

Youth Work and Communities and Schools.

Annette Coburn and David Wallace (2011) Edinburgh: Dunedin.

ISBN: 9781906716233 (pp. 120, £16.50, pb.)

Review by RALPH CATTS

This commentary on Scottish youth work policies and practices is written in a refreshing and intimate style that conveys the experience, dedication and commitment of the authors to the welfare of young people. It draws heavily on Scottish policy documents and on Education Scotland resources to promote the role of youth work in school settings, but draws also on practice when discussing community based youth work.

In discussing youth work, equality and identity (Chapter 4) the authors provide a nuanced understanding of the impact of adults exercising power on the decisions and opportunities for youth to participate in community-based youth programmes. They leave the reader to recognise the contrast between the way power is exercised by teachers in schools and by youth workers in community settings. The effect of these different approaches on young people is a topic that warrants further consideration, especially by trainee teachers and teachers in schools. The potential for better learning outcomes for young people is evident, but the authors seem to imply that it is in the hands of teachers to act in ways that will enable the benefits of community based youth work to be realised within the formal education system. I suspect that some teachers will not recognise the potential, and may be resistant to ceding any of their institutional power. I wonder whether in a second edition the authors might collaborate with an author from the education mainstream to make explicit how changes in the school community relations might enable access to opportunities for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and provide some examples from practice. In addition the authors could draw on the research evidence of the effects of exclusion from education on employment and economic well-being to advance their case.

A feature of several chapters is short vignettes of good practice which are used to illustrate important issues. These examples are worth disseminating widely. The Education Scotland web site provides a wide range of good practice examples and perhaps more examples of good practice in youth work in collaboration with schools could be identified for inclusion in the resources that teachers access.

Missing from Chapter 5 (Youth Work in schools), is a critique of the assumption that schools and community-based youth work are compatible functions. Community learning is predicated on the voluntary attendance of young people, and on their input into the activities through which they learn. In community settings, young people make decisions about things that work and hence have a role in self-assessment and programme evaluation. In contrast, schooling depends upon compulsory attendance and on adherence to externally determined curricula and assessment. The authors do identify the lack of engagement with schools of many 'at risk' youth and they promote the role of youth workers as providing 'complementary' services. Unfortunately some teachers see youth services as a convenient solution to the problems caused by the limitations of the formal school system rather than partners in the development of lifelong learning.

The Dunedin Press series to which this book is a contribution proclaims itself as intended to 'appeal to an international audience'. This book is less accessible for this purpose not because it draws heavily on Scottish policy and practice, but because it fails to generalise the principles that are evident. A particular example is when brief reference is made to the 19th century 'New Lanark' social experiment attributed to Robert Owen (and David Dale). The influence that Owen subsequently had on social policies in the USA is not acknowledged. Had it been addressed, and the values of equality that underpin youth work today related to the wider principles of the rights of the child, then the commitment to

equality in current Scottish youth practice could have been presented more effectively to a wider audience.

This book is a valuable summary of the interface between youth policy and education policy in Scotland and is useful for informing the professional practice of teachers and youth workers. It would also be especially useful for the training of both teachers and youth workers, especially if the implied challenges to improve the current provision of integrated services for children and young people were drawn out in discussions.

Europeanizing Education: governing a new policy space

Martin Lawn and Sotiria Grek, (2012) Oxford: Symposium Books.
ISBN 978-1-873927-61-8 (pp. 173, £24.00, pb.)

Review by DONALD GILLIES

Making sense of the European Union and education has never been an easy task and this new publication is to be strongly welcomed. It provides a full, accessible history of the place of education within the European Union and within its previous post-war guises. The authors are well known for their work around European topics and in particular around the ways in which related policy operates. In addition to the historical account, the authors provide some tentative analysis of the manner in which education policy has evolved within the EU over recent decades where prescriptive legislation has been almost completely absent. Instead, policy influence has been achieved through a process of what the authors call 'soft governance'. In the European setting this has involved the impact of various experts, the related use of networks, exchanges, and committees. What the authors show too is that this process has served to create a living idea of Europe, as far as education is concerned, so that what that term has come to mean is entirely focused on the community which such individuals – as political actors - have developed. Europe as an education space has thus become lived or embodied rather than some external entity.

This idea of Europe has been sharpened in recent times by a number of different developments. Since harmonisation and coherence was viewed as unattainable through policy imperatives, instead this has been progressed through a system of standards which these original experts were encouraged to formulate. The focus has been on outcomes rather than inputs, therefore. The authors show how this has become highly effective, particularly in relation to the alliance with the OECD's PISA programme. These, and other, national indicators collated at EU level have served to shape national systems into a much more closely uniform structure. The role of such data in steering national education systems has become even more powerful since the Lisbon agreement of 2000 which positioned education – in the guise of 'learning' – as a central pillar in the EU's attempt to dominate the knowledge economy at the expense of its deemed rivals in North America and Asia. The authors trace how this transition to 'learning' has also involved a much more narrow focus on work-related knowledge and skills rather than the historic ideals of education. What is now in place within the EU is a system of 'governing by numbers' where statistical data drive the agenda. The authors rightly point out, however, the central role of politics in the decisions made about which numbers are to be collected, why collected, how collected, and the way in which such numbers are to be interpreted.

There is a Scottish flavour to part of the book with an interesting chapter on how the HMIE's approach to school self-evaluation has been exported and also some paradoxical evidence of how the Scottish education system is seen as strongly resistant to explicit international influences. A European Commission staff member is quoted: "In the Scottish system, everything is Scottish. This is our system, we defend it as a fortress and all these influences from outside, they should be kept away" (p.109). Whether or not that is an accurate picture, it is still an intriguing external perspective.

The book does not speculate hugely on future directions. There seems to be settled agreement within the EU that a harmonised European education system is neither desirable nor achievable. Instead, these various steering mechanisms will continue to develop, almost entirely driven by beliefs about the assumed nature and demands of the reputed 'knowledge economy', and so about the instrumental requirements of education systems deemed necessary for its advancement.

There are one or two disappointing aspects of the publication. Apart from the unappetising jargon of its title, the book could have done with a glossary of acronyms: as can be imagined from the committee addiction of the EU, there are scores of such abbreviations throughout the book and it becomes difficult to keep track of them all. There is also no index which is a real loss for those of us who would wish to consult it regularly. Despite these cavils, however, the authors are to be warmly congratulated for sifting what must have been a daunting mountain of evidence and data to provide such an extremely useful account.

Coaching and Mentoring: Developing Teachers and Leaders

Christine Forde and Jim O'Brien (Eds.) (2011) Edinburgh: Dunedin
ISBN 13: 9781906716295 (pp119, £16.50 pb.)

Review by LINDA LAFFERTY

Number 29 in the popular series of 'Policy and Practice in Education' published by Dunedin Press and divided into six chapters, this edited book transports the reader, in general terms, from the emergence of coaching and mentoring as a desired/preferred intervention associated with continuous professional development (CPD), through a snapshot of specific applications within professional settings such as initial teacher education, 'leading' learning and communities of professional practice, and propels us on into the 'post-Donaldson' era .

The opening chapter emphasises the synergy between policy, practice and purpose and, in doing so, serves as a reminder that training and development interventions should never be viewed in isolation when consideration is given over to supporting and promoting organisational change in general, and educational change in particular. In this respect, the role of effective teacher education as a means of affecting educational reform is chronicled. By drawing on literature from within the United Kingdom and by comparing and contrasting CPD initiatives which have been implemented since 1997 in particular, O'Brien sets the scene for the emergence of coaching and mentoring and 'social interaction' (p15) as integral elements of both continuous professional development (CPD) and educational reform.

Given the considerable emphasis placed on coaching and mentoring and the development of communities of professional practice within recent publications such as Donaldson and McCormack (and the recently-revised SNCT Code of Practice for the Role of the Chartered Teacher), Forde commences Chapter 2 with an examination of the use of such 'experiential methodologies' (p17). In order to ensure minimal misinterpretation, she goes on to provide clear definitions of four approaches, namely mentoring, coaching, peer-supported learning and professional learning communities, all of which are critically examined in light of literature in the respective area. The aim of adopting such models – that is, as a means of developing 'reflective', 'critical' and 'informed' professional practice – is highlighted and aligned with the Scottish Government's use of professional standards which encapsulate the pre and post registration continuum associated with the individual teacher's career-long professional development.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 supply the reader with illustrative examples of the 'theory in practice' by focusing on three professional contexts: the role of the mentor within the Scottish Teacher Induction Scheme, working across the full coaching/mentoring continuum within leadership development and, finally, working collaboratively with peers (as a vehicle for 'leading

learning') within a professional learning community as a means of 'capacity building' (p77) and creating 'networked learning' opportunities' (p78).

In the final chapter (lest we get carried away with the notion that coaching and mentoring approaches represent a sovereign remedy to the current state of flux that the sector may find itself in), the editors consider the strengths, limitations and tensions which may arise with 'the adoption of experiential methodologies' (p82). They revisit the need to balance individual with organisational needs when engaging in any form of career-long professional development.

In summary, the book 'does what it says on the tin'. It is thoroughly grounded in the literature (as evidenced in 12 pages of references) and yet strikes an effective balance by including illustrative examples at appropriate points. It is clear, concise, and successful in its attempts to remind us that the education field is littered with dynamic and complex processes. As someone who prefers to adopt a facilitative approach as part of her own professional practice, it was heartening to see some reference made in Chapter 2 to the differences required in pedagogical approach when coaching and mentoring others. For its relatively small size, this text manages to compare and contrast policy and practice from across the whole of the United Kingdom (unlike some lengthier texts), as well as incorporating the global perspective. In this respect, whether for practitioner or learner, it is a book well worth having to hand as a means of grasping the overall 'bigger picture'.

Beginning Interpretive Inquiry: A Step-by-Step Approach to Research and Evaluation

Richard E. Morehouse, (2012) London: Routledge
ISBN 9 780415 601894 (pp. 140, £19.99, pb.)

Reviewed by ANNE PIRRIE

This book purports to be a straightforward introduction to 'interpretive inquiry' for the novice researcher. Chapter 1 begins rather unsteadily with a reference to interpretive research rather than inquiry, leaving the reader to wonder what difference, if any, there is between these two terms. Chapter 1 also moves swiftly from rather homely references to 'what' and 'why' questions that intend to reassure novice researchers to the terms hermeneutics and phenomenology. However, it must be said that the definitions of these leave much to be desired. Moreover, some of the writing is downright clumsy, for example: 'The dictionary (Apple Dictionary, Version 2.0.2) says that hermeneutics serve to interpret or explain.' The irony of referring to a resource developed by a global corporation to provide a definition of hermeneutics did not escape this particular reader. There is an excruciating instance on the very first page where one suspects that the author has used the word 'phonological' instead of 'phenomenological'. The phrase 'an electronic way to conduct qualitative data analysis' (p. 102) seems destined to elicit a wry smile, if not exactly to galvanize the neophyte researcher. One might expect to encounter a reference to Brainy Quote (n.d) in the bibliography of an undergraduate essay, but certainly not in a book intended for 'undergraduate students, graduate students, and others as they work their way through a research or evaluation project' (p. 5).

The references to standards and guidelines of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and lexicon ('juried' rather than 'peer-reviewed' journals) would indicate that this book is primarily intended for the American market. The author seems to be unaware that there are already some excellent books that are more informative, and certainly more readable, than this one. Gary Thomas's excellent *How to do Your Research Project* is a case in point. Thomas (2009) offers a more nuanced and cogent account of positivism and interpretivism and a far more lively treatment of how ideas for research are generated than is evident in Morehouse's rather leaden prose. Curiously enough, Chapter 6 in the Morehouse text, which is devoted to where ideas come from, succeeds the chapter

mysteriously entitled 'Transition'. In Chapter 5 he explores 'qualitative-like terms' and the role of 'human instruments'.

The book is divided into two parts: Part I sets out to provide the 'philosophical foundation for interpretative inquiry' that is a *sine qua non* for those embarking upon what Morehouse calls an 'inquiry project' (a further example of rather infelicitous phrasing); Part II is entitled 'From ideas to publication'. However, Thomas (2009) provides a much clearer account of key concepts such as ontology and epistemology than one might have expected, given the self-evidently hands-on nature of his title. Indeed so much so that it would be invidious to make further comparisons, apart from to observe that Morehouse's book does not offer a step-by-step guide. Part II goes on to explore the business of 'launching the inquiry' (with further opaque references to the inquiry project and the inquiry sample); conducting a literature review; project design and sampling. By now we are on Chapter 7, and the cart seems to be well in front of the horse. Chapter 8 proceeds to explore data collection and analysis. There are unsettling references to 'qualitative measures' (p. 80), a curious and rather unfortunate juxtaposition (but perhaps less so than the phrase 'mixed methods measures' on p. 85). The example given (a schedule for a group interview relating to perceptions of a precollege scholarship program) is unlikely to have much appeal to a British or international readership. The consideration of research ethics in Chapter 9 draws almost exclusively on American examples. Moreover, there is the naive assumption that going through the review process is a sufficient guarantee that 'important ethical issues have been properly addressed' (p. 90). The final chapter provides some guidance on writing for publication. However, this is rather schematic and refers once again to guidance provided by AERA. The volume ends rather abruptly, with the rather banal and anachronistic observation that 'roundtables are a good way to expand one's network of likeminded scholars as participants often exchange business cards with discussants who share a deep interest in the topic'. To conclude, I would advise anyone with a deep interest in interpretivism to look elsewhere for guidance.

Reference

Thomas, G. (2009) *How to do Your Research Project. A Guide for Students in Education and Applied Social Sciences*. London: Sage Publications

Writing Voices: Creating Communities of Writers

Teresa Cremin and Debra Myhill (2012) Routledge: London and New York:
ISBN: 978-0-415-57981-0 (pp.216, £22.99, pb.)

Review by BONNIE SLADE

To paraphrase French philosopher Simone deBeauvoir, one is not born, but rather becomes a writer. *Writing Voices: Creating Communities of Writers* eloquently explores this process of becoming. To counter the notion that teaching writing is an 'unproblematic set of technical outcomes', Teresa Cremin and Debra Myhill examine the process of learning how to write, and what it means to be a writer. Drawing on more than a decade of research on writing and pedagogy, they weave together voices of young writers, teachers, professional writers, and academic researchers to examine the writing process. This engaging book gives teachers a good grounding in the elements of writing and research in the field, provides insight into writing by popular and respected authors, and outlines pedagogical considerations. One of the key strengths of this book is that while it is written for teachers without assuming that they are confident, competent writers, it also has much to offer to teachers who identify as writers.

The book is divided into three sections: Children as Writers, Teachers as Writers and Professional Writers. While the bulk of the book focuses on Children as Writers, the discussion in this section serves an equally important role in outlining significant aspects of the writing process. Each chapter identifies a fundamental writing skill (such as the role of

talk, texts, writing as design, autonomy and choice, and the role of metacognition in writing), drawing on relevant research. The discussion is accessible and current, drawing on the expertise of well-known successful authors such as Sarah Waters, Margaret Atwood and Phillip Pullman, and from popular children's fiction, such as Harry Potter and Secret Heart. They encourage teachers to think of students as 'emerging writers', and argue that primary students are capable of more than they are usually given credit for. Referencing numerous research studies, they suggest that it is important to begin metacognition, the ability to think about the writing process, at early stages of writer development. These chapters serve as a good introduction to research on children and writing, as well as a good reminder of the key aspects of writing, and give the reader an interesting, non-threatening way to engage with these ideas.

This is not a tips and techniques book. In each chapter while there is a discussion about pedagogy, the authors do not provide simplistic, formulaic suggestions; there are no checklists in this book. For example, they argue that it is important for a teacher to encourage a sense of play and creativity to encourage a good writing environment, yet, they do not offer specific suggestions on how to do this. Similarly, they advocate for the value in using notebooks and journaling to help children find their authentic writing voice, develop confidence and flexibility of expression, yet they do not instruct on how to do this. By providing research-informed thought on the critical aspects of effective teaching for writing, this allows the teacher room for creativity in lesson design.

In the second section, Teachers as Writers, the authors argue that it is vital for teachers to develop a rich sense of their identities as writers and to consider how they position themselves in the writing classroom. Acknowledging that teaching writing in a creative, engaged manner can be a terrifying challenge, this section begins with an excellent discussion of the writing that we do in our daily lives, such as email, texting, and short note writing, which are not normally thought of as 'writing'. By pointing out that we all engage in a range of writing that is purposeful, and geared to a particular audience, the authors help teachers connect with their own writing practices. For teachers who have had negative experiences of learning how to write themselves, they may lack confidence in teaching writing and may rely on rigidly following curriculum as a result. The authors argue that moving away from mechanically delivering curriculum and engaging with children's sense of play, creativity and curiosity is critical. Pedagogically, the authors explore two interesting ideas to invigorate writing pedagogy: writing alongside young writers, and demonstrating writing authentically. These require digging into a 'difficult and messy process' (p. 134), that can have long-lasting impact on children's confidence in writing.

The focus of Part 3 is narratives from six professional writers: three professional writers who work in schools, a journalist, web designer and blogger, and a science writer. The professional writers talk about important considerations in their fields, such as writing to tight deadlines or gearing writing to a particular audience. Their discussions about their writing processes are detailed and personal, and work to illustrate that although the context for writing may differ across settings, all writers face very similar issues.

The overall goal of the book is to 'trigger conversations, prompting readers to reflectively examine the art of writing and the experience of being a writer' (p.7). With their comprehensive content, engaging style, and accessible tone, Teresa Cremin and Debra Myhill certainly achieve this goal. The underlying assumption of the book is that writing is an activity that can be learned and that it is a social act. While many teachers are energised and confident about teaching writing, many others are not. Without doubt, engaging with this text will boost both a teacher's confidence in their own writing, and in their teaching of writing, helping them to transform writing classrooms into communities of writers.