

# Significant Books

## Contributors:

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**Education and the Disadvantaged American. *Educational Policies Commission, NEA. Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1962, p. 39.***

**The Culturally Deprived Child. *Frank Riessman. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962, 140 p.***

Indicative of the proportions of the educational problems facing the urban communities is the appearance this year of two publications in this field. One is a statement by the Educational Policies Commission, *Education and the Disadvantaged American*, beamed at school administrators. This booklet clarifies the problem, identifies some characteristics of school program, staff, administration, facilities, and home-school-community relations, and recognizes the responsibility of the public.

Dr. Riessman's contribution, *The Culturally Deprived Child*, "a pioneer study of the underprivileged," throws light on the true nature of the problem. He has drawn upon his own rich experience and upon the experience and research of other educators, psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists. Addressed to teachers and "all social practitioners who are concerned with underprivileged groups," this book is meant to reduce "the cleavage between the deprived child and the school (which) appears to have reached new heights" (Preface).

Both publications contribute information to questions related to the magnitude

and the nature of this continuing problem.

1. What are the proportions of this problem? The Policies statement estimates: "If present trends are not reversed, half the inhabitants of the large city of 1970 may be disadvantaged—persons unable to participate constructively in their society" (p. 10). Riessman supports this view (p. 1).

2. Are the disadvantaged interested in education? Riessman's study (p. 10) indicates that 50 percent of the lower white and 70 percent of the Negro socio-economic groups said that education was what they missed most in life. Other studies support this idea. Both publications put the responsibility upon the school for working out a successful approach to discover or create interest in school attendance.

3. What does "education" mean to these in-migrants? Riessman points out that it is not an academically based, future-oriented education which captivates these people; it is a realistic, pragmatic education which bears fruit quickly in success, friendships, jobs, purchasing knowledge and upward mobility. Interest in the three Rs and science-related knowledge runs high. Concrete experience is valued more than abstractions (p. 12-14).

4. What seems to be the greatest obstacle to the education of these children? Pointed out by the Policies statement are differences between family and neighborhood cultures and school culture,

neighborhood tensions, lack of leaders, and social and job discrimination practices (p. 5-10). Acknowledging these, Riessman holds that the "Achilles heel" of these children is their inability to communicate in formal (school) language (p. 80-86).

5. Are these children inarticulate and unsophisticated in their own surroundings? Riessman cites evidence that these areas are creative in language, often making contributions which become part of the accepted "public language" (p. 74-78).

6. Is the nature of their deprivation economic, social, or cultural? Economic and social—yes; cultural—not *per se*. It is more that their culture differs from that which is typical of middle class American life (Policies, p. 3-10, Riessman, p. 3, 25-35).

7. How can these people be approached to engender self-respect and trust in the school? Riessman implies that this must be done by contact, by sensitive and perceptive personnel (p. 21). The Policies statement advocates teacher contact in order to provide a model of the more sophisticated culture (p. 31).

8. Once they are in school, how shall the school deal with them? Tersely and decisively, the Policies statement clarifies the challenge that the school can exert a profound influence to equalize opportunity, to keep children in school, and to relate school and life relationships, enable children to progress, and nurture aspirations. Suggestions include kindergartens, especially prepared reading materials, speech teachers, environment-broadening experiences; for older children, a strong program of vocational education and work and study experience; and, for all, class size not to exceed 20 (p. 15-19). Riessman supports and expands many of these ideas, and

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illustrates how one teacher—and one city—work (p. 89-111).

9. Are there some "right approaches" to teaching these children? Yes, says Riessman. The teacher must be *consistent* in requirements, he must establish rapport and trust, and must clarify goals and steps of progress, placing emphasis throughout on verbal development and successful experience (p. 81-88). Riessman suggests many ideas for action (p. 112-29).

These books treat two vital aspects of the same problem: administrative responsibility, and teaching sensitivity and know-how. One establishes formally and clearly the importance of this educational problem to the American people, and delineates some principles of dealing with it. The other delves deeply into the places where the disadvantaged live, illuminating the component and interweaving parts of the problem: people, alive, valu-

ing, and aspiring; environments which inhibit, repress, even antagonize; and the school as a socially designated hope-giving institution.

—Reviewed by GERTRUDE M. LEWIS, *Specialist for Upper Grades, Office of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Washington, D. C.*

**In Defense of Youth. Earl C. Kelley.** *Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962. 145 p.*

There are two major schools of thought in education and psychology. One group looks at the behavior of children and youth from the perception, demand, control of an adult or some outside authority. The other examines it from the viewpoint of the behavior or learner—his needs, purposes, feelings or meanings—all under his perception and control. The author of this book takes the second position. He accepts the behaviors of youth as their best judgment according to their perception of the situation which they face at the moment of action. *But*, he wants to help them broaden their perception, deepen their meanings, mature their value judgments and he explains how the community and the school can do this.

The book is divided into three major sections. In Part I, "It's hard to be young in these times," there are six chapters devoted to the problems and needs of youth, together with a discussion of the false ideas held about them by adults. Part II, "How citizens are made," gives clear accounts of ways in which schools and other community organizations can, if they so desire, help youth become responsible citizens. In Part III, "The school is a good place for youth," the author wants a school where "acceptance and love replace rejection . . . where

the youth feel some ownership and involvement; where somebody cares about every single one of them; where there will be no second class citizens."

There are today no secondary schools in the United States where youth can reach this simple expectation. This fact is due to a dozen "false assumptions" (Chapter 13) about education generally held by "the man on the street" and "unfortunately by many teachers." And their false beliefs affect the schools: the more traditional the educators, the greater the effect or the more miseducative is the opportunity offered to youth.

While "our schools have many faults" (Chapter 14), there is hope for the better, but it is too slow in coming, due in part to "The Attackers" (p. 94-101), who confuse the issues and make difficult an improved positive program.

While this book should be read by all persons interested in helping youth, I commend it for careful study to traditional educators, reinforcement psychologists, and discipline-minded parents. This volume should help them see why their approaches to life and learning are inadequate for youth in the modern world.

—Reviewed by L. THOMAS HOPKINS, *Professor Emeritus of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University.*

**Paradox and Promise. Harry S. Broudy.** *Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961. 176 p.*

The paradoxes in this book are discussed in a series of 15 essays covering broad perspectives that range "through those of teachers, educational administrators, devotees of the liberal arts, educationists, would-be philosophers and thoughtful human beings who want to reap the material benefits of technology without sacrificing the fruits of the human spirit." The problems discussed fall

in the areas of leisure, freedom, old age, automation, individuality, liberal education, and intelligent planning of the curriculum.

Since this book has no central purpose or organizing theme, each essay must be judged on its own internal merits. Here great variation in quality exists. Five of the essays are "fictionalized versions of incidents so common that the reader may be tempted to guess at the identity of the characters, places, and events." In most instances the paradox is cloudy or implied rather than clearly or explicitly stated.

The author is critical of professional administrators, lay "experts" who want to run the schools, teachers' strikes, teaching machines, and godless schools which he is careful not to define.

He closes with an essay on "Planning for Excellence," in which he analyzes negatively the curriculum planning from 1920 to 1950 but offers few positive suggestions for improvement. This book should be of value to beginners who want a descriptive overview of a variety of educational topics, but it lacks the depth for a more mature reader.

—Reviewed by L. THOMAS HOPKINS.

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