Jellesma, F.C.

Published in:
Education Review

Citation for published version (APA):


Collective consciousness refers to unintended, cognitive resonances between people. In The Living Classroom, Bache argues that collective consciousness within a classroom creates a learning field. In a learning field, the memories and cognitions of students and the teacher can become accessible to the other people in the classroom and therefore affect the learning climate. Bache assumes this happens because of mind-to-mind communication on a spiritual level (i.e., telepathy). For example, a teacher who talks about child-naming uses an example in which he refers to a name that was always desired by one of the students in the classroom. The teacher is thought to have "picked up" this information from the collective consciousness in the classroom. Thus, teachers and students would communicate not only on the conscious, verbal level, but also share information on a more unconscious, invisible level of spirituality.

The book is written in an entertaining, interesting way. Bache uses many examples of experiences that he feels illustrate collective consciousness in the classroom. He is a university teacher himself and feels that he frequently experiences examples of what could be explained by collective consciousness and that these experiences cannot be explained by coincidence. The examples are, nevertheless, highly subjective and I was curious about empirical evidence that would validate or invalidate the rather philosophical theory described by Bache.
Bache devotes one chapter to the discussion of empirical evidence of collective consciousness. This chapter, however, did not convince me of the right- or wrongness of the theory. One problem with parapsychological studies is that they are often written as well as reviewed and cited by “believers.” This may cause blindness for alternative interpretations of the findings, and experiments might even suffer from the unconscious influence of the experimenter. It has been argued that skeptics and proponents should collaborate in research in order to achieve more objective results (Schlitz, Wiseman, Watt, & Radin, 2006). What I found missing in Bache's discussion of the scientific literature on collective consciousness were alternative explanations, such as the influence of non-verbal communication, shared goals and desires by students in the classroom, and shared experiences. In addition, ideas about how the theories could be further tested, would perhaps have been more stimulating for the scientific readership in carrying out research on this topic.

Therefore, I have to conclude that as a philosophical/religious text, The Living Classroom is exciting to read. For those who want to read the book as a scientific text, however, disappointment is likely.

References


Reviewed by Francine C. Jellesma, University of Amsterdam


Road to Reading: A Program for Preventing and Remediating Reading Difficulties by Blachman and Tangel offers support for early elementary reading programs. Designed for teachers of first through third grades with the possibility of addressing the remedial needs of older elementary grades, Road to Reading is a structured approach for small group and individual reading instruction to develop fluency by identifying letter sounds and high frequency words. Blachman and Tangel present six color-coded levels that progress through the same five steps: sound-symbol correspondences, decoding skills, phonetically regular words (PRWs) and high frequency words (HFWs), oral reading in context, and dictation. The teacher’s manual includes detailed appendices as well as a CD-ROM with an extensive array of reproducible forms and teaching materials.

Blachman, Ball, Black, and Tangel's Road to the Code: A Phonological Awareness Program for Young Children (2000) sets the stage for Road to Reading. In this new book, Blachman and Tangel assert that “explicit, systematic, research-based instruction to help students understand the alphabetic principle” leads to “accurate and fluent word identification” (p. 1). The authors contend that “word recognition skills provide the essential foundation and support for good reading comprehension” (p. 1). The instructional elements of the program outlined in this manual align with the findings of the National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). In the introduction, the authors freely concede that Road to Reading "is not a complete classroom program" (p. 2) as it lacks clear vocabulary and comprehension instruction.

On the whole, the manual is teacher-friendly. Color-coded tabs allow for quick access to the sequenced levels. These levels, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, accurately reflect the increasing syllabic complexity of the focus words (PRWs and HFWs). From closed syllables, final “e” syllables, open syllables, vowel team syllables, vowel + r syllables, and consonant + le syllables, the students navigate both regular and irregular sound-symbol correspondences. The section for each level opens with goals