



## Book Reviews

### **An Inspector Calls**

CEDRIC CULLINGFORD (Ed.), 1999  
London, Kogan Page  
227 pp.  
ISBN 0-7494-3053-2

This collection is a series of discussions about the effect of Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspections on education. It arises from a widespread concern with inspections and their place within a continuing programme of politically driven educational change—a concern which also led to the setting up of a Parliamentary select committee enquiry whose report was published in summer 1999.

The 12 chapters are contributions from researchers interested in the inspection process, and deal mainly with schools in England, with one contribution from Wales, one from higher education initial training and one from the further education sector. In addition to discussing these contributions, I will look at a critique of the volume by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector, Chris Woodhead, which appeared in *The Guardian* newspaper (5 October 1999).

While this volume is ostensibly about OFSTED, it comes at a time when there is a considerable debate in education, and within the social sciences more generally, about the acquisition and use of research evidence to inform policy. This context is important because the volume claims to provide and interpret research evidence in an important area of policy, so that in the wider debate about evidence it may come to be seen as a model to follow. Whether it should provide such a model is an underlying theme of this review, which I address both implicitly and explicitly.

In his introduction, Cullingford stresses the difficulty of evaluating OFSTED's work and the importance of well-constructed empirical research. Other contributors echo this, but sadly, with one or two exceptions, fall short of this aspiration. The first chapter by Kogan & Maden briefly describes much of current school improvement research and also provides an account of the inspection system. They summarise and discuss the results of a questionnaire survey, supplemented by interviews, and describe how OFSTED inspections affected normal school activities and existing management structures as well as people's perceptions of the effects of inspections on 'standards'. The authors go into some detail about true inspection costs. They raise several issues also made by other contributors, for example, on the need for the views of those being inspected to be incorporated into reports, and argue in favour of school 'self evaluation'. Nevertheless, there are difficulties with this contribution. To claim, as they do, that 'OFSTED has made strenuous efforts to monitor its own reliability', when in fact it has only (to date) carried out one small, poorly controlled study (see select committee report for a description and discussion) hardly inspires confidence. More seriously, the authors provide no details of how their study was carried out, for example, how the interviews were conducted, what the survey response rate was, etc. Results are presented as 'facts', with no indication of their reliability or representativeness and no reservations expressed about the validity of their data. In fact the full report of the study (Centre for the Evaluation of Public Policy and Practice [CEPPP], 1999) does give some details: the response rate to the main postal questionnaire was 22% for governors and parents and 33% for heads. These rates are extremely low and would generally be felt to cast considerable doubt upon the validity of any findings. Moreover, although some basic data about the sample are given in the full report, there appears to have been no serious attempt to check whether the sample can be considered to be representative. When authors omit such caveats from any serious discussion of results, it weakens their whole argument.

In the following chapter, Winkley characterises a classroom lesson as a 'performance', for example, of a play, with pupils as audience and OFSTED inspectors as critics reporting on it. Using this analogy,

Winkley makes several observations about the importance of the teaching 'context', the lack of opportunity to contest the 'critic's' judgement and the (partly) subjective nature of critical judgement. Pursuing the analogy, he makes assertions about the level of disagreement (reliability) to be expected among inspectors. All of this, however, is speculative and rather a long way from having a secure evidential basis. Winkley goes on to discuss the results of a survey of recently inspected primary schools and their views about the inspections. He notes, for example, failures to take account of particular kinds of achievement in addition to key stage test results and discusses the stress induced by the inspection process. Like Kogan & Maden, he argues for the school's views of inspection to become incorporated into reports. He attempts to set OFSTED within the wider contemporary political scene and sets out his views about how a better inspection system might be constructed, using a school improvement model.

Interesting as much of this chapter is, it is let down by weak logic and poor research methodology. Thus, for example, Winkley makes statements about the lack of evidence for beneficial effects of inspection, with a clear invitation to the reader to interpret this as an argument against the *existence* of such benefits. In another example he writes about 'schools with serious weaknesses' needing special treatments—yet gives no indication of how he defines 'serious weaknesses': yet the labelling of such schools by OFSTED is contentious, as many other contributors point out. Like Kogan & Maden, he makes reference to the results of a survey, but again with an absence of detailed information that would allow the reader to evaluate his evidence—and also with no indication where the reader might go to see such details.

The merit of the chapter by Cullingford & Daniels is that it does attempt to obtain empirical evidence about the relationship between OFSTED inspections and changes in educational 'standards'. The authors describe a survey of examination results, which they relate to inspections, when and where these occurred. Details of their survey are set out. Their analyses show that the percentage of A\* to C grades at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) for a school decreases the closer is the inspection to the time of the examination. The authors recognise some of the pitfalls in interpreting such data, for example, that 'weaker' schools were chosen closer to the examination period, and go on to dismiss these possibilities, but they provide no empirical data that would justify such dismissal. More importantly, the use of GCSE results to measure 'standards' is naïve. At the very least, a 'value added' definition is required, adjusting for prior achievement, but nowhere is this recognised. This study, therefore, provides poor ammunition against OFSTED.

Grubb provides a US view of OFSTED, based upon observations in a sample of schools and conversations with heads and inspectors. He discusses ways in which the establishment of OFSTED led to the bureaucratisation of inspection, with the introduction of criteria and formal databases. The chapter is characterised by attempts to make generalisations based upon his own experiences and this makes it much more an exercise in educational journalism than serious research. As such, however, it does provide some insights; the waste of information involved in summarisation; the failure to match inspectors' judgements to those of teachers and the conflicts endured by the inspectors themselves. He contrasts the inspection system in further education (FE) with that in schools. He comments favourably on the former's emphasis on self-evaluation and avoidance of some of the stress associated with OFSTED, and makes some suggestions for how others might learn from the English experience.

FitzGibbon & Stephenson-Forster consider the nature of any claim by OFSTED to objectivity and report on a survey designed to monitor OFSTED's impact. They look at the inspection process in terms of whether the information provided is 'representative' of what happens in schools, whether it can achieve reasonable reliability, and whether it approaches acceptable standards of validity. In their survey, they found strong support for the principle of inspection; they also found a general reluctance among heads to believe in the validity of OFSTED judgements and also to see problems with reliability. The authors present a limited analysis of the relationship between a crude measure of poverty (based on free school meals), amount spent on pre-inspection preparation and the inspection outcome as perceived by headteachers. Limited as this study is, it is well documented and is a careful attempt to provide relevant empirical evidence about OFSTED's perceived impact.

Alexander's chapter is based upon his evidence to the Parliamentary select committee. He sets out to question OFSTED's claim to independence and integrity and argues that it should be much more concerned with critiquing government policy, based on professional judgements, rather than acting largely to implement that policy. The main difficulty with this chapter is that it consists largely of brief statements of personal views and presents little new empirical evidence beyond some anecdotes about individual OFSTED judgements. Alexander is very clear in his attitude to Woodhead, accusing him of abusing his position, not by speaking out, but by doing so irresponsibly and with more regard for ideology than evidence.

Thomas traces the history of the creation of OFSTED and looks at a survey of inspection in Wales, which has its own inspection system. Schools were asked about the factors they felt affected their performance, and inspection appeared as less important than, for example, in-service education and training (INSET) or within-school monitoring. Schools, however, had quite different views about the factors affecting performance of other schools than their own. Without any more objective evaluation, and coupled with a relatively low (64%) response rate to the survey, it seems difficult to draw clear conclusions from these findings.

Law & Glover look at about 30 schools inspected within one shire county. They point to a relationship between inspection judgements and social background factors and discuss the difficulty of properly taking account of these when making judgements about schools. They look at changes in a small number of their schools that were reinspected and found that those with more social problems made less progress between inspections. They argue that such schools will tend to be those that more often fail and have less chance of being judged as 'improving'. Despite being based upon a limited sample of schools and not using a proper value added analysis, this chapter does offer some potentially useful insights into the important issue of relationships between OFSTED judgements and social background.

In the next two chapters Hustler looks at the lay (non-educational-professional) inspector within inspection teams and suggests that these inspectors are increasingly becoming 'socialised' into the system, and Cuckle & Broadhead describe a survey of headteachers' views about OFSTED inspections. Hustler's study consists of a series of interviews, but we are given no details of how representative the sample is and the presentation consists of vague statements with little quantification. Cuckle & Broadhead conclude that heads value inspections, especially when schools are able to respect the quality of the inspection team. Again, no sample details, such as response rates, are reported for the survey so that it is also difficult to judge the quality of this contribution.

Griffith & Jacklin discuss the OFSTED inspection of the University of Sussex primary Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course, which eventually led to the withdrawal of the University from Initial Teacher Education (ITE). They present this as a case study and invite other PGCE institutions to share their experiences. They make several points:

1. that changing requirements and inspection criteria for ITE have made it extremely difficult for institutions to respond in the time required;
2. inspectors are often inexperienced and confused;
3. there is often a serious lack of communication between OFSTED and the Teacher Training Agency (TTA).

They offer suggestions for improvement, especially changing from a 'punitive' to a 'supportive' culture, and in this echo much of the debate about OFSTED inspections in schools.

In a concluding chapter, Cullingford describes 'A modest proposal' for a new inspection system based around the notion of an 'undercover state inspector' in every school monitoring everything that happens. The satire is spoilt, unfortunately, by stopping (or does it?) part way through, to be replaced by bold assertions such as 'OFSTED lowers standards' and 'we also know that standards of achievement are not rising'.

Chris Woodhead is the key figure in contemporary debates about OFSTED, although Grubb's view that he has 'single-handedly done considerable damage to the process (of inspection)' seems something of an overstatement. Nevertheless, it is important to try to understand Woodhead's role. There is in this volume, unfortunately, no serious attempt to do this, although Alexander does make some observations about it. Nevertheless, Woodhead's critique of this volume (*Guardian*, 5 October 1999) is quite revealing.

In his critique, Woodhead selects particular evidence or misquotes contributors in order to defend OFSTED. For example, he accuses Grubb of 'dismissing out of hand' the possibility that poor teaching can be a result of personal incompetence. In fact Grubb does nothing of the sort, as a careful reading shows. Has Woodhead really absorbed Grubb's chapter and then deliberately misquoted him, or has he simply superficially skimmed it and not understood what is being said? Woodhead is often contemptuous of research; in the critique he uses the phrase 'the treacle of academic reference'. On several occasions in the recent past he has also demonstrated his ignorance of educational research. Thus, for example, as Alexander points out, Woodhead's introduction to Tooley & Darby's (1998) review of four education research journals draws quite unwarranted conclusions from that same report. Furthermore, Woodhead shows little inclination to learn about research and its methods. It is such attitudes, rather than any particular opinions he may hold, which in the longer term may have more serious consequences, since

they make it difficult for policy to be mediated by evidence. Even though all within OFSTED do not share such attitudes, those other voices are generally not heard.

There are certainly many deficiencies in OFSTED and in its leadership, and these need well-founded critiques that the present volume, on the whole, fails to provide. For those readers who wish to become well informed about OFSTED, a much better source is the Select Committee report, which is available for free on the Web: [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199899/cmselect/cmduemp/62/6202.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199899/cmselect/cmduemp/62/6202.htm); and the Department for Education and Employment and OFSTED responses to it are also interesting: [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199899/cmselect/cmduemp/791/79102.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199899/cmselect/cmduemp/791/79102.htm).

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### **The Adult University**

ETIENNE BOURGEOIS, CHRIS DUKE, JEAN LUC-GUYOT & BARBARA MERRILL, 1999

Buckingham, Open University Press

194 pp.

ISBN 0-335-199070 (pb), 0-335-199089 (hb)

Adults now make up a majority of the university population in many countries, including the UK. However, we do not have a clear picture of which adults are entering university, where they are distributed or how they experience university life. Nor has there been a full exploration of what 'mass higher education' means for the life chances of adults, or whether and how universities are changing to meet the needs of this growing group of students. *The Adult University* makes a contribution to this discussion. Using a comparative approach, based mainly on research at the University of Warwick in the UK and at L'Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) in Belgium, the authors examine two main themes: how are universities in Western societies adapting to changes in university populations, and to what extent does the modern university act as a vehicle for social inclusion?

The book begins by examining recent social changes affecting the university and its environment. It refers to the effects of globalisation and economic competition which have increased pressure to market courses to wider section of the community than formerly, and have led to inflation in the demand for higher education qualifications. It asks whether a mass system of higher education is promoting social inclusion, or whether such claims are merely tokenistic.

The authors examine the features of a university as a professional bureaucracy and explore how these features promote or impede access in practice. Chapter 4 provides a useful summary of who the adult students are and where they are located. It reveals a picture of diversity, but also confirms that those from the most advantaged socio-economic background are the most likely to succeed in breaking through the barriers to access—a fact which is evident in statistics on higher education entry in the UK, in spite of the current rhetoric of widening participation.

Chapter 5 draws on data collected from interviews and questionnaires conducted with students and lecturers at the University of Warwick. It explores students' perceptions of university life and their teachers' attitudes to the admission and teaching of adult students. The authors use an interactionist analysis to explain the process of socialisation into university culture and conclude that the university has made only a limited response to the challenge of combating social exclusion through widening access.

Chapter 6, working on the assumption that 'adulthoodification' of the university comes about through the interplay of actor strategies and policy-making, looks at theoretical frameworks for achieving this. The authors draw upon a case study of change at UCL. They conclude that the struggle for adulthoodification is a political process and the extent to which access policies develop in particular universities or departments is a function of the power relationships and strategies of the interest groups concerned. They also ask whether there are particular structural characteristics within institutions and their environments which may make some more receptive to adulthoodification than others. Using comparative data from

Warwick and UCL, they reach a qualified conclusion that faculties where the 'scientific' ethos prevails are likely to be less conducive to adult participation than those where 'academic' principles and social capital perspectives are dominant.

Finally, the authors return to the themes of social exclusion and inclusion and attempt to predict how universities will respond to the challenge of widening participation. They ask whether universities will embrace the concept of widening access across the board, or whether some will do so, leaving the 'elite' to go their own way, unchanged by the challenge of widening access and perpetuating a system of privilege and underprivilege in higher education. This raises the question of whether 'non-traditional' students will gain less from their education—it being judged inferior in the job market and in terms of social status. The authors draw a more optimistic conclusion and hold out the possibility of universities as communities of inclusive learning. Time will tell which direction the universities will take.

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### **Troubling Women**

JILL BLACKMORE, 1999

Buckingham, Open University Press

242 pp.

ISBN 0-335-194796 (pb)

### **Equality in Education**

KATHLEEN LYNCH, 1999

Dublin, Gill & Macmillan

328 pp.

ISBN 0-7171-2834-2 (pb)

In some ways the twentieth century has been a century for Western women. Current assumptions that women's lives matter, that women should participate equally in the workforce, in politics, in the family and community, are commonplace in ways that were unimaginable at the beginning of the century. Yet few would argue that women's struggles to equalise power relations and participate in all social institutions on terms of full equality with men are now over. Women are still the other, the problem, different to the acceptable norm. This is clearly demonstrated in the area of leadership and management. Despite an emancipatory debate proclaiming that women *should* take more positions of leadership, those who do seek and fill such positions, and who challenge a masculinist discourse of good leadership, are troubling women.

Blackmore's book, *Troubling Women*, is an illuminating and insightful discussion of women and leadership at a time of educational change. It examines the way in which the reformation of education, work and family relationships have impinged on women in leadership positions over the past decades in contradictory ways. The small number of women managers in an increasingly feminised workplace has led to calls for more women managers and administrators, but there is continued opposition from most of the white, middle-class heterosexual males who continue to monopolise financial, political and cultural power. Leadership continues to be regarded as a technical—rational matter, with underlying questions concerning leadership for what end or leadership for whom, being largely unasked. Blackmore uses the concept of leadership 'as a conceptual lens, through which to critique the position of women in educational reform' (p. 6).

The book is organised in three parts. The first provides an historical overview of gender, power and knowledge relations in educational management and administration, the second focuses on how policy works in educational bureaucracies, and the third examines the micropolitics of gender and management in schools. The book draws on a number of research projects undertaken in the state of Victoria, Australia, at a time when the whole state education system was being restructured along market lines, in particular using case study research in Hillcrest, a secondary school where a woman principal was appointed to amalgamate two schools. The case study brilliantly illustrates the dilemmas faced by women working within a system where, as one interviewee commented, 'women have either got to be superwoman or super bitches' (p. 97).

A central theme of the book is that more women are coming into leadership positions at a time when global trends are causing a restructuring of all Westernised education systems. Global markets and new information technologies have affected national economies, creating job shortages and national and individual insecurities. A common response of national governments has been to deregulate schools,

reducing their funding while expecting them to act as small businesses seeking clients. Financial management, image management, competitiveness, entrepreneurship, productivity and performance, are rated above teaching, learning and cooperation. Women, who have traditionally centred their work on students, the curriculum and collegiality, with more concern for democratic practice and social justice than many of their male colleagues, face intense dilemmas in these postmodern times. Blackmore concludes with some guiding principles for a feminist politics of educational leadership which sensibly include the recognition that debate must move beyond binary assumptions that construct women as compassionate carers and men as rational decision-makers. She describes a 'feminist postmasculinist politics' which could now begin to underpin governance and management of schools. Her book should be required reading for those who yearn for more democratic relations and egalitarian practice in schools.

Kathleen Lynch's book, *Equality in Education*, also argues for more egalitarian and enlightened structures and practices in education systems at all levels. Lynch combines in her writing an ability to produce scholarly and measured argument and analysis combined with a passionate belief that structures and systems can be changed. Structural agents within a nation state are not invisible, they can be named and targeted and persuaded or encouraged to redress disadvantages and promote equality. The book is a collection of essays arranged in four sections. The first section examines theoretical and research issues in equality debates, the second and third sections cover specific groups and institutions, and the final section consists of a powerful essay critiquing liberal perspectives on equality and education.

The first chapter critically overviews research and theory in the sociology of education from a radical egalitarian perspective, from Tawney, through Freire and Giroux, to Iris Young. However, Lynch concedes that the liberal tradition within the sociology of education has much to contribute to clarification of the equality debate. Although the arguments are clear, the layout of this chapter and occasionally in following chapters is irritating—there being several 'conclusions' and sometimes 'concluding remarks' as well as 'conclusions'! Chapter 2, by Lynch & Cathleen O'Neill, is based on a previously published paper, and argues strongly for an emancipatory methodology in researching inequality, one which demands a reciprocal relationship between researcher and researched, dialectical theory-building and systematic reflexivity. Chapter 3 describes the setting up of the Equality Studies Centre, which Lynch coordinates, at University College, Dublin, and the struggle to establish the legitimacy of the Centre within the University. In a country in which a functionalist sociology and Catholic traditions dominated, there was resistance to Equality Studies. She argues however, that Equality Studies represents a form of resistance to political and economic structures, and also challenges academics who are themselves resistant to change.

Chapter 4, written with Clare O'Riordan, uses a large-scale study of low-income working-class students attending college to examine barriers to access and participation in higher education. This study demonstrated clearly the ways in which economic, cultural and educational barriers can interact to promote inequalities. The authors remark that the students seem to have internalised a meritocratic ideal and did not query the social class system as such, looking to the state to be a 'fair referee' rather than a change agent. Chapter 5 overviews research on women and education with particular reference to Ireland, and includes a section on women in educational management, and chapter 6 looks at the status of children from equality perspectives. Although there has recently been a greater focus on children's rights and status, research has usually been undertaken within a protectionist model, with children defined as a homogeneous group incapable of making rational choices. This chapter includes some very practical suggestions for counteracting children's structural political powerlessness. Chapter 7 uses data compiled for a government committee on the future of higher education in Ireland to discuss the disadvantages mature students face in education, and notes that the representation of women among mature students is much lower than men, even middle-class women finding difficulty in funding their studies.

Chapter 8, written with Anne Lodge, presents findings from a research project on equality and social climate in schools, one purpose of the study being to learn how young people themselves define an equality agenda, and in chapter 9, Lynch takes on the pervasive belief in 'ability' as an unproblematic concept, used to select and stratify young people in schools and then in the labour market. The final chapter returns to a theoretical analysis of education and social justice, offers some succinct conceptions of equality, critiques the liberal equal opportunity policies which have dominated public policy-making in all Westernised countries, and concedes that critical theorists, Marxists, feminists and post-modernists have challenged, but not eroded, the liberal agenda on equality. The book is a powerful contribution to the literature on equality in education.

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**Men Engaging Feminisms: pro feminism, backlashes and schooling**

BOB LINGARD &amp; PETER DOUGLAS, 1999

Buckingham, Open University Press

192 pp.

ISBN 0-335-198171 (pb), 0-335-10818X (hb)

Bob Lingard & Peter Douglas's new book represents a sorely needed intervention in an increasingly disingenuous debate. The authors address directly the sophistry of those in the government, media and conservative 'men's rights' pressure groups by deconstructing their use of self-serving statistics, which has fuelled the perception of a growing gap between 'high flying' girls and 'underachieving' boys. The authors identify this 'what about the boys?' discourse as a key element in the masculinist backlash against modest feminist advances in education.

The stated aim of their book, though, is not to deny the relevance of the debate about boys, as some radical feminists have, but rather to reclaim the issue from 'recuperative' men's groups and media misrepresentation. The book succeeds in this regard but does not move the larger argument very much further than those other books with 'men' and 'feminism' in their title, two words joined previously by such suggestively problematic prepositions, 'in', 'doing' etc. and here by the sometimes 'martial', sometimes 'marital' 'engaging'. However, the authors *do* wrest the terms of the debate from the 'backlashers' in a series of essays that begin at the 'macro' level, progressively narrowing their focus, and arriving at a conclusion which examines an individual school in Queensland, Australia. The failure of the school to implement its largely commendable policy commitments the authors ascribe to several causes, but most of all to the 'influence of the broader school community' and 'reduced funding (typical) of structural backlash' (p. 168), that is, to the larger contexts which the book has been discussing. The cumulative effect of developing their position in a sequence of subtle essays seems warranted, then, when they come to interpret the Queensland case study.

However, the authors' overreliance on the macro-theory of Giddens renders their aetiology rather mechanical in its analysis of change. Nowhere, for example, do they offer a sustained exploration of why the 'managerialist fetish for efficiency and effectiveness' (p. 76) and the consequent restructuring of educational policies and priorities has arisen *now*; and nor do they fully account for the contradictory character of how these changes have both caused and combined with feminist demands in schools. They correctly interpret the current 'new' managerialist valorisation of 'feminine' psychological qualities as often merely piling on the 'emotional labour' for female teachers. But the book's failure seriously to engage with politically pointed psychoanalytic arguments means they also fail to account for how 'Third Way' meritocratic discourses offering to transcend the hegemony of (embodied) masculinity has seduced some women—and selected some girls—out of sisterhood and into the more spurious sorority of 'lifestyle' feminism and bourgeois careerism.

Likewise, gendered psychological investments in the classroom are undertheorised too, rendering the book's discussion of adolescent masculinities and femininities sometimes abstract and static. Consequently, their theoretical pincer movement challenging an exclusive reliance on either 'equality feminism' or 'difference' feminism, an opposition paralleled by their quite proper critiques of both 'men's rights' groups and 'effeminism', rarely develops the dynamic beyond an agreeable, but negative contour, failing to coalesce into a positive position on that pearl of great price: difference-without-subordination. Only tantalising glimpses remain of concrete attempts to challenge 'toxic masculinity' in general while addressing the needs of those economically and culturally marginalised boys who are 'falling behind'. Their allusions to theatre and dance (p. 143) perhaps suggest areas where the psychically repressed, historically relative and socially relational character of gender can be dramatised; Brechtian techniques of defamiliarisation, such as work on the gendered dimension of 'gestus' and other ways of countering young male foreclosure on conventional masculine roles come to mind.

LIAM BUCKLEY

*Institute of Education, University of London***Understanding the Boys. Issues of Behaviour and Achievement**

JOHN HEAD, 1999

London, Falmer Press

120 pp.

ISBN 0-7507-0866-2

John Head clearly sets out the focus for this book in the overview, where he outlines the issues that are

causing educationalists, parents and in fact whole communities, concern about the behaviour and academic performance of our young men. That is, their overrepresentation in crime, suicide, exclusion from school and unemployment data, as well as their academic underachievement. He develops a model to outline the causes of this behaviour and then, in the following chapters, looks at each of these causes in turn.

Part One of the book takes each of the explanatory models, biological effects, personal history and social relations, and provides a detailed account of how they affect the young male and how they might cause or explain aspects of their behaviour. John Head uses quotes and references to work by others as diverse as Freud and Shakespeare, as well as appropriate data from a range of sources, to support his own research and ideas. The final chapter in this part, entitled 'What is New?', is an excellent summary of the changes in society that have caused some of the concerns we currently have about young men.

Part Two of the book, entitled 'Addressing the Issues', looks in detail at the achievement and behaviour of boys, providing possible causes and remedies. This detail extends to looking at the performance of boys in particular subjects as well as particular groups of young men who are at risk. It was refreshing to read that his evidence that schools can make a significant difference in the behaviour and achievement of their students; that some of our young men are not programmed to automatic failure due to social and psychological factors beyond the schools' control. His checklist of the 'Good-Enough School' (p. 93) is a good practical guide for schools attempting to address the concerns we have about the boys in our schooling system.

I found this book to be an excellent guide in 'understanding the boys'. It is concise at 106 pages and provides easy reading, though sometimes the references to other authors or articles do ruin the flow of the text. I would recommend it as compulsory reading for current teachers as well as those currently training in our teacher training institutions.

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### **Policy, Leadership and Professional Knowledge in Education**

MICHAEL STRAIN, BILL DENNISON, JANET OUSTON & VALERIE HALL (Eds), 1998

London, Paul Chapman

241 pp.

ISBN 1-85396-445-X (pb)

This book was compiled by the editors to celebrate 25 years of publishing by the British Education and Administration Society (BEMAS) in their journal. It represents a revisit, in edited versions, of some of the seminal articles and debates that have transpired in that time frame around the four themes of: teachers, theory, policy and leadership. There is an overall introduction and then editorial commentaries in each of the four sections by the four editors.

As a BEMAS member and therefore a subscriber to the journal, this covers, for me, familiar territory. The articles by Smyth on devolution and teachers' work, by Pring on privatisation, Hoyle on micropolitics and Bhindi & Duignan on leadership for the new century provide a good deal of food for thought amongst educationalists. The debates started by Thomas Greenfield and explored by him and several others in this volume are still vibrant. Some other articles are more of historical interest—an early typification of leadership roles of secondary heads by Hughes and a piece by a Chief Education Officer of the same early 1970s period and a somewhat later critique of the Taylor Committee's Report (1979) about the appropriate representation of parents and other constituents on governing bodies of schools.

The two female editors decry the paucity of women contributors—none of the reprinted articles are by a woman—and more saliently, the relative lack of a gender perspective in studies of school leadership, management and policy generally exhibited in this collection (with a few exceptions).

There is a bias to theory-making and -building rather than empirical studies in this collection. Even the one article jointly authored by a practitioner and an academic (Ribbins & Sharratt, 1992) discusses how they collected data of leadership/headship in action but the 'findings' are not included and were still awaiting publication when this edited work was published 6 years later. It is often these empirical studies which, in my experience as course tutor of management courses, are particularly illuminating to practitioners working on similar problems or issues in their own establishments.

What is interesting, therefore, is to speculate on whom this book is 'for'. As a celebration of the work of the Society, it could have been mainly for its members. It is, of course, also useful for students on various leadership and management courses, although access to the original journal entries and the vast numbers of articles not included in this edition might in fact prove more efficient, depending on their

particular interests. There are course readers for some of the currently available MAs and MBAs in Leadership and Management that cover the same areas or grounds (indeed with some of the same articles), and perhaps do this in a more coherently designed learning experience for new learners in the field and are not limited to using only one source (journal) but include excerpts too from seminal books in the field.

Would this book be of interest to *BERJ* readers? Possibly, but more as an overview of writing in the field historically than for current interest or illumination. It does 'count' for the research assessment exercise for its editors, but whether it actually advances the knowledge of practitioners today is less certain.

EDITH JAYNE

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