

indigenous knowledge of the region. They emphasise that higher education should serve the needs and interests of the society and should provide the tools necessary for the citizens' survival in ever-changing economic circumstances.

The authors' criticisms and suggestions should be valued and taken seriously by policy makers and higher education providers in the region. Loss of indigenous knowledge is a present danger if their warnings are not heeded and the issue is not given the attention it deserves.

Reference

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Yussra Jamjoom
 Institute of Education, University of London, UK
 yjamjoom@gmail.com
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Faith in education: a tribute to Terence McLaughlin, edited by Graham Haydon, London, University of London Institute of Education, 2009, 129 pp., £15.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-85473-853-3

In 2007 a series of lectures was given at the Institute of Education in memory of Terence McLaughlin, Professor of Philosophy of Education at the University of London Institute of Education, the result of which is this short, albeit immensely rich, collection of essays. It is a fitting tribute in many ways, not least of which is due to the fact that all of the contributors knew McLaughlin and several had worked with him on joint publications. In addition to a succinct introduction by Graham Haydon, together with a complete bibliography of McLaughlin's publications, the book consists of seven chapters of varying length. A review of such brevity cannot possibly do justice to the quality of the philosophical arguments employed. For the purposes of this review, therefore, some contributions will unavoidably receive little more than scant attention, which in no way is meant to suggest that they are less worthy of critical scrutiny. Without exception, and in different ways, they all inspire the reader to formulate his or her own position in relation to faith schools.

Gerald Grace provides a brisk overview of McLaughlin's publications on faith schools in which he struggled, in my view unsuccessfully, to reconcile the so-called rights of parents to send their children to schools reflecting their own religious convictions, with the right of the child not to be indoctrinated but to receive an education with a proper concern for autonomy.

The most surprising thing about Eamonn Callan's chapter is the fact that after years of disputing with McLaughlin on the question of whether or not children could achieve 'autonomy via faith', he now believes that his earlier contribution to the debate was nothing short of 'ludicrous'. As someone whose sympathies have always been with Callan in regarding the cultivation of faith in young people to be completely counterproductive in terms of promoting their autonomy concerning religious beliefs, I find his U-turn regrettable, relying on nothing more than cold feet in relation to the denial of parental rights. In view of the fact that so many people see nothing problematic about so-called parental rights to faith schools, it is a pity that it merits so little attention in the book as a whole. For my part, I am disinclined to accept the necessity for Michael Hand's 'middle path', whereby parents have a 'privilege right' to provide their children with a

strong religious upbringing 'just to the degree that they can do so without recourse to non-rational forms of persuasion' (97).

Hanan Alexander begins with an admirably clear summary of the dispute between McLaughlin and Callan, before embarking on the project of trying to persuade us of the merits of the so-called 'initiation thesis' whereby children who understand religion 'from the inside' are in a better position when it comes to making autonomous choices about religion. One of the perennial disputes in the literature relating to the very idea of religious education is whether or not religious *belief* is a necessary condition of religious *understanding*. For my part I fail to see how any such understanding is otherwise possible, and for this reason have serious reservations about the place of RE in the curriculum. In his attempt to defend the initiation thesis, Alexander relies on, but provides no arguments for, the highly questionable assumption that faith (or belief) *in* something requires nothing in terms of belief *that* it exists. How can I possibly have faith in you (or God) if I have no beliefs whatsoever relating to whether or not you (or God) *exists*? Alexander is not an easy read for the philosophical novice; for this reason, a prior reading of Michael Hand's admirable commentary in the final chapter will help.

The most substantial (and approachable) chapter is that by Mark Halstead, 'In defence of faith schools', in which he addresses the first four of six familiar claims invoked by opponents of faith schools; their social divisiveness, their failure to adequately develop personal autonomy, their tendency to promote fundamentalism and extremism, their unjustifiable claim to the public purse, their questionable reliance on parental rights, and questions relating to their ability to promote the values of citizenship as easily as their secular counterparts. While few would wish to deny that social conflict in places such as Northern Ireland for example, has political and economic dimensions, Halstead is too sanguine in minimising the extent to which faith schools have been, and continue to be, responsible for the kind of 'educational apartheid' (his term) he wishes to deny. While Halstead may be strictly correct in claiming that there is 'little evidence to support the claim that increasing the number of faith schools will lead to greater divisions in society' (55), it is surely counterintuitive to expect them to be overly concerned with the socially divisive consequences that may well ensue. (Witness the astonishing comments made by the governors of the Torah Maczikei Hadass School in London, who, when criticised by the inspectors for failing to prepare their pupils for the wider society 'simply declared no interest in this particular educational purpose' [cited in Burtonwood 2003, 424]). Our fears in relation to such matters would be no less misplaced were we to rely on a curriculum that merely teaches *about* other cultures and religions, with actual contact with children from different religious backgrounds having no bearing on the matter. In any case, his claim that 'a plural society requires recognition of group rights' (55) is nothing more than assertion. Again, it is too easy to slough off the charge that products of faith schools are as equally capable as other school leavers of subjecting the claims of religion to rational scrutiny, when faith schools actively foster religious commitment through their assemblies, religious education lessons, and selection of teachers. In the light of avowals by the Church of England to the effect that the Church's mission is 'to bring others into the faith' (Archbishop's Council 2001, 11), it behoves us to be sceptical of the idea that their prime concern is with a child's anticipatory autonomy rights whereby she may be better placed to reject the whole package if and when she thinks fit. As far as the charge of extremism is concerned, with its associated intolerance likely to endanger social cohesion, Halstead here, as in other publications, is far too complacent about the demands made by some faith schools to withdraw pupils from classes on homosexuality or to pretend that creationism is an equally valid alternative to scientific evidence. Why *should* the views of those who would discriminate against homosexuals be respected any more than the views of white racists who invoked religion in support of apartheid in South Africa? It simply will not do for Halstead to maintain that 'faith schools should be allowed to teach their religious beliefs as true, as long as

they also teach children that there are many reasonable people who do not share their convictions' (62).

Apart from Hand's excellent critique of every other contributor to the volume, there are two additional chapters both of which failed to live up to expectations. Richard Pring attempts to answer the question 'Can faith schools serve the common good?' in the course of which he admits to having doubts about the answer before he started writing. I wish he had resolved his doubts earlier, for in spite of the fact that it contains a lengthy and clear account of Dewey's defence of 'common schools', it ultimately fails in the attempt to square the circle. The purpose of Harry Brighouse's chapter, 'Faith schools, personal autonomy and democratic competence', is to evaluate the case against faith schools, on the grounds that they may be found wanting in these respects. Not only does Brighouse's faith in faith schools strike me as altogether naïve, I find his resolute defence of the fact that they should continue to receive public subsidy, untenable. As Hand concludes:

It is morally wrong for both parents and teachers to use non-rational means of persuasion to impart religious beliefs to children, and we should not be deterred from condemning this practice by our legitimate qualms about the use of coercive power to prevent it. (105)

References

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Roger Marples
 Roehampton University, London, UK
 R.Marples@roehampton.ac.uk
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Knowledge, power and educational reform: applying the sociology of Basil Bernstein, edited by Rob Moore, Madeleine Arnot, John Beck and Harry Daniels, London, Routledge, 2006, 247 pp., £83.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-415-55972-0

This book encompasses 13 chapters written by authors with a variety of educational interests, perspectives, and applications of Basil Bernstein's work. At his core, Bernstein was a sociologist-linguist who focused on the effects of power, social class, and society on language. He strongly believed that individuals bring into every situation a societal background that affects their interactions with others, attitudes towards education, and understanding and processing of language.

In Chapter 1, Johan Muller reviews the historical changes in knowledge structures from the seventeenth century onward. In his review, he shifts back and forth in time which may appear confusing to readers who prefer historical events presented in a linear fashion. Muller claims that by ignoring the different structural forms of knowledge, research on curriculum planning and research assessment remains stagnant. Muller could more clearly explain the connection between knowledge, curriculum planning, and research assessment. Does Muller mean that by reviewing the progression of knowledge the reader can see the types of knowledge that have been and are valued which in turn will affect the contents of a curriculum and a research assessment? Muller also discusses Bernstein's views about knowledge structures: they differ in terms of their verticality, or how theory develops, and grammaticality, or how theory deals with the empirical world.