

BOOK REVIEWS/COMPTEs RENDUS

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Strategies for Helping Students, Calvin D. Catterall and George M. Gazda, Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas Pub., 1978, 407 pp.

Reviewed by:

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The first sentence of the Preface to this book sets forth its ambitious purpose: ". . . to organize and briefly describe all of the strategies for helping students which are available to school personnel." The remarkable thing is that Catterall and Gazda actually succeed in this endeavour, or at least come as close as any reasonable person could wish. In fact, the book comes perilously near that description offered by the apocryphal pupil in his book report: "This book tells me more about the subject than I care to know."

Well, perhaps not more than one cares to know, but certainly more than one could use at one time.

Strategies for Helping Students is divided into two parts. In Part I the authors describe the model of helping which Truax, Carkhuff and Berenson elaborated from Carl Rogers' work on core facilitative conditions. They discuss the goals and processes of helping and describe how a "Learning Facilitation Team" may develop a way of helping students. They illustrate this method by presenting a case study which displays the stages in the helping process: initial teacher-

student interaction, the generation of a profile based on specified areas of development, establishment of priorities with the student, identification and development of possible courses of action.

The substance of Part I will be familiar to students of Carkhuff's work on counselling and problem-solving or of Gazda's earlier work on human relations and group counselling. There is nothing essentially new here, but the section is necessary as a stage-setter for Part II which sets forth the strategies. People may buy the book for Part II, but without the underlying rationale and context provided by Part I, they would be left with a patchwork quilt of strategies with no conceptual framework to give them meaning.

Part II is essentially a taxonomy and encyclopedia of helping techniques. It deals with strategies of interventions under four chapter headings: The Development of Academic/Intellectual Skills, Corrective/Remedial Interventions, Development of Humanistic/Life Skills and Corrective/Therapeutic Interventions. The basic concept underlying this classification is that helping may include development and/or remediation in either the cognitive or affective domains.

Each of these chapters lists and describes techniques and tools appropriate to its topic. The chapter which deals with cognitive and intellectual skills describes such techniques as infant stimulation programs, pre-school screening, classroom adjustments, individualization, the

making of rules and the like, while the chapter which deals with corrective or remedial interventions in the cognitive area describes tutoring, reinforcement and others.

It is likely that school counsellors will be most interested in the chapters dealing with Humanistic/Life Skills and their remediation. In fact, the chapter on Humanistic/Life Skills is probably the most creative in the book. In it, Catterall and Gazda present a very useful model for a life skills curriculum. They describe six "strands" which are developed "for all students through a continuous cycle process which goes through three phases and nine steps" (p. 198). It sounds complicated, and it is to some degree, but it is also potentially very useful. The strands are:

- (a) Understanding/Valuing Self and Others
- (b) Clarifying One's Values
- (c) Improving Communication Skills
- (d) Solving Life's Problems
- (e) Adopting More Satisfying Roles
- (f) Making Creative Decisions.

They also identify and describe a host of resources and ideas for the teaching of each of these strands. This chapter, if published alone, would provide an excellent compendium of many of the best resources on the (American) market today. For this one chapter 268 references are cited!

The basic assumption of the chapter on the remediation of life skills is that the schools have a role to play in providing therapeutic interventions in the lives of those students who have "deficits" in these life skills. I would have liked more in the way of discrimination among the interventions they present: counselling, encounter groups, mediation, reality therapy, desensitization and the like. Are all these interventions equally applicable to the public school setting? What degree of therapy is appropriate in a school? Are all these therapies equally effective? What competencies are required of the users? These are important questions and I do not think the authors address them in sufficient detail. More useful to school counsellors may be their discussion of liaisons with appropriate agencies, which is found in the same chapter.

Finally, the authors come to grips with the problem of choosing the "best" strategy. To their credit, they make the point that the state of the art—and it is an art, not a science—does not justify a mechanical matching of problem to strategy. They point out that the whole topic is complicated, imprecise and lends itself to no "cookbook" approach. Instead they focus on the Learning Facilitation Team and on the dialogue of team members as providing the best answer to the question of selection of strategy. The

importance of total school atmosphere is highlighted by the provision of a well thought-out list of questions which lead to the identification of a number of factors in making a school-centered plan of action.

Also provided is a "Flow Diagram and Strategy Selection Chart". This borrowing from computer technology may give a spurious air of scientific exactitude to the process of strategy selection, but if the reader has understood the topics in the book to this point, the flow chart may be properly used as an aide-memoire and not as a mechanical device. As the authors say, "Looking at the flow diagram and the strategy selection chart makes the process look deceptively clear-cut and organized. In real life it will seldom happen this way (p. 364). The real benefit of these devices may well be to remind us that there is a whole variety of different helping strategies available to us and also that there should be some logic or reason underlying our choice of strategies in particular situations.

The purpose of *Strategies for Helping Students* is essentially humanitarian and reformist from a humanistic standpoint, but it is strongly influenced by a technological impulse—the impulse to develop a technology of human interactions. This may be the modern tone and it may even be the most efficient way of operating. But it does not lend itself to a graceful style. The language of the book is unfortunately stiff and cold. It tends to be the language of the engineer rather than that of the humanist. I found myself wishing for the passionate involvement, the sense of immediate personality which is found in a Herbert Kohl, a John Holt or a George Dennison. Certainly, the humanistic ideas are all there, but if we believe with the French sage that "Le style, c'est l'homme," then we must wonder.

In sum, this is a very scholarly, useful and thought-provoking book for counsellors, counsellor educators, teachers who want to get a new lease on their professional lives, and school administrators who care about what happens to kids in our schools. Catterall and Gazda have accomplished an impressive piece of work.

To Be a Therapist, Jerry M. Lewis, M.D., Brunner/Mazel Inc., New York, New York, 1978, 186 pp., \$13.95.

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Drawing upon extensive experience as a clinician, researcher and teacher at Pennsylvania's Timberlawn Psychiatric Hospital,