The greatest limitation of *The Design of Education* (2nd ed.) is its tendency to be too general. It could not be used as a "how to" guide or a reference manual for program design, development, or evaluation. What it does instead, as mentioned above, is provide, throughout the text, reference sources for various topics under discussion. For example, he makes only a passing mention of "needs assessment" (it is not even in the glossary!) although he does make reference to a book that covers it in depth.

To some extent, the book is not very "reader friendly," as the reader must always refer back to the descriptions of the 11 categories or to the glossary (presented in two forms: (a) As a summary of the book using key terms in context; and (b) as an alphabetical listing and explanation of terms) for the definitions he has assigned to certain commonly used words such as "episode," "act," and "situation." Other drawbacks of the book are that: (a) It tends to be somewhat disjointed, with key points of information on a topic dispersed throughout the text; (b) its chapter devoted to case studies, used expressly for the purpose of description and analysis, is a bit short on analysis; and (c) many of the cases and examples are dated.

On the other hand, assuming one is familiar with the principles of program planning and evaluation and has read other texts or articles on the subject, it is a good book to add to one's program planning collection due to its unique adult learning perspective and the fact that, despite its lack of detail, it is quite comprehensive. Questions which arose while reading the book were answered (or you would know what to read to find the answer). For this reason, it is recommended that the book be read in its entirety.

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ASSESSING NEEDS IN CONTINUING EDUCATION: AN ESSENTIAL TOOL FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Donna S. Queeney (1995). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This book is about the practicalities of conducting needs assessments that effectively inform program planning decisions. Beginning with the premise that "whatever our purpose, needs assessment can help us achieve it by providing information that enables us to offer programs that meet our definition of success" (p. xi), Queeney deftly sidesteps much of the theoretical ambiguity and ideological controversy surrounding the concept of need. These issues are not avoided entirely, and, in particular, the final chapter includes consideration of ethical and political dimensions of assessment; however, by concentrating on the pragmatics of assessment, Queeney, perhaps inevitably, oversimplifies the concept of need and overstates the power of needs assessment. To illustrate, in the final chapter,

Queeney sums up her thesis on the benefits of assessment by noting that it can enable continuing educators to develop and deliver programs "that will serve individual learners, employers, and society while also meeting the continuing educator's own organizational goals" (p. 247). The implication that common aims and comparable benefit will emerge from assessment, even if carefully conceived and constructed, seems improbable in light of Cervero and Wilson's (1994) analysis of program planning as the ongoing, complex negotiation of multiple, often discordant, interests and competing power relationships.

There is much to commend this book. Intended primarily for continuing educators and trainers who have experience in planning and delivering educational programs but little or no grounding in needs assessment, this handbook makes it evident that assessment involves much more than technical know-how. In fact, of the ten chapters that comprise this book, only three are devoted to describing needs assessment methods. Queeney's emphasis is on assisting program planners to identify, and make informed judgments about, a myriad of factors that affect assessment planning, implementation, and utilization. Underlying this discussion is the notion that even the most basic approaches, if thoughtfully considered, can provide planners with useful information.

Queeney devotes Chapter 1 to needs and needs assessment. Needs, not to be confused with wants or demands, are discrepancies between actual conditions and desired standards. Needs assessment is a decision-making tool for identifying educational activities that will best meet educational needs. Queeney's emphasis is on educational needs; however, operational needs, often mentioned are no less important to the success of market driven programming than educational needs.

In Chapters 2, 3, and 4, Queeney moves from considering the broad parameters of assessment and determining what to assess to deciding how to conduct the assessment. There is no simple formula for designing a needs assessment; however, Queeney's broad yet lucid presentation, highlighting key assessment decisions and the common sense logic that generally informs them, will bolster the confidence of needs assessment neophytes.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 describe a range of specific assessment methods. An overview of each method is provided, including advantages, limitations, and suggestions for appropriate implementation. Chapter 5, somewhat mistitled as "Methods for Beginners," describes several less formal, but exceedingly useful, approaches that are well known to program planners accustomed to assessing needs. For example, triangulation of data from a variety of simple approaches is a common needs assessment strategy. In the hands of continuing educators with extensive practical knowledge, the benefits from this strategy may often outweigh those derived from more complex, resource intensive methods.

Queeney discusses two additional approaches to assessment that generally require significant resources and specialized skills for successful implementation: (a) survey methods (Chapter 6) and (b) methods for assessing performance (Chapter

7). The overview of survey methods is comprehensive and detailed. The unmistakable message is that surveys require skillful, detailed planning. Queeney's discussion of performance assessment will be of particular interest to continuing professional educators. Balancing her enthusiasm for assessing needs Queeney provides an overview of methods that include reviewing performance products, performance observation, performance simulations, and assessment centres.

In the final chapters of the book (8 to 10), Queeney connects needs assessment to the program planning process and the realities of planning within an organizational context. Chapter 8 discusses assessment as a first step in program design and chapter 9 examines the role that evaluation can play in assessing program effectiveness in meeting identified needs and in informing future programming. In the final chapter, Queeney turns to a discussion of political and ethical considerations in assessment. Queeney is cognizant of the potential conflict between person-serving needs and institution- and power-serving needs, or both; however, consistent with what Torres (1996) refers to as a mainstream, clinical model of adult education, Queeney stresses the integrative possibilities of needs assessment.

Assessing Needs in Continuing Education is an excellent resource for program planners and students of planning who want a practical, comprehensive, and understandable introduction to the topic. Unlike some planners who equate needs assessment with survey methods (Goody and Kozoll, 1995), Queeney provides a service to continuing education by recognizing that effective assessment can incorporate a range of methods and data sources. This book will encourage planners who do needs assessment to become more systematic and resolute in their efforts.

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