

Book Reviews

Carol Schneider Lidz, Editor.

**DYNAMIC ASSESSMENT:
AN INTERACTIONAL APPROACH TO
EVALUATING LEARNING POTENTIAL.**

New York: Guilford Press, 1987.

511 pp. \$53.50.

Approaches to the assessment of aptitude and learning potential have traditionally been based on the assumption that an individual's intelligence and learning capability were inborn and fixed. Historically, intelligence tests were erroneously thought to contain items that were culture-free and, thus, it was believed that they provided valid scores across cultures and population groups. Psychologists in the last two decades have examined the structure of intelligence tests and have concluded that most standardized psychometric instruments emphasize achievement factors, or "what one has learned." Furthermore, the tests tend to measure crystallized, rather than fluid, ability. In response to criticisms of this traditional testing paradigm psychologists and educators have moved to a new model, that of dynamic testing.

Dynamic Assessment has been available in Canada for only the last year. It contains articles by the most influential writers in the field, providing a comprehensive examination of the history, methodologies, and contributions of this new testing paradigm. The first article offers a historical overview of the early developments in the area, leading to Feuerstein's seminal work in the late 1970s. The socio-psychological roots of qualitative assessment are examined and Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development" is outlined. Contemporary applications of Vygotsky's theory are then analyzed in recent empirical studies. The focus of these three studies is Feuerstein's *Learning Potential Assessment Device* (LPAD).

Of particular interest is the article by Campione and Brown which links dynamic assessment with school achievement. The practical examples offered by the authors explain and clarify their work started over 10 years ago. Two articles by Budoff, one of the early pioneers of the test-train-test method are noteworthy in their overview of learning potential. They provide the link between early approaches to dynamic testing and the more contemporary Feuerstein approach.

The LPAD receives the most concentrated examination available in the current literature. Several articles delineate the potential use of Feuerstein's instruments in different situations: groups, primary-age children, and intellectually handicapped children. The article by Jensen and Feuerstein further illuminates the philosophy and structure of dynamic testing methods. It also explores differential applications of the LPAD.

The issue that has received the most criticism from traditional assessment devotees is the problem of transfer or generalizability (i.e., Does the mediation process described in the dynamic assessment procedure carry over to real-life situations and thus, give this "process" predictive validity?). The Campione and Brown and the Embertson and Budoff articles review this thorny issue. The conclusion of these authors is that the extent to which transfer occurs is to some extent determined by intellectual factors rather than the quality of the mediation process. This contentious issue will need future consideration in the literature as this book does not provide a definitive solution.

Dynamic testing models enable psychologists and educators to discover intervention strategies designed to improve learning and performance. The authors of the concluding chapter assess the state of affairs for intervention and suggest that future research will minimize any weakness inherent in this new model. Dynamic assessment seeks not a product but rather accessible characteristics for meaningful change. In other words, this approach emphasizes the **process** of testing. This shift in paradigm is becoming the state-of-the-art thinking in psychometry as we move toward the next century.

This book fills a void in the contemporary assessment literature. It is appropriate for psychologists, educators, and researchers. In one volume it examines the area of dynamic testing with primary source material. As testing models shift their focus from quantitative to qualitative aspects of measurement, researchers will need to explore the contents of this book as it is bound to be a milestone in the dynamic assessment literature.

John Lewis
McGill University