

operations we can perform without thinking about them. However, although few would argue that teachers should become more sensitive to students or that they should provide positive reinforcement more frequently, they must beware of responses that are *almost* automatic!

The authors recommend the use of the handbook for all levels of teacher preparation, including college instructors, and for inservice training. The text is so liberally sprinkled with commas, however, that sensitive writers may find the reading painful. (The "Foreword — To Teachers," one page in length, contains more than fifteen unnecessary or misused commas.) Composition teachers, weary from "correcting" student themes, may never read past the first few pages.

Debate may arise from statements such as: "Only by this means [VTR] can the teacher see, and understand, and relive, the many purposes and feelings that underlie each recorded action" and "Teachers now have the capability of studying and controlling the environment, *absolutely*." However, teachers may be won over on page one with the Rectors' statement that "Teachers are teachers, and are capable of teaching themselves anything they wish, as fast as they wish."

Donna L. Cook
McGill University

J. M. Thyne.
PRINCIPLES OF EXAMINING.
London:
University of London Press,
1974.
278 pp. \$6.95.

Despite their detractors, examinations have played an important, and honorable, part in British education. Some forty years ago two significant books, *Essays on Examinations* (an international enquiry and report) and *Marks of Examiners*, laid divergent pathways for subsequent writers. On the one hand were those concerned with the history, practice, and general imperfections of written examinations; on the other, the critical, experimental, statistically oriented writers. Thus

libraries are littered with works which seldom add much to our previous knowledge, though in the forty years there have been considerable gains in the statistical sophistication of test construction, and there are many worthwhile texts indicating how teachers can improve the quality of their own tests. But little has been done either by a search through current examination practices or by consideration *ab initio* towards a statement of, let alone a critical analysis of, the principles which underlie examining and examinations. Thyne's book purports to consider these principles.

His premises are clearly stated. An examiner seeks to maximize the validity of the *results* of the examinations he sets. We must therefore look at the procedures by which the results are produced (behaviors given in response to questions). The behaviors are subject to evaluation; the method of evaluation must as a necessary condition yield consistent results. But the behaviors (responses) should all be relevant to the purpose of the examination. If the examination consists of more than one question, then each question should elicit responses relevant to the purpose of the examination. The totality of behaviors is a combination of part-behaviors; the form of combination, whether simply or weightedly additive, can affect the final ranking of candidates and is therefore related to the topic of consistency in measurement. Since, as Thyne shows, these conditions are necessary *and* sufficient for the results of examinations to be valid, the rest of his book contains their careful expansion and their non-mathematical translation into the practice of good examiners.

Principles of Examining has three parts: "The Meaning of Examination Results," "The Combining of Marks," "Setting Questions and Marking Answers." The first section (nine chapters) is important as a contribution to our understanding of the principles of examining; the second treats a numerate topic in an almost completely non-numerate manner; and the third should appeal to those who like to see principles translated into a "how to do it" set of exercises. The style is lucid, the language simple,

with many major points illustrated by clever cartoons. Yet the treatment is deceptive. The cautious approach which keeps restating the premises and then giving examples familiar to us in other contexts (disguises) may lead us to think we are more familiar with the principles than we are. For those with a more statistical turn of mind it provides some basis for display of statistical ingenuity which they (and not the book) can exhibit. As an approach to the whole topic, and without recourse to the more quantified texts in "Educational Tests and Measurement," Thyne has given us a very useful little book. Its value will be enhanced when the student uses it as a precursor to the necessary, more statistical approach to which he is normally subjected.

Reginald Edwards
McGill University

Diane Ravitch.
THE GREAT SCHOOL WARS.
New York:
Basic Books, 1974.
449 pp. \$14.25.

The basic assumptions governing American educational history have been recently undergoing important changes, due both to deeper and more sophisticated empirical research and to the opposition of minority groups and radical scholars to the dominant paradigms. Diane Ravitch's book is an example of this revisionist trend: instead of viewing the evolution of the public school system of New York as betterment and presenting a rosy picture of its history, she writes about the conflicts and the "School Wars" (terms she borrows from Nicholas Butler).

According to her, four such wars occurred since the inception of public education in New York. The first opposed the Catholic clergy to the upper class philanthropic Protestant Free School Society; it ended by the creation of a public school system. The second war, "The Rise of the Expert," opposed the specialists attempting a centralization and a professionalization to the poor and the immigrants who were endangering

the American social order. The third "The Crusade for Efficiency," was an attempt to make the school apparently more efficient by adopting the "Gary Plan"; and the last one, "Racism and Reaction" which is still going on, opposes minority groups to teachers in a fight for the control of the educational system.

Ravitch's book is lengthy and well documented, but her sympathies and her antipathies are certainly obvious: she sides against the upper class reformers and with the underdogs, be they Irish or other immigrants. However, because of her opposition to the upper classes, she comes to identify the last school war with the Ford Foundation and the Lindsay administration and sides with the teachers' union against the supporters of decentralization. In doing so, she forgets some of her previous sympathies for the Black community groups, underdogs who allied with the upper classes. She tends to overlook the professional and political power and the wrongs of the teachers' union, while emphasizing Black mistakes. This issue seems to be too close for any dispassionate treatment, and Ravitch's work would have been much more valuable had she left the last school war for a more polemical kind of book.

The Great School Wars is of interest to Canadian historians of education, for it raises some important comparative questions. Did things happen the same way during Canada's more recent and quite different waves of immigration? Should the basic assumptions and images about the Canadian urban (and perhaps also rural) educational systems be revised? Can one apply the same type of political analysis to the educational history of Canadian cities, or were they economically, socially and culturally too different from New York? Thorough historical research similar to Ravitch's should be carried out in the different parts of this country so that the backing of such research could support and clarify many of the present criticisms of Canadian education.

Michel Laferrière
McGill University