

Kelly touches upon the problems of the slow learners and non-readers in the mixed ability classroom. Kelly offers sound advice à la Bruner and Piaget, but no cookbook solutions. Similarly, Kelly discusses teacher-pupil relationships, as well as teacher training.

The teacher, to effectively plan individualized activities, will make full use of intellectual resources and skilled methods in order to formulate educational decisions for each child. To prepare for this awesome role, the teacher must be highly trained in his own area of learning, in his theoretical background of education, in his professional studies, and in his practice of teaching. If the inter-relationships among all these elements are developed, the teacher may then adapt to a different role in the classroom: moreover, the teacher will be prepared to contribute to the future changes in education.

To many educators, Kelly reiterates familiar philosophy and problems in the area of individualized instruction. But whereas many educators have become weary and disheartened in the search for solutions to these problems, Kelly remains hopeful that the cooperative efforts of parties interested in education will lead to solutions, to improve the educational atmosphere in the classroom and in society.

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Howard E. Blake.
CREATING A LEARNING-CENTERED CLASSROOM —
A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TEACHERS.
New York: Hart Publishing Co. Inc., 1977.
340 pp. \$12.95 Hardcover. \$7.95 Softcover.

As the title indicates, this book is intended as a practical guide for teachers in developing learning centres in their classrooms. There is a great deal of literature available on *why* one should set up this kind of classroom; and although the programs described may seem exciting, they are often so far removed from one's own experience that attempts to implement them are rarely made. There also exists a plethora of materials of the "instant kit" variety suggesting the kinds of materials to use for centres. The need is no longer to know why one should include learning centres in one's classroom or even to know what to put in them; it is, rather, to know *how* to go about it. Howard Blake's book responds to this need. He provides advice on how to begin, offering models comprising ascending levels of sophistication, and giving suggestions for all aspects of developing the centres from preparing the materials to storing a completed centre for future use.

Blake organizes his material logically so that one can follow it

while implementing his suggestions. He begins with a chapter on the description and underlying philosophy of learning centres, followed by a section outlining some prerequisites for setting up centres; in particular, stress is placed on the assessment of children's needs and the importance of moving gradually. The next two chapters deal with preparing learning centres and organizing the classroom. Practical suggestions and a variety of diagrams of classroom arrangements are included. A further two chapters are spent discussing the critical but often neglected aspect of how to keep track of which children have worked at which centres, and of how to evaluate their work. Sketches of suggested wall charts and checklists are abundant. Blake suggests ways of keeping parents and administrators informed about the development and implementation of centres, a matter that is all too often neglected by teachers. He makes very clear that the learning centre approach is not an "easy way out" for teachers. That planning, organization, evaluation, and hard work are required is obvious throughout.

More than half of the book, however, is devoted to the detailed description of sample learning centres. Although many teachers will find this description helpful, the centres described are in the main narrow, unimaginative, and extremely limiting to the children. Blake writes, "Children don't learn much by being talked at; they need to explore, to question, to experiment and formulate their own solutions." (p. 17) How the centre on long and short vowels (pp. 161-165) fulfills these needs is a puzzle. Each child is expected to perform the same task, creativity being encouraged by having each child make his or her own Vowel Album. A centre called "Dining Out" reinforces mathematical operations (pp. 242-248). There are 10 activity cards, each of which is imaginative. Children may choose any card, but must follow all the instructions. And they are then told to complete the rest. There is no room for individual choice, no allowance made for children of different ability levels, and, other than suggesting the child make up his own activity card and show it to the teacher, no room for imagination on the part of the child.

The majority of the centres concentrate on such topics as addition and subtraction, nutrition, eyes, and rhyming words, these choices being obviously those of the teacher. In my own teaching experience, the most successful centres were those that derived from the interests of the children: hockey, dinosaurs, monsters. Skills were taught within a context, not in the isolation of a centre.

Blake writes, "Setting up learning centres is not a mechanical thing that a teacher can do simply by copying something he has observed somewhere." (p. 15) Stressing actual centres by allotting more than half the book to them leads to the very real possibility that teachers *will* simply copy those centres, without regard to the students in their classes or to the reasons for setting them up in the first place. I feel this would be an abuse of the samples, leading to the "101 quick and easy, instant centres" mentality. It is possible that this book will be popular precisely because the sample centres are so explicit and can be so easily copied.

It is worth emphasizing that my reservations about this book are mainly limited to the section on sample centres. I feel the value of this book is in the first 139 pages. I recommend it as one of the best books of its kind I have read. I believe its helpful suggestions and procedures make it useful to teachers, principals, student teachers, and others concerned with elementary language arts. It will be particularly valuable for the teacher in a traditional classroom who would like to start developing learning centres gradually, without creating havoc with administrators, parents, and the children in her class. The book is a welcome addition to the field.

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Manuel Zymelman.

THE ECONOMIC EVALUATION OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMS.

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976.

122 pp. \$6.60.

Manuel Zymelman has reviewed fifty-four books and articles dealing with different types of vocational programs in developed and undeveloped countries in order to produce this synthesis of material. To a certain degree he hopes that his findings will provide a basis for analyzing and evaluating all types of vocational education programs. This, he declares, is necessary; for whereas it is generally recognized that a trained labour force is essential for economic development, the method of selection of a specific program is less clear and the choice of teaching method even more diverse.

What the book does in fact do is provide a broad overview of the complexity of the subject. To a person relatively unfamiliar with the field it provides a neat, curt insight into the historical aspects, different methods of training both on-the-job and off-the-job, economic and institutional factors that affect the selection of a particular training mode, methods of evaluating vocational school programs, and finally evaluation of proposals for vocational training.

The breadth of this material indicates the difficulty which the author has in reaching any clear-cut decisions. Although he provides data which can be used to analyze and evaluate vocational programs, the reader is brought to the realization that there can be no answers which are right for all situations. Moreover, the search for possible solutions to key questions invariably raises additional questions.

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