

the religious educator of the varied approaches of social science theory is noble, the result is a catalogue of theories each with some usefulness in themselves but unusable in the present context.

Second, Lee has an inordinate faith in the objectivity of social science. Apparently, he ignored recent theoretical literature in the social sciences which questions his basic premise, that a social science approach is value-free and completely objective. Indeed, by presenting a broad survey of social science theories and conflicting evidence, Lee implicitly recognizes that there is not *one* social science approach. Hence, Lee's juxtaposition of social scientific theories each with its own validity for the religious instructor without a clearly enunciated overarching approach, would produce more perplexed religious educators, not confident guides to a richer religious experience for the learner. Once again, while the intent of providing an introduction to social science theory is noble, one questions how the uninitiated beginner in the field of religious instruction, for whom this 766 page volume and two companion volumes are intended, will be able to sort out the best combination of social science theories and pedagogical tactics to put into practice what is, in the end, an excellent method to teach religion or any other subject.

This is a not a work that will be readily employed by the interested and devoted layperson (the Sunday School teacher and the religion teacher in the private or public school). It is too complex and too cumbersome to be readily employed by the non-specialist. The volume is *not* "for beginners in the field of religious instruction" (p. 750). Rather, it is a useful compendium of social scientific discussions of the content of instruction with a particular emphasis on Christian teaching. Selectively employed, even experienced teachers would learn much from *The Content of Religious Instruction*.

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Coombs, Philip. *The World Crisis in Education: The View from the Eighties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985, 353 pp., \$15.50 (paper).

Philip Coombs gazes into his global crystal ball and tells us he sees dark clouds — educational systems in crisis. All nations, developed or developing, have witnessed an accelerating growth of learning needs. For instance, more and more people have migrated into urban areas leaving behind old values and old lifestyles while searching for the fulfillment of their new-found dreams, i.e., abundance of consumer items and technological razzle dazzle. Especially in developing nations, schools have come to represent a transition house that destroys beliefs and traditions before access to the modern world is granted. In such a situation, education no longer plays the role of transmitting the best of a culture. The English (foreign) language, mathematics and natural sciences become bridges into an alien 20th century lifestyle, the passports to the new world, not the upholders of the old.

Notwithstanding education's pivotal role, educational funding is on the decline worldwide, especially in time of cost cutting and restraint.

Additional problems have also shown up:

- i) The economies of developed and developing nations are unable to employ the recent graduates their educational institutions produce;
- ii) access to higher education is still too often not based on student talent or aptitude but on students' financial and political connections;
- iii) despite costly educational ventures a vast number of the earth's population is still illiterate, and further increases in world illiteracy (to 683 million) are projected for 1990;
- iv) in many countries access to schooling is still gender based with girls coming out second best;
- v) serious regional and economic disparities do not allow equality of access to education worldwide.

To substantiate his observations, Coombs relies heavily upon statistics generated by UNESCO, even though he himself casts doubt upon their accuracy. Reporting procedures, especially in developing countries, are not

standardized while statistics from Iron Curtain countries are made public only if they reflect communist ideology. Nonetheless, the overall trends, he claims, are reflected through the statistics.

While the book takes a global view of education, it runs the risk of being too general; of absorbing too much breadth at the expense of depth and detail. A case in point is his discussion of moral education. Now, anyone who has done any reading at all on this topic would have to include the name of Lawrence Kohlberg as one of the main figures (if not the central figure) of the moral education movement in the 1970's. Yet Kohlberg is not mentioned; neither is the cognitive-developmental theory of moral growth. This omission strikes me as serious and makes me question just how closely Coombs has examined particular educational achievements. Also omitted is a reference to China. For a book which claims to take a wide perspective, this omission is notable.

My biggest regret is that *The World Crisis in Education* never lives up to its title. The word "crisis" usually refers to a state of affairs in which decisive change for better or worse is imminent; where one is at the brink of something extraordinary about to happen. Yet after the reader has dutifully digested generality after generality, one is left with the question: "Where is the crisis?" By the end of the book one concludes there has indeed never been a "crisis," only a host of persistent educational problems which, during the past ten or fifteen years, have not gone away. These are problems that are clearly not new. Nor is it the case that Coombs offers a new strategy for dealing with the problems; he makes virtually no substantive recommendations.

In summary, *The World Crisis in Education* is somewhat disappointing. Its interesting elements are outweighed by lengthy discussions of the obvious, while conveying little new information. The book could easily have been edited down to one-half or one-third of its size. Ironically, it is itself a symbol of one of education's ailments: voluminousness has been allowed to replace precision.

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