

Reviews

advocate support for the patriotic war, and the policy of the lowest common denominator as the social norm. Members of both the present day press and public would do well to read this publication.

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Susan N. Cummings.

COMMUNICATION FOR EDUCATION.

Toronto: Intext, 1971.
235 pp. \$3.25.

This is not a conventional book, therefore it cannot be fairly reviewed as one. In fact, reading it from cover to cover clearly does it a disservice.

Susan Cummings collected topics from psychology, group work, and education. Such topics include the nature of language, societal goals in education, creativity, and perceptual processes. She presents each with introductory questions, brief summaries (5 to 10 pages) of expert opinions, and follow-up projects. Each of the fifteen chapters is an independent unit. They are intended to help the reader learn about communication processes in education.

More precisely this manuscript has been written for the purpose of facilitating communication, particularly oral communication, and, more specifically, discussion. The discussion process plays an important part in our educational system at all levels, and, with the recognition of the value of the small group as a tool in learning, the need arises for a specific structure or frame of reference from which to proceed. This text is an examination of elements involved in making communication both successful and satisfying.

(Preface, p. iii)

The idea is, apparently, that you actually do the discussing. Conclusions are not found in the chapters. This is a very clever idea —

my first objection is that I did not realize it until I got to the end, though one unadorned sentence could have been a clue: "Our frame of reference will be the method of inquiry used in the text." (pp. 6-7)

The book has several merits. First, the attempt to use the book format in the novel manner just described. It will have to be used as intended before this can be properly evaluated. The book is also very easy to read, and the well annotated list of supplementary readings (pp. 203-217) is a useful source on communications in education. The *Epilogue* offers a good checklist on how to run discussion groups, including suitable references to teacher education. Two concepts particularly well treated are how one's realization of ignorance grows with increased knowledge (p. 26) and that a verbal description is not reality, that it can be many levels away from reality, yet very closely tied to it by learning (especially pp. 87 and 107).

No overall judgement can be offered on the specific subject content of the chapters. Issues are treated from several perspectives, but the severe space limitations prevent extensive development. Anyone with more than the most elementary knowledge of experimental psychology, group processes, and educational foundations will be familiar with it. The material is intended for teacher trainees and other students, and it might be at an appropriate level. The author does report previous successful use.

Cummings suggests that discussions are not based on agreement but on inquiry, doubts, and disagreements (p. 39). Here are mine.

First, is communication synonymous with discussion? Not even the supplementary reading list mentions Bales or Flanders, or research on student learning in small groups. The title might be too broad. It certainly prompts a reader to expect to find a strong argument that the discussion process can serve educational goals

beyond learning to discuss. It is also possible to expect some mention of effectiveness of communication, of how to judge if a message gets through, and the use of nonverbal cues. There was very little. Chapter titles are all questions, for example, "What Do You Know?", "What's Good?". They do not greatly facilitate anticipating the chapter contents. Repeated reference is made to four other writers, S. I. Hayakawa, Wendell Johnson, Alfred Kozybski, and Harry L. Weinberg. Some defence of their eminence in the field would have enhanced Cummings' decision to give them so much attention. There are simple design problems, such as leaving an important checklist of the responsibilities of discussion leaders in the midst of a regular paragraph (p. 55) while less crucial lists were separately tabled or given in point form. It seems incongruous that "?????" should be a chapter title (p. 23) in a book on oral communication.

I have only one real disagreement, and it is with the presenta-

tion, not the content. The book is interspersed with a dozen full-page drawings of an irrelevant space creature named "Pfos." Pfos adds nothing to the content or to the discussion process the book is intended to stimulate. Together with a number of blank pages that allow chapters and sections to begin on the right, unit heading pages, and a needless glossy page of different hues of red, 44 of the 227 principal pages of text contain nothing.

Communication for Education is an interesting experiment in directing attention to process in teacher preparation, and deserves a trial in that role. It is not a very good textbook. Its greatest deficiencies are that it does not make the intended role sufficiently clear and that it does not pull together most of the ideas it is trying to stimulate. A competitor on the bookshelf is Carpenter and McLuhan's *Explorations in Communications*, probably a better book.

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