

Helping the intellectually impaired

Book review

Steenkamp, E & Steenkamp W (1992) **The intellectually handicapped child: A manual for parents, teachers and related professions**. Durban: Butterworths.

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The intellectually handicapped child is the second edition of this book, whose first edition was titled **The mentally handicapped child**. The change in title is briefly commented on in the introduction, where the authors point out that "intellectually" handicapped is a more specific term, and therefore more appropriate to the group of children they are writing about. This is indeed a welcome change, especially for consumer groups, who are very conscious of the stigma attached to the word "mental". Although the authors also refer to the term "impaired" rather than "handicapped", they prefer not to use this terminology. This is unfortunate, since it is the internationally accepted terminology also accepted by "Disabled People South Africa (DPSA)".

The authors recognize the wider audience their book has found by changing the subtitle to encompass consumers and related professions, and the book will be useful for all people who work with moderately impaired children. It deals specifically with the task of the teacher in a special school, but the information can clearly also be very useful to parents, since self-care skills and the broad development of the child is discussed in some detail.

Although the text sometimes has an *ad hoc* feel about it, for example in the list called "hints for discipline", the content is systematically set out, well explained, with adequate examples. After a few introductory chapters which set the scene, the main section of the book is organized around the developmental objectives set for all children. For each objective the aims and methods are described according to three age groups. At the end of each chapter, specimen lessons and simple evaluation instruments to assess the development of the child, are given.

The trend of mainstreaming is not discussed at all, and it may very well be that by the next edition this omission will have caught up with the authors. If this strong trend from the developing countries finds root here, Steenkamp and Steenkamp may find that teachers in mainstreaming schools will form a large portion of their readers.

A stronger consumer focus might also have been forthcoming. For instance, the right of parents to know that their child is developmentally vulnerable, is not strongly

advocated in the section on the role of the physician. Since the early stimulation of the child is dependent on such knowledge in the parents, negligence on the part of the physician has serious implications for the future of the child.

Nevertheless, I am sure that the authors will keep their significant following with this attractive new edition.

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