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Troubling Data: A Foucauldian Perspective of “a Multiple Data Source Approach” to Professional Learning and Evaluation

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Introduction

Many academic workplaces are moving toward data driven professional development and evaluation models that rely on various forms of data as feedback to guide professional learning. One such system of evaluation gaining popularity in education is the 360-degree approach to evaluation that draws on multiple sources of feedback on teacher performance (Dyer, 2001; Manatt, 1997). The 360-degree feedback system in education often includes feedback from parents, students, and teaching peers, a supervisor’s evaluation, student achievement data, and the teacher’s self-assessment. In this article, I draw on Foucault’s metaphor of the panopticon and its disciplinary powers, along with Nikolas Rose’s (1999) discussion of numerical technologies and Popkewitz’s (1999) notion of “populational reasoning,” to critically examine a professional growth and evaluation program that uses a 360-degree teacher evaluation process.

Professional Growth and Surveillance

Using the metaphor of the panopticon to describe the ways people police themselves when they feel they are or might be watched or inspected, this article provides a critical perspective of a data-based system in which the aim of professional growth is to continuously improve student learning through a system of 360-degree feedback from students, parents, colleagues, and administrators. My analyses primarily focus on the Professional Growth and Evaluation Handbook (2004) that delineates a data-based professional growth and evaluation system for an international school in East Asia. This school describes itself as a “data driven” school which is reflected in its Annual Report (2005), a glossy 48 page booklet with statistical data contained in charts and graphs to highlight “key quality indicators” (p. 2).

As Foucault (1977) noted in *Discipline and Punish*, in a panoptic system “inspection functions ceaselessly...the gaze is alert everywhere” (p. 195). I investigate how 360-degree evaluation systems provide similar forms of inspection, showing how the effort to “collect valid and reliable information on performance...from multiple sources—

students, parents, and evaluators” (*Handbook*, 2004, p. 1) creates a system of surveillance that shifts the locus of control for professional learning from the teacher to a set of disciplinary techniques. I argue that a system of growth and evaluation that examines performance in terms of certain types of feedback data collected from multiple sources “tends to constitute minute social observatories” (Foucault, 1977, p. 211) that penetrate into the working lives of teachers as disciplinary mechanisms.

Beginning with Foucault’s description of panoptical forms of supervision and surveillance, I discuss the discourses and disciplinary forms of power that accompany these methods, and explain how they help us understand a specific system of professional growth and evaluation. However, I argue that the emphasis on surveillance, inspection, and subordination is too limited and draw on Rose’s (1999) analysis of numerical technologies to show how data operates to support broader forms of governmentality. I offer some tentative conclusions about the effects of power exercised in ways that rob teachers of other forms of professional growth that might be more meaningful and constructive for both teachers and schools.

The Panopticon and the Disciplinary Power of Data

The panopticon was an architectural design created by Jeremy Bentham in 1787 (Bentham, 1995) to instill social discipline in prisoners, and Foucault used it as a metaphor to describe how people discipline themselves under surveillance. However, Deleuze (1990) argued that the panopticon should be viewed as a “system of variable geometry” or a diagram of power that results in “free-floating control” in seemingly open environments. In this sense, he identifies a physical, lived reality of panoptic surveillance rather than merely metaphorical. So, while the panopticon can serve as a metaphor, it is important to understand that it likewise serves as a description of forms of surveillance that have found their ways into the workplace. As a result of panoptic disciplinary power, individuals can be monitored and evaluated, but more importantly, they learn to monitor their own behavior through disciplinary technologies of self-regulation. Disciplinary technologies promoted by panoptical surveillance, such as timetables, documentation methods, normalizing judgments, and examination, reduce resistance, maximize the utility of human bodies, and are translated into technologies of the self that promise to bring about such ideals as salvation, self-improvement, or continuous learning.

Foucault (1977) described panoptic power as a “faceless gaze” that provides permanent, omnipresent surveillance and transforms “the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert...” (p. 214). This unceasing observation requires a series of reports and registers, an immense and complex documentary organization to register “forms of behavior, attitudes, possibilities, suspicions—a permanent account of individuals’ behavior” (p. 214). The disciplining technologies of documentation, normalization, and examination replaced more transparent forms of discipline. These technologies operate quietly and efficiently by people submitting to the gaze of others and by individuals turning the gaze on themselves.

Three central concepts used by Foucault help us understand the disciplinary power of panoptic surveillance in educational professional development and evaluation systems: (a) the notion of discourse or “discursive formations” as a way to situate the practices of professional development and evaluation in broader contexts; (b) normalizing judgment, or the ways norms and standards allows us to “evaluate ourselves according to the criteria provided for us by others” (Rose, 1990, p. 11); and (c) technologies of the self through which individuals monitor and audit themselves in ways consistent with organizational norms and standards. These three concepts are used to conduct a textual analysis of the *Professional Growth and Evaluation Handbook* (2004).

This article examines the techniques, practices, and discourses of the professional growth and evaluation system outlined in the *Handbook*. Discourse consists of the underlying rules and assumptions that form accepted social practices (Foucault, 1991). It is used to provide a sense of how things are done, how certain knowledge, acts, and practices get accepted as natural and necessary during a certain historical period. Since professional development and evaluation practices are constituted historically as institutional practices and a field of knowledge, they are a product of certain discourses. The first line of analysis examines the historical contexts of the discursive formations that produce meaning and ways of thinking in a “multiple data source approach” to professional learning and evaluation.

The second area of focus is an investigation of the ways power functions through normalizing judgment. As Gore (1993) notes, disciplinary power is invisible and exercised through “the ways and means by which individuals constitute themselves as the moral subjects of their own actions” (p. 53). As a result, disciplinary power is internalized and never ceases to function; “it institutionalizes, professionalizes, and rewards its pursuit” (Foucault, 1977, p. 93). It produces discourses, rationalities, and practices that form “regulated systems” (Marshall, 1996) that define important knowledge and ability, shape relationships, and make available certain resources for disciplinary practices. These practices shape, structure, or guide the behavior of people and constitute what Foucault (1979) referred to as “governmentality.” As Townley (1994) notes, governmentality requires “vocabularies, ways of representing that which is to be governed; ways of ordering populations, mechanisms for the supervision and administration of individuals and groups” (p. 6). Normalizing judgment shapes these technologies; it provides the standards, norms, and benchmarks that define and give substance to the techniques of observation, record keeping, classification, categorization, and the calculation of social practices to render them knowable and measurable. Normalizing judgment provides the basis for knowing, calculating, and ordering individuals. It makes possible the perception and evaluation of things; it determines what will be seen, examined, and represented.

Power exercised through normalizing judgment is not a possession of individuals; it is embodied in practices, relationships, and procedures, such as those used to supervise and administer individuals and groups. The techniques and relationships of panoptic surveillance produce “a known and calculable subject, enhancing governmentality

through constructing the individual as a more manageable and efficient entity” (Townley, 1994, p. 139). Individuals turn the gaze of normalizing judgment on themselves as forms of self-evaluation and self-surveillance. Foucault (1977) observed that, “he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; ...he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection” (p. 203). Thus, there is a need to consider the technologies through which individuals monitor and audit themselves. As disciplinary technologies and surveillance relationships become more dispersed, pervasive, fluid, and invisible, the subject is “faced with an uncertainty with respect to whether he [sic] is being watched...He behaves as if he was being watched and so is careful not to attract the ire of the observer who he imagines is there” (Simon, 2005, p. 5). The extent to which forms of self-surveillance are encouraged in the 360-degree system of evaluation will be considered.

Data and numbers play a role in these technologies. As Rose (1999) argues, “Numbers and the techniques of calculation in terms of numbers, have a role in subjectification—they turn the individual into a calculating self endowed with a range of ways of thinking about, calculating about, predicting and judging their own activities and those of others” (p. 214). The study also draws on Rose’s conception of “the calculable person” (p. 213) and Popkewitz’s (1999) notion of “populational reasoning” (p. 162) to provide further theoretical support. For example, Popkewitz describes new forms of governmentality, in which “Individuals [are] expected to contribute productively in the social transformations occurring through their own ‘self’ discipline to form a productive part of these social transformations” (p. 19). According to Popkewitz, turning people and experience into data objectifies the self so that dispositions, attitudes, and behaviors become data for individual self-scrutiny and improvement. It also objectifies and quantifies subjectivities for others: “Feelings, attitudes, and perceptions were made public (observable) and comparable through the survey. Personal attributes became observable (or in this case countable) phenomena” (p. 21). The use of data allows for the normalization, measurement, classification, and administration of subjectivity. This new rationality represents “populational reasoning,” in which people can be defined normatively in relation to statistical aggregates that allow organizations to monitor and calculate “growth” or “development.” Simon (2005) refers to the uses of data for these purposes as “dataveillance (the collection, organization and storage of information about persons)” (p. 1). The extent to which data is used to measure, evaluate, compartmentalize, report, and thereby monitor professional growth and evaluation and assure the “ordering of human multiplicities” (Foucault, 1977, p. 218) will be further examined.

Contexts Matter

Using these theoretical perspectives, I analyze a multiple data professional growth and evaluation system in the school in which I taught. The school is an international school in East Asia, with a predominately Asian American student population, and can be described as a “data driven” school which is reflected in its annual report, a glossy 48 page booklet with statistical data contained in charts and graphs to highlight “key quality indicators.” These include various test scores, AP and IB test performance, college

acceptance rates at the top 50 national and liberal arts colleges, parent perceptions of school climate based on surveys, and data on school processes and resources. The report compares student test scores with comparable international schools and “stateside suburban counterparts.” The section of charts and graphs on student learning, mainly test score results (ERB, WrAP, SAT I, AP, IB, PSAT, National Merit Scholar, fitness tests), begins with a quote from Bernhardt (1998), noting “The true purpose for measuring student learning is obvious in the manner in which a school uses its student learning results. The values and priorities of the organization are revealed in these uses” (Annual Report, p. 8).

Briefly, the standards-based and multiple data source approach used by the school was designed by Richard Manatt, a professor at Iowa State University, whom the school contracted to help develop the system and process the data collected each year. It is considered a formative evaluation process featuring multiple input sources about teaching performance and student learning. In an on-line article in *School Administrator* (http://www.aasa.org/publications/sa/1997_03/manatt.htm), Manatt (1997) notes that 360-degree feedback is “so well established in American business and industry that it has become a recurring theme in Dilbert cartoons.”

To critically analyze the school’s *Professional Growth and Evaluation Handbook* (2004) as a document, I pursued the following questions:

- What goals, procedures, and approaches does the *Handbook* outline that constitute disciplinary technologies?
- What are the discourses, rationalities, and relations of power suggested by the *Handbook*?
- What contexts help us understand the *Handbook* as a text?

The *Professional Growth and Evaluation Handbook* was revised and completed in October 2004 and includes a mission statement, background and rationale for the 360-degree professional growth process, the 15 teaching standards implemented by the school, and a description of the “operational procedures and protocols” (p. 1). Operational procedures and protocols are outlined for each of the three tracks teachers can be on for performance review: (a) the new teacher track for new hires, (b) the professional growth track, in which teachers set professional goals for the year that are reviewed with their facilitator throughout the year, and (c) the intensive assistance track, designed to “address significant concerns the principal has with the performance of a teacher related to one or more teaching standards” (p. 16). It also includes all of the surveys used to obtain the feedback data from students, parents, and colleagues for teachers and non-teaching professionals (such as IT Coordinators and Librarians) with different survey instruments used at various grade levels (Grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12). It is a 148-page booklet with charts and graphs for the three tracks for professional growth and evaluation with the stated purpose of describing the process “meant to help teachers meet, and ideally exceed the 15 Teaching Standards” (p. 1).

Socio-historical Contexts and Discursive Formations

Situated in more immediate historical contexts, 360-degree professional growth and evaluation systems reflect notions of accountability that grew out of the reform movements of the mid-1960s and the 1980s. Current reforms that stress accountability and standards have their “origins” in the Sputnik crisis and Cold War fears that America was losing military, technological, and economic preeminence to the Soviet Union (Carlson, 2005). Generally, these reform movements can also be characterized as responses to continuing educational achievement gaps based on race, class, and the location of schools, increasing federal influence, the elevation of a science of education, and the embrace of market approaches to education (Cochran-Smith, 2005). Increasing federal influence has resulted in mandatory reporting and accountability requirements in which educational achievement is viewed as a policy issue, something driven by outcomes and standards, and a matter best addressed through scientific research and the collection and analysis of evidence (data). As one summary of data-driven learning notes, “In order to achieve improvement goals for all students, assessment data has become a much sought after tool for identifying the learning gaps that interfere with student progress” (Dyck, 2006, p. 4). An underlying assumption is that schools and student achievement can be improved by making data-based decisions.

This age of accountability and standardized testing, however, can be viewed in broader socio-historical contexts. Most notable are the scientific or technical-rational discourses that value control and measurement and carry an assumption of presumed objectivity. Science and quantitative reasoning emphasize “exact measurement, precise predictability, absolute certainty...and a detached mode of observation” (Best & Kellner, 1997, p.202). Viewed within this discourse, professional learning and evaluation “is informed by a mechanical rationale based on the assumption that understanding human performance involves ‘taking it apart,’ analyzing its basic constituents and then reassembling it. In this sense, it is an approach to knowledge which emphasizes enumeration and the imposition of a classificatory order” (Townley, 1994, p. 61). Herbert M. Kliebard (2004) chronicles these discourses as an outcome of social efficiency educators seeking to apply scientific management techniques of supervision, accountability, and measurement to the processes of schooling. Scientific and technical-rational discourses “privilege the visible, the ability to observe behavior bringing with it the prerequisite to measure it and include it as a dimension of performance. They emphasize cognitive rationality and measurable or verifiable facts, and downgrade those abilities or qualities incapable of direct observation and measurement...[such as] creativity, sensitivity and intuition, the ‘soft’ qualities, which are difficult to measure” (Townley, 1994, p. 62). Standardized ways to document and measure learning emerged from the discourses of “scientism” and social efficiency which value instrumental knowledge, prediction, and control.

Historically, this scientific, technical-rational discourse corresponds with the logic of capitalism:

The abstraction process generated by science, in which the natural world was emptied of meaning and reduced to quantitative value, is paralleled by the

abstraction process created by capitalism, in which all objects, including labor itself, are subsumed to exchange value as mediated by money. In both cases, a reductionism takes over placing the entire world within the frame of technological manipulation for power and profit. (Best & Kellner, 1997, p. 200)

Accountability systems can be seen as part of a capitalist logic in which predictability and control are seen as necessary to reduce risk and maximize profits. “Hierarchical relationships of authority, means/ends analyses, and continuous regulation are intended to ensure this predictability in institutions and everyday matters. Rationalization, then, treats human beings as variables to be manipulated along with materials, time, and space to ensure predictable products and profits from material, ideational or social manufacturing” (Shannon, 2001, p. 3). Accountability, efficiency, and management discourses become the sine qua non of the institutions and practices of capitalist societies.

Similar to the importance of accounting systems to capitalism, education has developed a “romance with quantification” (Langemann, 2000, p. xi). The “bottom line” of schooling is measured by having objectified standards and outcomes that can be measured by standardized, objective measurements of teaching and learning. In this context, teaching and learning must be known and articulated in ways that allow them to be managed and measured so they may be rendered conventional and calculable. For example, according to the *Handbook*, the teaching standards “define specific teaching behaviors that, based on research and current practice, influence student achievement” (p. 7). Accordingly, these can be measured and assessed using data collected in student, parent, and colleague surveys. In the 360-degree evaluation system, a “central idea that defines [the] teaching assessment procedure is to ensure that everyone within [the] school is focused, through their everyday endeavors, on high quality instruction for students” (*Handbook*, p. 5). The “Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs)” and the 15 Teaching Standards are intended to ensure this focus in everyday endeavors and achievement data, and data collected from multiple input sources are assumed to measure the teaching and learning taking place in the school.

Another important context shaping educational reform discourses is that of corporate consumer capitalism. Schooling is seen as central to training students in the skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary to compete in a globalized and post-industrial work force. Schools have also typically served the important role of sorting and efficiently allocating individuals in a highly stratified society. This has resulted in an emphasis on education as a means for social mobility or maintaining one’s social standing. As Labaree (1997) points out, this view of education as consumer good results in a view of students and parents as clients who ask the question, “What can school do for me, regardless of what it does for others” (p. 51)? Labaree believes this perspective has become the dominant view of educational purpose. As Manatt (1997) suggests in his description of the 360-degree evaluation process, the multiple data approach means that teachers are expected to “listen to their customers, namely parents, students and other teachers” (p.10).

According to Labaree (1997), parents and students want an educational system that stratifies, ranks, and sorts, and helps them gain competitive advantage. In particular, “it is the elite parents that see the most to gain from the special distinctions offered by a stratified educational system, and therefore they are the ones who play the game of academic one-upmanship most aggressively” (Labaree, 1997, p. 54). As a result, education is valued for extrinsic rewards such as status, prestige, and reputation, rather than for intrinsic values. Labaree argues that this consumer conception of education has resulted in an overriding concern for “contest mobility” in which winning is emphasized over learning and private gain over efficiency: “The essence of schooling then becomes the accumulation of exchange values (grades, credits, and credentials) that can be cashed in for social status rather than the acquisition of use values (such as the knowledge of algebra or the ability to participate in democratic governance)” (p. 67). Similarly, data serves the purpose of having exchange value that can be used for comparative purposes so that “clients” know how their “product” stacks up against other “products.” Data, such as that provided in the school’s annual report, helps clients consider the quality of the education they are consuming and how it compares to (and prepares students for) other educational opportunities.

These discourses shape the ways teaching and learning are constructed as measurable entities that can be assessed using various sources of data. They provide maps through which teaching and learning are known and represented in particular ways: as discrete behaviors that can be observed and measured; as ways to “focus...the teacher’s role in student learning and achievement; help recognize and commend good teaching...; communicate clear and specific performance standards and criteria...; be fair and extend due process to all parties; and provide information to assist in personnel decisions, including assignment, transfers, and continuing employment” (*Handbook*, p. 4).

Normalizing Judgment

In “The Means of Correct Training,” Foucault (1977) notes that the chief function of disciplinary power is correct training and the production of knowledge. Discipline is made possible through surveillance and the calculated gaze that judges and instills norms as disciplinary mechanisms. According to Foucault, normalizing judgment “brings subjects in line with what is expected of them; it has as its function reducing gaps” and “it must therefore be essentially corrective” (p. 179). Normalizing judgment, then, creates norms and standards against which individuals can be observed and measured. It “enmeshes the individual in a series of calculative norms and standards” (Townley, 1994, p. 86).

The 15 Teaching Standards fall within four performance areas: effective planning and preparation; productive teaching; learning environment; and learning community responsibilities. The standards give definition to the goals and objectives of the evaluation and professional development system. They are presented in rubric form and have three general performance categories: behaviors that indicate a teacher does not meet the standard, meets the standard, or exceeds the standard. They are described as

behavioral objectives defining specific teaching behaviors that influence student achievement.

This provides an example of what Foucault (1977) referred to as a “panoptic modality of power” whereby juridical systems, based on certain standards or universal norms, define “juridical subjects” according to seemingly egalitarian norms. According to Foucault, these frameworks establish “disciplines [that] characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another and, if necessary, disqualify and invalidate” (p. 223). The 15 Teaching Standards define what it means to effectively plan and prepare for teaching, productively teach, create and maintain productive learning environments, and fulfill learning community responsibilities and make possible the “disciplinary power to observe” (p. 224) by defining what will be judged.

According to the *Handbook*, the standards are to be used for self-reflection, professional growth, and evaluation. This interesting blend of self-reflection, professional growth, and evaluation defines teacher professionalism as meeting the standards and having strong and current content knowledge “to take initiative, to take risks, and...responsibility for continuously improving instructional practices” (p. 7). However, on the same page it notes that if a faculty member doesn’t meet one or more of the teaching standards he or she may be placed on the “Intensive Assistance Track,” which will result in support “decided between the principal and teacher, with clear, observable expectations outlined in the improvement plan” (p. 7). The initiative, risks, and responsibilities a teacher takes must fall within the scope and sequence of the specific teaching behaviors outlined in the teaching standards. Here we see the ordering of multiplicities and possibilities circumscribed by the standards, protocols, and procedures identified in the *Handbook*. Rigid and narrow conceptions of professional growth may be one consequence of a system in which “quality means conforming to specifications” (Manatt, 1997).

The *Handbook* states the goals of the professional growth and evaluation system. As mentioned earlier, it states the system will be used to “help recognize and commend good teaching,” “implement and support” the school’s mission, beliefs, and values, “ensure that professional goal(s) are aligned with school-wide priorities, and provide information to assist in personnel decisions” (p. 4). In many cases these professional growth goals are secondary to the needs and requirements of the organization, such as school-wide priorities and personnel decisions. While it undoubtedly tries to strike a balance between personal growth, improved instruction, and student learning, the overarching priorities of the system are paramount.

The heading, “It’s All About Instruction,” is on the next page of the *Handbook* and highlights the relationship between the ESLRs and instruction. This section in the *Handbook* also notes that the system of professional growth and evaluation “vests both teachers and evaluators with a responsibility to move the school towards strategic goal(s)” (p. 6). As Foucault (1977) reminds us, such approaches may “appear as methods of training that enable individuals to become integrated into...general demands” (p. 222). In this case, the goals of professional learning integrate individual teachers into the

general goals and demands of the school. These normative practices support the alignment and “ordering of multiplicities” in ways that are consistent with the school’s strategic goals.

However, there is also a high degree of uncertainty, indefiniteness, and open-endedness in the overarching goals of continuous improvement that are stated throughout the *Handbook*. This idea of continuous learning and improvement parallels a neoliberal view of progress with its vision of limitless growth, expansion, and consumption (Lasch, 1991). It provokes a certain anxiety due to the awareness that that there are certain norms and standards according to which one is judged at the same time one is expected to exceed these standards and continue to grow and improve in ways that are supposedly continually observed and measured. Niebuhr (1941) provides a sense of the anxiety this vision of limitless growth and improvement causes:

In short, man, being both free and bound, both limited and limitless, is anxious. Anxiety is the inevitable concomitant of the paradox of freedom and finiteness in which man is involved....He is also anxious because he does not know the limits of his possibilities....He is anxious about both the end toward which he strives and the abyss of nothingness into which he may fall. The ambition of man to be something is always partly prompted by the fear of meaninglessness which threatens him by reason of the contingent nature of his existence. His creativity is therefore always corrupted by some effort to overcome contingency by raising precisely what is contingent to absolute and unlimited dimensions. (Niebuhr, 1941, cited in West, 1989, p.160)

In other words, what is contingent, such as the conditions and contexts of teaching and learning, is viewed as having limitless possibilities. In the introduction of the *Handbook* it notes that the main aim of professional growth is “to continuously improve student learning” (p. 1). An underlying assumption seems to be that there are no limits to student learning, no endpoint, and to meet this goal teachers must “seek to continuously improve” instruction. It is never explicitly stated what continuous improvement might mean or what it might look like, but it is held up as the result the system is designed to produce. To achieve this aim it proposes “substantive and reflective dialogue about teaching and learning” (p. 12), but again, doesn’t ever identify what this is, what it might look like in practice, or how collecting multiple sources of data might result in or lead to this desired result.

In this introductory section, we see the kinds of presuppositions, goals, and objectives that Rose (1999) suggests underpin or govern the “hybrid assemblages” and disciplinary technologies shaping practical rationalities that guide behavior. On-going learning, continuous improvement, never-ending achievement, and not only meeting but also surpassing teaching standards become ill-defined and elusive goals that one is expected to aim for in this professional development and evaluation approach. Success is “a goal without a satiation point, and the desire for it, instead of abating, increases with achievement” (Kardiner, 1945, p. 445). Even with standards intended to describe teacher behaviors that mark “effective” and “productive” teaching, the goals outlined in the *Handbook* seem to have no satiation point.

Foucault (1977) also commented on the indefinite nature of discipline. He noted that ideal discipline would be

an interrogation without end, an investigation that would be extended without limit to a meticulous and ever more analytical observation, a judgment that would at the same time be the constitution of a file that was never closed...the ruthless curiosity of an examination, a procedure that would be at the same time the permanent measure of a gap in relation to an inaccessible norm and the asymptomatic movement that strives to meet in infinity. (p. 272)

This infinitely minute web of panoptic techniques in which data is collected from 360 degrees of observation to measure individuals against innumerable standards that teachers are encouraged to exceed while they strive for continuous improvement seems to characterize the type of power that “never ceases its interrogation, its inquisition, its registration of truth” (Foucault, 1980, p. 93). Taken together, the emphasis on infinite growth, data, satisfying “clients,” and “populational reasoning” enmeshes the 360-degree model of professional learning and evaluation in a web of disciplinary power.

As a result, normalizing judgment serves to provoke anxiety and uncertainty about whether or not one is truly meeting the standards since they are continually shifting in a sea of endless improvement and achievement. At the same time the individual is enmeshed in a series of calculative norms and standards they are also left awash in their yearning for continuous improvement that may make the very standards by which they are being judged irrelevant.

Technologies of the Self

Each person in the panoptic system is inscribed by normalizing judgment and the disciplinary technologies of observation and measurement: “the individual is both an object and a subject of power and knowledge” (Townley, 1994, p. 109). The individual follows rules, regulations, and requirements; goals, definitions of normality, and standards for behavior are referred to as guiding principles. Through orientations, socialization, and induction programs, systematic procedures and discursive strategies are put in place and utilized by individuals. Individuals internalize the discursive practices that organizations promote for continuous improvement and productivity. As Townley (1994) notes, organizations emphasize “the identification of individual skills and knowledge required for the organization to meet its strategic objectives” (p. 120). Personal growth and learning must add value to the organization. A set of disciplinary technologies develop to “shape actions, processes and outcomes in desired directions” (Rose, 1999, p. 4). These technologies of the self, then, can be understood as a set of practices or techniques through which one knows, changes, relates to, regulates, or works on one’s self and one’s thoughts and actions in order to meet the goals and requirements of broader organizational systems.

Drawing on Foucault, Nicholas Rose (1996) provides a definition of these technologies as “any assembly structured by a practical rationality governed by a more or less conscious goal. Human technologies are hybrid assemblages of knowledges, instruments, persons, systems of judgment, buildings and spaces, underpinned at the programmatic level by certain presuppositions and objectives about human beings” (p. 26). In the case of panoptic systems, the goals that govern these “assemblages” include the shaping and assurance of desired kinds of behavior by normalizing judgment. Most importantly, however, these disciplinary technologies and the power relationships they encompass circulate through the production, distribution, and use of certain texts that outline and delimit the boundaries of desired and acceptable practices. These texts formalize and naturalize power and serve to socialize or inculcate people into the discursive practices they embody.

As a result of panoptic systems of disciplinary power, individuals learn to monitor their own behavior through the disciplinary technologies of self-regulation. Norms and principles of the system structure the possible field of action for individuals. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) notes the subtle transition from physical forms of discipline and punishment to these more social and psychological disciplinary techniques. There is a transition toward the use of disciplinary technologies such as timetables, documentation, hierarchical observation, normalizing judgments, and examination. Power also instills methods of self-evaluation and self-regulation that influence the actions of people while claiming to bring about salvation, self-improvement, or continuous learning. In other words, the exercise of power is perfected in several ways:

Because it can reduce the number of those who exercise it, while increasing the number of those on whom it is exercised....Because, in these conditions, its strength is that it never intervenes, it is exercised spontaneously and without noise, it constitutes a mechanism whose effects follow from one another. Because, without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, it acts directly on individuals; it gives ‘power of mind over mind’. The panoptic schema makes any apparatus of power more intense: it assures its economy (in material, in personnel, in time); it assures its efficacy by its preventative character, its continuous functioning and its automatic mechanisms. It is a way of obtaining from power ‘in hitherto unexampled quantity’, ‘a great and new instrument of government . . . its great excellence consists in the great strength it is capable of giving to any institution it may be thought proper to apply it to’ (Foucault, 1977, p. 206).

This disciplinary power of panopticism is “simultaneously productive and repressive....Indeed, the productive nature of these technologies is the principal reason why individuals actively and voluntarily participate in these practices....They confirm and sustain a sense of identity through which individuals secure knowledge of themselves, their competence, abilities, etc.” (Townley, 1994, p. 141). For example, the 360-degree professional growth and evaluation model is designed to socialize and integrate new teachers in discourses that shape their work and how they view their work.

The *Handbook* provides a set of very detailed diagrams and charts that lay out each step in the assessment process. For new teachers it carefully delimits the assessment activities, the calendar for completion, responsibilities, resources, and products that will be completed. It also provides detailed charts as planners for each track and specific protocols for collecting multiple input data. Charts are provided to explain the procedures, roles, and responsibilities for collecting each kind of data (teacher to teacher, parent to teacher, and student to teacher survey data). Actions and responsibilities are outlined. For example, in collecting the teacher to teacher survey data it is noted that the human resources department will send out the instruments, each teacher is to hand five of the surveys to colleagues of their choice, the supervisor/principal will choose an additional two surveys to send to other colleagues associated with the person's work, and then the teachers who complete the survey are to turn in the form to the human resources office in a sealed envelope. All of the data is then sent to Iowa State University's School Improvement Model project to process the data. They will send back feedback data in a sealed envelope for the teacher and his or her facilitator/supervisor. A triangulation chart for collecting multiple feedback data is provided to show how data is triangulated, which in this case means that data is collected from three different sources: student surveys, peer surveys, and parent surveys.

For new teachers, the professional growth and evaluation process is introduced during New Teacher Orientation; the teacher is to meet with their "goal facilitator" (the principal) and establish two professional goals linked to the teaching standards. The "evaluator" (the principal) conducts a series of informal classroom visits and feedback and drafts a progress report by December 15. Before winter break, the evaluator and teacher meet to discuss and finalize the draft progress report, unless "significant teaching performance concerns are observed" (p. 7).

The chart includes a checklist of steps the new teacher must follow. General headings include:

- New teacher introduction;
- Collaborative goal setting between new teacher and the goal setting facilitator for the coming school year;
- Evaluator writes progress report prior to December 15 and conducts teacher performance conference;
- Data collection;
- Collating data: Teacher gathers information into a professional growth folder;
- Teacher reflection;
- End of year goal attainment meeting with goal setting facilitator;
- Evaluator receives copy of multiple feedback data, places teacher on professional growth and evaluation track. (pp. 10-11)

The goals new teachers set must be aligned with the teaching standards. Teacher performance is then evaluated by the principal/evaluator; the evaluation protocol includes a written narrative report by the principal based on classroom visitations; and copies of goals, collated data, and teacher reflections are submitted to the principal. Procedures are

followed, people are observed and evaluated, records are kept. While it might be hard to see how this system differs from typical evaluation systems, the main difference is placed on the collection of data. This data is drawn from the 360-degree survey questionnaires distributed to and completed by parents, peers, and students, and classroom visit notes and discussions with the evaluator. With the 360-degree model, procedures require that people are ceaselessly observed and evaluated within and outside the classroom, by parents, students, colleagues, and administrators. Instead of a single person, such as the principal, being able to observe and evaluate a teacher, practically anyone and everyone who comes into contact with that teacher during the course of a normal teaching day has the potential opportunity to observe and evaluate.

According to Richard Manatt (1997), feedback from 360-degrees is different in two significant ways:

First, student achievement is not improving using a single evaluator. Data never seems adequate to hold anyone accountable. Second, conventional evaluation from the top results in every employee in each job-title group being rated similarly. Stated another way, traditional evaluation of educators lacks the ability to sort. (n.p.) (Emphasis added.)

In other words, an underlying premise is that data collected from 360 degrees can hold people more accountable and has the ability to sort teachers. For what purposes is unclear, but one supposes these purposes would be in accordance with the goals outlined in the *Handbook*. Manatt (1997) argues that “the overarching purpose of performance evaluation is to improve performance year after year” and provide “ironclad accountability” (n.p.). He further makes a case for teachers listening to their “customers, namely parents, students, and other teachers” (n.p.).

To outline the technologies that make up the hybrid assemblages of knowledges, instruments, persons, and systems of judgment that Rose (1996) mentioned, it is important to include the new teacher orientation, key procedures and protocols surrounding the collection and use of specific types of data, the knowledges and behaviors outlined in the teaching standards, the procedures for evaluating the teacher (either through survey questionnaires or classroom visits), and the systems of judgment provided by data designed to sort and hold people accountable. These features of the evaluation system make use of disciplinary technologies such as timetables, individuation or sorting, documentation, hierarchical observation, normalizing judgments, and examination. Procedures and protocols are designed to ensure maximum efficiency, accountability, and rehabilitation, if necessary. Teachers never know when they are being observed and evaluated, for it could be by anyone and at any time. The panoptic schema suggested by the 360-degree approach structures the field of action of teachers in the area of professional learning and evaluation. It forecloses other possibilities for accountability and evaluation and for teachers’ professional learning experiences.

These technologies become technologies of the self through continual emphasis on teachers developing their own professional growth plan consistent with the teaching

standards and analyzing the data collected about their teaching performance. According to the *Handbook*, teachers are expected to “self-reflect” and “have a choice in how they respond to formative assessment” (p. 2). The *Handbook* also “recommends that one day each spring be given to each teacher for the purpose of analyzing teaching performance data and engaging in reflective self-assessment against the teaching standards” (p. 6). The *Handbook* highlights the relationship between self-evaluation and professional growth: “By defining our expectations through the Teaching Standards, thus allowing greater responsibility by our faculty to take ownership in their professional growth, a considerable amount of professional development decision-making is given back to the teacher” (p. 7). The teacher is expected to take ownership in ways that are aligned with the objectives of power.

Numbers

Putting in place a system that formalizes the collection of certain kinds of data to be collected in certain ways formalizes or makes more “official” certain kinds of data and certain kinds of data collection. Certain kinds of documentation and examination are privileged in the *Handbook*. Student surveys, parent surveys, and peer surveys are given a privileged status in the system, while other forms of meaningful data and data collection are not mentioned. When certain goals, such as “meaningful feedback,” “helpful discussions,” and “time to reflect and assess” are combined with these assumptions, it is assumed that the kind of system put into place will promote and operationalize these goals by collecting and referring to certain kinds of data. The data collected, the techniques and procedures put in place, the knowledges, instruments, persons, and systems of judgment for feedback, discussion, and reflection shape the ways teachers think about, talk about, and practice professional growth and evaluation.

As Nicholas Rose (1999) notes, “To govern is to cut experience in certain ways” (p. 31). It means to identify, inscribe, and objectify certain behaviors so they can be observed and recorded. Rose argues that political judgment is implicit in what is measured, how it is measured, and how results are presented and interpreted. They turn qualitative experience into data and make it amenable to control by establishing domains and classifications through which people think of themselves and their experiences. According to Rose, numbers bring order to situations that are chaotic, uncertain, and complex; they impose illusions of objectivity through quantification. They give rise to the “calculable person, the person rendered calculable to others and to him- or herself in terms of numbers” (p. 213). They turn individuals into calculating selves.

In the 360-degree evaluation system, the surveys that are completed by parents, peers, and students provide data based on a Likert scale that asks respondents to rate the teacher according to whether or not certain behaviors are exhibited very often (5), often (4), sometimes (3), not often (2), never (1), or does not apply (0). The teacher uses this data to compare how he or she stacks up against the standards and to other teachers in the school.

Popkewitz (2001) refers to this rationality as “populational reasoning”:

Populational reasoning divide[s] people into specific units that [can] be calculated, organized and reflected on...[and produces] new cultural forms for constructing individuality. Its 'reasoning' is one in which the person is defined normatively in relation to statistical aggregates that ascribe a 'growth' or 'development' of a person that can be monitored and supervised. (p. 162)

The emphasis on data in data-driven schools and the use of surveys to guide professional growth or development seems consistent with this rationality. However, Popkewitz also reminds us that it is important that this data is selected from a great array of possibilities: "The selection processes operate as 'lenses' that define problems through the classifications that are sanctioned" (p. 163). This selection establishes parameters for how people inquire, organize, and understand experience and themselves. It circumscribes the methods and approaches people use for professional learning and development.

Concluding Thoughts

Foucault (1977; 1991) helps us understand the disciplinary effects of panoptic schemas, such as those offered by the 360-degree approach. He argues that it reduces the inefficiency of multiplicity, such as the possibility of teachers pursuing their own professional learning paths. It makes these potentialities more manageable by ordering them around standards and benchmarks and reducing and managing possible antagonisms or resistances to the system's various elements and requirements. The disciplinary effects fix, arrest, or regulate movement, clear up confusion, and dissipate groupings of individuals wanting to do things in unpredictable ways.

It is apparent from this analysis of the 360-degree approach that the selection of certain data is designed to regulate teacher learning. The purposes of collecting data, the data selected, how we choose to make sense of and use that data, how the data are represented and become "knowledge," and what kind of "knowledge" it becomes is determined by power relationships demarcated in the system of accountability. Contexts matter. In this particular setting, data are viewed as means for holding people accountable and communicating to stakeholders what is valued. The framework underlying this system is one of accountability, sorting, documentation, examination, and inspection. Data collection and analysis serves the interests of school-wide stakeholders as a way to monitor performance, provide normalizing judgments, and make sure the school is continuously improving the performance of teachers and students alike.

The 360-degree approach to professional growth and evaluation is a highly centralized and standardized approach to professional learning that allows room for individuals to meet the demands of the system, but limits teachers' opportunities to consider other data, develop their own standards in a community of practice, and pursue their professional learning and evaluation in other ways that might be more meaningful.

Cherryholmes (1988) argues that post-structural understandings, such as those offered by Foucault, offer possibilities for increased freedom. By troubling data and problematizing a system in which teachers make use of data for evaluation and professional learning, I

demonstrate how certain rationalities and practices are designed to discipline teacher learning and evaluation. I show how disciplinary techniques that support panoptic surveillance are “actual things used in the governing process. These include the calculations, techniques, apparatuses, and procedures through which authorities seek to embody and give effect to governmental ambitions” (Heyning, 2001, p. 294), such as ordering multiplicities according to the goals and standards set forth in the *Handbook*. The text also constructs a professional self-premised on a teleology of continuous learning, responsiveness to data and “clients,” and a willingness and ability to correct and improve itself in the name of professional development and learning. Discursive relations, technologies, and practices set forth in the *Handbook* have disciplining effects that order and manage multiplicities and limit the range of options available to teachers for professional learning. It is my hope that a critical awareness of such effects can have liberating effects that restore the range of options to teachers’ professional lives.

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