REVIEW

reviewed by Lewis A. Rhodes

William M. Cruickshank, James L. Paul, and John B. Hunkala. **MISFITS IN THE PUB-LIC SCHOOLS.** Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, N. Y., 1969. 213 pages. $6.00.

Why is this an important book for the communication technologist to read? The answer lies primarily in the analysis of issues presented, and the suggestions about what society must do to deal with them. Don't misunderstand; the roles that technology might play in meeting these new needs are not covered in this book. The paths to follow in developing these roles, however, should be a little clearer because of the understandings about the processes of human and institutional changes that a reader can take away.

It would be unfortunate if *Misfits in the Public Schools* becomes categorized as a book about special education, and its readership is limited primarily to those with interests in that field. The audience for this book should be the general educator and the practitioners of all the sub-systems (including the instructional technologist) that are tied to him.

The trio of authors, all recognized authorities in special education, communicate the frustrations and second-class-citizenship feelings of professionals dedicated to individual human development who must work within a larger system which tolerates, and often seeks to protect, "mediocrity and endless ineffectiveness". A reader in any of the other sub-systems of education could substitute the name of his field every time the words "Special Education" appear and be highly pleased with the relevance of this book to his concerns.

Cruickshank, Paul, and Junkala examine the road-blocks to effective education for the exceptional child and in so doing, deal with the problems of effective education for all. The system that can be truly responsive to the needs of the exceptional child has the capability to respond to the needs of *any* child. The solution to the problems of introducing innovation into schools is seen as the immediate task for all concerned educators.

This book therefore is one about *innovation*. It is an important one for the purveyor of innovative ideas to read because it deals with the human-related aspects of innovation, i.e., how innovation affects and involves people—their personalities, goals, and administrative styles. The book further explores the limiting effect of the current roles of the University and the Public School on this process, and suggests new cooperative procedures.

In the main, the writing style is clear. The authors do not hide their feelings and frustrations . . . *"Special education . . . is being sold down the river because of inadequate educational leadership, mediocrity, and willingness to compromise with even a minimum concept of excellence"* (page 8). They support this observations with numerous case studies and examples.

If one had to fault the writing style for anything, it might be for the writers' tendency to wander away from the subject of the chapter and include ideas which logically should be dealt with in one of the other chapters. This could well be attributed to the divided authorship of the book, but while it does fragment the continuity of ideas, those ideas are treated from a little different viewpoint each time they are repeated.

The authors use several techniques to assure a relevant understanding of the concepts they present. These include three-dimensional models and role analyses. In this latter case, the four categories of administrative style—Mr. Of the System, Mr. Against the System, Mr. Above the System, and Mr. Within the System—will provide a framework within which most readers will be able to find the faces of their friends, and probably also themselves.

Cruickshank, *et al.,* continually brings the reader back to the point that institutional change is a people-problem and it must be dealt with in that arena.

> "Fear, hostility, enthusiasm, and other feelings are crucial to the total enterprise of change. Concepts of social systems and processes of change may appear cold and impersonal and seem to obey certain logical patterns, but the substantive issues are as much those of feelings as of ideology. This kind of conceptualization applies directly to much of the discussion of mechanization as it affects human roles. The kinds of defenses often erected against hardware such as teaching machines, for example, while rarely stated directly, are certainly related to matters of pride, self worth, and importance of 'my job.'

If this is indeed the case, it should not be surprising that demonstrable evidence on the efficacy of certain hardware meets with something less than mass excitement and reception."

They warn against viewing innovation as means-related only, with the assumption that system goals cannot be changed, and caution against the confusion of process innovations with their concrete artifacts which frequently become regarded as the essence of a program.

Finally, *Misfits in the Public Schools* warrants reading because of its *timeliness*. It deals with ideas that are some of the major thrusts of new programs under consideration at federal education agencies, namely, "institutional renewal," the "linkage" of university-based research with operational development, and "cooperative" approaches. Several recent research reports (cf., *A Comparative Study of the Literature on the Dissemination and Utilization of Scientific Knowledge* in USOE Project No. 7-0028, and *The Linking Agency: A New Force in Educational Management,* a report on the Educational Systems for the Seventies project in USOE Project No. 8-0376) provide additional support for the validity of the approaches they advocate.

For the technologist, the challenge today is to create in society an awareness of the basic role that communication technology, in particular, must play in facilitating the above institutional and human processes. The authors suggest that it is basic that any innovation be understood in terms of its *consequences*. This may be difficult because of the stimulus-orientation of most viewers of technology which causes judgments to be made on the basis of what stimuli are carried rather that the effect they create in a recipient. The consequences of the appropriate use of communication technology to "link" human beings together in more broadly-based, effective systems, however, CAN BE the self-renewing institution of education oriented toward the common objective of individual human development. ☐

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