

BOOK REVIEW

Glenn Doman, Teach Your Baby to Read, Published by Jonathan Cape (1963, pp. 158)

One striking factor about Doman's book is the number of reprints since its publication in 1963. The author, a graduate of Physical Therapy, shares his experiences with brain-injured children at the Philadelphia Rehabilitation Centre where hundreds of handicapped children have achieved normal lives.

Working with a team of specialists in the fields of education and medicine, he discovered that children whose brains had been damaged at birth could be taught how to read, a factor which made them to reason out that normal children could achieve more and at far younger ages than the handicapped who achieved reading at the age less than four years.

In the book, Doman suggests that neurological organization is stimulated and increased in very small children through teaching them how to read. This is true because reading is a cognitive process through which the child is given opportunity to acquire information about his surrounding. As they learn to read children also learn language, which is the vehicle for expressing their ideas and thoughts. He continues to argue that there is no case where early reading has been a disadvantage to the child. On the contrary, superior students have been taught how to read at very early ages.

How early should a child begin reading?

Doman reports instances where children have achieved reading by the age of three, meaning that they have had access to reading at much earlier ages: fourteen months onwards. One of the main arguments put forward by the author as to why reading should be taught at such young ages is that children do want to read. They are curious and eager to learn, especially between the ages of $1\frac{1}{2}$ years to 4 years, so that depriving them of the opportunity to learn is tantamount to limiting their experiences, a necessary component for the process of learning to survive.

Another reason advanced by the author is that children have the ability to read. Their cognitive set allows them to master words,

sentences, etc. As such there is no reason why they should not be allowed to read. Another factor mentioned by the author is that children learn how to read anyway before they even enter kindergarten when for instance, they look at pictures or watch T.V. shows. So it is better to provide them with organized reading.

Lastly, Doman argues that teaching very young children to read not only quenches their thirst for knowledge as indicated by their hyperactivity but also is accompanied with their ability to take in and store information. Such ability will never be equalled again in their lifetime. Moreover, they get opportunity to strengthen, add and utilize more linguistic repertoire, a facility man needs for his social livelihood, since man can have no more sophisticated thought than he has language (vocabulary, expression) to express it.

Doman does not forget to share his methodological experiences which initially require no more than paper and pen (stiff paper and felt pen). The child is taught visual differentiation of individual words beginning with known and moving on to the unknown while taking the child at his own speed. The alphabet is not taught till the child is able to read.

While the setting of the book is essentially on the American population, which is at a higher level of economic development with a much higher level of literacy skills, the ideas portrayed by the author are worthwhile considering for application in Tanzania. Reading is a mentally healthy process which needs to be encouraged at all levels of the Tanzanian population. It is a source of education. When the reading material is well selected for purposes of our readership. Young children need to be initiated into the process so that they make it a habit in their life.

However, there is need to place reading in a theoretical framework which is meaningful to Tanzanians. Individualism and competitive practices would be the resulting process if Doman's approach were to be practiced in the Tanzanian context without an effort to translate it, that is, the family being the basic, dominant trainer in the programme. On the other hand, in Tanzania, where we do not have the necessary economic facilities and the educational background, it is much more feasible to think in terms of providing such skills to young children collectively for the purpose of harnessing the limited resources for

popular use. Day-care centres or playgroups can institute a reading programme which could multiply to other centres. This is possible since at the initial stage the method suggested does not require expensive tools. As soon as the child begins to read books, it is necessary to keep up the motivation that will have been hopefully advanced.

Essentially, the book is of great importance to Tanzanians for the development of man since it is based on thorough knowledge of how the brain works and develops. As such, it requires studying and developing programmes suited for Tanzanian ideology and practice so that the individual talents are developed within the context of the whole society. Among others, components should include the motivation of adult readers, able parents to begin the programme with their own children together with their neighbours' collectively; developing children's reading materials and programmes, setting such materials in the Tanzanian context for uplifting abilities in a variety of areas. The radio and other forms of mass media should be used to cultivate and promote such needs and programmes.

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Jette Bukh The Village Woman in Ghana, Centre for Development Research Publications 1, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala 1979, pp. 118.

Jette Bukh's monograph offers a very comprehensive, well-documented picture of the social contradictions facing village women in Ghana. It represents an important contribution in the field of African women's studies.

The monograph is not a theoretical study, however, Bukh rightfully felt it necessary to set a theoretical point of departure. The point of departure is identified as "the transformation process in a peasant society" resulting in "a new social division of labour, new patterns of exploitation and oppression, new elements of class contradictions, and in particular an increased subordination of women". (p. 13)

In Chapter Two Bukh concretized the transformation process in terms of historical structural changes which had taken place in the village economy. The village under study was situated in Ghana's cocoa growing