Reviews

The Editors are pleased to receive notice of books written or edited by educationists in Wales, or with Welsh connections, or with a Welsh educational interest.

Neil Selwyn and Stephen Gorard, *The Information Age: Technology, Learning and Social Exclusion in Wales* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2002), 226pp. £14.99, ISBN 0-7083-1708-1(pb).

'What are the *realities* of educational participation and, therefore, what is the present basis of Wales as a learning society?' This is the central question which this scholarly, lucid, well-structured and meticulously argued book sets out to answer. It aims 'to uncover the specific factors and influences underlying people's patterns of learning' in Wales and to explore and assess the impact of the Welsh Assembly Government's ICT policies and educational and public sector initiatives in reaching out to those excluded from education in Wales.

The early part of the book discusses commonly cited claims about the benefits of ICT and outlines the case for the information age, exploring notions of 'the learning society', 'the information society' and the view that ICT can be used both to improve economic performance and widen access. An examination of the global context enables a comparison with Wales to be made. The authors call into question these claims, so often used as the basis for making an assumed (but unproven) causal link between ICT and widening access. (Alas, it is this assumed connection which policy-makers in Wales use for setting many agendas.) In contrast, Selwyn and Gorard set out the analytic framework of their study on a sound empirical basis to identify 'a set of key socio-economic determinants of participation'. This enables them to construct a model based on the 'characteristic sequences of learning episodes' or 'trajectories' and, mapping their change over time, to investigate 'how and why people in Wales do, or do not, participate in various types of education and training' and to use the information to judge 'the actual and likely future impact of ICT usage on these patterns'.

The evidence from their study is then set in the context of what is referred to as 'the rise of the virtual education movement' in Wales. They examine the Wales Digital College and the UfI (University for Industry). What emerges is a set of failings: 'surf wars' where organizations fight for 'the positioning of initiatives', a lack of interest by key players in the background of the intended learners, and little more than 'technology-fuelled confidence' (part of a UK-wide government culture of 'initiatives') focused on

economic-dominant approaches rather than designed to improve social inclusion. As a result, few attitudes 'on the ground' are changed.

Casting doubt on such initiatives, the authors ask how they benefit the identified 75 per cent non-participants of the population in Wales. Using an analysis of thirty-six learners utilizing a Wales Digital College web site developed to help learners of Welsh study on-line as a case study exemplifying the attempts to use internet technologies to reach non-participants, the authors identify a range of problems with the prototype system. These extend from the running of a course based on little more than a transfer model of information with few innovative features (due to the cost of developing them) to learners' feelings of isolation from its being on-line. Far from providing a solution, ICT is shown to be problematic. Is any learning taking place? Little. Who are the learners? With the exception of three who most closely match non-participants, none other than 'the usual suspects'. According to the authors, the fault of non-participation lies in the provision and not with non-participants. They demonstrate how initiatives are based around qualifications and take little account of informal learning.

This disturbing book brings 'the chasm between the reality and the rhetoric of online learning in Wales' starkly into focus, with the claimed benefits of ICT shown to have no empirical basis and to be of little benefit to the one-third who are non-participants. In the case study, not one 'non-participant [was] drawn into learning by the opportunities available' from ICT. What emerges is a paradox of initiatives, driven by politics: the development of an on-line Welsh-language course having prominence when mastery of the Welsh language 'was the least important skill for the Welsh economy'. The authors conclude that it is unlikely that 'education for all' will be provided by the Internet 'as policy-makers would have us believe'. However, it would be wrong not to acknowledge the positive aspects and to commend, as the authors do, 'the present range of ICT based education policies'.

Several minor changes, such as better proof-reading, a screen shot to help the reader visualize the web site, and the avoidance of perpetuating the myth that 'multimedia' is inherently educational would have improved the book. More serious is the 'admittedly very limited' sample of their case study. Nevertheless, all politicians and educationalists in Wales should read it.

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David Squires, Gráinne Conole and Gabriel Jacobs (eds), *The Changing Face of Learning Technology* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2000), 182pp. £7.99, ISBN 0-7083-1681-6 (pb).

This collection of articles was originally published in the journal of the Association of Learning Technology, *ALT-J*. Compiled by Gabriel Jacobs (a founder member of the association), Gráinne Conole, a prominent figure in the world of learning technology, and

David Squires, the book covers topics such as design and evaluation, institutional change, networked infrastructures and the future, and includes international contributions. It provides quite a profound insight into some of the key areas which learning technologists have debated and have had to deal with in the last ten years. Well worth a read.

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Robert Philips and John Furlong (eds), *Education Reform and the State: Twenty Five Years of Politics, Policy and Practice* (RoutledgeFalmer, 2001), 269pp. £25.00, ISBN 0-415-23764-5 (pb).

In an interview with Eric Bolton, the former HMCI for England, I asked about the origins of two national HMI surveys conducted in the late 1970s, which had been initiated by his predecessor. He reported that she had predicted that when the problems of teacher supply and school accommodation had been resolved, the politicians would turn their attention to education standards and student performance. This book covers the twenty-five years following the renowned Ruskin speech of 1976 when politicians did turn their attention to issues of school organization, curriculum and pedagogy, and demonstrates how right she was.

The volume discusses the major legislative and structural changes that have occurred since 1976. It examines how and whether the education system has been transformed and identifies continuities. In narrative terms, the period embraces the restructuring of the state and education formerly based on social democratic principles to the provision of public services founded on markets, choice and competition. It covers both the Conservative and Labour administrations and thus makes a compelling framework for contributors to examine what has remained durable across governments of different complexions and where ideological commitments have given rise to different value systems. A central concern of the volume, and in one sense its major organizing principle, is the examination of the place of social justice in a period of radical reform.

The editors have assembled a large cast of more than twenty contributors, all of whom have been involved in major research projects focused on educational policy and practice. I would estimate that the great majority are centre, or centre-left by persuasion and many have acted in official and unofficial advisory capacities to the Labour Party, in and out of government. In one sense this is a pity because it limits the critical perspectives that have been brought to bear. There are four substantive parts to the book titled: a historical overview; the changing policy context; professionalism, accountability and standards; and issues of equity. A conclusion by Tony Edwards brings the various contributions into focus.

Phillips's deft and well-argued historical overview sets the scene for the detailed examination of specific policies in the compulsory and post-compulsory sectors of education. He notes that the dominant discourse in the period has

coalesced around 'standards, choice and accountability' and Jim Campbell's chapter on primary education provides eloquent testimony to that argument. He argues that the primary school curriculum was 'colonised' by central government in its drive to raise standards in response to a perceived notion that schools were underperforming. Labour's more recent and distinctive contribution, he notes, has been to focus on pedagogical change rather than on curriculum, organization and content. Those familiar with the prescriptive nature of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies (NLNS) will know what he means. Cumulatively, through measures such as the National Curriculum and the NLNS, central government gained the levers of control that it lacked before 1976.

For Walford, whose subject is how successive pieces of legislation have impacted on secondary education, comprehensive schools signal a commitment to social justice because they offer the prospect of a common experience of education for children of whatever social background. Policies that impinge on them therefore must generate questions of equity. He rehearses the argument about the extent to which the shift from LEA control to markets leads to socially stratified schools, and is convinced that it does and with deleterious effects. Much the same is said about specialist secondary schools which can be interpreted as undermining the idea of the 'common school'. The problem here is that comprehensives were always socially stratified by virtue of their catchment-area-based admissions policies. The evidence that markets have made things better or worse is, in fact, very thin. Moreover, the notion of the common school was mediated by comprehensives banding or streaming their populations and thus offering students quite different educational experiences.

Jephcote and Huddleston and Rees and Stroud address the further and higher education sectors respectively and together take forward another key theme of the volume, namely that education is now firmly anchored to the economy. Thus, its chief social function is to provide a skilled and flexible workforce. Major changes have occurred in higher education, most notably the shift from an elite to a mass system, as measured by the age participation index (API), which is the proportion of the cohorts of eighteen-year-olds progressing on to HEIs. As a measure of whether the education system as a whole has become more equitable, Rees and Stroud show that the API has risen from 6 per cent in the 1960s to 35 per cent in the 1990s, with the government aiming for 50 per cent in the near future. These figures suggest a strong growth in the numbers of students staying in school, in those obtaining some kind of qualification and in places for them to fill. Some things remain constant, though, insofar as opportunities to progress are likely to be governed by the structure of labour markets and the health of the economy; it also remains the case that middle-class children are more likely to go to university than their working class counterparts (and to go to different universities).

Furlong and McCulloch show how central government has increasingly policed what counts as teacher education.

Furlong's table on pages 120–1 powerfully summarizes the diminishing autonomy of HEIs in the creation of professional identities of teachers. A virtual national curriculum and an emphasis on time to be served in schools dominate the initial education of teachers. At the same time, as McCulloch argues, the relationship between the profession and the state has been mediated by the National Curriculum, testing and pedagogical initiatives. These have changed the nature of 'profession' and 'professionalism' in the direction of 'performativity' and attending to tasks set out in Whitehall.

Broadfoot brings a welcomed theoretical perspective in her discussions of the social functions and consequences of testing via a consideration of Foucault's testing as a technology of power, in this case exercised by the state within the education system. She argues that national tests have been centrally involved in moving schools towards the idea of excellence in education defined in terms of performance rather than empowerment or by other desirable qualities such as creativity and sensitivity. But, in light of the abundance of data that we now have at hand on the performance of students, and against the background of all the changes we have mentioned thus far, have standards been raised? Tyms and Fitz-Gibbon show how difficult it is to develop an adequate methodology to answer that reasonably straightforward question. Certainly, Key Stage assessments results show a steady improvement, but is this really grade inflation? The same questions are posed in relation to GCSE and A levels. The authors' own data suggests rises in standards of literacy and numeracy but grade inflation for A levels. Ultimately, more research is needed in order to refine our understanding of what is really going on.

Daugherty and Phillips note the ironic situation that the Conservatives' centralizing policies also enabled Wales to create a distinctive educational and institutional framework. Their analysis is interesting in that they see the 'schooled to fail' debate as an important step towards arguing that if there are distinctive Welsh problems then there should be locally generated policies to address them. At the time of writing, the most prominent of these was the *Curriculum Cymreig* and the later White Papers which together clearly defined a distinctive educational purpose and identity for Wales.

The chapters on equity by Dyson and Slee, Tomlinson, Arnot and her colleagues and Lauder and Robertson explore changing policy frameworks in relation to special educational needs, race, gender and social class. Tomlinson and Lauder and Robertson see education markets further disadvantaging the already disadvantaged groups. For Arnot et al. new-right policies in the areas of the economy destabilized traditional family arrangements, opened up opportunities for some girls and women but made the world a riskier place for young disadvantaged men. At the end of the period under examination inequalities continue and groups which currently receive the most and least are those who did so in the past.

I would strongly recommend this book to teachers and students engaged in educational policy studies in higher education as a source for informed analysis of the changes wrought in

education in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

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Roy Lowe (ed.), *A Century of Local Education Authorities, Oxford Review of Education*, Special Issue, Vol. 28, 2 and 3, June and September 2002, 248pp. ISSN 0305-4985. (The annual subscription for the four issues of this journal is £251 institutional rate and £93 personal rate.)

It is no easy business in a brief review to summarize and do justice to a substantial two-volume issue with some sixteen contributions by nineteen contributors which range from Wendy Robinson's opening essay on historiographical reflections upon the 1902 Education Act to a concluding article by John Fitz, Stephen Gorard and Chris Taylor on the role of local education authorities (LEAs) in school admissions following the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act. The task is further complicated by a variety of timescales and frames of reference. Thus, while a contributor such as Peter Cunningham in his review of LEAs and the primary curriculum, covers the whole century, 1902–2002, Tim Brighouse's view as a participant embraces the fifty years since 1952. More focused studies include those by Annie Crombie on the supervision and control of elementary education in Staffordshire, *c.* 1902–14, David Crook on LEAs and comprehensivization in England and Wales, 1944–74 and John Davis on the Inner London Education Authority and William Tyndale Junior School, 1974–6.

While the purpose of these essays is to reflect upon, rather than celebrate, the work of LEAs, in his introductory piece entitled 'A century of local education authorities: what has been lost?', Roy Lowe, as editor, sets the overall scene in a tone which he admits is 'as much advocacy as argument'. He lists a variety of LEA initiatives across the twentieth century, including school meals and medicals, building design, curricular and examination reforms and secondary school reorganization. Indeed, Lowe argues that, although LEAs 'are currently in what seems close to terminal decline', their achievements have been considerable and that they 'or something very like them, are needed as much today as they were a hundred years ago'.

Perhaps the most significant element in this collection, and not least for readers of this journal, is the inclusion of separate essays on Scotland and Wales. The 1902 Act did not apply to Scotland and David Limond's article, therefore, identifies a different historical trajectory: school boards, 1872–1918; ad hoc authorities, 1918–29; county and county councils, 1929–74; regional councils, 1974–95; unitary authorities, 1995–2002. Further variation has been brought about by the establishment of the Scottish Parliament, which has assumed many of the responsibilities previously exercised by the Scottish Office, including those concerned with education. Limond concludes with the thought that the wheel may have come full circle and that the next reform in Scotland may recreate smaller and more numerous bodies for

the local governance of education, somewhat akin to the school boards of the late nineteenth century.

Gareth Elwyn Jones, whose substantial and impressive article entitled 'Policy and power: one hundred years of local education authorities in Wales' encompasses social, economic and political as well as educational dimensions, also identifies a history of Welsh LEAs separate from that of England. Elements in this story include the Welsh Intermediate Education Act of 1889, which depended for implementation upon the county councils created in that year and which led to the establishment of more than ninety intermediate schools by the end of the century. From 1896 some co-ordination of the educational work of county councils was provided by the Central Welsh Board. Nevertheless, there was no smooth transition in 1902. The Education Act of that year, which provided rate aid for voluntary (including Anglican and Roman Catholic) schools, provoked considerable opposition in a Wales that saw less need for the demise of the school boards than in England, and that was predominantly nonconformist in terms of both religion and politics. Some Welsh LEAs, while passing on central government money to voluntary schools, at first withheld all rate aid. By 1905, however, the 'Welsh revolt' had petered out. Its legacy was a realization that LEAs 'were the political tools of central government, instruments to implement an education policy which, in Wales at least, they did not endorse'. The unemployment and depopulation of the inter-war years was keenly felt in Wales, but in 1931 nearly 20 per cent of pupils in Wales between the ages of eleven and twelve attended secondary school, in sharp contrast to England where the figure was less than 10 per cent. The 1944 Act and the reorganization of secondary schooling along comprehensive lines showed the marked differences between urban and rural Wales but, as in Scotland, a new situation was created by the establishment of a National Assembly with responsibilities for education. Significant differences from England already include the non-publication of test results from individual primary schools, opposition to specialist secondary comprehensive schools and a pilot Welsh Baccalaureate. Thus Jones is able to conclude on a positive note that, in contrast to the situation in England, 'the existence of the Assembly guarantees that the distinctive role of the Welsh LEAs will continue for the foreseeable future'.

In conclusion, therefore, this is an important collection of essays, and one which demonstrates not only the distinctive role of Welsh LEAs in British history over the last 100 years, but also their potential for providing an even more significant contribution in the century to come.

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Monica Heller and Marilyn Martin-Jones (eds), *Voices of Authority: Education and Linguistic Difference* (Westport, CT: Ablex Publishing, 2001), 442pp. £69.95, ISBN 1-56750-530-9 (hb), £29.50, ISBN 1-56750-531-7 (pb).

This valuable book demonstrates that language policies and practices in education are struggles over power and authority, equity and marginalization, legitimacy and social order, symbolic domination and identities, social categorization and social hierarchization. Any contest about who should speak what language, how, when and where is essentially about what counts as legitimate language, and who has dominance and control. Hence, those in power who legitimate the current social order regulate access to linguistic norms and linguistic resources to preserve their power and position. This argument follows in the varied traditions of Bourdieu, Cicourel, Bowles and Gintis, Mehan and Giddens. Its contribution is to sociolinguistics or, more exactly, sociopolitical linguistics.

Education is regarded as a central stage on which such power struggles and political episodes are enacted. Education is rather intricately defined as

> an institution of social and cultural production and reproduction, that is, a discursive space in which groups with different interests struggle over access to symbolic and material resources and over ways of organizing that access that privilege some and marginalize others on the basis of criteria of evaluation that have collective applications and effects. (p.6)

Such 'language practice' is the theme of much of this volume. The book has clearly stated aims:

> (1) to highlight the role played by educational institutions in multilingual societies in the construction of cultural identities, in the production and distribution of prestigious cultural and linguistic resources, and in the reproduction of social inequalities and (2) to show that we can develop a fuller understanding of these processes of production and reproduction in education by investigating the communicative practices of learners and educators in the daily cycles of life in educational settings. (p. x)

It very successfully meets these aims with ample exemplification, evidence and evaluation.

The book comprises eighteen chapters mostly based on 'close ethnographic analyses of socially and historically situated cases' (p. x). There is a wealth of international contributions from Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Corsica, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Malta, Peru, South Africa, Switzerland and the UK. This allows portrayal of colonialism, postcolonialism, neocolonialism, globalization, nationalism and minority rights movements. The international width of the book is a major strength, providing a comparative dimension that robustly delivers its aims. The editors succeed not only in strongly supporting their argument by such regional variety, but also by providing a clear rationale and conceptualization for that international variety. Thus in three sections, the chapters elucidate: (1) symbolic domination via the construction and imposition of a legitimate language; (2) situations where there is inherent contradiction in interaction preventing the imposition of a unified discourse and hence the opportunity for contesting dominance; (3) situations where linguistic contest is overt and persuasive.

There are many well-illustrated and cogently argued individual themes in the chapters: teacher-dominated classroom talk, the use of closed and convergent questioning, recitation and chorus responses by pupils, lesson routines which are safe, 'doing the lesson' without cognitive gain, using a prestigious colonial language that is remote from the child's home and community experience, the use of 'safetalk' and 'safetime' to reproduce marginalization and academic failure, and the paucity of classroom materials in a minority language reinforcing the dominance of a majority language. One first-class chapter analyses the role of bilingual teaching assistants who are made marginal to the 'main action' of the classroom by monolingual (majority language) teachers, thus reproducing the symbolic dominance of (for example) English and the perceived inferiority of minority languages and language minorities.

From a Wales perspective, the book is co-edited by Marilyn Martin-Jones, University of Wales, Aberystwyth. This adds to her seminal, high-quality output over many years. However, the Welsh context is not analysed. In contrast, there are three chapters on England. Since language policies and practices in Welsh-language education have a long and fascinating political history, the themes of the book could have been well illustrated by reference to Wales. Sixty years of Welsh-medium education have bequeathed many captivating local and central struggles over power, equity and legitimacy in language education. Nevertheless, the themes of the book are highly relevant to Wales, historically, politically and sociolinguistically, such that it should receive a warm *croeso* onto Welsh bookshelves.

Overall, this volume is a laudable contribution to educational and sociopolitical linguistics. The editors make a successful attempt to integrate the varied chapters into a holistic and logically ordered structure with their substantive introductory and concluding chapters. There are no weak chapters; each makes important points. Thus, the title of the book aptly refers to the authors and editors and not just to the theme.

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