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## Book Reviews, Winter 1979

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## Book Reviews

Bowen, Howard R. *Investment in Learning: The Individual and Social Value of American Higher Education*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco, 1977, \$15.00 (hardback), 507 pp.

Howard Bowen is an economist specializing in the economics of higher education. In a time of limited resources and general skepticism toward the value of a liberal education, his book provides not only a carefully researched study into the outcomes of higher education but also a valuable lesson in the decision-making process relating to the management of a variety of resources.

*Investment in Learning* is written "to assemble information about the outcomes of higher education and to reach reasonable judgments as to the value of these outcomes in relation to their cost" (p. 5). It is written for educators who must respond to the demand for efficiency and accountability. Occasionally, POD members will be those educators but more frequently it will be the clients of POD members who may be influenced by this book. For this reason, it is of importance that POD members be aware of its contents.

Bowen takes a very analytical approach to his subject. In Part One "The Setting" he meticulously defines the system of American higher education; its three functions (education, research, and public service); the analogy he sees between the business of transforming resources into learning and the organization of *inputs* and *outputs* by any industrial firm; and the expected outcomes of higher education which, he says, provide the basis for setting educational policy and the criteria upon which the performance of higher education is judged.

Part Two "Consequences for Individuals" supplies a thorough analysis of the research that has been carried out which may indicate the degree to which higher education impacts on individual students and helps them develop cognitive abilities, affective characteristics, and practical competence. In every case Bowen is care-

ful to point out the reliability of the data and place it in its rightful context. For example, Bowen summarizes several studies which show a moderate correlation between liberal attitudes toward political issues and a college education; he cautions, however, that those studies which were made in the late 1960's and the early 1970's may more accurately reflect the spirit of the times than present or future attitudes. He also presents information gathered about college alumni that is concerned with the long-term effects of a higher education.

Part Three "Consequences for Society" is concerned with the effects of higher education on society. It deals with all three functions of education: education, research, and public service. It concludes with a review of the views of a number of social critics on the outcomes of American higher education on the individual and society.

In the Conclusion, Bowen evaluates the evidence presented in Parts Two and Three and attempts to assign some numerical values to these outcomes and to suggest some reasonable approaches to the economics of higher education. More important, perhaps, he explores the possible future for higher education and the practical considerations that must be taken into account if the institution is to attract a more diversified group of students, preserve its function in society, and make more effective use of its resources.

Although he does not ignore the nonmonetary benefits of higher education in his summary, Bowen admits that the most convincing evidence to justify the \$85 billion spent annually on higher education is that which results from a comparison of providing higher educational opportunities with the monetary returns, "in the form of enhanced earnings of workers and improved technology which are probably sufficient to offset all the costs" (p. 447). However, it only became obvious to me in the final pages that the nonmonetary benefits were to remain unquantified and yet touted as "several times as valuable as the monetary returns" (p. 448).

The implications of his conclusions exemplify the problem with which those in the area of instructional development will increasingly have to deal; namely, the impetus to undertake those activities which have measurable monetary benefits at the expense of those activities which lack such measures.

*Investment in Learning* is an important resource. It presents studies from a wide variety of literature on a number of outcomes for individuals and for society. It is also a thought-provoking book which raises questions concerning educational philosophy and institutional responsibility for which POD members might wish to be prepared.

DIANE L. JOHNSON

Johnson, Kent R. and Robert S. Ruskin. *Behavioral Instruction: An Evaluative Review*. American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., 1977, \$5.00 (paperback), 182 pp.

"I understand that there is this new teaching method, PSI or something. Can you tell me anything about it?"

That question has been known to strike terror in the hearts of faculty developers. Not only are there several versions of "PSI or something" but the research on it is extensive and scattered here and yon. The individual developer is often hard pressed to keep abreast of new findings and modifications, much less have them neatly packaged to hand to the interested party. Enter Johnson and Ruskin with the avowed goal "to organize the vast amount of literature available on behavioral instruction."

The book begins with a history of Keller's Personalized System of Instruction (PSI), its grounding in operant conditioning and a description of the basic principles of PSI such as self-pacing, use of proctors and so on. The authors then describe some of the other teaching methods which are based on the principles of behavioral instruction such as Ferster's interview technique and Michael's group remediation system. These two chapters make a good set of introductory readings for the instructor who wants a basic overview of the concepts of behavioral instruction. Their only drawbacks are (1) an occasional lapse into descriptions which use behavioral terminology with which the reader may be unfamiliar and (2) the difficulty of conveying in prose the atmosphere of a behaviorally designed class. Having been professionally raised in a hotbed of behavioral instruction techniques (two of which are described in the

book), I found the descriptions somewhat dry, an unavoidable problem when one is trying to be systematic and objective, but a disappointment nevertheless.

In the third chapter the authors get down to the nitty-gritty of running a PSI course. This section would be useful for the instructor who has moved beyond the basics and actually intends to design a PSI course. While the chapter does not give a cookbook approach to the design of a course, it does discuss the most important concerns an instructor must face such as use of proctors, unit size and mastery criteria and the meaning of grades in PSI. The authors also direct the reader to additional resources, both written and face to face.

The remaining 120 pages of the book are devoted to an intensive review of the research literature, first comparing behavioral instruction with conventional methods and then analyzing the various components of behavioral instruction. I found this part fascinating but frustrating. As with any research in education, the data on behavioral instruction are far from clear cut. The authors seem to do a good job of raising issues and presenting both sides of a question. I often found myself saying "oh yes, but what about X?" only to find X discussed several pages later. Johnson and Ruskin certainly seem sensitive to both the pluses and minuses of the research they present and are fairly comprehensive in trying to present each point of view. In spots they become almost too conscientious and present so much data that the faculty member may get lost in the maze of competing evidence. They do provide summaries of the sections which help the reader to wade through the information, but it could be slow going.

On the whole, this book would be a useful resource for a faculty development center. It might best be used in stages, however; the first part would serve those totally unfamiliar with behavioral instruction; the middle section would be for those designing a PSI course; the last chapters are for those who want to know if it works and why. The first two of these needs are met by other resources as well as they are by this book, but I think the literature review is particularly well done and there is much to be said for having all three needs met in one book

MARILLA D. SVINICKI

Tough, Allen. *The Adult's Learning Projects: A Fresh Approach to Theory and Practice in Adult Learning*, Second Edition. Learning Concepts, Austin, Texas, 1979, \$14.95 (hard bound).

If POD were to sell its membership mailing list to publishing firms (as a resource for members, mind you), my first three candidates would be Jossey-Bass, University Associates and Learning Concepts. Each produces a plethora of titles useful to people who want to make higher education more effective and, sometimes, more humane. Among the special virtues of Learning Concepts is the effort those people make to market not only their own titles but also basic works in educational and professional development published by others. A list of the authors represented in their 1979 Christmas catalog, for instance, reads like a book shelf organized for a POD conference: Robert Mager, Richard Bolles, Daniel Levinson, Oscar Mink and many others.

The republication of Allen Tough's *The Adult's Learning Projects* is a case in point. This second edition is not basically revised—there is only a new preface, new postscript and an updated bibliography tacked on to the original 1971 version of the work. But Learning Concepts has provided an important service to United States readers in making this Canadian work more widely available. The book was originally issued by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, where Tough has spent the last decade and a half concentrating on problems of adult education. Since then it has become a minor classic, though not quite on a par with the comprehensive works of more well known authors as Alan Knox (*Adult Development and Learning*, 1977) and Malcolm Knowles (*The Modern Practice of Adult Education*, 1970 and *Self-Directed Learning*, 1975).

Even POD people who work in institutions which serve late-adolescent undergraduates exclusively are adult educators. The faculty, administrators and support staff with whom we work are subsets of the adult population. Tough's research is important to us because he draws our attention to the most common yet least understood kind of adult learning, that which is self-planned and self-directed. Virginia Griffin, writing in the Canadian publication, *Learning*, probably speaks for most of us when she says that, "Too

often we have fallen into the defensive trap of believing that our people are dumb and apathetic, not motivated to learn—simply because they don't happen to think it is important that they learn the particular things we think they should learn right now. Allen's work lifts us out of that trap."

I appreciate Tough's book because it shares the insights of basic research focused on learning from the perspective of the individual adult rather than from the perspective of the professional helper or teacher or educational institution. More particularly, he is interested in how the individual decides to learn something and plans his or her learning. If, as he maintains, 70% of adult learning is self-planned and self-directed, and the amount of time all adults spend in such learning projects is substantial (averaging over 700 hours per year and ranging well over 1,500 hours per year for academics), then we must understand these processes much better if we are to do our jobs effectively.

On the other hand, the precision seemingly necessary for replicable research also makes some of Tough's assumptions a bit too restrictive and formal for my tastes. For instance, technically, a "learning project" is defined as a "highly deliberate effort to learn." That is not too bad, but operationally Tough and his colleagues restrict it even more to a "series of related episodes, adding up to at least seven hours. In each episode, more than half of the person's total motivation is to gain and retain certain fairly clear knowledge and skill, or to produce some other lasting change in himself." That just won't do. A bright professor can address a significant learning need in less than seven hours. A reflective person who joins a support group may gain and retain some new skill with a primary motivation of belonging rather than learning.

These quibbles about the researcher's excessive scientism are minor. Allen betrays his surname in his underlying humanism. My major criticism, in fact, is that he only begins to suggest some "practical implications for institutions and instructors." He makes some telling observations *a la* Carl Rogers about freedom, autonomy and control in the relationship between helper and learner.

But then you and I are good learners. We can draw out the implications for our own practice with little explicit direction. We and other adults, as Tough shows, are guided primarily by our own expectations and usually only need sufficient resources and support to

learn and grow. In this case, we need to learn how to encourage and assist other adults in that huge span of interests, time and learning that will inevitably outdistance all the workshops, courses, modules and consultations we are now planning and conducting. And we need to grow beyond the limiting view that we are responsible for the development of other people.

STEPHEN C. SCHOLL

Vaillant, George E. *Adaptation to Life*. Little Brown and Co., Boston, 1977, \$4.95 (paperback), 396 pp.

Adult development is a relatively new concern. A popular textbook on personality development, published in 1963, devoted over 85 pages to the first 21 years of a person's life. Adulthood was covered in less than three pages. Adult development is also HOT. Gail Sheehy's *Passages* (1976) has sold millions of copies, and words such as transformations, transitions, and passages may be to the late 1970's what identity crisis was to the mid 1950's. POD'ers who are interested in this subject are probably already familiar with Daniel Levinson's *The Seasons of a Man's Life* (1978), but George Vaillant's *Adaptation to Life* seems less well known. This is a pity for this book is of interest for several reasons. First, this is a report of a remarkable research effort. Ninety-five Harvard graduates (classes 1942–1944) were studied on how they adapted to crisis in their lives over a 30-year period. Information on each person is said to exceed 300 pages. Using a Freudian framework, Vaillant concludes that these adaptive styles (or defenses) can be arranged in a hierarchy from Level I—psychotic—to Level IV—mature. He also concludes that those with the more mature defenses are less likely to see a psychiatrist, to become sick, or to get a divorce. Those with immature defenses tend to have lower incomes and barren friendships and to avoid vacations.

This book is also of interest for it attempts to formulate an objective definition of mental health and life success. While some may disagree with his conclusions on these topics, his ideas can provide a framework for lively discussions.

But probably the most intriguing aspect of *Adaptation to Life* is



the number of questions it raises. A large team of experts believe that they can classify the adaptive styles of others. Can a relatively simple instrument be developed so that non-experts can determine their own styles? Vaillant concludes that adaptive styles change over time and that some styles result in more successful outcomes than others. Is it possible for people to consciously shape their own adaptive styles? This study includes only males; are its findings relevant to the majority of our population?

While *Adaptation to Life* may raise more questions than it answers, this is an important book for those interested in adult development. Indeed, if the interest is great enough, POD might consider ways by which this topic could be better understood by the academic community.

JOHN ANDERSON