



Book Reviews

Groups: Theory and Experience. Rodney W. Napier and Matti K. Gershenfeld. Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973. 305 pp.

This book comes at its ideas from three directions.

1. Text, theories about groups, membership, leadership, group norms, attitudes about groups, and connection of theory to practical group life. The material is delivered in a scholarly manner. The theories are of course not all new, but here given freshly and with the firmness derived from a background of practical involvement.

The text layout often uses numbered points. These points are sharply delineated. In many other books this listing method is monotonous. Napier and Gershenfeld have honed the listing techniques to make the reading faster and at the same time deeper.

I would think a serious reader will have the quotable quotes well marked in the first reading. But this book is not a "read once and never again object." Much can be gleaned on the second reading and the nth perusal. The authors have selected firm and thoughtful support for their references.

2. Stories, narrations that subjectively ramify the tone of the text. These stories come at the points from a soft angle. They sneak up on your thought to surround the reader with a pervasive pressure saying, "THIS IS THE POINT."

Also, these stories can be nicely used with students to conjure up the affective base which supports firm solution solving. Role playing could also easily grow from many of these stories. The stories are set apart from the text by differentiated type. Good idea!

3. Experiences, outlines of things to do, and ways of making class things happen. The authors assure us that these experience ideas have been tried and found to work. However, these experiences are written in such a way to promote variations on the themes, ac-

ording to the local situation. The authors are rightfully flexible in their telling, so as to allow flexibility in the using.

Any material on groups is always complex. The subjects of people-relationships-leadership, etc., soon blends to the unknown and mysterious. While studying one need remember that all three of these pieces are not designed to puzzle, but are designed to support each other toward full understanding.

If the book comes up short in any respect, it is with its less than enough delivery of awe and wonderment about the vast dynamics of groups. However, I am in respectful awe of the authors scholarship and ability to integrate the academic, the subjective, and the outlined experiences into one pointed reading venture.

All group personnel, teachers, and students, should know about groupness. Designated leaders can't do it all. In fact, readership of this type material is everybody's bag. Intelligent teaching designs leans toward some understanding of the group process, regardless of academic content. This book has much material to that end.

Adults "coming back" to school often have great fears of their own possible failure. Students often expect and group leaders often construct competitive group milieus. Groupness needs to be more cooperative than competitive for optimum learning.

Groups: Theories and Experience, gives much in the way of better understanding how to assure human comfort in groups rather than the debilitating climate that cripples learning.

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Instruction in the Cooperative Extension Service. H. C. Sanders. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1972. 152 pp. No price given.

The author, H. C. Sanders, who was senior editor of the "working handbook," *The Cooperative Extension Service* (published by Prentice-Hall, Inc., in 1965) has produced this successor volume to place emphasis on the function of instruction in Cooperative Extension work. In his introduction, he notes "... six ideas relating to the work of the Cooperative Extension Service." These statements-of-idea provide the format for the remainder of the text.

The first "idea" avows that instruction is a major function of Extension. Chapter 1 interprets that instruction is a primary responsibility of Extension personnel. This chapter also makes the point that the instruction process in Extension "does not take place

in isolation.” It’s but one function. Others are reporting an organizational maintenance.

The remainder of the book focuses on the instructional process. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the “ideas” of the significance of objectives—general and program—and with the selection of those objectives. Chapter 2 also promotes the notion that Extension education is “externally” influenced by “. . . objectives of the nation, objectives included in legislation and the objectives of their clientele.”

The subsequent three chapters present discussions about learning experiences in Extension; especially their selection and organization and the importance of appropriate and available instructional materials and other resources.

Chapter 7 explains evaluation in the instructional process. Emphasis is placed on appraising the situation with regard to clientele needs (felt and unfelt) and to determinations about: (1) quality of performance, (2) effectiveness of the learning experience, and (3) the extent of attainment. Thus, Chapter 7 briefly discusses both process or formative and product or summative evaluation and concludes with some useful guidelines.

Throughout the book, readers will find a significant reference to the work of Ralph Tyler.¹ Tyler’s rationale for curriculum development, guides to selection and screening of objectives, notions about selection and organization of learning experiences, and concepts of evaluation are liberally referenced and adapted to the Extension case.

The book closes with an additional three chapters that strive to integrate the foregoing information through discussions about “organizing structure,” operationalizing the instructional process, and training for instruction. These sections have the effect of facilitating the practice of instruction.

This book is a useful handbook, especially for beginning Extension personnel. More experienced Extension educators will find it helpful to organizing thoughts and actions about program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

While the text doesn’t provide in-depth analyses of underlying psychological and sociological foundations for the adult teaching and learning (instruction) process, it does provide a well-organized and readily useable framework for the practicing educator.

Clear chapter headings and many subheadings make it a helpful reference source. While the book by example and reference is largely about the Cooperative Extension Service, adult educators in other career areas should also find the work adaptable and meaningful.

¹ R.W. Tyler, *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1950).

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Learning Is for Life. Raymond M. Rigdon, Nashville, Tennessee
Broadman Press, 1971. 128 pp. No price given.

Learning Is for Life is a catchy title for an attractive little book. However, a reader expecting a statement of philosophy for the continuing education of adults with, perhaps, a rationale for the pursuit of lifelong learning, is likely to be disappointed. At least I found the book disappointing except for the first chapter and parts of the last two chapters.

The following paragraph appears in Chapter One:

The theme of this book is that learning must continue throughout life. The alternative is personal frustration and deterioration. In a real sense, one must continue to learn or perish as a person of integrity and wholeness. Subsequent chapters deal with ways adults can use daily informal learning opportunities in learning to live more creative and successful lives.

The statement is encouraging to the reader and a rather delightful promise of what lies ahead. The hitch is that the "theme" of the book seems to be quickly forgotten and very little in the "subsequent chapters" actually is directed to "ways adults can use daily informal learning opportunities."

Instead, the next seven chapters try to deal with most of the topics you associate with adult education as a field of study. Needless to say, in such a short essay the treatment of each topic must necessarily be perfunctory and superficial.

Chapter Two, "Freedom to Learn," is a rather unsophisticated statement on "growth toward maturity" and a discussion of "achieving developmental tasks" based on Havighurst's concept.

The next chapter deals with "How We Learn," a topic that has been the subject of countless books and one that doesn't lend itself well to condensation. Certainly it can't be adequately treated in 10 pages.

Topics of the following two chapters, "Reading to Remember" and "Listening to Learn," aren't quite so broad, but they too are condensed with difficulty.

Chapter Six has the intriguing title "Every Man My Teacher." The implied concept is developed through a series of anecdotal accounts of persons faced with discouraging situations. Included

among the examples are such "everymen" as Abraham Lincoln, William Osler, René Descartes, and Winston Churchill.

The next chapter, "Learning Through Creative Thinking," encapsulates Alex F. Osborn's ideas on creativity, presents five steps for "creative problem solving" that look like those in most problem-solving procedures, and paraphrases "four stages in creative planning" taken from a 1949 description by Eliot Dole Hutchinson.

In Chapter Eight, "Learn More—Faster in Groups," the author undertakes the Herculean task of covering the subject of group learning processes and procedures with an introduction to group dynamics, all in 20 pages.

He does acknowledge that "it is impossible in one chapter to explore learning opportunities with all the groups of which we are a part." But the discussion "focuses" on informal social groups, clubs and service organizations, and formal learning groups and that doesn't leave many groups unaccounted for!

The last two chapters get back into the area of philosophy with strong theological overtones. Thus, the author ends his story in the area in which it began and on the ground with which he seems most familiar.

The intended use of the book isn't clear. The first chapter ends with the statement that "if the reader has a serious interest in continuing to grow, the pages ahead offer a compelling invitation to learning." This sounds as though the book is to provide the basis for independent study. At the end of each chapter is a list of "Personal Learning Activities," which also suggests independent or self-directed learning. But each chapter is followed also by a list of "Group Discussion Starters" which seem to imply another use for the book's content.

If the book inspires the uninitiated to consider seriously the need for continuing education, and if they act on that consideration, Rigdon will have provided a valuable contribution, indeed.

But Extension personnel and other adult educators, and the serious students of Extension education, will find little to help them. Other writers have covered all of these important aspects of the study of adult and Extension education more completely and more scholarly. Even many of the references cited in this book are of doubtful value. Most were written before adult education as a field of study had progressed to its present stage. Only a few of the authors cited are recognizable as authorities in adult education.

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