

issues to take into account in policy development. Gen Ling Chang and Gordon Wells report on writing in grade 3 and 5 classrooms; William Fagan documents socioaffective factors in adult literacy development; and Rodney Clifton with Trevor Williams and Jeff Clancy describe an investigation into "Ethnicity, English-Language Usage, and Academic Achievement: Evidence from Australia."

Few issues in education arouse as much public concern in Canada as literacy. Views on the use, meaning, value, and level of literacy required in any particular setting tend to vary according to which individuals and institutions happen to be consulted. Few people are likely to consider illiteracy an advantage in a highly literate society, but they may disagree about specific advantages and disadvantages. They may or may not be convinced, for example, by claims like those of the Canadian Business Task Force on Literacy (1988), that the disadvantages of illiteracy can be quantified in dollar costs to Canadian business and Canadian society as a whole. Whatever is believed about the individual and social consequences of illiteracy or, indeed, of literacy, those beliefs have a very significant impact on policy decisions for literacy programs. Educators, therefore, have a particular responsibility to decide and argue for the priority of interests they will listen to and serve when they accept or develop policy. Their literacy goals for children are likely to be quite different from the literacy goals of factory managers for adult workers. The intention of *Foundations of Literacy Policy in Canada* is "to provide educational policy makers the foundations in knowledge and concepts needed for making justifiable literacy policy decisions." As a collection, it offers perhaps not the foundations, but it certainly makes a much-needed, substantial contribution and will be stimulating and very useful to its intended audience.

**Wendy Strachan**  
University of British Columbia

**Brent Kilbourn.**

**CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK:**

**LEARNING THE ART.**

**Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1990.**

**121 pp. \$24.50.**

Few teachers, or those who work with preservice and inservice teachers, would dispute the claim that learning to teach is an ongoing, complex process. A myriad of successive and differing interactions with students, subject matter, other teachers, teaching situations, administrators, curriculum materials, and the like, constitute the continuing realities of this complexity for teachers. *Constructive Feedback: Learning the Art* rivets our attention on many of these interactions and the feedback about the events of teaching they provide teachers.

In addressing the question, "What makes feedback constructive?", Kilbourn's book has considerable potential for stimulating important discussion about the education, professional growth, and development of teachers. Nevertheless, Kilbourn spends little time arguing for feedback as a significant component of these processes. Rather, he challenges us to reflect upon his description, analysis, and reconstruction of an actual instance of feedback as a means to develop understanding about the process and, further, to examine and question our own practice.

The case of Taylor and Oliver involves two practitioners engaged in the feedback process over 13 successive lessons, comprising a science-teaching unit. The unit represents a significant departure from those traditionally taught in general level science courses. The case documents significant classroom interactions as Taylor teaches the unit for the first time, Taylor's daily interactions with Oliver (Taylor's department head) who has observed each lesson, and Kilbourn's own reflections on the interactions of the feedback process as it develops over the 13 lessons.

Kilbourn's presentation of the case is lengthy and detailed. Indeed the case itself comprises the majority of the pages in the book. It does, however, serve as an important tool in helping Kilbourn to illustrate successfully the nature of the feedback process and its potential for professional development and the improvement of teaching. Certainly, reflection on the case helps the reader understand what Kilbourn means by the need for constant attention to details and context, active inquiry in practice, and reflection on reconstructed accounts of practice in using the constructive feedback process in teaching.

The case further enables Kilbourn to make two important points about the process. One of these has to do with the complexities and difficulties of the process itself. The account of Taylor's and Oliver's interactions provides us with a strong sense of the energy, time, and intellectual effort each commits to the task as they struggle individually and collegially to develop a clearer, deeper understanding of the complexly interwoven events of teaching practice. As Kilbourn points out early in the book, this is not an easy process, for either the teacher or the observer.

The second point relates, at least in part, to the first. It has to do with what Kilbourn refers to as the sense in which constructive feedback is a "learned art." It is clear that both Taylor and Oliver grapple with learning skills and concepts to help them smooth out the process and to remain focused on the specific issues they had previously agreed would guide their inquiry. As Kilbourn comments, few teachers have had sustained experience with constructive feedback and the process, as used by teachers, tends to be characterized by "ups and downs."

This point is related to perhaps the most significant issue raised by the book. The feedback process, as developed by Kilbourn, stands in sharp contrast to much of common practice in teaching. "Feedback" is often used to refer to

events in the preservice and inservice education and evaluation of teachers. However, it more frequently results in authoritative pronouncements about good (or effective) teaching practice, and performance assessment of technique or decontextualized knowledge of subject matter and pedagogical concepts.

*Constructive Feedback* describes an alternative which merits consideration by teachers and practitioners involved in preparing, credentialling, educating, and evaluating teachers. The book deals with important issues for those who have an interest in learning the "art." At the same time, Kilbourn's sensitive and objective treatment of these issues has much to recommend it for those who are not yet familiar with the constructive feedback process in teaching.

**Audrey M. Chastko**  
The University of Calgary

**Evelyn Gagné & Pierre Poirier**  
**LE CHOIX DE CARRIÈRE DE LA FEMME**  
**DANS UNE PERSPECTIVE SYSTÉMIQUE.**  
**Ottawa: Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1990.**  
**133 pp. \$14.95.**

This book is the result of four years of research by the authors into some of the factors that are involved when women make a choice between a career that has been traditionally followed by women and a nontraditional career. Each chapter in the book is devoted to the investigation of the influence of a different group of variables on the career plans of girls.

The first experiment deals with the decision-making style of high school and college-level female students in Ontario and Quebec. It investigates the relationship between their decision-making styles and their rank in the nuclear family: first born, youngest, or only child. The experiment was based on work by V.A. Harren (1980) who investigated the decision-making styles of American college students. The decision-making styles of students are considered as being either rational, intuitive, or dependent. The authors found oldest and only children are more likely to use a dependent style, relying on others to influence their decisions, while youngest children are more likely to choose a rational style of decision-making. This seems to relate to the final piece of work in which the researchers found that both women in the workplace, who have chosen a nontraditional career, and college and university students, who are preparing themselves for a nontraditional career, have a higher level of emotional differentiation. Emotionally differentiated individuals are objective, have a more detached view of their interpersonal relations and are more