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Review:

Campbell, R. J. and Neill, S. R. St. J. (1994) *Secondary Teachers at Work*. London and New York: Routledge

This book is part of the *Teaching as Work* project which is based at Warwick University and which has systematically recorded and analysed nearly 7000 working days (covering the period from 1990 to 1992) from over 700 teachers in 91 Local Education Authorities in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. The research provides a detailed picture of how teachers spend their time on work, both on and off the school premises, which the authors then analyse by reference to national policy, to issues of school management and to concepts of teacher professionalism. This volume is based on the records of 2688 working days from 384 secondary teachers, all taken from a time when the educational changes associated with the Education Reform Act 1988, and particularly the changes in curriculum and assessment, were at an early stage of their implementation. Other results from the *Teaching as Work* project are published in *Primary Teacher at Work*, also by Campbell and Neill, and *The Meaning of Infant Teachers' Work* by L. Evans, A. Packwood, S.R. St. J. Neill and R.J. Campbell.

In part 1 of this text, entitled "The Evidence", the authors give the detailed results from their survey. They aim throughout to maintain a neutral description of the teachers' work, thus avoiding the possibility of some of their results being discounted because of bias. As reasons why this research was undertaken, Campbell and Neill cite the need to update the findings of Hilsum and Cane (1971) and Hilsum and Strong (1978) which described the time spent on various tasks by teachers working in the late 1960s and mid 1970s. They also wished to examine whether or not the way in which teachers work has contributed to the perceived 'crisis' in British education and they felt that a greater knowledge of how teachers work was necessary for local management of school and national policy formulation. To do this, they chose a very wide spread of teachers, full details of whom are given and the implications of any skews considered.

Campbell and Neill begin by discussing some of the myths about teachers and teaching, and they debunk some of these by giving results which shatter the childish picture of a job which finishes at the end of the school day. For example, the mean time per week spent on work by their sample was 54.3 hours. They point out that this is equivalent to far more than the 1265 hours annually for which teachers are contracted in Britain, and they show that, even for the nominal 39-week year, these figures mean that their total hours worked per year is significantly greater than a 40-hour week spread over the twelve months. Nevertheless, one has the impression that the actual number of events in which the teachers is involved each day is very small, especially when compared with management.

The authors find that teachers in small secondary schools tend to work longer hours than other teachers. For the entire sample, the mean time spent teaching per week was 17.0 hours, with a further 13.1 hours on preparation, 18.0 hours on administration, 5.0 hours on professional

development and 4.0 hours on other activities. Campbell and Neill's definition of administration includes such activities as registration, moving classes from one room to another, assembly, meeting parents, putting up displays and all school breaks and lunchtimes. They acknowledge that many of these activities do not fit easily into their given category and they discuss the implications of this. However, even when the doubtful activities are removed from administration and transferred to another field, we are still left with a figure which is significantly higher than the 3% of a teacher's time which Hilsum and Strong found in 1978 was taken up by administrative work. Campbell and Neill suggest that this may well be largely due to the demands of the introduction of the new National Curriculum. The fact that teachers are spending only 30% of their time on actual classroom instruction may well have major implications for those involved in the training of teachers.

Part 2 of this book contains three chapters which provide an opportunity for deeper consideration of some of the issues raised by these findings. The authors discuss some of the implications for school managers, they highlight some of the problems facing teachers in an era of enforced change and they identify the difficulties experienced by the conscientious teacher. These are useful additions to the education debate.

Some recent research claims that the increasing demands on teachers are proving counterproductive, with an increasing problem of retaining the more effective teachers in the medium to long term. The findings of Campbell and Neill, showing long working hours dominated by activities other than teaching, are unlikely to be helpful to those trying to persuade able students to become teachers. This may well ultimately precipitate a crisis in education whereby it becomes virtually impossible to recruit really effective personnel to the teaching force. The implications of such a scenario are beyond the scope of this book, but it does provoke such stimulating or upsetting thoughts.

I was slightly bothered by the repeated use of nouns as verbs – e.g. “The questionnaire was trialled ...” and “we patterned the work ...” – and somewhat amused by the failure of some of the sample to complete even the most basic questions – e.g. 3% of the group chose not to reveal their gender, even though the entire project was undertaken both voluntarily and anonymously! Furthermore, I occasionally found it a little misleading when the figures for the percentage time spent on various activities added up to greater than 100% (because teachers sometimes undertake two things simultaneously) but, after a few of these tables it is easy to become accustomed to this, admittedly more accurate, presentation.

In spite of these slight reservations, however, *Secondary Teachers at Work* is a very useful resource, crammed with recent information on the work practices of secondary teachers in the United Kingdom. There are 94 tables and 13 figures, making for a well-illustrated book which should not upset even those normally terrified by statistics. There is a useful and comprehensive bibliography and a good index. The reader will find a balanced discussion of the findings of the authors' research. The end product has a pleasing feel which should guarantee not only its place on many bookshelves but also as a means of enlightening many arguments about what teachers really do.

Robert Kerr