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This begs the question of *which* limiting concept, which cake to choose from among the highly assorted confections on the liberal cakestand.

There is, in fact, at least one element of the liberal tradition which could be valuable in criticizing current educational arrangements in the UK. Premature specialization and over-specialization have long characterized English secondary and higher education. This is related to the fact that the Victorians, while embracing the anti-vocationalism of the Aristotelean tradition, chose to ignore another element of that tradition, namely a presumption against excessive specialization. It is open to our generation, in furtherance of a different social and political agenda, to pick and choose our own limiting concepts, just as our predecessors did.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Evans, G. (Ed.) *Learning and teaching cognitive skills*. ACER, Melbourne, 1991.

This collection of readings developed from papers presented at the ACER International Symposium on Intelligence in 1988 looks at the issues associated with the teaching and learning of cognitive skills. As a result of this there is a strong emphasis on research findings and their application to the learning environment. The basic assumption of the ideas presented here is that thinking and learning can be taught and the learner takes an active role in selecting and using appropriate strategies to tackle new tasks, learn new skills and solve problems. The writings focus on teaching and learning in formal situations across the range of ages from children to adult learners. A variety of issues are addressed within the context of current thought in the field of cognitive studies.

The introductory chapter by Glen Evans provides a useful theoretical overview presenting current thought and research in the area of cognitive studies. Evans raises the major issues that are addressed in the chapters of this book and makes valuable links between the issues presented.

The book represents all of the major approaches to the area covering research issues, domain specific and general strategies and approaches to teaching these strategies to students of all ages. A number of the chapters take a developmental perspective investigating factors that may facilitate development or the examination of the process of development of specific strategies. The teaching of learning strategies is approached from a variety of philosophical perspectives, explicit instruction in strategies in subject specific and generic environments and the spontaneous generation of strategies for particular tasks. Within this there are suggestions for practice.

Chapter One provides a useful discussion of the range of methods available for the investigation of cognitive skills. The major issues related to the collection of data and the assessment of thought processes are discussed. The findings presented in subsequent chapters result from the use of a variety of the methods discussed.

This is a thorough coverage of research in the area with a particularly Australian focus. The findings presented cover a broad range of perspectives of the field, both methodologically and philosophically.

Biggs, J. (Ed.) *Teaching for learning: the view from cognitive psychology*. ACER, Melbourne, 1991.

The writings collected in this text take a constructivist view of knowledge, that is that the learner constructs knowledge rather than the teacher imparting knowledge to the learner. The focus of the research and the writing is clearly on the learner and the role of the learner in the educational experience. Emphasis is placed on the role of metacognition and the process of learning how to think and problem solve.

There is a strong focus on the Australian educational setting, only one chapter presents research derived from a non-Australian context. The initial chapters focus on the role of learning in the school context, followed by the role of cognitive and metacognitive processes as they apply to student learning. Subsequent chapters consider specific aspects of metacognitive processes including planning, discussion of the links between psychology and instruction and specific problem solving skills for mathematics and learning from reading. Also included are studies that have provided suggestions about the nature of metacognitive strategies and those things that teachers can do to teach in a way that facilitates the development of such strategies. Several of the chapters present details and results of specific programs such as PEEL (Project for the Enhancement of Effective Learning) and SPELT (Strategy Program for Effective Learning/Thinking). Chapter Five by Swellings questions some widely accepted ideas about cognition and the links between cognition and instruction. This chapter in particular provides plenty of scope for debate. The final chapter focuses on implementation issues at classroom, school and community levels.

This book presents relevant theory and strategies in the field of cognitive and metacognitive

learning. Writings come from such experts as Biggs, Goodnow, Lawrence and Evans. This is an informative and practical book with many suggestions for practice. It is representative of current Australian thought and practice in the area.

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