

struggles with qualitative research, I look forward to Schulz's future work. As it is, *Interpreting Teacher Practice: Two Continuing Stories* should be read by all those attempting narrative research, if nothing else, as a cautionary tale, but more hopefully, as a invitation to deeper and more critical thinking about the narrative enterprise.

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Hobson, P.R. & Edwards, J.S. (1999). *Religious education in a pluralist society: The key philosophical issues*. London: Woburn Press, (Softcover) 184 pages.

This is a well-written, well thought-out book about teaching religion in public schools. After analyzing this situation in Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, the authors opt for what they call an approach called pluralistic liberalism. This approach sets out a methodology that deals honestly with the "truth" of the various religions but does not prejudge the various belief systems, either implicitly or explicitly, nor does it put on hold dicey questions of epistemology.

This volume is divided into four major parts, each of which comprises two chapters. The four parts are: The Legitimacy and Place of Religious Education in Schools, Responses to Pluralism in the Teaching of Religious Education, Ethical, Political, and Social Dimensions of Religious Education, and The Teaching of Religious Education: Case Studies and Recommendations. The first and fourth parts of the book are particularly germane to this review in light of the fact that the book's discourses makes no reference to the situation in Canada. Nonetheless, these sections do have relevance to the Canadian scene.

Hobson and Edwards appear thoroughly convinced that religious education ought to take place in public schools as a vital

part of the curriculum on the basis that students have the right to be informed about all aspects of societal functioning. They believe that religious education has a vital part to play in schooling in terms of helping students develop spiritual, moral, and cultural values for themselves. They reject the notion that religious education is necessarily indoctrinative, and plead for a more rational approach which assumes that religious data can also be taught investigatively and analytically. The final result is that such a procedure will assist students in making informed personal decisions about values.

According to the authors, religious education in pluralist, multi-faith societies has undergone significant changes in the last two decades. This shift in thinking has encouraged the development of multi-faith, educationally-oriented programs in religious education in all three countries under study. In addition to examining such programs in each country, this book is oriented towards the development of an over-all pedagogically-sound approach that may confidently be used by educators in western multi-faith, pluralist countries.

Hobson and Edwards reject the teaching of specific religious values for commitment in public schools as well as the idea of teaching *about* religion. The former approach belongs to the mandate of purely religious institutions, they argue, and the latter simply does not delve deeply enough into the grounds on which the various faith systems are founded. Instead, the authors recommend an open-ended approach which freely and objectively examines the rationale for such religious systems as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and so on. Such a program could be taught by teachers from a wide range of backgrounds with the only necessary commitment being to the broad religious education of students. The authors reject the principle of exclusivism, namely the position that a given religion is superior to others as well as the principle of inclusivism, which implies that all religions are essentially the same in that they allegedly all worship the same God.

The notion of pluralism is subject to various considerations and interpretations, and Hobson and Edwards specify that their version of "extended pluralism" founds on the principle that when a particular religious orientation is analyzed, no judgment of its

efficacy is made in advance. In addition, all issues of ultimate concern raised during the analysis will receive careful and open consideration. The authors argue that if the study of religion is treated in an educational way, the criteria for such study will include critical awareness, openness to differing perspectives and a broad range and depth of understanding. From this reviewer's perspective, it is doubtful that a more pedagogically-sound approach could be developed for public schools.

A survey of approaches of religious education programs in America, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Chapt. 7), reveals that the United States has traditionally shied away from any admixture of church and state. Still, some state schools do offer descriptive-type courses about religion and parochial schools are permitted to do as they please about the subject. The compulsory religious school curriculum in the United Kingdom includes a descriptive study of six major religions – Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikhism. Australia has increasingly adopted a secularist approach to the subject, but the authors praise both its purpose and content. In the Queensland program, for example, students are encouraged to engage in philosophical inquiry about such issues as the existence of God and the problem of evil. This, in the estimation of the authors, should motivate students to engage in a more serious study of these questions on their own. New South Wales is set on a similar course of study and the State of Victoria is not too far behind. Implicit in Hobson and Edwards' argument is a hint that everybody really ought to be following the example of these Australian states.

The final chapter of this volume offers recommendations for teaching religious education following the open-ended, educationally oriented-approach previously outlined. This chapter also includes a "charter" for teachers of religious education which outlines the knowledge, skills, and attitudes appropriate to this station.

A plain-spoken and well-written book, there is much benefit to be gained in perusing its pages, if only to become convinced that the avoidance of teaching religious education in schools severely short-changes students. These authors do a commendable job of

arguing the case for a pedagogically-sound inclusion of religious education in today's schools.

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Castells, M., Flecha, R., Freire, P., Giroux, H.A., Macedo, D. & Willis, P. (Eds.). (1999). *Critical education in the new information age*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 169 pp. (softcover).

"Some might argue that critical pedagogy is already dead and can only rehearse the aesthetics of its disappearance," suggest Peter McLaren (1999, p. 20), in the introductory essay in *Critical Education in the Information Age*. This hints at the challenge which the book poses: how should we reposition critical pedagogy in graduate courses again, given this current collection of seven essays? The collection suggests to me that critical pedagogy continues to offer vital critique in its own way, but continues to suffer from fundamental flaws which might block its return to its former prominence.

Three of the book's essays are by central figures in critical pedagogy. Each provides a valuable sampler of the author's broader work. Paulo Freire, now deceased, calls for vigilance in protecting public schools from government interference or abandonment, in a spirit more reminiscent of Horace Mann than Che Guevara. Henry Giroux attends to how "border youth" (p. 104) need reformed curricula to address their identity issues in a postmodern world. Both pieces, however, engage readers' minds, not their souls. By contrast, Peter McLaren breathes fire, calling for a pursuit of "a contraband pedagogy, a profane pedagogy and educational brigandism for the next century" (p. 33).

Unfortunately, two other essays are valuable only as examples of the limitations of critical pedagogy as a genre. Critical pedagogy has yet to recognize that not all critical theory is educational.