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BOOK REVIEWS

Lokan, J. and McKenzie, P. (eds). (1989). *Teacher appraisal: issues and approaches*. *Australian Education Review*, No. 28. Melbourne: ACER.

The Australian Education Review series, published by ACER, is establishing itself as an important source of informed and substantial comment on subjects of current significance in Australian education (it may even be an antidote to troglodyte bureaucrats' discussion/white papers serving politicians' interests). This volume is a worthwhile addition to this series, in part because of the importance of the topic, and consists mainly of papers presented to an ACER forum held in 1987.

Given that formal teacher appraisal largely disappeared from government and non-government schools over the last two decades, it is an important to be clear why teacher appraisal is "in the spotlight again" (Beare, P.11). His view is that it is "largely because an economic recession has made all providers acutely conscious of the need to extract maximum value from every dollar..." and thus one of the five purposes of teacher appraisal is accountability. However this view underplays the significance of a change in political ideology in the 1980s in Australia and, in particular, England, where Forde (p.35) claims "Implicit in Mr Baker's approach to teacher appraisal is the scapegoating of individual teachers for problems in the wider educational and social systems over which they have little or no control." Notwithstanding the non-educational factors contributing to the rise of teacher appraisal as an issue in the USA (outlined in the papers by Wells), England (Forde) and Australia, teachers have a professional interest in encouraging the development of a formal system of appraisal which utilises fair and efficient procedures to provide reliable and usable information for all five of the purposes listed by Beare (viz. teacher improvement, promotion, school improvement, accountability and research).

Professional development of teachers through performance appraisal is considered in papers by Bednall and France and, provided that such appraisal is not linked to staff management decisions, this aspect should receive wholehearted support from teachers and be recognised as part of teacher education programmes. The paper by Baird is helpful in showing how teacher appraisal is a part of school development.

Somewhat more controversial is the question of the procedures to be used in appraisal. In his typically forthright manner, Scriven (p. 104) states that "We need a new system because all the old ones are not only inefficient but invalid, and hence unjust....Even the systems built into the latest handbooks for teacher evaluation are illegitimate". The recommendation by Tobin (p.89) that the Georgia TPAI be modified to suit Australian schools should also not escape Scriven's strictures as an effort to adapt it for use by WACAE in student teacher appraisal was rejected on grounds similar to those advanced by Scriven. The challenge is to establish fair and efficient procedures of teacher appraisal and

the papers by Moses, Scriven, Ingvarson and Tisher are useful for those concerned with this enterprise. As Tisher (p.163) concludes, "Teacher appraisal is a potentially worthwhile, yet difficult, task that must be tackled collaboratively by employers, teacher educators, teachers, parents, and researchers", yet experience in the USA and England has shown this is an area where politicians can make well-publicised plays for their own purposes. If teachers are positively disposed towards appraisal and working towards developing a professionally acceptable system, then the danger of misappropriation by others is minimised. To that end this book was used as a major reference in an assignment for a WACAE B.Ed. unit studied by 500 teachers Australia-wide in 1990. Their comments on the book were favourable.

B. HAYNES

Christie, F. (Ed.). (1990). *Literacy for the Changing World: A Fresh Look at the Basics*. Melbourne: ACER.

This is an important book and one which deserves to be widely read, as the issues it raises merit discussion. It is a collection of eight essays by distinguished Australian scholars. The opening essay by Christie provides the historical context for the study of literacy, while the subsequent essays focus on more specific aspects such as particular subject literacies (English, science, social science), the needs of the ESL learner, and the gender implications of the topic.

Some essays consider literacy in the context of a whole language approach but others concentrate more specifically on the development of writing. The thesis developed through the essays is that the teaching of writing will improve if the 'genre' approach (based on the systemic linguistics work of Halliday and others) is adopted. In promoting this view, the approaches associated with the work of Britton, Barnes, Moffet and others (known as the 'growth model' or 'process writing') are criticised.

From the standpoint of this reviewer, this is regrettable, as there is a real danger that in pursuing certain admirable goals of the genre approach, understandings and approaches gained from Britton and Barnes may be jeopardised.

As different facets are discussed, the authors make reference to the syllabuses and teaching approaches of the 1940s and '50s, when the function of the teacher was to transmit a specified body of knowledge (and the values implicit in it) to the students. In the 1960s a shift away from these syllabuses began; a shift which became widespread in the '70s. The process of HOW the student learned became the focus of syllabuses across all subject areas.

While acknowledging the role that Britton and others played in this shift of focus some of the writers are, at the same time, critical of the significance given to personal and narrative writing by them. The criticism that many teachers,

influenced by the growth model approach, failed to teach the range of genres or modes of writing required by secondary school subjects, is valid; as is the criticism that many failed to teach the conventions of usage, punctuation and spelling to their students.

These inadequacies of teaching tend to be used to discredit the theories on which they are based (no matter how imperfect the application of the ideas), and individual teachers are at times referred to, to illustrate the points made. It can, however, equally be demonstrated that teachers who have an understanding of the small-group approaches to learning as outlined by Barnes (*From Communication to Curriculum*, 1976) and Reid, Forrester and Cook (*Small Group Work in the Classroom*, 1982 and a revised edition *Small Group Learning in the Classroom*, 1989), and are confident in their knowledge of language, are highly effective teachers of writing and are able to teach to the point of demonstrated need - be it whole class, small group or individual need. (The dominance of transmission-mode, teacher-centred teaching in Australian schools [at least at the secondary level] suggests that these understandings and competencies are not widespread).

This tendency to criticise ideas, in part, because of imperfect application, and a tendency to refer to, or imply, teacher-centred approaches when discussing classroom practices are a matter of concern in some of the essays.

The essays may be read as individual items or as a sequence. This reviewer would recommend that readers start with Lyn Wales's "Literacy for Learners of English as a Second Language" for two reasons. Firstly, the principles underpinning the second language learning are valid for mother-tongue speakers as well and, as such, should underpin all teaching - as Wales and Christie acknowledge. Secondly, the teaching approaches espoused (based on the principles) are sound. Indeed, if they were adopted in all Australian classrooms there would be a dramatic improvement in the quality of language teaching.

Likewise the chapter by Janet White 'On Literacy and Gender' should be essential reading for all teachers. Beyond this, readers may prefer to select chapters related to their specific subject interest, though there is value in reading them all. For English teachers, Pam Gilbert's stimulating chapter "Authorising disadvantage; authorship and creativity in the language classroom" should also be considered as required reading.

Martin, and Cope and Kalantzis argue the need for science and social science teachers to teach the vocabulary and genres of their disciplines. The argument and the approaches espoused are sound, though two aspects perhaps merit further discussion: the quality of the writing in textbooks, and the question of jargon. All disciplines have subject-specific terminology or jargon and good writers use these terms to promote their arguments as precisely as possible. Regrettably, there are other writers who retreat into abstractions and excessive jargon which act as a barrier to understanding. Schoenfeld in the *Chemist's English* is critical of many science writers who produce such poor writing.

The adoption of the genre approach as the new orthodoxy will be unlikely to produce dramatic improvements in writing unless a number of other issues are also addressed. These issues include learner-centred teaching methods, the language competence of teachers, and the out-of-school environment of students. Teachers need to be better informed as to who this out-of-school environment can influence the language development of students so they can better advise parents. For the reasons outlined above it should be evident that *Literacy for a Changing World* is a book to read, discuss and be influenced by, but not one to be adopted as a gospel for the 1990s.

KEN WILLIS

Willis, S. (ed.). (1990). *Being Numerate: What Counts?* Melbourne: ACER.

What constitutes numeracy and how it might be achieved in our schools forms the focus of this excellent book edited by Sue Willis. The authors comprise a selection of Australian and British mathematics educators, each detailing a facet of this most complex of issues.

Each chapter provides powerful and convincing arguments, and supportive, though not extensive, research evidence for a reconceptualization of numeracy. No longer, it is argued, can numeracy be viewed as a set of decontextualized basic facts and skills. This is shown to be the case even for employer groups, whose views parenthetically are treated somewhat generously. Today, numeracy should be thought of in terms of "basic" processes, particularly those mathematical processes integral to modelling real world problem solving—for example, the ability to interpret graphs and tables of information.

The basis for learning processes, the book argues, involves learning mathematics within a context. Transferring this knowledge to other subject areas requires the ability to translate between various representations of mathematical activity, eg., symbolic, pictorial and verbal representations. However, it is apparent for many mathematical activities where real objects are involved—for example, building a barbecue from a two-dimensional plan—that concrete representations are also an essential form of mathematical learning for numeracy. This needs to be considered in any theoretical framework that suggests how mathematical understanding develops.

The time and energy devoted to teaching standard algorithms is shown to be questionable in terms of developing numerical aspects of numeracy. Calculator and mental activities are suggested. However, while clearly motivating, many lack the real-world significance that is considered important throughout the remainder of the book.

The issue of assessment is also addressed. Assessing numeracy becomes more than simply employing paper and pencil tests. The book offers a number of

alternative suggestions, noteworthy among which is the procedure for interviewing students on how they might tackle real world problems. However, the realities of the classroom and the pressures of everyday teaching could make this a difficult task.

Inertia on the part of the mathematics teaching profession to break away from its traditional approach to teaching may change through the implementation of principles described in exemplary inservice packages, such as the Mathematics Curriculum and Teaching Package. Nevertheless, one rather startling observation - that the content of our mainstream mathematics courses are driven by the needs of 7% of the secondary school cohort - gives credence to the view expressed by the editor, that perhaps alternative mathematics courses (such as Mathematics in Practice and Modelling with Mathematics in Western Australia) should be seen as the 'traditional' courses if we are to value a numerate society.

This is a welcome textbook for students wishing to gain an understanding of the issues surrounding numeracy in the Australian context. I would also suggest that the views expressed on numeracy apply equally well to the broader topic of mathematics education and as such this constitutes an excellent reference book for all teachers, pre- and inservice, throughout Australia. In addition, the book also contains a useful, though less than exhaustive, annotated bibliography relating to each chapter.

In a discipline where the major issues are usually addressed in a British or American context, it is refreshing to find an authoritative work relevant to the Australian scene.

ANTHONY J. HERRINGTON

Brennan, B. (ed.). (1990). *Continuing Professional Education: Promise and Performance*. (Australian Education Review No.30), Melbourne: ACER. \$17.95.

This timely monograph offers a critical appraisal of continuing education for Australian professionals. The editor, Barrie Brennan, is currently Acting Director of the Department of Continuing Education at the University of New England.

Five professions - Accounting, Engineering, Law, Occupational Therapy and School Teaching - are highlighted with details on each presented by a practitioner actively engaged in providing CPE to the profession.

The first three chapters introduce the topic, explore the major terms, including the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations Directory (ASCO) - published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of

Employment and Industrial Relations in 1987; present statistical information on employment in major occupational groups, and provide a framework for discussing CPE (Chapter 3). The latter is particularly useful, focusing on contextual factors, policy and objectives, management of CPE, program content and delivery, evaluation, and finance. The framework is then used as a basis for discussing each of the five targeted professions.

The chapter on the "School Teaching profession" notes that this is the largest professional group, with over 200,000 members working with over three million students in widely differing school communities across six states and two territories. The size and the diversity of the profession result in complex needs and provisions, and the contributor of this chapter (Glyn France, a professional development consultant in Victoria) points out the difficulty of generalizing across sub-groups.

Demographic data have important implications, e.g. because almost two-thirds of teachers are female, many with their own children, the timing of CPE (in-service) activities is crucial.

France notes that the Karmel Report (1973) indicated a major national commitment to the resourcing of CPE for teachers in all school systems in Australia.

Because the provision of CPE today is governed by policies at several levels, a detailed review is presented for the state of Victoria only. A more comprehensive review covering each of the states and territories would have been desirable.

The book concludes with an excellent summary and highlights emerging issues. Brennan notes that professions have moved towards mandatory CPE with "occupational therapists striving to maintain the voluntary principle, and teachers unable to resolve more fundamental problems". (p127). The mandatory versus voluntary issue appears to dominate CPE policy discussions in Australia.

In terms of program content and delivery, there appeared to be no overall CPE program in the professions discussed; and profiles indicated that evaluation was not a high priority. There also appeared to be a lack of overall clarity in the purposes of the CPE programs of the professions.

Brennan advocates a cross-professional approach particularly in the area of research, and points out the need to question the "outputs" of CPE.

This book provides both a useful framework for discussing CPE and insightful conclusions based on detailed analysis of the five professions. It should be read by all who are interested and/or involved in this important area.

JANET WILLIAMS

Atkin, J., Bastiani, J., and Goode, J., (1988). *Listening to Parents*, Kent: Croom Helm.

The participation of community members in schooling has received greater attention from governments and education departments in recent years. In response to calls for greater accountability and more "efficient" public education services, the focus has moved to a consideration of the community and the role its participation in school decision making could play to assist in the alleviation of the criticisms levelled at the state education systems. Hence governments in Victoria, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory have enacted legislation empowering the participation of community members in school decision making. Other governments are in various stages of contemplation of this issue.

However whilst the rhetoric surrounding the advantages and disadvantages of community participation in schooling abounds the various bodies seeking to introduce such initiatives into schools have seemingly had few constructive means of implementation at their disposal. It is apparent that the issue of community participation is not a "fad" which will soon pass. Hence it is now necessary for education authorities to focus more intensively on the means by which community participation may be implemented successfully into our schools.

The book under review provides a useful starting point for schools already (or soon to be) in the process of introducing community participation. The focus of the book is on the participation of parents and the importance of listening to parents in order to improve home/school relations. Rather than being written from the usual school/ teacher perspective the issues are discussed from the parents/children perspective. The process of "listening to parents" is regarded as a crucial element in attempting to improve the relationship between the home and the school. No attempt is made to discuss the philosophical issues surrounding participation of parents in education, nor is there provision of a literature review. The authors state that the book is not intended as an academic text: rather it was written basically for teachers.

The book is divided into four parts. Part One gives a brief description of the current issues and concerns in the area of parent participation in schools. The concerns of various interest groups are identified and the rationale behind the "listening to parents" approach given.

Part Two provides evidence from interviews with "real life" parents in order to explain the parents' perception of their involvement with schools. The point is made that whilst the parents may have some access to the working life of the school they are rarely privy to decisions about that the aims of the school and how these are to be achieved. This section deals with the experiences of parents who have attempted to develop greater familiarity with the school. The boundaries which exist between schools and parents are discussed. The perspective of the "teacher parent" is examined and provides an interesting insight into the manner in which this situation was dealt with by those interviewed.

Part Three attempts to provide a framework around which a school's programme of greater parent participation may be constructed. The problems which a school may face when endeavouring to formulate a participation policy, planning and evaluation of the policy are outlined. Strategies through which schools and teachers may find ways of listening to parents are identified and their implications discussed.

Improving communication and contact (both written and face to face contact) is considered essential and various practical strategies are provided.

Part Four shifts to a broader focus, whereby the implications of listening to parents for the education system in its entirety are examined. Matters such as teacher servicing, allocation of resources to allow teachers the time to pursue greater contact with parents and teacher education programmes are discussed. The support of the whole education system is crucial. Suggestions for further reading are provided at the conclusion of this section.

The British origin of the book may be regarded as detracting from its value to Australian readers. However I believe that there is much merit in the stance adopted by the authors and the interviews with parents reflect experiences not dissimilar to those of their Australian counterparts. The suggested strategies are readily applicable to Australian schools and are clearly described. However my concern is that they will only enhance the "token" participation that parents have in many schools. There is little attention paid to means by which parental participation in determining school philosophy or important school decisions may be enhanced. It is only when such strategies are developed that parents may feel that they do meaningfully participate in schools.

I believe that Australian teachers would benefit from reading this book as the classroom teacher could implement a number of the strategies mentioned. Teachers would certainly find the comments of the parents in the book interesting and the parents/children perspective of school participation may provide a useful guide for improving their own communication and contact with parents. The practical nature of the book renders it very readable. Likewise, school principals searching for methods to improve the communication and contact with parents would find the book a useful starting point. As a text student teachers would benefit as it would assist their avoidance of errors in dealing with parents and enhance their understanding of the parents' perspective. The question of parent (and community) participation is complex and the authors, by their own admission, have failed to cover all aspects of this issue. Thus as an adjunct to further reading on this subject this book has merit. Whilst not being the definitive work on the subject of parent participation in schools, this book does make a worthwhile contribution to the area, with the authors drawing on their experience and countless interviews with parents to be able to speak with some authority.

ANNE MARKOVIC

Ralph Pettman. (1986) *Teaching for Human Rights: Pre-school and Grades 1-4*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service. 121 pp.

Topical in this year of the signing of the *U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child*, this is a book of resources and strategies for teaching human rights K-4, compiled by more than 150 teachers and schools throughout Australia.

Human rights are described as reasonable claims to permit people to live decent lives, and the doctrine of human rights is presented as being also a doctrine of human responsibilities. The curriculum suggested to foster a humane world begins by developing individual feelings of self-esteem and social tolerance before moving on to developing the values of justice, freedom, equality and well-being and an acceptance of the principles of the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights or the Rights of the Child.

Many practical strategies are provided to assist teachers to develop anti-racist and anti-sexist classrooms, as well as catering for the special needs of Aboriginal children. A seven-step model for conflict resolution and the use of bibliotherapy are also highlighted.

This book, which is simply written, would be a useful reference for both pre-service and experienced teachers in implementing a social studies and life skills curriculum.

DAWN BUTTERWORTH

VIDEO REVIEW

Educating Inattentive Children

"Educating Inattentive Children" is a long (120 minutes) video that provides a comprehensive coverage of symptoms, assessment and intervention of Attention Deficit Disorders in children. It is basically a two-hour lecture by Drs Sam and Michael Goldstein, who bring considerable experience and the perspectives of child psychology and child neurology to bear on the topic.

In the first segment, Dr Sam Goldstein outlines the many symptoms, associated behaviour characteristics, incidence and perceived classroom difficulties of Attention Deficit Disorders. The coverage is detailed and informative and the presentation is professional and easy to listen to. Samples of classroom behaviour would have enhanced the relevance for classroom teachers. After some 45 minutes, Dr Michael Goldstein takes up the commentary and elaborates on the disorder from a medical perspective. He emphasises the importance of multi-disciplinary evaluation and expands on the role of medication in the intervention of hyperactive behaviour. This section is rather clinical but very informative

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about the effects of medication and the variables associate with its use. Dr Sam then resumes and completes the programme with an overview of strategies that teachers can undertake in the classroom. He provides a number of ideas, most of them well established in the literature, but unfortunately many such ideas lose credibility with teachers if they are not accompanied by visual examples of their effective use in classrooms. The model of intervention developed in this programme involves the use of controlled medication; classroom strategies to minimize the effects of the behaviour and cognitive strategies designed to alter the child's learning style.

The lecture format employed in this video certainly provides the opportunity for the presenters to provide a wealth of information but its value to the practising teacher is reduced considerably by the lack of classroom footage. Teachers have trouble identifying with suggestions, no matter how appropriate, if they cannot be portrayed visually in naturalistic teaching settings. It is one thing to talk about intervention strategies but quite another to implement them in a class of 30 children. The video is a useful resource for students and teachers because of the information that it provides and the easy communication style of the presenters. One possible problem is that it is an NTSC tape which is not compatible with the PAL system that operates in most Australian institutions.

The tape costs \$89.95 (U.S.) and is available from:

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KEVIN CASEY