The History of Education

The possibility of survival

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This paper discusses the rise and decline of the History of Education as a discipline based area of research and teaching. Australia is the central site of attention, but the argument could not have been developed without strong attention to the history of the subject in North America and Britain. The authors argue that the History of Education is in undoubted decline in Australia. The reasons for the decline should not be sought within the historiography alone. The debate over the 'utility' of history in teacher preparation curriculum has also had a key role to play. The early twentieth-century 'settlement' represented by the Cubberley-style History of Education certainly established a role for the subject in professional preparation, but at a cost. By the late 1950s and into the 1960s the works of historians of education were subject to scathing criticism by main-stream historians. The response in the form of revisionism was certainly timely. The great flowering of the History of Education with many works of brilliance also came at a cost. The impact of neo-liberalism in economics and public policy, coincident with the new 'action research' and the 'reflective practitioner' orientation of teacher education left the History of Education somewhat detached from its previous base in teacher education, vulnerable as schools and faculties of education radically reduced their staff establishments. The paper concludes with a discussion of the prospects for the future and an argument for a new civic role for the discipline.

We begin with two quotations, fully reflective not only of the failing fortunes of the History of Education as a field of study in Britain, but also Australia. The first was written in 2000; the second in 1965.

> Over the past few decades, research into the history of education has gone out of fashion. Whereas, in the 1960s and into the 1970s, the majority of all initial teacher education courses involved some study of the history of education, there no longer appears to be any space - or any need - for such work to be undertaken. Partly as a consequence, but also arising out of other trends and developments, there are relatively few educational historians working in institutions of higher education and history of education is not a heavily populated research field. (Sikes in McCulloch & Richardson, 2000, p.xii)

Brian Simon, the eminent Marxist historian of education, had a very different story to tell in the mid-1960s.

> There is no need to make out a case for the study of the history of education as an essential aspect of the course offered to intending teachers. It has long been accepted as such in most colleges and universities and is almost universally taught, in its own right, as part of the education course. There is, however, considerable room for discussion about what is taught.(Simon, 1966, p.91)

Within a period of forty years then, as these quotations indicate, the history of education had experienced a triumphal acceptance into the core studies of the education of teachers, and then a return to a peripheral role at best. In Australia there are less than ten positions whose designated field is the history of education among the many hundreds of tertiary education appointments. Each retirement usually heralds the loss of a position, rather than an opportunity to appoint new scholars with new research approaches and perspectives. In the United States and Canada there are similar problems. A recent review of the sub-discipline in North America assumed the collapse, and asked how a restoration to education faculties might occur (Levin, 2000).

One of the amazing features of this phenomenon is that a great flowering of the field occurred within this period. Old interpretative paradigms were rejected. Attempts to connect research in the discipline to the broader social sciences, and to establish productive relationships with main-stream history were often highly successful. Historians of education often had substantial things to say about the broader history of childhood and youth, the professions and of women and the family. Historians who had worked in those fields of social history found appointments in schools of education, and a welcome to the conferences of the history of education (McMahon, 1996, p.5). One of the themes this paper explores is the possibility that this flowering of educational history, associated as it was with the new social history, actually harboured the seeds of the decline of the discipline.

The idea of 'decline' for the history of education cannot be avoided. The facts of the appointment numbers and declining share of the teacher education curriculum are too visible. In seeking to explain this phenomenon, a concentration on the internal workings of the discipline itself would be a major mistake. Broader politics and funding decisions are also part of the story, as are fundamental reconceptualisations of what good teacher preparation should look like.

The disciplinary approach to teacher education was meant to consolidate teacher education as fully professional in character. The movement of teacher 'training' away from apprenticeship models (monitorial and pupil teacher) towards more time spent in lectures and tutorials in teachers colleges and universities required a new kind of teacher 'education', in strong contrast to 'training'. As medicine, law, architecture and even dentistry, and finally nursing, demanded places in universities, with access to 'scientific' and up-to-date 'research-based' knowledge at different times in history, so did teachers and their employers (Gidney & Millar, 1994).

The premier discipline in teacher education for much of the twentieth century was educational psychology with its claim to the reliable measurement of intelligence and linked abilities, capacities and skills. From this claim came the possibility of interventions which might assist educators, at best to improve those capacities and skills subject to 'nurture', or at the least provide suitable environments and instruction to maximise the potential of those with the limited capacities which 'nature' had provided. With such an approach, and with the development of theoretical approaches breaking through the old nature/nurture conundrum, educational psychology would continue to be well placed to contribute to the development of new pedagogies in the new 'information technology', post-Fordist age.

The apparent and clear relevance of educational psychology was not necessarily shared by the philosophy and history of education, but a good enough case was made for those disciplines to enter the core teacher education curriculum from the 1960s to the 1970s in Australia. Approaching the pre-eminence of educational psychology at this time was the sociology of education, with its promise of a true understanding of the differentiated participation and success rates of different social groups in education. Like educational psychology, it appeared to offer a promise: that if the social character of educational activity could be clearly described and theorised, ameliorative interventions, even interventions promising greater social justice could be conceived, funded and implemented. In Australia, the last great burst of research, and research-driven policy implementation along these lines was associated with the Schools Commission from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s.

It was also in this period and a little earlier in Australia that the last teachers colleges were closed, and teacher education was transferred in part to colleges of advanced education and eventually to the universities. As part of the break with direct control by state education departments over teacher education, and the new drive to consolidate teacher education in the universities, the ideal of educating teachers as 'teacher-scholars' developed strength. There was a new place for a substantial study of the social foundations of education, usually organised in the disciplines of psychology, philosophy, history and sociology. Such studies might contribute to the ever-present struggle to legitimate teaching as a legitimate profession. This approach and the ideal of the 'teacher-scholar' as the dominant mode of conceptualising teacher education would be short-lived however.

It was always possible that the history of education could have had some influence on the contemporary development of policy and practice in education, and indeed where it survives in Australian universities, projects are often oriented toward such relevance. Nevertheless the age has passed for example when state and national inquiries into education felt impelled to introduce their reports with summarising discussions of the history of their concerns. In New South Wales, the report recommending the introduction of comprehensive high schools to the public education system is an example of the old approach. From the history of secondary education in Britain and Australia,

Harold Wyndham found an essential context, and a valuable set of arguments for extending and revising the means of providing universal secondary education (Wyndham, 1957). In recent times, considerations other than the historical had much greater priority for the development of education policy. The ascension of neo-liberalism to an hegemonic position in the reform process for all public policy is a key element to explaining this. Economics is a social science which should have much to learn from history, but in the contemporary period is alarmingly a-historical in approach (Marginson, 1993; Pusey, 1991).

We return to some of these issues a little later in the paper. Nevertheless it has been important to make very clear, from the beginning, the current problems of the history of education in Australia and elsewhere, and to suggest one or two of the major issues which may have contributed to the cause of the problems. In the remainder of the paper we spend time on the internal development of the discipline, and conclude again with the broader debate about its current status and organisation in Australia and beyond.

THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION: PRE-REVISIONISM

The history of education as an organised discipline is clearly associated with the rise of the modern teachers college, and the modern department, school or faculty of education within universities. In Australia these institutions arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The curricula of these institutions were clearly founded on the belief in the possibility of a science of pedagogy, and the belief that research in education could lead to the improvement of schools, school systems, and the improved learning of individuals and groups. The essential context of such an effort was the rise of modern state school systems. The organisation and management of such systems required the collection of a wide range of data and its interpretation (Green, 1990; Travers, 1983). In the Anglophone world, the universities and sometimes teachers colleges were quickly perceived as places where such research could take place, as well as within the data-collection branches of the state education departments themselves.[1]

The curriculum for the trainee teachers in the colleges and universities was not only to be found in the fruits of this kind of research. The development of modern teacher education occurred during the period of educational activity referred to as 'progressivism' in North America, and the 'New Education' in Britain and Australia. The New Education was highly dependent on interpretations of contemporary and past philosophers of education. Rousseau's *Emile* was often a starting point, while Dewey's *Democracy and Education* represents an early twentieth century climax to the tradition. Within this tradition occurred paradigmatic shifts in conceptions of children and teachers, discipline and punishment, good teaching practice and good learning environments, and socially efficient curricula. Archetypal images of representative nineteenth century schools and schooling practices associated with dame and monitorial schooling, and unreformed grammar and accomplishments education were excoriated in the process.

There was not only an essential role for philosophy, but also the study of history in the invention of the new teacher education. In Australia and Britain, the natural partner of the history of education was usually philosophy. Much of the early twentieth century history of education was thus written in terms of the history of educational ideas and practices. This approach is readily seen in the early calendars of the Sydney Teachers College. An extract from 1917 demonstrates the approach which concentrated for the most part on ancient education, with a New South Wales update:

> The course is designed to augment the culture of students as well as to increase their knowledge of facts, and to furnish suggestions and illustrations likely to prove of professional utility ... The text-books are the Republic of Plato, and a series of extracts from Ausonius, Capella and the Theodosian code. (Sydney Teachers College, 1917, p.38)

From this tradition came the best known Australian academic historian of education in the inter-war period. This was P. R. Cole who wrote extensively on education in antiquity as well as educational administration in Australia (Sherington & Cleverley, 2000).

A contemporary British educational historian has typified the origins of the discipline in this period as 'propagandic' in character (Lowe, 1983). Nevertheless it is clear, especially in the United States, that the role of the history of education as written and taught through the first half of the twentieth century was to justify contemporary public school systems, and to represent such systems as the triumph not only of 'reform', but 'history' itself. History showed that contemporary school systems were the best that had ever been. The work of Ellwood P. Cubberley of Stanford University, eminent professor of education and writer of foundational histories of education demonstrates these characteristics. In his general history of education, his themes were 'the progress and practice and organization of education itself, and to give to such a history its proper setting as a phase of the history of the development and spread of our Western civilization' (Cubberley, 1920).

In the same preface to his history, Cubberley made his case for the beneficent role of a study of the history of education – and comparative education:

> The rise of modern state school systems, the variations in types found to-day in different lands, the new conceptions of the educational purpose, the rise of science study, the new functions which the school has recently assumed, the world-wide sweep of modern educational ideas, the rise of many entirely new types of schools and training within the past century – these and many other features of modern educational practice in progressive nations are better understood if viewed in the light of their proper historical setting. Standing as we are to-day on the threshold of a new era, and with a strong tendency manifest to look only to the future and to ignore the past, the need for sound educational perspective on the part of leaders in both school and state is given new emphasis. (p.ix)

The argument can sound reasonable, but it is unconditionally 'presentist' and profession-legitimating in approach. The job of the history of education was to celebrate, justify and explain the present. History was primarily relevant to the student of teaching or educational administration in so far as it achieved this task. As we shall see, it was precisely this approach which so isolated the discipline from the broader field of history.

Cubberley did not invent this approach by himself. An earlier volume, *Progress of education in the century* (Hughes & Klemm, 1907) and others like it had pioneered the genre. The following extract from the table of contents gives insight into the spirit and character of this kind of history (p.vii).

> **CHAPTER I**
>
> **General Awakening in Education**
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> The Child's Century.–The New Education.–Pestalozzi and Froebel the True Reformers of Method.–The Work of Mann and Barnard Compared with that of Pestalozzi and Froebel.–The Establishment of Free National Schools an Important Step in the Progress of the Race.–The Principles of the Kindergarten.–The Six Stages of Teaching in the Nineteenth Century.–Manual Training in Europe and America.–Rapid Growth of Industrial Schools.–The Education of Suffering, Neglected, and Defective Children.–The Awakening of a True Spirit of Child Reverence.–Child Study in the Nineteenth Century.–The Training of Teachers.–Physical Education.–The Education of Women.–Systematic Culture after Graduation from School or University.–Technical and Scientific Education.–Art and Music.–The Sunday School.–Teachers' Conventions. ...

There is no doubt that it could and often did contribute a sense of purpose to the trainee teacher. This kind of history clearly had a 'civic' function. It contributed to the building of a proud community; in this case, of newly professional and increasingly confident teachers, and educators in general.

In Britain, similar stories were told in the foundation years of the discipline. Similar volumes swept the centuries, usually beginning with the ancient Athenians. William Boyd's *The history of western education*, went through at least six editions from 1921, and was still being reprinted in 1961. Its sixth edition concluded with the beneficent 'scientific pedagogy' of the twentieth century (1952, p.viii). This was an adaptable text with a message for every season. At the beginning of the Cold War, the history of education and the preservation of democracy were linked. The rise of totalitarianism before World War II had forced education to 'justify itself as a working faith against the extraordinary achievements of the totalitarian countries ...' (p.457).

In Roy Lowe's terms, the uncritical 'English tradition' in the history of education lasted from the 1880s to the 1950s. It laid the foundation for the devastating criticism of the field from academic historians in the 1960s (McCulloch & Richardson, 2000, p.36). This tradition also dominated the field in Australia. Craig Campbell's review of the historiography of Australian secondary schooling (1999) shows the dominance of the narrow, profession-focussed, and 'Whig' tradition until well into the 1960s. An example

of this tradition is the biography of Peter Board, a Director of Education in New South Wales which was published in the late 1950s. Board was classically constructed as a hero of modernity, progressive public schooling and the New Education (Crane & Walker, 1957). The vision of public education that its authors give us is truly admirable. The novelists 'Brian James', Dymphna Cusack and even Christina Stead are the superior guides to the day to day realities of public schooling in New South Wales in the early twentieth century (Cusack, 1991; James, 1967; Stead, 1990).

The history of education had a clear function in the development of prospective teachers. It provided heroes. It helped provide aspiring professional educators with a sense of being part of a socially progressive vanguard. In Australia the tradition lasted into the 1980s. The series of volumes on the 'pioneers' of Australian education, edited by Clifford Turney from 1969 to 1983 remained within the old tradition though historiographically they were more sophisticated than productions of the 1920s to 1950s. The 'pioneers' of Australian education were invariably those persons associated with the triumph of modern forms of schooling and school administration. By the 1960s, let alone the 1980s however, its tradition was increasingly intellectually bankrupt.

THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION: REVISIONISM

The crisis and reform of educational history is a frequently told tale. Recent versions of it may be read in the works of McCulloch & Richardson (2000), or Donato & Lazerson (2000). We shall briefly review it here.

Much of the history of education in the early to mid-twentieth century had been written in isolation from the mainstream discipline of history. Academics in university departments of history often held the sub-discipline in disdain, principally because of the way it had come to celebrate and justify the educational past. Significantly, the stimulus to change came initially from the new interest of historians in social and intellectual aspects of the past.

The essay read by the Harvard historian Bernard Bailyn in 1959, titled 'Education in the forming of American society' is the usual agreed starting point for the new era. Bailyn pointed to the narrowness of the discipline and the questions asked within it. He argued that 'education in history' was waiting to be discovered in many places other than schools. Critically he argued for a connection between the history of education and the history of the family. He recognised the utility of the old history of education as a 'subject which could give the neophyte an everlasting faith in his profession', thereby producing a 'clearly deserved ... central position in the curriculum' (Bailyn, 1960, p.8). But, that focus of the history of education had led to very poor historical writing; history which failed to authentically contextualise educational activity in terms of its own historical societies and eras. Bailyn's essay not only demanded an educational history written by well trained historians rather than educationists, but also a different historical approach.

At the same time as new approaches and questions were emerging in the history of education, mainstream history, as the history of nation building, diplomacy and war,

rulers, and the politics of ruling elites, was also being challenged by the advocates of a new social history, or 'history from below' (Abrams, 1982; Burke, 1992). In Britain a group of Marxist historians were especially influential. The historiography of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century was transformed with work such as that by Thompson on the making of the English working class or Rudé on social revolution in France (Thompson, 1963; Rude, 1959). In the educational historiography, Brian Simon led the way. His multi-volume attempt to rescue the alternative educational traditions of the working class and the emergent labour movement began with *The two nations and the educational structure* 1780-1870 (Simon, 1960).

In North America Marxism was not nearly as influential. Rather, the corresponding figure to Simon in the United States was probably Lawrence Cremin whose *The transformation of the school* (1961) was a marvellous study of the educational tradition which had previously dominated the very writing of the history of education in that country. He soon followed it with *The wonderful world of Ellwood Patterson Cubberley* (1965). Within three years of one another, work by Bailyn and Cremin had initiated a significant moment in educational historiography.

The movement which emerged was 'revisionism', and revisionist historians began producing articles and monographs which occasionally reversed traditional interpretations of American educational history. The public schools of great industrial cities such as Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia and New York were no longer portrayed as gifts by high- and community-minded leaders of society to depressed populations. The schools became part of the reason for their depression.

Increasingly, work within the American revisionist tradition was more or less radical in approach. Early work by Michael Katz was clearly oppositional. Extracts from *The irony of early school reform* (1968) and then *Class, bureaucracy and schools* (1975) illustrate its critical and polemical character.

> Americans share a warm and comforting myth about the origins of popular education. For the most part historians have helped to perpetuate this essentially noble story, which portrays a rational, enlightened working class, led by idealistic and humanitarian intellectuals, triumphantly wresting free public education from a selfish, wealthy elite and from bigoted proponents of orthodox religion. (Katz, 1968, p.1)

> On a street corner in a Brooklyn slum there stands a modern school, a massive concrete block in the middle of an asphalt playground. Like an ancient fortress, it has long, narrow slits in place of windows. If I were a kid that building would frighten me ... Those walls testify that the first compulsory schools were alien institutions set in hostile territory. (Katz, 1975, p.xv)

The revisionists engaged more closely with other forms of radical social science, for example, the new sociology or political economy of the 1960s and 1970s. The historically oriented sections of *Schooling in capitalist America* argued a correspondence theory for the history of 'popular' schooling. Its authors, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (1976)

argued that the disciplines and curricula of schools corresponded to the disciplines and production processes of the factory. Working class youth were schooled as compliant factory fodder. Eventually, and along with correspondence theory, the new theories of a radicalised sociology, in retreat from the hegemony of structural functionalism, linked education and schooling to notions of 'social control' and 'social reproduction': the former dealt with the social control of the mass of working class people, and the latter, the social reproduction of inequality. With the re-orientation of interpretation came the use of new social history methods, including the quantitative.

In Britain Richard Johnson emerged to lead the argument about the importance of social control in educational policy (Johnson, 1970). There is no doubt that much of these early revisionist histories of education were either naïve or limited in a new way by narrow sets of assumptions. Harold Silver argued effectively against Johnson's work, in particular his use of 'social control' as 'a uni-directional concept, failing to disentangle intent from practice, and practice from effect (and seemingly unaware of the sociologists' difficulties in establishing meanings for the concept)' (Silver 1983, p.25). David Tyack, an author of one of the great revisionist studies of American progressivism in education (Tyack 1974), joined Silver in criticism of the influential *Unpopular education* of which Johnson was one of several authors. There the problem according to Tyack was over-theorisation and insufficient dialogue between theory and 'the particulars of the past' (Tyack in Silver 1983, p.xii).

These debates rapidly assumed the character of paradigmatic transformation in the writing of the history of education. Few elements of the discipline were untouched as research methods, research questions and interpretive frameworks and theory were dramatically overhauled.

McCulloch and Richardson argue that from 'the epicentre of New England the shock waves spread to Canada with the arrival there of Michael Katz in 1966, reached the UK in 1968 ... finally arriving in Australia in the late 1970s ...' (p.38). There are probably two key figures associated with this 'arrival' in Australia. One is certainly Ian Davey who having been a doctoral student of Katz took up an appointment at the University of Adelaide in the mid-1970s. There he attracted a number of scholars, sometimes referred to as the 'Adelaide School' which advanced the revisionist project in the history of education in Australia. The title of one of the first published articles from the group ('Capitalism and working class schooling in late nineteenth century South Australia') announced its early focus (Cook, Davey & Vick 1979). This group was increasingly alert to one of the many problems of early revisionism: its focus on social class, and blindness to the gender issues being raised by second wave feminist writers. Eventually two historians from the Adelaide group would go on to write significant studies which placed gender and age relations at the heart of the social history of education (Mackinnon 1984; Mackinnon 1986; Mackinnon 1997; Miller 1986; Miller 1998).

The second of the key figures was Melbourne-based. Influenced more by the British Marxist tradition than by American revisionism, Bob Bessant was also responsible for a

number of challenging revisionist studies which attached ruling class intentions to the formation of public school systems. According to him, the aim of such systems was primarily to control and socialise unruly working class youth. This analysis clearly contradicted the weighty tradition of the Australian historiography, that little but good flowed from the acts of government in establishing 'schools for the people' (Bessant 1983; Bessant 1987).

In the United States the reaction against the aggressively critical versions of educational history written by the newly named 'radical revisionists' came early. Maris Vinovskis, sometime co-author with Carl Kaestle of illuminating social histories of schooling in nineteenth century Massachusetts (Kaestle 1983; Kaestle & Vinovskis 1980) mounted an attack on Katz's version of the history of the high school. That history was not simply a history of the wealthier classes securing class privilege by unfair appropriations of tax funds (Vinovskis 1985). An astounding polemic had come out even earlier. Dianne Ravitch mounted a case against the 'radical revisionists' which had McCarthyist undertones. According to Ravitch the radical revisionists were un-American in their imputed attacks on American public schools (Ravitch 1978). In Australia those historians of education who have similarly argued against the radical elements of revisionism most vigorously have included Alan Barcan and Geoffrey Partington. (For example, see Partington's review (1987) of Miller's *Long Division*.)

Leaving aside this polemical side of the debate, revisionism in Australia led to a number of historians making contributions to the emergent field of childhood history. Geoffrey Sherington's work, with Winifred Mitchell on growing up in the Illawarra was representative of the trend as was Davey's work on growing up in Adelaide (Davey 1985; Mitchell & Sherington 1984; Sherington 1990). Campbell's work (1993, 1999a) on the twentieth century history of adolescence was also part of this movement.

Not all historians of education in Australia were influenced by the new movement of revisionism. But from the mid-1960s there was certainly a greater sophistication in Australian historical writing about the educational past. Marjorie Theobald (1998) has written recently about the strongest set of contributions to the scholarship of the history of education in Australia. Beginning with work by A. G. Austin (1961) on the struggles between church and state to control and develop public education, Melbourne historians also produced a series of biographical studies which escaped the bounds of Whiggism. The master of the art was Richard Selleck whose studies of the Victorian, Frank Tate, and the Englishman, James Kay-Shuttleworth, were firmly grounded in critical understandings of the history of the social sciences and the struggle to develop modern state educational apparatuses (Selleck 1982; Selleck 1994).

The work mainly of the Melbourne and Adelaide historians through the 1980s came together symbolically with the publication of Family, school and state in Australian history in 1990 (Theobald & Selleck 1990). Pavla Miller and Ian Davey led the collection, writing about 'Family formation, schooling and the patriarchal state' (pp.1-24). All the essays belonged to the approaches of social history. There was only one essay on a great

administrator, but this was not authored by the biographer of William Wilkins. Bruce Smith interpreted the pioneering administrator of public schools in New South Wales very differently from Clifford Turney. The latter's narrative mode tended to the Cubberley tradition as the book jacket suggested, 'essential reading for ... those preparing to enter the teaching profession' (Turney 1992). The essay by Bruce Smith concentrated on new issues raised by his reading of Michel Foucault (Smith 1990). New analyses of the nineteenth century school inspector through the eyes of those influenced by Foucault's ideas about surveillance, discipline and discursive regimes of 'truth', along with new feminist work would herald another new period for educational historiography.

Revisionism, whether benign or radical had linked educational history to the new social history. But it had also broken the close bond between educational history and the teacher education curriculum. The new educational history began to look like the new educational sociology. The questions it asked were not necessarily comfortable for existing educational practice. It could be accused of undermining the confidence of beginning teachers. As a discipline, the history of education had flowered. The number of historical works of insight and depth in the field of education were extraordinary. Oral historical and quantitative methods, as well as new discoveries and theories about how to read the documentary evidence of the past had led the historian's gaze into areas barely touched previously.

THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION: POST-REVISIONISM

There is no clear demarcation between revisionism and post-revisionism, although we have already indicated that Foucault's influence may well be one indicator of departure. Three individuals or groups have led the way here. The Canadian, Bruce Curtis substantially extended the argument of the revisionists about the origins of compulsory schooling by bringing a new vision of the state into the argument (Curtis 1988). His following books (1992; 2001) concentrated on school inspection and then the census as key processes by which the modern state was built and its surveillance of local populations extended.

In Australia, a special issue of the *History of Education Review* (20: 2, 1991) edited by Lesley Johnson and Deborah Tyler included work by Bruce Smith, Denise Meredyth and Ester Faye. Most of the articles responded to the Foucaultian challenge of discussing issues such as 'citizen formation', the production of new 'subjectivities' and new discursive regimes of truth. But the promise of a radical new wave of educational history around such themes has not eventuated, at least in Australia at the beginning of the new century. The most prominent of the new writers from this approach is Ian Hunter whose book *Rethinking the school* (1994) made immensely ambitious claims. He promised to demolish the whole structure of revisionist writing about the origins of popular education, but its complex discussion of new subjectivity formations in nineteenth century classrooms and schools has been strongly challenged. David Lloyd and Paul

Thomas (1998) have convincingly reasserted the relevance of 'social control' explanations for much state activity in nineteenth century education. Hunter's claims were 'thinly based', flying 'in the face of the empirical evidence' (p.19).

This controversy exposes some features of the broader debate over the role of history in relation to post-modernism and 'cultural studies'. Hunter's book was published in a series titled 'Questions in cultural studies'. While it has been enormously positive that this emergent field in the humanities should take history seriously, Hunter has not been the only practitioner whose use of historical evidence has been eclectically narrow. Historical argument served his theory-building; those parts of the historical record that did not serve the theory were dismissed.

The most sustained contribution by an educational historian within the Foucaultian framework has been David Kirk's interpretation of the rise of Australian physical and health education in terms of normalising and disciplining the potentially unruly bodies of youth (Kirk 1998). The themes and questions inspired by Foucault have produced, and will continue to produce important work for the history of education. Essential perspectives such as power dispersal in localities as well as centres, of the power of language-defined categories to construct discourses and 'regimes of truth', the 'normalisation' of ranges of behaviour and the creation of 'deviance' have only begun to have their effect on the discipline. To some degree innovative work by Mary Louise Adams (1997) in Canada on the normalisation of heterosexuality for youth, and in Australia, Christine Trimingham Jack (1998) on the voices of women and children in educational settings owe something to these traditions.

It is to the work of a group of feminist historians of education that we must go for some of the most valuable work written in the history of education in Australia and elsewhere over the last ten to fifteen years (Blackmore 1992). At the forefront has been Marjorie Theobald whose *Knowing women* (1996) both confirmed and went beyond the revisionist project. Theobald's methods included the meticulous combing of the personnel files of the Victorian Education Department in the nineteenth century for individual cases of women teachers managing their survival in the face of increasingly male-dominated and bureaucratic administrative practices. Though eschewing a close influence of social theory, Theobald has not only continued the 'history from below' focus of revisionism with a central feminist perspective, but has added substantially to historical studies of governmentality and new subjectivity formation, themes redolent of post-revisionism in the history of education.

A FUTURE FOR THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION?

With the decline of the history of education in university schools of education, the role of the professional associations in Australia, New Zealand and Britain at least, will be crucial for continuing to organise and encourage research. The Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society holds annual conferences, and publishes its own proceedings, journal and monograph series. It provides an essential focus for the

remaining academics, postgraduate students and others in the field. It has the special function of displaying the fact though there may not be many 'history of education' academics, large amounts of work in the area continue to be done by academics appointed in apparently unrelated areas. This will be the toe-hold sustained in the universities for the sub-discipline.

This review of the past fifty years in the discipline has necessarily been selective, tending to concentrate on work which may be defined as pioneering or highly innovative in its time. It has not done justice to the work of many historians in the field. What we hope to have done is to have made an argument that the discipline has only increased its intellectual sophistication, and its production of innovative and substantial studies relevant to our understanding of education. The problem has been that this work may be seen as potentially detached from the immediate needs of teacher education. As the argument that the most appropriate research training of teachers must be found in the reflection of professionals on their practice, often through 'action research', the place for direct historical, philosophical and sociological training has declined. In Britain the decision to dismantle the 'disciplinary' approach to teacher education was made by government in the early 1980s (McCulloch & Richardson 2000, p.40). This tendency was hastened in Australia by the decision in the mid-1990s to take coursework in masters' degrees in education 'off profile'. The consequence was that masters' topics which did not appear to have an immediate promise of economic return to an educator's career tended no longer to attract enrolments. This will have a major effect on reducing the number of research candidates enrolling for higher degrees in the history of education.

This is only one aspect of the effect of new approaches to higher education funding, and the exposure of the tertiary education sector to market forces. The humanities in general have suffered from this approach. The important issue is the strategy for the sub-discipline from here. The framing of effective strategies is a particularly difficult task when continuing appointments in the discipline are so few.

There have been at least two strategies which have had some successes in Britain and North America. One has been the attempt to make the discipline relevant to teacher education once more by concentrating on the history of classroom practice and the curriculum. The other asks for a new effort in making history relevant to policy development. Both are seen as neglected sites by some historians of education.

Coming from a background in curriculum theory, Ivor Goodson has made a strong case for the first of these new efforts. In Britain, the crises over various attempts to impose a national curriculum in the 1980s demanded a range of reactions, one of which was at the least historical contextualisation. The idea that central administrations of education can and should impose uniform curricula and curriculum standards has been a state fantasy for nearly two centuries in many parts of Europe, North America and Australasia. Goodson argued:

> The reluctance of historians to look behind the schoolhouse door, and of curriculum specialists to use historical methods, serves as a drag on any attempt to comprehend schools and education. (Goodson 1994, p.51)

Certainly in Australia, few historians have taken up the challenge of writing such histories of curriculum practice. The American historian, Barbara Finkelstein has also made a related challenge and demand that historians of education uncover the history of the actual practices and relationships of the classroom and school (Reese 1999), p.11). In discussing Finkelstein and this argument McCulloch and Richardson (2000) wrote that in the contemporary political climate in teacher education:

> educationists have felt compelled to concentrate most of their effort on research into effective learning and professional practice, a process which has all but squeezed out of educational studies any residual tradition of historical and philosophical enquiry. (p.40)

Useful work in this mode has been produced recently. Ian Grosvenor, Martin Lawn, Kate Rousmaniere and Kari Dehli are some of the writers of such work (Grosvenor, Lawn, & Rousmaniere, 1999; Rousmaniere, Dehli, & de Coninck-Smith, 1997). The only way that in Australia this approach to shoring up the discipline could make some difference would be to appoint specifically in this area. A consequence might be a return of the old problem of divorcing historians of education from 'history' by such a narrow concentration of topics.

The second of the strategies to rescue the history of education is to work once more toward making such studies essential in the development of good policy. We have already discussed the difficulties of this in a period in which the a-historical economics associated with neo-liberalism has developed an hegemony over public policy debates. Nevertheless there are examples from the United States and Britain where books may be seen very directly to have addressed contemporary policy concerns. Their influence is less certain. The books by Gary McCulloch (1994; 1998) on the twentieth century British history of secondary education and its failure to provide for the 'ordinary child' provide one such example. In Australia, Irving, Maunders and Sherington (1995) attempted to place the history of educational policy within a wider framework of the development of a youth policy since the second world war. As issues associated with Aboriginal peoples, immigrant communities and ethnicity become ever more pressing in modern Australia, their historical contextualisation becomes similarly pressing.

Recent work in the policy history genre in the United States has often been conservative in approach, part of the campaign to diminish the influence of progressivism and multiculturalism on public education. In so far as the work of Angus and Mirel (1999) or Ravitch and Vinovskis (1995) for example is heard, on the 'failure' of the American high school or similar issues, we wonder if it is because the historians merely support rather than challenge existing policy directions.[2] David Tyack and Larry Cuban's *Tinkering toward utopia* (1995) is conservative in a more positive way, arguing against a cycle of policy-making in the United States which tends to place huge responsibility for social reform in general on changing what schools do in particular; leading to inevitable disappointments with the regular waves of school reform. The argument for policy relevance may also be hindered for this reason: historians are usually the first to argue that history does not necessarily teach clear lessons about the past of relevance for the future (Reese 1999, p.13).

In McCulloch and Richardson's discussion of the issues, they argued that as educational historians have found themselves marginalised, as 'educational studies have become more and more present-minded', the response of many of the survivors 'has been to trim hard and turn towards social science methodology' (p.48). There is certainly evidence of this in Australia. Richard Teese may be an example of this phenomenon. Though his present work remains historically informed, an applied sociology directed towards practical policy formation has been his focus for some time (Teese 1995; Teese 2000). The role of Allyson Holbrook in the writing of the Australian government's study of the impact of educational research is another (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs 2000).

In 1999, the Australian Council for Educational Research published an up-date of the John Keeves-edited review of research in education (Keeves 1987; Keeves & Marjoribanks 1999). The 1987 version had a positive and wise essay by William Connell on research in the history of education(Connell, 1987); the 1999 version ignored the field altogether. It seemed indicative of a low point for the history of education in Australia, despite the vigour and achievement of its research effort during the period. We continue to argue along with McCulloch and Richardson that the history of education has much to offer education schools in universities. The discipline is more open than ever 'to a creative relationship between the traditional strengths of history and the empirical social sciences' (p.49). Historical perspectives remain essential perspectives on the problems and issues of our time.

There is also the possibility that sufficient distance has been achieved from the revisionist project to conceive a new civic role for the history of education in teacher education and beyond. Hopefully this would not lead to a reversion to the triumphalism of Cubberley and his era, but the emergence of a stronger argument about an essential role for the history of education which allowed teachers and schools in particular to understand their practice. The historical arguments over eugenics and intelligence testing in education systems for example, would seem to be topics of continuing importance as education systems and schools continue to select and sort their students into different curriculum streams.

NOTE

1 The origins of this journal, the Forum of Education (re-named Change in 1998) in 1942 are explained by this process.

2 George W. Bush appointed Vinovskis and Ravitch to his education transition team on assuming the presidency of the United States (The Network: AERA Division F, 17: 1, 2001, p.13).

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