

questions he suggests be asked of normative data. Dividing such lists into between two and four overarching categories would enhance the likelihood of counsellors actually employing these ideas in their day-to-day work.

Having discussed the concepts of normative data, life-span development and counselling, Thomas devotes the remainder of the book to discussing six different life stages from infancy and early childhood to the final decades. In each case, he considers in some detail a particular issue emblematic of the type of concern that might be brought to counselling by a client of that age-group or life stage. The depth of discussion in these illustrative issues is a welcome balance to the breadth that prevails elsewhere in these chapters.

In recognition of the impossibility of covering the whole field of life-span development and associated counselling approaches in one volume, Thomas concludes by providing a bibliography directed at assisting readers in their search for more answers. Some annotation as well as classification of these references would have enhanced the usefulness of this section, helping the reader select between the various books suggested. References to relevant journals as well as specific books is a welcome recognition of the constant need to update normative material and how it is analysed in the context of a changing society.

There is a lot of substance in this book. If it happens to discuss in detail an issue on which you are working with a client, then you will be well served. If not, then at the very least it heightens awareness of how normative judgments infiltrate many assessments made about clients and how to utilise normative data effectively and appropriately. For counsellors faced with a client from a different life stage to their usual client group, the book can provide a quick pen-portrait of some of the preoccupations the client may bring. Summaries which helped the reader hold together large amounts of often disparate data would on occasion have been welcomed. Nevertheless, this is a useful book both for generalists wishing to gain an overall view of developmental tasks characteristic of all life stages, and for specialists wishing to explore what life may be like beyond the confines of their own typical client group.

Work experience: a key text for improving practice

Andrew Miller, A.G. Watts and Ian Jamieson: *Rethinking Work Experience*. London: Falmer, 1991. £28 (hardback); £12.95 (paperback).

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Work experience is one of the areas in the curriculum which, since its appearance as a 'subject' in the early 1960s, has undergone most growth and

seems now to be destined for most if not all students in British secondary schools. The book being reviewed sets out to justify the popularity that work experience enjoys in England and overseas, arguing that if the conception, organisation and practice of such programmes were to be improved, then the educative potential of this curricular initiative could be realised even further.

Much of the literature that has appeared on the subject has provided accounts that are either so theoretical that their value is all but lost to practitioners, or else focused so exclusively on practice that they fail to sensitise readers to the social context that contains their educational endeavours. This book is an exception. A key achievement of the authors is their ability to provide practical advice while at the same maintaining an embeddedness in theory which invites the reader to rise above technical details to consider wider normative and educational issues. This linkage between theory and practice is achieved not only in the informed debate on a number of issues, but also in the organisation of the book, with the first part providing a conceptual and historical introduction, and the second and third parts focusing more directly on organisational and curricular matters. This makes excellent educational sense, and is a strategy that promotes the role of the teacher as a 'reflective practitioner'.

The authors offer us accounts of the development of work-experience programmes in Britain and elsewhere, and of the relationship between these programmes and wider economic transformations. They argue that the recession and widespread youth unemployment have affected the definition and experience not only of work, but of education as well. We thus find insights regarding the way social, political and economic changes have led to such educational innovations as Local Management of Schools, the National Curriculum, and TVEI Extension. The authors also explore the ways in which these changes influence the directions that can be taken by work experience.

In comparing and contrasting the different forms of work experience, the authors constantly problematise a number of issues and practices. They raise, and creatively confront, questions related to the 'who', 'where', 'when' and 'how' of work experience, drawing from a wide range of theoretical and empirical research as well as on the experience of practitioners in the field. They explore the various organisational strategies which seem best suited to the fulfilment of the various aims of work experience, considering the advantages and disadvantages of school-based and LEA-based programmes, and the articulation of work-experience programmes with the curriculum. With reference to the latter, the authors favour those projects that are integrated with the rest of the curriculum, and they give several examples of how this can be done by exploring a number of curriculum frames into which work experience can fit.

The authors stress that work experience should be integrated within an educational framework, for then it can 'raise important questions for young people about both the nature of work and our society's current arrangements for work' (p. 79). They draw on various case-studies reported by different schools; these examples not only serve to illustrate some of the more theoretical points that are made, but are also a useful guide to good practice. The chapters on employers' perspectives and on legal issues involved in the organisation of work-experience programmes will be particularly welcomed by teachers. In both cases, programme facilitators are found to be at a loss, firstly because they often have little experience of the industrial world, so that the co-ordination with employers can present special problems, and secondly because legal issues related to permissibility regarding age and section of employment, discrimination, health and safety, insurance, and protection of children present specific challenges which teachers are often untrained to deal with.

Teachers will also appreciate the pedagogical insights the authors provide with reference to the teaching, assessment and evaluation of work-experience programmes. In line with the experiential learning mode which is the hallmark of such programmes, students are considered to be active learners who bring to the classroom a wealth of knowledge about work – in terms of their involvement in home labour and in jobs in the 'twilight economy'. The authors place an emphasis on the processing of the students' experience at work so that progression in learning is facilitated. They also provide innovative and educationally sound models for the assessment of student learning on the one hand, and the evaluation of programmes in terms of students', teachers', schools' and employers' expectations on the other.

There are a few weaknesses in an otherwise excellent and comprehensive treatment of the educative potential of work experience. The title '*rethinking* work experience' would seem to suggest, as one of authors himself points out, a 'process [which] should involve taking stock of the *status quo* and subjecting it to critical scrutiny' (p. 87). The authors do take into account many if not most of the critiques made of work experience – the chapter on the problems of matching students to work placements, for instance, is particularly good in this regard – but the reader would probably be in a better position to 'rethink' if the critiques were addressed more systematically, perhaps in the context of a specific chapter. In that chapter the authors would have also made their political/normative positions more clear, for these, while not absent, do not emerge as directly and coherently as one would have liked. A case in point is the writers' ultimately consensual outlook on employers as equal partners in work-experience projects, an attitude which sits uncomfortably with their justified critique of the way capitalist social relations in the workplace breed class, gender and race-based inequalities. Also, some criticisms are less thoroughly developed than

others. For instance, the danger that work experience becomes yet another powerful instrument to socialise students for the world of work as it is, rather than as it could and should be, is deserving of more attention and, given the educative focus of the book, should have featured more centrally.

These weaknesses are, however, minor ones compared to the authors' achievement in providing an informed guide leading to good practice. The book is clearly written, and the presentation of summaries in boxes is a useful device for remembering and reflecting on key points argued in each chapter. The authors have also obviously collaborated closely in writing the book, for not only is the style and structure of presentation consistent throughout, but each author is careful to build on points and arguments made in earlier chapters and to integrate these in new contexts. *Rethinking Work Experience* is therefore a welcome addition to the growing literature on an important curricular initiative, and will undoubtedly become a key text referred to by those who, within or outside schools, co-ordinate this form of linkage with industry.

~~A book about men~~

~~Robert Bly: *Iron John*. Shaftsbury: Element Books, 1991. £12.95.~~

~~Reviewed by John Leary-Joyce, Gestalt Centre, London.~~

~~It is hard to admit that I did not like this book, since it has been top of the American bestseller list for years, and has had rave reviews and glowing reports in every magazine you picked up. Its popularity stems from the fact that there are comparatively few books written on the 'new age' men's movement, and also that Bly's style and approach are radically different from the others. He challenges both the traditional male stereotype of being hard, unfeeling, intellectual and remote, and its polarity, 'feminist man', who is soft, emotional and non-violent. Instead he offers a vision of masculinity as the paternal, compassionate warrior who we have all longed for in our own fathers and who Bly endeavours to emulate, both in his writing and in his photo on the back cover.~~

~~The content is allegorical and based on the Grimms' fairytale 'Iron John'. The tale, which I loved and quickly read all the way through by skipping the commentary, is about a boy prince who is drawn by the fascination for a wild man, Iron John, away from the safe, controlled, predictable family home/palace. He sets forth to achieve manhood, and with the help of Iron John faces the challenges of ridicule and poverty to develop strength and humility. Eventually he achieves the pinnacle of masculinity: marry the beautiful princess, have children and become king.~~