

Reviews

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Curriculum—Teaching the What, How and Why of Living. Louise M. Berman and Jessie A. Roderick. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1977. 267 pp. —Reviewed by Norman J. Bauer, Professor, Division of Educational Studies, State University College of Arts and Science, Geneseo, New York.

Throughout the past 100 years of education on the American scene, two opposing theories have waged war with each other. One theory, oriented toward the past, toward the desire for certainty, toward the acquisition of the basic skills of reading, writing, and computing, has placed stress on ready-made subject-matter, emphasizing a doctrine of discipline. The other theory, oriented toward the future, toward the management of conditions in light of chosen purposes, toward those basic skills necessary to cope with emerging life experience, has emphasized a doctrine of growth.

Affixing themselves to the doctrine of growth, Professors Berman and Roderick declare that "Education has a dual purpose: (a) to help persons develop internal qualities necessary to meeting the problems of living and of life, and (b) to enable individuals to gain the moral courage and stamina to carry out what they perceive to be their own commitments in relation to themselves and others" (p. 21).

To achieve these purposes they suggest that educators consider four topics: (a) an image of humankind; (b) basic life skills; (c) appraising these skills; and (d) environments conducive to growth in these skills.

Projecting a post-Darwinian conception of humankind, the

Curriculum Teaching the What, How, and Why of Living



Louise M. Berman · Jessie A. Roderick

authors view people in continual contextual interaction as "moving, dynamic, process-oriented" organisms having the potential power to gain a certain amount of control over their environments.

The naturalistic conception can be perceived in the stress placed on three basic skills: decision-making, involvement, and peopling. Decision-making emphasizes the notion that transactions emerge within an interactional context, in accordance with the identification of purpose; involvement addresses the ways persons devote their energies to their activities; and peopling stresses the ability to enjoy, obtain comfort from, give

comfort to, and live fully with others. An analysis is made of how these skills are related to three dimensions of life, communicating, knowing, and living in social systems.

Procedures for observing and recording verbal and nonverbal data and making inferences about internal growth processes are identified and examined. These include diaries, verbal and nonverbal codification systems, and self-reportive (reflective) techniques.

The book concludes with chapters devoted to specific suggestions about how classroom environments might be established to implement growth in these life skills.

Two needs of educators are addressed by this bold and much needed piece of work: (a) the need to identify measuring instruments designed to assess process-oriented learning outcomes; and (b) the need to develop the moral courage and commitment necessary to press for substantial changes in the kinds of educational experiences they provide students.

Educators have been far too inclined to employ only those assessment instruments designed to measure overt behaviors. As a result, we have moved dangerously close to totally imposed environments. Years ago Dewey recognized this problem when he

asserted that "Educational science cannot be constructed simply by borrowing the techniques of experiment and measurement found in physical science."¹

The authors reveal real conviction and courage in the curricular design they are advocating. It is a design that will require educators to develop a philosophy of experience and to structure curricular activities in such a way that the educative process itself becomes the medium through which values that are worthwhile emerge. This will not be a task for the tenderhearted.

Two points of concern need to be mentioned. In their graphic model of decision-making (p. 41), the authors fail to reveal the existence and function of "purpose" in considering alternatives. As the model stands, it smacks of materialism, which is decidedly not their position. Second, they fail to distinguish clearly between "interaction" and "transaction." A small point, perhaps, but in terms of the naturalism with which they have aligned themselves, not unimportant.

This book is a fine testimony to the fact that the great image of man which emerged during the last half of the nineteenth century continues to remain a viable part of the consciousness of America's leading educational thinkers. And, it is the image, as Dewey so brilliantly observed, "that is the great instrument of instruction."

Human Characteristics and School Learning. Benjamin S. Bloom. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1976. 284 pp. —Reviewed by Karen Harvay, Instructor of Education, and Lowell Horton, Professor of Education; both at Northern Illinois University, De Kalb.

Benjamin Bloom posits significant and revolutionary notions about school learning in his latest book. It is possible for 95 percent

of our students to learn all that the schools have to teach, Bloom writes, and to learn it to a mastery level. There are only one to three percent at the bottom level who cannot master all that is provided in the school curriculum, and another one to two percent at the top who have some superior powers and do not fit Bloom's theory.

Rather than good learners and poor learners, or fast learners and slow learners, Bloom's research has led him to the view that most students become similar with regard to learning ability, rate of learning, and motivation for further learning when provided with favorable learning conditions. Conversely, his research demonstrates that when students are provided with unfavorable conditions they become more dissimilar in learning ability, rate of learning, and motivation for further learning.

This book attempts to explain individual differences in school learning and to suggest means for altering these differences. In our efforts to teach individual students, we have traditionally been concerned with accommodating individual differences. Never have we believed that while individual differences in people do exist, those differences are not relevant to the learning task if instruction is approached sensitively and systematically. This is Bloom's contention and the central thrust of his work.

It is possible, Bloom tells us, by using the technique of mastery learning for about 80 percent of our students to reach the level of achievement ordinarily graded "A," a level usually reached by only 20 percent. That only a limited few earn a grade of "A" is due to errors in the teaching/learning process largely caused by group teaching. Bloom proposes that by reducing errors of instruction, an added 10 percent to 20 percent investment over present instructional efforts will achieve the goal of having 80 percent of our students achieve as well as our top 20 percent do now. A range of outcomes is not inevitable, Bloom says. If students are

taught systematically and appropriately, individual differences in what they learn will reach the vanishing point. Some students may require a slightly longer period of study to achieve mastery, but not much longer if their knowledge level is accurately diagnosed and the material is suitable to their needs. Bloom makes a strong case that the quality that is measured by an intelligence test need not control how much of the school curriculum the student learns. A central thesis of this book is that variations in learning and the level of learning are determined by the students' learning history and the quality of instruction received. School achievement is viewed as a quantitative variable.

Bloom credits J. B. Carroll's model of school learning with influencing him in the development of his present theory of mastery learning. Carroll argued that if students have normal distribution of aptitude for learning, some subject and if they are all given the same instruction, then their achievement measured at the completion of instruction will be normally distributed. Conversely, if students are normally distributed with respect to aptitude, but the kind of quality of instruction and the amount of time allowed for study are made appropriate to the characteristics and needs of each learner, the majority of students will achieve mastery of the subject.

Bloom's theory comprises three independent variables: cognitive entry behaviors; affective entry behaviors; and quality of instruction, which, he believes, if properly attended to should enable schools to approximate an error free system of education.

The book provides exciting and provocative reading that evokes some profound questions about human learning, the nature of curriculum, and what we may expect from our schools. It is a significant book which promises to

¹ John Dewey. *The Sources of a Science of Education*. New York: Liveright, 1929. p. 26.

make a strong and lasting contribution to educational literature. Bloom's theory is an exciting and attractive one with a potential for making a difference in the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Socialization and Schooling: The Basics of Reform. B. O. Smith and Donald Orlosky. Bloomington, Indiana: Phi Delta Kappa, Incorporated, 1975. 376 pp. —Reviewed by Joe L. Boyer, Associate Professor of Education and Head, Department of Educational Foundations, Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, Alabama.

The youth in America are in idle dissipation, shut off from meaningful adult interaction, and they suffer from a poverty of experience—the experience needed for them to assume the responsibilities and activities of adults. Smith and Orlosky conceptualize this state of affairs as a deterioration of the socialization processes caused by mechanization, specialization, bureaucratization—modernization. Their argument is that the entire society faces the threat of disintegration because one the two processes by which it replenishes and maintains itself is seriously impaired. They therefore conclude that the development of new modes of socialization is one of the most pressing matters fac-

ing every community and the nation as a whole.

The book presents an outline of a master plan for socializing the youth into the adult community. By grouping the major institutions and agencies by function and by determining the types of activities each offers toward socialization, the entire society can contribute to reestablishing the processes by which the youth can be effectively socialized.

The recommendations for reforming the schools are bold, imaginative, and reasoned. They require that reforms be empirically based. For example, the benefits of schooling (utility) to the individual and to society must be established by public criteria. Based partly on what is now known, the authors are confident that the benefits of schooling warrant the time, money, and energy needed to reform schools so that they are adjusted to the poverty of youth's experience. It is also recommended that national achievement floors be established for all pupils in reading, writing, and computing. Exceptions would include only those few pupils with physical, mental, or emotional conditions that prevent them from achieving the minimum levels. The reform proposals include recommendations for re-orienting teacher education toward the diagnosis and remediation of learning difficulties. The roles of the university, school personnel, and school community are specified. Because edu-

cation is crucial to the survival of the entire society, the authors advance the position that the federal government should participate fundamentally in the finance of education.

A key feature of the reform proposals is the role assigned to research. The implications for research are sounded throughout the book with a special chapter devoted to an analysis of how research has been conducted and how it should be conducted as a component of their program of school reform. Specific procedures for implementing the reforms are presented along with anticipated problems and recommended solutions. The socialization of minorities is scantily treated by requesting a few minority scholars to react to the manuscript. These reactions are included in an appendix.

This well-conceptualized, readable, and timely publication should have a significant impact on educational practice. It is sure to become a classic in educational literature on reform. [E]

Correction: In the April 1977 issue of *Educational Leadership*, a review of the ESF Instructional Learning System¹ failed to include Dr. Mary Esseff as co-author, co-founder, and co-owner. *EL* regrets the omission.

¹Charlene Rothkopf. "Instructional Development Learning System." *Educational Leadership* 34(7): 555-6; April 1977.

Reviewers



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