

Fifteen Thousand Hours: Secondary Schools and Their Effects on Children.

Michael Rutter and others.
Cambridge, Mass.:

Harvard University Press, 1979.

—Reviewed by Arthur W. Steller, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education, Shaker Heights City School District, Shaker Heights, Ohio.

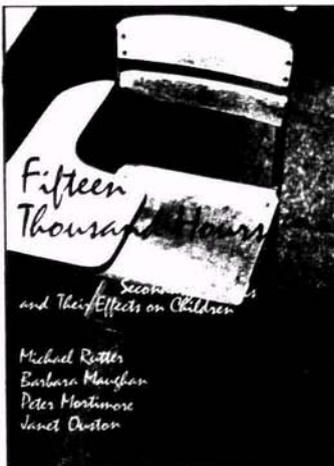
This book, with a title based on the time students devote to schooling, will be the center of scholarly debate in both the United States and England for years to come. The prime reason that educators will spotlight this study is the decisive conclusion:

... that schools can do much to foster good behavior and attainments, and that even in a disadvantaged area, schools can be a force for the good (p. 205).

Michael Rutter, a professor of child psychiatry, led a University of London research team in preparing this prominent work. For three years, a field study collected massive amounts of information on all of the students entering twelve inner London secondary schools. The research conclusively demonstrates that schools only a scant distance apart with almost exactly the same "pupil intakes" (social background and intellectual ability) engender widely divergent educational results.

American research over the last 15 years has advanced the proposition that schooling makes little difference in the lives of children. In 1966 James Coleman's *Equality of Educational Opportunity* deduced that variations in school experiences did not affect education attainment. Christopher Jencks led another large scale study. Published as *Inequality* in 1972, it further embedded the concept that "Variations in what children learn at school depend largely on variations in what they bring to school, not on variations in what schools offer them."

On the other side of the Atlantic, Sir Cyril Burt has had a major influence through the English *Black Paper* movement in promoting the neutrality of schools in fostering individual growth. Some deterioration in support of the genetic determinism part of this theory has occurred with the discovery that Burt forged many of his examples in the



research on identical twins reared apart. Nevertheless, the hereditarian viewpoint is still being held by some with only slightly less fervor than when Burt's "discoveries" were considered genuine.

Rutter's examination contradicts these prevailing opinions. According to Rick Rogers (*New Statesman*, 23 March 1979) "The special contribution . . . in *Fifteen Thousand Hours* is to shatter that proposition [that schools produce no measurable changes in their pupils] beyond any obvious hope of repair."

Parents and many practitioners have passionate convictions about the value of school attendance. Common sense, educational lore, and lay opinion have consistently labeled the costly research conclusions of Coleman, Jencks, and others as misleading. Practitioners may feel that *Fifteen Thousand Hours* is ". . . a tremendous amount of hard work just to demonstrate what we knew already on the basis of experience or common sense" (p. 204). However, the debate can best be carried on with the kind of empirical data set forth in this study.

Spending 15,000 hours engaged in any endeavor (even sleep) has to have an effect! Attending school is no exception. Why then, up until now, have formidable research efforts not produced these common sense answers? In other studies variables within schools such as values, teaching style, the quality of organizations, discipline, and pupil-teacher relationships have often been ignored. Rutter's research team revealed these factors to be important.

Joanna Mark (*New Society*, 22 March 1979) believes that *Fifteen Thousand Hours* has "started to answer what is perhaps the crucial question in education: what is it about a successful school that makes it successful?"

The New York Times probed this question with Janet Ouston, one of the coauthors of the book. The answer, according to this University of London researcher, lies in the "ethos" of the school—the overall tone. Moreover, she said the study found that schools could be improved to make them more effective.

The factors contributing to the difference between effective and ineffective schools included emphasis on academic concerns—amount of homework, use of library, time spent on instruction, amount of teacher planning, expectations of student performance, and others.

Student behavior was found to be better "where discipline was based on general expectations set by the school (or house or department), rather than left to individual teachers to work out for themselves" (p. 192).

Positive encouragement by teachers during lessons or displaying student work on walls was related to good behavior and exam results. The extent to which children were given duties of responsibility and were able to consult teachers about personal problems likewise contributed to successful outcomes.

These ingredients of a successful school have some direct implications for school-based educators. School policymakers would have more difficulty controlling some of the significant external forces such as a reasonable proportion of higher ability children in the school, and a higher proportion of nonmanual (higher socioeconomic) parents. There was also no relationship between the parents' choosing the school and any of the measures of success. This latter point is interesting because it comes at a time when many parents in England and the United States want more control over which school their children attend.

The inequities in society were not overcome by the good schools studied. However, students of all ability ranges had higher examination scores in the best schools. Joanna Mark concludes her analysis of *Fifteen Thousand Hours* by stating:

The study is important and encouraging for those who believe in education. The team cannot point to anything that will even up the unequal changes of pupils from different family backgrounds. But they do show that a good school can improve the behavior and attainments of all pupils ("What Makes a Good School?," *New Society*, 23 March 1979).

The authors propose that schools are a major influence upon children. While education cannot nullify societal inequities, the findings of *Fifteen Thousand Hours* offer some promise that inner city schools can be upgraded.

Rethinking Staff Development: A Handbook For Analyzing Your Program and Its Costs.

Donald Moore and Arthur Hyde.
Chicago:
Designs for Change, 1978.

—Reviewed by Patricia Zigami, National Staff Development Council, Oxford, Ohio.

Based on an extensive analysis of staff development programs in three large school systems, the authors developed a method other school districts can use to analyze the nature and costs of their staff development programs. Using an expanded definition the authors observed that:

—Many more staff development activities were going on in the three districts than anyone had realized, and they were being carried out by a variety of people who were often unaware of staff development activities carried out by others.

—When the costs of these staff development programs were totaled, they were 50 to 60 times larger than estimated.

—While most people had the impression that staff development programs were largely supported by special state or federal funds, most of the money for staff development in these three districts came from the school districts themselves.

Apart from these rather surprising findings, the strength of the handbook lies in its format. A detailed table of contents allows readers to use the handbook for their own purposes. *Rethinking Staff Development* can be used by schools to analyze their own staff development programs. Copies are available for \$6 including postage from *Designs for Change*, 220 South State Street, Room 1616, Chicago, IL 60604.

Curriculum Development: A Guide to Practice.

Jon Wiles and Joseph Bondi.
Columbus, Ohio:
Charles E. Merrill, 1979.

—Reviewed by Richard Kimpston, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

This recent publication is written for both prospective and practicing curriculum leaders but it will probably be received most favorably by professors of curriculum in search of a text for a curriculum survey course. Within the confines of approximately 400 pages, the authors have managed to discuss a broad array of topics. Having chosen such broad coverage they have necessarily sacrificed indepth treatment, but each chapter closes with a fairly comprehensive listing for further reading.

Personnel Administration in Education: Leadership for Instructional Improvement.

Ben M. Harris, Kenneth E. McIntyre,
Vance C. Littleton, Jr., and
Daniel F. Long.
Boston:
Allyn and Bacon, 1979.

—Reviewed by Dustin A. Peters, Principal, Elizabethtown Area High School, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania.

Intended for the practicing administrator or supervisor, the book blends theory and practice by using several unifying themes, the most important of which is "the improvement of instruction through personnel management." The authors also emphasize "involvement of all staff affected by a decision."

Staff Development: New Demands, New Realities, New Perspectives.

Ann Lieberman and Lynne Miller,
editors.
New York:
Teachers College Press, 1979.

—Reviewed by John Thurber, Director of Staff Development, Palm Beach County Public Schools, Florida.

Because we need a strong theoretical yet operational basis for inservice education programs, this volume appears at a most propitious time in the evolution of staff development. The eight essays provide a worthwhile starting place.

The first section presents a spectrum of solidly documented, successful programs, ranging from the domain of

personal concerns and growth to organizational/social concerns to the viewpoint of organized teacher unions. The second section provides a look at five current successful approaches.

All in all, the work is significant enough to recommend its reading by all those who contribute to the continuing professional growth of educators.

The Principal's Handbook on the School Library Media Center.

Betty Martin and Ben Carson.
Syracuse, New York:
Gaylord Professional Publications,
1978.

—Reviewed by William R. Thomas, Principal and curriculum coordinator in the Falls Church Public Schools, Falls Church, Virginia.

This book is written for practicing supervisors and administrators who want the libraries (media centers) in their schools to be seen and used as an integral part of the instructional program using "all forms and channels of communications." It provides the components necessary to successfully develop, implement, and evaluate an effective and successful program.

How to Bring Up 2000 Teenagers.

Ralph Rutenber.
Chicago:
Nelson-Hall, 1979.

—Reviewed by Dorothy Porter, Executive Director of Civil Rights for the State of Colorado, Denver.

For those looking for a scholarly treatise based on scientific research, this is not the book. But for those who hold a genuine concern for the personal/social as well as the academic growth and development of youth, the time required to read this book will be well spent. Rutenber offers a refreshing, common sense perspective on bringing up young people. He explores six major premises, illustrating them by recounting his experiences as headmaster at MacDuffie, a private girls' school in the east. Educators in large urban areas or small rural districts may think the book is not for them, but I feel (having experienced home/school communities in urban, suburban, and rural areas as student and as educator) that the ideals and hopes which most adults hold for the young transcend geographic, social, economic, and ethnic lines. *How to Bring Up 2000 Teenagers* is worth reading.

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