Reviews

The Structure of School Improvement

Bruce R. Joyce, Richard H. Hersh, and Michael McKibbin
New York:
Longman, Inc., 1983

—Reviewed by Sarah D. Caldwell, Ferguson-Florissant School District, Florissant, Missouri.

The Structure of School Improvement looks at school improvement within a social context. By "structure," the authors mean "the pattern of relationships among the many individual components of school change: administrative leadership, teacher effectiveness, curriculum improvement, and community involvement."

Synthesizing from the literature, the authors provide a brief historical perspective on school improvement and an overview of criteria for effective schools. The thrust is on the processes and practices that take a school from slight refinement to complete reorganization.

The concept of the individual school as the unit of change forms the basis of this approach to improvement. The strategies and decisions for change lie in the hands of a group called the Responsible Parties—school-level administrators, teachers, parents, and community members—who guide the activities of improvement through three stages.

The goal in Stage I is to *refine* the school's program. The first task is to create the social climate in which the objectives of the school can be fine-tuned. These refinements, made in relatively low-risk areas, enable the Responsible Parties and the faculty to install a school improvement process and a climate conducive to continuous self-renewal. The authors called this climate the "homeostasis of change—a condition that provides stability to the school while enabling regular thoughtful improvements to be made."

After success with minor refinements, the Responsible Parties are ready to move to Stage II, *renovation*. Here their aim is to substantially improve the school's program in one curricular area and to establish staff development as a "way of life"—a natural and continuous process. The anticipated outcome of this phase is not only to produce successful major change in part of the school's curriculum, but, more important, to develop group problem-solving skills and faculty support for school improvement.

At this point the authors contend that the school is ready for the giant leap to Stage III, *redesigning the school's mission*. This carries implications for a complete overhaul of the organization, its programs, and its practices. In this phase we look at the school of the future, in which the Responsible Parties choose a mission for the school from one or more of three domains: social, academic, personal.

The book might have been more appropriately titled The Structure *and Content* of School Improvement since the authors devote much of it to the content of schools' missions, alternate forms of schooling, and the use of technology in the school of the future.

The major concepts contained in the book reflect a synthesis of research about change and school improvement. The extensive bibliography of the literature reviewed is a useful reference. And the text makes a contribution to elementary and secondary practitioners by recognizing that school improvement occurs in stages. Thus we get a view of the developmental and continuous nature of improvement processes. However, for a concise and easy-to-follow narrative delineating a systematic process and structure for school improvement, this is not the book to read. Tracking the flow of ideas and understanding the relationships of concepts to contents is tedious.

There are some notable high points. The chapter on staff development is excellent. It pulls together the earlier journal publications by Joyce, and presents some well-written scenarios depicting schools in various stages of improvement.

There is, however, a serious limitation. Part V, which deals with Stage III's redesign of the school, is found lacking. It begins with this introduction:

> Once the process of school improvement has been established and the school meets basic effectiveness criteria and can improve its curriculum areas at will, the Responsible Parties are ready to examine the missions and means of the school, consider the possibilities in current technology, and examine social change.

The authors assume that the processes of change that carried the school through Stages I and II are all that is necessary to allow the Responsible Parties to carry out their redefinition and redesign. Further, the basis of the authors' approach to school improvement is that the *individual* school is the unit of change. Neither the assumption nor the approach seem practical for redesigning the school. Redefinition of the school's mission by the Responsible Parties presupposes a condition that may not exist: that the individual school has complete control over the determination of its mission. While this may be desirable, it is impractical. The individual school exists within and contributes to a larger system of school district and community, which in turn must operate within the law, annual operating budgets, board policy, and collective bargaining agreements.

Although the authors paid some attention to this larger context of schooling, they chose not to develop its implications for the individual school. Perhaps they do not consider it a significant issue.

The Structure of School Improvement is a synthesis and discussion of what is already known about refinement and renovation, and it offers visions of schools of the future; however, it falls short of serving as a guide to school redesign.

Available from Longman, Inc., 19 W. 44th St., New York, NY 10036, for $15.95.

Marva Collins' Way

Marva Collins and Civia Tamarkin
Los Angeles, California:
J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 1982

—Reviewed by Lowell Horton, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.

The title says it all. Marva Collins, the controversial founder of the Westside Preparatory School, explains how she is able to teach black children from some of the most deprived areas of

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Nancy Carter Modrak

Chicago to not only read, but to read and discuss such authors as Dostoyevsky, Chaucer, Faulkner, Homer, and Shakespeare. A description of how Marva Collins begins the year with a study of Emerson's "Self Reliance" with nonreaders is instructive in helping us understand her method as well as her attitude toward the children she teaches.

There is no miracle worker here; just good, hard teaching combined with a love of children and a powerful belief in their ability to learn.

The text itself is an uncomfortable mixture of co-author Tamarkin reporting Marva Collins' classroom procedures interspersed with Collins' autobiography, but the complete book works to give us a picture of one teacher touching the lives of children.

Available from Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, Massachusetts, for $12.95.

What Research Says to the Teacher: Motivation (revised)

Raymond J. Wlodkowski
Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, 1982

—Reviewed by Madeline Hunter, University of California, Los Angeles.

While there is no panacea for increasing motivation to learn, there are better ways to teach in one's own style to increase students' intent to learn and their enjoyment of learning. This thesis is supported by brief summaries of research in attribution theory, achievement motivation, teacher personality, self-concept, intrinsic-extrinsic motivation, reinforcement, praise, feedback, teacher expectations, technology, goal structure, and various forms of motivation. Those who enjoy the stimulation of translating research findings into "tomorrow morning" application will find this book an effective launching pad. Those who are looking for specific "how to's" will not find them.

Available from NEA Order Department, The Academic Building, West Haven, CT 06516, for $2.00.

The Student's Right to Know

Lee Burress and Edward B. Jenkinson
Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1982

—Reviewed by Sheila Rezak, Purdue University, Hammond, Indiana.

Book censorship in elementary and secondary literature classes and in the school library is closely examined in this work. Giving reasons for the increase in censorship, and comparing the thinking process of a book censor from a book selector, the authors encourage more intellectual freedom in schools. Teachers, school administrators, librarians, and parents will find these sections particularly useful: a complaint form schools and libraries can offer to parents and others who disapprove of reading materials; a list of the 22 books most often the target of censorship; and the effect of both good and bad literature on the reader.

Available from National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, IL 61801, for $2.25.

Insight: The Substance and Rewards of Teaching

Herbert Kohl
Menlo Park, California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1982

—Reviewed by Shirley McFaul, Education Consultant, Baltimore, Maryland.

An ardent advocate of personalized, innovate curricula, Kohl argues that teachers are increasingly forced to do only what is assigned by school districts in ways prescribed by manuals—which does little to foster learning or a democratic way of life. He offers a collection of 20 years of creative teaching ideas dealing with reading, writing, social sciences, thinking, discipline, and self-renewal. Much of this material originated from his former *Teacher* magazine articles. Believing that one can learn a lot from good past practice, he shares his insights and resources, which emphasize process, relationships, intrinsic motivation, and open-endedness.

Available from Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 2725 Sand Hill Rd., Menlo Park, CA 94025, for $9.95.

19 Improving Schools and Why

A 206-page paperback describing the formula for success of 19 elementary schools in Michigan, by Peter L. Clancy (Ypsilanti, Mich.: Eastern Michigan University, 1982).

According to its author, this book's study of successful schools is unique for several reasons. (1) It deals mostly with suburban and rural schools; most other studies are based on urban and inner-city schools. (2) It analyzes the effect of pupil-teacher ratio, school size, teacher salaries, and more on the success of schools. (3) It offers a blueprint developed by the successful superintendents, principals, and teachers for what individuals in these roles can do to ensure success. Available at $7.95 per copy prepaid (20 percent discount for orders of more than ten) from the Office of Community Education Research, 34F Boone Hall, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197.

Internationalizing Your School

A 63-page paperback guide for teachers, administrators, parents, and school boards, by Frank H. Rosengren, Marylee Crofts Wiley, and David S. Wiley (New York: National Council on Foreign Language and International Studies, 1983).

Although not a blueprint for every school to follow, this handbook offers practical advice about introducing international studies and foreign language teaching in schools—based on the experience of schools that have already done so successfully. It is a compendium of books, articles, cassettes, audiovisual material, and films, with information on how to procure them. It also describes scores of model programs and curricula that are being employed throughout the U.S. Available for $7.50 per copy. To order or to obtain information about discounts for bulk orders, write to the National Council on Foreign Language & International Studies, 605 Third Ave., 17th Floor, New York, NY 10158.

Job Success Begins at Home

Learning materials kit for teenagers, teachers, and families (Washington, D.C.: The Home and School Institute,

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