

● Selected for Review

Contemporary Research on Teacher Effectiveness. *Bruce J. Biddle and William J. Ellena, editors.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964. \$5.00.

Reviewed by FRANCES R. LINK, *Coordinator of Secondary Education, Cheltenham Township Schools, Elkins Park, Pennsylvania.*

All of the contributors to this volume are active researchers or educators. Most of them have won reputations for at least one significant study, and several are among the leading men and women in our profession. More significant, however, is that all of them have something to say which directly concerns research approaches to the problem of teacher competence and they say this well with graphic representation. The caliber of the contributors to this volume provides an initial indication of its degree of excellence.

The editors, Bruce J. Biddle and William J. Ellena, have performed a unique service not only for educators who will find data for understanding the depth and complexity of the research problem, but also for the non-specialists or lay persons who want to do and know something about our understanding of teacher competence.

For the educational researcher, the methodological discussions focus on

how the research was done, and on the human activity inherent in the process of instruction, and the physical and social contexts in which education is necessarily performed. The editors say they hope, "to stimulate researchers into long-term commitments to research programs bearing on the competence problem."

Much reporting on research today tends to become a formula or prescription for the proper conduct of research in an ideal setting. Hence all observations are objective, all data are direct and all inferences are sound. In the setting or world that is the school or the classroom, things are not so uncomplicated. The data are often retractable, "hunch" sometimes substitutes for inference, and conclusions receive support from something less than the best of evidence.

Lest the reader be dazzled by research, the editors and contributors offer firm and skillful reporting of the limitations and values of their work. The editors tell us that literally thousands of studies have been conducted on teacher excellence since the beginning of the twentieth century—with modest and often contradictory results. And many educational researchers have abandoned the field of "competence" research as a simple-minded approach

to a vastly more complex topic: The study of classroom interaction.

The school administrator or college professor who is faced with the day to day and year to year problem of selecting and evaluating an individual teacher's effectiveness and performance will find in this book no recipe for perfection to guide him. No reader, however, can fail to emerge from reading this work without added wisdom as to how to prepare himself for seeing the dimensions of teacher behavior and teacher-pupil interaction.

The reviewer was impressed with the fact that until careful studies are made of the facts and artifacts involved in the rating process, rating forms seem less than useful for research on teacher effectiveness. To date the result of research using rating forms has been poor and contradictory.

Another significant insight stems from the findings which relate that teachers of all ages, sex and racial origin may be effective (or ineffective), but that different types of behavior are required for effectiveness at different ages and in terms of one's sex and background. Some of these behaviors are sensitively and realistically conveyed in a chapter entitled: "Age, Teacher's Role, and Institutional Setting," by Warren A. Peterson.

The chapter on the "Integration of Teacher Effectiveness Research," by Bruce J. Biddle, describes the problem of teacher effectiveness as so complex that no one today knows what *the competent teacher is*. Moreover, he clearly states that the concern of the contributors to the book is with how to study effectiveness as a phenomenon, with concepts appropriate to that task, with

methods, and with research strategy and models. Their concern is not to describe or define the competent teacher.

Bruce Biddle, in his initial chapter, introduces and summarizes eight other chapters in the book. He is able to refer to the research studies in a manner which is both more sophisticated and more concise than the usual treatment of this type. It is an impressive accomplishment, indeed, to have set a framework and summarized so much material in so intelligent, so honest, and so useful a fashion. This editor never loses sight of the specific goals of each researcher who has contributed to the book. He highlights the significant hypotheses and the general variables which other researchers should not overlook.

"Evolution of Current Practices in Evaluating Teacher Competence," by Hazel Davis, describes in chronological fashion the most relevant movements and trends in employee ratings in business and industry which began in 1916 and in teacher ratings in public schools dating back to 1896. In a perspicuous and organized fashion, Hazel Davis reveals the historical foundation for a current trend, which she describes as a growing participation in evaluation by classroom teachers themselves.

"Research on Teacher Behavior in the Context of the Teacher Characteristics Study" by David G. Ryans considers some problems in one set of researches theorizing about teacher behavior. Specifically, Dr. Ryans presents a sophisticated discussion of methodology employed in researching teacher behavior, as well as some findings, limitations and implications, of

such research for the evaluation of teacher competence. The writing style is clear and interesting; there are many illustrative examples. Dr. Ryans consciously relates model and data to reality.

His work is an extremely important contribution to the book and to research on the dimensions of teacher behavior. His reporting is terse, thorough and thought-provoking. The reviewer was impressed with Dr. Ryans' gem-like insights which leap out at the reader on many a page. These seem to grow from both wisdom and an immersion in detailed observations of teacher behavior.

The next series of chapters focus on a variety of models and instruments for studying teacher behavior, abilities, and environmental variables.

The design in R. L. Turner's chapter is based on an assumption that teaching may be viewed as a series of problem-solving or coping behaviors. Milton Meux and B. O. Smith describe in detail a unique treatment of teacher behavior as a variable, and the logic of teacher-pupil interaction.

Ned A. Flanders, focusing on some of the same variables, conceives of teaching as a series of overt acts over a period of time. In the project described, a sophisticated study emerges with numerous findings in tables and charts. His technique for studying classroom interaction and teacher behavior seems uncomplicated. It involves a "participant observer," one who is trained to categorize at the rate of approximately once every three seconds, seven kinds of teacher talk, two kinds of student talk and one behavior labeled silence or confusion.

After describing his study, Dr. Flanders faces squarely the issues of evaluating teaching for improvement of instruction and for merit pay, as well as the need to overcome deficiencies in teacher preparation. He suggests a design for in-service education of teachers which aims at the teacher's development of a sense of inquiry as he experiments with his own behavior in the classroom.

The reviewer was intrigued with two concluding paragraphs in this chapter, entitled: "The Teachers' Bill of Rights and The Nonteachers' Bill of Rights." If a supervisor or administrator wishes to replace a rusty, dusty or just plain inadequate set of notions about the improvement of teaching, Ned Flanders offers a splendid statement of beliefs.

The contributors, Gump, Rosencranz, Biddle, and Peterson, as they report their fine studies, urge that problems of teacher effectiveness be considered in terms of the immediate environment of learning, the view of the teacher's role as held by teachers, administrators, parents, pupils and others in the community, and with even the larger contexts of historical change in America.

If the contributors to this book have one trait in common, it is that all have been blessed with insight and intelligence. They have set forth in a single volume a valuable guide not only for those embarking on research but also for those seeking ways to utilize research findings to improve the processes inherent in instruction.

The reviewer recommends to the American Association of School Administrators, the Department of Class-

room Teachers of the NEA, and the National School Boards Association, the groups sponsoring this compilation, that this volume become the first of a series to consider Contemporary Research on Teacher Effectiveness.

Principles and Procedures of Curriculum Improvement. *Vernon E. Anderson.* New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1965. 498 p.

Curriculum Improvement: A Guide to Problems, Principles and Procedures. *Albert I. Oliver.* New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, Inc., 1965. 504 p.

Reviewed by NELSON L. BOSSING,
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Major contributions to the curriculum field in 1965 include the two comprehensive books listed here. These volumes provide a general treatment of the curriculum covering the elementary and secondary schools.

In one principal section of his book, Anderson devotes two chapters each to the elementary and secondary schools. In the remainder of the book he apparently assumes equal applicability of the discussion to the curricula of both schools. Oliver, on the other hand, appears to assume his treatment of the curriculum generally applies equally to the entire school system, and is careful to refer specifically to the elementary or secondary school where such discussion seems especially pertinent.

Anderson includes seventeen chapters in five major divisions:

1. Dynamics of Curriculum Improvement
2. Sources of Curriculum Decisions

3. Planning and Organizing for Curriculum Study

4. Curriculum Development in Elementary and Secondary Schools

5. Curriculum Development in the Classroom.

Oliver has presented fourteen problem areas in five major sections:

1. Meaning and Method of Curriculum Improvement

2. Guide Lines for Curriculum Improvement

3. Curriculum Decision Making

4. Field-Testing Curriculum Innovations

5. Focus on Change.

Both books cover much the same range of basic curriculum consideration, though under different major divisions. Yet, as might well be expected, the two books vary in some curriculum areas included and the exhaustiveness of the treatment of particular topics. For example, the last major division of Anderson's book is entitled "Curriculum Development in the Classroom." In this section three chapters are devoted to classroom curriculum activities such as the familiar unit organization. Oliver did not overlook these important topics but discussed them under the major section, "Field-Testing Curriculum Innovations."

These two books have followed a quite different type of organizational pattern in the presentation of their materials. Anderson has employed the usual style of a formal statement caption for each chapter such as found in Chapter 1, "The Meaning of Curriculum Change," followed by the customary subheadings in the organization of the chapter content.

Oliver has followed a unique plan

of formulating chapter headings in the form of problems as exemplified in Chapter 1, "What Is the Meaning of the Curriculum?", and then following throughout the chapter subdivisions with questions about the central chapter problem. This is an organizational device which many believe has much pedagogical merit.

Both books are well written. Footnoting is more extensively used by Oliver. This to many educational readers seems a benefit since it provides an immediate check of the sources used in writing, and gives leads to valuable sources the reader may not have seen. Extensive bibliographies are included by Anderson at the end of each of the five major divisions of his book; while Oliver uses a technique of including an extensive bibliography at the close of each chapter. The advantage of a bibliography at the end of each chapter is that such bibliographies become more definitive as they give the sources referred to in the content of the immediate chapter.

Both footnotes and bibliographical references generally are up-to-date. For the purpose of checking the basis of the author's conclusions, the reviewer finds the footnote far more significant than bibliography at the end of a chapter or section. It is true in both texts that a careful check of both footnotes and bibliographies reveals that in some important topic treatments the absence of footnote references suggests that the authors either ignored or had not read some of the references included in the bibliographies.

An example of the differences in thinking of the two authors that appears on occasion is evidenced in their

discussion of the Core Curriculum idea. Oliver thinks of core as one of two principal ways of organizing the curriculum on a fundamentally different educational basis. For the final paragraph of an eight page discussion of Core, Oliver offers this caution: "Although an eventual decision will have to be made as to the center to be used in organizing content and learning experiences, a curriculum committee would be unwise to start with a firm commitment to subject matter or student experiences."

Anderson, on the other hand, in a two and a half page discussion of Core considers it largely a curriculum movement of the past, now being superseded by, of all things, team teaching—an administrative device for the teaching of subject matter and in no sense involved in a fundamental concept of curriculum organization. This interpretation of team teaching is made clear by observation both of the examples of team teaching and the point of view of such scholarly writers as Judson T. Shaplin, as expressed in the book *Team Teaching, 1964*, edited by Judson T. Shaplin and Henry F. Olds, Jr.

Shaplin, in the first chapter of this book emphasizes the fact that team teaching is essentially an administrative device for teacher and instructional organization and nowhere implies that team teaching involves a fundamental concept of curriculum organization.

Anderson seems to accept team teaching uncritically as the movement that will absorb Core. Oliver appears to accept team teaching for what it is—essentially a device for administrative

arrangement—in these words: “Some administrative arrangements and certain mechanical devices help in that they enable the teacher to do more with less time and effort. Some team teaching schemes . . . schedules three or four

teachers with the same group of adolescents. . . .”

Both of these texts are excellent general discussions of the curriculum with which all teachers and administrators should be acquainted. 45

INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.	4th Cover
American Guidance Service	392
Appleton-Century-Crofts	388
Association for Childhood Education International	430
Behavioral Research Laboratories	406-7
Chilton Books	401
Continental Press, Inc.	370
Coronet Films	402
Creative Educational Society, Inc.	413
John Day Company	412
Educational Activities, Inc.	414
Encyclopaedia Britannica Films, Inc.	394-95
Enrichment Teaching Materials	421
Follett Publishing Co.	2nd Cover
Gregg Division (McGraw-Hill Book Company)	408
Harcourt, Brace & World	398
Harper & Row, Publishers	419
Hertzberg-New Method, Inc.	418
Houghton Mifflin Company (El Hi; College)	380; 410
Instructo Products Co.	390
Initial Teaching Alphabet Publications, Inc.	403
Judy Company	384
J. B. Lippincott Co.	420
Lyons & Carnahan	404
McGraw-Hill Book Co.	400
The Macmillan Company	425
A. J. Nystrom & Co.	422
Prentice-Hall, Inc. (Educational Books; College)	416; 424
Rand McNally & Company	3rd Cover; 377; 386
Scholastic Magazines	378-79
Scott, Foresman and Co.	396
Yale University Press	389

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