

Skepticism will surely be roused and its arousal just as certainly will be justified whenever the value of an historical study is identified by its relevance to current concerns, as though to say, "Here are lessons to be learned." If relevance of that sort matters, it ought to be, like style, something displayed, but not paraded. Such doubts are moderated, however, in this case by strengths that would carry this book even were it without any connection to current problems of reform.

One virtue is its complexity. Another its inclusiveness. A third is the fact that it is simply a pleasure to read. This is a work not of history so much as the history of ideas. And it is no mere text-book account of the Founders' ideas. It includes judicious and critical remarks on major expositors of the history, Lawrence Cremin, for example (p. 69). It includes a remarkably (maybe excessively) sensitive and sympathetic account of Franklin's views on moral discipline, and the harmony of private interest and public service, a view in stark contrast to the acerbic and cynical accounts that philosophers and historians are prone to present. It contains an unusually extended discussion of the ideas and work of Benjamin Rush, attempts at developing a National University. In addition this volume contains an unusually useful bibliography, almost worthy of study by itself.

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Ashman, A.F. & Conway, R.N.F. (1993). *Using cognitive methods in the classroom*. New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall. 195 pp. (hardcover), \$74.95.

The aim of this book is twofold: first, to outline the conceptual basis of a cognitively-based instructional approach, designed by the authors, and second, to show how the approach can be used in a range of educational contexts. The goal of bridging from research to practice is laudable. It is not clear, however, if Ashman and Conway have succeeded in this endeavor.

There is little doubt that the cognitive revolution has had a marked effect on educational practice. Over the last 25 years, researchers and theoreticians have worked toward describing the organization of knowledge, how it is acquired and transformed, and how teaching can be practiced so as to maximize children's learning capacity. The book, *Using Cognitive Methods in the Classroom*, as the name implied is conceived within this general tradition, however, this work deviates in very fundamental ways from most other programs developed recently within this tradition.

Ashman and Conway's instructional approach, *Process Based Instruction (PBI)*, is based on "a general process — planning — which appears to have a very clear application to the plethora of learning and problem-solving situations that occur across our lives" (p. 54). The authors rightly contrast PBI with other recently-developed, cognitively-based instruction programs. Most other instruction programs focus on domain-specific problem solving processes and strategies or on domain-specific conceptual knowledge whereas Ashman and Conway's approach harkens back to a general problem-solving process that applies across all domains.

One of the main reasons for the current domain-specific orientation involves the problem of knowledge transfer, that is, the frequent failure of children to use knowledge gained in one context in another. Over the years, the scales have tipped back and forth on this issue. Historically, very general transfer was thought possible. The doctrine of formal discipline asserted that the mind could be trained through exposure to classical disciplines such as Greek and Latin and that the effect of this training would be visible in more current endeavors. Learning theorists argued against the position, advocating instead a theory of identical elements, where transfer was thought to occur only when elements of the learning and transfer situations overlapped to a high degree. The move from classical learning theory to the information processing paradigm brought about a return to the general position in the form of training metacognition. But knowledge transfer proved resistant even under these new conditions, as the application of general metacognitive strategies was typically limited to "near" transfer. By contrast, the sought after "far" transfer, which involved moving knowledge between domains and thereby forging links through conscious strategic activity, remained elusive. Children's failure to engage spontaneously in a "mindful backward search" eventually led researchers to turn their attention from teaching general

metacognitive skills and processes to directly teaching domain-specific strategies or procedures designed to facilitate knowledge access, transfer, and strategy utilization. A similar trend from general to more specific structures has occurred in the developmental literature, where Piaget's *structure d'ensemble* has been replaced with constructs such as central conceptual structures, domain-specific knowledge structures, and domain specific theories.

Against this backdrop of theorizing and empirical evidence supporting the domain-specific position, it is difficult to understand why Ashman & Conway advocate a general approach. Although there is little doubt that planning is the hallmark of expert performance in all domains, it does not automatically follow that a general planning framework will transfer across all scholastic situations. What seems to be in order is an extended analysis of how planning differs given the particular nature of the knowledge domain and the conceptual understanding of the planner. Such a discussion is essential in order to bring this work in line with the current *zeitgeist*. As the situation stands, teachers are left on their own to make this important and essential adjustment, thus placing them in the untenable position highlighted by the authors, that of linking research and practice, given their already heavy work loads and full schedules.

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Casey, K. (1993). *I answer with my life: Life histories of women teachers working for social change*. New York: Routledge, Chapman & Hall. 196 pp. (softcover) \$15.95.

Kathleen Casey's analysis of the life histories of women teachers working for social change, a recent addition in the Routledge *Critical Social Thought* series, is purposefully presented "to celebrate [these teachers'] alternative progressive versions of education, and in doing so, to recreate the possibility of public debate which has actually been suppressed" (p. 3) in current official and conservative reports on the state of education in the United States.