Morrison achieves these aims with a book that focuses on the practical while still engaging with the theoretical.

After a brief introductory chapter of four and a half pages, there are five substantive chapters: 'Tools for understanding causation', 'Probabilistic causation', 'Approaching cause and effect', 'Determining the effects of causes' and 'Determining causes from effects'. The final chapter provides an overview of the argument in the book together with prospects and challenges under the heading 'Causation: Effective, inconsequential or a lost cause?' The first of these five chapters, 'Tools for understanding causation', makes use of the work of philosophers such as Hume, Mill and Russell as well as worked examples and a number of clear figures to help the reader better understand the issues relating to causation. A particularly nice, and effective, touch is that each section in these chapters is followed by a box listing 'Implications for researchers'. The next chapter on 'Probabilistic causation' begins with a worked example of small class teaching before exploring various aspects of probability. This chapter includes seven examples exploring the use of control and two other examples on qualitative and ethnographic research. With such a great deal of content it is no surprise that the chapter is almost 80 pages long, but this length is not a problem. Instead, the chapter provides a coherent body of work that will tax some readers but will help them to understand the issues if they persevere with it.

The chapter on 'Approaching cause and effect' explains the stages in identifying causation with good use of worked examples and a particularly strong section that looks at alternative explanations of results. The subsequent chapter on 'Determining the effects of causes' provides the detail that is missing from the previous book in this review with an extensive consideration of experimental methods as well as a few pages on action research. The last of the five substantive chapters, 'Determining causes from effects', focuses on case studies and detailed examples with the emphasis on the role of intervention.

Morrison deserves a great deal of praise for this book as he has attempted to produce an intellectually demanding text that rewards the careful student; fortunately, he has succeeded. In a very practical book, he has managed to introduce some complicated philosophical concepts and ensured that their relevance is clear to the reader. I would hope that students who have mastered Burton and Bartlett's text would find Morrison's book to be the next step in their development as critical researchers in education. I also hope that more established academics will take the time to work through Morrison's book. Doing so will enable them to reflect on their practice through the lens of causation to understand how they might improve as researchers.

Reference

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Key issues in education policy, by Stephen Ward and Christine Eden, London, Sage, 2009, 184 pp., £19.99 (paperback), £60 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-84787-465-5

There are many occasions when, as a policy-maker in teacher education, I need an accessible source of information about one or more current and key issues in education as a starting point

for a task. I require that information to be authoritative, clear and up to date and this book goes a long way to providing just that starting point. The prime audience however is undergraduate and postgraduate students of educational studies, of whom there are around 40,000 in 2008 (116). The book is written in a highly accessible style which is arguably its main strength and much needed for this complex and often confusing area.

A key aim of the authors and the Sage book series 'Issues in education' is to provide the reader with a level of criticality. Many 'younger' readers will have grown up in a context of government intervention and through this book they are challenged to deconstruct and see beneath a wide range of issues and the policies they spurned. This is achieved in a way that includes historical contexts and alternative perspectives, yet not in so much detail that clarity is lost.

Each chapter can be read independently yet there is a clear story told through reading them sequentially. In addition to clear information and argument the authors have included two pages of abbreviations which may be as necessary to many UK readers as to international scholars! Within each chapter the authors include reader tasks in the form of issues to consider and questions that may be useful to inform or encourage the reader to view an issue from a number of view-points. I was certainly intrigued to see what questions the authors had singled out for further consideration. Many are indeed thought provoking and would form the basis of useful activities within taught sessions but as the tasks are short they can equally be skipped and don't detract from the flow of text. Conclusions and key data are often presented in boxes with judicious use of clear and helpful bullet lists. At the end of each chapter a comprehensive set of references is provided but also further readings are listed; something that readers of an introductory book such as this are likely to find valuable.

The authors completed the book in late 2008, in time to predict that recent economic world events would have an impact on trends in educational policy. For example the well summarised trend data on educational opportunity and social class in the final chapter may be less likely to continue with an ever tightening economic climate. Perhaps in a future edition this is a further chapter on its own!

Chapter 1 introduces ideas about the nation state and the politics of education. It provides a simple but clear overview of the key drivers in the UK's educational developments and linked legislation. Chapter 2 develops the theme through examining the marketisation of education and the influence of various economic situations on political theory and educational policy. In the third chapter there is a focus on school systems and the inequalities in education. It concludes by highlighting the importance of the 2006 Education Act in schools' admissions policies, the ownership of schools and the hiring of staff and thus gives a seamless transition into Chapter 4 which continues the theme of marketisation of the education system and tackles the introduction of schools and academies.

I was intrigued as to how the authors would present this political 'hot potato'. They do so very effectively by highlighting in the second word of the chapter that it is a controversial initiative and then by explicitly presenting the information as a debate; looking at two possibilities; that these schools have created a divided and hierarchical secondary school education system or that they have been successful in tackling educational disadvantage and underachievement (48). Once again the facts are presented, evidence through data is highlighted to illustrate each side of the debate, and tentative conclusions drawn. Throughout the book the authors' personal views are occasionally revealed. For example on page 61 is written 'for those who believed in comprehensive education it has become difficult to see Labour engaged in anything but its destruction and the introduction of a selective (and less accountable) system with tiers of education'.

Chapter 5 turns the reader's attention to development and change in the curriculum while keeping the focus firmly on the interest and control of politicians and successive governments.

The authors conclude that the key drivers are market forces rather than a desire to achieve social cohesion and the remaining chapters then elaborate on inequalities within the education system within the UK.

The focus of the sixth chapter is the influence government policies have had on teachers' professional practice through central control and accountability. Once again the recent historical developments are clearly and concisely outlined with the influence of Ofsted, QCA and the National Strategies cited as key drivers in change.

A further chapter is dedicated to the educational policies which have shaped and changed teacher training which rather surprisingly I found lacked the depth of other chapters. In Chapters 8 and 9 the authors turn to issues relating to gender, race, religion and social cohesion in the education. It illustrates inequalities: how policy has attempted to cope with our increasingly diverse population, inherent racism and social tensions. While the authors acknowledge that boys and girls have won an entitlement to the same curriculum their own choices remain gendered.

The final chapter confronts some of the most intractable issues of government educational policy: social class, deprivation and poverty. The Every Child Matters policy is arguably one of the most influential policy initiatives introduced in recent years and is discussed here in detail and with strong critical viewpoints. As in so many areas of the book the authors are able to present this complex issue with authority with clarity. It is an effective final chapter since policy in the end radically affects people and particularly those people in areas with greatest poverty and lowest social class. Finally the authors end with the gloomy reality that social class and deprivation remain, despite huge efforts of policy-makers, the strong influences in determining pupils' lifelong achievement.

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Languages and education in Africa: a comparative and transdisciplinary analysis, edited by Birgit Brock-Utne and Ingse Skattum, Didcot, Symposium Books, 2009, 356 pp., £32 (paperback), ISBN 1-873927-17-5

The debate on what is an appropriate national and official language is an emotive one in Sub-Saharan Africa. There are disagreements as to whether the use of the so-called colonial languages – English, French, and Portuguese – are a form of neocolonialism or simply practical ways of providing a uniting language. Within the education sector, this debate has been focused on what languages should be used as media of instruction. There are those who argue that African languages should be the basis of teaching and learning throughout the education sector, and there are those who oppose the idea, claiming it is impractical, and would be wildly costly: which is the African language, they would ask, that should be used in multilingual countries? For example, in Nigeria there are nearly 200 languages, with Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba tribes and their languages being dominant; and in Kenya there are nearly 40 tribes – which is to say that there are nearly 40 languages. The dominant Kenyan tribes are Kikuyu, Luo, Kamba, Luhyia (who speak a mixture of dialects, and some cannot understand one another), Kamba, and Kalenjin. The same story repeats itself in many African countries.

Chapter 1 of this book sets out its main thrust, arguing that Africa has no basis for using colonial languages. These languages, claim Brock-Utne and Skattum, are a burden to African