BOOK REVIEWS

Flexible Learning in a Digital World: Experiences and Expectations, by Betty Collis and Jef Moonen. Published by Kogan Page Limited, London, UK, 2001 (231 pages).

Betty Collis and Jef Moonen, who were full professors in the Faculty of Educational Science and Technology, University of Twente, Netherlands, at the time of publication, led out in the TeleTOP initiative that involved an institutional change towards more flexible learning. Both brought to the project extensive experience in the field of technology as it is applied to education.

Changes in technology increasingly affect every area of life including that of education. Perhaps the greatest changes can be seen in higher education, where universities are rapidly embracing new and experimental modes of teaching and learning. Terminology such as "distributed, distance or flexible learning" and concepts such as "virtual universities" or "virtual libraries" invade the literature and the conversations of academics and students alike. Even university administrators seem to have caught the inspirational spirit linked to such ideas. Perhaps today's student demographics that include combinations of young students just out of high school, mature students with full-time jobs, part-time students with part-time jobs, etc., mean that higher education must become more flexible if it is to appeal to a wider constituency. Whatever the reason, many colleges and universities appear to be jumping headlong into the marketplace of on-line learning. It is therefore useful to read a serious and thought-provoking analysis of this phenomenon. Collis and Moonen masterfully tie educational practice and technological know-how together into a sound treatise of the subject.

This work is not for the faint-hearted or for those looking for easy answers. *Flexible Learning in a Digital World* is a review of the authors' experience in designing and implementing a flexible learning model for their department and their university. The Flexible Learning initiative involved changes in teaching, learning, and support of education through the use of technology. The overall focus centered on the pedagogical principle that authors term as the "U Approach." This approach to education identifies and seeks to foster two types of learning activities: the acquisition of knowledge and contribution to a learning community.

The authors define flexible learning "…in a broad way, with the key idea being *learner choice* in different aspects of the learning experience…Flexible learning is a movement away from a situation in which key decisions about learning dimensions are made in advance by the instructor or institution, towards a situation where the learner has a range of options from which to choose…" (pp. 9-10) Options fall into categories such as time, content, entry requirements, instructional approach, resources and delivery.

An explanation of the various components needed in a flexible learning model introduces the reader to theoretical and practical issues. Technology, as a tool is one aspect. Pedagogy, another aspect, underpins and supports. Implementation strategies are critical if the model is to be implemented on an institutional-wide basis. The final component of the flexible learning model is the Institution itself. Without institution-wide support for the initiative, little lasting progress will be forthcoming.

The process of change can be broken down into a three-step process: initiation, implementation, and institutionalization and is estimated to take approximately five years. An implementation model, called the 4-E Model, includes the following four factors: Effectiveness, Ease of use, personal Engagement, and Environment. According to Collis and Moonen, this model predicts an individual's likelihood to believe and participate in a new flexible learning initiative. In order for change to take hold, the 4-E Model must be considered through every stage of implementation. On pages 2-3, the authors provide a list of 18 lessons learned throughout their own implementation process at the University of Twente. They address this list one by one throughout the book. Anyone thinking about initiating a flexible learning approach within his own institution would do well to carefully examine this list of common problem areas.

Perhaps the most practical side of this work is the way in which it addresses the problems and pitfalls related to faculty, student, and administrative acceptance of a flexible learning initiative. The point is made that although there are many studies that look at the implementation phase of a technological education initiative, most come down to the issue of "Will they use it?" (p. 52). The book devotes a great deal of time and pages to this issue and offers valuable insights into the factors that will make a professor, student, or administrator either support or reject the project.

Finally, the book gives a summary of the actual TeleTOP initiative at Twente University and analyzes its strengths and weaknesses. Although a bit detailed in parts, it serves as a good example of how one institution was able to make the shift from traditional to flexible learning.

The authors include a great deal of educational theory and technological information. It is sometimes hard to see through all the details. There are, however, useful models and examples that would undoubtedly help anyone who is trying to implement a new learning modality that includes technology.

Annette D. Melgosa, MA
Associate Librarian
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

The Principal as Curriculum Leader, by Allan A. Glatthorn, 2nd ed. Published by Corwin Press: USA, 2002 (163 pages)

Allan A. Glatthorn is a Research Professor at East Carolina University, North Carolina. Member of the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education, he served for 26 years as classroom teacher, district supervisor, and high school principal.

Glatthorn has written more than 20 books on supervision and curriculum. He has consulted with more than 200 school districts, assisting them in developing and implementing their curricula.

As is summarized in its preface, this book is written especially for school principals and is derived from several tested beliefs. There is no single right way to develop curriculum. What is offered here are useful guidelines, tested in practice, not rigid prescriptions.

The book is made up of five important sections.

1. Section one explains what it means to be a curriculum leader, it examines the four levels of curriculum work and analyzes the nature and importance of the principal's role.

2. Section two explains how the principal can shape the state and the district curricula.

3. Section three outlines how the school can develop its own curriculum vision and goals.

4. Section four talks about how a principal can work with teachers in making the classroom curriculum operational and meaningful.

5. The last section summarizes how the principal can fit all these separate activities into an integrated process.

In all these different sections the book shows that the principal must emphasize integrated academic and career education by training students in career-specific skill (not simply generic skills) so that they can gain employment after graduation. He must also think about a curriculum quality.

By shaping State and District curricula, the author says that the principal needs to be informed about what new initiatives are being developed at the state and district levels. They have to influence state policy making in a proactive

fashion and participate in the evaluation of instructional materials developed by the state department of education.

The author says that the best way for the school to develop its own curriculum vision and goals is for the faculty to answer this question: "What features should make the curriculum of our school unique?"

For all educators and curriculum leaders, Chapter 6 is very significant. Using the example of the shared dream of the educators of the Washington City School System, it illustrates how to develop the school's vision of a quality curriculum by showing aspects of vision, identifying the educational goals, and creating a curriculum of excellence.

From page 71 up to page 74, the author explains how the principal and the faculty can work toward a schedule. He shows what they can do together and what teachers with principal leadership can accomplish on their own. The principal can work with teachers to help them allocate time within a particular subject so that it reflects priorities in that subject. One of the best ways to do that is for teachers to develop yearly schedules that the principal can review. Chapter 12 further explains this process.

In conclusion, the author shows that the preceding chapters have taken an analytical approach to curriculum leadership, examining the separate functions that should be accomplished. This last section summarizes by suggesting how the principal can fit all these separate activities into an integrated process, by "working closely with district leadership, setting up the organizational structures, using them for leadership, making curriculum improvement part of an overall plan, and developing specific plans and managing time."

The Principal as Curriculum Leader comprises a very interesting contribution for designing a classroom curriculum. It offers guidelines which, if properly followed, would enhance the great job of educators, principals, and school leaders who are curriculum planners. As it is said, there is no single best way to develop curriculum. The most important thing for us as teachers and principals is to be creative and conscientious professionals who want the very best for the children and youth we teach.

Joyce Musabe Ngamije
MA in Religious Education, School of Graduate Studies
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments That Work*,* by C. Carney Strange and James H. Banning. Published by Jossey-Bass, Inc., San Francisco, California, 2001 (251 pages).

In *Educating by Design,* authors Carney and Strange present a fresh approach to the design of environments of learning specifically at the university level. Theirs is not a book detailing how to go about planning institutions of learning nor programs of instruction, but rather one that seeks to develop a philosophical basis or rationale for doing what is to be done in the process. For example, in Chapter One (Physical Environments), the authors explain and illustrate the relationship between specific campus or building design features and the educational philosophy of the institution — not necessarily the verbalized philosophy (if one exists) but rather the enacted philosophy. Their momograph is divided into two major sections — "types and impacts of campus environments," and "creating environments that foster educational success."

Part One of the book is comprised of four chapters dealing with "the principal dynamics of human environments as a function of their physical features, the aggregate characteristics of their inhabitants, their organizational designs, and the perceptions or constructions of those who participate in them" (p. 107). These first four chapters tend to emphasize the physical aspects of the design of educational institutions, while Part Two tends to focus more on organizational characteristics within the physical environment. The emphasis in Part One is on "environmental correlates [as] determinants of human behavior" (p. 2). They summarize the relationship thus:

> Colleges and universities establish conditions to attract, satisfy, and retain students for purposes of challenging them to develop qualities of the educated person, including a capacity for complex critical reasoning, communication, leadership, a sense of identity and purpose, an appreciation for differences, and a commitment to lifelong learning. (p. 2)

In these chapters, Carney and Strange lead the reader to a deeper appreciation of the significance of the influence of campus and building design characteristics on learning outcomes. Indeed, one is led to query if in terms of educational impact upon students, this part of the "hidden curriculum" (now exposed) may actually be equally or more influential than the planned curriculum which traditionally has had its base in the field of psychology (see p. 199).

Part Two of *Educating by Design* focuses on "creating environments that foster educational success" — "on conditions thought to be seminal to the success of environments committed to educational purposes" (p. 107). According to the writers, learning involves risk taking. Learning "entails engagement with new experiences and opportunities that challenge an individual's current ways of viewing understanding, and responding to the world" (p. 107). One of the desired outcomes of the educational process is the replacement of old ways of thinking, of interacting with people, of problem solving, with new and better ways.

Prerequisite on the part of the student, therefore, is a willingness to let go of the old ways before new ones can be acquired and refined. This requires a willingness to take a risk, at least from the student's perspective: "What if the new ways don't work? What will I have lost?" This reality underscores the importance of educational institutions being a safe and supportive environment where such risk taking is encouraged. The authors identify this as the first of a three-tiered "hierarchy of learning environment purposes" (p. 109).

This hierarchy of learning environment purposes has been conceptualized similar to the hierarchy of human needs developed by Abraham Maslow (1968). Each level in the structure must be satisfied to a reasonable degree at least, before advancement to the next higher level can be anticipated. The three levels of the Carney and Strange hierarchy (environmental safety and inclusion, structures for involvement, and conditions of community) comprise the philosophical background and the organizational framework of chapters five to seven.

Chapter Seven begins with the following insightful paragraph:

We have suggested in previous chapters that environments that offer inclusion and safety, and involve participants in significant and meaningful roles, fulfill two primary conditions for promoting learning, growth, and development: a sense of belonging and security and a mechanism for active engagement. We also suggested that if the learning potential of any environment is to be realized, a third and more complete condition is proposed: the experience of full membership in the learning setting. This last condition is present most powerfully in an environment that is characterized by the dimensions of community. (p. 159)

Throughout its pages, the book examines an extensive base of contemporary research which supports its conceptualizations. Chapter Eight considers the virtual community of the world wide web, which is a growing extension of the learning environment of the university. "Regardless of any specific contributions it can make to the instructional goals of higher education, (its) ultimate function . . . is to bring people together." (Weinreich, 1997; cited p. 184) The book concludes with Chapter Nine, a call for campus assessment and action (p. 199).

Educating by Design is an insightful approach to "creating campus learning environments that work." Viewing the learning environment as a composite of both the physical structures that house the learning enterprize and the organizational structures within it, the authors have produced a volume that is a "must read" for all educators who are genuinely concerned with the learning outcomes of their students.

David R Streifling, PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Studies
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies