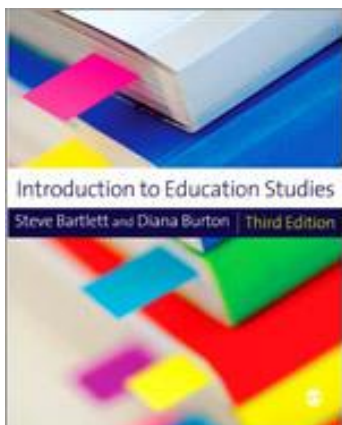


## Book Review



### **Introduction to Education Studies (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)**

By Steve Bartlett and Diana Burton  
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In their book *Introduction to Education studies (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*, Bartlett and Burton adopt an engaging, readable discourse to offer a multi-disciplinary overview of education as a field of study in its own right. They skilfully manage to provide the readers with an introduction to several significant and relevant fields to education studies, including philosophical, historical, political, and psychological theories and debates. By providing an analytical overview of such topics, the authors not only manage to encourage further exploration and reflection among novice readers, but also offer an accessible literature review to experienced educationalists.

The main aim of this well-structured and useful book is to provide a critical analysis of the interrelation between education and other disciplines such as philosophy, history, sociology, and psychology and to demonstrate how education is a “result of continual conflict and interaction between competing ideologies at many levels” (p.312). *Introduction to Education Studies* intrigues its readers by posing an apparently simple question, i.e. ‘what is education’, at the very beginning of the book to which it then makes a vigorous effort to respond through critical analysis of politics, policies, practices, theories and research paradigms. It maintains a balance between its analysis of such general topics and its overview of the British education system, as a case, where it examines the history of schooling, curriculum frameworks, neo-liberal, neo-conservative and globalisation ideologies and their impact on education policy.

Positioning education at the heart of its analysis, *Introduction to Education studies* is divided into three main sections. In section one, three main themes are discussed: what is the nature of education studies; the nature of education; and researching education. The second section provides an overview of the education system in Britain by discussing: a modern history of schooling; curriculum; politics and policy in education; globalisation and comparative education. Achievement in education is the theme for the final section of the book where it is scrutinised from different angles including: individual achievement and major psychological theories; education and psychological research; social factors, gender, ethnicity and achievement; organising teaching and learning.

Distinguishing ‘new education studies’ from the traditional ‘technical-rational’ approach to teacher education, the *first section* of the book starts by emphasising the essential intellectual understanding that educational studies can offer as a separate field of study rather than being reduced to only “part of the education/training of teachers” (p.5). The authors argue that as a main focus of study, education and its processes are of interest to several disciplines: concerns “over the nature and purposes of education, how knowledge is organised and what should be learned” are of philosophical nature (p.8); “the wider social influences upon the individual in education” and “how people learn and develop” (p.9) are some of the questions raised in the sociology and psychology of education, respectively; while the history of education explores the causal relation between education and socio-political changes. In this same section, the

authors explore the meaning of education and how shifting ideologies such as the functionalist, the consensus, conflict theories or ideas of Plato, Hobbes, and Rousseau can have an impact on education and its processes as they emphasise 'the individual', 'the knowledge', and/or 'the society'. Hence, educational researchers may adopt from among differing ontological and epistemological perspectives, methodologies and methods to explore educational phenomenon because "beliefs and values both predicate and are part of the research process" (p.64).

In *section two*, the authors provide a comprehensive analysis of the modern history of education in Britain from 1800 onwards, which is of great value to the readers interested in "understanding why things in education are as they are now" (p.69). The core aim of this section is to demonstrate how different incentives, ideologies, and socio-political trends can alter the nature of curriculum, its purposes and aims, its content, pedagogy, assessment, and in general provision of education in the case of Britain. In their inquiry, the authors set forth a clear and well-structured timeline of all such defining moments and legislations from 1800 onward as governments in power have moved along a spectrum of neo-liberal and neo-conservative worldviews. The development of free elementary and secondary schooling and teacher-led curriculum to educate students for democracy, moral duties to self and the nation, and for a better quality of life are shown to be well-established through the *Education Reform Act of 1870*; *Balfour Education Act of 1902*; *Fisher Education Act of 1918*. It is only after the devastating Second World War and through the Butler Education Act of 1944 that Ministry of Education is established marking "a defining moment in the history of modern education" (p.79). The Ministry's attempt to categorise students based on their aptitude and intelligence in the tripartite system of secondary schools, i.e. grammar, technical, and modern schools comes under much criticism throughout the 1960s leading to the establishment of the first wave of comprehensive schools. The authors contend that the publication of Black papers 1969-1977 and the *great debate* over the falling standards and rigour in teacher-led curriculum forms the basis for the *1988 Education Reform Act*. The Act aimed at "creating a market whereby schools competed with each other for 'customers' (pupils) and ensured a traditional subject-based curriculum for all pupils." (p.90); hence the creation of the National curriculum and league tables.

Of course, the shifts in the British education sector do not stop there. Pressures from teachers and parents led to a review of the National curriculum in the 1993 Dearing Report. Likewise, the emphasis of the 'New Labour' Labour party (1997) on literacy and numeracy and downgrading of aesthetic and creative areas of education led to much criticism and introduction of National Strategies or 'desired learning outcomes' (p.117) and Foundation Stage in *The Education Act of 2002*. The authors believe that the new Coalition government is inspired by neo-liberal individual freedom and "neo-conservative ideologies of traditional schooling and methods" (p.175) and therefore seeks to "give teachers more freedom" and "develop a National Curriculum as a benchmark reflecting the best collective wisdom and ensuring the highest performance and rigorous learning among students" (p.123). The authors attempt to display the impact of governments is best expressed in their own words: "what should be taught, how it should be taught and issues of measurement and standards remain, as ever, dependent upon ideological belief... their vision of society" (p.174).

The final section of *Introduction to Education Studies* is a detailed account of achievement in education from a psychological perspective and in relation to social factors and their impact on British schooling and National curriculum. To complement their debate, the authors make a discerning choice in discussing: a) how psychological theories have "opened new avenues of inquiry" (p.225) in education studies and b) how an ensemble of psychological social, economic and political views can explain "current developments in pedagogy" (p.292) following the introduction of comprehensive schools in Britain. In the first chapter of this section the authors introduce key psychological theories that can explain the differences among individuals' achievements in education. These include the Behaviourist theories that focus on

overt behaviours, stimulus-response and conditioning; the personality theories that discuss motivations and orientations; and the cognitive theories and humanistic theories. The next chapter examines individuals' development through education from 1970s onward and introduces some of the main theories namely, social/constructivist, metacognitive, learning styles/preferences, multiple and emotional intelligence, as well as situated cognition theory. As the authors rightfully state, understanding these theories are of great significance for students of education who are to "to adopt a critical stance when reviewing" (p.252) them. It is evident that individual attainments are also affected by wider social factors, which is why the next chapter focuses on the impacts of social class, gender, and ethnicity in British education and successfully demonstrates how "emphasis on equality of opportunity and the adaptability of workforce" (p.289) has had a role in the introduction of inclusive, anti-racist, multicultural education in Britain and around the world too. Prior to the conclusion chapter, the authors make an invaluable effort once again to provide the readers with an application of psychological theories as they have been used to organise students into streamed groups, or to approach teaching/learning in mixed-ability, differentiated or personalised learning in Comprehensive schools and in the (formal or hidden) National Curriculum in Britain.

In sum, *Introduction to Education Studies* is an accessible introductory resource book to key debates, theories, and researches in the field of education and provides a sound foundation for undergraduates in education studies and teacher training, especially those interested in the British education system. The authors' choice to support learners through reader reflection boxes inside the text, activities/question at the end of each chapter and a website makes the book a truly helpful companion. What I would like to see in future editions is the inclusion of summary tables at the end of chapters that could enable clear visualisation of the relation between psychological theories and pedagogy for the novice readers/students. Another idea to be considered is to allocate a future edition to other parts of formal education including further and higher education, early childhood education, and special needs education which are briefly mentioned at the final chapter of the current book. This third edition of *Introduction to Education Studies* is a useful, multi-disciplinary, liable account of key themes in the 'contested enterprise of education'.