


BRIEFLY NOTED

 **The Skillful Teacher** by Stephen D. Brookfield. Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, California 94104 (\$21.95).

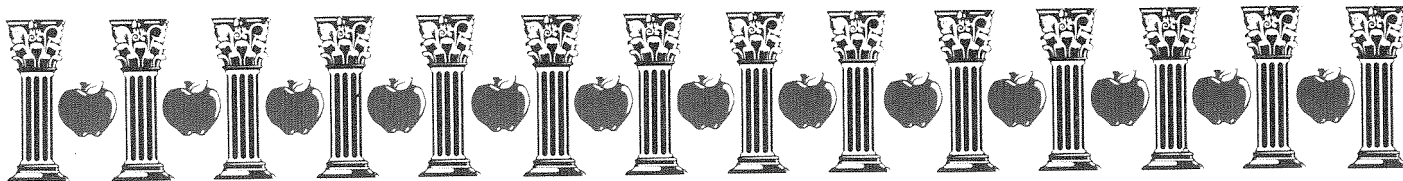
Happily, this is not a step-by-step, how-to kind of a book. In the opening paragraph of Chapter One, the author admits that the "messiness" of the classroom precludes that sort of discussion about teaching. This point provides some comfort to those who

are highly suspicious of pedagogical dogma, and gives a clue to Brookfield's own philosophy that teaching is a creative enterprise. This impression is verified by considering his list of references, which include mostly philosophical and practical articles, and very few behavioral/statistical ones.

Not surprisingly, the author touches the usual bases with chapters such as "Lecturing Creatively," "Preparing for Discussion" and "Giving Helpful Evaluations." But he goes much further by discussing the need to understand the subjective aspects of the classroom. The ability to adjust one's teaching to the students' learning rhythm, and to understand the

tensions and emotions of learning are, in Brookfield's opinion, attributes which reap dividends for the skillful teacher.

The final chapter briefly discusses some dozen-and-a-half "truths" about skillful teaching, my favorites of which are "Be Wary of Standardized Models and Approaches," "Take Risks," "Don't Evaluate Only by Students' Satisfaction," and "Attend to How Students Experience Learning." Then, as if to reiterate his philosophy, the author begins his closing statement by saying, "Don't trust what you've just read. What for me are truths of skillful teaching may, for you, be partially or entirely inappropriate." ●



REACHING THROUGH TEACHING

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address to the faculty last fall, Dr. Levine opened with a comparison of the present academic situation to that of the similar situation in 1827. Part of this comparison involved the political climate and the respective circumstances of two controversial vice presidents. A popular president (Andrew Jackson) was followed by his vice president (Martin Van Buren), who in the midst of a recession dumped his vice president, a man who had a spotty war record and was in trouble with women. This obvious analogy to Vice President Quayle was received with general hilarity. But a later quick look in encyclopedias reveals that the vice president in question (Richard Mentor Johnson, a rough-and-ready frontiersman) was the last vice president to be elected by Congress, was controversial in war because it was not clear whether he had indeed killed Tecumseh in the War of 1812 (Congress voted him a war hero), and had trouble with women because he had a public interracial liaison. Not quite the same circumstances.

Editor's Note: All materials reviewed in this publication are available from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, Room 472-473 in the Library.