
Book Reviews

Index for Inclusion:

developing learning and participation in schools

TONY BOOTH & MEL AINSCOW, 2011

Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE)

192 pages, ISBN 978 1 872001 68 5, £39.50

Tony Booth has produced an excellent and inspirational third edition of the *Index for Inclusion*, originally devised and written by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow. The first edition was published in March 2000, with a second edition following fairly quickly, in September 2002. This third edition, including a CD for use in schools, has been substantially revised and expanded, in the light of ten years' experience of its use in Britain, and in the more than 40 countries that have adapted and translated it around the world. It is published by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE), which was established in 1982 to support inclusive education as a right of every child. The Centre's guiding belief is that 'everyone is of equal value, by virtue of being human, and should feel welcome, visible and respected, regardless of attainment, gender, ethnic/cultural background, impairment, or any other perceived or actual difference'.

One of the main aims of the *Index* is to encourage teachers and young people, families and communities, to work together in reviewing all aspects of a school's practices and expectations. By this means, priorities for development can be determined and school improvement plans implemented.

The *Index* covers a really impressive range of topics, and does so with remarkable expertise and a keen awareness of the practical needs of schools. It is accepted that everyone has their own meaning for 'inclusion' – and that complex concepts like 'inclusion' cannot be captured within a single sentence. Here the term is seen as representing a commitment to particular values; of all the values thought necessary for 'inclusive educational development', five are singled out – equality, participation, community, respect for diversity and sustainability – as contributing more than the others to ensuring inclusive school structures, procedures and activities.

In the section on curriculum, there is special mention of the three primary reviews that have recently made proposals for a revised and more inclusive primary curriculum, including, of course, the Alexander Review; the extensive list of Resources at the end includes the 2004 book *Learning without Limits*, which, as *FORUM* readers are aware, has done so much to revolutionise our

thinking about ability labelling, and about the right of all children to enjoy an education that views them as important and educable.

In making specific proposals for the content of an inclusive curriculum, the *Index* provides suggestions for interventions in education in such key areas as: environmental sustainability; global citizenship; health promotion; democratic values; sexual feelings and the importance of trust in relationships; the tackling of bullying and harassment; and so many more. These are not always easy issues to deal with in the classroom, and where the use of questionnaires is recommended, these are clearly intended to prompt dialogue, not to avoid discussion.

It is hardly surprising that large numbers of teachers have found earlier editions of the *Index* of immense value in the creation of 'inclusive school cultures'; some of the appreciative comments of those involved in piloting this third edition adorn its back cover. I would certainly agree with the teacher who says this is a 'thought-provoking, incredibly useful and challenging document'.

The *Index* is available from CSIE: www.csie.org.uk/publications

Clyde Chitty

Reference

Hart, S., Dixon, A., Drummond, M.J. & McIntyre, D. (2004) *Learning without Limits*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Education, Education, Education: reforming England's schools

ANDREW ADONIS, 2012

London: Biteback Publishing

276 pages, ISBN 978-1-84954-420-7, £12.99 (paperback)

As soon as it was published in September 2012, Andrew Adonis's new book received warm and appreciative reviews from such noted right-wing luminaries as Anthony Seldon, the Master of Wellington College, and former Conservative Education Secretary (Lord) Kenneth Baker. Seldon went so far as to recommend, in a review in the *New Statesman* (September 7, 2012) that if Labour is returned to power in 2015, Adonis ought to be its Education Secretary.

Given the nature of the views expressed in this book, the admiration of the Right is not difficult to understand. Adonis himself seems proud to record that Michael Gove thinks he's 'wonderful', and that the Conservatives understood, back in mid-2007, or at least found it convenient to argue, that poor Adonis was being 'sidelined' by 'the statist Brownites and, in particular, by Ed Balls, the new and unsympathetic Education Secretary' – eventually being 'hounded out', and obliged to surrender his education portfolio in October 2008. Of course, all this could be simply dismissed as 'tactical party politics' – a thinly-disguised attempt to point up divisions within the Labour Party – but

Adonis seems anxious to show that only Cameron's wing of the Conservative Party was smart enough to understand that Adonis's new Academies were, in fact, 'the new grammar schools', taking 'the best of the grammar school ethos and emphasis on rigour, qualifications and effort, including traditional A-levels and academic sixth forms', but making it available to all children, without selection (Adonis, 2012, p. 118). Only the Conservatives could see that Academies were 'the true engines of modern social mobility'.

But admiring comments have not been restricted to commentators on the traditional Right. For example, Martin Kettle, who can probably be described as an unrepentant Blairite, and has certainly rejected all the views held by his respected Marxist father Arnold Kettle, wrote an extraordinary panegyric for the *Guardian* (September 13, 2012), headed, 'Adonis has a plan for schools, and you may find you like it', in which he described Adonis's book as 'an exhilaratingly unapologetic, well-sourced, highly readable and generally persuasive account of why the late-20th century English schools system had to be reinvented, has largely been reinvented but still needs to be reinvented further'. Kettle predicted that 'the unthinking Left and the vested interests will hate Adonis's education plan, as usual', but urged *Guardian* readers to go out and acquire the book.

And the *New Statesman*, ostensibly a journal of the Left, devoted an editorial to Adonis's views (September 14, 2012), headed, 'Andrew Adonis's vision for a fair and free education for all', in which it was argued that 'Labour should explicitly reaffirm its support for Academies and education reform'.

So is this book really such a brilliant critique of all the views about secondary schooling held by the genuine Left within the Labour Party since at least the mid-1960s? Much of it is, in fact, little more than an ill-informed and badly-written compendium of unsubstantiated assertions. It refuses to acknowledge or record any inconvenient fact that does not fit its broad thesis, and thereby undermines its claim to be taken seriously as a credible manifesto for the future.

There is no reference to the remarkable achievements that so many of our comprehensive schools could boast of, not least according to the somewhat narrow criterion of student examination results, or to the reforms in curriculum and pedagogy made possible by the abolition of selection at 11.

Adonis insists on talking about 'secondary modern comprehensives', as if no other type of comprehensive school ever existed. 'In reality', he says, 'comprehensive schools were essentially a continuation of their predecessor secondary modern schools, rather than the creation of new schools. They were "secondary modern comprehensive schools", and this is why they so largely failed' (Adonis, 2012, p. 12).

Yet he fails to acknowledge that, where this was the case, it was due to the abject failure of successive governments (both Labour and Conservative) to fully embrace comprehensive reform, and remove private and selective enclaves from the system. Research carried out in the 1990s showed that the proportion of 16 year olds gaining five or more A to C grades in comprehensive schools, where there was at least one competing grammar school in the area, was 29%,

compared with 48%, where the school could claim an intake that was genuinely 'comprehensive' (Benn & Chitty, 1996, p. 182).

Not surprisingly, we are treated to all the usual clichés about comprehensive schools. We are told that 'leadership, ethos, discipline, the qualifications of teachers, and the quality of teaching and learning were often pitiful'; and that this situation was exacerbated by 'a hard Left ideological hostility to ability setting or proper systems of rewards and sanctions' (Adonis, 2012, p. 19).

It follows on from this that Adonis's Academies were born of the failure of comprehensivisation to achieve its goals. The key objective of the new Academies, according to Adonis, was to replace all the 'failing' and 'bog standard' comprehensive schools (to use Alastair Campbell's infamous description) with successful 'all-ability' schools sponsored by successful entrepreneurs, private schools and universities.

When it comes to Academies, there is not even a suggestion in the book that they could be anything less than brilliant. Much is made of the 'success' of the Mossbourne Academy in the London Borough of Hackney; but there is no reference to the 2010 London Challenge Report or to the research carried out by Henry Stewart (reported in the *Observer*, February 26, 2012) showing that council-run schools with a similar intake performed better than Academies did in 2011.

One of the main purposes of the book is to argue that the private-state divide could be overcome if Academies became the vehicle by which private schools could become systematically engaged in establishing and running state-funded schools. In Adonis's words: 'Every successful private school, and private school foundation, should be asked to sponsor an Academy or Academies' (p. 148). In an article in the *New Statesman* (September 14, 2012), headed 'Beyond our Berlin Wall', and designed to accompany the publication of his book, Adonis argued that his proposal would 'unite state schools and private schools in a common endeavour'. To answer the criticism that private schools would lack the expertise to run state schools with often 'challenging' intakes, Adonis pointed out that the Governing Body of Eton was chaired by the former Conservative Minister William Waldegrave, and that its members included three professors, three knights, five PhDs and a Prussian princess. Isn't that reassuring?

I think it goes without saying that I find nothing in Adonis's book to applaud or endorse. And what saddens me is that any serious commentator or educationist could find its ideas stimulating or appealing.

Clyde Chitty

Reference

Benn, Caroline & Chitty, Clyde (1996) *Thirty Years On: is comprehensive education alive and well or struggling to survive?* London: David Fulton.