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What Band Wagon Next?

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Editorial Comment

WHAT BAND WAGON NEXT?

Some educators have a way of flitting from one panacea to another. Any theory designed to explain reading disability which is reported to be new seems to be accepted without question. These teachers do not wait for data resulting from well-designed and well-controlled research. In 1947 Strauss and Lehtinen contributed much to the understanding of the brain injured child. Doman and Delacato in their diagnosis of reading disability have stressed the importance of neurological organization, and Money and Kephart have emphasized perceptual difficulties. Various forms of treatment have been suggested and apparently have been used successfully by these therapists *with some children*. Teachers are saying that if a little training of a sort is good, more is better. There is no proof of this assumption. Many teachers without a systematic and careful study of the child are prescribing "patterning" for all children with or without reading disabilities. Perhaps they believe that they can "change human potential . . . and the very nature of man."

Some individuals are actually attempting to improve "neurological organization" of their children by having them spend hours on the floor crawling and creeping. Parents comment, "What a strange way to teach reading." First and second grade children are given visual "perceptual training" varying in form from "patterning" to "eye exercises." These teachers have become "experts" in the diagnosis and treatment of "perceptual difficulty." Such approaches have been attempted without a fundamental background in the basic sciences, in physiology, and in psychology.

For some time it has been disconcerting for psychologists and physicians to stand by and observe inadequately trained educators practice their expertise in the diagnosis and treatment of reading problems. Protestations are now being heard. Freeman of Temple University Medical School questions the claims of Doman and Delacato. Robbins of the University of Toronto shows that the reading skills of a group of children in the second grade had no relationship to their ability to crawl and creep.

In the professional world educators must guard their image and, like cobblers, stick to their last. They must separate the wheat from the chaff. They must show a scientific attitude and question all claims until they have been proven beyond reasonable doubt. They cannot afford to be naive and gullible for their colleagues in other disciplines are asking, "What band wagon next?"

Homer L. J. Carter
Editor