

Significant Books

Reviewers:

O. L. Davis, Jr.

Dorothy Mial

Innovation in Education. *Matthew B. Miles, editor.* New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1964.

Fads and nostrums in education, like death and taxes in society at large, seem ever to be with us. Not unlike carnival "come-ons," their glamor enthalls the crowds, excites the imagination of the spectators, and seduces the innocent and sophisticate alike to "try them out." Once tried, the educational fads, like their "carney" counterparts, fade away, forgotten by most and remembered by few as an interesting, perhaps stimulating experience. And at some time in the future, the fads return, face-lifted, newly tinselled, freshly painted, and unrecognized. And round, and round . . .

But this folly need not persist. Or so it asserted the faith in the power of intelligence and it applied. That some may succumb to or be deluded by the gracious simplicities of false glitter is to acknowledge reality. Yet, alternatives to ignorance may be fashioned.

It is to the end that such alternatives may be realized that Miles' new volume should have its greatest impact. *Innovation in Education* may sound like the "carney" pitch to some; but it is not. It may attract some who would embrace or cast stones at almost any recently proposed suggestion for improvement (or different-ness) in education; but it

will disappoint them. Too, it is no recipe book. Miles' weighty volume, probably too lengthy, will satisfy few. It calls on those who practice and study education to THINK . . . and in considerable detail . . . in a sustained, engaged manner . . . and that process of THINKING to be directed to the end that innovation—proposals and process—may be understood and manipulated toward appropriate goals.

Innovation in Education is a most uneven book. Only Miles' brilliant essays save the volume from being a non-book. Conceived in a Teachers College seminar, it brings together some mighty papers, some interesting but unspectacular reports, and a few puerile contributions. Still, none of the chapters constitutes bedtime reading.

General ignorance about innovation and the process of diffusion and incorporation of innovation is documented by several case studies. From these reports—mostly of failures conceived in euphoria—insights of the dynamics of the innovation process do appear. Particularly interesting, in this regard, are Goodwin Watson's sensitive recollections of the utopia of New College and Richard Colvard's carefully drawn narrative of the Ford Foundation's entrance into teacher education through the "Arkansas Purchase." This only partial sampling of failures is not really depressing. For

sure, these histories are not ennobling, but they are necessary. More, rather than fewer, such studies must be prepared. We must have some ideas about how notions are translated into bandwagons, how they build up steam, and why they run out of fuel. Too frequently, we see only the hulks of abandoned bandwagons—like whitened bones on the desert.

Paul Marsh's description and analysis of the PSSC strategy are illuminating. That an idea, unformed and elusive, developed full-blown into triumphal entry into American high schools is a recognition of the millions of tax dollars spent, the time invested, and the driving force of Jerrold Zacharias and his committee, and is also a tribute to the basic strategy of materials development and teacher involvement. That "scholars" and "schoolmen" stood eyeball to eyeball, mistrusting and deriding each other in

the process, is to neither's credit. Yet, out of the PSSC experience, a tentative model of national curriculum reform emerged and, with it, the burgeoning awareness of the possible contributions of both groups in the process—of both innovation development and diffusion.

Chapters on research and theory in innovation provide dismal confirmation that educators neither know the dimensions and dynamics of innovation nor have they acted on fact or theory beyond the level of fortuitous intuition or convenient folklore. If these reports of innovation research are representative of those done, we can only be sick at heart. We might cry out against our collective stupidity or flail ourselves for being so naive for so long, but neither action would help, really. In the general darkness, however, dim rays of hope emerge from the insightful chapters of Mackenzie, Griffiths, and Miles. Their

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contributions should go far in stimulating the construction of adequate theory and the design of productive research on innovations. The impact of this section is unmistakable: we must *understand* innovation—understand, not on the wings of angels, but through the steady cadence of serious and sustained theoretical and empirical work.

This book probably will win the "reviews" but, unfortunately, may lose the long term battle for influence. It is too important and too provocative to be a dust-catcher (and it a big one) on bookshelves. Miles and his colleagues must feel, in some measure, like Boone and his trailmates did as they stood high on the Appalachian barrier and surveyed the unbent trees of Kentucky. What prospects! What visions! But, for the realization of the Western promise, the Wilderness Road remained to be chopped out, the domain had to be surveyed, claims staked, and companies—and later a legion—of pioneers had to make the long trek, establish settlements, and work the land. Miles and his colleagues open to us the Kentucky of innovation, but the formidable barriers to understanding, undertaking, and evaluating educational innovation still exist. Hopefully, many others will follow them into the virgin wilderness.

—Reviewed by O. L. DAVIS, JR., Associate Professor of Education, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.

Classroom Group Behavior: Group Dynamics in Education. Mary A. Bany and Lois V. Johnson. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1964. 412 p.

This book is an invitation to teachers to use "the knowledge that now exists to facilitate the development in individuals of attitudes that will predispose them to

think, to question, and to reflect." It is the authors' thesis that the classroom group is one of the most important groups in the life of a child. If this group fulfills his developing needs, he becomes an active, satisfied, contributing learner. If it does not, little learning will occur.

The authors define learning as a transaction involving teacher, pupil, and class group. It follows that skill and sensitivity in mobilizing group forces are crucial in teaching. (It is interesting to reflect on how much classroom practice actually serves to fragment class groups rather than to make collaboration a normal procedure.)

The authors suggest that better use of psychological principles about groups could help keep group-centered educators from exaggerating the value of group techniques. Better use of such principles might also help individual-centered educators realize the potentialities of a class

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in helping individual members to learn. They also suggest that some of the fog-giness characterizing much discussion of group dynamics and education could be lifted through more precise use of terminology, through more rigorous study and use of psychological principles, and through more study in classroom settings of how groups are formed that foster individual learning and achieve responsible law and order without limiting individual freedom to be different.

For example, because of varying needs and abilities and the necessity of working with individuals (and because there is evidence that small groups are effective learning units), the teacher may want to divide pupils into small work groups. How should the groups be organized? Can teamwork be developed so that members can help one another and get help from the teacher without developing dependency? How can emotional supports to learning be provided? How can research knowledge of the effects of different communication patterns be applied in class groups? How, for example, can teachers use the finding that accuracy of communication is reduced if most of the communication is one-way? Or that group hostility toward the communicator tends to increase when there is no opportunity to express negative reactions? Or that restricting the expression of criticism toward a person who is creating a problem seems to intensify group hostility toward the person and create some hostility toward the teacher? Or that group interest in a task increases when the group is given correct knowledge of its progress—to say nothing of meeting the teacher's own need for "feedback?"

One proposition emphasized in the book is that many individual acts labeled as "problem behavior" are caused by

pressures stemming from group membership. It follows that if teachers focus upon changing individual behavior and ignore the effects of group influence, they will find it difficult to bring about any change.

The final fourth of the book is concerned with techniques for changing group norms that the teacher believes are interfering with progress toward individual and group goals, for helping classes to become more effective in problem solving, and for studying and collecting data about class groups in order to increase understanding and insights for directing group forces toward learning rather than against it.

—Reviewed by DOROTHY MIAL, Director of Programs in Education, National Training Laboratories, 1201-16th Street, N.W., Washington, D. C.

Perspectives on the Group Process: A Foundation for Counseling with Groups. C. Gratton Kemp. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964. 388 p.

Though it is in a sense coincidental that *Perspectives on the Group Process* comes along for review with *Classroom Behavior*, the two books are complementary. Kemp has attempted to develop a clearer perspective on—to bring into some integration—a body of writings about group behavior that has appeared since about 1948. There have been various attempts recently to compile the growing literature on small groups into some systematic framework. Kemp has attempted to make his readings interdisciplinary. The teacher, counselor, or supervisor may find in this book interesting avenues for exploring further some of the issues raised in *Classroom Group Behavior*.

One is struck by the fact that while

the scientific study of groups is relatively recent (it is less than two decades ago that several of the writers in this collection launched the experiment in training for group development at Bethel, Maine, that has influenced an international movement), there is now available a considerable body of literature on group behavior. Kemp's contribution is to bring into a kind of running discourse a number of writers, some of whom have been in direct collaboration but some of whom have been pursuing separate but parallel paths.

The underlying assumption is that decisions which determine our future are made in small groups. The new condition that can profoundly influence this process, and therefore our future, is the substantially increasing knowledge of group behavior to which we now have access and the growing acceptance of the notion that it is both possible and necessary that we apply this knowledge as we try to work and live together. Kemp attempts to move us a little further toward an interdisciplinary approach and to a deeper understanding of groups. He develops five underlying premises:

1. The potential limits of the group are based on the potentialities and limitations of man himself;
2. The possibility for realization of potential limits is directly related to the insights gained from psychology, sociology, education, religion, and other disciplines;
3. Different types of leadership result in different outcomes;
4. Ability to participate constructively and adequately in a group is an extended development process; and
5. Group process enhances the possibilities for change in the perceptions and self concepts of the members.

The book is planned especially for college students and teachers interested and involved in human relationships as they develop in groups, whether in classroom or in group counseling. More broadly, the concern is with small groups—in homes, schools, industries, churches, hospitals, other social organizations—where decisions are being made that determine the quality of our personal and national life and of our influence abroad.

—Reviewed by DOROTHY MIAL.

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