

real, actual and empirical' (149), but this is surely an unduly narrow conception of academic disciplines. Is this not a conception of knowledge that, in its concern with 'causal mechanisms' privileges scientific modes of thought? This suspicion is deepened through the remark that 'academic disciplines provide access to the natural and social worlds' (70) but what of the humanities that characteristically attempt to provide insights into what it is to be human, which includes what it is to be a person, with feelings, interpretations, imagination and intentions?

Do we see here, perhaps, a double limitation in the critical realism project, in that it poses a 'real' world at its centre and then attempts to work out the relationship of understanding to that world: such a philosophy underplays both the felt sense of being human and, even more importantly, the role of the imagination in bringing new worlds and different worlds into view. This is crucial for a genuinely emancipatory curriculum and pedagogy for part of such an education will surely lie in liberating students' imaginative powers so that they can bring their own worlds into view; so that, in effect, they can become poets and creators of new worlds. Emancipation surely ultimately requires an *imaginative* emergence from the 'given' world into a new, although still feasible, world.

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Accountability in higher education: global perspectives on trust and power, edited by Bjorn Stensaker and Lee Harvey, Abingdon, Routledge, 2011, 270 pp., £33.99 (paperback) ISBN 978-0-415-87196-9

Accountability in higher education: global perspectives on trust and power provides the latest contribution to the Routledge series *International Studies in Higher Education* (edited by David Palfreyman, Ted Tapper and Scott Thomas). The series collates case studies and comparative analyses which demonstrates different interpretations of critical developments in key aspects surrounding significant policy developments in higher education across the world. The central theme of this book is about the accountability initiatives which are increasingly being introduced to higher education. The book provides a global overview of many different schemes all of which have been designed in response to the various challenges being faced by higher education. The book also presents some theoretical reflections that try to provide possible insights of the resulting long-term consequences. Underpinning the book is a premise that all round the world in whatever way higher education has traditionally been organised, currently, systems are facing fundamental shifts in their individual characteristics. This is resulting in transitions in the relationships between higher education with the state and the society in which it operates. The book uses specific case studies to analysis this perspective.

In the early chapters of the book we are provided with an outline of what accountability can mean, the historical origins of what it can be for and how it can work. Stensaker and Harvey (eds) question if the promises made for accountability schemes can outweigh some of the problems associated with them. They outline three dimensions which provide themes for the subsequent chapters. These are firstly the 'power' dimension, considering what accountability schemes look like they question why different schemes have been established and why different groups can be influential. Secondly they suggest that by considering broader contexts about how the information created by accountability schemes can be interpreted and used to change the values of higher education the possibility of using the information to improving the function and

performance of both education and research the ‘quality dimension’ of accountability schemes can be considered. The third dimension addresses the legitimacy of such accountability schemes, especially within a global setting and as such suggests a ‘trust’ dimension.

In Part I there are seven chapters which consider specific approaches to accountability from Australia, Africa, China, Eastern and Western Europe (through the Bologna Process) and the Americas, both Latin America and US America respectively. For example Liu in her chapter about the early development of accountability in China questions how higher education institutions can make their voice heard in a largely state-run scheme. In the chapter by Temple the origins of accountability schemes in Eastern Europe developed from state controlled communist origins are outlined. The challenges suggested by Liu and Temple provide a good comparison to Zemsky’s chapter about the US and his argument that market forces have failed to hold American colleges and universities accountable. As Stensaker and Harvey (eds) identify in all cases, the role of the government can be identified as a key player in recent accountability initiatives.

In their conclusion Stensaker and Harvey suggest that problems for accountability initiatives include the lack of involvement ‘not only by students, parents and employers but also by higher education institutions’ impacting on ‘having fair judgement criteria’ (247). They suggest that it takes a ‘mature and confident agency, maybe the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the UK as an example, to seriously engage with these stakeholders concerns’ (Chapter 13, 247–8). I would suggest that in the UK we should not become complacent and that this book provides useful case studies for us to think about. Following the *Independent review of higher education and student finance in England* (the Browne Report) which was published on 12 October 2010, critiques of the report (for example Collini) and the subsequent government response (reform to tuition fees House of Commons vote) suggest that higher education in the UK is also undergoing an ideological shift in the likely future relationship between society, the individual and higher education. In Surssock’s chapter more details about accountability in Western Europe are compared including the work of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in England (Chapter 7, 118–21) At a time when many in UK higher education are waiting to see how the detail of the Government Spending Review and changes to how higher education will be funded in the future is going to affect our higher education more generally this book offers a timely reminder that the challenges to the relationship between the state, the individual and higher education are not confined only to the UK.

It is therefore useful that Part 2 of the book considers the wider perspective of the dynamics of cross border challenges, about increasing global accountability schemes and about the strategies that institutional leaders might chose in a mass market orientated higher education environment. In the final concluding chapter Stensaker and Harvey consider interactions between accountability, trust and power by raising questions about how we might better understand the developing field of accountability emphasising a need to re-think some of the ways accountability is currently accomplished.

This book provides an important contribution to a growing literature which focuses on accountability or more broadly speaking quality assurance. It provides useful context in which the current challenges for higher education can be interpreted. As Temple states, ‘accountability is a central concept in understanding the university’s position in society’ (Chapter 6, 107) and this book demonstrates this very well.

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The death of the comprehensive high school?: historical, contemporary, and comparative perspectives, edited by Barry M. Franklin and Gary McCulloch, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 218 pp., US\$85 (hardback), ISBN-13: 978-1-4039-7769-4

The attempt by governments to invent common secondary schools for all youth was a twentieth century project. It was in the 1950s and 1960s that the comprehensive high school appeared most likely to succeed across the English-speaking world. Pioneered in Scandinavia and the US such a school promised to solve a number of problems.

First was the newly discovered adolescent. A new institution was required to protect youth from premature entry into dangerous adult worlds. The school also promised greater social cohesion, especially where new migrants were required to assimilate rapidly, and where old and new ethnic, racial, religious, class and other social divisions were endemic. It promised better informed citizens for democracies. It promised a great leveling up of average educational standards. No longer would too many young people be trapped in schools – central, junior technical, secondary modern, and similar – that routinely reduced opportunities for higher education and better-paid careers. The comprehensive high school also promised a common curriculum, at least in the junior years, that would meet modern labour market requirements. Young people would be better ‘adjusted’ for employment and living in modern societies.

The essays in *The death of the comprehensive high school?* tend to suggest that these expectations were too heavy a burden for any single institution to meet. Nevertheless the editors conclude that the story is far from over yet, despite the accumulating problems.

In most places where these schools were systematically introduced, there was resistance. The antagonism of the Roman Catholic church was probably most effective in Australia – less so in the US. Some ethno-cultural-religious groups insisted on separate schools, inside or outside of public education systems, regardless of apparently rational state policies regarding assimilation and common citizenship training. There was resistance from those who had benefited from, or sought for their own children, specialist schools, schools that most likely collected the children of the wealthy or those who sought academic, or grammar school educations apart from ‘ordinary children’, or children who were considered ethnically alien or unacceptable for one reason or another. There were other enemies from the beginning, those who believed a common school for all could only drag educational standards down, would produce mediocrity, would not be in the best interests of nation or society.

The range of issues that have affected the history and contemporary circumstances of comprehensive schools therefore are very broad. This book addresses many of them in useful ways, but not all essays are equally successful.

Two of the best essays make specific populations their focus. Thomas Pedroni and Pavla Miller contrast individual and group private purposes, with the public policy intentions of comprehensive schooling. Pedroni writes about Black American voucher-using families. Miller looks at Italian–Australian families. Such families become rational actors in the schooling circumstances of the cities within which they live. They are not selfish users of neo-liberal inspired