

EVALUATION CONFERENCE



forms are only one way in which learning might be improved.

If we're looking for improvement in learning, and taking it that evaluation forms for courses or professors may be used in conjunction with, or apart from, other ways of improving learning, we might well look at some of the following:

- a) an increase in the length of the academic year. Canada has one of the shortest academic year years in the world, and it may well be - particularly if we were to spend a considerable amount of time discussing the goals of courses and in evaluating them - that we should consider lengthening it to bring it in line with the academic year in the United States.
- b) Traditional examination techniques which included, among other things, final examinations set by other people than the professor teaching the course and marked by other people. The exams were in a sense "public". If one wants to see how much learning is taking place, perhaps it is better to examine the amount of learning by examining it rather than by conducting opinion surveys of the way in which the learning was achieved.
- c) In-service training for faculty.
- d) Pre-service training for faculty, perhaps as part of the Ph.D.

e) The use of some of the new techniques of "observing" in classrooms - in effect, a study of the language and interactions in a given class. These have been used with great effect to improve learning in other places.

f) Traditional techniques for evaluating faculty, based primarily on the judgement of peers and superiors.

g) The use of outside teams of evaluators, or individual evaluators - not every year, but, say, at least once every five years. This would be a technique rather like that used for accrediting medical schools.

h) The use of standardized national and international tests - for example, the college entrance board examination, the advanced standing examinations, the graduate record examinations, and so on.

i) A greater use of faculty working together in courses so that they may help one another and at the same time bring an element of "publicness" into the over-privacy of many present classrooms.

No doubt there are other things we should consider as well, but looking back on a most successful weekend it seems to me that on another occasion we might do better to widen the range of the ways in which we can improve learning and teaching.

I would also like to add my own views of change

in the university. Of all the metaphors that are used increasingly I prefer the evolutionary metaphor. Changes are tested on individual members of a species not on the whole species. One strives for variety, experiment, adaptation to particular contexts, and viability within particular contexts. Metaphors based on single purposes or rigid systems of planning appeal to many people but they may not in fact be the best way of inducing desirable change in an institution like a university.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who planned the weekend, and hope that we may have more in the future.

