

W. Alan Wright*

Classroom Cookbook: The Recipes are Very American But Very Good

Dwight W. Allen and Eli Seifman, eds. *THE TEACHER'S HANDBOOK*. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1971. 832 pp. \$12.95.

The Teacher's Handbook is a massive collection of some 75 essays on virtually all topics of interest to contemporary educators. Editors Eli Seifman of the State University of New York and energetic Dwight W. Allen, Dean of New England's innovative School of Education at the University of Massachusetts, have successfully realized the ambitious task of soliciting and compiling papers from over 80 contributors to produce a survey in education — a catalog for teachers — which is at once undeniably practical and academically excellent. Though Canadian teachers will find the *Handbook* a unique and valuable tool, its worth as a reference and source of information is somewhat handicapped due to the deep-rooted U.S. orientation which prevails from cover to cover. Those who conceived the *Handbook* were obviously committed to creating a volume which, by its format, features and design, invites frequent use. The body of the volume is divided by topic into seven sections, each color-keyed for ease of access and suitably linked by brief, informative introductions.

The essays themselves are direct and concise, and demonstrate effective use of subtitles. Annotated bibliographies offer options for in-depth exploration of a given issue. One dozen important appendices also help to make the *Handbook* one which belongs on the teacher's desk rather than on an inaccessible shelf.

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Most significant of the *Handbook's* special features is an eight-page reference section which directs the reader to specific articles for possible answers to his questions. Lloyd W. Kline has compiled fifty "Questions Teachers Often Ask," and listed the relevant articles to turn to for guidance.

Section 1 of *The Teacher's Handbook* is devoted to "The Teacher." Articles deal with teacher education, in-service development, substitute teaching, teacher aides, teaching strategies, accountability and teacher organizations. Editor Seifman's "Teaching Strategies" asserts that, "There is no one best teaching method that fits all situations," and advocates the acquisition of "a range of teaching strategies" for all teachers. Another paper in this section, "Teacher Organizations," is little more than a brief description of the structures, policies, and conflicts that characterize the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. Hopefully, Canadian teachers will take the trouble to find out something of the workings of their own teacher organizations, such as the Canadian Teachers' Federation.

"Human Growth and Development" is the heading for Section 2 of the *Handbook*. This, the "major province of the entire professional enterprise" (p. 84), is dealt with in five basic essays on the stages of human growth, giftedness and handicaps. One naturally relates these theoretical essays to specific children one has known and taught; therein lies the strength of this Section.

The teacher will probably look to Section 3, "The Instructional Process," more than to any other part of the *Handbook*. It is here that practices and procedures which characterize the daily operation of the business are examined. Elementary staffs debating instructional grouping procedures would do well to consult Thomas Hawkes on the topic, while others concerned with "Classroom Discipline" and "Instructional Media" might turn to articles by William J. Gnagey and Gabriel D. Ofiesh. There is the occasional dismal essay which I hope teachers do not take seriously. In "Classroom Management," Paulette Alexander entices teachers to undertake with enthusiasm the "bookkeeping and housekeeping aspects of teaching" which many complain about, as "the records kept by classroom teachers are the grassroots of administration" (p. 177). The author also excuses the use of humor in the classroom with, "In the well-structured, purposeful, business like atmosphere of the effective classroom, there are many appropriate opportunities for humor. It relaxes class-

room tensions..." (p. 181).

The mid-section consists of a series of "crash courses" in the various curriculum areas. Most follow a standard format in presenting an historical overview of the development of the discipline, plus an outline of current trends and approaches.

Section 5 is "The School System." To be precise, it should read "The American School System." The extent to which the American orientation upon which these essays are based limits their value for Canadian readers is ultimately for the individual to determine. I found Francis A.J. Ianni's "School and Community" particularly stimulating. Ianni deals with the coming together of the two institutions and calls for a new focus on the "third institution — education — which is neither school nor community but both" (p. 484).

Five essays comprise "The Foundations of Education" Section. Eli Seifman examines "Historical Foundations" of education in the United States, hoping the teacher will find his "statements about the past" of "historical significance and contemporary relevance" (p. 558). Louis Fischer's formula for making teaching "the noble occupation it must be" "through effective utilization of organized membership" (p. 568) is found in "Social Foundations." In "Philosophical Foundations," Donald Arnstine demonstrates that philosophy of education is of practical value as a "mode of analysis" (p. 570); James W. Hall outlines the work in psychology that has implications for education; and, in "Aesthetic Foundations," Ralph A. Smith emphasizes the need to leave the world a better place.

The most thought-provoking Section of the *Handbook* is the last — "Contemporary Issues." It offers a wide variety of essays on controversial topics. Here again, the sole consideration of the American experience in most of these is a drawback. Not that the issues raised in James Farmer's "Minority Problems," for example, are irrelevant to Canadians. On the contrary. But, there is a strong tendency on the part of Canadians to read such articles and conclude that the problems are uniquely American. The "It couldn't happen here" syndrome is reinforced by a lack of information on the Canadian experience.

Sandwiched between "Student Power" and "Sex and Drugs" is Margaret Gillett's refreshing and original paper on "The Ecology of Education." In the *Handbook's* only Canadian contribution, Dr. Gillett takes an irreverent look at

"the school as an ecosystem... out of balance" (p. 748). The author proposes "an approach to the nature of learning, the learner, and the outcomes of learning that is at once scientific and humane." She claims that "Such an approach would be an ecology of education" (p. 753).

Unless an enterprising American finds a formula for profit on a Canadian edition, *The Teacher's Handbook* will remain a thoroughly "stars and stripes" production. For the time being, it appears to be a must for the teacher's desk and the staff room — a manual for all educational seasons.

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