

● Selected for Review

Educational Research: New Perspectives. J. A. Culbertson and S. P. Hencley, editors. Danville, Illinois: The Interstate Printers & Publishers, Inc., 1963. 374 p. \$6.95

Educational Research Methods. G. D. McGrath, J. J. Jelinek and R. E. Wochner. New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1963. 301 p. \$5.50

Elements of Educational Research. H. H. McAshan. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1963. \$5.50.

Educational Research: An Introduction. W. R. Borg. New York: David McKay Company, 1963. \$6.25.

Reviewed by JAMES D. RATHS, Associate Professor, Bureau of Educational Research and Field Services, University of Maryland, College Park.

While the four books listed above fall into a general category headed "research," it is really at this point that they cease to be similar. Three of the books, those by McGrath *et al.*, McAshan, and Borg appear to be geared for use as textbooks in an introductory course in educational research. The series of papers found in *Educational Research: New Perspectives*, edited by Culbertson and Hencley treat various topics relevant to educational research generally and research in educational administration specifically.

Professor Borg's book is written in the tradition of well-established textbooks in this area. He has done a superb job in handling the chapter dealing

with library skills, a section of research books generally considered rather mundane and less than important. Professor Borg's treatment of statistical tests, in essence a description of their appropriate uses, seems quite complete for the purposes of his text. He did choose to omit or treat lightly case study research and developmental research. His work is enhanced by a well organized and well selected annotated bibliography that appears at the close of each chapter. Certainly in writing style, in organization and in content, with the exceptions noted above, this book is the equal of any standard text in educational research methodology treated at the elementary level.

The work of G. D. McGrath, J. J. Jelinek and R. E. Wochner and that of H. H. McAshan attempt, in the authors' so many words, to skip the theory and stress the practical in the area of educational research. In a sense both treatments reflect this goal. Inasmuch as there is nothing so practical as a good theory, both of these books are quite impractical. *Educational Research Methods*, a more extensive treatment than that of McAshan, deals almost entirely with experimental and correlational research studies. The bibliographic references, that the authors assure us have been carefully selected and analysed, are almost all relatively old and the lists of references almost without exception contain the most egregious errors in spellings of authors' names. The treatment of such topics as correlation and

statistical inference is shallow at best and sections dealing with the formulation of hypotheses surely do not reflect the authors' best work. The most unfortunate aspect of this text is a sentence that cautions would-be researchers from using evidence-gathering techniques that lack reliability because of the risk of ridicule by other investigators. Clearly, the importance of using reliable instruments is central, but their reason for caution, reflecting an "other-directedness," is perhaps one that is plaguing so much of our educational research today. Too many of us are writing and publishing to impress a dean or faculty colleagues, rather than to test ideas in an exacting manner.

Elements of Educational Research, a paperback authored by H. H. McAshan, shares with McGrath *et al.*'s book the same limited focus on experimental research and the same superficialities. An example of the latter would be the warning that "assumptions should be recognized and clearly stated as assumptions." McAshan also suggests that in cases in which subjects have been "accidentally assigned" to treatments, "non-parametric (or descriptive) statistics may be used in the analysis of the results." Surely randomness is a necessary condition for using *any* statistical tests—non-parametric as well as parametric.

A strong point of McAshan's work is his coordination of the textual aspects of his book with the development of a specific research project. He cites concrete examples of hypotheses, definitions and assumptions, *etc.*, that elucidate the discussion in the text. While suggesting that one criterion for a good hypothesis is that it be testable, it is

unfortunate that one of the examples of an hypothesis includes one that tests for "permanent differences" in learning. Certainly no research technique that we know of can test for permanent changes.

A second aspect of McAshan's book that is certainly laudatory is a section dealing with submitting research proposals to the U.S. Office of Education under Public Law 531. While most of the information seems to be merely a rehash of U.S. Office of Education bulletins, it is accompanied by an example of a proposal that can be of use to novices in the proposal writing field.

In sum, these three books seem to share the shortcomings of all their rivals in the area of introducing educational research to graduate students. They seem to treat in a rather trivial manner the profound and difficult questions relevant to the research process: What is an assumption? What is its role in the research argument? What is a theory? A model? How can hypotheses be related to theory? What is the logical pattern that connects data and other findings to the hypothesis under test? These are just some of the hard questions that students should be dealing with at the graduate level, if not before.

In addition, with the exceptions noted here, the works do not even make reference to the *Handbook for Research on Teaching*, and only passing mention of some of the "newer" evidence-gathering techniques such as the semantic differential scale developed by Osgood on the paired-comparison technique of rating. And finally, Professor Borg and Professor McGrath *et al.* only barely mention the Cooperative Research Program of the U.S. Office of Education. Many of these criticisms stem from publication

deadlines that authors had to meet. However, as these works fail to build on and make use of some of the newer contributions, they surely must be found wanting as up-to-date texts.

Educational Research: New Perspectives is an entirely different book than those previously mentioned in terms of purpose and depth of treatment. It is theoretical and as such is immensely practical. The publishers suggest that this work might be used as a text in courses concerned with research. While parts of the book are admirably suited for an introductory course, e.g., contributions by Guba and Smith, the book on the whole is directed at persons interested in educational research in general and in administrative research in particular.

A provocative article by Ross Mooney and a clear statement of a university's role in research by Virgil Herick are only some of the brilliant contributions to a first section concerning research environment. A second section suggests models for doing research in the field of educational administration. In a third section, Guba's paper, setting forth distinctions between experiments, studies, surveys and investigations in terms of their meeting standards of external and internal validity is especially helpful and interesting. Another paper in this section, dealing with the evaluation of research proposals will be helpful to anyone interested in applying for research funds. A final section of this book concerns itself with the training of research workers.

Both the contributions by Professor Mooney and Professor Halpin seem to suggest that the research act is essentially creative and that researchers

must see research as "creative of science." Certainly there is another point of view. It can be asserted that research merely tests creative ideas. It may not be strictly necessary for a person to be both a creative person and a researcher. To illustrate my point, a recent review of literature lists hundreds of generalizations that have been supported by research. The lists of researchers on the whole do not reflect the names of the creative men of our times. Perhaps the acts of researching and creating require different capacities and intellects—both profound and both needing one another.

Educational Research: New Perspectives is an important book for anyone interested in talking about research and even for those who are interested in doing some research.

Guiding Language Learning. Mildred A. Dawson, Marian Zollinger and Ardell Ehuell. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., Second Edition, 1963. 430 p.

Common Sense in Teaching Reading. Roma Gans. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963. 414 p.

Reading Improvement in the Junior High School. Deborah Elkins. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963. 76 p.

Poetry in the Elementary Classroom. Flora J. Arnstein. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962. 124 p.

Physical Fitness and the Child's Reading Problem. Pearl M. Rosborough. New York: Exposition Press Inc., 1963. 80 p.

Reviewed by AGNES L. MCCARTHY, Curriculum Director of Secondary Schools, Faribault, Minnesota.

Judging from the number of new books about various phases of English education, the public and professional concern about the teaching of reading has expanded to include the broad field of language arts. Evidently, teachers themselves and those responsible for teacher education and in-service education are becoming more aware of the importance of language in thinking and learning in all areas.

Guiding Language Learning, for example, begins with a chapter on the nature and function of the English language. The authors maintain that a teacher of English even in the elementary grades "... should be informed and able to provide facts and explanations about the language that are consistent with recent findings." The chapter itself provides a good orientation for a study of language, and there is an excellent bibliography for further reading for this and subsequent chapters.

Throughout, the authors stress the importance of relating the various language arts to each other and to the child's experience. The need for well defined goals, interest and readiness in language learning is illustrated in step-by-step teaching situations. The book should be valuable not only as a textbook for methods classes but as a resource for practicing teachers.

Common Sense in Teaching Reading is addressed to parents and teachers. The author's faith in the effectiveness of common sense or good judgment applied to teaching reading will be reassuring to many in both groups. The book refutes many common misconceptions about reading and readers or potential readers. Following each chap-

ter is a bibliography of suggested readings.

Generalizations about child growth and development, the nature of reading, and the principles of learning are illustrated by anecdotes from the author's rich experience with children, parents and teachers. The book begins with preparation for reading in the home and in kindergarten, discusses development through the primary and intermediate grades, and concludes with an examination of reading problems in the junior and senior high school. Theory and practice in the teaching of reading at each level are explained and evaluated in relation to overall educational goals. Problems in the teaching of reading are identified, and proposed solutions are examined in the light of common sense.

The book presupposes no technical knowledge beyond that which could be expected in an intelligent layman. Nevertheless, teachers, administrators and supervisors will find it interesting and helpful in getting a perspective on the whole field of the teaching of reading.

Reading Improvement in the Junior High School is the record of an experiment in the use of a core program to teach reading to three groups of seventh grade children two or more years below grade level in reading. The procedure illustrates the effectiveness of relating the teaching of reading to other language arts in a meaningful context.

Excerpts from taped discussions provide concrete illustrations of the method. Planning for the unit and day-to-day procedure are described in detail. The importance of learning to read by writing is emphasized in accounts of actual experiences. Suggestions for

handling group work or committee assignments are concretely illustrated. The experiment is a colorful example of an integrated language arts approach to teaching reading.

Poetry in the Elementary Classroom is addressed to teachers who feel inadequately prepared to teach poetry to children. Since the majority of elementary and secondary teachers would probably put themselves into that category, the book should serve a real need. Actually, teachers who already know a great deal about poetry and who have had some success in teaching it will read the book with interest and pleasure. It is worth reading by anyone teaching creative reading or writing at any level.

The author describes the climate favorable for developing appreciation and discusses the selection and presen-

tation of suitable poems. In the chapters on writing poetry she stresses writing to learn rather than learning to write. She uses examples of original poems to point out poetic quality in children's writing.

Physical Fitness and the Child's Reading Problem reports a study of twenty problem readers who had various kinds of physical and visual handicaps. The author offers evidence in the form of charts and graphs to support her position that there is a definite relationship between physical fitness and ability to read. Most readers will agree that "Within the area of the Physical Fitness Program is the possible key to some of our educational problems." However, they will also agree that more research is needed in order to prove that specific disabilities cause particular reading problems.

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