

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.

Ken Reid, *Truancy: Short and Long Term Solutions* (London, Routledge Falmer, 2002), 193pp. £16.99, ISBN 0-41527-575 (pb).

After a flurry of interest in the 1960s and 1970s, truancy, in the last two decades, has not received the attention it deserves. UK rates of non-attendance are high by international standards and, since many subjects are highly school dependent, not being at school inflicts serious damage on children's educational achievements. Not being at school also creates the opportunity for all manner of social problems from crime to drug taking, since the chaperonage of school is absent.

Over the last twenty years, Ken Reid – almost alone – has attempted to focus our attention on this problem. In his numerous books and articles, of which this is the most recent, he has attempted to codify what the nature of the problem is and the mechanisms that may work in combating it. The book concentrates on the practical solutions to the problem, outlining more than 119 short-term strategies, in addition to long-term strategies and macro curriculum and policy changes at national level.

Simply to have hoovered up all this material is a practical *tour de force* and the target audience for the book, which is stated to be practitioners, will undoubtedly find the content useful. It is a measure of the author's skill that he is able to present material which is accessible without being patronizing to those who live at the educational sharp end.

It may have been asking too much of a book like this, but one wonders whether the attempt to make the content accessible has occasionally meant the sacrificing of some science. Firstly, as an example, *SuccessMaker* is seen as a useful and successful innovation that might help repair the deficiency in basic skills that lies at the root of much truancy, but there is no academic evidence given for its use. The literacy and numeracy versions are described jointly, but it is clear that most users regard the numeracy material as much more valid. This is but one example; because we are referenced mostly to Reid's past writing, which itself often misses quoting the academic chapter and verse for its positions, we do not know the strength of the scientific evidence for the material in the book.

Secondly, because of the absence of supporting material, it appears that all of the remedies are of equal importance when it is clear that they are not of equal power. Admittedly, Reid sorts the material into short-term, strategic and macro changes, but some interventions one would expect from the effectiveness literature to be of major impact, such as consistency programmes, are given a status similar to phone checks. Practitioners need help to know which of the myriad of things Reid refers to here, and in what sequence, will have the desired effect. They also need to know what will be effective in their particular context. These important – and some would say necessary – insights they will not get from this book.

One must not be too critical, however. In a field where intellectual progress has been slow and where practical policies are now more determined by political spin than by truths of research, Reid stands out for his encyclopaedic knowledge and humanity. He is surely right to call for a national inquiry into truancy which, if it had some minimal resources, might do much at little cost. There happen to be a large number of databases in the effectiveness and improvement area that possess data on attendance rates, but, usually, analyses have concentrated upon academic achievement and the processes that can promote it. Often, indeed, researchers have not bothered to analyse their attendance data. The whole situation of truancy research could indeed be transformed by such a policy intervention.

It may even be that these data show, as many people think, that schools need to do somewhat different and maybe mutually exclusive things to combat truancy, by comparison with what they need to do to improve academic outcomes. Now, that would be interesting, both politically and educationally!

David Reynolds
University of Exeter

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Stephen Gorard and Gareth Rees, *Creating a Learning Society? Learning Careers and Policies for Lifelong Learning* (Bristol, The Policy Press, 2002) 192pp., £17.99, ISBN 1-86134-286-1 (pb), £50.00, ISBN 1-86134-393-0 (hb).

This is a timely review and analysis of the lifelong learning legacy in Wales by two of the leading Welsh academics in this vitally important field of study. The work is largely based upon a major research grant received from the Economic and Social Research Council as part of its 'Learning Society' programme. Particular tribute should be paid to Professor Gareth Rees who drew on and successfully synthesized the rich seams of historical documentation and practice at Swansea with the critical empirical and theoretical work at Cardiff.

For over a decade, the concept of lifelong learning has become a central feature of government policies throughout

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Europe, addressing equally economic efficiency and social exclusion. The value of this work is that it locates the Welsh scene within this wider context with a particular focus on the definition of 'a learning society'. Rees and Gorard place great emphasis on the social and economic factors which shape and determine participation and non-participation in lifelong learning. They also provide fresh perspectives on the mechanisms and character of lifelong learning. In so doing they provide ideas and insights into new policy developments which will inevitably, if policy-makers take note, lead to progressive initiatives in the new era of democratic devolution.

In setting out in a clear and cogent way prospects for a learning society the study identifies the crucial factors which determine participation and non-participation. Time, place, gender, family and initial schooling are the key determinants, and if policy-makers can address these issues then the concept of lifelong learning will displace 'second chance' learning which so dominated twentieth-century Wales.

This study affords the opportunity to see, albeit a glimpse at this stage, how policy is unfolding in a democratically devolved Wales. If this study were to be undertaken in ten years' time, then we would be confronted by a very different set of policies which would have been informed, not by the apparently generic but artificial concept of a 'learning society', but by the more rooted concept of a 'learning country' first projected in 1997 by the adult learners' body in Wales, NIACE Cymru (currently NIACE Dysgu

Cymru) now very much part of the Welsh Assembly Government's vision for the future.

Hywel Francis MP
Westminster

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Gareth Elwyn Jones and Gordon Wynne Roderick, *A History of Education in Wales* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2003), 254pp. £15.99, ISBN 0-7083-1807-X (pb), £35.00, ISBN 0-7083-1808-8 (hb).

Since devolution the Welsh education system has become increasingly differentiated from that of England and it is therefore singularly appropriate that the year 2003 should see the publication of the first general survey of the history of education in Wales. It is doubtful whether this book could have been written thirty years ago but the last three decades have seen the flourishing of Welsh historical scholarship in all periods, as witnessed in the work of scholars such as Professor R. Rees Davies, Sir Glanmor Williams and Lord Morgan of Aberdyfi. The wealth of their monographs and general histories, and those of their fellow historians, has occasioned the appearance of one-volume general histories of Wales, most notably that by John Davies, and has encouraged the growth in the historiography of Welsh education to which Professors Jones and Roderick have been such distinguished

contributors. The ambition of Professor Evan John Jones in 1931 to produce a complete history of education in Wales has at last been realized and it seems fitting that he too was a professor of education in Swansea.

The two writers have produced a work of genuine co-authorship in that it is impossible to identify their individual contributions. One assumes that each has worked from his own special interests but the style is integrated throughout in a masterly survey of educational developments since the end of Roman Wales. Given the unevenness of much of the historical record over such a long period it is hardly a surprise that two-thirds of the text covers the years since 1870 or that the authors have eschewed the thematic approach of some recent introductions to British educational history and opted for a chronological narrative in eight well-organized chapters. The approach is 'new history', setting education in the social, economic and cultural context of Wales and avoiding the arid prose of the old-fashioned text of political and administrative analysis of statutory provision and tales of education's heroes and heroines. Not that politics and Acts of Parliament are missing. The last chapter is a definitive account of the changing structure and administration of education in Wales since 1979, which discusses the importance of devolution both for Wales and for the English system. Neither are heroes and heroines ignored: there are excellent vignettes of the contributions of Griffith Jones, Owen

Edwards and others, and full account is taken of the many gifted women who have played on the Welsh educational stage.

The writing is a skilful analytical narrative packed with fascinating detail which challenges the reader with thought-provoking discussions over a wide range of issues, notably the important interactions in Wales between education, religious convictions and varying attitudes to the Welsh language. The authors also appear to have been at pains to provide a good geographical balance between north and south Wales and the rural and urban divide. Some useful distribution maps might have added summary information in some places, for example, monastic locations, Welsh LEAs and higher education institutions. Photographs would also have added value – and, of course, cost!

Though the book is intended to be read as a continuous account each chapter is sufficiently self-contained for the reader to approach each one as a separate essay. Thus, the first chapter 'Monasticism to Puritanism' is a rewarding *tour de force* covering bardic education, the place of the medieval church in cultural transmission, the influence of the Renaissance, Tudor grammar schools, the education of the poor compared to that of the gentry and the influence of the Puritans. Throughout the book the authors are quick to consider and evaluate informal as well as formal agencies of education, for example, with reference to the visual education in church buildings, the musical education

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of the male voice choirs and eisteddfodau and the literary and political education of the miners' institutes. Good use is made of the primary evidence with apt quotations which enliven the text, such as the amusing and accurate description by Deirdre Beddoe of the rituals of the girls' grammar school in the 1950s. It is possible to follow the development of different sectors of education through the book, and particular strengths are the consideration of secondary and comprehensive schooling and of post-compulsory provision in the analysis of the university and teacher education system. The story of technical and scientific education in Wales makes for depressing reading where a gallery of industrialists, quarry- and mine-owners might be presented as the villains of Welsh educational history, though there are some honourable exceptions such as David Davies of Llandinam.

This will be the standard history of Welsh education for a long time to come and can be highly recommended as an overview of the field. Those readers fortunate enough to have been educated in Wales will enjoy judging their experience against the views of this first-rate commentary. The bibliographical note is a helpful essay for future scholars, but the value of the book for researchers and general readers seeking sources of additional information would have been enhanced had the authors appended each chapter with notes on sources and a brief list of suggested supplementary reading, as did Richard Aldrich in 'Education for the Nation'. This reviewer was annoyed

to find more than occasional reference in the text to named writers with no citation of relevant publications. This may be a quibble too far, however, for this distinguished volume is a work of original synthesis which makes a major contribution both to Welsh historiography and to Welsh educational scholarship. It is published with the high standards which we have come to expect from the University of Wales Press, and the University of Wales Guild of Graduates must be thanked for funding the paperback edition.

John B. Thomas
Loughborough University

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Rob Phillips, *Reflective Teaching of History 11–18: Meeting Standards and Applying Research* (London, Continuum International Publishing, 2002), 80pp. £16.99, ISBN 0-8264-5274-4 (pb), £60, ISBN 0-8264-6043-7 (hb).

This book begins with Christine Counsell's dictum that 'There is nothing more practical than a good theory'. Perhaps the only thing that disproves her maxim is in fact this comprehensive and accessible publication itself. Thanks to its blend of theoretical overview and practical detail, it is set to become a standard work in the field of history education. For although it begins with theoretical and historical perspectives upon

the ways in which learning and teaching in history has developed in recent decades, this is also a very helpful treasury of practical advice for those setting out to become history educators. The book is grounded upon Rob Phillips's deep reading and thinking about issues in history education and there is much to delight those who enjoy debates in this field. He revels in the political and polemic aspects of these issues and this injects a welcome degree of colour, pace and readability into the text which is often missing from works of this kind. His ear for a quote which sums up a position serves him well on numerous occasions throughout this book. We all owe him thanks for reminding us of Stephen Ball's description of the unrealistic nostalgia for the stereo-mythical school history of yesteryear as 'the curriculum of the dead'. The author's own stance on the history education issues of the last two decades is never in doubt. A staunch supporter of reflective teacher autonomy and a believer in curricular and methodological innovation and experiment, he champions the value of research in underpinning effective history education from page one onwards. Nevertheless, his treatment of the views of those in successive governments and on the New Right who have approached history education from different philosophical and political directions is scrupulously fair and full. In particular, his summary of the debates in the area in Chapters 1 and 2 of the book should be considered essential reading for all would-be history teachers.

There are many features about this

book that will endear it to hard-pressed PGCE tutors and students alike. The twelve chapters and their sub-headings clearly relate to the range of issues and questions that emerge in university seminar discussions. It will also be of value to history mentors and heads of department as they strive to promote good practice and develop further their professional knowledge and skills. The author draws well from the works of others and has the happy knack of summarizing exactly what the reader really wants or needs to know about an issue. His excellent precis of Furlong and Maynard's six stages of professional knowledge is infused by his own experience of working with student-teachers. On a structural level, there are frequent bullet-pointed checklists of key ideas, issues and questions which the more apprehensive student will find reassuring, while those who wish to read more on a topic can easily follow the clear trail of references given in each section of the text. There is a very thorough eighteen-page bibliography and a decent thematic index.

Of course, every reviewer has to identify areas of weakness in order to justify their free copy of the book. So what is disappointing here? Chapter 3 on how pupils learn in history is general in nature and it ended just as it was getting really interesting. I would have liked more examples here that made links between theory and practice in this respect, but in all fairness to the book, many of the succeeding chapters give precisely that. And that is about my only

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quibble. The rest of this purposeful book is simply packed with well-laid-out, sensible advice that successfully bridges the theory/practice divide.

The blurb on Terry Deary's popular *Horrible Histories* proclaims them to be 'History with the best bits left in'. Rob Phillips has produced a book which is comprehensive yet concise, learned yet genuinely accessible, grounded in theory and historical context and yet likely to be consulted by students on school experi-

ence placement. It will be of value to the newest and the oldest practitioners in this area of work and should be on most PGCE course reading lists in England and Wales, and beyond. I think it will quickly assume a dominant role on these for this is quite simply 'History Education with all the very best bits left in'.

Richard Dargie
University of Edinburgh

Robert Huw Phillips (1959–2003)

Colleagues within the academic community in Wales and beyond will have been saddened by the news of the untimely death of Rob Phillips since this issue went to press. The above review stands as a tribute to Rob's energetic and passionate commitment to enriching and transforming history education in secondary schools, and to his extraordinary ability to communicate new approaches based on his researches and personal philosophy with learners and teachers. Undoubtedly, he leaves a lasting legacy in this field. His contribution to education research in Wales more generally had already been established, but had not yet been fully realized. The loss of an academic who combined critical enquiry with enthusiasm and originality can be ill-afforded, and members of the editorial board wish to express their sincere sympathy to his family and friends.