Globalisation and Pedagogy. Space, Place and Identity. By Richard Edwards and Robin Usher. Pp. 179. Index. London and New York: Routledge. 2000. £55.00 (hbk). ISBN 0-415-19114-9 (hbk).

‘The reconfiguration of pedagogical practices around the globe has taken on a momentum that an earlier generation might well have considered startling and disorienting. Indeed, many still working in the education and training arenas do experience a high degree of disorientation and dislocation.’ So state the authors (p. 1) at the outset of this book, which addresses the effect of globalisation on pedagogical concepts and practices. The authors’ main purpose is to propose the replacement of ‘dislocation’, with its implications of disempowerment, with their concept of ‘(dis)location’: a deliberate decentring of concept and practice through ‘mapping’ and ‘translating’ (see below). At first glance, the style of the book (in particular, the exploration of multiple meanings of ‘opening’ and ‘closing’ and the tendency to turn sentences upon themselves) is resonant of Stronach and MacLure’s Educational Research Undone (1997); but these authors unfortunately lack Stronach and MacLure’s dexterity and lightness of touch with language. Edwards and Usher perform linguistic somersaults throughout the book which, even as a committed postmodernist with a love of complexity, I find hard to take. This is not an easy read.

The authors explore the multiple causes and manifestations of globalisation: the expansion of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and Computer Mediated Communication (CMC); the compression of space-time through developments in travel, media and communications; the development of international policies and organisations at macro and micro level; the expansion of Open and Distance Learning (ODL); and the reconceptualisation of pedagogy through globalising influences, new teacher-learner relationships and the concept of lifelong learning. The authors choose to divide the book into ‘glimpses’ rather than chapters: these ‘glimpses’ aim to illuminate diverse but interlinked aspects of globalisation and pedagogy, drawing in particular on feminist and postcolonial thinking. The glimpses show us changing concepts of space/time, pedagogy, the curriculum, the academy, knowledge, research and identity, though these concepts are dealt with in a recursive or spiral fashion, lending a sense of deja-vu (or deja-lu) which does not always enhance the experience of the reader.

The authors explore changing notions of knowledge, curriculum and pedagogy, highlighting the blurring of boundaries between ‘knowledge’ and ‘information’ through increased media and Internet access and growing learner autonomy. They focus on the shifting identities of ‘teacher’ and ‘learner’ brought about by the dislocation – or relocation – of spaces for teaching and learning and the reduction of face-to-face learning encounters, and identify the changing role of the university, away from that of the seat of knowledge and towards that of service provider to an increasingly diverse range of learner-clients. In relation to educational research and its links with pedagogy as the transmission of established knowledge (in itself a highly questionable concept) they identify a tension between a desire for closure,
particularly among ‘users’ who commission research projects, and a move towards increasing diversity and complexity: a tension I have explored myself elsewhere (Atkinson, 2000a).

Without claiming to present a ‘resolution’ to a ‘problem’, the authors offer a way forward through what they describe as ‘pedagogies of (dis)location’:

(Dis)location signifies the moveable space of diaspora and hybridity. It is not a singular or single space but one in a constant process of reconfiguring, and multiple in the sense that it inscribes a notion of power, difference, engagement and negotiation rather than transcendence (p. 122–3).

They advocate performing or enacting pedagogy in a way which recognises its multiple meanings and contexts and does not seek to fix or locate it. It is a way of accepting uncertainty; of reframing identity so that ‘who we are becomes something which we experience as a question to be answered rather than the answers resting in a pre-given order of things’ (p. 101). All this is well and good, and I have argued for accepting uncertainty and reframing identity myself (Atkinson 2000a, b, 2001), but I am uncertain as to whether the metaphor of (dis)location adds anything to the existing literature in the field, for all the authors’ advocacy of the term as ‘a useful, non-essentialising metaphorical resource’ (p. 8).

My disillusionment continues, I’m afraid, with the authors’ concluding argument in favour of ‘mapping’ and ‘translating’, drawing on feminist and postcolonial literature. They relate the concept of mapping to a discursive approach to analysis, drawing on Ball (1990): mapping in this context is a process of identifying the disparate discourses through which we might understand pedagogic practices and teacher-learner relationships. This sort of unpacking, of course, is central to deconstructive as well as discursive analyses, but the authors choose not to visit the work of other postmodern thinkers who have followed this path (e.g. Lather, 1991; Stronach and MaLure, 1997; Popkewitz, 1998a, b) or to relate this point to their earlier references to Foucault. The process of translating, coming from postcolonial studies, involves undertaking a conceptual, perceptual, cultural or ideological shift in the understanding of a concept such as learning or pedagogy in order to accommodate the diversity encompassed in the effects of globalisation. The extent to which Edwards and Usher achieve this shift, however, particularly in relation to culturally diverse concepts of pedagogy and identity, is debatable.

The authors seek to exemplify the process of mapping and translating through a description of a distance learning course in guidance and counselling. Unfortunately, however, this move proves to be the most disappointing move of all: the acknowledgement of disparate discourses in understanding both self and others is not new, and the case study which the authors offer here sheds no further light on the issue. They propose a concept of professional ‘knowledgeability’ which differs little from Elliott’s reflexive consciousness (1993), or the dialogic self-awareness of McNiff (1993), and there is little sense, either here or earlier in the book, of (dis)location from the authors’ white, Western viewpoint, other than repeated caveats that those in different cultural contexts may experience globalisation and pedagogy, or guidance and counselling, or mapping and translating, differently from themselves.

This book serves as a useful channel for the wisdom of significant postcolonial/feminist writers, particularly Massey (1993, 1994), Bhabha (1994) and Brah (1996) whose insights shine through these tangled pages with welcome clarity; but the authors’ own comments, once they have been unravelled, yield less reward.
Having searched the book from beginning to end to find new insights into globalisation and pedagogy, I am left wondering whether I have learnt anything at all.

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Elizabeth Atkinson

under Educating Women: Globalizing Inequality. By Jackie Brine. Pp. 1 x 178. Index. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press. 1999. £55.00 (hbk), £17.99 (pbk). ISBN 0 335 19739 6 (hbk), 0 335 19738 8 (pbk). ‘Feminist Educational Thinking’ series.

In this book Jackie Brine expands and deepens a theme which is by now familiar to those who have followed her work – how it is that the European Union education and training policy is linked to a discourse of equality which trains working class women for jobs that do not exist.

Her focus is on working-class women, a group given short shrift by social scientists and many feminists. She wrote it motivated by the belief that working-class women are under-educated, many, as a result, spending their lives believing themselves to be stupid. Her main guiding idea is that within the formation of regionalised blocs or ‘states’, for example, the European Union (EU) and the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) education plays a similar role to that...

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played in individual nation states and that this role maintains existing gender, class and race power-relations. She rejects the simplistic globalisation thesis which has been uncritically appropriated by so many writers in the field of lifelong learning. According to this thesis a qualitatively different world economy has developed in which politics and nation states have been all but vanquished. In her view – backed up by her own empirical research – the state (nation state and regional ‘state’) still plays a key role in the capitalist global economy: indeed, as its control of economics dwindles – because of the growing power of transnational corporations (TNCs) – so the need for its hold on social policy increases, particularly in the fields of welfare and education. This is precisely why nation states have opted to link together into regionalised blocs with free trade agreements and, for example, European Citizenship agreements.

At the heart of the book is a fascinating account (and discourse analysis) of the developing post-compulsory education and training policy of the EU (and other blocs) and of the shift from a human resource economic discourse (the need to train for labour market needs) to one which locates education and training within an overall social policy dealing with the effects of globalisation – including the fear of social unrest.

The earlier chapters (Chapters 1–3) lay out her theoretical framework, which combines feminist insights with theories of neo-colonialism and of an unfettered international capitalism. These early chapters are important for the depth and edge they lend to her main object of study – working-class women’s experiences of EU training policies, particularly in ESF funded projects.

Chapter 4 explores the emergence of a discourse of equality within the EU and the difference between formal and material equity and the familiar feminist debate surrounding similarity and difference. In Chapter 5 Brine turns to the European Social Fund, which, although the main source of funding for European unemployed women, is simply giving women the crumbs from the bakery. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 consider the effects of the UK government on European training and education policy. This is a mind-opening account of how, in the UK – the most deregulated and unprotected labour market of any of the OECD economies (excepting the US) – the ‘agency’ of the nation state and of the main sectors administering the fund actually work to marginalise women’s training.

Chapter 7: ‘Marginalising women’s training’ is a devastating case study of UK interpretation and implementation of policy in 1996 in which she focuses on five UK administrative sectors to explain their shift away from the then European ‘mainstreaming’ equal opportunities training policy. What she finds is a prevalent narrow interpretation of this policy to mean mainstreaming the equal opportunities pathway only, thus effectively excluding women from the other training pathways to employment which are perceived as being for unemployed men, not women. This is an extraordinary finding. Another intriguing finding for me as a Scot is that Scottish interviewees expressed a greater commitment to exploiting the gaps and spaces in policy than the English ones. However, since the original policy may be more radical than subsequent interpretations it is clear that such exercise of agency is not always positive.

This book is an accessible yet theoretically sophisticated analysis of the structural features of global, regional and national policy-making. It also stresses the importance of local context and individual agency, without romanticising the latter. Chapter 8 presents three case studies of ESF funded projects, warts and all. I found this the most provocative part of the book and Brine’s depiction of the attitudes of the workers in the project as spanning the ‘evangelical’ to the ‘patronising’ hit the
A section titled ‘The Closed Community’ (p. 128) makes uncomfortable and painful reading. It is a fine illustration of how the global gets played out locally and how romanticised depictions of feminist inspired education will not do.

Given the lack of choice in the ESF programme (where black and white working class women are trained for black and white working class men’s jobs – which are dying out anyway) it is significant that the women trainees seem to see their opportunities in broad adult education terms rather than in relation to specific skills training. Brine’s own view is that current training policy for working class women is more about social control than about preparation for jobs, a strategy of the neo-liberal state which puts the blame for the failures of the state onto individuals themselves. But in the hands of feminist educators, she says, opportunities have been provided for working class women to access a radical adult education explicitly directed at social change and justice. She advocates an education which goes beyond literacy, competence and qualifications to one that encourages a critical understanding and engagement with the world in order, perhaps to challenge and change it.

Jackie Brine’s book is a testament to such a project. Her unblinking look at the strategies of neo-liberalism, internationalised capitalism and their effects on those on the downside of a worldwide project of re-structuring, is timely. For those working and writing in the field of lifelong learning who have swallowed simplistic tales of globalisation and the end of politics her book should be compulsory reading. And for feminists and adult educators who remain stuck in the past, it is a clarion call to move on and to engage with new complexities and realities.

The main value of the book for me lies first in its insistence on a feminist analysis of fields of study so often treated as ungendered, and second, in its location and anchoring of theory in the lives and experiences of working class women – including her own.

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JEAN BARR

Professionalism and Ethics. By David Carr pp. 275. London: Routledge 2000. ISBN 0-415-18459-2 (hbk) 0-415-18460-6 (pbk) ‘Professional Ethics’ series.

David Carr’s book is a breath of fresh air in a world (certainly in the UK) where teaching is seen by governments, and by an increasingly large number of newly qualified teachers, as essentially a technical pursuit: benchmarks, targets and curricula rubrics are set by external authorities, and teachers in schools, led by their principals, are there to discover and implement the most efficient ways of achieving such targets. Ofsted, LEAs, and governing bodies are then there to oversee this implementation, and blow the whistle if it is not being done properly. For Carr, this kind of approach fails to address the core meaning of professionalism, which he regards as essentially ethical in character. For him, the profession of teaching is a moral project, one which necessarily is concerned with the development of ‘human flourishing’. Teachers then must debate not only the means of teaching, but the aims and ends of the educational project as well. It therefore becomes obvious why this activity – the consideration of the ultimate purposes of education – is missing from current conceptions of professionalism, for when governments arrogate the determination of ends to themselves, they neither require nor want others believing that such considerations are part – nay, the defining characteristic – of their endeavours.

It is hardly surprising then that Carr comes up with some politically unash-
iable definitions within this book of the role of professional educators. He is at pains, for example, to point out (p. 49) that because, just as in medicine and law, there is ‘inherent uncertainty and significant public disagreement’ concerning the purpose and aims of education, a ‘technicist’ account of professional practice is necessarily inadequate. It therefore follows, as he asserts (p. 98) that, counter to the basis for teacher training in the UK, ‘to try to understand educational professionalism from the direction of discretely specifiable competencies is essentially to start from the end of things’, simply because without an understanding and personal commitment to certain educational aims, there can be no competencies. It is understandable then, that given the moral project which Carr conceives education to be, that he sees the primary role of headteachers as ‘to forge communities conducive to moral and spiritual growth.’ Carr’s aim then is to re-orient notions of professionalism from ones founded upon technique and competence, to one which which looks beyond such concerns, encompassing them within the wider question of why they are required in the first place. His book is therefore profoundly subversive of present political conceptions of professionals, and one which, to this reviewer at least, is therefore both welcome and necessary.

Carr’s project cannot and does not, of course, stop there. By asserting the essentially ethical nature of professionalism, he therefore has to deal with a myriad of questions which used to be the staple diet of trainee teachers, but now – to their professional detriment – has very little if any place in their initial training. Thus, whilst part 1 of the book is concerned with demonstrating the inherently ethical character of teacher professionalism, section 2 argues that there is a genuine teacher knowledge and expertise grounded in Aristotelian notions of *phronesis* or moral wisdom. Section 3 is largely devoted to resolving the dilemma that the inevitable contestability of values, indeed their potential relativism, might just as surely as present technical accounts, undermine any notion of the possibility of an ethical educational professionalism. The concern to establish a degree of ethical objectivity informs most of the debates with which Carr wrestles in the rest of the book, and in so doing, the author manages to develop a nice coherence to his argument throughout.

This is not to say that there are not issues to be resolved. In a book as necessarily ambitious as this, and with an author who is not afraid to speak his mind, it would be surprising if there were not omissions which might have been included, stances with which a reviewer would differ, conclusions which provoke disagreement. Thus, this reviewer would have liked an extension at the beginning of the book on the meaning of learning, for if, as Carr argues (p. 5) teaching is about the ‘promotion of learning’, and there exist profound disagreements about both the nature and meaning of learning, it would seem an important topic to address – even if the author’s views on the topic can to some extent be inferred from the book’s overall stance. Furthermore, the ‘virtue ethicist’ stance which he adopts, is by and large a subtle and sensitive portrayal of the position, but there are times when certain things are claimed as virtues – such as neatness on p. 218 – which are not only highly contentious, but lead one to see how such a philosophical approach can be translated into a pretty dogmatic and authoritarian ‘character education’ approach, or which indeed can all too easily become a supermarket of values from which you choose to suit your personal or political inclinations. Moreover, and despite Carr’s appeal for the need for the contextualisation of ethical values in order to come to a sensitive and considered – and inherently contestable – decision, he uses case studies for the exemplification of his argument, which it could be argued precisely lack that contextualisation which would allow one to come to their sensitive resolution.
Finally, the argument for contextuality requires a difficult balancing act between arguing for values which are too objective and contextually free, and ones which are so context-bound as to have little justification beyond this context. I think Carr does a good job here, but not all will agree.

However, despite the substantial paragraph it has taken to describe these problems, most are in a way a strength of the book rather than a weakness, precisely because one can only come to them through deliberation, reflection and argumentation into which Carr so cleverly leads one; and it is precisely this kind of deliberation about the issues which he places centre stage which tend to be so sadly lacking from educational policy debates at the present time. For the matters it raises, and for the manner in which they are presented and argued for, this book deserves a wide audience.

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Mike Bottery

The Social World of Pupil Career: Strategic Biographies through Primary School.
By Andrew Pollard and Ann Filer. Pp. 320. Index. London: Cassell. 1999. (hbk & pbk). ISBN 0-304-32640-2 (hbk), 0-304-32642-9 (pbk).

This is one in a series of studies of English primary school pupils throughout their years of compulsory schooling, and follows directly from an earlier volume, The Social World of Children’s Learning (Pollard and Filer, Cassell 1996), which was also based on research in the same school. This present book describes and analyses the experience of four individual pupils over their seven years in a primary school, and seeks to address several questions: how should the primary school pupil’s ‘career’ be conceptualised and analysed; how do pupils cope with the experience of different teachers and classes; how do pupil strategies interact with the influences of family and peers to affect their developing identities; and is there a tension between national policies regarding educational standards, the quality of pupil experience, lifelong learning and the personal, social and moral development of future citizens? An ambitious agenda.

The study is briefly contextualised in respect of the movement from macro to micro approaches in sociology, and from behaviourism to ‘constructivism’ in psychology. Citing Prout and James (1990), the authors outline their belief in children as, ‘active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, the lives of those around them and of the societies in which they live’. Children, they argue, are more than ‘passive subjects of social structures and processes’ (op. cit.), deficient and dependent and there to be ‘taught’ through ever more closely specified school curricula.

The research style is ethnographic; and the authors offer a systematic, scholarly and very readable account, carefully contextualised in terms of social theory and of the social policy of the 1980s and 1990s, and of the research school and its staff. The greater part of the book is devoted to detailed descriptive accounts of the four children (two girls, two boys) over the full seven years of their primary schooling; and these seek to track the changing patterns of learning and interaction in respect of the influences of home and the local community, the classroom, playground and the wider school environment. As the authors put it, ‘Through the stories we hear the voices of children defining themselves against the wider group of peers, articulating a sense of self as a girl or boy, as clever or slower, as leader, follower or marginal to the activities of their peers’ (op. cit.). Pollard and Filer also report the
voices of parents, particular friends and teachers, and their own reflections (including those derived from classroom observation) as researchers.

Overall, the study represents the very detailed and painstaking collection, presentation and analysis of a mass of data, albeit for just four children, and is an important contribution to the literature. It also exemplifies a central and long-recognised dilemma in social science: how best to advance knowledge in the almost impossibly complex field of social interaction with its huge range of variables? Generalisation on the basis of this tiny sample is clearly impossible, as the authors readily acknowledge; and yet such detailed personal accounts obviously do much to illuminate the nature and operation of those broader social processes which may be more amenable to more controlled and measurable macro methodologies.

It would have been interesting to know more about how the data was collected and processed; how continuity was ensured when the second researcher (Filer) took over from the first (Pollard) in year 5 of the study; what guidelines and controls were applied in respect of comparability, and of subjectivity in observation, recording and analysis. It is, indeed, a pity that the reader is simply referred to the authors’ other publications for such key information about methodology. Secondly, while there are references to the possible significance of broader, structural concerns such as social class, ethnicity and gender in the formation of pupil identity (which a future volume will apparently address), their absence as analytical variables highlights the limitations of a micro study such as this. Nonetheless, like other enquiries in this tradition, it undoubtedly complements more extensive quantifiable accounts; and the aim remains to find a balanced combination of approaches in our pursuit of understanding.

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Evaluations on Citizenship. By Bernard Crick. Pp. 210. Continuum London/New York 2000 £30.00 hardback ISBN 0-8264-4821-6. £14.99 paperback ISBN 0-8264-4182-7

In the preface to this collection of essays, Bernard Crick begins with a warning to the reader that the book is `neither a guide to nor a resource book for the practical delivery of the new subject `Citizenship’ in the National Curriculum. . . . Neither is it a history.’ Nevertheless, there is much here to inform and support all those concerned with the development of Citizenship within the school curriculum and for all those wishing to reflect on a concept which eludes simplistic definition. In the wake of the report of the advisory committee set up by David Blunkett, Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools (QCA, 1998) and the introduction of the Citizenship Order (2000), these essays make a notable contribution to the discussion and debate surrounding the implementation of a freshly conceptualised aspect of the curriculum which seeks to make meaningful links between classroom experience and the real lives of children in their own communities and in the wider society.

The book consists of eleven essays spanning a period from 1969 to the present day and the style is personal, optimistic and readable. The aim of the author, as
stated in the preface, is to be ‘speculative, thought provoking and thoughtful . . .
arguementative, sometimes polemical indeed and often informal in style, with a
personal tone’. In this he succeeds admirably. The writing bears testimony to his
belief in educating children to become active citizens and in the necessity for citi-
zension, both as a subject and as a practice, to be a ‘bridge between the vocational
aims of education and education for its own sake, in danger of being forgotten’.
This over emphasis on subject specific teaching at the primary level and an increas-
ingly strong focus on the utilitarian aims of education has been one of the failures
of the National Curriculum. The original non-statutory guidance to support the
cross-curricular and affective aspects of education (NCC 1989; 1990) was not widely
taken up by teachers over-stretched with the implementation of the new orders, the
burden of assessment and the demands of Ofsted inspection. The Citizenship
Order (2000) and the revised framework for guidance, ‘PSHE and Citizenship’ are
long overdue initiatives by the government to redress the balance and give higher
status to the importance of values education. For many schools and teachers and for
all those actively involved in the education of the young, the development of policy
and practice in citizenship education constitutes a real challenge and one for which
there is no one blueprint – best practice will need to be worked out by schools and
communities in ways which meet their needs and are relevant to their own particu-
lar contexts. These essays make a significant contribution to these discussions and
taken together form a comprehensive overview of one person’s attempts to grapple
with the issues over the past few decades. They have important things to say about
the nature of citizenship, its development within the education system and its rela-
tionship to the national political context.

The book starts with a useful discussion of the nature of citizenship, its histori-
cal context and its antecedents, political education and civics. Chapters 2–5 consti-
tute essays first published in the 70s and 80s which explore a number of
problematic issues relating to the teaching of political literacy. The pitfalls of some
traditional approaches which heavily emphasised knowledge and information at
the expense of skills and understandings, are lucidly expressed in a way which
engages the reader in reflection about the nature of the subject. It also proposes a
conceptual framework for political literacy encompassing knowledge, self-interest
and social responsibility and action skills. Practitioners in particular should find
Chapter 3 On Bias a helpful consideration of one of the most problematic areas of
political and citizenship education. As Crick remarks, ‘Many councillors, officials
and parents believe in principle that politics should be in the school curriculum
because it is so important to us all, but in practice oppose or obstruct because they
also believe that it cannot be taught without bias.’ This goes to the heart of the
uncertainty that many teachers feel about teaching controversial and current issues
in an educational system attempting to meet the needs of a diverse and pluralistic
society.

Chapters 6–9 constitute a range of essays from more recent years which take the
form of personal reflections and views arising from the report of the advisory
committee Education for citizenship and the teaching of democracy in schools (QCA, 1998)
which the author chaired. These essays consider in some depth the new citizenship
requirements, the nature of citizenship in a liberal democracy, the role of citizen-
ship education and the values dimension. There is a disappointingly short section
on world citizenship, which although recognizing the need for educating for the
global context in order to develop notions of interdependence and sustainability,
dismisses these as unrealistic goals. Emphasis is placed on the need to focus on
more immediate experience within the local and national context. One feels here
that the author has been outstripped by the rapid globalisation of recent years and there is a danger that his concept and definition of citizenship is rapidly becoming obsolete. National boundaries are no longer capable of proscribing citizenship responsibilities and children are as influenced and affected by events and ideas on a world scale as they are by local and national developments. In reality local and global cannot be separated and any concept of citizenship has to take this into account.

The final two chapters of the book consists of two essays reflecting Crick’s current concerns about the state of democracy and the decline of political thinking in British public life. He feels strongly that political literacy ‘is not only lacking among ordinary school leavers, but also among many of those who try to control their standards’. This book should make a useful contribution to those wishing to develop their understanding in this most complex of areas.

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Anna Disney

Teachers and the State: Towards a Directed Profession. By Mike Bottery and Nigel Wright. Pp 176. Index. London: Routledge. 2000. £55.00 ISBN 0 415 21347 9 (hbk). ‘Routledge Research in Education’ series.

It would be illuminating to know just exactly how Teachers and the State: Towards a directed profession came to take its published shape and title. Certainly the sub-title reflects the main theme, though viewed as a whole this volume offers a rather specific treatment of what its full title might suggest. Nevertheless there is a consistent line to the argument running throughout: the pressures of successive government-driven educational reforms in the UK have linked with an essentially compliant and implementational professional culture to produce what the authors suggest is ‘a damaging coherence’ – a phrase to conjure with, if ever there was one – which has weakened the notion of teachers as extended professionals. The underlying argument that teachers are being deprofessionalised by the loss of control over what and how they teach is a familiar one. The authors offer a wide-ranging discussion of contemporary pressures but more particularly they provide an analysis grounded in some empirical research related to teachers’ priorities for their own professional development and the perceptions of professional priorities held by mentors for their work with student teachers. For Bottery and Wright the necessary response is for teachers to resist the drive towards being a state-directed profession of ‘technical rationalists’ and to strive to become ‘critical players’ in societies which are constantly changing.

There is some interesting discussion of the ‘context of teachers’ deprofessionalisation’, in which Bottery and Wright argue the UK experience has not been unique but has ‘encapsulated’ international post-Fordist trends in which control over the educational mission is centralised whilst responsibility for implementation is devolved through market mechanisms. Though the empirical foundations are somewhat narrower than the superstructure of argument built upon them, this book offers some careful evidence of teachers’ sense of their professional priorities in two key areas. The study of INSET provision and teachers’ participation in the 1990s shows just what has driven in-service work. The authors draw the conclusion from their survey: ‘virtually all the in-service education and training investigated appeared to be devoted to questions of legislative implementation’. Though there is no clear base-line for making comparative judgements, teachers’ perception of
their development needs appear to have become narrower and more ‘technical rational’ as they have had to respond to successive waves of reform bringing the twin pressures of market competition between institutions and central direction of the curriculum. Another study focused on the ‘perceptions of professionalism by the mentors of student teachers’. In investigating the priorities of mentors and their allocation of time with students, Bottery and Wright show that consideration of broader issues of ‘being a professional’ is essentially driven out by the immediately practical concerns of supporting the development of students’ teaching skills. Whilst the authors acknowledge the importance of these fundamental skills, they want some redressing of the balance in favour of promoting a more informed understanding of the wider professional role and context.

Inasmuch as the book carries a call to arms, it is one for teachers to rebuild a more self-directed profession with a sense of its social role in an increasingly global society. One solution for the authors is a thorough commitment to teachers’ own action research. This they see as emancipatory for individuals and crucial to the development of teachers who have a grasp of their societal role and context (what they call ‘ecological understanding’) and can function as critical professionals. Perhaps somewhat optimistically, Bottery and Wright conclude teachers can regain some of the public respect lost in recent decades if they can rise beyond the professional culture of being ‘predominantly technical rational and implementational’ and adopt the critical social role they advocate.

Given its title, the treatment of some perennially awkward issues of professions, their organisation and collective relationship with the state is limited. Whilst the desire to avoid the pitfalls of hoary definitional questions is understandable, these cannot be entirely overlooked. Greater acknowledgement of other professional groups’ often fraught relationships to the state is a useful corrective to some simple notions of ‘the autonomy of the teaching profession’ – whether referring to some idealised past or future. Bottery and Wright don’t really question the construct of a unified profession (still less that of a unified state) or fully acknowledge the many competing versions of professionalism, not least amongst teachers themselves. It is also not quite so self-evident that a more autonomous teaching profession would necessarily be the great democratic advance which they suggest.

A comment from an anonymous headteacher is used to introduce chapter 3: ‘We can get bogged down in academics – what we really want is time to implement the National Curriculum.’ Unfortunately, for those teachers, pundits and politicians – not to mention a certain former HMCI – who might side with that headteacher on the utility of ‘academics’, this book will do little to persuade them otherwise. Its rather flaccid academic style, contrived models, overwrought and mixed metaphors, and clichés about the universal constant of ‘change’ would very likely soon drive our anonymous headteacher back to concentrating on the latest DfEE directive. That would be understandable, yet it should be regretted because the underlying arguments which Bottery and Wright discuss are important and the case they advance is worth a hearing.

Though Bottery and Wright do not discuss the recent establishment of the GTCs in England and Wales, this is perhaps the moment for teachers to seize opportunities for a more vigorous assertion of professionalism. This book could be a contribution to the necessary debate about what teacher professionalism should entail. For those engaged on post-graduate research and masters level courses it will certainly be a useful source of evidence and arguments. For all those interested in serious consideration about how professionalism might be built up from action at the base rather from the imposition of structures from on
high, and as an alternative to some state-sponsored versions of what being an effective professional might mean, it certainly provides food for thought.

ROB HYLAND

For Home, Country and Race: Constructing Gender, Class and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880–1914. By Stephen Heathorn. Pp. 300 including Index and appendices, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 2000 (no price) ISBN 0-8020-4436-0. Series ‘Studies in Gender and History’

This is a book which analyses elementary school ‘readers’, written by middle class authors for a working class audience. It’s thesis is that the cultural meanings of class, race, nation and family were almost systematically rewritten between the early liberal period of the mid-19th century and the late-Victorian period. Heathorn has produced from, a wealth of scholarly research, a cultural explanation for the condition of the English working classes on the eve of the First World War. He successfully places this explanation in contrast to the situation that existed in the mid-nineteenth century to show historical development, and on that level this is a very useful volume for educational historians. He does, however, have a tendency to extrapolate a little too much from the evidence, as when he holds this transformation to have been largely responsible for British workers fighting foreign workers in World War One. Rather, Heathorn should be content to have demonstrated in great detail the way in which the English and Empire middle class succeeded in reinventing notions of race, nation, class and gender in the period after 1850. The bulk of Heathorn’s research is concerned with the construction of myths of ethnicity, race and national belonging through the materials contained in ‘readers’.

‘Readers’ in this context refers to simple introductory history and geography books written specifically for the Elementary school market-traditional history and geography books aimed at the secondary grammar and public school sectors were both too expensive and complex for this purpose. Readers had to both teach the young boys and girls their ‘letters’, as well as provide them with some knowledge of their home-country and the British Empire’s role in the world. Heathorn’s case consists of two major strands; firstly, his analysis of the authors and publishers of such books demonstrates the changing context of the growth of Elementary Schooling after the 1870 Act and a new type of reader author emerging. Prior to 1870 the bulk of readers were authored by amateurs, often clergy or women, and they were often written with a romantic or religious slant to the narrative. After 1870, with publication houses becoming aware of a burgeoning new market, Heathorn identifies a new type of author. His analysis shows the new authors coming from three groups of university educated men. The first group consisted of university trained academics in their own disciplines, particularly geography, history and literature; the second group were formed from recently established educationalists in the teacher training colleges; and the third group came from within the staff of the grammar and public schools. Often the subject matter was equally romanticised and moralistic in tone, but after 1870 these narratives were given the professional gloss of objectivity that comes with academic, specialist credentials.

Heathorn’s second major strand of argument is to demonstrate how these newly professionalised and objectified readers reflected all too well the intellectual predispositions of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Notions of ethnicity and racial
difference became central to the narrative; English citizenship began to be derived from our connection with great Anglo-Saxon figures of the past, whereas before history readers had concentrated on the civic-legal settlement of the Glorious Revolution. English boys and girls were taught that they had to behave in a certain way to be counted as citizens and members of a superior race. Obedience to the social order was an important element of that, and within family structures the same moral pressures applied. In perhaps the least well-documented area of his thesis, home becomes a ‘gendered metaphor for the nation’ with a direct parallel between social and familial order and stability.

The context for all this is the changing moral order at the end of the 19th century, when schools being used to manufacture citizens so that (in Michael Sadler’s words) ‘a systematic effort should be made to foster a stronger sense of our national obligation’. RE Hughes, writing in 1907, stated that ‘The school is a political institution maintained by the state for the cultivation and propagation of national ideals’ and each school would then become a ‘machine deliberately contrived for the manufacture of citizens’. Even liberal reformers of education saw the need to educate the working classes about their obligations towards each other and their nation. The liberal educationist Thomas Raymont even expressed that there was a spiritual inheritance specific to each nation, and only through a sharing of that inheritance would come salvation. Groups from the left such as the Fabians, the Social Democratic Party, the Clarion movement and Toynbee Hall, also framed their educational reforms in terms of what Heathorn calls ‘the national culture discourse’.

In his Introduction, Heathorn acknowledges that such social constructions are not a cynical and fully conscious attempt at social control; the term propaganda is not appropriate. The authors, in his view, replicated the new racial and gender assumptions of the post-Darwinian era that were prevalent among the educated middle class, and on an individual basis saw their role as replacing or downplaying other social collectivities such as class consciousness which might threaten the racial, national homeland. The late-Victorian period began to be characterised by economic down-turn, the rise of trade unionism and growing evidence of both working class degradation and an awareness that other, lesser nations, were catching up with Britain and her Empire, culminating in the ‘Made in Germany’ crisis of 1896 and the poor state of recruits for the Boer War effort.

In his conclusion Heathorn asserts that what we have witnessed is a replacement of one liberal narrative of ‘civic idealism’ giving way (all over Europe, he notes) to more biological concepts of national identity and belonging. The liberal individualism and religion of mid-century had given way by the end of the century to more collectivist, communitarian expressions of the role of the working classes in society, to the extent that the concept of citizenry had replaced religion as a social stabiliser. Having rejected the notion of propaganda as an organising concept for this process, Heathorn describes the effects of a kind of cultural hegemony that combined generally accepted truths with the supposedly scientific and objective status of the authors. What is certain is that, as Heathorn concludes, such readers set the conceptual boundaries and shaped the imaginative experience of the working class in elementary schools. This is in general a well-made case, perhaps too clearly a PhD thesis-turned-book which is often exhaustive in its accumulation of evidence, and would be best suited to a specialist, post-graduate audience.

University of Sheffield

COLIN McCAIG

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I approached this book, written by an Australian academic, with great enthusiasm given a sustained interest in children’s conception of time and the challenges both practitioners and parents experience in trying to enable children to understand this elusive phenomenon. The idea of early childhood professionals recognising and addressing young children’s sense of ‘personal connection with time and the future’ is appealing, in that the recent Foundation Stage Curriculum Guidance in England, for example, is very embedded in current skills development aspects, even where personal and social education is given generally greater credence. Genuinely seeking children’s views and analysing their responses in depth gives researchers and other early years professionals rich opportunities to tune into children and extend their learning experience from the basis of children’s own understanding and metacognition. Thus an early clear statement that ‘an important first step towards formulating a futures-oriented early childhood curriculum should be for professionals to take seriously children’s perceptions of the world’ (p. 2) and the link on p. 5 with the child’s right to be heard, sets the book firmly within a child-oriented perspective.

Emphasis in futures education on children’s choice and active participation, together with commitment to the development of a strong self-concept, cultural identity, social conscience and environmental awareness, frame the writing very much in the social-constructivist domain.

The thrust of this book is that early years professionals should capitalise upon young children’s ‘flexibility of thought, their positive and constructive outlook on life, their sense of the continuity of time, their creativity and imagination and their sense of personal connection with the world’ (p. 40) to extend and encourage their thinking about the future. In turn, this essentially child-oriented approach to curriculum planning places ‘the children back on the main agenda’ (p. 89): no problem! But why is this different from any other effective early childhood curricular approach? Throughout the book, I find myself raising this question over and over again.

The book takes the reader through eight chapters, five of which offer mainly theoretical perspectives, with two in part related to the application of futures concerns and values and a final one exploring the role of early years professionals as agents of change. All chapters implicitly offer the writer’s own notions about effectiveness in terms of early years practices. These have been well-rehearsed over the last few years and are consonant with contemporary thinking in the western world, drawing as they do on constructivist, social-constructivist and metacognitive theories of learning. Because of this, I am left with questions as to what new issues are being raised here to inform our debate about the early childhood curriculum and its implementation.

Focusing as it does on young children’s perspectives on ‘the future’ and notions of ‘time’ and ‘change’, I had expected a book which offered new and innovative ideas and, as the book cover illustrates ‘fresh insights’ into areas of developing knowledge about how young children perceive temporal aspects of the world. In fact, this aspect is rather played down in a welter of background theory and emerging conceptions of futures education, together with some relatively mundane statements about planning and practitioners’ roles in applying and developing the theory. What constitutes futures education is explored but never really pinned...
down. This is a great pity, given that some earlier examples of children’s thoughts, notions and drawings about time present and future, could have been extended much more clearly and cogently by greater analysis of the children’s perspectives within the interviews conducted as part of initial data gathering.

As it is, one gets a sense of ‘she protesteth too much’ – Jane Page’s arguments are strongly presented but weakly convincing: long explanations of, and treatise towards, values and the underpinning of futures education overwhelm what might have otherwise been some delightful and refreshing insights into young children’s cognitive processing of time and change issues. Additionally, by not giving further details about the analysis of children’s testimonies, it appears that some ‘loose’ interpretation of the data has been undertaken which assumes much. Without knowing what kind of narrative analysis processes were used, the writer has rendered herself open to potential challenge of her interpretation. In examining children’s responses, for example, it seems to me that they are all different and very personally oriented; any generalisation is, therefore, questionable.

Addressing the issue of the early childhood curriculum, futures concerns and values (Chapters 6 and 7), it seems no less problematic to gain a clear view of what is different about a futures-oriented curriculum. The focus appears to be on children developing personal skills (strong self-concept and a respect for diversity); social skills (‘awareness and tolerance of other individuals and cultures’ and an understanding of rights (p. 78); and relationships based on trust, security and forward-looking perspectives (p. 65) which link with the current emphasis on citizenship, prominent in the National Curriculum 2000 for England. Clearly issues of tolerance, awareness and anti-stereotyping are all implicit – and explicit – here, but differences between all these and futures education remains unclear.

Within a reasonably extensive literature review (although with a number of rather dated references), Jane Page posits the view that older children and teenagers often feel a ‘sense of disconnection’ from the future, a certain cynicism and a feeling that they do not have a role to play in changes, commonly perceiving the future as a ‘frighteningly unstable and unknowable force’ which can ‘appear threatening … because of its close association with the principle of change’ (p. 9). She suggests from her own empirical research, on the other hand, that young children are more positive about the future, associating it with their own growth and ‘growing up’ (p. 21) rather than with ‘fear, anger and hopelessness towards the inevitability of technological, social and political change’ (p. 8) implied by older children’s responses (apparently 9 year-olds onwards). However, the basis on which these claims are made remains, for me, very debatable both from the standpoint of child development theory and by the nature of some of the original research contributions cited. For example, the young children in the research were clearly asked about their own future world, whereas it is less clear whether older children were simply asked to describe the future world or the future of the world. This would make a significant difference to the type of responses made, e.g. thinking about the self in the future or thinking about a science-fiction, futuristic world for others. Were questions asked about both short, long and medium term futures because, again, speaking of what might happen next week or next month has different connotations from speaking of 50 or 100 years hence?

There appears still to be much to debate about futures education and, if nothing else, perhaps this book and review might promote some of the discussion in the UK as well as in Australia.

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NOTE

1. Department for Education and Employment/Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (2000) Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage. London: HMSO.

Anglia Polytechnic University JANET MOYLES

Radical Constructivism in Action. Edited by Leslie P. Steffe and Patrick W. Thompson. Pp. 327. Index. London 2000 ISBN 0-7507-0989-8 Routledge Falmer.

This is a useful text in considering the work of Ernest von Glaserfield in a new and dynamic way. It honours and builds on Glaserfield’s work. The book draws on 15 contributions from leading researchers in the field of constructivism and mathematics and science education and offers a variety of perspectives on constructivism and its application to mathematics and science education. It has relevance to the academic and teacher alike. The book is divided into five sections each relating to a specific area within mathematics education. These include knowledge, language and communication; construction of self, ethics and Paideia; practice of mathematics education; teacher education in mathematics and science; reflections and directions.

The opening chapter by Glaserfield sets the tone of the book by highlighting the issues and problems associated with constructivism and how the notion of radical constructivism arose. As always, his views are open to interpretation, but they are clearly set in the context of how to build on existing research and critiques within the field. A focus in the text is that of identity and self and the role constructivism has to play in its development. In such a short review it is not possible to critique individual chapters, as each has its own message and focus. Generally, the book is a useful tool for those interested in the development of mathematical and scientific ideas within an constructive framework. Teachers and teacher educators would find Simons’ and Desautels’ chapters of value. Simons’ has particular relevance to the place and impact of constructivism on teacher education. He discusses the implications of the theoretical shift that constructivism has brought to mathematics knowledge and how this can be used to develop mathematics teachers in the future.

The main value to the book is that it discusses the epistemological perspectives of constructivism. These are debated, refined and clarified and then applied to a variety of contexts, such as practice and inquiry. The book’s aim is to increase understanding of the underlying principles associated with constructivism. In the main this is achieved, however some areas are denser than others and are not always so easily understood. The book will appeal to all those who have an interest in mathematics and science education. The perspectives put forward engage the reader with issues that need discussion and critical analysis.

University of Surrey GILL NICHOLLS

Promoting Quality in Learning – Does England have the Answer? By Patricia Broadfoot, Marilyn Osborn, Clare Planel and Keith Sharpe. Pp. 280. London and New York: Cassell. 2000. Price: £16.99 (pbk). ISBN 0 304 70684 1.

For anyone interested in comparative studies and primary education, the book Promoting Quality in Learning is compelling reading. Although the book is based on
the findings of the ‘Quality of Primary Education: Children’s Experiences of Schooling in England and France’ (QUEST) project, it is clear that the authors draw on their vast knowledge from previous projects comparing English and French primary education. The aim of the QUEST study is two-fold: ‘to compare primary-school learning outcomes in England and France’; and ‘to explain the sources and significance of these in terms of the different educational environments which pupils have experienced’. This is done by examining data from carefully designed tests on literacy and mathematics, and exploring pupils’ different perspectives on, and experiences of, schooling in France and England through questionnaires and interviews. One of the key objectives is, as the title suggests, to contribute to policy debates about quality in primary education, and another to demonstrate the necessity of using more qualitative approaches in comparative education. I feel that on both accounts the authors have successfully carried through their argument and convincingly presented the evidence in the book. In the following I shall outline the different parts of the book, before commenting on selected issues that I found intriguing.

The book is principally organised in three parts. The first part consists of three chapters, where the authors question the hegemony of large-scale, quantitative international surveys of pupil performance; present their rationale for the QUEST project; and provide an overview of the two national education systems. The second part of the book gives the reader a taste of ‘pupils’ voices’ regarding their attitudes and aspirations in each country, how they view themselves and their national culture, and their experiences in the classroom. The outcomes of the performance tests in language and mathematics and explorations of how French and English pupils differed in their performance are presented in the third part. The last chapter in this part offers an examination of intra-national differences with respect to gender, ethnicity, to name but a few, and considers how influential such personal and local environmental differences are in ‘manipulating’ children’s perceptions of schooling and their performance compared with inter-national influences. The final chapter draws together the main conclusions from the research and proposes that comparative studies should adopt a more ‘holistic’ view linking context, culture and ideology, as a basis for policy-making. Such practice, it is argued, would help to recognise the strengths of English primary education and to avoid oversimplistic measures in terms of government policies.

In many ways I feel that I am badly placed to comment on this book, in the sense that I am a biased ‘viewer’ of the work of the group who authored this book. In my opinion, their work is both important and excellent, and this book is a token of that value. However, and as is my task, I will outline my ideas and comments on the following selected issues: ‘why compare’ and ‘cultural embeddedness’; research methodology in comparative education; and ‘celebrating English education’.

Firstly, and as so aptly explained in the book, the question of ‘why compare’ is relevant for any comparative study and it is important to demonstrate the value of comparing cultures of different countries. By stepping outside a particular set of cultural traditions and observing classroom practices in other countries, we may question our own traditional practices, norms and expectations that are so widely shared and familiar, so familiar that they may become invisible to members within a culture. Thus, by comparing we may become aware of the choices we have made in constructing the educational process. However, when comparing it is important to realise and acknowledge that what we see in the classroom is culturally embedded: the subject content; the teaching; and the learning. Not only is teaching an activity embedded in culture, but so is what is taught, and countries have developed
their own ways of engaging students in the process of learning. Kawanaka et al (1999) contend that

teaching and learning, as cultural activities, fit within a variety of social, economic and political forces in our society. Every single aspect of . . . education, from a particular teacher behaviour to national policy, must be considered and evaluated within a socio-cultural context. (p. 103)

Whilst it might be exciting to view, or read descriptions of, lessons of different countries, we have to find possible explanations for the similarities and differences that we see and experience. How can we understand the practices that we see in the light of what we know about the different countries? If we believe that teaching and learning is ‘culturally embedded’, what are the cultural and intellectual underpinnings that influence teaching and learning? Where do the cultural and educational traditions stem from, and how do they feed into the classroom? These and more questions have to be posed and answered, if we want to benefit from comparing teaching and learning in different countries. The research reported in the book has gone a long way in answering these questions for primary education in England and France.

Secondly, the issue of research methodology in cross-national comparative studies is worth re-iterating. Broadfoot et al emphasise the importance of qualitative research methodology in comparative studies which permit a more holistic understanding of the concepts under study. However, they repeatedly ‘apologise’ for not being able to ‘generalise’ on the basis of small numbers in some of their samples (and they are keen to remind the reader that most of the QUEST study findings are based on a sample of 800 children). From the quantitative researcher’s point-of-view who seeks to generalise over population, this concern is, of course, methodologically correct. Thus, interestingly, however much the team is eager to stress the advantages of qualitative research, there seems to be the general position that it is not possible to generalise from qualitative data. Without going deeply into this debate, I think that it is important to remedy this view. The criticism that qualitative findings are not generalisable (because very small samples are studied) rests on a particular conception of generalisability, and it might be timely to re-conceptualise the notion of generalisation. It seems important to differentiate between generalisation over population (in quantitative studies), and generalisation over ‘context’ (in qualitative studies). For a deeper analysis, reference is made to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) or Hammersley (1990 and 1992).

Thirdly, I would like to comment on, and add to, the authors’ suggestion that ‘it is time to recognise the unique strengths of the English education tradition’. I agree in principle, if it means celebrating what is ‘good’ and ‘important’, however we perceive it, and in my opinion individualism and attention to the whole-child belongs to one of those principles. However, under the banner of individualism and/or child-centredness, in particular secondary teachers have been burdened with too many tasks and responsibilities. So much so that they appear to have little time to think about teaching and learning, which is, they claim, the core task (Pepin, 1998, 2000). They feel that they do not have enough time for lesson preparation, for reflection on their teaching and on pupil understanding. More money, either for Initial Teacher Education or for Performance-Related pay, will not necessarily attract those who relish engagement in thinking about teaching and learning. The conditions of work also have to be right, and rewards provided for those who want to concentrate and specialise on classroom teaching. Learning cannot be reduced to statements of learner behaviour, and examinations and test results must
not become more important than the learning process. Broadfoot et al capture this ‘culture of league tables’ that presently resides in the English education system particularly well in their first chapter. My prediction is that, unless this ‘culture’ changes and the majority of those concerned with education turns to ‘promoting quality in learning’ which includes emphasising processes, instead of outcomes, English primary school teachers might not regain their vision.

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The Open University

**BIRGIT PEPIN**

*Men in the Nursery: Gender and Caring Work*. By Claire Cameron, Peter Moss and Charlie Owen. Pp. 192. Index. London: Paul Chapman Publishing, 1999. £47.50 (hbk), £16.99 (pbk). ISBN 1 85396 431 X (hbk), 1 853396 388 7 (pbk).

This book presents a rigorous and well-written analysis of a very important issue and it was highly commended by the judges of the Standing Conference for Studies in Education Annual Book Prize for the best academic book in education published in 1999. It takes a potentially controversial issue and uses it as a springboard for a wider discussion of gender in the education and care of young children.

One of the strengths of the book is its use of data drawn from a wide variety of sources and at different levels of analysis. These range from comparative national data from various countries to detailed portraits of the histories and experiences of men and women in nursery work. Between these two extremes are data drawn from a survey of childcare college lecturers, another survey of English local authorities’ child protection policies, and data drawn from an interview studies with workers and parents. The very scarcity of men in nursery settings (about 1 per cent in England) meant that it was not possible to focus on a small number of centres for case study. Instead, the selection of workers was on an individual basis, and eleven men and ten (roughly matched) women were intensively interviewed from ten separate institutions. In addition, 52 mothers and 25 fathers of children using these ten settings were interviewed by telephone.

The book skillfully weaves together date from these various sources to give a
lively and thoughtful account of the experiences of male childcare workers, why they entered the work, their relationships with female workers, children and parents and their everyday work and practice. It starts by giving voice to three male and three female childcare workers who are working in a variety of childcare centres. These accounts start to illustrate the diversity of experience that is a major theme of the book – not only between men and women but among men and women. It is argued that there are twin, competing discourses that frame the discussion of men in childcare – equality and risk – the desirability of emphasising equality for men and women in work and the risk of abuse of children by men. It is of note that while these two discourses run in parallel in countries such as Britain and the USA, the equality discourse is emphasised in most of Scandinavia where a larger proportion of men are in such work. The discussion of the possible risk that men present to children is balanced and well-argued, and it is worth recognising that risk of abuse is not only associated with men.

I found the chapter reporting the results of the telephone survey of parents unexpectedly interesting. Although several parents voiced reservations about having male care workers, most were generally in favour of the practice of employing men. One major reason for this support was concern for their boys, where it was seen as desirable to have a male role model to challenge stereotypes about caring. The presence of a male worker was not seen as so relevant for girls. But there was a considerable diversity of opinion found, with a large group being more neutral in their support. For them, the individual characteristic of the man were more important than the issue of employing men as careworkers. There was greater homogeneity in the discussion of possible disadvantages, where virtually all of the potential disadvantages of employing male workers that parents talked about revolved around the issue of men and child abuse. A point that the authors do not emphasise is that this was true even for this non-representative sample of parents with children in settings where there was a male worker. No doubt parents who were even more seriously concerned would not use centres which employed a man.

A major strength of the book is that it rises above tired discussions of gender role models and considers the impact of a gendered work force on childcare work. The authors argue that the invisibility of men in childcare reflects and perpetuates a wider invisibility of gender, and that gender issues – concerning children and parents as well as staff – need to be made more visible and the subject of discussion and reflection. This book is an admirable first step in the process of giving greater visibility to these issues.

University of Oxford

GEoffrey WAlFORD

Education, Equality and Human Rights. Edited by Mike Cole. Pp. 206. London and New York: Routledge/Falmer. 2000 £ (hbk), £16.99 (pbk). ISBN 0-7507-0876-x (hbk), 0-7507-0877-8 (pbk).

This is a welcome addition to the growing body of literature on issues of equality and education. As the study of these issues expands, (through changes in initial teacher training, continuing professional development, and now through the introduction of Citizenship Education in schools) there is a need for authoritative, mature, and developed accounts of the theories and practices which support and restrict their currency. Academic publishers have recognised this gap and we have seen a burgeoning literature in this and associated fields. But while the best of it
manages to promote and enable new forms of debate and activity, the worst is
merely a re-badging of old materials which (quite frankly) were not especially help-
ful in their previous cover and are no more helpful with the word ‘citizenship’
attached to them.

This collection, thankfully, is not such a book and it consists entirely of new
contributions to the field. It is a considered and thoughtfully constructed attempt
to provide a background to five specific aspects of equality and inequality in the
educational experiences of many groups and individuals at the turn of the millen-
nium. The book brings together ten authors, many of whom have faced these
inequalities themselves, and who produce five pairs of chapters: two each on the
issues of gender, race, sexuality, special needs, and social class. These paired chap-
ters provide us with a collection of thoughtful and intelligent accounts of the histor-
ical sources of inequality, the ways in which it is experienced in contemporary
British education, and the implications for the future of our schools, our children
and our teachers. Between them they aim to be a clear call for our outrage at past
practices, our determination to examine the present, and our commitment to bring
about change.

Each of the chapters is clearly written and accessible. Although they cover some
complex issues they do so simply and straightforwardly, and benefit from the direct
experiences of inequality that the authors have witnessed or studied. The chapters
by Viv Ellis and Simon Forrest (on sexuality and identity) and Jane Kelly and Jane
Martin (on gender and education) will prove very particularly useful to teachers
and students who want to understand the precedents of inequality without losing
sight of its contemporary manifestations. And while Tom Hickey’s essay on social
class runs the danger of getting bogged down in history and the clash of theories,
it is neatly balanced by Richard Hatcher’s account of new concepts of how class is
working in contemporary settings.

So if it has such strengths, why did I feel slightly short changed by the collection?
There are three reasons I think. Firstly (and this is a minor point) there is not
always enough direct connection between the individual chapters and the types of
action and reaction that readers might be encouraged to take up in addressing
inequality. Maud Blair and Mike Cole (in their chapter on racism and education)
pick up Haberman’s suggestion that there are five steps to such a course of action:
self-analysis; historical analysis; a consideration of personal gains and losses; a
consideration of other linked issues; and strategic planning for action. While it is
unrealistic to expect this book to be read in isolation, some of the chapters do not
get far beyond the second or third of these stages.

Secondly (and this links to Haberman’s point about the need to make connec-
tions between different manifestations of inequality) the five pairs of chapters in
this edition are strangely separate – united by little more than the covers in which
they are bound. Mike Cole says in his Introduction that ‘while recognising the inter-
relation of various inequalities . . . their separateness must also be acknowledged.
. . . People are not only exploited and oppressed in similar ways, they are exploited
and oppressed in different and specific ways.’ (p. 4). Perhaps, in seeking to explain
these specific forms of inequality the book has lost the chance to examine the
general issues. Only one or two of the chapters make explicit reference to the issues
covered by the others, and this leaves them more like a collection of essays than an
edition of pieces working to the same (or similar) ends.

Finally, in its mission to explain and clarify issues of equality and education there
are other approaches and critiques of this subject which are largely absent from the
collection. The notion of Human Rights, for example, features in the title and the

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brief introduction, but only once in the rest of the book (and then in a footnote). And while it is certainly the case that equality of education is a Human Rights issue, it is not really good enough to let the connections remain implicit – especially at a time when legislation places particular responsibilities on the likely readers of this book. As for the critiques of the world view shared by these authors, the most considered has to be that provided by the postmodernist commentators of the last 30 years. One key aspect of the postmodern (or more accurately poststructuralist) critiques of liberalism is the argument that in identifying and claiming rights and equality we paradoxically disempower ourselves by first highlighting our own disadvantage. This merely serves to reinforce the processes of exclusion. These authors, I suspect, do not agree with such arguments, but they need to address them more thoroughly than can be done with a few dismissive asides in Chapter One and a brief swipe in Chapter Nine.

Perhaps my misgivings are more about the way the book has been edited than the way it has been written. A clearer and more comprehensive Introduction to the book and the individual chapters could have addressed all three of my concerns: providing a clearer framework for teachers to make the lessons of the book their own; linking the pieces together instead of asking them to stand alone; and providing a wider view of the issues and perspectives that relate to them all.

This should certainly be on the teacher’s bookshelf. Not on its own, but with key texts from the bibliographies of each chapter – and beyond.

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ROB WATLING

Learning from Comparing: New Directions in Comparative Educational Research. Volume 1. Contexts, Classrooms and Outcomes. Edited by R. Alexander, P. Broadfoot and D. Phillips, Pp. 302. Symposium Books 1999. £28. 1-873927-58-4.

The two ‘Learning from Comparing’ volumes are the product of a series of ESRC funded seminars initiated by Robin Alexander and held between 1997 and 1999. This first collection of papers provides a significant and timely contribution to the debates surrounding comparative education following increased globalisation. They succeed in their intentions to be challenging and interesting and to provide contrasting viewpoints. At a time when, as several of the contributors relate, the field of comparative study is searching for a way forward and university taught provision is declining, yet interest in comparative and international education is on the rise, the contributors take the opportunity to make their voice heard. As Michelle Schweisfurth’s snapshot in time of comparative education in United Kingdom universities demonstrates, there is a need for those with expertise to intervene in the debate about the future of comparative education.

The volume is structured into three parts: Comparative Education in the 1990s; Comparing Classrooms and Schools; and Comparing Pupil Achievement, thus mirroring the three aspects of the volume’s title. The first section deals with issues related to theory, method and context; the second provides reflections on research studies; and the third a critical analysis of issues emerging from the current interest in international comparisons of pupil achievement.

Robin Alexander, in his introduction, expresses the hope that the volume will appeal to ‘users’, researchers and research students alike and this is largely achieved. There is, inevitably, some tension inherent in targeting such a diverse audience. Some users may be less interested in researchers’ debates about
methodology and more interested in the results of the research. However, this approaches one of the recurring themes of the volume; the relationship between research and policy. As Alexander argues, although policy ‘users’ require research which addresses their concerns, research must offer ‘critique and warning as well as encouragement’ (p. 111). In one sense, the volume provides elements for each section of the target audience. Section One is of value to those wishing to engage in the more abstract issues surrounding theory and methodology and may be somewhat less accessible to users, whereas Sections Two and Three provide the illustrative material which is more accessible and answers to a large extent the call from Tobin to present research in ways which are accessible to teachers.

There are a number of themes which recur throughout the volume. Prominent amongst them is concern about policy borrowing and the transplantation of ideas from one culture to another. This relates to another major theme; the importance of viewing comparativism from a social science perspective and the embeddedness of ideas and practices in a particular culture. Reynolds sounds a different note in arguing for the validity of the search for universally ‘travelled’ factors which contribute to school effectiveness and which can be distinguished from context specific factors.

The main focus of the first section is an examination of the nature of comparative education. A short contribution from David Philips sets out, clearly and succinctly, several of the main themes of the section; the current position of comparative education in relation to its history; the contribution and value of comparative studies; the importance of the cultural context; and the future of comparative education. Patricia Broadfoot, in a similarly short, but interesting, chapter further explores these themes, placing particular emphasis on the need to recognise the importance of culture and its pervasive influence. She is clear that comparative education is ‘definitely not traveller’s tales, nor the basis for unsystematic policy borrowing’. It is not ‘descriptive accounts of “what is”, however carefully done’ and it is not ‘de-contextualised comparisons of particular dimensions such as educational achievement’. Rather, its function is

> to document the salient cultural features in a given context, to compare cultures in order to generate insights about variables whilst recognising the integrity of the cultural whole (p. 29).

Both Shriewer and Cowen, in their analyses of what comparative education is, argue convincingly for a move away from the predictive social science of the past. Cowen’s reading of post modern literature convinces him of the need to ‘step away from our earlier confidence about the possibilities of knowing, with certainty’ (p. 80). Indeed, Shriewer argues, it is ‘precisely the advantage of comparative analysis to actually throw into relief . . . the full complexity of causal networks’ (p. 41). Throughout the volume there is general agreement about the role of comparative education in making the strange familiar and the familiar strange.

The reflective accounts of comparative studies in the second section of the book, in particular the contributions from Alexander and Tobin, provide rich insights and detailed analyses. Alexander, in his pivotal chapter, skillfully and convincingly presents his vision of a way forward for comparative education in informing classroom practice. While acknowledging the difficulties of cross-cultural comparisons of pedagogy, he brings classroom teaching and learning to the forefront, and thus begins to redeem the previous lack of attention given to school and classroom processes by comparativists. His discussion of ‘the parts and the whole’ of classroom practice and his concern to ‘find a way of complementing the increasing atomisa-
tion of teaching with a convincing kind of holism’ draw attention to a fundamental issue. As he says,

Somehow, we have become adept at dissecting teaching but poor at reconstructing it; good at isolating factors in ‘effective’ classroom practice . . . but less able to demonstrate how these and other elements are reconstituted by teachers and children (p. 512)

His position on this, together with his belief that culture must be understood and researched as ‘intrinsic and pervasive’ rather than extraneous, throw into sharp relief his differences with school effectiveness researchers as exemplified by Reynolds.

Within the final section, which raises questions about the assumptions underpinning international surveys, Robinson provides an interesting review of international data on educational achievement and economic growth. He effectively demonstrates that the intuitive belief in a causal link between national educational achievement and economic performance is unproven, which sounds a cautionary note for policy makers.

This volume raises a number of key concerns about the effectiveness and value of comparative research, of which the issue of policy importation and the notion that perceived ‘good practice’ from one culture can be borrowed directly and effectively transplanted into another is one. The continuing tensions within the field around this and other issues are thoroughly rehearsed in this volume. Despite the acknowledged difficulties, the authors demonstrate the valuable contribution that comparative education has to play in developing our ability to solve educational problems. Whether the policy ‘users’ in the target audience will be convinced remains to be seen.

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LINDA WILSON

Learning to Bridge the Digital Divide. By OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development). Pp. 137. OECD 2000 92-64-18288-8

As we enter the 21st century, the emerging features of the ‘New Economy’ can be seen everywhere. At the heart of these changes are the innovations made possible by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), . . . but economic growth, important as it is, must be promoted in tandem with social and democratic objectives, especially in tackling exclusion.

This short extract from the forward of this book gives a flavour of the thrust of the contents. However, the onward pursuance of the ‘New Economy’ is not questioned, neither are the OECD principles of economic development within a world economy that is non-discriminatory and multilateral.

The book is one fruit of the fifth NCAL/OECD Roundtable held on 8–10 December 1999 which involved around sixty participants from OECD and non-OECD countries. The Roundtable was entitled ‘The Lifelong Learning and New Technologies Gap: Reaching the Disadvantaged’ and the book consists of revised versions of the thematic papers presented as well as two syntheses of discussion and an introductory overview. Each has a different author and although there is a progression in ideas through the chapters there is also much repetition, or should we think of it as re-inforcement?

The first chapter provides the overview of the ‘Emerging Policy Agenda’ which
is not a purely educational one. The problems for a global society of having a large number of its members unable to access the new technologies are not overstated but exclusion on the basis of physical access or lack of skills is seen as unacceptable. This is the digital divide. The chapter goes on to consider the role of lifelong learning both about digital technologies and through digital technologies throughout life. This, the author suggests, is a misunderstood concept with national governments used to providing schooling for the young within formal policies now having to wrestle with the notion of re-educating its adults through an array of agencies according to the agendas of others. Throughout the chapter, as in the book as a whole, examples are given from a range of countries that illustrate one possible solution to the problems posed.

The developments in ICT and their impact on education are discussed in the second chapter. This is not just about the potential impact on pedagogy and the ease of delivery of education at a distance but also the need for technological literacy alongside the formerly accepted basics of literacy and numeracy. The chapter emphasises the need for ICT policies to address the equity issues and goes on to describe the various ‘gaps’ which give cause for concern and require ‘closing’. There are then various potential strategies posited, along with exemplars of the strategy in use before the Mexican ‘Telesecundaria’ programme is considered in some detail.

The existence of a digital divide is not only a concern because of disparity in access to employment, skills and education. It is also a concern because it gives differential access to knowledge which is increasingly a strategic advantage. Chapter Three considers the ramifications of this within a technologically advanced nation, the United States and then for the less advanced nations. It goes on to discuss the ‘enabling strategies’ for closing the divide such as the ability to ‘leapfrog’ some of the stages including the Power Up initiative in the United States.

Chapter Four is the first of the syntheses of discussion. This concentrates on the points raised about the nature of the digital divide in learning. It contains many actual quotes and comes to the conclusion that of all the gaps that make up the ‘digital divide’ those in education and learning are the most important because although technology will change there will always be the need to know how to use the knowledge it provides.

A closer analysis of the digital divide in education is undertaken in Chapter Five when some possible causes of the digital divide are delineated. These are not merely access to equipment and facilities but deeper sociologically rooted phenomena, suggests the author. He considers various strategies that have been tried and their outcomes. Alongside these he looks at the argument that it is the existence of the newer technologies of e-mail and World Wide Web (WWW) that make this inequality more important than others we have accepted without ‘excessive pangs of discomfort’. It is the connectivity and the global access to information that is the divide.

Whilst the previous chapter looked specifically at the divide in formal education, Chapter Six considers the potential impact on basic adult education, which has traditionally focussed on literacy and numeracy. Not only has the technology changed delivery of education at a distance, it has also encouraged a range of adults to seek education for their perceived shortfall in skills. However, the point is made that access to this education is far from universal and the need for this updating by adults is likely to continue for some time. The chapter goes on to look at the range of reasons for adults to seek technological education and a number of strategies adopted, mainly in the United States, for providing it to previously disadvantaged communities.
Chapter Seven is the second synthesis of discussion. This latter one concentrates more on the strategies for beginning to bridge the divide. It concludes that there is much to be gained from an international exchange of practice without prejudice but a need to also engage in the process of establishing exactly what works and why.

The last two chapters go on to begin this process. Chapter Eight looks at the Swedish approach. It considers the use of formal schooling as the foundation for lifelong learning and Sweden’s strategy for spreading the use of technology in schools which is now entering the stage of focusing on its potential benefits to learning rather than the technical infrastructure which is already in place. The chapter then goes on to consider this policy applied to adult education. The final chapter deals in rather less detail with national approaches in Portugal, the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States and Finland.

The whole book does give an insight into the need for carefully considered policy initiatives from all national governments and not only to fulfill their immediate desire to improve their current economy; a long-term global view is required. The evidence is clearly presented and possible solutions from a range of international perspectives offered. It is essential reading for policymakers, and their advisors.

The Open University

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