



## EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

**ROGER OPENSHAW and JOHN CLARK**

We feel honoured to have been invited to edit this memorial volume. Professor John Codd and Professor Roy Nash were highly respected colleagues of ours. They died within a year of each other and left a legacy few will ever be able to equal. Both began their academic careers as psychologists but went on to draw deeply upon the other disciplines of education to inform their scholarly work. They almost effortlessly wove together the disciplinary strands of the history, philosophy, psychology and sociology of education and were no strangers to the many ideas in the parent disciplines, which they employed to shape their own theorising. Over time, John was drawn more towards philosophy and policy while Roy focused on sociology and inequalities.

Together, they left their mark on the education landscape. They set the very highest standards of scholarship, which was reflected in the enviable international reputations they rightly acquired and richly deserved. They published widely in many of the world's leading education journals and books, which had a significant impact on academic and professional audiences alike. Both were uncompromising in their critical analyses of education policies and practices, being determined to expose unexamined

assumptions and taken-for-granted ideas to rigorous analysis. Their shared concern for social justice was evident for all to see, and their pursuit of the truth lived up to the highest ideals of the life of a university academic. They were, as far as they were able, determined to right wrongs and bring about a better world. Sadly, they were cut down while at the height of their intellectual powers, and so those of us who remain lost the benefit of the enormous contribution they would have made had they survived.

It is in their memory that this book has been published. It not only honours what they achieved over a lifetime of academic scholarship and university service, but also builds on their intellectual accomplishments by exploring and extending some of their central concepts and theories in ways that do justice to the themes they were so passionate about.

## **John Codd**

In the second half of the 20th century critical policy analysis emerged to challenge the assumptions of traditional pluralist or functionalist analyses. John Codd's work fell very much in this tradition. Mark Olssen's introductory chapter on the work of John examines the way he was able to draw upon, and indeed extend the work of, critical theorists such as Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault to provide the basis for a broad commitment to a democratic and ethical vision of a new welfare community.

As Olssen relates, John's approach to education policy research was distinguished by his breadth of expertise and interest. His work on education policy focused on ideologies and their significance for policy. From the 1990s John was particularly concerned with the growth of neo-liberalism and managerialism, especially their threats to academic freedom. As a result, Olssen aptly concludes his chapter with a key quote from John himself that clearly epitomises his belief that educators should strive "to develop their students' capacity for democratic deliberation, critical judgement and rational understanding".

John Codd encouraged ongoing critical scholarship in which theories and methodologies were subject to rigorous scrutiny. Taking up this challenge, Roger Openshaw reassesses the social, political and ideological

origins of the Picot Report and *Tomorrow's Schools*; documents that gave rise to New Zealand's radical education reforms in the late 1980s. He illustrates how the early post-World War II failure to address longstanding education problems and issues created a potential time bomb. As a result, significant changes in the economic and cultural spheres during the 1970s inevitably sparked urgent, ultimately irresistible, calls from across the community for radical education change. Accordingly, Openshaw argues that the reforms need to be situated at the end of a rather lengthy continuum rather than at its beginning. Moreover, the fact that pressure for reform emanated from such diverse sources suggests that we would do well to substitute a multidimensional view of education policy change for the largely unidimensional view that has too often prevailed.

Drawing extensively on newly available primary source material from Archives New Zealand's extensive collections, Openshaw poses some searching questions concerning our largely uncritical acceptance of a sudden, unheralded policy change largely engineered by Treasury neo-liberals. In response, he argues for continuity rather than disjunction, as evidenced by a lengthy history of concerns over excessive education centralisation and lack of accountability and choice, culminating in a number of reports both inside and outside education during the 1970s and 1980s. His chapter examines the dual economic and cultural crisis that gradually polarised New Zealand society in the two decades prior to the reforms, bringing into being a number of groupings that, while disparate in ideology, embraced a common policy rhetoric of radical reform in education that was ultimately impossible to ignore.

Acknowledging his own debt to John as friend and mentor, Peter Roberts asserts that among the many qualities for which he will be remembered was his intellectual integrity. For John, he observes, there was no separation between the ideas he espoused and the way he lived his life. In his later years John was particularly critical of what he would have regarded as the corporatisation of the academic world. Building on a tradition of critical scholarship, which John exemplified throughout his life and work, Peter Roberts's chapter critically examines New Zealand's Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) as an example of the very processes John deplored. His concern in this chapter is not so much with

the technical aspects of the PBRF system but rather with some of the philosophical questions the system raises. For instance, although promoted as a means for enhancing creativity, it fosters individualism, in Roberts's words, "pitting one academic against another in the quest for higher 'quality' rankings". However, along with the undesirable characteristics of compliance, conformity and compulsion, the author sees some potential within the PBRF environment in its acceptance that research today is a process of struggle. Hence, if it is subjected to careful reflection and critique, the PBRF could provide the basis for intellectual growth.

John was particularly well known for his critically incisive work on the school curriculum and our assessment practices, especially given his hopes for greater teacher autonomy and advocacy for a high-trust model of education. Howard and Greg Lee argue in their chapter on the emergence of NCEA that these concerns have been seriously compromised, not only by current assessment policies and practices, but also by the extremely rapid emergence of NCEA with little critical debate. Such debate, they conclude, is vital. The speed of NCEA's evolution has given teachers and schools little time to adapt to the new requirements. It has also resulted in much confusion about exactly how it operates compared with the previous norm-referenced examination system. A crucial problem with NCEA is that it remains trapped between the rhetoric of standards and the reality of maintaining a relatively consistent pass rate in order to protect "standards". Thus, while professing to be a standards-based qualification, NCEA uses normative boundaries to ensure a stable pass. Lee and Lee leave us with a warning that we must never lose sight of "the very real possibilities that education offers and the reality that the intellectual journey can be just as valuable and worthwhile as the final destination". It is a warning that John himself would have thoroughly endorsed.

## **Roy Nash**

He "will come to be known as one of the most systematic theorists in the sociology of education". In this way Hugh Lauder opens his introductory chapter on the work of Roy Nash. Lauder continues by illustrating how Roy's unique brand of interdisciplinary realism enabled him to develop

a sophisticated explanatory structure coupled with a methodology. Roy, he points out, always subjected this structure to rigorous testing and encouraged others to do likewise. As a sociologist, he was particularly critical of the current predilection for policy makers and some researchers to see teachers and schools as the main cause of educational failure. In contrast, he did not consider inequality to be primarily determined by education, but rather by class-based family resources.

Roy's work, however, leaves us with a number of challenges. He argues that family practices and processes create the cognitive habitus that sets the trajectory for learning and achievement, but it is not clear from his theory what responsibilities schools have for inequality. Roy also cautions us about the limitations to the knowledge claims that can be made by scholarly disciplines, which means there will always be difficulties in implementing policies derived from the best theories of educational inequality available. Challenges notwithstanding, however, Lauder's observation that there was an element of insight and prophecy in Roy's work that only now is becoming manifest is well exemplified in the contributions that follow and the indebtedness the authors freely admit to.

Elizabeth Rata continues and extends the critical and scholarly theme of this volume. By posing a crucial question about the state of Māori education following four decades of biculturalism, she questions the current, largely uncritical acceptance of ethnic-based education in terms of its claimed benefits. In so doing, Rata acknowledges her indebtedness to the scholarship of Roy, who was particularly critical of what he once termed the "absurd distortions" that arise with the idea of separate, compartmentalised entities termed "Māori culture" and "Pākehā culture". Roy was particularly concerned that such idealised views of culture were resulting in the virtual sidelining of much excellent sociological and historical scholarship dealing with social class in New Zealand.

The consequences of these views for Māori education, Rata contends, have been seriously detrimental. One reason for this is that a dominant culturalist approach bases the curriculum on tribal knowledge that is sociocultural rather than disciplinary. Such socialisation into an essentially closed group, she warns, may well result in a generation of young people unable or unwilling to contribute to or benefit from New Zealand's more

open liberal-democratic society. Rata's conclusion thus confirms the bicultural dilemma foreseen by Roy over 20 years ago.

Jane Prochnow, Bill Tunmer and James Chapman observe that an important aspect of Roy's work was his firm belief in a multidisciplinary approach to investigating the central educational question, "What causes differences in educational attainment?" In critically examining reading failure, the authors take up Roy's plea for collaboration between sociology and psychology. They are particularly critical of Berryman and Bishop (2011), who claim that the deficit thinking of teachers, supported by Western psychology, largely explains Māori educational failure. Instead, they argue that, especially in literacy, an interdisciplinary approach provides the basis for a much more scientifically defensible account.

Drawing on the family resource framework developed by Roy Nash, Prochnow et al. investigate the role of literate cultural capital in generating social disparities in educational achievement. They conclude that New Zealand's literacy achievement gap can be explained in terms of family resources, literate cultural capital and orientation towards literacy education. This gap can be reduced by using differential instruction from the outset of formal schooling.

Some of Roy's most significant publications were brought together in his posthumous book *Explaining Inequalities in School Achievement: A Realist Analysis* (2010). A key idea which threads through much of his thinking is the centrality of a structure–disposition–practice model of causal explanation. He had, over a long period of time, developed a systematic theory of structure and practice, but his work on disposition remained incomplete upon his death, although he provided enough clues to the direction he was taking. John Clark takes up the challenge of "filling the disposition gap" by advancing a neurophilosophical account of learning consistent with the neural theory Roy was beginning to work on.

Clark distinguishes between etiological (external social factors) and constitutive (internal neural factors) explanations. He examines two competing etiological explanations: the first locates causes within schools, as Te Kotahitanga does, which he finds wanting. The second seeks a wider explanation in external social causes. But the critical element lies in the constitutive side of things, with a neural mechanism to account

for learning and memory along with how the brain represents the world. This takes us into a deeper understanding of neural processing. Finally, the etiological and the constitutive are connected in order to give Nash's structure–disposition–practice model greater explanatory power in identifying the causes of inequalities in school achievement.

## Concluding comments

Taken as a whole, this volume embraces the key concerns of education research that both John and Roy spent much of their academic careers exploring in depth. One of the most significant of these is differential attainment: Why do some students fail at school while others succeed? Successive chapters underline the fact that answering this question comprehensively necessitates a broad multidisciplinary approach that embraces a number of research methodologies. Such an eclectic approach can be readily justified when one accepts that the study of differential attainment must inevitably involve a critical examination of the various historical and contemporary attempts at administrative, philosophical, pedagogical and assessment reform in education. This includes the original motives for reform, their ideological and intellectual assumptions and their stated and actual outcomes.

Furthermore, as both John and Roy fully recognised, carrying out this challenging task requires the continued commitment of both tertiary institutions and schools to academic freedom in its broadest sense. This is particularly necessary because, perhaps inevitably, much good research is inherently controversial in that it furnishes important means of understanding and thus addressing contemporary concerns. In so doing, such research highlights the assumptions that both explicitly and implicitly inform contemporary education policy and practice. John and Roy are no longer with us, but we believe that this volume will keep the message and spirit of their scholarship alive, fulfilling in years to come what one British commentator described as “a need for rigorous research which does not ignore, but rather addresses the complexity of the various aspects of schools and schooling” (Sikes, 2000, xi).

## References

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