

BOOK REVIEW

PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION MARK FOX (1993)

London: Cassell Educational (0-304-32470-1) 228 pp

Those of us who teach student teachers will be interested in Fox's approach to the generic topics of educational psychology texts. This relatively short, readable, and argued book provides another alternative for subject convenors. Large omnibus American texts dominate the substantial market for texts on psychology applied to education, but their cultural specificity stimulates student resistance. Several Australian texts now offer either constructivist perspectives referring to relevant Australian research or more personalised organisation of the ed. psych. domain. The further alternative offered by this text from the United Kingdom arises from the appeal to the reflective practitioner to reduce the gap between teachers' espoused views about, for example, catering to individual differences and providing equal opportunity and their practice in the classroom.

The text could be covered comfortably within a semester, and students will probably respond favourably to the argument that the book provides a framework within which they can develop a logical and unified theory of action in their teaching practice. Eleven chapters of approximately 20 pages are grouped into three sections. The rationale for this organisation is to understand (a) student behaviour and thinking and teachers' influence on cognitive and personal development; (b) teachers' attitudes, motivations, and attributions for success and failure, in parallel with those of students; and (c) the pupil-teacher relationship in classroom management, the psychology of groups, and teaching and learning strategies, respectively.

The writing style is simple and straightforward, but major educational themes are compacted into chapters with considerable panache. The 18 pages of the first chapter on pupil behaviour provide a sensible coverage of behavioural antecedents and consequences in the ABC model, including a critique of behaviourism misapplied in classrooms, the influence of pupils' and teachers' personal constructs on their behaviour, a rational-emotive analysis of how

students' emotions affect their behaviour, and Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism of, for example, the cycle of pupil expectation of hostility, aggressive behaviour, and negative environmental response. This style gives a modern flavour to the text that reflects contemporary professional interests, but the approach requires adjustment of subject delivery when so much is introduced in the first chapter.

The treatment is balanced. Constructivism is quite well-served in this text, and there is also reasonable input about humanistic concerns. Social issues get considerable attention. Fox focuses on how prejudice involves efforts to protect self-esteem and provides a cogent argument about the issues involved in attitudinal change and associated behaviour change. Fox's view that it is unproductive to see prejudice as an illogical and negative process opens the way to novice teachers to examine their own attitudes rather than simply to close their minds. This work on social psychological issues is clearly directed at the teaching of UK black students, but it could be usefully applied to the Australian multicultural setting.

In keeping with the selective strategy of this book, the references provide a sample of the familiar and the current. Fox uses a wide range of sources including the major American influences. However, he also adventures into territory not usually associated with education and introduces, for example, organisational research with managers to discuss the dynamics of groups in school. Thus, this text has a personalised feeling of reflecting issues and concerns of the author. However, the treatment is not likely to alienate lecturers who will be able to recognise most sources. The issues expressed in UK context are sufficiently topical around the world to be of interest to student teachers, and they do provide a framework for reflection about psychology in the classroom.

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