

Abbott, L and G Pugh. *Training to work in the early years: Developing the climbing frame*.  
Buchan: OUP. pp 189

The book arose as a result of the concern the authors felt that there was not as yet a coherent training strategy in Britain. Their book therefore set out to address some of the questions of training and development that critically affect the kind of training and professional development of adults who are to work with children as a necessary precursor to the implementation of a national strategy.

The editors, Lesley Abbott, Professor of Early Childhood education at Manchester Metropolitan University and Gillian Pugh, Chief Executive at the Thomas Coran Foundation for Children in London, are leading figures in the field of early childhood care. Their book is unusual in that it draws on the work of committees formally commissioned to investigate early childhood care in Britain as well as the opinions and experiences of students at various stages of their training. The contributors to the book are all acknowledged experts in Britain.

While it is true that the book very clearly directs itself to the situation in Britain, there are a number of issues that are addressed which are directly relevant to South Africa. This is particularly true at a time when the nature of pre-school education that should be offered in South Africa is being explored.

In her chapter, 'Changing minds, young people and society', Tricia David focuses on the high demands made on education at this level if educators at this level are to have the ability

to stand in a child's shoes, or to stand in a parent's shoes, and to examine the ecological niche within which the family is living; to try to make sense of expose the challenges and constraints – and the benefits – which impact on that child and that family in ways which may assist or prevent the child in the achievement of his or her human potential (p 25).

Her view has been strongly influenced by researchers such as Howard Gardner (1993), Bonner and Haste (1987), and Trevarthen (1992) who emphasise the capacity children have for learning in their early years.

The chapter by Thompson and Calder, 'Early years education: Skills, knowledge and understanding' is designed to provoke debate. In my view this chapter should form part of prescribed reading for educators at training institutions in South Africa since it offers an opportunity for reflexive and reflective of the most recent thinking on child development and what is required of people involved in pre-school education.

In the spirit of 'recognising our own values as we explore and question those of others', they offer a framework for the training for those who wish to work with young children in the appendix. Policy makers in South Africa should find this detailed framework particularly useful.

There are three other chapters I would like to highlight. Chapter 6 'The development of quality serving through competence-based qualifications' (O'Hagan, Griffin and Dench) offers a useful framework for integrating the various factors involved in providing good training. Chapter 7, on the other hand, explores assessment which becomes 'a shared process where the candidate gradually assumes ownership and control and her work practice develops and changes as a result'. Chapter 11 'A European Perspective on early years training offers a useful review of current scenarios in Europe. The final chapter offers a framework 'Training to work in the early years' which unites three key issues: the critical importance of early childhood education, the need to have highly skilled and trained people as the educators involved and the present inadequate training on offer.

The authors are uncompromising in their argument that early year teachers require a greater breadth of knowledge, understanding and experience than that required by teachers of older children. Their book is also a cautionary tale in that it focuses on the what is at stake 'the most remarkable features of the young and – its adventurousness, its generosity, and its resourcefulness, and its flashes of flexibility and creativity' (Gardner 1993: 111).

The book is thorough in its attempts to provide a complex view of the kind of national strategy that is necessary in Britain. In my view, it could make a major contribution to ensuring that training in future in South Africa will provide educators who can ensure that future school children are well equipped to meet the demands that will be made on them.

Morgan, Cohen and Glyn Moms. *Good Teaching and Learning: Pupils and Teachers Speak*. 1999. Buckingham, OUP.

This book represents a five year research project on Secondary school education with 'particular emphasis' on the definition of 'quality' in learning and teaching.

The research was based on individual interviews with 207 learners and 133 teachers in ten comprehensive schools in diverse educational contexts. In incorporating the views of pupils ('in their own voice'), the research represents a break with conventional research which has focused on the views of teachers and what constitutes learning and teacher effectiveness.

Researchers will welcome the detail the authors provide in respect of their underlying assumptions and research procedures as well as the thick description of the research experience.

Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 describe and compare perspectives on particular questions:

- why pupils learn more in some lessons (Chapter 2)
- why some teachers are better than others (pupil perspectives) (Chapter 3)
- the best, the worst lessons and where they learn the most (Chapter 4)
- why some pupils learn better than others (Chapter 5)

The pupils, the quality of the teaching and the level of interest in the subject taught are seen as the prime factors in the learning situation. Unfortunately, time constraints did not allow the researchers the opportunity to define the term 'interest' nor to allow the researchers to explore the responses by those interviewees who suggested that teacher action could ignite or develop interest where there was not a ready or a natural interest. It