

REVIEW: Complexity in Education: From Horror to Passion

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JACQUELINE DODDING

University Centre at Blackburn College

jacqueline.dodding@blackburn.ac.uk

Bakker, C. & Montesano Montessori, N. (eds.) (2016). Complexity in Education: From Horror to Passion. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. pp.312.

Complexity in Education: From Horror to Passion, edited by Cok Bakker and Nicolina Montesano Montessori, is a compilation of four years' work by research groups from the Faculty of Humanities at Utrecht University and the Faculty of Education at HU Utrecht University of Applied Sciences. The central theme explored in the text is that of 'Normative Professionalisation'. The book presents perspectives on professionalism, ethics, virtue and morality drawing on the work of Hannah Arendt, Gert Biesta, Harry Kuneman, Donald Schön and Chris Argyris. This volume seeks to build evidence for attending to the complexities present in education and educational situations which, in turn, it is suggested, support the education and professional development of teachers, thereby improving society and democracy. This work contains an extensive array of research on worldview education, disclosure on citizenship, co-teaching, teacher education, moral authorship, traditional reform perspectives in education, the dialogue on citizenship, and the link between education and religion. It is suggested that this text might be useful for researchers and educators interested in the subject of 'normative professionalisation', qualitative researchers, researchers involved in practice-based research, and teachers and managers in primary, secondary, and professional education. It is also proposed that the book could be of interest to members of the public who may be concerned with how education may influence the development of a secure and sustainable society.

The initial introduction to the book is provided by Bakker and he begins with an exploration of key terms used in the book such as instrumental and normative professionalism, which is useful for those readers who are unfamiliar with such terms. Whilst the introduction sets the scene for the book, it does seem to be rather lengthy but, nevertheless, it provokes interest as it highlights how the teacher is required to know and understand the 'system' (p.13) that

is in place in education. This needs to be achieved to work within its constraints and to become an instrumental professional thus, in the system's eyes, providing a good education. He further problematises what a 'good education' is considered to be and then identifies six developments in education that are taking place at the moment. These are established from a synthesis of the research that has been undertaken by both research groups.

The second introduction produced by both Bakker and Montessori provides an introduction to the research projects discussed within the book. It highlights that educational research is indeed complex, as many those involved in research are also practitioners and, therefore, there is a hermeneutic element to this type of research. All the contributors to the book have had to demonstrate the theory and methodology they have worked with during their projects. There is the suggestion that the inclusion of multiple theories and methodologies adds to the depth of the problem of complexity presented within this text since it demonstrates the multiple ways in which educational settings are researched. This further provokes interest as the notion of complexity in education is deepened.

The second introduction is again quite lengthy, and it does seem to take a long time to arrive at what might be considered the most important sections of the book, namely the research underpinning it. That being said, the inclusion of both of these introductions is necessary for those unfamiliar with educational contexts and research. For those who are more familiar with the concepts, both introductions serve as a reminder of the complexity in education where teachers and educationalists are expected to conform to the norms inherent in their profession in terms of the instrumental professionalisation, whilst often subscribing to the complexities involved in normative professionalisation. The introductions also provide signposting to the rest of the book, as it seems that the title of the book, not only belies what is discussed, but is also the layout of this volume.

The core chapters of the book present the research reports from members of both groups, during which the question 'how can we develop a grip on the notion of complexity in education?' (p.54) is addressed. Chapters One and Two report on the philosophies of Hannah Arendt and virtuosic citizenship respectively; case studies are presented during Chapter Five to Chapter Nine. Chapter Ten explores the development of a new teacher-training course at a teaching college, whereas Chapter Eleven explores the origins of Dalton education in the Netherlands, evaluating this and its relationship with the Dutch government.

Part Three of the text focusses on why complexity in education matters. The first chapter of Part Three is written by Montessori and considers the concepts of plurality and complexity focusing on the social and educational relationships, applying discourse theory. This chapter does not present any further new research but reflects on the research already situated in Part Two via the 'lens of results' (p. 259) focusing on normative professionalisation discussed earlier in the book. Throughout this chapter, Montesano Montessori discusses how the research presented in Part Two has led to understandings about worldviews and helped with analysis of how current society and the educational system are interlinked. One of her main observations is how contradictory the EU discourse is regarding lifelong learning for which, through her reflections on the research presented earlier in the book, she proposes some solutions.

The final chapter of the book presents the reflections of both editors on research in Part Two. They ponder on how the research within the book contributes to further understanding of complexity in education. The conclusion the editors come to is that if complexity in the educational and research fields is acknowledged and to some extent embraced, educational and social processes become all the more enhanced. However, this is balanced with a nod to the fact that instrumental professionalisation needs to be accepted to some degree in education. Identifying instances which matter and paying attention to those, thereby stepping away from instrumental professionalisation and embracing the complexity of education, is often of great value in educational situations.

This book is a valuable addition to the literature surrounding educational processes. By presenting current research in the field, it explores the complexity of educational processes connecting these to how society and education are related. The text is complex in its layout, but there is adequate signposting throughout enabling the reader to meander through, absorbing the interesting concepts it presents.