

# Significant Books

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**American Government: The Clash of Issues.** James A. Burkhart, Henry C. Bush, Samuel Krislov and Raymond L. Lee. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1960.

This book represents a new and bold approach to the study of civics. Those who like their civics textbooks to be organized along traditional lines of presentation based on the description of the structure and the functioning of branches of federal and local governments, will find it difficult to use this textbook, which is organized topically and presents issues and problems in the workings of American democracy.

The authors are quite aware of the boredom of the structured, descriptive teaching of civics which goes on in many high schools. They suggest that, instead, the American government and the functioning of our democratic process could be made more meaningful to students if presented in the form of a discussion of different points of view on topics such as: "States' Rights and the Constitution," "Civil Liberties—How Free Can We Be and Still Be Safe?" "The Presidency—The Hardest Job in the World?" "Congress—Does It Lead Us?" "Big Business and Politics, Big Labor and Politics." Problems presented are in the form of contributions by leading American and foreign scholars and leaders in their several fields.

The problems presented are genuine

and have relevance to contemporary political, economic and social life. There is no effort to equivocate or soft-pedal controversial issues. The authors correctly assume that our youth is ready, eager and able, when taught by a competent and scholarly teacher, to deal intelligently with problems involved in the never-ending process of improving our democratic way of life. They frankly aim to teach, in the only way effective teaching can truly be attained, by challenging the student to think critically about the issues presented and to weigh carefully divergent approaches and points of view, and then allow him to make his own formulations and syntheses.

The authors are scrupulously objective in their selection of contributions on different topics. Thus in discussing "The Government and Welfare," the textbook includes contributions by J. K. Galbraith and Samuel B. Pettengill. Likewise in presenting the issue of a federally supported health insurance, the text carefully presents two opposing views both written by outstanding physicians.

The excellent exposition of the challenge presented to America by the Soviet Union includes lucid, simple and meaningful contributions by, among others, Dean Acheson, Henry Kissinger, and Dag Hammarskjöld.

The scope of the office of the President is presented in an interesting and stimulating discussion by foremost scholars

and experts in the field, including Sidney Hyman, Russell Baker and Clinton Rossiter. Articles dealing with Congress and the legislative process discuss the relationship between the Congress and the President, the good and the bad in the seniority rule, the positive and the negative in the cloture rule, the beneficial and harmful results of congressional investigations, and the advantages and disadvantages of our oftentimes slow legislative process.

Civics and social studies teachers who have been searching for a textbook or supplementary text which would give them an opportunity for creative and challenging instruction would do well to turn to this volume.

—Reviewed by MARK M. KRUG, Assistant Professor of Education in History, University of Chicago, Illinois.

**Education for Effective Thinking: An Introductory Text.** William H. Burton and others. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1960. 508 p.

Burton, Kimball and Wing assume that the school has a role in the development of experiences through which an individual may control, analyze or test his own thinking. In this book, they address themselves to the important task of defining that role. The authors' strategy is to reach teachers and thus effect a change in style and content of teaching. The authors' purpose is to present a text for prospective teachers from which they will gain an appreciation for both logical structure and psychological processes of effective thinking. The text is intended primarily for use in methods and curriculum materials courses, although it might also be used supplementary to texts in educational psychology.

The volume's 21 chapters are grouped

into three sections on the general subject of thinking: its definition, its organization and dynamics, and its planned development in children through the curricular content of the various subject-matter areas. The last chapter is devoted to a review of the published tests of critical thinking and a discussion of informal evaluation techniques.

The organized progression of an abstract description of what constitutes thinking, leading to process and then to application in subject-matter fields is smooth except for an interruption by two chapters which review the empirical research on factors affecting, and method of teaching, critical thinking. While these two chapters are among the most readable of the book, their content is (a) isolated and almost totally ignored in previous and subsequent chapters, and (b) extremely one-sided with regard to the question of experimental *versus* clinical evidence on thought processes. Evidence and theory emanating from clinical experience with children and adults whose thinking is upset by emotional intrusions are entirely omitted from these chapters.

Because thinking is such a broad topic, it is difficult indeed to attempt to write an introductory text which will treat the subject adequately. A *focus on particular aspects of thinking* is necessary to avoid a diffuseness of treatment antithetical to successful communication. This, in the opinion of the reviewer, is the first requirement which any discussion of thinking must meet. It is not met by the authors of this volume, in spite of their attempt to narrow their focus to "effective" or "critical" thinking. In addition to chapters reviewing empirical research, chapters on applications to the fields of social studies, mathematics, language arts, and science,

on their concept of critical thinking and a review of instruments and techniques of evaluating critical thinking, the authors present extended discussions of inductive and deductive reasoning, and psychological processes involved in problem solving and concept formation. While one may sympathize with the authors' feeling that a need for authoritative treatment of each of these areas of inquiry exists, it is apparent that such cannot be, or at least has not been, provided within a volume of 500 pages. )

Because thinking about "thinking" becomes increasingly abstract as one becomes immersed in the process, analysis of the process itself soon ceases to be communicable unless conscious efforts are made by the thinker-about-thinking to ground his communication about his subject in very concrete slices and sequences of the behavior he is labeling "thinking." The authors' handling of the

conscious aspects of critical thinking is successfully done, in terms of this second requirement of behavioral specificity.

A third requirement which any discussion of thinking should meet may be stated thus: Because thinking, like all behavior, is subject to the behavior's motives, any application of thinking must take into account the sources and development of motives leading to or from the aspect of thinking under consideration, particularly if the explication is to serve the purpose of developing habits of thinking. In the absence of such an explication, any consideration of how one develops critical thinking is impossible. The authors provide their consideration of motivation in Chapter 2, "A General Description of the Thinking Processes," and Chapter 3, "The Development of Attitudes Favorable to Thinking."

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Memory, imagination, believing, intuition, and insight, along with percepts and concepts, do not constitute thinking itself as the authors wish to define it, but rather the materials *used by* thought—that is, consciously controlled and critical thought. The conception that thought itself, along with the materials of thought, is closely controlled and directed by a more basic and usually unrecognized motivational network rather than by “an urge to base thinking and action on knowledge which . . . [is] . . . reliable” or by an outside world of obvious reality poses some difficulty for the authors. Just how thinking is an agent which uses, rather than a resource which is itself used, by the individual, is not clearly elaborated.

There is a clear implication that the world of reality is not only independent but that it acts directly upon the normal person's senses without any screening or distortion by personal, “subjective” factors. If only “genuinely stupid” persons act in defiance of reality, then normal, non-stupid persons act in consonance with reality with little or no influence from subjective factors.

Evidence from both experimental and clinical psychology is overwhelmingly in opposition to the view that the “normal” person's thinking is essentially rational or reality-oriented. Briefly, the evidence points to a view that, while man often and perhaps even usually may appear to be acting or thinking in consonance with reality, without influence from subjective motives, upon more comprehensive observation he is still seen as being very much directed by subjective motives but that these motives are presently demanding (some say allowing) reality-centered thinking. But if that motivational structure changes in certain respects, the objective world ap-

pears to lose its hold on his thinking. Actually it never had any hold not demanded (or allowed) by the “subjective” factors.

It is the writer's belief that the volume under review could, with much selection, form the basis for an extremely stimulating workbook for a curriculum materials course in social studies, and possibly other areas of the curriculum as well.

The first chapter, if combined with the exercises at the end of Chapter 5 and some of the materials of Chapter 18, on social studies, could be very useful in this regard. It is possible that other, more focused and more practical materials could be made available in this way, avoiding the diffuseness and consequent superficiality which attend the volume as it stands.

—Reviewed by FREDERICK F. LIGHT-HALL, *Assistant Professor of Education, University of Chicago, Illinois.*

**Educational Research for Classroom Teachers.** *John B. Barnes.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1960.

The author calls on the classroom teacher to concern himself with teaching that is research-oriented. In very readable style this short volume points out the teacher's obligation to carry on research in the classroom. It also presents simple, yet basic, methods of research and many practical suggestions for its conduct. Teachers continue to face questions as to “what to teach” and “how to teach.” The teacher (or administrator) who succeeds in uniting teaching and research will deepen his appreciation of the educative process and will become more aware of his own value to the profession.

This book begins with a brief, concise history of American educational re-

search, which is followed by an expansion on modern educational research, its definitions, types and methods. The author discusses three basic methods of educational research: historical, descriptive, and experimental. He points out a weakness in the historical method when it lacks direct, firsthand contact with the subject. The educational researcher then needs to turn to reliable, supportive materials including official documents, records of meetings, and reports of research studies. The descriptive method attempts to describe the current status of a given situation. It is a kind of inventory assessment. In the experimental method, attempts are made to examine the impact that one or several variables will have when all other components are held constant. Mr. Barnes warns against considering merely trying new methods as synonymous with use of the experimental method.

He suggests some minimal considerations in the use of experimental methods of educational research:

1. The problem should arise from a considered intellectual curiosity.
2. The hypothesis or anticipated outcome should be clearly stated. Avoid "trying something to see what happens."
3. Identify as many variables as possible before actual experimentation begins.
4. Select an experimental design for the study which is practical in terms of classroom operations.
5. Employ the most valid and reliable measuring devices at your disposal.
6. Plan for other participants and observers to share in the project. Shun urges to "go it alone."
7. Plan the experiment so that it can be as faithfully and accurately reproduced as possible. (p. 46-47)

A major portion of the book is given over to five case studies. Each study was an educational research project carried

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on by regular classroom teachers. These are not ideal studies. They are not models. They are actual situations. The author calls upon the reader purposely to examine each case. The cases are open to criticism. The reasons for presenting such cases are fourfold:

1. To illustrate the naturalness of teacher problems
2. To suggest ways to approach such problems
3. To demonstrate specific research methods and techniques
4. To provide the raw material to stimulate the individual reader to analyze critically examples of teacher research. (p. 77)

The first case is a teacher's study of a child who entered school late. The second illustrates how one classroom teacher conducted an individual study of a boy labeled "discipline problem." The third is a descriptive study of a

group of "rapid learners" in grades 11 and 12. The fourth is an experimental study of achievement of paired groups involved in two methods of grouping for committee work. The fifth study deals with an experiment in the teaching of reading in the fourth grade. Each case study has content which is of special interest, but each is more important for its research methods, examples of records kept, interviews, tables, and steps taken for controlled experiments in the conduct of the study.

In the appendices the author speaks directly to the administrator concerning his role in educational research. He dis-

cusses the value and the characteristics of a qualified consultant.

This book meets the in-service need of teachers who should be conducting action research. In summary, the author states that educational research should be a natural and rewarding concomitant to successful classroom teaching. This book, one in the Putnam Series in Education, deserves the attention of all interested in vitalizing the "what" and "how" of teaching through active research at the classroom level.

—Reviewed by ROY R. WILSON, *Research Associate in Education, University of Chicago, Illinois.*

#### Research Offers Leads

*(Continued from page 413)*

pupil-teacher planning and the development of differentiated approaches within a class. Block-time scheduling and core programs make this even more effective, as a teacher gets to know a group intimately. Ingenious schedules are being fashioned, to give more chance for enrichment and exploration. The NASSP's Commission on Staff Utilization is pushing the frontiers with respect to independent study, directly adapted to the individual; it is working toward a goal of 40 percent of a youngster's time to be so spent.

#### Technological Aids

Backing all these efforts are the burgeoning technological aids and physical plant inventions. In foreign language instruction, elaborate tape-recording systems make the new audio-lingual meth-

ods easy to use. Table-size projection equipment is available for individuals and small groups. Programmed instruction *via* scrambled book or teaching machine is increasingly able to offer specific work needed by individuals. Instructional materials in a bewildering wealth make differentiation easier. The whole conceptualization and design of school plant is in ferment, with a tremendous array of individual study cubicles and resources laboratories, and a general flexibility that makes adaptation to peculiar needs steadily easier.

Just where all this will go no one can possibly say until much bold and visionary experimentation is behind us. But the prospect is thrilling. The old, formal stratification and compartmentalization have not paid off. It is time to invest daringly in opening up the system, to exploit the possibilities that invention provides, and to go direct to the unique individual without first submerging him in a type.

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