

1986

## Jaques, David, Learning in Groups, Croom Helm

E. B. C. Thornton  
*Western Australian College of Advanced Education*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Thornton, E. B. (1986). Jaques, David, Learning in Groups, Croom Helm. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 11(1).  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.1986v11n1.8>

This Book Review is posted at Research Online.  
<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol11/iss1/8>

of an emerging identity. The book consists of three sections. Part I "Responses to Youth Unemployment" demonstrates the universal aspiration of youth for economic independence and self-respect through the social aspects of work. Work is the basic anchor point of personal identity. Unemployed youth wish to lead normal lives and so spend some of their money to avoid ostracism and social isolation. Those who fall into poverty traps experience difficulty in keeping their sense of self-worth intact. Many retreat into what Watson calls a "privatized aimless existence". For some youth, family supports and the option of a delayed or forced return to higher education are additional resources that can be incorporated in survival strategies. Part II "The Peer Group and the Family" provides evidence of the potential of adolescent peer groups and youth refugees to support youth as they confront changing family circumstances. Attention is given to the pressures which girls experience when asserting their independence in families where life is oriented about the economic and social position of the father. The unequal power relationships between sexes also appear in social relationships among youth. Adolescent girls have varying degrees of awareness of how they can become independent of boys for transport and social contacts. Working class girls are accepting of their fate as targets of compensation by boys who are themselves losers in the competition for jobs. Part III "Class and Schooling" shows the irrelevance of schooling in preparing youth to manage their personal careers beyond school. Here there is support for the dismantling of what has become known as the "competitive academic curriculum" (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler and Dowsett, 1982, *Making the Difference*). *Double Depression* is a sober reminder to teachers and teacher educators of the debilitating effects of the tight labour market. It is already too late to help many working class youth. Review of the high school by expert committees of enquiry in most states and territories provides a critical moment in Australian education. Action is needed to reconsider the caring, humane school environment of the "adaptive high school" (*Schooling for 15 and 16 Year Olds*, Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1980). Watson's study demonstrates the need for youth to acquire survival skills while still at high school so that they can maintain greater control over their careers, even with the experience of unemployment.

## BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by E.B.C. Thornton  
Western Australian College of Advanced Education

Jaques, David, *Learning in Groups*, Croom Helm  
\$35.95 pp. xviii, 318

In the characteristic "open" situation of much British higher (tertiary) education the limitations of lectures are well appreciated and alternative modes of teaching widely used. This book, by a Senior Lecturer in Communication Skills at the Hatfield Polytechnic is about one major alternative. On p. 36 we read that

... Bligh (1972), surveying the research evidence on different forms of teaching, concluded that discussion methods are more effective than didactic methods (e.g. the lecture) for stimulating thought, for personal and social adjustment, and for changes of attitude, and were no worse than the lecture for effectively transmitting information.

There is so much information packed into this book that it is hard to know quite where to begin. Perhaps Chapter Three, *Research into Learning*, would be a good place. Here we meet students who either look towards success or else fear failure (in UK), use either surface level or deep level processing (in Sweden), and adopt holist, serialist or versatile strategies (in London). In the Liberal Arts College of Harvard students develop from Position 1 towards Position 9, where Position 1 is "there are right and wrong answers to everything"; by Position 3 "diversity and uncertainty are accepted"; by Position 5 "all knowledge and values are perceived as relativistic and contextual"; and Positions 6 to 9 "cover the gradual movement from feeling the need for a tentative commitment, trying it out, exploring its implications to finally experiencing commitment as a continually unfolding activity through which the personal lifestyle of the student is expressed." "However it is rare that a student reaches the stage of maturity implied by Position 9." One can't help wondering "What about staff?"

All that, plus discussion, takes a mere seven pages. The next chapter, 16 pages, covers concepts in communication from the most basic, through the Johari window and feedback to transactional analysis "a valuable explanatory framework for human interaction, one to which it is easy to relate and develop in everyday communication." There is a discussion (from USA) of the way that "focus . . . on 'what is' or 'what other people have said may help students in jumping academic hurdles but have little personal impact on them."

The effect over a long period of time . . . is to drive them away into a world where their meanings are nearer those of their environment and accepted as having worth.

This chapter and the last give an idea of the very down to earth and humane approach of the book under review. The next two chapters, 56 and 34 pages, are called *Tasks and Techniques and The Tutor's Job*. these are both packed with practicalities, including questions of the physical arrangement of groups. Reading about this reminded me of the college where I once worked in England where furniture was rearranged so often that eventually everyone agreed it should be returned to the walls after each session, just to make it easier for the next class.

Chapter Eight tackles the influence of the institution, the department, physical considerations and "the shadow of assessment", all in a very realistic and down to earth way. Alas for tertiary education which ignores these matters! At the end of this chapter there are thirty eight real life case studies in group teaching, with details of a contact person for each.

The last two chapters are on Evaluating Groups and on Training Methods and Activities (for practice groups, teaching groups and task groups.) The question of evaluation is discussed on the assumption that teachers and students cooperate "in a climate of openness and honesty" and without mistrust "to articulate their experiences and both learn from it" with "no question of its being used for promotion or other public purposes . . ." If this sounds odd in Australia, where even prime Ministers have to watch their backs, it is well accepted in UK, part of the characteristic "open" situation. The head of CNAAB, Sir Edwin Kerr, made the same point about evaluation when he visited Perth in 1983. Notice that teachers are mentioned, and students, but there is no mention of administrators.

The chapter on training methods includes the programme for a three day Small Group teaching workshop run in London in June 1980. The sessions each day start at 0930 and go on until the bar opens at 1730. The last sessions on the two evenings are from "1930 — ?" and "1930 — 2100", called Evening Options. The first, Party and Games, says "The games will begin with some educational justification but where they end will depend on the dynamics of the group."

Not so far discussed are the first two chapters. These are called Theories about Group Behaviour and Research into Group Behaviour. They, too, are interesting. And at the end is a list of 163 English language references which draw on experiences in half a dozen countries or more. There is also a list giving details of six relevant resources and organisations, all in UK.

There is little in this book that any tertiary teacher would not be the better for knowing and knowing well. It is a pity that the price is so high and the print merely typescript. But don't be put off by that. If you are still in doubt as whether to get hold of a copy, try this questionnaire (from p.280):

Please tick each of the Group Techniques listed below according to how frequently you use them now on your teaching scheme. [Columns are then provided for "now", "future", and "comments" for each of the following: —]

1. Seminar
2. Case discussion
3. Group Tutorial
4. Individual tutorials
5. Peer tutoring
6. Buzz groups
7. Snowball groups
8. Cross-over groups
9. Horseshoe groups
10. Fish bowls
11. Groups in Laboratory classes
12. Groups in Field Exercises
13. Group Projects
14. Role playing
15. Games and simulations
16. Video playback of individual or group activity
17. Syndicates
18. Brain storming
19. Synectics
20. Associate discussion