

BOOK REVIEW

Education Policy: Globalisation, Citizenship & Democracy

M. Olssen, J. Codd and A. O'Neill
London, Thousand Oaks, California,
and New Delhi: Sage Publications (2004)
ISBN 0 7619 7470 9 (pbk) 327 pp.

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To review a book of this quality I considered it necessary to undertake some minimal background research. For a relatively emergent researcher, one of the first ports of call is the extensive resource of the internet and world-wide web. Thus poised to undertake this mission I embarked on a quick search on *google* – a search of the key words “globalization” and “education” rendered a massive 45,500,000 entries in 0.33 seconds. With the deadline for this review drawing ever closer I knew I would not have time to closely monitor each of these entries. The solution was to enter the UK spelling “globalisation” and “education” this search taking 0.47 seconds and lowering the entries to a mere 12,900,000. The solution to this problem of overabundance of information became instantly apparent – I should have been using the more academic mode, the trustworthy *google scholar*. However, a search on this edition also became problematic with some 39,700 book, journal and academic website musings on this topic. A more manageable resolution was required. Thus I went into the AUT library databases where Academic Search Premier and EBSCO Host made my task much easier and more deliverable. I was now down to searching the abstracts and full text of some 923 journal articles on this obviously popular topic in the literature.

With this as a background I found the following interesting information. Almost all higher education and major education journals in both the USA and the UK had included special editions on the topic of globalisation from 1999 onwards: the *Journal of Education Policy* in 1999; *Assessment in Education* and *Educational Theory* in 2000; *Comparative Education* in 2001; *Comparative Education Review* in 2002; *International Review of Education* and *Higher Education Research and Development* in 2003; *Compare* in 2004; and *Educational Philosophy and Theory* and the *International Journal of Lifelong Education* in 2005. The first articles on this topic were surfacing almost a decade earlier in 1990. However, in 2003 a new journal *Globalisation, Societies and Education* was launched to specifically deal with topics on this growing field.

Authors writing in this field need no introduction to educationalists, philosophers and those engaged in critical theory and post-structuralist or post-modernist approaches to research. Notaries include Michael Apple, Jill Blackmore, Roger Dale, Harvey Goldstein, Peter Jarvis, Bob Lingard, Simon Marginson, Peter McLaren, Mark Olssen, Michael Peters, Fazal Rizvi, Peter Roberts and Susan Robertson, to name just a few. Interestingly many of these authors have also been associated in one way or another with *ACCESS* journal, as either editors, guest editors, members of the

editorial board, or contributing authors, while some are continuing as advisory board members and consulting editors.

It is with this slightly extended introduction and contextualisation that I now begin the review of *Education Policy: Globalisation, Citizenship & Democracy*. I considered it relevant to place what I regard as an excellent and accessible text into a wider perspective of the growth of academic writing in the field of globalisation and internationalisation of education.

The three authors of this text Mark Olssen, John Codd and Anne-Marie O'Neill probably need little introduction to those in the education discipline as each has made a major contribution to critical engagement in educational theory, philosophy and psychology in both Aotearoa/New Zealand and globally. All three have published locally and internationally in prestigious UK, USA and Australasian journals: for example the *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *Journal of Education Policy*, *Discourse*, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *New Zealand Journal of Education* as well as *ACCESS: Critical Perspectives on Communication, Cultural & Policy Studies* and *DELTA*. In addition, each has edited or contributed to a large number of books and written single-authored texts.

The back cover of this publication is adorned with accolades from luminaries in the field of sociology of education: Mike Apple, Stephen Ball, Michael Peters and Hugh Lauder (all accomplished professors of education). My only quibble, given my own background in teaching issues of gender, is that there should have been some representation from notable women professors of education as well. This point aside, what each of the professors write is something that I can wholeheartedly endorse. For example:

“Olssen, Codd and O'Neill do us an invaluable service in producing a carefully theorised guide to current issues and key concerns – this is an important, erudite and very practical book”. (Ball)

“This book is a magnum opus and everyone should read it”. (Lauder)

“Education Policy is ... insightful and well written – and should be read by all of us who care deeply about what is happening in education in international contexts”. (Apple)

“This is the new policy bible for educationalists – it is at once systematic, provocative and instructive”. (Peters)

These are glowing reviews and I hope to contribute to these in my own way and show that they are indeed richly deserved.

In another scholarly foray for this review I searched for other sources of constructively critical endorsement – and I found these using both *google scholar* and also databases. In the first instance the book was advertised with 12 citations referring to this text (in *google scholar* – a helpful tool to measure your citations for PBRF or other purposes). The second was a positive book review from Preece (2005). While it was initially tempting to utilise this as the basis for my own review I actively resisted doing so, preferring instead to make my own assessment. That said, the reviewer's opening two sentences are worth quoting: “This is an expansive, scholarly and well-formulated text. It offers

a multi-disciplinary approach to educational policy in today's globalised world" (Preece, 2005: 246). It then proceeds to outline the contents and to highlight each chapter's arguments.

The text consists of 12 chapters, and each has additional extensive notes (as supplementary documentation). Chapter 1 "Reading education policy in the global era" outlines the different/competing theories on globalisation within the context of educational policy. Chapters 2 and 3 provide discussions on Foucauldian perspectives with the former addressing the "Post-structuralism of Foucault" and the latter "Critical policy analysis: A Foucauldian approach". The major theoretical components of Foucault's analyses of discourse, power, the state, and governmentality along with other dimensions are outlined here including his critique of Marxism. As a former PhD candidate trying to use a combination of both a neo-Marxist and Foucauldian analyses to understand and critique the state's role in educational accountability (see Smith, 2002), I would have found this chapter particularly useful. The third chapter draws upon a range of other theorists such as Nietzsche. Chapter 4 provided for me an excellent resource for policy analysis drawing upon a large range of luminaries in this field and drawn from much of Codd's earlier analyses in this domain. It will be a valuable chapter and framework for postgraduate students and other academics engaged in utilising policy and discourse analyses for making sense of "official" documentation.

Chapters 5 to 7 unpack various social and economic theories which have been in ascendancy in various periods of capitalist cycles for the past few centuries. First is "Classical liberalism" (Ch. 5), then "Social democratic liberalism" (in Ch. 6), followed by "The ascendancy of neoliberalism" (Ch. 7). All these chapters are well argued and explained, with the central economic concepts or tenets placed in a language easily understood by those not familiar with economic principles. Chapter 8 deals with the key neoliberal theories used in the 1980s and 1990s to restructure the state and reduce government expenditure.

Chapter 9 returns to more specifically educational issues discussing the roles of "Markets, professionalism and trust". Again this is familiar territory for both Codd and Olssen, as is some of the authors' recent work on the "Discourse of choice, inequality and social diversity" (Ch. 10). Chapter 9 provides a useful policy analysis of the both similar and divergent educational reforms adopted in the UK and New Zealand; and chapter 10 includes a section on "third way" policies.

The final two chapters draw out the major arguments of the text around notions of "Democracy, citizenship and thin community" (Ch. 11) and more clearly link in the major underlying theme of the book "Globalization, democracy and education" (Ch. 12). Here the authors argue the need for changes from the neoliberal discourse to a renewed interest in social justice using Rawls' communitarian thesis. Olssen in particular has undertaken considerable publishing on this topic. The central arguments raised in the final chapter centre on increasing democratic capabilities through education. Education is seen to be the key force in the reconstruction of democratic citizenship.

While somewhat depressing and pessimistic in parts, the book has an overall tone of hope for a better education system, and more enabled citizenship. One of Preece's (2005: 247) main critiques of this book was that there was only brief reference to gender, and that class, race and ethnicity issues receive little mention. These are accurate critical reflections; however, I personally believe that further analysis along those lines would add little to this debate, and make the book more detailed and significantly longer. There is also a great deal of literature on these topics already, in relation

to the effects of neoliberalism in education, and furthermore all three authors have contributed to scholarship on these issues in earlier publications on gender (in particular O'Neill), and class and socio-economic status (Olssen and Codd).

Preece (2005: 247) concludes that the book "... provides a comprehensive literature review of some major themes in contemporary education policy-making whilst attempting to offer real alternatives to the neo-liberal dilemma". I support and endorse her conclusion. Moreover, I am positive this text will be widely used by those with an interest in educational policy and practice and as a valuable teaching and academic resource. Once read, I am sure it will be revisited many times by postgraduate students and academics alike on both a local and indeed a global scale. It is well referenced and contains considerable invaluable information about a wide array of philosophical, theoretical and political positions. What is more, it is not too theoretically dense, thus it is relatively easy to read and comprehend despite dealing with some complex topical issues.

For me the book is an extremely useful text and one which I am happy to recommend to readers. There are a large number of recent books in the globalisation field, and this is a highly competitive market. A cursory glance over the first 100 entries in *google scholar* under "books" revealed around a dozen "rival" publications, and a scan of the book reviews sections of a number of the previously mentioned journals revealed another six or more "competitors" (see for example: Brine, 1999; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Carnoy, 1999; Crossley & Watson, 2003; Daun, 2001; Edwards & Usher, 2000; Osler & Vincent, 2002; Scott, 1998). *Education Policy: Globalisation, Citizenship & Democracy* compares favourably to these and is a triumph for the authors, three kiwis – one of whom is now located in the UK.

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