BOOK REVIEWS

LEARNING TO THINK: THINKING TO LEARN

Margaret Kirkwood (2005) Paisley: Hodder Gibson.
ISBN: 0340889942. (pp. 112, £9.99, pb.)

Review by PAUL RIDEOUT

"Thinking Skills" are contained in the nine official aims of the 5–14 curriculum, as well as in the six core skills and capabilities. Unfortunately, unlike the other aims, no guidelines were issued. It is arguable that with the increasing dominance of subject areas on timetables and specific targets in schools, those aspiring to promote and develop thinking skills directly have faced a difficult task. Recently there has been some guidance, such as *Learning, Thinking and Creativity: A Staff Development Handbook* (LTS, 2004), and Margaret Kirkwood's book is a welcome independent addition in trying to give practical guidance to teachers in this area.

The key message in the Preface is that schools and teachers have resources within themselves to develop thinking skills without being reliant on external packages, and the full title of the book claims "An introduction… from Nursery to Secondary". I suspect that nursery teachers may be a little disappointed in the coverage, but there is plenty of reference to primary and secondary contexts.

The opening chapter broadly considers the justification for teaching thinking directly, relating it specifically to some interesting supportive extracts from 5–14 Guidelines, and seeking to establish some necessary pedagogic principles – trying to make the thinking process more overt and pupils more active.

The next chapter tackles in detail the definition and classification of thinking skills, the complexity of which has probably been a negative factor in the uptake of the concept. Read different authors and you can be confronted with long lists of skills, which may overlap and give insufficient holistic focus to practical activities. The author conveys a selection of different perspectives and difficulties, also raising the important notion of affective factors alongside the cognitive.

Then the focus is upon how one might teach thinking skills. First the broad issue of whether to use existing commercial programmes or "infusion methods", either throughout the curriculum or within a particular subject area, is considered. I sense a certain dilemma in considering programmes, given the "key message" of the book (see above). There is a fair selection of what is available and prestigious – Instrumental Enrichment, Cognitive Acceleration (Adey and Shayer version) Philosophy for Children, and de Bono (a minor quibble is that the popular example given of "thinking hats" is not part of his CoRT programme). Furthermore, there is a balanced description of key aspects of their approach, and a helpful summary of features that are common to each. Yet one feels that if teachers were wanting to make an informed choice, information is lacking on financial costs, research evidence (apart from CASE) which is often much stronger than infusion methods, and endorsement (e.g. Glasgow and Lanarkshire schools have been introducing Adey and Shayer's *Let's Think* science programme for 5–7 year olds.) Indeed, some of the strategies used in these programmes are almost directly mimicked in infusion approaches (e.g. Lipman's philosophical enquiry method using narrative stories and pupil generated questions is the basis of the current LTS initiative, *Philosophy for Citizenship*.) There is an issue of whether "dilution" of originals is efficacious, but it is not discussed.

Perhaps all of this would make for a much longer book, and the next three

chapters consider how to implement "thinking skills" within the existing curriculum. These provide some useful examples in different subject areas, drawing on the advice of Americans such as Robert Swartz and David Perkins. The key issue of "transfer" is debated, in that the delights of the effects of particular lessons may prove to be ephemeral. Particular strategies are described, involving advice on better questioning, open-ended tasks, and games, with more UK sources to the fore such as the Newcastle University group, Robert Fisher, and Carol McGuinness (Activating Children's Thinking Skills projects). These are justifiably conveyed as possibilities to explore, though one might like some more evaluative comment at times. It is a little frustrating to read "the research evidence points to..." (p.72) without the evidence; and at the other end of the scale, one might imagine some being perplexed by the even-handedness on different strategies, and preferring more specific advice.

The final two chapters are aspects of "bringing it all together". In the first, within the context of transfer, the compatibility of thinking skills pedagogy with constructivist learning principles is discussed; the crucial role of metacognition and finding time to reflect is emphasised; and the social and affective dimensions of thinking are explored, along with how best to create a disposition to engage in thinking. All this represents solid advice.

The second is principally devoted to assessment and evaluation, with a final section on CPD. The validity and reliability of results is an important area, as one needs more than just subjective impressions of development in thinking. Appropriate links are made with formative assessment, and sound pointers given on evaluation. However, I do feel that extended examples would have been more illuminating, perhaps following through some of the plans in earlier chapters.

Overall, the book is written in a readable style, with "key messages" at the end of each chapter providing summary points. In keeping with the philosophy of a thinking skills approach, there are "thinking points" interspersed through chapters, designed to get the reader to reflect on particular issues. There are also short annotated bibliographies, giving further reading. The book clearly went to print before the appearance of *A meta-analysis of the impact of the implementation of thinking skills approaches on pupils,* conducted by the Thinking Skills Review Group at Newcastle University, but there are plenty of relevant and up-to-date recommendations. In all this is certainly a book any teacher who is interested in developing thinking skills with pupils should consult.

ABERDEEN STUDENTS 1600–1860

Colin McLaren (2005) Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen
ISBN: 1 85752 300 8 (pp. 211, £12, pb.)

Review by JOHN NISBET

The final three-page chapter, Conclusions, contains an excellent summary of key themes in each of the periods covered in this book, 1600–1639, 1649–1717, 1718-–1825 and 1826–1860. I made the mistake of starting at the beginning and did not read Conclusions till the end. The consequence was that initially I was overwhelmed by the meticulous detail of the text, all derived from contemporary documents, personal histories and records in the University archives. Conventions in historical research differ from those of experimental studies in education: here, every item in the build-up of data is referenced precisely or amplified in footnotes. Chapter

1, covering the first period, has 124 footnotes, and the book has 642 footnotes in all. The style is in striking contrast to older texts on student life in Aberdeen, such as Neil MacLean's *Life at a Northern University* (1853), which tends towards nostalgic reminiscences, extended anecdotes and uncritical adulation of the professors. For many of the older alumni, Neil MacLean's style is the one they enjoy, irrespective of its validity.

This, one might think, is a scholar's book rather than a popular one. But it would be unfortunate if the general reader were to be put off by initial impression. For the author's technique is a skilful one, creating a general picture from precise archive detail point by point. In history it is the detail which brings the past to life, though it runs the risk of becoming tedious if not set in context.

It is said that 3000-year-old hieroglyphs in Egypt lament the disgraceful behaviour of the younger generation. Is there nothing new under the sun? In 1666, the Principal complained of graffiti, 'the damnable custom of chalking the walls' (p.47), at the end of session. In 1794 the authorities imposed a fine of one shilling for snowballing (p.81). The frequent publication of codes of discipline, 'longer at each revision as each Principal sought to protect the conscientious and control the irresponsible' (p.46), suggests that there was a need for them (or a perceived need). The compulsory wearing of the student's gown, black for bursars and red for others, was a means of keeping a check on behaviour in town (p.47). A surprisingly modern touch in the Victorian age was the motion in the Debating Society in 1859, 'That the press is more beneficial to society than the pulpit', which was carried by 21 votes to 19 (p.112). These and similar anecdotes throughout make for interesting reading.

Although human nature may not have changed much over the centuries, the nature of education in two colleges of the University, Kings and Marischal, was very different. The average age of students at entry in 1827 was 14 at Kings and 12 at Marischal (p.121), and earlier in the 17th and 18th centuries ages ranged from 10 to 16. An indication of the immaturity of students is given by the 'regimen mensae' (table rules) of 1657 which include: 'take your food in three fingers, cut it with your knife before rending it with your teeth… not lick your fingers…' (Appendix 3). Numbers were small, at first 20 per year in both colleges, rising to 200 in the 19th century. The student day started at dawn 'when the mind is readiest for study', according to the Principal (1680:36), with chapel service, and all followed the same curriculum. It is surprising to find compulsory provision for sport (pp.45–46), two hours on three afternoons each week: rules mention tennis, billiards, bowls, archery and even shinty, but not golf.

A most important feature to be found even in the earliest period is the range of social class among the students. From the earliest times, bequests from alumni provided for bursaries, which meant that able children from poor homes mixed with the sons of the landed gentry in the student population. This was not without friction from time to time, and both colleges tended to apply a double standard of discipline, more severe for the 'puir scolaris' whose living conditions were rough, in contrast to the 'independent' students who sometimes brought with them their own tutors. Over the years, growth in the number of bursaries (there were 129 at Kings by 1829) led to an institution of dominating importance in the first half of the 20th century, the Bursary Competition. All the ancient Scottish Universities had their 'Bursary Comp' and able pupils in secondary schools were encouraged to stay on for a sixth year to cram for it. (In my secondary school in the 1930s, when a pupil gained first place in the Edinburgh list, the school was given a day's holiday.)

The University of Chapter 1, 1600–1639, was different in so many ways, more like a boarding school in its teaching and its restrictive control of students. But the subsequent unfolding story up to 1860 shows how the later stages have progressively contributed to the University as we know it today. The University of 1860 at the end of this book was not all that different from what I knew as an undergraduate in 1940.

If an 1860 Rip van Winkle were to awaken in 1940 (and perhaps even in 1960) to an almost unrecognisably different world, he would have found in the Universities of the time at least one comfortably familiar place. But since then, and especially in the last two decades, there have been more changes than in the previous 400 years. The records of the past show how our present institutions have evolved, and it perhaps sad that for many of today's academics these archives are seen as quaintly irrelevant.

MANAGING VERY CHALLENGING BEHAVIOUR

Louise Leaman, (2005). London: Continuum
ISBN: 0826485391 (pp. 160, £9.99, pb.)

Review by GNANATHUSHRAN RAJENDRAN

Leaman's book is impressive, from the outset, because she goes to the heart of the issues that make up the complex area of challenging behaviour. By setting out the numerous contexts for challenging behaviour, Leaman has written a book that offers an awareness of the many factors that influence difficult behaviour, and provides lots of pragmatic advice about how to deal with it. In this sense it can be thought of as a manual as much as a text.

The specific focus of the book is about managing the challenging behaviour of students with ESBD (Emotional, Social and Behavioural Difficulties), but the principles could equally be applied to other populations. Leaman writes from her experiences as a teacher rather than citing from the substantial literature on challenging behaviour. Therefore, some readers may wonder where the empirical evidence is to back up what Leaman suggests. This is not problematic in itself, but consequently it would not be an ideal book for readers seeking a review of interventions and the theoretical underpinnings of challenging behaviour.

Leaman writes with a deep understanding of challenging behaviour as functional, as communication, as something to be understood, but without absolving the student from taking responsibility for their actions. From this basis she provides prescriptive and realistic ideas about how to manage it, rather than to change it or avoid it. There is a focus on getting students to regulate their own behaviour, so Leaman's ideas are not just about managing behaviour in the short term, but about educating students to deal with their own behaviour in readiness for life after school. In this sense she remains true to the spirit of an educator, looking at the medium and long term rather than just the day-to-day management of behaviour.

The book deals with a spectrum of challenging behaviour: from low level annoying behaviours and medium level disruptive behaviours, all the way to high level aggressive and violent behaviour. The text's short chapters, punctuated with many subheadings, make it not only readable from cover to cover, but also ideal for dipping in and out of. Leaman's style is easy to follow and I especially like the way she uses examples of what students and staff actually say. Additionally, her humour provides relief from continuously reading about what can be a difficult and sensitive area.

The book's target audience comprises teachers and those undertaking initial teacher education programmes. However, academics will also find this book beneficial. One of its main strengths is that it acknowledges that challenging behaviour is difficult for professionals to manage perfectly, and this is something that everyone working in this field can relate to.

INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION: PROVIDING FOR CHILDREN

Ann Glaister & Bob Glaister (2005) Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press.
ISBN 1-903765-14-5 (pp.82, £11.95, pb.)

Review by GORDON MACKIE

This small book is number 13 in the excellent 'Policy and Practice' series published by Dunedin. It contains 5 case studies from around Scotland, detailing the experiences of practitioners working with others in ways which develop or promote collaboration across traditional boundaries. The case studies are book-ended by an introduction and a final chapter by the editors, the latter attempting to distil what is essential to facilitate such ways of working, as well as teasing out some important lessons learned along the way.

The first case study, by Bronwen Cohen, enters hopeful into the minefield of meanings and definitions. The plethora of synonyms currently used to describe a wide range of processes sometimes obscure as much as clarify. Whilst this small chapter can only raise some of these issues, it does refer the reader to other useful work in this area. An historical overview of policy and practice within Children's Services in Scotland is offered and finally some challenges outlined for schools in the era of the 'joined-up' agenda.

The second case study by Jeanie Mackenzie, entitled 'A Model for Educational Change in East Renfrewshire', charts the development of Integrated Community Schools in that authority and the subsequent effect this had in the organisational and professional culture.

The journey travelled, particularly within the realm of literacies work, challenges fundamental assumptions about what such practice actually is, with a move from deficit models to one informed more by 'social practices'. Each stage of Fullan's (1993) model of educational change is used to review the (necessarily long) journey.

Douglas Hutchison, an educational psychologist, describes his experiences of 'Joint Working in South Ayrshire Early Years Forum', working in partnership to support pre-school children with additional support needs. He charts the development of the Forum and evaluates two real-life cases of working collaboratively: one where the outcomes were disappointing for the progress of the child but which highlighted the robustness of the processes, and the other which shows how much effective collaboration can be achieved even through infrequent meeting.

Voluntary sector partnerships with services providers for disabled young people (education, health and social work) in Stirling are outlined by Sue Dumbleton. This chapter starts with a community issue (Where do disabled children go during summer?) This led to the creation of Playplus, which began as a playscheme but led eventually to an inclusive approach to all Council-run play facilities.

The final case study concerns the mental health of young people in Moray. Chris Wiles explains how the experiences there led to the understanding that 'mainstreaming' mental health issues is a priority for all who work with children, and not just specialist services. The impact of constant re-organisation of services and local government, and the impact of policy directives from the Scottish Executive, did not hamper the enthusiasm or commitment of staff to change what had been previously an oft-criticised set of services. Not only does he take an historical look back, but he outlines challenges for the future in terms of changes of outlook and perception.

The editors have clearly pored over the case studies (time and time again) to reflect upon what has been learned through all of these efforts. The final chapter is testament to their rigor and they identify 'four inter-weaving issues' which they feel are key factors emerging form the case studies. Each is taken in turn for further

scrutiny and the editors helpfully make the links between the case studies and each issue for the reader. This is truly useful for those who work in the public sector and should be prescribed reading for undergraduate courses across a wide range of disciplines.

A number of the authors make comment about shared values leading to the success of collaborative practice, but these are never made explicit (with the exception of trust). There is also a call made by the editors for 'one kind of person' or 'champions' to develop this kind of work. In the spirit of 'joined up thinking', Dunedin have a golden opportunity here: the editors of this book (volume 13) should team up with the author of volume 4 (Tett) to bring clarity here and develop their thinking further. Throw into the mix a Scottish Executive 'joined up policy', such as 'Working and Learning Together to Build Stronger Communities', and the values, skills, approaches and priorities become all the clearer. Any takers?

100 IDEAS FOR MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

Johnnie Young, (2005) London: Continuum.
ISBN: 0826484778 (pp. 112, £8.99, pb.)

Review by ROBERT DOHERTY

Continuum's 'One hundred ideas' series is a useful resource for the beginning teacher. With *Managing Behaviour*, Young has made a worthwhile contribution to this series. This small volume is presented in the series style; the ideas for managing behaviour are numbered one to a hundred and divided into such sections as, 'dealing with common problems' or 'managing yourself.' Each idea is presented as straightforward advice, outlining what the individual teacher should or can do when faced with the demands of managing behaviour in pursuit of those conditions and climate that allow teaching and learning to take place. This book would make a useful contribution to course reading lists and the library of institutions of initial teacher education. It will be particularly helpful for those students who are anxious about discipline or classroom management and who at this stage find texts that draw on more complex theoretical frameworks unhelpful or perplexing.

Experienced teachers will recognise the pragmatic and authentic tacit knowledge that is contained in the advice offered in each section. These are tips for teachers, but they contain a distilled insight that can be reassuring and directive to the novice teacher. However, books offering advice to be followed in complex social situations should carry a caveat. The reader needs to be reminded that knowing what is desired, and indeed what needs to be done, is not the same as being able to perform all the activities and manage all the factors required for a successful conclusion.

Some of the ideas and advice offered are perhaps idiosyncratic and individual: '…on a daily basis make an appointment with yourself to relax. Ask your family not to disturb you.' Generally however, Young captures many of those useful, effective and intuitive routines and approaches that practised and skilful teachers employ in the classroom every day.

PRIMARY-SECONDARY TRANSITION

Brian Boyd (2005) Paisley: Hodder Gibson
ISBN: 0-340-88992-6 (pp. 154, £9.99, pb.)

Review by LESLEY DOYLE

The transition from primary to secondary school is an oft-researched area in the UK and in recent times there has been a steady flow of books (Nicholls and Gardner, 1999; Hargreaves and Galton, 2002), reports (Galton, *et al.,* 1999; Arnold, 2002; Galton, *et al.,* 2003) and journal articles (Noyes, 2004; Doyle and Godfrey, 2005) – though as Boyd points out early on, there is still little research on the longer term impact of transfer in S3 beyond. Traversing over some of the well-known problems such as secondary teachers' 'fresh start' approach, Boyd's emphasis is on the need for a pedagogy, appropriate teacher training, CPD and even school buildings that give centre stage to children's learning and provide the conditions for continuity and progression from P6 to S2. A unifying theme running through the book is the reemergence of the principles espoused in the shelved 10-14 curriculum report of 1986. The report advocated a collaborative middle school approach, but without the structural upheaval. Boyd argues that this approach, delivered through joint in-service training, 'may in the longer term be more successful in achieving continuity and progression than any national initiative' (p.62), but he also explains how the new 3–18 curriculum could be made more effective than the present 5–14 scheme.

Boyd traverses across a wide range of highly relevant issues in order to contextualise the 'pantomime horse' analogy, where the primary and secondary sectors are supposed to work in tandem but a number of factors, some more real than others, intervene and create underachievement (Chapter 1). In Chapters 2 and 3 he analyses the current Scottish 5–14 curriculum and the role of teachers in its delivery, succinctly explaining that although it spans across the two sectors it does not take account *inter alia* of the differences between them in curriculum structure, and the professional 'boundary maintenance' of primary and secondary teachers. The latter is initiated, according to Boyd, by teacher training because 'while the two courses have… considerable areas of overlap in terms of structure and content, the students still undergo their initial teacher education separately' (p.34).

According to Boyd, these factors mean that the five principles of continuity, progression, coherence, breadth and balance espoused by the curriculum's architects were interpreted differently and incompatibly by the two sectors, making seamlessness at transition impossible. Boyd's own research (Boyd and Simpson, 2000) also found that in the secondary schools, S1 and S2 are timetabled last, leaving little flexibility and providing yet another obstacle. At the same time, where schools had utilised the 'common language' provided by the 5–14 curriculum to devise bridging units there was identifiably better continuity and progression (p.43). Nonetheless, although the report *A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century* (2001) has signalled the importance of CPD, 'in the context of primary-secondary liaison, more opportunities must be created to bring primary and secondary teachers together to share their expertise in learning and teaching' (p.44). However desirable it is for the sectors to come together, Boyd notes that it continues to be impeded by the school buildings themselves, with councils 'enshrining the traditional structures' by continuing to build separate primary and secondary schools.

In addition to these fundamental needs to achieve continuity and progression — integrated teacher training and appropriate school buildings — Boyd's thesis is that the teaching profession has to be actively involved in pedagogical research as well as being given easy access to the latest research both in learning and in the way

the brain functions during learning. Chapter 4 provides a useful summary of this research with the aim of 'making learning continuous, progressive and coherent'. Chapter 5 drills deep on the policy front and examines the rationale behind the UK government's, UNESCO's and the Scottish aims for education, concluding that 'the challenge for Scotland is to reach agreement among all those with a stake in education' (p.76). This is followed in Chapter 6 by a brief summary of the current research findings on troublesome issues such as class size and setting which, Boyd argues, politicians but especially teachers would do well to embrace in their deliberations as to what the aims of education are.

Boyd suggests that 'what is needed is more debate on the role of educational research and a greater degree of partnership between researchers and teachers in schools' (p.87), thereby increasing the status of educational research and its impact on policy and practice. In homing back in on the main subject of the book, Chapter 7 considers continuity and progression during transition from the perspectives of the young people themselves, drawing on Ruddock's (1996) UK research and a 1997 Scottish Office Education and Industry Department (SOEID) report *'Achieving success in S1 and S2'*. The final chapters of the book present changes that have been made, and those that still could be made, to try to achieve some measure of progression, continuity and coherence from P6 to S2. Chapter 8 describes a variety of ways in which schools and local councils have utilised the 5–14 curriculum to re-structure S1 and S2. Reiterating his insistence on the need for teachers to be well-versed in the latest national and international research, Chapter 9 illustrates where some councils have gone further and engaged whole sectors in 'joined-up thinking', with the most radical involving both sectors together in a 'thinking skills' programme as a way of promoting effective learning and teaching across the whole age range.

In Chapter 10 Boyd suggests that the way forward is to make the most of the 3–18 curriculum with its positive approach, particularly important at the point of transfer from primary to secondary school as it occurs at an age when disaffection begins to set in. Schools as vehicles of knowledge transmission cannot meet the needs of the future and would serve only to increase young people's disengagement in the middle years of schooling. Boyd illustrates that a clear set of curriculum principles, together with an emphasis on choice and equality of provision, can provide a sound basis for schools in both sectors to make consistent but relevant curriculum choices that do not quickly become out of date and therefore demotivating for young people (p.146).

At the end of each chapter are useful summaries and some questions to aid the use of this book for CPD purposes. An extension of the Scottish curriculum timeline on p.141 to include the UK context may have been helpful for UK and international readers.

In conclusion, what distinguishes this book, apart from the way it manages to combine readability and scholarliness with brevity (ten compact chapters) is its Scottish historical and political perspective. This should not limit its appeal – for whilst gaining an insight into one country's story, teachers, academics, education officials and policy makers from another country are also provided with a fresh perspective on primary to secondary transfer.

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