Reviews

Research Methods in Education (5th Edition). By Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison. Pp. 446. London: Routledge Falmer. 2000. £17.99. ISBN 0-415-19541-1.

Even a cursory glance through this book will give some indication of the ways in which this successful research handbook has been rewritten and significantly improved. For example, it is immediately obvious that the design and typeface are both much more user-friendly than in previous editions, and allow the reader to navigate the chapters with ease (particularly important in a book which many people will want to dip into rather than read from cover to cover). The design has also been affected by the authors’ decision to reduce the number of examples of specific research projects (these were presented in discrete boxes, separate from the text in the fourth edition). Although there are obviously some disadvantages to this decision, particularly for research students who may not be aware of a great number of specific studies across a wide range of research methods, it does allow the text to run more freely and provides room for additional methodological issues to be discussed.

The structure of the book has also been comprehensively revised and material is presented in a more systematic manner, recognising the different stages of a research project. Part 1 (‘The Context of Educational Research’) addresses the various epistemologies of educational research. This is then followed by ‘Planning Educational Research’ in Part 2 which draws together chapters on ethics, sampling and validity with a completely new section on the practical issues of planning and managing a research project.

The emphasis on issues common to many research projects in the first two parts of the book is certainly a strength, particularly the relocation of the ethics chapter from the back of the book to the front. Research epistemologies, planning and managing the research process and the ethical implications of research are all issues to which it is important to give due consideration at the beginning of any project, whether by first-time or seasoned researcher; their inclusion, together, early on in the book emphasises this. The only disadvantage of structuring material in this way is that it does, on occasion, lead to some rather repetitious sections as particular issues are addressed from a number of different standpoints. For example, different conceptualisations of validity and reliability are presented from the perspective of six different research strategies. I wondered whether, instead, a summary of common themes and significant differences would enhance the interest and ‘readability’ of this section.

The ‘Nature of Enquiry’ section provides a useful introduction to the different epistemologies which underpin educational research. It has been strengthened in this edition by the inclusion of both critical theory and feminist research methods. However, some recognition of the ways in which many methodological issues originally espoused by feminist researchers have gained wide acceptance across many areas of educational research would be useful, as well as a means of underlining the often complex influences between different methodologies. Similarly, the omission of any reference to post-modernism and its impact on research methodology seems an oversight.

Part 3 is devoted to ‘Styles of Educational Research’. A discussion of naturalistic and ethnographic research has been added in this edition to other styles addressed in previous editions such as historical research, surveys, case studies, experiments...
and action research. More specific ‘Strategies for Data Collection and Researching’ are discussed in Part 4. Here again, material from the fourth edition has been strengthened with the inclusion of discrete sections on the use of questionnaires, observations and the construction and use of tests. In both parts, a wide range of material is covered with much practical advice and substantial lists of further reading are available for those who want to follow up any one particular ‘style’ or ‘strategy’. Although the distinction between a style and a strategy seems a useful one, it is likely that some of Cohen et al.’s categorisation will be disputed. For example, whether a ‘case study’ is a style or strategy has long been a source of debate within the research methods literature. Perhaps the disputed nature of such categorisation deserves more attention, along with the debate as to whether particular research epistemologies and ‘styles’ logically entail particular ‘strategies’.

As mentioned above, Part 4 includes a new section on statistical tests. This may seem a rather ambitious topic for the mere twenty pages devoted to it, but the authors acknowledge that they can give ‘no more than a brief outline of a small number of key issues to do with tests and testing’ (p. 317). Instead of replicating introductory statistics textbooks, they concentrate on defining basic terms (e.g. parametric and non-parametric tests; the differences between norm-, criterion- and domain-referenced tests) and providing some practical advice for researchers constructing their own tests. As with much of the book, this section will be of particular benefit to those with little statistical knowledge and provides plenty of references for beginning researchers who decide to use statistical tests in their own research. It also provides a useful introduction to the more complex statistical tests discussed in the ‘Multi-Dimensional Measurement’ chapter although, rather strangely, the two chapters are separated by one on ‘personal constructs’ – a chapter which is likely to be informed by a substantially different research ‘style’.

Finally, the authors discuss a number of ‘Recent Developments in Educational Research’ in Part 5. Most of these are related to the increase in the use of new technology and include the Internet, simulations, fuzzy logic and geographical information systems. Although interesting, it seemed to me that examples of such specific applications would be better located within a wider discussion about the role of new technology at various stages of the research process as, for example, a means of recruiting respondents and generating data, as well as accessing data archives. Nevertheless, these relatively minor shortcomings do not detract from what is a very comprehensive and readable reference book for all those engaged in educational research as well as those who wish to find out more about it.

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RACHEL BROOKS

*Researching School Experience: Ethnographic Studies of Teaching and Learning.* Edited by Martyn Hammersley. Pp. Vii + 214. Index. London: Falmer. 1999. £16.99 (pbk). ISBN 0 7507 0914 6 (pbk). 0 7507 0915 4 (hbk).

*Researching School Experience* is a collection of essays in honour of Peter Woods on the occasion of his retirement. Peter Woods has been an influential figure in the application of interactionist ethnography in the pursuit of educational research. In honouring his contribution to the field, the volume gives a real sense of the ethnographic tradition and the ways in which it has been pursued over the last thirty years in British educational work. Ethnographic methods and interactionist perspectives have been enduring elements of educational research, as well as
becoming increasingly influential in other fields. This book provides excellent examples of the kind of work that this approach has generated.

The collection brings together a set of scholars who have all made a major contribution to the study of education and schools, by utilising interactionist perspectives and ethnographic methods. The overarching themes of the volume are the processes of teaching and learning in educational settings, although these are considered in broad terms. The authors (many of whom have worked with Peter Woods over the years) share material from projects covering a range of settings (from the primary school to teacher education), and explore a variety of educational experiences and perspectives. All of the chapters highlight the processual character of education and the ways in which teaching and learning are understood, and made sense of, by social actors.

The volume has contributions from Stephen Ball and Bethan Marshall, Jennifer Nias, Bob Jeffrey, Pat Sikes, Lynda Measor, Andrew Pollard and Ann Filer, Andy Hargreaves, Geoff Troman, Ivor Goodson, Alex Moore, Martyn Denscombe, and an introduction by Martyn Hammersley. Each chapter reports or reflects on primary ethnographic data. Individual chapters consider the everyday work of the teacher, teacher narratives and lives, teacher responses to educational reform, relationships between teachers and learners, the discourses of teacher education, pupil careers and identity construction, masculinity and schooling, and critical incidents in the learning process. Each chapter can be read as a separate piece, as well as being viewed as part of a broader picture – of exploring the value of engaging with ethnographic perspectives for undertaking social inquiry in educational arenas.

The volume makes an enjoyable read and bears testimony to the value of ethnographic research in understanding the social (educational/school) world. Hammersley's introduction provides a useful summary of the development of interactionist ethnography in educational research. The bibliography of Peter Wood's publications also serves as a valuable resource. As a tribute to Peter Woods, the volume is particularly apt and well pitched, reflecting the solid research tradition in which he has played a central part. On these grounds it deserves a place on the bookshelf, and a recommendation to students, especially those working in the sociology of education. The volume will also be of interest to established teachers, teachers in training and teacher educators.

However, the volume does have some limitations. Firstly it reflects the British (or more specifically English) ethnographic, educational tradition. This is perhaps unsurprising and understandable (given the purpose of the book as a tribute to an English researcher). But it does mean that the book does not engage with the contribution of ethnography and interactionism to educational research in international terms. Secondly the book is more about teachers than learners. Moreover it does not, perhaps, do justice to the wealth of ethnographic research on the gendered, racialised, sexualised and stratified experiences of education. Hence the perspectives that are presented are necessarily partial. Lastly, I was disappointed that the volume as a whole did not pay significant attention to recent developments and debates in ethnography. For example, there are no systematic explorations of the relationships between ethnography and feminism, or postmodernism. Nor would readers of the book get any real sense of the contemporary debates about ethnographic representation(s). These are real omissions given the significant contributions that educational ethnographers have made in these areas.

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AMANDA COFFEY

© Blackwell Publishers Ltd. and SCSE 2000
‘Race’, Class and Gender in Exclusion from School. By Cecile Wright, Debbie Weekes and Alex McGlaughlin. Pp. xi, 145. Index. London: Falmer Press. 2000. £15.99 (pbk). ISBN 0 750 708417 (pbk). ‘Studies in Inclusive Education’ Series.

The fifth title in Professor Roger Slee’s Studies in Inclusive Education Series, this is a useful contribution to the literature on exclusion, a significant problem area in contemporary British education. The suspension or expulsion of pupils – now called ‘exclusion’ – is firmly enshrined in law, and appears to be on the increase and to affect male and African-Caribbean pupils in particular. The more competitive post-ERA climate of school league tables, increased pressure on teachers’ time, and the local management of schools where buying-in specialist services is a direct cost, are all felt to be contributory factors; and there are now national targets for reducing exclusions.

The book reports a two-year survey of all secondary schools in a single Local Education Authority, extensive interviews with 62 pupils and 52 members of staff in five of them, and further interviews with a small group of 12 permanently excluded African-Caribbean boys and their parents. There is very detailed reporting of all these interviews, and of the complexity of the issues which may often involve aspects of racism and of pupil ‘resistance’. There is much discussion of the stereotyping of black pupils by teachers, of black pupils’ attitudes to authority, and of the perception of black male pupils as being more aggressive – a significant aspect of exclusions. But schools clearly vary in this, as do pupils’ perceptions; and a closer comparison with the group of excluded white male pupils would also have been useful. Data is presented through the extensive use of interview quotations (there are no tables or statistical analysis), and these are generally treated as representative and factually accurate. On the other hand, the very full documentation tends to support the reliability and validity of these findings.

The presentation is readable and systematic, if rather dense and sometimes repetitive. The issues are hardly new, suspension and expulsion are long established, and social class and ability would have merited much more rigorous attention in isolating the variable of ethnicity. Indeed, some comment on the varying exclusion rates among different minorities in British education would have been interesting. Policy implications might also have focused more on teacher education, which attracted only two brief mentions in the entire book, and is clearly critical. Nonetheless, in highlighting some of the long-term effects of the 1988 Education Reform Act in British education, the authors have performed a valuable service. As they note, competition between schools has focused attention more on performance ratings and away from the needs of the disaffected, and has been accompanied by the spreading culture of managerialism,

‘... [which] results in an emphasis on such factors as economy and efficiency ... a greater stress on ... examination results and less stress on trying to meet the needs of less motivated pupils’.

They conclude that ERA changes, ‘have resulted in less tolerance towards aberrant student behaviour, with the increasing probability of exclusion being used to solve the problem’. And where this affects pupils disproportionately in many (though not all) schools, key issues of equality of opportunity arise.

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MAURICE CRAFT

© Blackwell Publishers Ltd. and SCSE 2000
The Politics of Professionalism: Teachers and the Curriculum. By Gary McCulloch, Gill Helsby and Peter Knight. Pp. 176. London: Continuum. 2000. £45.00 (hbk), £14.99 (pbk). ISBN 0 8264 4814 3 (hbk) 0 8264 4798 8 (pbk).

This book traces the politics of teacher professionalism in secondary education, specifically ‘. . . how teacher’s professionalism has struggled to survive and has developed in new directions amid the conflicts of the 1990s’ (page 5). The book has three themes: first, the impact of the National Curriculum on teacher professionalism and the extent to which teachers can ‘. . . contest, interpret and mediate’ (page 4) the curriculum; second, the intensely political character of teacher professionalism and third, the tensions and contradictions which are inherent in recent reforms of teacher professionalism. The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 focuses upon the development of teacher professionalism in the post-war era exploring the debates and arguments through an examination of documentary evidence and a selection of oral accounts from teachers and policy-makers. Part 2 concentrates upon the development of teacher professionalism during the past decade and, through oral evidence, examines the views of teachers and policy-makers concerning the changing nature of teacher professionalism which during the post-Thatcher became a fiercely contested issue.

A theme which runs through the early part of the book, particularly in chapters 2 and 3, is the idea of teacher professionalism as a form of ideology characterised by ‘myth’ and ‘tradition’. These two chapters explore the historical assumptions and myths of teacher professionalism during the 1950s and 1960s and the manner in which it was established in educational discourse. The authors point out that the concept of teacher professionalism during these decades was fragile and problematic; while the rhetoric suggests that the teaching profession had considerable practical control over the curriculum, the claim is made that this control was illusory rather than real. An important element in this chapter is to challenge some accepted wisdom that teacher independence and professionalism was free from conflict, debate or contradictions and that few outside schools were interested in the reform of teacher professionalism or curriculum. On the contrary, these chapters illustrate the highly political nature of teacher professionalism, particularly in its relationship with the State.

Chapter 4 ‘Memories from a Golden Age’, continues this debate and using a range of oral evidence reconstructs the reality of teacher professionalism in this period from the views of a sample of secondary teachers. The conclusion from this analysis is that first, teachers did not have a stranglehold on the curriculum and that teacher freedoms to develop the curriculum were limited. Secondly, although the idea of teacher professionalism was very much a part of the discourse of educational debate, the increasing claims of the State to be involved in curriculum management through the development of the examination systems, a ‘potent’ and ‘insidious’ threat to teacher professionalism (page 41) and the work of the Schools Council, meant that teacher independence was being questioned.

While Part 1 of the book focuses largely upon the impact of changes in curriculum and increased State control over content, Part 2, beginning with Chapter 5, takes the idea of teacher professionalism away from discussions over curriculum content in the direction of control over pedagogy. Evidence is presented demonstrating that for teachers, control over what was taught was no longer a significant professional issue, the imposition of a National Curriculum had taken away any teacher claims of control. In contrast, concern over how that content was taught, and who controls those processes, is crucial in defining contemporary notions of
teacher professionalism, within a context where 'The delivered curriculum is seen as being less amenable to regulation than is the planned curriculum' (page 59). For the authors this issue lies at the core of the future development of teacher professionalism where pedagogy promises to be the ‘. . . terrain on which curriculum control will be contested’ (page 71). The chapters in Part 2 develop this important idea, and they are at their strongest when, again, using oral evidence from teachers. Some parts of this book are excellent, particularly the chapters in which teachers speak about their practice and the impact of educational reforms on their work. On other occasions the relationship between the book’s major ideas and the narrative was a little disjointed, perhaps the result of having three authors. Clearly the authors needed to chart the socio-historical development of teacher professionalism to provide a context for the more recent changes, however this meant that space was limited in later chapters to develop what would have been a very interesting analysis of teacher interpretation of curriculum and of pedagogy. In addition, much of the interview material is five or more years old and is drawn from another project. Nevertheless, those students, teachers and other professionals interested in understanding the core ideas of teacher professionalism and how they have been modified by socio-economic, ideological and political changes of climate would be well advised to read this book. It is an interesting and thought provoking book which rightly identifies some key issues in the changing nature of teacher professionalism. Indeed this ought to be the focus of further research, particularly the intensely political character of teacher professionalism and the tensions and contradictions which are inherent in recent reforms of teacher professionalism.

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KEITH CRAWFORD

A Life in Education. By Brian Simon. Pp. 184. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1998. ISBN 0 85315 866 5.

Brian Simon is one of the leading scholars of Education of the past century with contributions spanning the history, psychology and politics of education as well as major contributions to pedagogical thinking and much else besides. He is also a leading activist, campaigner and commentator who has influenced students, teachers and policy makers. In this account of a remarkable life in Education he locates his personal experiences in the context of the changes in Education and society more generally from the 1930s to the present.

The story begins with his own schooling and, more particularly, in the intellectual and political turmoil of Cambridge in the 1930s where the social and political outlook of many leading figures of his generation was formed. Following Cambridge, a commitment to Education, stemming partly from a family tradition of public service and educational involvement, led to a postgraduate teaching diploma at the London University Institute of Education. Political and educational activism led to the Presidency of the National Union of Students and membership of the Labour Party’s Educational Advisory Committee. The pattern for a later life is indicated as the book records combining training as a teacher, political involvement and preparing his first book, A Student’s View of the Universities.

Wartime service delayed the start of a teaching career which began in Manchester in 1945 and included elementary, secondary modern and grammar schools. It also began a lifetime of thinking about selection, streaming, IQ testing, teaching methods and the relationship of all these to social justice and social and educa-

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tional change. Brian Simon’s formal academic career began in 1950 with his appointment to the Education Department of the then University College, Leicester. He joined a successful and innovative department led by Professor Tibble and soon produced some of the most influential and important work in the study of Education. The first part of the four volume *Studies in the History of Education* set a new direction in demonstrating the educational influence of the working class and radical movement and in its thesis that educational provision for the working class had to be understood as an establishment response to the educational provision developed by the working class. In parallel with these historical studies was the production of *Intelligence Testing and the Comprehensive School*, a critique of selective schooling and, in particular, of the psychometric models of intelligence and its measurement which underpinned it.

A substantial part of the book is taken up with the campaign for comprehensive education in which Brian Simon was such a central figure. The early studies of the small number of comprehensive schools (13 in 1954) undertaken with Robin Pedley were followed later by the major study with Caroline Benn, *Halfway There*. Alongside the struggle for comprehensive secondary schooling was a commitment to unstreamed primary schools. The journal *Forum* launched by Brian Simon with Robin Pedley and Jack Walton in 1958 provided a focus for debate on both these issues. The *Forum* evidence to the Plowden Committee emphasised that the end of streaming and selection should be accompanied by research on methods of classroom organisation and pedagogy.

Brian Simon began such a programme of research in the 1970s with the ORACLE project. This enormously influential study was the first attempt to look at teaching methods and pupil and teacher behaviour in primary schools in a systematic and representative fashion. The ORACLE research showed the weaknesses of the highly individualised approach to teaching advocated in the Plowden Report and its consequent neglect of whole class teaching and co-operative group work. As Brian Simon argues here, such an approach virtually denies the possibility of a pedagogy which must deal, at some level, with effective ways of reaching children as a whole. This classroom based research was strongly linked to historical analysis and to the critique of IQ testing through an analysis of the reasons for a lack of concern with pedagogy, *Why no Pedagogy in England?*

Alongside studies of teaching Brian Simon also continued to produce historical studies both further volumes of the *Studies in the History of Education* and local studies of the history of Education in Leicestershire. He, and his wife Joan, were also instrumental in introducing the work of Russian psychologists to the UK and USA and the book recounts meetings with Luria and visits to Russian schools and research institutes. The final chapter of this book recounts a very active retirement from 1980 onwards. Inevitably it is dominated by the education policies of the Conservative government over nearly all of that period and the struggle against these in which Brian Simon played a central role. For most of the chapter the educational advances to which he contributed are threatened, but the book concludes on an upbeat note with the result of the 1997 election. It would be good to have an analysis of educational developments since then and the extent to which the hopes expressed have been realised.

This is explicitly an account of a Life in Education and not an autobiography more generally. Brian Simon’s wife Joan appears as a distinguished fellow scholar and campaigner and also his parents in their roles in public life and education. There is no account of wider political developments and involvement although there must be a fascinating story to be told there. There are tantalising glimpses of,
for example, directing Albert Finney in a non-starring role in a school play and a
hint that Peregrine Worsthorne may have been a less than delightful companion on
wartime service in Italy. The tone of the book is modest and it is written with great
generosity to fellow campaigners, scholars and friends. But the overwhelming
impression is of the formidable energy, determination and (dare I say?) intelli-
gence that Brian Simon has brought to the study of education and the struggle to
change it. A major theme of Brian Simon’s work has been the necessity to under-
stand current educational thinking and structures in their historical context. The
book is itself a contribution to that understanding. It shows the interplay of history,
psychology and politics in understanding our current educational situation. It also
shows how strong political commitments and active political involvement can link
with the academic study of education and how the rigorous pursuit of knowledge
and understanding can inform policy and practice. The book recounts how
Margaret Thatcher, questioned in a meeting with young teachers when Secretary of
State for Education, responded grimly that, ‘we know all about Brian Simon here.’
Readers of this book will not know all about Brian Simon but they will know enough
to value his commitment and insight and his influence on our understanding of
Education and our educational practice.

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PAUL CROLL

Intelligence Reframed. By Howard Gardner. Pp. x, 292. New York: Basic Books. 1999.
£21.50 (hbk). ISBN 0-465-02610-9 (hbk).

There are alarming signs that in the UK we are increasingly content to summarise
children’s learning by using simplistic, uni-dimensional measures such as SAT levels
(Standardised Assessment Tasks). Subtle variations in children’s intellectual
strengths and weaknesses get glossed over. Indeed, the tendency to categorise and
simplify is particularly strong within the field of special educational needs, where
there seems to be an ever-growing proclivity to use labels such as ‘dyslexia’ and
‘ADHD’. Given this unwelcome emphasis on the oversimplified categorisation of
children’s performance, it is enormously refreshing to read Howard Gardner’s
latest publication. Before commenting in detail on this book, it is worth reflecting
on the impact of Howard Gardner’s writing on the theory of ‘multiple intelli-
gences’. His output has been remarkably prodigious. He has written consistently
about this theory for over 20 years – in Appendix A nine pages of books and arti-
cles by Howard Gardner are listed (comprising over 100 publications). Other
appendices include 21 pages of books/articles on this theme written by others; five
pages of ‘videos, newsletters and miscellany’ on multiple intelligences, and a world-
wide list of ‘contacts on multiple intelligences’, many of whom are highly eminent
figures within the fields of education and psychology.

In this highly stimulating book Howard Gardner revisits his original theory of
multiple intelligences (first put forward in the seminal publication, Frames of Mind:
The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, 1983). He discusses whether new types of intelli-
gence might be added; comments on criticisms of the theory; addresses links
between intelligence, creativity and leadership; and discusses applications of the
theory of multiple intelligences to schools and business. There is also a thought-
provoking section on children’s understanding (or the worrying lack of it); and I
was reminded of a very interesting UK publication by Martin Hughes et al., Numer-
acy and Beyond in which a similar debate is conducted concerning children’s super-

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ficial level of mathematical understanding. Howard Gardner’s style is lucid and accessible; and the text is underpinned by preferences which are presented in the form of notes at the end of the book.

Howard Gardner’s original seven intelligences comprise the following: linguistic; logical-mathematical; musical; bodily-kinesthetic; spatial; interpersonal; intrapersonal. In Intelligence Reframed there is interesting discussion of Daniel Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence, which is given a positive reception. However Howard Gardner comments ‘... I prefer the term emotional sensitivity...’ (page 206). Four new ‘candidate intelligences’ are examined: spiritual, existential, moral and naturalist. Each contender is judged systematically and eight criteria are used to gauge whether it could be viewed as separate/independent human intelligence. As an illustration, one of the criteria relates to evolutionary links, and whether or not an intelligence has an ‘evolutionary history and evolutionary plausibility’, e.g. it is argued that we can assume our ancestors had to develop competence in finding their way around (spatial intelligence). When reviewing these eight criteria, Howard Gardner comments that today he would revise this list, paying much more attention to the relevance of cross-cultural evidence. I have to confess that I was slightly relieved that only one of the new contenders was endorsed in its entirety: ‘naturalist intelligence’ (i.e. extensive knowledge of the living world, and expertise in the recognition and classification of various species). The notion that individuals might have a ‘spiritual intelligence’ seems a rather arbitrary choice (why not a ‘secular intelligence’ – i.e. an ability to form balanced judgements un-hampered by irrational religious beliefs?). In terms of research evidence, data from the SUMIT (Schools Using Multiple Intelligences Theory) project at Harvard University is presented. Forty-one American schools using aspects of multiple intelligences theory were studied. Almost half the schools reported improvements in children’s learning which were attributed to practices inspired by the theory of multiple intelligences.

In this age when the Government is demanding that primary age children are grouped for literacy and numeracy teaching according to an ill-defined, crude attribute termed ‘ability’, and when considerable efforts are aimed at measuring and testing children’s performance in a reductionist and simplistic fashion, it is thoroughly exhilarating to read Howard Gardner’s book, and be reminded of the sheer wonder and complexity of children’s ‘intelligence’. There are welcome signs that some of Howard Gardner’s ideas are beginning to influence policy-making in this country. One glimmer of hope comes in the form of the DfEE publication: All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education (DfEE, 1999), in which Howard Gardner’s work is cited. I would wholly recommend Intelligence Reframed to those who are seeking confirmation that children are much more intelligent and complex in their thinking than current theory and practice would suggest. The combination of a highly stimulating, readable text, with ideas that are supported by research evidence, results in a book that should appeal widely – particularly to teachers, psychologists, academics and policy makers.

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Hughes, M., Desforges, C. and Mitchell, C. (2000) Numeracy and Beyond: Applying Mathematics in the Primary School. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bristol University ANTHONY FEILER

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Improving Education: realist approaches to method and research. Edited by J. Swann and J. Pratt. Ppxii+196. Index. London: Cassell. 1999. £45.00 (hbk), £18.99 (pbk). ISBN 0-304-70553-5 (hbk) ISBN 0-304-70554-3 (pbk).

One way that some of the current methodological divisions within educational research can be conceptualised is as a contrast between realism and anti-realism, the latter including forms of relativism and postmodernism. This is the framework adopted by the editors of this book. However, the realism that is advocated is of a very particular kind: Karl Popper’s philosophy of science. And, as the title makes clear, Popper’s work is seen as providing a basis not just for research but also for practical improvement of education. Interestingly, while Popper wrote little about education, his philosophy was shaped by theories of child development which he learned as a student at the Vienna Pedagogic Institute.

Central to Popper’s thinking is the idea that we start from a problem, rather than from some ultimate aim to be achieved. This problem is tackled by developing ideas about potential solutions (explanatory hypotheses in the case of research, strategies for action in the case of educational improvement), which are then put to the test. The result could be that the proposed solution works and will be subjected to more stringent tests, perhaps eventually being accepted as the most promising solution currently available. Alternatively, the proposed solution could fail, in which case a modification or a different proposal will need to be generated, and this can then be tested. A piecemeal process of trying out ideas and learning from mistakes is regarded by Popper, and by many of the authors of this book, as central to both research and practice. There are parallels with some forms of action research here; as well as differences from others.

The opening chapter, by Joanna Swann, outlines the Popperian approach to inquiry; and the second chapter, by Richard Bailey, criticises postmodernism from this point of view. A number of other chapters explore applications of the Popperian strategy: to the study of education policy, to teaching and planning in the classroom, to the improvement of assessment practice in higher education, to equal opportunities policy, to prescriptive models of the curriculum, to informal practitioner theory in adult basic education, and to professional education in the context of a taught masters course.

There is much to be said for a revival of interest in Popper’s work. It still has a great deal to teach educational researchers, and social scientists generally. And what is valuable about this book is that his views are not simply expounded but their educational implications explored: the aim is to demonstrate that this approach is superior to competitors. Unfortunately, while this is certainly a useful expository device – many readers will find the chapters dealing with particular educational issues of interest who would not otherwise be attracted by an account of Popper’s philosophy of science – those who do not share something of Popper’s way of thinking are unlikely to be convinced. This is not the fault of the authors; it arises from the depth of ‘paradigmatic’ differences currently to be found in the field of education.

There are, of course, some disadvantages in focusing so exclusively on a single approach to the nature of inquiry and practice. Popper’s work is by no means the last word in the philosophy of science, and even less so in political philosophy; and it is not without defects. One of these is a tendency to caricature ‘inductivism’. The implication is that any piece of research which does not start from a well-defined problem, and a hypothetical solution to it, is badly designed. But not all research is, or should be, concerned with obvious practical or even theoretical problems.
Research can have a more open-ended, exploratory character. And this reflects the fact that problems sometimes have to be discovered. Furthermore, obvious problems should not always be taken at face value. Discovering the right way to formulate a problem is often as important in the advance of knowledge as hypothesis-testing. In addition, there is the task of finding the most fruitful hypotheses to be investigated. Popper’s rejection of that task as inductivist has been one of the central elements in critical assessments of his work, along with the uncertain epistemic status he assigns to hypotheses which survive testing.

Not all of the chapters in this book are concerned with outlining and applying a Popperian approach to understanding and improving education. David Corson takes in more recent developments, advocating a form of ‘critical realism’; which he sees as an ‘updating’ of Popper. He begins by comparing Popper with Bhaskar, and then compares the latter’s position with those of Durkheim, Habermas, Bourdieu and Wittgenstein. It is not entirely clear, though, what is the purpose of these particular comparisons. And the discussion is sometimes misleading: for example, contrary to what Corson writes, Wittgenstein was not a realist in his early work, in any simple sense; nor, in his later work, was he a relativist, in a straightforward way. This highlights one of the central problems with discussions about different approaches to educational research: the variety of ways in which key terms can be used. And an important gap in this book is a discussion of the senses which the term ‘realism’ can be given, and the arguments among philosophers about different kinds of realism.

In the final chapter James Tooley claims that his OFSTED-sponsored assessment of the quality of educational research is in line with a Popperian approach. He also argues that not just education but also educational research should be privately funded. The support he offers for this tendentious conclusion is weak; and involves a contradiction. He claims that the quality of educational research may have been damaged by legitimate Government pressure to call the tune in what it pays for, and that there are ‘private education companies willing to substantially fund basic research’. But would they not also call the tune, and thereby introduce bias? Aside from this, some of the points Tooley makes about educational research are sound, and his brief commentary on Popper is of value.

This is an unusual, useful and controversial book. I hope that it encourages a revival of interest in Popper’s work. Much could be gained by wider adoption of his commitment to open-minded exploration of the validity of theoretical and practical ideas.

The Open University

Martyn Hammersley

Understanding Pedagogy and Its Impact on Learning. Edited by Peter Mortimore. Pp. 1ixs, 232. Index. London, California and New Delhi: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd. 1999. £17.99. ISBN 1 85396 453-0 (pbk).

The final chapter of Understanding Pedagogy concludes that there is a need for wide-ranging debate on the aims of education as well as on pedagogy. Its authors, (J. Ireson, P. Mortimore and S. Hallam), argue that this debate must be led by teachers ‘so that the profession will own the debate and will thus be most likely to take the conclusions into its own practice’ (p. 231). The issue of teachers’ right and need to participate authoritatively in dialogues about practice is fundamental to professionalism. Yet teachers’ power to exercise this right is constrained and there are still
problems of communication and authority, for example, between academics and professional researchers on the one hand and classroom practitioners on the other (Chapter 1). If teachers are to lead this debate then there are important questions to be asked about the kind of language or forms of representation and dissemination that will make this a likelihood.

One of the abiding themes of this comprehensive book is that teaching is a highly complex activity. It is a view that is endorsed in each and every chapter of the book, which deals with pre-school, through compulsory schooling, special needs, further and higher education, adult and workplace learning as well as the potentially transforming impact of new technology on pedagogy. Nevertheless, each of the chapters makes broad conclusions about effective practice in its particular area. The final chapter suggests that there are principles that can be formulated at a general level, such as the need for:

- clarity about aims that are also shared with learners;
- effective planning, organisation and management;
- high expectations and positive formative feedback;
- recognition of the individual within a climate of inclusion;
- challenging tasks suitably aligned to assessment procedures;
- making links between academic and other forms of learning;
- clear rules and explicit conventions of all learning institutions;
- an understanding of metacognition
- good levels of learner motivation

(Chapter 1, page 230)

Understanding Pedagogy is a very good source book and the combined experience and knowledge of its many expert contributors is very evident. The book offers a variety of examples of the general principles mentioned above, as well as situation specific reviews of research, within its specialist chapters. Any student or teacher embarking on an academic or professional study of pedagogy in a particular phase would do well to begin by reading the relevant chapter. It is also valuable for those with expertise in a particular phase to investigate the ways in which aims and pedagogy concur or vary in other phases of education. Already familiar with learning and teaching in early years, primary and higher education I found the chapter on further education refreshing, not least because its authors touched on issues of knowledge and power:

‘It is possible that as more people get qualified as a result of making learning more accessible, knowledge becomes equated with information rather than understanding and the emancipatory purposes of learning are lost except for the few who reach the highest levels’ (Young and Lucas, p. 101)

While general principles may be helpful as a starting point, making the case for complexity, as the book does, is crucial for several reasons. We are living in a time when education is so much in the public eye and politicians want educational research to provide answers about what works – they seem to want clichés, not complexity. The political agenda often dominates the debate about pedagogy, if not actively prohibits teachers’ participation in it.

The dominant discourse on pedagogy assumes that the worlds it is seeking to describe or explain are entirely rational. The language and the forms of representation or dissemination adopted offer only a partial perspective and one that rarely does justice to the very complexity of decisions and judgements made in teaching contexts that need to be expressed. The perspective is partial in the
sense that it fails to reveal significant dimensions of educational experiences and relationships.

We can contrast an academic discourse about pedagogy with discourses made possible for example by the exhibition of Reggio Emilia pre-schools, currently touring the country and referred to in I. Siraj-Blatchford’s discussion on early childhood pedagogy (Chapter 2). Both the exhibition and the book of the same title ‘The Hundred Languages of Children’ (Edwards, Gandini and Forman, 1998) evoke a powerful intellectual and emotional response. This approach to dissemination is multi-sensory and multi-dimensional. It shows what it is to achieve both authenticity and high quality in learning. The quality is present in the absorbed expressions of children, in the poetry of their comments, in the detail and originality of the representations they make, in the evidence of their sustained engagement with their learning and their use of initiative. Children recognise this quality immediately – my ten-year-old son was quite grief-stricken by the richness, thoughtfulness and variety of children’s work and experience and said it just isn’t fair that his school isn’t more like this.

Teachers and other adults who visit the exhibition look at pedagogy partly by working back from this quality to uncover the conditions that make it possible. One of those conditions is that both teachers and learners regard themselves and treat each other as thinkers, creating the kind of ‘virtuous circle’ to which Caroline Gipps and Barbara McGilchrist refer (p. 54). All the adults working in the Reggio Emilia pre-school engage in pedagogical discussion on a daily basis, continuously questioning their approach, challenging one another, drawing on their careful observations of children and systematically documenting the work, using both visual and written media. Another condition is the degree of autonomy and control students have over their learning, factors that are also identified as crucial to sustained motivation and a mastery disposition (pp. 216–217). One of the most startling features of many schools and other educational institutions in Britain today, is how little room the curriculum leaves for student initiative and direction.

There were a number of other ideas in the book that caught my interest, which I will visit briefly. The notion of ‘transferability’ of skills is one that has been around for a while and is often discussed in the context of teaching core or key skills, whatever ‘content’ is being learned. Tony Griffiths and David Guile talk of pedagogy in work-based learning contexts that moves beyond transferability to the idea of ‘boundary-crossing’ within a ‘connective’ model. ‘Teaching and learning in the connective model is more a process of and product of interaction within contexts and between contexts . . .’ Learning is not transferred from one place to another but rather theories and concepts are taught which the learner can use ‘to interrogate and assess critically workplace practice and concepts’. (p. 170) Young and Lucas also refer to boundary-crossing in their discussion of learning in further education (p. 110) and the need for students to develop poly-contextual skills – a term coined by Engestrom et al., (1995). Jenny Corbett and Braham Norwich make use of the term ‘connective pedagogy’ in their discussion of inclusiveness in their chapter on special educational needs. It is used in a rather different way to describe the central role of the teacher and the level of recognition, insight, skill and understanding required to operate an inclusive learning environment, where learners have a wide range of individual differences. They talk of making connections with children. (p. 133)

Connectivity (of schools to each other and to the NGfL and DfEE etc.) is mentioned in Richard Noss and Norbert Pachler’s incisive and critical discussion of the so far limited impact of new technology on pedagogy in schools. They argue that the National Grid for Learning has not generated a debate about the kinds of

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knowledge made possible by ICT, nor about more open approaches to teaching and the empowerment of learners (p. 197).

Understanding Pedagogy concludes by suggesting that there are a number of pedagogical issues that we know little about. These include: the merits of teaching those who find learning difficult alongside those who find it easy; the effect of assessment strategies on teaching and learning strategies; the effects of poverty on the pedagogy of schools and colleges; the effects of ICT and whether girls and boys should be taught together and whether single sex grouping might be more or less beneficial in certain age phases.

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The Aims of Education. Edited by Roger Marples. Pp. 213. London and New York: Routledge. 1999. £55.00 (hbk). ISBN 0-415-15739-0. ‘Routledge International Studies in the Philosophy of Education’ series.

Roger Marples’ collection of mainly new essays around the theme of the ‘aims of education’ is the seventh in the Routledge series of edited books in the philosophy of education. After the heady days of the 1960s and 1970s surprisingly few books have been published about aims in education. Perhaps they are too obscured at present by the plethora of objectives, targets and achievable outcomes.

To help us see this wood for the trees, Marples’ collection contains contributions from sixteen different authors. Some of these are grouped around expected themes of liberalism, autonomy and self determination from writers such as Robin Barrow (‘Or What’s a Heaven for?’ The importance of aims in education), Peter Gilroy (The aims of education and the philosophy of educations: the pathology of an argument), Paul Standish (Education without aims?), Kenneth Strike (Liberalism, citizenship and the private interest in schooling), Christopher Winch (Autonomy as an educational aim), James Walker (Self-determination as an educational aim) and John White (In defence of liberal aims in education). There are also contributions from other perspectives such as critical thinking from Jan Steatell and Ben Spickler (Liberalism and critical thinking: on the relationship between a political ideal and an aim of education) and William Hare (Critical Thinking as an aim of education). Penny Enslin offers a perspective on national identity (The place of national identity in the aims of education) and some social perspectives are provided by Morwenna Griffiths (Aiming for a fair education: what use is philosophy?), Richard Pring (Neglected educational aims: moral seriousness and social commitment) and, ironically, Paul Hirst (The nature of educational aims). The latter effectively recants his earlier arguments about forms of knowledge and academic disciplines for a pragmatic social constructivist position: it is a pity Dewey was not more widely read in the UK in the 1960s.

In the final chapter of the volume John White explores a defence of liberal-democratic ideals which might form a basis for educational planning. In doing so
he provides a useful summary and trenchant critique of many of the arguments that have been put forward in the earlier chapters. The analysis includes a helpful discussion of the limits of personal autonomy as an aim and the relationship between autonomy and well-being. White is clearly sympathetic to the broad ideal of liberalism and the importance of personal autonomy but seems unconvinced by many of the arguments put forward by other philosophers on the same side!

What I am not sure about is where the collection of essays leaves us. I would have appreciated an overview from the editor and even perhaps a summary of how he felt the collection of essays achieved his aim to ‘promote wide-ranging discussion of what education should be concerned with as we enter the new millennium’. A chapter developing John Elliot’s ideas (1996) on values and school effectiveness might have promoted such discussion with those responsible for achieving such aims in the classroom. As it stands the arguments about aims are well presented and developed; it may be more difficult to make the connection with shorter-term objectives and outcomes as they are delivered in schools. In short, the arguments help you appreciate an impressionistic picture of a wood but without any details of any trees.

I would like to finish (predictably) with some observations from John Dewey’s writings. As I understand it, Dewey was at pains to maintain a position which denied one predominant aim or goal but saw the goals of education as a pragmatic synthesis of competing aims. For him the immediate value of education was important: ‘In our search for aims in education, we are not concerned, therefore, with finding an end outside of the education process to which education is subordinate’ (Dewey Middle Works (MW) 9: 107). It is an activity for now and the practice of deriving meaning from experience as ‘a constant reorganising or reconstructing of experience’ (Dewey MW 9:82). Second, education should broaden the interests of learners in a way which develops their individuality (as opposed to their individualism) (Boisvert 1998). Third, it should help develop the habit in learners of participating in community life in such a way that decisions are made not as individual acts of will or by individuals who claim insights into absolute truths but as part of a process taking into account the information provided by others as well as their situations and desires. ‘Apart from participation in social life, the school has no moral end nor aim’ (Dewey MW 4: 271). In other words education should be of immediate value to the individual (whatever their age), should widen the interests of the learner and should involve them in the society in which they live.

Such thoughts were published in the first half of the last century and, it seems to me, still worth bearing in mind today. Perhaps this is how we will achieve John White’s final challenge of how we might ‘throw ourselves into our own self-creation as full bloodedly as into creating the conditions for other people to throw themselves into theirs’.

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Apprenticeship: Towards a New Paradigm of Learning. Edited by Patrick Ainley and Helen Rainbird. Pp. I, 205. Index. London: Kogan Page Ltd. 1999. £35.00. ISBN 0 7494 2728 0 (hbk). ‘Future of Education 14+’ series.

This edited book is a collection of 13 papers drawn from a seminar series on ‘Apprenticeship in Education and Work’. The book is divided into four sections, each comprising three or four themed chapters. The first and second sections respectively, explore the history and theory of apprenticeships while in the third section, the notion of apprenticeship is examined as a model for learning. In the final section we read about modern apprenticeships.

While the book focuses on apprenticeship in its various forms and across a range of theoretical disciplines from medieval times to the present day, apprenticeship is actually used as a tool, metaphor or paradigm to explore new ways of conceptualising what learning might be and where it might take place.

The first three chapters map chronologically, the development of apprenticeships. Richard Aldrich begins by tracing their history in medieval England up until the end of the 19th century. The survival of apprenticeships in their many forms can be attributed, he argues, to their embracing many dimensions of human life; for example, the social, occupational, educational, religious, familial, group and legal elements. Linda Clarke continues the historical tour through her analyses of apprenticeship in the construction industry over the ages. She demonstrates the ways in which apprenticeships have changed as British state regulation has developed to the point where they are now increasingly employer led rather than state regulated. The final chapter in this section looks at the history of engineering apprenticeships during the time of classic heavy or Fordist industry in Britain. Paul Ryan takes up his story in 1926, the year of the General Strike, and continues up to the engineering strikes of the 1960s and 1970s. He demonstrates the ways in which European apprenticeships have been seen as part of vocational education and personal development, whereas in Britain they have been viewed as part of labour market training and industrial relationships, rather than education.

In section two, the writers consider apprenticeships from their different disciplinary perspectives. Glenn Rikowski adopts a philosophical viewpoint to explain Nietzsche’s meaning of mastery. Three types of mastery are articulated in relation to three forms of apprenticeship: classical, modern and post-modern. The philosophy of Marx is also employed and from this position, Rikowski outlines a critique of the ideology of learning that disguises the new reality of a society and an economy in which technology is developing so fast it is difficult to keep up. Stephanie Bunn takes quite a different theoretical stance: that of anthropology. She analyses the Kyrgyz society, a nomadic people from Central Asia. Here we see little division of labour, other than that between women and men. Instead, each individual shares all the skills and knowledge of the group so as to be, in learning society speak, flexibly multi-skilled. Michael Forrester employs a perceptual psychology metaphor, that of affordances for learning as a focus for his chapter. Using Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development which exists between the unaided efforts and understanding of the learner and the understandings of the teacher, he demonstrates how the verbal interactions between the learner and teacher provide affordances for learning.

The chapters in section three move into the formal learning environments of schools, colleges and universities and we see the application of the Lave and Wenger (1991) term, legitimate participant participation. Edwin Webb emphasises the prime purpose of communicating meaning and value in the language for learning and critiques the technicisation of learning within schools which has resulted
from the imposition of a narrowly academic National Curriculum. In David Guille and Michael Young's chapter they critique transmission models including the attempted transmission of so-called transferable core or key skills. They also see the potential for facilitating learning by using ICT and give examples in Finland which inform the work environments in which they are applied. Phil Cohen's chapter, which approaches apprenticeship from a cultural studies perspective, emphasises the psychodynamic dimension. Cohen explains how structures of feeling and fantasy can influence learning outcomes. Identity work, Cohen states, is integral to all learning about the subcultural styles assumed by different factions of working and middle class youth.

In the fourth section, we move on to policy debates on work-based learning and more specifically to an analysis of modern apprenticeships. Alison Fuller and Lorna Unwin emphasise the need to build learning and support structures to reconstitute the communities of practice from which apprentices benefited in the past. They point to the importance of regulatory structures in legitimating routes into occupational communities, identifying four aspects of the community: the pedagogical, the occupational, the locational, and the social. They argue that Youth Training in its many and different guises, fractured relationships between communities and their training traditions. Malcolm Maguire provides an overview of modern apprenticeships and documents the ways in which they are linked to the changing structures of the youth labour market, reflecting shifts in the occupational structures on the one hand and increased staying-on rates in post-compulsory education on the other. Their success, however, he argues, may be undermined by competing policy priorities. In a chapter focusing on apprentices in college, Prue Huddleston examines shifts over time. She identifies the significance of the context of learning: the integration of learning by doing and from experienced practitioners in the workplace and this is set against classroom learning and the transfer of knowledge in the college environment. The final contribution to this volume engages more directly with contemporary policy debate. Peter Senker and colleagues stress that more than the current piecemeal approach is required in order to develop a coherent strategy towards the reform of work-based learning. They argue that government policy under successive governments has been plagued by conflicting visions of economic development which are fundamentally incompatible.

As with most edited collections arising from a seminar series, there is inevitable overlap between chapters and wide variation in the quality of writing. Nevertheless, this is an interesting book which provides a comprehensive view of apprenticeships. In doing this, it also enables the reader to consider alternative forms and places of learning.

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New Labour's Policies for School – Raising the Standard? Edited by Jim Docking. Pp. viii, 210. London: David Fulton. 2000. £16.00. ISBN 1-85346-611-5 (pbk).

In its twelve chapters, this text attempts to give an account of ‘New’ Labour’s policies for schools (though it oddly includes preschool and lifelong learning in this remit) since the 1997 UK General Election. The restriction of the account to England is quite understandable, especially in the light of the various forms of devolution which have occurred since 1997. However, such a restriction does demand a certain rigour all too often absent from the literature. The synonymous use of
England, Great Britain and UK has to be especially avoided as incorrect at any time but doubly incorrect when the locus of discussion has been consciously restricted. Yet we find at numerous points throughout this text this very equation. For example, in Peter Jackson’s chapter, Early Years Education, we learn that ‘the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) has been central to the UK’s educational reforms over the last decade’ (p. 94). This will be news to the Scots who lie beyond the remit of OFSTED. It is quite evident that OFSTED has played a major role in the policing of school and later preschool reforms in England but OFSTED has not been central to educational reforms in the UK as this declares not only an incorrect geographical locus of activity for OFSTED but also an incorrect remit for that organisation. OFSTED is only just extending itself into adult and continuing education and into further education and, so far, it touches higher education only in its inspections of provision funded by the Teacher Training Agency.

Jackson’s chapter also presents us with ‘the Continental idea of educare’ (p. 91) (original emphasis). This English (language) neologism appears a little odd as a Continental idea. Is it a reference to the French école maternelle where care and education are combined? This is never adequately explained and the uninitiated (that is, most of the intended audience of the book) might easily be left with the idea that there is a single Continental way of doing things. In other words, it is the anglocentric insularity of times past whereby Europe consists of two blocks – England (often subsuming the rest of the United Kingdom and even the rest of the British Isles) and the Continent.

Jim Docking’s otherwise laudable Curriculum Initiatives also demonstrates a certain cultural ignorance when he writes that ‘in spite of being described as “national”, the Literacy Strategy has not been given the same thrust in Wales (p. 64).’ Are we to assume therefore that, for Docking, Wales is once again part of England? It is somewhat insulting to the Welsh that there should be any question over whether the so-called National Literacy Strategy should apply to them since it is national to England.

Roger Marples’ chapter 14–19 and Lifelong Learning successfully avoids any hint of cultural imperialism and sketches an accurate portrait of the Labour stance on formal education in the 14–19 age group, depicting as the writer puts it ‘the stranglehold of the A-level’ (p. 135) and ‘the need to grasp the nettle which has bedevilled 14–19 provision for far too long’ (ibid). However, he himself avoids entirely the main nettle surrounding lifelong learning, that is, what it is for. Instead of a discussion of the evolving discourses of lifelong learning, we have a couple of pages on the DfEE’s (1998) The Learning Age: a Renaissance for a new Britain and the 1997 Learning for the twenty-first century. There is not a word on UNESCO’s (1996) Learning: the treasure within which in many respects rekindled the lifelong learning debate and took it into the forefront of political rhetoric. Neither do we read anything about lifelong education versus lifelong training (an issue all the more important given the DfEE’s stance whereby notions such as quality of life simply do not figure). Lifelong learning as education or as leisure (critical from the point of view of the status of purposeful learning and whether it is a means of social cohesion or social division) is equally absent. Perhaps, however, the greatest omission is of the entirety of non-formal education. This is arguably the very essence of lifelong learning. It is an aspect which Labour has generally, if not totally, avoided. What a pity that Marples did not apply the same eloquence to this as he did to the 14–19 age range. Labour has no policy on educational gerontology and it appears to be policy not to have one. Thus, Marples leaves unploughed a rich field of potential deconstruction and the reader of this text might easily be left with the idea that education
is only education when it is formal. Worse, the idea can be left that acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes is only learning when it is linked to some sort of accreditation or to a job.

While Welch and Mahoney’s *The Teaching Profession*, deals well with many aspects of the ‘professionalism debate’, it is a pity that they neglect a discussion of the Scottish GTC given its relative success. As well as maintaining the Register, the Scottish GTC controls entry to the profession. In addition, it successfully resisted such initiatives as a national curriculum and a teacher training agency, making full use of the Court of Session in Edinburgh and openly defying the government when all else had failed. Yet the Scottish GTC is passed over with the words ‘a GTC has been in existence in Scotland for some decades’ (p. 145). Some debate on the role and function of this GTC and how its English counterpart might compare would have been welcome.

Also on p. 148 the writers discuss ‘the current official rhetoric of “profession, professional, professionalism”’. They refer to profession being a ‘hurrah’ word in England (which is difficult to disagree with) but then state that ‘this is not the case in other parts of Europe’ (ibid.). Is this *all* of Europe? If so, the writers are simply mistaken. In Switzerland, when one is ‘professional’ then one is trained and is able to perform autonomously. In this respect, my neighbour in Lausanne in the 1980s proudly termed himself *monteur professionnel*, bearing as he did a vocational qualification equivalent to a university degree (*brevet fédéral*). For him, profession(al) was anything but a ‘boo’ word. Besides, are we to believe that everywhere west of the Urals no one but the English believes that profession is a hurrah term? If so, then what about the Scots, the Welsh, the Irish (both North and South)?

However, in much of Western Europe, the question of teaching as a profession is a non-debate. In those countries where teachers are civil servants (whether of the nation, the Land or the Canton) then they have high status as civil servants. They often enjoy conditions of service which are the envy of teachers throughout the British Isles (and not just in England) and enjoy a social status which teachers in the UK have not had for many a year.

Overall, this text is a brave attempt to encapsulate a complex and sometimes self-contradictory series of policies and legislation produced in a remarkably short time. The problems may have arisen from attempting to do too much in insufficient space and perhaps with too little distance from the various initiatives coming forward.

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*Special Education Re-formed: Beyond Rhetoric?* Edited by Harry Daniels. Pp. 283. London: Falmer Press. 2000. £16.99. ISBN 07507-0892-1. ‘New Millennium’ series.

During the 1990s, debates over educational policy and provision for pupils with disabilities and learning difficulties came to centre on the notion of ‘inclusion’, that is, the right of these children to be educated together with their nondisabled peers in regular neighbourhood schools, a position which was endorsed for example in the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994). In the United Kingdom this issue moved on to the policy agenda following the victory of New Labour in the 1997 election, with the new government issuing a series of policy documents which officially espoused the goal of increasing the proportion of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools. At the same time, there were many other
aspects of government policy which appeared to run counter to this agenda, such as the introduction of payment by results for teachers, the prescriptive standardisation of pedagogy at state level, and the creeping privatisation of the public education service. In this context, supporters of the current bipartite system also mounted a rearguard action, with no small success, aimed at watering down the commitment to increased inclusion contained in the early policy statements, before draft legislation was formulated.

The present book enters on to this conflicted and rapidly-shifting terrain with the stated aim of moving beyond the rhetoric surrounding the term ‘inclusion’ in order to establish an evidence base for policy reform. The editor, Harry Daniels, who has played an important part in previous work in developing neo-Vygotskian learning theory, has brought together in this collection fifteen chapters loosely organised under the four themes of: values, pedagogic concerns, individual and groups (learning together), and pressure groups. The chapters reflect a variety of perspectives, though with seven of the eighteen contributors coming from a professional background in psychology or educational psychology, the voice of this discipline is perhaps particularly strongly represented. One chapter reports work from Denmark, and another discusses a comparative study of practices in eight advanced industrialised countries; the rest of the contributions are mostly concerned with the British policy context.

I particularly enjoyed reading the final section of the book, which contains some fresh and thought-provoking material on the increasingly important role of pressure groups. Jane Martin’s chapter on parents’ organisations reminds us that the quasi-market in education casts parents in the role of individual consumers and, by its nature, systematically disadvantages many children identified as having special educational needs. Recognising the power differential between parents and professionals in decision-making about placements, she invokes the need for a collective ‘voice’, raising the question of whether a common organisation for all parents would be better placed to address this aim than the current fragmented mosaic of single-issue groups. In an informed discussion of the role of the voluntary sector, Olga Miller astutely locates the tensions facing non-profit organisations between the direct provision of services and their advocacy function, and between the growing contract culture of central government funding, and the voluntary sector’s healthy desire for independence from the state. She points out that an increasing reliance on voluntary bodies in the provision of statutory services could militate against a coherent and comprehensive view of service development. Katy Simmons of IPSEA contributes a chapter reviewing the legal framework on inclusion as it affects parents. She argues that statements of special educational needs are a key to successful mainstream placements, though I felt that this view was undermined by evidence she presents showing that LEAs can and do use statements as a weapon to deny access to the mainstream by naming a special school placement against parents’ wishes; decisions which are sometimes upheld by the SEN Tribunal and High Court.

Several contributors to this collection make great play with the concept of ‘dilemmas’, suggesting for example that there is a fundamental dichotomy between the aim of providing a common educational experience in which all can participate, and the aim of making a form of provision which is appropriate to individual needs. Posing the issue in this way leads to the conclusion that no final resolution of the dilemma is possible, and that what is needed is a pragmatic compromise or trade-off between ultimately irreconcilable value-positions. I have noted above some of the contradictions in contemporary government policy, and it is not difficult to believe
that these give rise to tensions experienced as concrete dilemmas by practitioners and administrators at different levels in the education system. But I would argue that presenting these dilemmas as the outcome of existential value-conflicts which are intrinsic to the human condition is an act of mystification. This conceals their roots in a historically-specific policy settlement which prioritises the goals of economically powerful groups in society above others, and for which those with the power to determine national education policy bear a definite responsibility. It is in any case not at all clear that the main aims of the state education system to date have been about providing common educational experiences, or meeting individual needs. For much of the twentieth century in Britain, schooling functioned as a naked instrument of social selection, and the New Labour government’s first major statement of education policy, which declared that the purpose of education was to produce ‘human capital’ to meet the perceived needs of the labour market, instilled little confidence that this situation was about to be reversed (DfEE, 1997).

This book succeeds in bringing together contributions from a range of perspectives which bear on the broader issues of social policy in which the debate over the future of special education and its relation to the mainstream is enmeshed. Original evidence is presented and discussed by several authors, for example the analysis in chapter three by Daniels and his colleagues of the interwoven influence of gender, ethnicity and ‘special needs’ in patterns of referral and service provision. In the end, I doubt whether greater equity in educational provision can be brought about by a ‘reform’ of the existing special education sector, as the title of the book seems to imply; I think the task should be seen instead in terms of a transformation of the mainstream. Nevertheless, this volume contains much material which will be of interest to all those concerned with current developments in special education policy and theory, and is particularly useful in providing up-to-date information about the developing role of parents’ groups and voluntary organisations in the British context.

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Improving Schools and Inspection: The Self-Inspecting School. By Neil Ferguson, Peter Earley, Brian Fidler and Janet Ouston. Pp. xvi, 172. London: Paul Chapman/SAGE Publications. 2000. £49.50 (hbk), £16.99 (pbk). ISBN 0-7619-6726-5 (hbk), ISBN 0-7619-6727-3 (pbk).

It is a matter of record that the debates in parliament surrounding the 1992 Education (Schools) Act generated more heat than light concerning the inspection of schools. This tradition has been continued by the inspection body in England (Ofsted), which has frequently participated in ferocious debates with its critics. It is only fair to point out that the critics, also, have on occasion tended to raise the tone of the debate so that there has been an element of ‘megaphone diplomacy’ on both sides. It is therefore a pleasure to read a book which manages to balance criticism of the inspection body with praise for its many achievements; and which has collected and summarised a large amount of research evidence in support of the many interesting points made.

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The authors (who have between them a long record of researching school inspection and management) set out their stall early: it is their intention to 'consider the system of Ofsted inspections and ask how beneficial it has been in encouraging schools to develop and improve'. They also consider the advantages and disadvantages of the present system. It is made clear that Ofsted has generated a large amount of useful information about schools and their performance, including performance indicators such as PICSIs and PANDAs. In addition, many Ofsted publications, including the Inspection Handbook, have been praised for their usefulness by heads and teachers. The evidence that inspection in its current form has a number of negative effects is also summarised, so that 'the question arises . . . whether the disruption to schools caused by inspection is necessary' (p. 19). If unambiguous evidence existed to prove a link between inspection and 'standards', then one would expect the answer to this question to be in the affirmative. However, it appears that 'Ofsted have claimed that there is no significant relationship between inspection and examination results' (p. 35), making it more difficult to justify the considerable costs of the system.

The early chapters give accounts of well-documented research areas such as pre-inspection preparations, the inspection week, and key issues for action. It is pointed out that the present inspection system is seen as too threatening, so that all but the most naïve headteachers and staff do their best to conceal their schools' weaknesses, rather than behaving as patients who, when they seek a doctor's advice, give a full account of their symptoms. The chapter on key issues is interesting in that two apparently contradictory results are reported: it appears that heads, when asked to predict two key issues for their schools, performed badly – with 43 per cent naming issues which did not appear at all in the inspection report. On the other hand, there was a good match between the heads' predictions and the key issues most frequently included in the reports (for all schools in the sample). This tends to show that 'heads and inspectors share a view of the priorities for inspection' (p. 62). The authors go on to point out that 'feedback and advice on the quality of action plans is not available from Ofsted or the inspection team' (except for schools in serious difficulties) (p. 64), and question the lack of follow-up and support in the post-inspection period.

This brings us to the authors' second main purpose: to investigate whether there are 'alternative approaches to school . . . improvement that might prove to be more effective' (pp. 1–2). They make the point that the present inspection system has already evolved in a number of significant ways, often in response to research findings and/or Ofsted's internal procedures (Ofsted would probably identify the latter as the catalyst for change). For example, it is now part of standard procedure for feedback to be given to individual teachers. This has certainly reduced stress levels for teachers who, in the past, were given little indication of how the inspection was going, though (perhaps because of a lack of time) feedback does not appear to cause many teachers to change their teaching significantly.

In what ways could the present system be altered with advantage? The views of heads, inspectors and the Select Committee of the House of Commons are discussed, and it is noted that the proposal most strongly supported by heads and registered inspectors was that 'inspectors should follow up inspections and provide support/advice for school improvement' (p. 92). This view was rejected by the committee on the grounds that 'it is not the role of the inspector to come into the school and tell the headteacher how to run it' (p. 94).

If inspectors are not to be allowed to give advice, what alternatives are available? The authors describe a system of assisted school self-review, in use in Australia, and
consider ways in which this model could be adapted for English schools. Compari-
sions are drawn between Ofsted inspections and self-review, and later between ‘self-
evaluation’ and ‘self-inspection’, which clarify the characteristics of the various
mechanisms. The authors strongly question whether Ofsted’s ‘twin purposes of
school improvement and public accountability are compatible’ (p. 145). Their
thesis is that Ofsted’s focus and emphasis lies on making schools accountable to the
government (and the taxpayer), rather than on assisting schools to improve.

Ofsted itself is not keen to move away from the present model, as the chief
inspector claims that ‘too many headteachers do not know what is happening in the
classrooms of their schools’ (p. 133). The authors argue that the current system has
significant imperfections, including crucially that inspection does not act as an
effective catalyst for school improvement either before or after the inspection, and
has little effect on classroom practice (p. 141). They propose instead a split system
of ‘self-inspection’ (which would focus on school improvement) in tandem with a
slimmed down Ofsted inspection (which would focus on issues of public account-
ability). This section is carefully argued, and is worthy of the most serious consid-
eration from policy makers, though it is doubtful that Ofsted will readily agree to
give up its responsibility for monitoring teaching quality.

Overall, therefore, this book should be read by headteachers who wish to
improve their schools’ self-improvement systems; by inspectors who are ready to
consider improvements to and also alternatives to parts of the present system; and
by those who have the power to introduce major reforms in the process.
Is self-inspection an idea whose time has come? Time will tell.

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