

Editorial

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This issue features research undertaken in Wales but it will quickly become apparent to readers that many of the articles have a wider application because they address issues of national and international interest. It has been argued in this journal and elsewhere that there is no reason for locally conducted research to be dismissed because ‘it’s only about Wales’. When was the last time anyone heard or read that about research undertaken in England, or for that matter the USA?

A case in point is Thorpe and Williams’s study of federations of small schools. ‘Federation’, in practice, is simply one mode of a larger movement intended to enhance the management, resources and operation of schools by grouping or clustering several of them together. It may be unusual to think of Education Action Zones in this light but they were another variant of the same policy initiative. How effective ‘federations’ are, and what solutions they offer to the challenges faced by small schools, is a UK issue and this study addresses that wider concern.

Both the National Literacy (NLS) and Numeracy Strategies (NNS) have attracted international attention. The sheer scale of the attempt to introduce literacy and numeracy strategies to *all* schools in England has caught the eye of overseas commentators. In Wales, they operate through LEAs and without the rigidities of the ‘literacy’ or ‘numeracy’ hours. Taking a comparative approach, an England–Wales study is one way of assessing whether the NNS works. It also might point the way to further research about the extent to which the English ‘literacy hour’ is proving beneficial.

Pugsley’s and Coffey’s study of higher education institutions operating in the marketplace and the contribution by Aubrey-Hopkins and James on reward–management systems also address national issues and very broad sets of

literature. Anyone who has participated in a university open day will by now be familiar with the so-called UCAS parents who seem to turn up to these events in equal numbers to the students attending them. In their study, Pugsley and Coffey identify the factors that influence the choice of universities. Aubrey-Hopkins and James identify and assess the relative effectiveness of a fairly recent phenomenon of giving rewards in cash or kind to secondary school students for good behaviour, effort and performance. This is a step on from the days of giving out badges or sashes for being seen walking around the school smartly and with a straight back. Moran's inquiries into Vico and considerations of what we might draw from his philosophy in order to think through a 'science of pedagogy' also take us out of the here and now and address issues of a wider compass.

Contributions by Davies, Roberts and a review by Williams explore in detail aspects of education practice and policy in Wales. All three alert us to the opportunities and challenges afforded by bilingual contexts. Davies's comparative study of Welsh- and English-medium primary schools suggest that the former are more likely to see religious education in terms of teaching about the Christian faith. Yet multi-ethnic Wales is also widely recognized in classrooms that introduce students to the character and values of other religions. As he also suggests, there is a rural/urban difference in the way RE is perceived and taught. Roberts's research note reports on a project aimed at addressing the challenge of teaching students of two language communities within the same institutional context. This note reports on a group working on strategies and materials that will enhance teaching and learning in bilingual settings. It is unusual to draw attention to a review in an editorial but Williams's extended reflections on Iolo Wyn Williams's history of the establishment of Welsh-medium education draw attention to a text that is of importance to anyone seeking to understand the development of schooling in Wales. Drawing on her translation from the Welsh, Williams gives us a hint of the narratives and the major themes that inform this study. It is a text we would hope to return to in the near future.