

Reviews

The Moral Life of Children/The Political Life of Children

Robert Coles

New York:

The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986

—Reviewed by Thomas R. McDaniel, *Converse College, Spartanburg, South Carolina*

Robert Coles, psychiatrist and sociologist, humanist and humanitarian, turns his Faustian thirst for knowledge about the young, especially children of poverty, to two topics of great interest for educators: the moral and the political life of children. In two volumes he reflects on how he thinks children develop moral and political sensibilities. I say "reflects on" advisedly, for both books are as much a retrospective on the education of Robert Coles as they are a study of moral and political thinking in the legions of children around the world whom Coles has studied, interviewed, written about, and learned from.

When I first heard Coles speak, as a visitor to the college where I now teach, I was impressed by his energy, his passion for the intellectual pursuits of the scholar, his quest for social justice, and his extraordinary ability to see the connections between thought and action. His catholic interests—art, literature, film, politics, philosophy, medicine, psychology, to mention a few—form an intricate latticework through which he focuses on the many children he has come to know.

Both *The Moral Life of Children* and *The Political Life of Children*, then, give Coles an opportunity to view his experience in new ways. We meet again his children of crises, the uprooted children, and the children of migrants, sharecroppers, and mountaineers. We hear again the poignant insights of Ruby Bridges, a black child who initiated school desegregation in New Orleans and who helped Coles learn that "the moral life is not to be confused with tests to measure certain kinds of abstract (moral) thinking. . . ." We hear Eduardo, a young Brazilian who had not lost his "moral pride, a

kind of self-respect that even a ten-year-old scurrying across the hot pavements of the Copacabana can manage to possess." And we hear Lon, a Cambodian boy who, says Coles, "taught me an enormous amount about what it can mean for a child living in exile from Southeast Asia to think about one nation, then another, to feel one set of nationalist yearnings and loyalties, then another." It is, you see, the children who are the teachers in these two books. Coles is the thoughtful student who eagerly learns the moral and political lessons that emerge from the thoughts and feelings of each child-teacher.

What does Coles learn? That is difficult to say, for these are not textbooks but social and intellectual travelogues. The author tells us he has "tried to work toward a vision of documentary child psychiatry: to record how a historical crises . . . or a social crises . . . or a long-standing social impasse . . . bears upon the mental life of young people." The lessons are embedded in the social context and the individual lives of the children themselves in "the psychology of everyday life." As Coles says, "I claim no definitive conclusions about what any 'group' feels or thinks. . . . One can only insist on being as tentative as possible, claiming only impressions, observations, thoughts, reflections, surmises, speculations, and in the end, a 'way of seeing.'" In the manner of a James Joyce novel, his books are better experienced than analyzed. The ideas of the children, and the stories of their lives, are absorbing.

For the educator there are more than a few lessons. The impact of experience (poverty, movies, change, adversity, etc.) on character and values and ideals is one lesson. Coles assures us, for example, that "if moral life has strength and coherence, the movies aren't likely (at their worst) to topple things." Another lesson to speculate on, as Coles does at length, is the impact of political issues and circumstances (nationalism, nuclear threat, race, religion, etc.) on a child's concept of government—how to rule and who is to rule whom. Coles writes

with passion about the different ways white and black children in South Africa think about their "nationalism" in "a highly racist political world," and he speculates sensitively on the different ways that the fear of nuclear holocaust affects the political morality of children in Poland and the United States.

The Moral Life of Children and *The Political Life of Children* allow us to see moral and political issues through the eyes of the world's children. They also show us the education of Robert Coles at his philosophical best.

Both books are available from The Atlantic Monthly Press, 420 Lexington Ave., Suite 2304, New York, NY 10170, for \$19.95 each.

Intelligence Applied

Robert J. Sternberg

San Diego:

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986

—Reviewed by Harold Baker, *Litchfield High School, Litchfield, Connecticut*

Intelligence Applied has much to offer educators concerned with curriculum development for the improvement of thinking skills. Sternberg offers a comprehensive and self-contained program based on his Triarchic Theory of Human Intelligence and draws on his own experience for practical examples.

Sternberg covers a wide variety of intellectual domains in this comprehensive text, including figural, abstract, and verbal problems. Each section begins with illustrative examples that make the exercises more meaningful. Because of the clarity of presentation, this text could be used for self-study as well as in classes at the high school or college level.

Sternberg concludes with two chapters that may make the book unique. In one he discusses social and practical intelligence, and in the other—entitled "Why Intelligent People Fail (too often)"—he offers advice on getting the most out of his program for improving intellectual skills.

Educators interested in thinking

skills development will find this text an excellent resource.

Available from Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1250 Sixth Ave., San Diego, CA 92101, for \$14.95.

Improving America's Schools

Bruce R. Joyce
White Plains, N.Y.:
Longman Inc., 1986

—Reviewed by William J. Leary, Broward County Public Schools, Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Improving schools in this country continues to be a reformer's dream. Because there is so much that is easy to criticize, reformers frequently take the tack: "Why doesn't somebody do something?" So it is with *Improving America's Schools*. The author suggests that the "real task" is uniting teachers, administrators, and community members to establish an environment where educational improvement is the norm. Most people will agree!

However, the difficulty occurs in the author's failure to describe how to develop a political and financial climate where legislators and taxpayers at the local, state, and national level will assign the resources necessary to improve education in the way this well-meaning book intends.

One of the book's best highlights is Joyce's mind-stretching model of what future education might be, in the best of all possible worlds. He supplements his ideas with a bibliography of other writers and thinkers who have explored similar ideals.

Available from Longman, Inc., 95 Church St., White Plains, NY 10601, for \$12.95.

The Struggle for the American Curriculum 1893-1958

Herbert M. Kliebard
New York:

Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986

—Reviewed by William Schubert, University of Illinois at Chicago.

The curriculum field is replete with needless rediscovery. The appearance of Kliebard's book, however, makes it increasingly difficult to remain ahistorical. He has written what is destined to become a contemporary curriculum classic.

Beginning with the context of the reports of the NEA Committees of Ten and Fifteen, Kliebard constructs an interpretive history of curriculum thought and practice from 1893 to 1958. He presents the perennial debate over the primacy of the child or the curriculum; discusses the Dewey School; elaborates the rise of the social efficiency movement and so-called scientific curriculum-making; elucidates subject realignment in light of vocationalism; analyzes the project and experience curriculum; presents social meliorist, reconstructionist, and life adjustment thrusts; and notes the pre-1960s tendency toward hybridization of curriculum ideas and approaches.

Kliebard's painstaking research carefully sets in context the work and influence of such notables as Francis W. Parker, William T. Harris, Charles W. Eliot, G. Stanley Hall, Lester Frank Ward, Joseph Mayer Rice, Edward L. Thorndike, William C. Bagley, Edward A. Ross, John Dewey, David Snedden, Franklin Bobbitt, W. W. Charters, Charles Prosser, Clarence Kingsley, George S. Counts, Harold O. Rugg, and Boyd H. Bode. He makes events such as the Eight Year Study and Rugg's social studies texts come alive with contemporary relevance, and he interprets the growth of four orientations: humanist, social efficiency, developmentalist, social meliorist, and hybrids of each. Because of Herbert Kliebard's efforts, the curriculum field has a richer history. It behooves curriculum leaders and scholars to know the precedent that they can build upon by reading this book.

Available from Routledge & Kegan Paul, 29 West 35th St., New York, NY 10001, for \$24.95.

Improving Principal Effectiveness: The Principal Profile

Kenneth A. Leithwood and Deborah J. Montgomery
Toronto:

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1986

—Reviewed by Bill Ernest, University of Montevallo, Montevallo, Alabama.

How is a principal's "effectiveness" to be judged? On what basis are we warranted in claiming that principal A is a better principal than principal B? The bases for making these judgments compose the content of this book. The authors make research results available to those wishing to put it to practice. Laying a practical foundation upon which strategies for improving principal effectiveness can be built is the volume's strength. This well-researched and forthright presentation is of special interest to principals, to those aspiring to be principals, and to those responsible for selecting principals.

Available from The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 252 Bloor St., West, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5S 1V6, for \$19.50 prepaid.

Managing Productive Schools:

Toward an Ecology

Karolyn J. Snyder and
Robert H. Anderson
Orlando:

Academic Press, Inc., 1986

—Reviewed by Art Steller, Oklahoma City Public Schools, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

This volume is clearly designed for those interested in the school principalship—aspiring candidates, academic researchers, trainers of principals, and even seasoned veterans. Its sheer heftiness, both in content and in the number of pages, suggests that it is a work to be better digested with some company in a course or principal's academy than as bedside reading.

The authors are totally committed to the systems approach to organization-

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Reviews

al management. "Central to our thinking is that each school is an ecological system, all parts are interdependent, and healthy relationships between the parts can help the school to thrive as an organization" (p. viii). Every aspect of a school—goal development, leadership, organization, performance, program, and management—is presented within the context of a system or subsystem. Each piece of the school puzzle is comprehensively analyzed, although I would have liked to see the entire puzzle reassembled as a final chapter.

Virtually all of the authors' concepts, models, and so on, are reinforced with statements from research and professional literature, drawing almost equally from the fields of management and education. The approach in this book provides a way to view and to enhance the organizational life in productive schools.

Available at Academic Press, Inc., College Division, Order Dept., Orlando, FL 32821, for \$37.80.

Curriculum and Aims

Decker F. Walker and Jonas F. Soltis
New York:

Teachers College Press, 1986

—Reviewed by *William Schubert, University of Illinois, Chicago.*

What is worth knowing, experiencing, and teaching? This question infuses almost every curriculum book, but is rarely given book-length treatment. Walker and Soltis address head-on the problem of ideals as the dimension of curriculum upon which all else is contingent. They contrast progressive and traditional perspectives, demonstrate the problematic character of aims, and discuss different bases for rationalizing curriculum. In the final chapter the authors present cases that make theoretical points from earlier chapters come alive in political, intellectual, and school-based contexts. This book should be as useful to the seasoned curriculum leader and teacher as it is to the novice. The kind of reflection on purposes it encourages should not be neglected by any-

one who works seriously for educational improvement.

Available from Teachers College, Columbia University, 1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10027, for \$8.95.

Sexism and the War System

Betty A. Reardon
New York:

Teachers College Press, 1985

—Reviewed by *Carolyn Jurkowitz, Department of Education, Diocese of Columbus, Columbus, Ohio.*

Sexism and the War System breaks into the educator's daily rat race to appeal for help in abolishing two insidious forms of human violence: sexism and war.

Because the attitudes, values, and beliefs that spawn sexist and militaristic behavior are learned—and, therefore, subject to change—Reardon puts her hopes for the future squarely in the laps of those who educate. The core of her book lies in the theory of "reciprocal causation," which holds that sexism and war are deeply rooted, closely connected manifestations of aggression. While aggression is universal, it is not spontaneous. It is born and bred by fear: fear of those who are different from ourselves and fear of the otherness within ourselves that stems from imposition of rigidly defined sex roles.

Reardon contends that neither sexism nor war can be overcome independently from the other. Structured, even revolutionary changes in the sociopolitical realm are authenticated only by significant psychic changes in people. We have to change ourselves before we can change the world.

Provocative and brief, Reardon's presentation is intended more as food for thought than agenda for action. Her message is original, direct, logically argued, and conceptually clear. It deserves a hearing.

Available from Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1234 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10027, for \$17.95 (hardcover) or \$10.95 (paperback).

Learning Strategies

John Nisbet and Janet Shucksmith
New York:

Routledge & Kegan Paul and Methuen,
Inc., 1986

—Reviewed by Meredith "Mark" Gall, Uni-
versity of Oregon, Eugene.

The authors make a convincing case that development of metacognitive ability (awareness of one's mental processes) and learning strategies (methods for controlling and regulating one's learning) should be prime aims of the curriculum. They examine recent advances in theory and research on the utility of learning strategies, differences between learning strategies and study skills, patterns of learning strategies development in children, and three approaches for explicit teaching of learning strategies. The authors provide examples of learning strategies instruction, drawn

primarily from education in Scotland. However, this provocative little book has much to offer educators elsewhere who wish to promote the teaching of learning strategies and study skills to school-age children.

Available from Routledge & Kegan Paul and Methuen, Inc., 29 West 35th St., New York, NY 10001, for \$29.95.

Decision-Oriented Educational Research

William Cooley and William Bickel
Fitchburg, Massachusetts:

Kluwer Academic Publishers Warehouse,
1986

—Reviewed by Robert Crumpton, Minneso-
ta State Department of Education, St. Paul.
Cooley and Bickel introduce a new

concept of decision-oriented educational research and compare it to evaluation. Written for educational decision makers, *Decision-Oriented Educational Research* describes ways in which educational research can become more relevant and valid.

The authors report case studies of researchers who have been working in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, public schools for the past five years, and who have sorted out the lessons from this experience that are generalizable to other education contexts. Indeed, this book includes a type of operations research that involves continuous data collection, analysis, and practical feedback to policymakers and managers of education systems.

Available from Kluwer Academic Publishers Warehouse, 231 Industrial Park, Fitchburg, MA 01420, for \$42.00.

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