Thomas L. Good, Bruce J. Biddle, and Jere E. Brophy. *Teachers Make a Difference.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975. Pp. vii, 271. $5.95.

At a time when most colleges and universities find themselves in the extremely difficult position of carrying on their functions within ever-increasingly tight budgets, questions of efficiency and justification arise with perplexing insistence. One by one institutional subdivisions—whether colleges, schools, departments, faculties or disciplines—come under close and often unsympathetic administrative scrutiny. Many of them are simply discontinued or shrunken and others must convince the powers that be that they do perform a distinctive function and hence have a reason and right to be.

In this context, the long-standing question as to whether schools or departments of education do anything professionally distinctive or contribute anything significant to academe takes on added importance. The book, *Teachers Make a Difference,* is assertively titled, and with good reason. One of its major purposes, according to the authors, is to document the fact that teachers and schools *can* and *do* make a difference in the educational progress of students. It is a timely project. For if teachers, however well prepared, cannot make a difference, or if the difference they do make is only marginal, *vis-a-vis* other factors social or economic, questions regarding their importance as well as the *raison d'être* of schools or departments of education become purely academic. If, for example, physicians made no difference in the promotion of healing, not only their practice, but the existence of medical schools would be thereby called into question. Somewhat analogously, if it can be shown that teachers, as professionals, do make a critical difference in the education of students, then a similar case is thereby made for their existence and the existence of institutions which prepare them.

"Critics of education," say the authors of *Teachers Make a Difference,* "pose countless questions, but perhaps those most pressingly in need of answers include the following: why spend more money for public education if increased expenditures do not improve student progress? Why spend vast amounts of money training teachers if teachers make no difference? Why spend money for research when the definitive prescriptions for classroom life have not been found?"

A second purpose of the book, according to its authors, "is to illustrate the appropriate use of research data in the attempt to improve educational practice." In this connection they argue that research should precede and guide not follow educational innovations.

Their third and final objective in preparing the volume is to provide comprehensive and in-depth treatment of important topics which, they claim, are insufficiently treated of in regular textbooks. With this in mind the authors give their attention to a fairly wide range of topics. Open and individualized classrooms and information on how well they work, the use of behavioral objectives and criterion-referenced testing in the classrooms, and the forms and efficiency of accountability, are among those which receive attention.

As to the audience for whom the work is intended, the authors identify it as consisting of teachers, teachers in training, parents, researchers, policy-makers and others who want information about the effects of school and teachers on the student, and who want to know more about the research process and how it can be used to improve educational practice.

Quite a project; quite an audience. Perhaps the greatest merits of the book are its comprehensiveness in terms of issues dealt with, and its heavy reliance on research findings. But in addressing their work to virtually everybody, the authors appear to have been unmindful of their promise of "in-depth" exploration of important topics. There is understandably, though not excusably, somewhat of an absence of rigor and moment both in the framing and selecting of questions, on the one hand, and in the pursuing of them on the other. The fanfare and build-up which typically introduce controversial topics do not issue in sustained, well-worked out positions or arguments. It is doubtless the case that the authors had much more in mind than the marshalling of research findings in support of uncontroversial, commonsense observations, much more in mind than the citing of research in connection with areas of current controversy. But this extra something which they had in mind is left too much to the reader's imagination. In short, the methodology or rather the strategy of the work is not altogether convincing.

One would expect, for instance, that the boldly assertive, but undifferentiated title, *Teachers Make a Difference,* excellent as a title, would not only acquire tidiness or specificity of treatment, but that at least a telling argument of sorts would be made in its support. After all, to aver that teachers and schools do make a difference is not, *ipso facto,* terribly enlightening. Few would contest the claim minimally made by that assertion. But what concerned people want to know is what difference that difference makes, and in what regard or regards the difference exists. In other words, concern is over the significance of difference as well as areas of significant difference rather than over the mere fact of difference.

In this regard, not only is the introductory chapter blandly disappointing, but as the work progresses, the thesis of the book becomes lost in the haze of research citings. As an example of blandness, very early in this chapter, in answer to the question, Do schools make a difference? we read:

> Most would argue that schools make a difference in the broadest sense. Students enrolled in school do better than students not attending any school . . . School enrollment helps children to develop important skills that they usually do not develop naturalistically without special instruction . . . More importantly, however, it will be argued that because of important differences among schools, some have very little influence on learners while others have a much greater impact. (p. 2)

Further on we read:

> In addition to *suggesting* (italics mine) that teachers do make a difference, we would like to suggest how teachers make a difference . . . Unfortunately, research has not yet linked teacher behavior and student achievement in a direct associative way. Thus it is impossible to say that teaching behaviors x, y, and z are associated with distinct areas of student achievement. (p. 8)

One wonders after getting to the end of the work not only whether teachers do really make a difference, but in what respects they significantly do. One further difficulty ought to be mentioned. Crucial conceptual distinctions, for example those between education and instruction, are not made in the work and this failure often leads to perplexing results. But, for topical purposes, the book is quite useful, especially the chapters entitled "Criterion-Referenced Testing" and "Measuring Noncognitive Variables." While one may have difficulty with the authors' position that research "should precede and guide educational innovations," one would find their review pro and con of selected pieces of research quite helpful. For these reasons, if no other, the book is well worth consulting.

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John T. Guthrie (ed.). *Aspect of Reading Acquisition.* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976. Pp. 222. (Paper) $3.45.

This volume presents a series of eight papers originally read at the Fifth Annual Blumberg Symposium on Research in Early Childhood Education. Truly interdisciplinary in its intent, the compilation attempts to relate subject matter ranging from curriculum design to neuropathology and social psychology to issues surrounding reading acquisition. Although the symposium contributors made a little direct attempt to provide explicit implications for practice, a survey of practitioners present showed that they perceived the material applicable to their work.

To provide immediate evidence of the true interdisciplinary nature of the collection, Benson introduces the series with an article addressed solely to the problem of alexia. While by the author's own admission, "most of the really significant questions about the acquisition and operation of reading skills remain unanswered" (p. 32), he provides a readable, though technical treatise on three varieties of alexia. He carefully details the associations of the three varieties (primary, secondary and teriary) with physiological, and to some degree, pedagogical implications. Benson raises pertinent questions regarding the relationship between alexia and traditional clinical interpretations. Particularly pertinent to the interests of reading-language diagnosticians is the author's well-formulated discussion on "pseudoalexic" problems. This is followed by a brief but well-documented discussion of language processes in the absence of normal left hemisphere functioning.

Benson's contribution has particular relevance since so many existing programs emphasize perceptual motor skills development on the grounds that neurological impairment will be overcome. These programs have been implemented in the absence of research that has evaluated such a model directly. Such evaluation is Benson's chief contribution. However, he admits that he has only guidelines to offer rather than direct answers. This is so especially since his data are based on adult patients whose nervous systems have already gone through the developmental sequence. Direct extrapolations to problems of children who suffer neurological damage before the nervous system is "fully organized by experience" (p. 206) are questionable.

A research study "Young Children's Expectations for Reading" is reported by Doris R. Entwisle. The study, an attempt to determine the effects of children's and parents' expectations on reading, arithmetic and conduct, is cast in the framework of what the author calls "The