to know to make an informed judgment of me as a teacher: I wanted her to understand my emphasis was on knowing me and knowing my students as a means to knowing about learning in my classroom. This subjective emphasis contrasts strongly with the objectivity of the list of evidence I was *required to provide* and my recognition that the inspector *had not seen what she wanted to see*. The inspector's emphasis is on documentation and measurable objects as evidence of good teaching and organization. My teacher emphasis is on knowing people.

#### *How Does the Literature Help me to Understand This Story?*

Teaching is a process in which a person (the teacher) interacts with other people (students) for the purpose of learning. What counts as knowledge? –

is a question we must ask if we are to begin to understand why *knowing people* is not a valued criterion in teacher evaluation. A look at the structure for knowledge, at what counts, reveals objective knowledge (distant from and not influenced by the knower) has high status as knowledge, whereas knowing people historically has been considered subjective (influenced by the knower), and has not been regarded as knowledge. Code (1991) describes the mainstream view of knowledge that informs western thought and identifies the ideals of that view as objectivity and universality. She is critical of the power and supremacy of objective/scientific knowledge and advocates a view of knowledge that addresses objective *and* subjective concerns. In her view knowledge is born out of a social context and even objectivism is socially constructed.

Strong arguments and significant research exist to validate other kinds of knowledge than scientific/objective. With reference to teachers' personal practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983; Clandinin, 1986; Connally & Clandinin, 1988) recent research on ways of knowing which helps us to understand and to expand this concept includes: *narrative knowing* (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988; Connally & Clandinin, 1990), *embodied knowing* (Benner & Wrubel, 1989; Johnson, 1989; Berman, 1990) and, *relational knowing* (Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, & Minarik, 1993; Hollingsworth et al., 1994). These fields of research provide insight into the ways of knowing that were not validated in my experience of teacher evaluation.

Teacher evaluation, as I experienced it, emerged from an essentialist view of knowledge (Code, 1991) that validates objective knowledge and denies subjective knowing. Teacher evaluation by the outside expert attempts to be objective, to measure, to rate, to put a number on, a teacher's effectiveness/efficiency/performance. Neutrality and objectivity are required in order to have validity of findings. While an objective view assumes that knowledge must be based on scientific criteria, Code stresses, that this decontextualized, ahistorical, and circumstantially ignorant set of criteria for measuring objects is inappropriate for dealing with human subjects. She questions "a public demeanor of neutral inquiry, engaged in the disinterested pursuit of truth" (p. 25). In her view the claims to neutrality of objective methodologies in studies involving humans are highly questionable. Her argument has relevance for teacher evaluation.

In my story the school inspector focused her attention on documentation and other observable evidence of my work in order to make a decision about my effectiveness/efficiency/performance. The meanings I attached to my work as a teacher, curriculum developer, teacher collaborator, and administrator, were not part of the evaluation. While the inspector remained at a distance

from my students, from me and from what my work meant to me, I do not believe that her evaluation was made objectively. Her judgment was strongly influenced by her tacit assumptions as an educational administrator. Her beliefs were grounded in a view of efficient/effective teaching and administration. From this view, the criteria by which I was evaluated were developed. The distance maintained by the inspector, her the reticence to "get personal" with me is rooted in negative views of subjectivity and a belief that objectivity achieves truth. Code (1991) links such thinking with the origins of scientific views of knowledge: "Implicit in the veneration of objectivity central to scientific practice is the conviction that objects of knowledge are separate from knowers and investigators and they remain separate and unchanged throughout investigative, information-gathering, and knowledge construction processes" (p. 32).

My story reveals, however, that I am not separate from my practice – from my knowing as a teacher or school administrator.

*The next day was very anticlimactic – an extra day to wait out did not seem an advantage. I felt hurt and damaged, my body and a little voice in my head were sending me lots of negative messages. I felt depressed and my confidence in my ability to keep up the performance was falling. There seemed no enjoyment in the process of evaluation and I wanted it over with. I knew I was a good teacher and had worked very hard for 15 years. My staff were extremely supportive and as a department we had a solid reputation in the school. I knew I could do the job and that I was worthy of promotion, yet I was not happy. I spent the day feeling miserable.*

*After a lot of tears I decided to go on with the evaluation. I felt I deserved recognition and this evaluation process was the only way the system in which I worked validated teaching. On Wednesday morning the inspector returned at 8 am sharp. I pulled myself together and the lessons went brilliantly. In every lesson the students were actively engaged in their own learning (as they so often were) and the inspector expressed delight. It just wasn't the way I had wanted the classes to operate that week, or how the students expected their lessons to be – the continuity that was important to us, our focus, had been disrupted to put on a staged show. I knew that if I wanted to pass, I had to meet requirements.*

What does "I had to meet requirements" tell us about teacher evaluation? Postman (1993) uses medicine as an example to show that technology is not neutral – that it redefines. He says doctors do not merely use technologies but are used by them: "Technology changes the practice of medicine by redefining what doctors are, redirecting where they focus their attention, and

reconceptualizing how they view their patients and illness" (p. 105). Isn't this also the problem of teacher evaluation? "*It just wasn't the way I had wanted classes to operate that week, or how the students expected their lessons to be .... I knew that if I wanted to pass, I had to meet requirements.*" We need to consider what was required and why. What counted in the teacher evaluation process?

*Our department meeting later that week went smoothly, impressing the inspector. That my staff and I were not impressed was something we kept to ourselves – what we thought did not seem to matter. Again it was a staged show. After all, we hadn't even been recognized as able to develop a topic worthy of discussion.*

*Friday, the final day came. The inspector had spent the afternoon of the previous day going through the hundreds of samples of student work that my staff had filled a room with. The room looked fabulous, a myriad of garments, soft furnishings and toys, in beautiful fabrics and colors. This represented only some of the work that our students had completed in Textiles and Design classes in the previous four months. There were also books and projects from ten students in every class for each of the 16 curricula we taught in our department. The inspector admitted the quality and quantity of student work was commendable. I was disappointed in (what seemed to me) her attitude that such high standards were simply expected. I knew the work of our students and the teachers in our department was outstanding – I wanted her to say so. However, my attention was drawn to two students' exercise books, the inspector expressing concern that the spelling lists in the back of one student's book were not up to date. She wanted to know how often I went through the books of students taught by teachers on my staff and that she held me responsible for what she perceived as this omission of duty. Her concern with the second book seemed a petty criticism. I repeated that, for me, teaching was not what students filled their books up with, but with what they could do – their explanations, their creativity, and their ability to solve problems. Though spelling lists were not a high priority with me, I said that the vast majority of students had up to date spelling lists, spelling was taught and encouraged and that I did not find this worthy of much discussion. Our discussions focused more on administration after this.*

The story reveals that following policies, constructing and accumulating documentation, and student bookwork counted, and ... whether the spelling lists were up to date. These were what my attention had to be focused on in order to be evaluated positively. However, what counted for me was what my

students could do, their explanations, their creativity, their ability to solve problems and my relationships with students and teachers. *Why is it, that what was important to me did not count in my evaluation?* The answer to this question has to do with authority, that is, with whose knowledge counts. The story reveals that the authority to decide whether the teacher would be evaluated favorably or not resided with the school inspector. But is this reasonable? Is the authority of the outside expert legitimate? Postman (1993) problematizes our reliance on experts and uses western society's reliance on science as an example. He reveals that we look to science to give us answers to questions such as: What is life? When? Why? Postman makes the point that science cannot tell us when authority is legitimate and when not, or how we must decide, or when it may be right or wrong to obey. Postman argues that it is a grand illusion to ask of science, or expect of science, or accept unchallenged from science the answers to such questions. Teacher evaluation also supports a grand illusion – that is, that the authority of the evaluator is legitimate.

*At the end of the final day, the inspector informed me that she considered me a worthy candidate and would recommend me for promotion. She reminded me that the process was not over and that I would have to be "assessed" a second time, probably in five to six weeks time. The second assessment would be by the Regional Director, the most senior administrator in our region of 200 schools and over 4000 teachers. It would be a one day visit to the school, with the date to be advised depending on the availability of the director.*

### *What is it That Teacher Evaluation Works at?*

It is impossible to understand experiences and behaviors without taking into account both the social context and the meaning – the significance of the event for its experiencer or author (Code, 1991). Perhaps then, teacher evaluation has nothing to do with understanding the teacher's experience and meanings of teaching? Educational bureaucracies would argue that teacher evaluation works. Works at what I ask? One of the standard arguments for the validity of the claims to objectivity of knowledge and the rationale for science as knowledge is that science works. Keller (1992) stresses, "as routinely as the effectiveness of science is invoked, equally routine is the failure to go on to say what it is that science works at .... Science gives us models/representations that permit us to manipulate parts of the world in particular ways" (p. 74). Similarly, we must ask: What is it that teacher evaluation works at?

Clandinin (in Clandinin, Davies, Hogan & Kennard, 1993) helps us to see that the knowledge found in practice is not valued at research universities or in professional education programs. She says:

The highest-status knowledge is located further away from practice. The knowledge that is valued is the knowledge of certainty, not the tacit, uncertain knowledge of the practitioner. However, as many researchers now recognize (Eisner, 1988), our work must be situated in practice and with practitioners as we try to understand practice, teacher knowledge, and the ways in which teacher knowledge is constructed and expressed in practice. (p. 178)

This same problem exists for teacher evaluation. What counts, what is measured, is not the teacher's practice or what the teacher knows from practice, but a system-devised set of criteria. What is valued is external from teachers' personal practical knowledge.

*It is six years now since that awful week of evaluation, assessment, inspection. It has taken me a long time to figure out why I went home the first night and cried and why I felt so miserable all of the second day. For all my work and effort and for all the wonderful support of my staff and students I have a one page report from the inspector and four lines from the Regional Director. The reports were both very good. They both recommended me for promotion in favorable terms. The Director's report stated:*

*Dear Mrs. Webb,*

*Following further consideration of your work I now confirm that your efficiency has been determined as satisfying requirements.*

It is important to consider the focus on efficiency in teacher evaluation and how it influences conceptions of teaching. The problem with teacher evaluation is not just the process and the way it is imposed, but more significantly, how its ideals serve to frame problems and views of teaching. Underlying teacher evaluation is the assumption that a teacher's practice can be measured, just as the efficiency or output of a machine can be rated. Such assumptions emerge from a management rationale for teaching supported by modern faith in numbers and objectivity. Postman (1993) claims that in our preoccupation with efficiency and desire to measure everything, we are strongly influenced by an ideology of machines. He traces the origins of this kind of thinking to Taylor's (1911) book *The Principles of Scientific Management* on scientific management which contained the first explicit and formal outline of the assumptions of the thought-world of "Technopoly" – a term he has coined to describe the current faith in technology and the belief "that a technique of any

kind can do our thinking for us" (Postman, 1993, p. 52). This includes the belief that the primary, if not the only goal of human labor and thought is efficiency.

Teacher evaluation, that is, the attempt to measure/rate a teacher's efficiency/effectiveness stems from the assumptions of Technopoly. The problem in treating humans as machines is that meaning is lost. My story reveals that the evaluator missed the meanings I had of my work.

*On receipt of the reports I did not feel any real satisfaction or sense of achievement, only relief that it was over. Shortly I came to feel shame for what I had put the teachers in my department through in order to jump a hoop – shame for jumping the hoop. I cried because teacher evaluation was so meaningless. An "expert" came in and decided if what I did was "right." The system (which devised the process) assured teachers that evaluation was an objective search for truth. I realized that a judgment about good teaching had been made before the inspector had seen any of my classes or the classes of the teachers I worked with. I cried because this process had not even got close to what I knew about teaching, to my relationships with students, or to what I knew about working with teachers. There was little focus on what I thought was important – it had already been decided what was important. The assessment process was to see if I was conforming to a systemic view of what was important.*

My utter disillusionment with a process that I had believed would recognize and validate my work and the work of my students and our department is revealed in this later part of my narrative. Though I was evaluated positively and recommended for promotion, I realized that the evaluator had not even got close to what I knew about teaching students or working with teachers. What was *valued* in the evaluation process centered on implementing system policies and keeping up-to-date documentation.

The limitations of "looking only for what you want to see" are profound and not limited to evaluation of teachers. In a fascinating account of the life and work of Barbara McClintock (a Nobel prize winning geneticist), Keller (1983) presents a similar complaint about scientific research. McClintock expresses strong criticism of genetic scientists among her peers for their zeal for quantitative analysis. She says they were "so intent on making everything numerical" (p. 97) that they frequently missed seeing what there was to be seen. I draw a parallel here to my narrative of evaluation in that the school inspector had already decided before arriving at the school what was worth seeing. In looking only for what she wanted to see, she missed what I felt was important in my practice. Anything else I had to say, about caring for students

or the importance of relationships was of little interest or relevance to the evaluator.

McLintock stresses the need for us to consider other ways of knowing than the scientific view of knowledge. She advises other scientists to "get a feeling for the organism" and expresses hope for a future approach to science which allows "a completely new realization of the relationship of things to each other" (in Keller, 1983, p. 207). Noting that relationships were not part of the evaluative process I experienced, we might ask: Where is the feeling for the organism in teacher evaluation?

An interesting story shared by Keller (1983) about McLintock's specialized knowledge of maize chromosomes has implications for understanding the ways teachers use, hold, and construct knowledge. At a 1951 Cold Spring Harbor Symposium, McLintock failed to make herself understood. Her colleagues turned their backs on her work. Her isolation deepened and she withdrew further into her work. Keller suggests that McLintock's problem in communicating her findings was to do with the particular nature of her knowledge – her intuitive knowledge. Also, that her problem was in challenging accepted beliefs. At a time when neo-Darwinian theory predominated and operated on the central premise that genetic variation is random, McLintock reported genetic changes that were under control of the organism (Keller, 1983, p. 144). Such results did not fit in the standard frame of analysis. Keller also suggests that McLintock spoke a different language because she had an intimate and more thorough knowledge of maize chromosomes than anyone else in her audience. Furthermore, she had worked largely alone, developing her ideas in isolation and without the benefit of mutual understanding that can grow out of an ongoing discussion with colleagues. Ordinary language could not begin to convey the full structure of the reading that emerged for her (p. 145).

Several significant questions about teaching and teacher evaluation emerge from McLintock's experience as told by Keller: Do teachers have a knowledge that is special to their experience? Do teachers speak a language not shared by those who evaluate teachers? Is the problem, that what teachers may have to say about teaching might not fit into the standard frame of analysis?

### *What Teacher Evaluation Misses*

My purpose so far in this critique has been to show how the traditional model of teacher evaluation has emerged from how we see the world, and in particular, how we view knowledge. Drawing from the ideas of Code (1991),

Postman (1993), and Keller (1983, 1992) I have problematized the ideal of objectivity for both natural and human sciences. I argue that teacher evaluation is founded on the principles of scientific management, of efficiency, prediction and control, which similarly derive from an objective view of knowledge. My purpose in sharing my personal narrative of the experience of being evaluated is to highlight what teacher evaluation misses – the teacher's knowledge and meanings of her/his work. It is appropriate at this point to consider how teachers' personal practical knowledge looks and works. It is also important to consider that research *with* teachers for the purpose of describing and naming teachers' personal practical knowledge is a relatively new field.

Three current theories for understanding the ways teachers use, hold, and construct knowledge are narrative knowing, embodied knowing, and relational knowing. While these ways of knowing are perceived as helping us to better understand teachers' personal practical knowledge, it is not claimed here that these are the definitive ways of understanding teacher knowledge.

*Narrative knowing.* The importance of narrative as a way of knowing has been stressed by several researchers working in diverse areas (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988; Connnelly & Clandinin, 1985, 1988, 1990). These authors view narrative as the way humans make sense of the world and of their lives. Humans tell stories to make sense of their experience – in doing so they story their knowledge. Narrative accounts of teachers' work (Witherell & Noddings, 1991; Coles, 1989; Paley, 1979) have provided insight into the way teachers use narrative as a way of knowing and suggest that narrative is far more important to understanding humans and the meanings of what they say and do, than has been given credence by scientific and cognitive schools of thought.

Bruner (1990) reminds us that there is no one way of knowing about meaning. He suggests narrative is a way in which we might be able to get close to the multiplicity of meanings people attach to their lives. With regard to my story I ask: What is the meaning of teaching to the teacher? Has the process of teacher evaluation revealed or even come close to the meaning the teacher attaches to her work? If not why? Why is the meaning not important? We need to hear teachers' stories of their practice. Similarly, Polkinghorne (1988) makes a case for valuing practitioner stories. He gives accounts of investigation of narrative in the fields of history, literature, psychology, and the human sciences. His research finds that practitioners work with narrative knowledge: that is, they use people's stories or narrative explanations to *understand* why people behave the way they do. Narrative meaning (Polkinghorne, 1988) is not an object available to direct observation, it

concerns making a connection between human action and events that affect human beings. In contrast, it is important to note that the model of teacher evaluation described in my story was only concerned with evidence that was available to direct observation by the evaluator.

Polkinghorne reminds us that a function of the human sciences is to read or hear and then interpret the texts of human experience. He says these disciplines do not produce knowledge that leads to the prediction and control of human experience; they produce, instead, knowledge that deepens and enlarges the understanding of human existence (1988, p. 19). Polkinghorne's emphasis leads me to question the object of inquiry in teacher evaluation: Does teacher evaluation function to generate knowledge about teaching? Does teacher evaluation assist teachers or the teaching profession in generating knowledge about teaching? My story suggests the answer to these questions is *No*. It is important to think about why this is so. The issue as identified by Polkinghorne concerns prediction and control. A study of narrative provides a kind of knowledge that individuals and groups can use to increase the power and control they have over their own actions. We need to note at this point, the conflict for teacher evaluation. Who holds the power in the current set up? The problem in validating narrative in teacher evaluation is that the power is shifted.

In recent years Connelly and Clandinin (1985, 1988, 1990) have provided extensive research data which supports the need to hear and validate as knowledge, teachers' narratives of their practice. Dewey's (1938) emphasis on experience in education informs their research on teachers' personal practical knowledge. Drawing on the work of Johnson (1987, 1989), these authors describe knowledge as in the mind *and* in the body. They describe teachers' personal practical knowledge as "experiential, embodied and reconstructed out of the narratives of a user's life" (1985, p. 183) Part of the challenge outlined by Connelly and Clandinin in validating teacher knowledge, is that teachers' constructions of their knowledge are missing from the literature about teaching. These researchers stress the need for educational researchers to work *with* teachers to tell *new* stories of education. This criticism is also made by Florio-Ruane (1991). She looks at the language of educational research reports and reveals the ways these exclude teachers and their interests. The reality is that teachers' stories are a largely untapped source of information about teaching.

Carter (1993) also argues strongly for the place of story in the study of teaching and teacher education. She emphasizes that teachers' stories are told in a context and she stresses the need to consider the importance of the context for teaching. Carter reminds us that stories teach in ambiguous ways.

She also asks us to consider what our stories are told in the service of. The implications of her work for teacher evaluation lie with her question: Have we authorized our work so that lives have changed for the better? This is the challenge if we are to create new stories of teacher evaluation.

*Intuition or embodied knowledge.* Johnson (1989) rejects the "knowing how" and "knowing that" dichotomy that has been characteristic of the traditional argument about what counts as knowledge. In his view the classic theory-practice split has emerged from the long-standing view that epistemologically, knowing that was superior to knowing how. Johnson says that this view has served to separate practice from theory. He goes back to the work of Dewey to argue for a view of knowledge which is both personal and practical. Johnson says there is a crucial role of human embodiment in understanding reasoning and knowing. In explaining his conception of embodied knowledge he describes the body as the locus of interaction with the environment. He suggests embodied knowledge is an important avenue for research into the way teachers develop, communicate, and transform their knowledge.

Johnson uses the term teachers' personal practical knowledge to focus attention on the way teachers understand their world, insofar as this understanding affects the way teachers structure classroom experience and interact with their students, students' parents, colleagues, and administrators. He advises that new models of cognition are needed to take such a view of knowledge seriously. He also suggests that new understandings of knowledge create new territories for curriculum inquiry.

*I had been judged and measured but what was measured was not important to me. It was external to my practice and it left out what was central in my work. I really cared about teaching, but there was no attempt to get at what caring meant or the ways in which caring influenced my work. The knowledge that came from my practice and my life was ignored in the assessment process. The embodied knowledge that had been constructed and reconstructed over 15 years of being in classrooms with students 12-18 years old, teaching numerous curricula simultaneously, was not measurable in a short term visit, and hence was invisible to the observer who knew none of us in the room. The relationships with students, so essential to learning, which were so slowly developed and nurtured were not understood or validated. Only the visible products of our encounters in the classroom counted (and if the spelling lists were up to date).*

My story argues for caring and suggests it is part of my knowing. While Noddings (1984, 1992) has argued for the importance of caring in teaching

and schooling, research in nursing has begun to provide data which reveals an epistemological basis for understanding caring. Benner (1984) has collected powerful research data in the form of nurses' detailed reports which present a strong case for validating caring and intuition as critical to the skills and knowledge of an expert nurse. She says that to examine care we cannot rely on purely quantitative experimental measures based on the natural science model. For Benner, caring is embedded in personal and cultural meanings and she advises that the strategies used for studying it must take into account meanings and commitments. Benner's research has implications for rethinking what matters in teaching – if teachers' intuitive knowledge is to be validated as knowledge. The work of Benner and her coresearchers (Tanner, 1987; Wrubel, 1989) has great relevance to teacher evaluation. Benner is critical of what counts as knowledge in nursing and in particular, what does not count. My story of teacher evaluation reveals that what counts in teaching is not what counts for the teacher. No importance was attached by the evaluator to my knowledge of the people I spent my time teaching and working with, our relationships, or how caring worked, or why it was important to us.

Whereas Johnson (1987, 1989) has attempted to explain a theory of embodied knowledge and Benner and Wrubel (1989) have documented specific instances as a means to validating this way of knowing, Berman (1990) helps us to understand the controversy that accompanies the body or *soma* as a way of knowing. He reveals that historically there has been a threat in acknowledging the body as a ground for knowledge and that throughout western history somatic (embodied) knowledge has been linked with heresy. Berman is highly critical of the dominant ideologies of western culture, of achievement and productivity, and ambition as unquestionably good. He says that in modern western culture (in particular), there is a conspiracy not to talk seriously of the ways the body knows. Berman warns that in denying our bodies as a source of knowledge, we are denying ourselves as humans.

*Relational knowing.* Teaching children is a personal and emotional process. Hollingsworth and coresearchers (1993, 1994) describe the relationship between teacher and child as a way of knowing about teaching through the senses. These teacher-researchers share stories of teachers' reliance on intuitive mode and argue for recognition of personal and relational development as a primary way of knowing about teaching, which they call relational knowing.

The epistemological difficulty in valuing "knowing people" as knowledge is explained by Code (1991). She states: "Knowledge, as the tradition defines it is *of* objects. Only when people can be assimilated to objects is it possible

to know them" (p. 39). She challenges this long standing assumption by claiming that knowing other people is a worthy contender for knowledge and says, "the process of knowing other people requires constant learning: How to be with them, respond to them, act toward them" (p. 39).

The work of Hollingsworth and her co-researchers helps me to understand what the distancing of teacher evaluation achieves and why it is so hurtful. The lack of connection between what was considered worth measuring and my practical knowledge should be a concern. I have to come to realize that the process looks at results or evidence of teaching from a perspective that knowledge is fixed; the personal is denied and the context ignored. I ask: What about the context for teaching? What about the children's lives? What does the teacher know that influences the teaching?

### *Features of my Narrative Central to This Critique*

The purpose of sharing my story is to focus attention on epistemological questions about teacher evaluation. The story serves as a connection between my experience and my reading. Central to my epistemological critique are the features of the story. The story reveals that the teacher is evaluated for promotion by a person appointed by the educational system, a person not of the school community, not a practising teacher, and someone much higher up in the educational hierarchy. The story also tells us that the school inspector decided when she would visit, what classes she would see, the topic the teachers were to talk about in the staff meeting, and what teaching styles constituted good teaching. We find that the evaluator sat in classes and made notes on what she saw and did not ask for information about the students or if there was anything special the teacher felt needed to be known. I share my view that the evaluator had a predetermined idea of what effective teaching and effective administration looked like and that I was measured in terms of those predetermined criteria. Implicit in the story is the alleged neutrality of the process. Paradoxically, the process that was supposed to determine my efficiency/effectiveness allowed little or no space for my voice or my meanings of my work. I was not included in decisions about what was important. And finally, the most significant aspect of the story is that for me (the teacher), evaluation was an unsatisfactory process irrespective of the outcome.

### *What's the Point Epistemologically?*

The claim of this paper is that the traditional model of teacher evaluation emerges from an objective view of knowledge – a view of knowledge that is inappropriate to teaching and learning. The literature helps us to understand that how we see the world and how we view knowledge are linked. Teacher evaluation has developed as an aspect of scientific management, from a need for prediction and control. I suggest that teacher evaluation is motivated by the wrong things. Rather than a concern with improving teaching and learning it is tied in with larger cultural practices concerned with efficiency and the notion that objectification of human activities is necessary and useful. The view of knowledge that underpins teacher evaluation is part of a bigger educational issue which concerns perceptions of teaching and learning: specifically, how knowledge is perceived in education systems, structures and policies, and in much of the literature about education. This issue has been addressed by Clandinin and Connelly (1992) in their challenge to the assumptions about knowledge underpinning mandated curriculum. I suggest that the traditional model of teacher evaluation may be characteristic of a number of practices and policies within hierarchical education systems, in that it works out of a view of knowledge that does not recognize or value the ways teachers (and students) use, hold, and construct knowledge within the context of their classrooms and their lives.

Simply creating a new policy for teacher evaluation will not address the problems outlined in this paper – a whole new way of thinking about knowledge is needed. The problem we face is expressed by Pirsig:

To tear down a factory or revolt against a government ... because it is a system is to attack effects rather than causes; and so long as the attack is on effects only, no change is possible ... and if a factory is torn down but the rationality which produced it is left standing, then that rationality will simply produce another factory. (1974, p. 102)

We need to ask ourselves: What if the rationality that produced teacher evaluation is left standing?

### *Let's Imagine a Story of Teacher Evaluation That Would be Different*

It is important at this point to consider what teacher evaluation might look like if we could take seriously what teachers know. Imagining a different story of teacher evaluation, one which values teacher knowledge, requires a different view of knowledge than that which informs the traditional model of evaluation by the outside expert. What is needed is a view of knowledge which includes and values subjectivity, a view which values the personal

stories of teachers about their practice and the ways in which they construct and reconstruct their knowledge of teaching and learning. In this new story, knowing other people would be considered a worthy contender for knowledge and teacher/student as well as teacher/teacher relationships would be validated as central to the learning process. A new story of teacher evaluation requires a process which allows the meanings teachers have of their work to be shared. New structures and policies which would facilitate this process would be needed.

Recognizing that an objective view of knowledge puts severe limits on what we can know about teaching and learning is central to imagining a new story of teacher evaluation. Understanding knowledge as at once objective and subjective and teachers' knowledge as constructed from personal narratives, from the senses, and from knowing people is an expanded and different view of knowledge, to the traditional view which allocates objectivity the highest status. Rethinking teacher evaluation to value teachers' personal practical knowledge, requires an enlarged conception of what counts as knowledge and recognition of teachers and students as knowledge creators as a starting point. Also required for a new story of teacher evaluation is a changed logic, what Lyons (1990) has described as – *a new way of seeing and being in relationship with learners and learning* .

This new story of teacher evaluation emerges from a view that the scope of epistemological inquiry has been too narrowly defined and that we need to think about how we view knowledge, about what counts as knowledge and the language we use to describe knowledge. Code (1991) in arguing for a broader conception of knowledge has said that we need to challenge the structures for knowledge, to transform the terms of the discourse and begin "remapping the epistemic terrain" (p. 323). This is what a new story of teacher evaluation needs to do. Part of imagining a different story of teacher evaluation and creating a new epistemic map is recognition that teachers need to participate in developing critical ways of knowing (Britzman, 1986).

A new story of evaluation needs to recognize that a hierarchical power imbalance is inappropriate and should look to ways of teachers working together to give an account of themselves and how they make sense of their work. Power is shared rather than controlled in a story where teachers are seen as knowledgeable about their practice and when structures are developed to include what teachers have to say in decisions about what counts. This new story of teacher evaluation must not silence the teacher's voice and needs to allow all participants in the evaluation process to contribute. Mishler (1986) commenting on research interviewing, has suggested that we need to hear teachers' stories and invite them to

collaborate, to share and control, and together to understand what the stories are about. His advice to educational researchers is also pertinent to educational administrators who currently control the process of teacher evaluation.

In imagining a new story of teacher evaluation, however, we must be wary of falling back on old patterns. It is possible to change the way evaluation is done without changing what is at the root of the problem – the view of knowledge out of which teacher evaluation emerges. Shifting who the evaluator is does not change the view of knowledge.

### *Conclusion*

Capra (1988), a theoretical physicist, asks: What's paradoxical about physics as a field of study? He uses Heisenberg's uncertainty principle to demonstrate that there is no objectivity in physics. Capra's concern is with the way we view the world including an economic rationale for education. He argues that efficiency and productivity have become distorted and asks, "Efficiency for whom?" (p. 253). Similarly, this epistemological critique points to an essential paradox in the traditional model of teacher evaluation and argues that evaluation by the outside expert emerges from an objective view of knowledge which does not recognize or value teachers' personal practical knowledge. If we are to create a new story for teacher evaluation, one which values teachers' knowledge, we must remember to ask Carter's question: Have we authored our work in such a way that lives have changed for the better? (1993, p. 11)

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