

The broader societal framework is explored in a chapter on 'The performative culture', a concept widely written about in all sectors of education and within a range of disciplines (see Ball 2003; Strathern 2000). The present chapter focuses on a critique of metrics, which at the time of writing will have seemed pertinent. What I hoped the chapter would do is explore the interplay between a virtues approach and performativity and it did begin to do so (146–7) but stopped short of examining this in any depth. For example, there was no discussion of the internalisation of performativity and its connection with the virtues earlier described.

The chapter on 'Learning about virtue' argues that ethics should be taught by anyone who teaches research methodology as an integral part of their course, and goes on to critique the most common approaches to the subject in such courses. Those setting out to teach research methodology or wishing to review how they teach ethics would find this chapter an excellent starting point for discussion – either with peers or indeed with research students. The final chapter 'The good professor' links the book with Macfarlane's other works and explores the overlaps and consistencies between the virtues he has identified and associated with research, teaching and service/academic citizenship. It also touches on debates surrounding the research-teaching nexus and to a limited extent other writing on academic identity.

In conclusion, this is a useful starting point for beginning researchers, supervisors of research students and those teaching research methodology courses. Despite its claims to be not specific to any discipline, it is unlikely to appeal to biomedical researchers whose horizon is bound to be already crowded with other possibilities and the case for virtues theory has not really been made with respect to their context. For social scientists and arts researchers, especially those with minimal grounding in philosophy and ethics, this book is an excellent introduction and an encouraging prompt to think about and critically respond to the institutional ethics guidance with which we are required to comply.

References

- Ball, S.J. 2003. The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy* 18, no. 2: 215–28.
- Strathern, M. 2000. *Audit cultures: Anthropological studies in accountability, ethics and the academy*. London: Routledge.

Duna Sabri
King's College, London, UK
duna.sabri@kcl.ac.uk
© 2009, Duna Sabri

European universities in transition: issues, models and cases, edited by Carmelo Mazza, Paolo Quattrone, Angelo Riccaboni and Richard M. Goodwin, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar, 2008, 304 pp., £69.95 (hbk), ISBN 978-1-84720-748-7

It is difficult to identify the target readership for this book. The book itself is the outcome of a conference held at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice to discuss the need for reform in Italian higher education. The chapters, however, represent a random set of contributions very few of which actually address Italian higher education issues. A high proportion of the contributors are from business schools and not all are higher education specialists. Like the curate's egg, some of the contributions are of high quality but the overall impact is diffuse and lacking in direction.

The trouble with writing about European universities in transition is that we are not told very clearly what they are in transition from, let alone what to. The editors rightly note the calls from the European Commission for higher education reform and draw attention to the failure to approach the Lisbon target of 3% of GDP being devoted to R&D and to the low representation of European, particularly continental European universities, in the Shanghai Jiao Tong league tables. The only solution to emerge with any clarity is the need for more funding for higher education (the rallying cry for all too many would be higher education reformers). In this context, instead of the inevitable, and depressing, comparisons with the US, some comparisons with China and India, both countries which we are often told are likely to overtake Europe, might have been useful and have added perspective.

But the chief problem about writing about European universities, even if we exclude the UK, is that generalisations over such different national systems are highly misleading. Historically we can say that there are two main traditions, the Humboldtian and the Napoleonic, which offer very different institutional models and missions. But within these divisions there are issues of central or regional control, of staff employed by the state on civil service terms or employed by their own institutions, and of systems managed directly by ministries or through intermediary bodies. European universities are undergoing a period of change but, the Bologna process apart, these changes are largely being dictated by national governmental pressures and do not all point in the same direction, though a greater devolution of financial decision-making to institutions is a common theme. In an area like institutional governance, for example, there are almost as many reform proposals as there are countries and here the Italian approach of building up the power of rectors to act more as a chief executive while preserving the post as an elected office is something one might have expected authors with a business school background to have commented upon. In the contributions from the UK, the governance reforms at City University described by Creagh and Verrall represent an approach which is considerably at variance with the spirit of Thrift's contribution, which argues for collegiality, flat organisational structures and strong academic controls, and is certainly moving in a contrary direction to the UK's two most successful universities, Oxford and Cambridge. This is an important topic if we want to improve institutional performance, but the devil is very much in the detail. Creagh and Verrall offer a single institutional case study of governance reform which in itself is interesting (if somewhat horrifying), but it does not point the way for Italian universities.

In addition to the Thrift and Creagh/Verrall chapters there are three others which make this rather haphazard collection worth reading. The first is a contribution by Kearney and Read which takes rather further Deem, Hillyard and Read's *Knowledge, higher education and the new managerialism* (Oxford 2006) in suggesting that UK universities display a hybridised form of the 'new managerialism' in which discourse about performativity competes with professional, collegial discourse, and where coping mechanisms dilute externally imposed neo-technocratic managerialism. In other words, the authors are counselling that the academic community may have adopted the rhetoric of managerialism but has also conducted a significant rearguard action to water-down its practice.

A second contribution, from Ryan, Guthrie and Neuman, is devoted to developments in Australia where the dilution of new public management reforms seems definitely not to have taken place. Their account provides a cautionary tale for continental European universities with the Minister's demand for the 'highest standards' irrevocably compromised, in the authors' view, by 'large increases in teacher-student ratios, casualisation of teaching academics and a diversion of resources away from teaching and research into marketing and administration' (182). The analysis confirms and updates what we already know from Slaughter and Leslie's *Academic capitalism* (Johns Hopkins, 1997) and Marginson and Considine's *The enterprise university* (Cambridge, 2000). This would definitely not be a model for Italy to draw from.

Finally there is an excellent account of the introduction of the Italian research assessment exercise by Minelli, Rebora and Turri. This offers ample evidence that higher education reform is in progress in Italy although the lack of transparency in some operational aspects of the exercise (paralleled in the UK when the first such exercise was carried out in 1985–6) and the lack of a clear link between funding and performance suggest that it has a way to go before matching what is happening in some countries.

How should university reform proceed in Europe? The evidence suggests that governments must have a role but that for reforms to become embedded a battle of ideas needs to be won. Imposed reform, as in Australia, rarely works. Reforms need to be espoused and adapted within institutions by Thrift's race of 'player managers' who can absorb the rhetoric and come up with changes that are palatable to their colleagues. In spite of Bologna-type pressures, the European Higher Education Area, as a homogenising instrument, remains a distant bureaucratic dream and each national system needs to find its own solutions within its own national cultural and economic frameworks.

Michael Shattock

Institute of Education, University of London, UK

Email: m.shattock@ioe.ac.uk

© 2009, Michael Shattock

Meritocracy, citizenship and education: New Labour's legacy, by John Beck, London, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008, 201 pp., £70 (hbk), ISBN 978-1847060730

I was drawn to reading and reviewing this book by the juxtaposition of citizenship and education in the title and the prospect of a review and appraisal of a decade of policy for citizenship education in England. However, the main originality of the volume lies in revisiting Michael Young's satirical concept of meritocracy. Beck takes this critique of social policy that is apparently egalitarian but actually divisive and applies it to aspects of education policy under New Labour.

John Beck's book, published in 2008 but based on material drafted over the course of a decade, is in three unequal sections, the rationale for which becomes more apparent when the basic argument about meritocracy is understood. Part 1 consists of three chapters on meritocracy, post-democracy and education. These have been specially written for the book and provide a theoretical framework and context to the four central chapters that were previously published as articles or chapters. They are given the heading "'Modernising" education and the professions'. Part 3 is a single chapter exploring nationhood and citizenship in the context of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity.

The book may be read as homage to Michael Young. The central chapters draw heavily on Basil Bernstein and the whole analysis rests on an acceptance of Colin Crouch's assertion that the introduction of quasi-markets to public services undermines democratic control to the extent that Britain is getting 'steadily closer to a condition of post-democracy' (xviii).

Young's original coining of the word 'meritocracy' in 1958 was in the context of an education system where elite private ('public') schools provided the bulk of entrants to the few elite universities, as today. However, there was a parallel system of grammar schools which selected students from primary schools on the basis of their performance in the 'eleven-plus' test, which included a so-called intelligence or IQ test. These schools also provided students, including those from less-favoured backgrounds, to the universities. Thus the principle of the grammar schools could be summarised by Young as 'IQ + Effort = Merit'.