

## 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.*

Lynda Pritchard Newcombe, *Social Context and Fluency in L2 Learners: The Case of Wales* (Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 2007), 139pp. £20.00, ISBN 978-1-85359-994-1.

I doubt whether those pioneers of Welsh for Adults (WfA) provision, Gwilym Roberts and Chris Rees (who established the first WLPAN course in Cardiff in 1973 with only 11 students), ever imagined the growth that has been experienced in the field over the last 30 years. It has been nothing less than phenomenal across Wales, with an ever-increasing number of adults enrolling on various courses. However, the fact that the drop-out rate is high and that comparatively few learners ever manage to become fluent L2 speakers is a matter of concern, and in this book, Dr Lynda Pritchard Newcombe looks in depth at some of the barriers and practical problems that face adult language learners as they attempt to consolidate and use their newly-acquired language in the community.

An adult Welsh learner herself – and

an experienced WfA teacher – Lynda Pritchard Newcombe focuses here on the pivotal role of social interaction in L2 learning and use. Although the book is based mainly on the findings of an important longitudinal study into the challenges that face adult language learners of Welsh (The Adult Welsh Learners' Project or AWLP), the findings have important implications for a range of other situations in bilingual/ multilingual contexts.

The first two chapters are both engaging and informative in the way they succinctly set the context for the main themes and issues addressed in the book. We are given a concise overview of the way in which WfA provision (and its accompanying methodologies) has developed in Wales in the latter half of the twentieth century, concentrating on the characteristics of adult learners and the challenges they encounter as they attempt to consolidate their learning in the community. Whilst Chapter 2 serves as a valuable historical account of the development of WfA provision, it also evaluates some of the main method-

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ologies that have evolved over the last 30 years.

As indicated, this publication concentrates on the main problems encountered by adult language learners in the community. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 discuss *attitudinal* barriers to practising Welsh in the community, whilst Chapter 6 focuses on the *practical* barriers; these chapters highlight the fact that there has been a dearth of research in the past into the power of social interaction in L2 learning/use. Drawing on autobiographical/biographical accounts of learners, Chapter 3 gives us a valuable insight into the four main challenges that usually face learners in the community – issues that confront adult learners throughout the world: the tendency of native speakers to switch to English, the speed of speech, dialect differences, and code-switching/code-mixing. The findings highlight the fact that learners are not always prepared for the gulf that exists between learning in class and using the new language in the community.

The complex question of identity is discussed in Chapter 4 and as contemporary Welsh society is so diverse, there can be no single view of what it is to be 'Welsh'. With anxiety amongst adult language learners currently considered as one of the main factors impeding effective L2 learning, Chapter 5 focuses on how anxiety and lack of confidence impact on learners' progress and their willingness to practise the language outside the classroom.

Moving on to the practical barriers to practising Welsh in the community, Chapter 6 deals with problems that are not easily overcome: time and opportunity. The time element is explored from two perspectives: the time it takes to

achieve fluency and the amount of time available for study. With reference to *opportunity* for learning, one has to acknowledge that there will always be fewer opportunities for learners to practise a minority language (such as Welsh) than a majority language (such as English).

In a more positive mode, Chapter 7 focuses on motivation for successful language learning. Drawing on a brief review of literature on the role of motivation in language learning, the chapter describes who the current adult learners of Welsh are and their motives for learning the language. It concludes that those who attend WfA courses create a very heterogeneous group and have a variety of reasons for learning Welsh. Distinguishing between *integrative* orientation towards the L2 on the one hand and *instrumental* orientation on the other, it is clear that integrative motivation dominates, although the instrumental motive is also present.

Bearing in mind that the initial aim of AWLP was to examine the challenges facing learners when practising Welsh outside the classroom, the final chapter offers practical and compelling advice for everyone involved in adult language learning and outlines the agenda for further development of WfA provision. One of the most important conclusions of the study is that successful language learners require regular interaction in the target language. This has many implications not only for tutors and providers of WfA, but it is also a very timely wake-up call to native speakers. 'Those who have ears to hear ...'

**W. Gwyn Lewis**  
Bangor University

W. Gareth Evans, Robert Smith and Gareth Elwyn Jones, *Examining the Secondary Schools of Wales 1896–2000* (Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 2008), 247pp. £45.00, ISBN 978–0–7083–2149–2.

This valuable book is a memorial to the first named author, a distinguished Reader in Education at Aberystwyth, whose place in Welsh educational historiography has been guaranteed by a body of scholarship which includes the histories of Llandovery College, the Central Welsh Board, the Education Department at Aberystwyth, and especially a definitive study of gender history in the much-cited *Education and Female Emancipation: the Welsh Experience* (UWP, 1990). The present book is also a tribute to the industry of his co-authors who completed and put in context the manuscript left on Dr Evans's premature death in 2000. Professors Geraint Jenkins and Richard Daugherty provided the funding and departmental support in Aberystwyth to prepare the book for eventual publication.

Organised in long but engrossing chapters, the text presents material chronologically in five logically well-defined periods with each chapter providing a thematic synopsis followed by consideration of each subject area examined in the secondary schools. Based on extensive research in the records of the Central Welsh Board, the Welsh Joint Education Committee, the Public Record Office and elsewhere and drawing on an impressive range of secondary sources, the authors stress the continuities and conflicts in the history

of Welsh secondary education from the original intermediate schools, through the grammar school period, to the modern day comprehensive system. Comparisons with developments in England are both valuable and enlightening and the educational history is carefully integrated with the political, social and economic development of each period under discussion. Each chapter is fully referenced with copious notes but these might more usefully have been collated at the end of the volume. The index is relatively weak and a separate author index would have been a valuable addition.

The text may be read either as a continuous narrative or, interestingly, as a set of essays on each curriculum subject followed through each chronological chapter. The latter approach emphasises the notable contribution which the authors make to the history of disciplinary dynamics, the ways in which school subjects have changed and developed within the broader history of the secondary school curriculum. Thus, reform and retrenchment can be detected in the syllabuses of mathematics and the influence of the classical curriculum traced in the history of English teaching. Similarly one can follow the varying fortunes of the study of Welsh history, language and literature in the respective sections on the examining of history and Welsh. The selected comments on each subject from the reports of the examiners over the decades are as instructive as they are entertaining and provide fascinating if shadowy glimpses into the realities of teaching and learning in the schools mentioned.

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The central strength of this book, apart from the subject histories, is the unique and original contribution it makes to the history of assessment and examining in a nation, Wales, where these processes were directed centrally, firstly by the Central Welsh Board (CWB) and then by the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) and not, as in England, by the regional, University controlled examination boards. The often strained relationships of the major stakeholders in the Principality, for example, in the early period, battles between the Welsh Department of the Board of Education and the Central Welsh Board, are well described. The influence of the University of Wales is less well known and is given detailed attention here.

The professors, though not controlling the secondary schools directly, nevertheless dictated the assessment of their curriculum from the beginning through their matriculation demands for admission and 'for better or worse, generally cast their long shadow over the content and approach employed in the intermediate/grammar schools of Wales'. Thus Aberystwyth geographers influenced the teaching of that subject to generations of pupils (including myself, taught by a graduate who elevated the late Professor Emrys Bowen to near sainthood!).

This volume is a valuable analysis enriching more than the history and examination of the school curriculum. The authors add to existing scholarship in a number of areas of historical research in Welsh education: disciplinary dynamics, public administration, and the

history of higher education. Both the insights provided and the hypotheses suggested should help to stimulate further investigations, including histories of the 'non-academic' school subjects and comparative studies of the varying influences of different higher education systems in the United Kingdom on secondary school curriculum and examination.

It might have been misplaced in this volume, but an appendix listing the publications of W. Gareth Evans would have been an additional recognition of his important status as an educational historian and an aid to future scholars developing further his stimulating ideas and themes. The University of Wales Press once again demonstrates high standards of book production.

**John B. Thomas**  
**Loughborough University**

Gwyn Pritchard, Aki Rasinen, Pasi Ikonen, Timo Rissanen, David Barlex and Louise Davies, *Design and Technology in the Curriculum* (School of Education, Bangor University, 2008), 53pp. £5.00, ISBN 978-1-84220-102-2.

*Design and Technology in the Curriculum* explores a number of alternative approaches to 'Design Education' in Wales, England and Finland through three separate research articles.

The first focuses on Design and Technology in the primary school as a means of developing language. The author has addressed many historical curriculum

issues which are still relevant today but which have contributed to the development and understanding of Design and Technology (DT) in the primary phase over the years. The research addresses the development of an individual's language through DT and the opportunities which exist for teachers to use the design process to support this in their teaching. The emphasis on language development is at the forefront here; multiple opportunities are identified throughout the article to provide a creative and relevant learning environment. It is also refreshing to see the promotion of a flexible creative process as opposed to a linear format so often adopted by many schools.

The article describes a range of projects which were developed in a number of schools in Key Stages 1 and 2. These carefully covered the requirements of the subject but also allowed pupils to express their ideas in a traditional DT format and to discuss and justify them with their peers, thus making informed choices as they would do in a 'real world' situation. The author also identifies and explains the relevance of products which have been designed and influenced by the Welsh culture. This again makes the article a useful resource for teachers to refer to in the context of the Curriculum Cymreig requirements in Wales.

The second article, entitled, 'From craft education towards technology education' draws on the Finnish experience. This provides an interesting insight into the development of craft / technology education and the implementation of a 'technical' curriculum. As in the

first article, this again highlights the influence of historical factors on curriculum development. The inclusion of 'craft' provides a very exciting concept for many teachers; however it is clear that the creative development of the product as well as the production of the product should remain of equal value. Design and Technology as we experience it in Wales is far from reaching a suitable conclusion in Finland, and whilst the authors have given a clear and unbiased breakdown of the organisation of technology there is clearly a need to rectify and provide a relevant balance in terms of creativity within the subject areas responsible for the delivery of the subject in that country.

One of the most significant developments in DT education in Wales and England has been the Nuffield Primary Design and Technology Project. This is the focus of the final article, which provides a retrospective view of the work achieved. David Barlex and his colleagues in the Nuffield project have been the key to success for DT in the primary school curriculum and, as a teacher educator, the impact that this project has had makes me feel that I can almost write this review without reading the article! All interested readers will not only appreciate having a summary of the project's work in an easily accessible form, but will also gain an insight into the time spent on the development of the key teaching resources produced by the project team for primary aged pupils. The resources mentioned are a valuable addition to the subject. The author is clearly developing these in line with important global developments and

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expectations, and we can feel confident that DT in the primary school will continue to thrive and reach new standards where these are utilised.

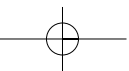
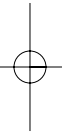
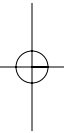
Any teacher or student teacher unfamiliar with the identification of problems in the teaching and curriculum delivery of DT should read this article. It not only discusses through case study the 'prototyping' of its product, but also takes the reader through a step by step real life design scenario.

In conclusion, this publication provides an interesting and relevant

insight into the flexibility and creativity that DT has to offer, whether it is developing a fundamental role for itself in an emerging curriculum or ensuring pupils' personal interpretation of relevant issues associated with design problems in a Primary school.

*Jason Davies*

**University of Wales Institute Cardiff**



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