

His solutions for the poor being trapped in what he sees as a vicious cycle of downward mobility is for policies that encourage ‘healthy’ cultural change. Perhaps not surprisingly for someone from the right-wing, free-market-oriented, Cato Institute, these include things like ‘encouraging entrepreneurship’, removing the ‘regulatory barriers to entrepreneurship’ and ‘unleashing competition’ – though quite how these fit into his earlier analysis is less clear. He certainly does not want European-style redistribution which he sees as both counter-productive and fiscally unsustainable.

These policy proposals are fairly modest. Even on his own terms, they are unlikely to tackle what he sees as the problem, shifting those lazy working class people into having the thinking skills that enable them to cope with modern complexity.

As his book completely ignores what I, and many others, would regard as the main drivers of inequality – systematic changes in the nature of work, shifts in the proportion of income away from workers to shareholders, and sharply increasing income differentials, for example – this failure to put forward policies that might go some way to tackling growing inequality is hardly surprising. But then I would challenge his basic premise that what matters now is ‘human capitalism’. This seems to me like an alternative universe where the financial crash didn’t happen and the rise in the power of economic capital is simply ignored.

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Daniel Araya (2015), *Rethinking US Education Policy: Paradigms of the Knowledge Economy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. £60.00, pp. 204, hbk.
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This short volume of critical theory examines the concept of the “knowledge economy” (KE) – a society driven by the production, distribution and consumption of information – and articulates its four component paradigms: “neoliberal”, focusing upon human capital creation; “network”, dealing with collaboration and networked commons; “creative”, focusing upon intellectual capital; and “green”, sustainability and innovative green technologies. The author argues that the American education system is based upon an outmoded factory model of schooling dominated by standardization and didacticism. He suggests that despite President Obama’s efforts to encourage innovation and technology in schools, the President’s reforms, like those of his predecessors, ultimately fail to prepare students adequately for the entrepreneurial knowledge economy. The author hopes to transcend old debates about Keynesian versus neoliberal approaches to economic policy by substituting a “social investment paradigm” which marries components of both, investing in human capital and knowledge workers.

The book's centrepiece is an engaging examination of the four component discourses of the knowledge economy. Although the discussion could provide more detail on precisely how these paradigms fit together and diverge from one another, there is ample exploration of their internal strengths and weaknesses. The key to the network economy is the dynamic, non-hierarchical, collective sharing of information, though this leads to problems of the control of intellectual property and cooperation capacity. In the creative economy, for which creativity and human ingenuity are paramount, the delineation of the boundaries of "the creative industries" (p. 63) and the cultural capacity for openness and tolerance are the central challenges. The green economy is viewed by many as an oxymoron (p. 66), and it grapples with the challenges of renewable energy and smart cities. This book is aimed at those already familiar with the relevant political economy literatures, so key technical terms – including "KE" itself, but also "rhizomatic networks" (p. 120), "flexicurity" (p. 49), etc. – tend to be introduced without explanation, and defined only in later chapters. Readers from outside the relevant fields will, however, find many citations to help penetrate the jargon.

The best parts of the book are its clear tables, which provide summaries of key concepts and their interrelations, and the central chapters (2-5), which offer reasoned critiques of recent 'superficial reforms of industrial era education' (p. 88). The argument that modern educational reform is excessively concerned with efficiency and cost, failing to address challenges related to "quality and fit" (p. 6), is persuasively made with the help of the writings of scholars, policymakers and educationalists. There are two senses in which the book is occasionally inconsistent, however.

First, the normative, critical approach sits oddly with the language of positive political science. Critical theorists may find the language appropriate, but to a reader outside of that discipline the book at times appears as a strange mix of normative and positive, utilizing the language of hypotheses, testing and method alongside subjective statements and normative critique. The author states: 'My main hypothesis is that educational reform policies are undermined by superficial readings of discourses on KE' (p. 12), but the same statement is listed amongst the "working premises" (p. 13). It is unclear whether the "working premises" are mere assumptions, testable hypotheses, or normative assertions.

Secondly, there is a disjunction between the chapters dealing with the Obama administration's blueprints for educational reform and those engaging with broader theoretical questions. The connections are sometimes obscure between sweeping notions of "metadiscourse", "discursive layers" and "the social imaginary", and the prosaic specifics of Obama administration policy documents. Drawing upon a large literature, the author makes a convincing case that the US education system is outmoded because it is based on an industrial model of education; that current educational reforms are too centralized and ideological; that there is too much testing, a disdain for the professional capacities of teachers, and too much involvement from "mega-philanthropies" such as the Gates Foundation (although it is not always clear whether the author considers these factors intrinsically or extrinsically problematical). The case that the current education system is inadequate to the task of producing entrepreneurial, creative workers in the knowledge economy is well made. But the case that 'educational reform policies are undermined by superficial readings of discourses on KE' (p. 12) is not so sharp: there are many weaknesses and contradictions in the Obama administration's policies, some of which relate to local implementation problems and others to problems of process, capacity, or political opposition. Hence observed policy problems cannot be linked conclusively to ideological assumptions or superficial readings of KE discourse on the part of the policies' originators. There are no interviews with American policymakers.

Although the use of long-form quotations from experts provides an interesting dialogue in chapter 5, all seven interviewees are critics of neoliberalism. Some opposing voices might

have provided additional opportunities to examine policymaker intentions and interpretations of KE, and to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the four component paradigms. This book raises many excellent questions about the state of American education and prospects for reform; it does not purport to provide conclusive answers to them. What is the mission and purpose of schooling? Why has federal and state responsibility expanded in education? How has neo-liberalism shaped education policy in America, and what are its future prospects? In the concluding section the author suggests that the social investment paradigm may provide an alternative to neoliberalism but here, and throughout this thought-provoking volume, the author provides an outline and critique, and no firm answers. The recognition of uncertainty, ambiguity and complexity is the foundation of this book.

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Catherine Needham and Jonathan Glasby (eds.) (2014), *Debates in Personalisation*. Bristol: Policy Press. £21.99, pp. 232, pbk.
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Debates about personalisation in certain ways take us back to the closure of long stay institutions, community-based living and disabled people wanting to live life in the mainstream. More recent shifts to direct payments and personal budgets, although more precise delineations of choices and rights, would not have been possible were it not for these earlier antecedents. Each in their way stemmed from disabled people's and families' disillusion with paternalist social 'care' policy (Borsay, 2004). The above edited collection, from a range of influential writers, is an important attempt to draw on a specific interpretation of the latter development – that of personalisation. I mention the above history because, as Beresford makes clear in the book, the language of personalisation was derived from policy and interest groups not linked to the above struggles by disabled and survivor groups themselves. However, and by way of fairness to all parties, social support is sought by and provided to a population well beyond those who would self-define as disabled and who may be far removed from disabled people's organisations (Watson, 2002). Indeed the theme of diversity, the need to comprehend the very diverse needs and rights of those that seek social care and support seems key to an evaluation of the book itself.

This edited work is far-reaching and includes those with diametrically opposed views of personalisation. It provides service user, academic, policy and practice voices. The book is very well framed and written. Part one provides a clear contextualising of the book's scope and aims. Parts two and three provide critical insights on personalisation policy and take in challenges of Resource Allocation (RAS), the limited comprehension of personalised safeguarding and limitations to take up of personal budgets (PBs). Part three explores street-level experiences, achievements and frustrations which help bring the question of the value of personalisation to life. There are clearly people who like and benefit from PBs. Part four, perhaps the least engaging aspect of the book, explores the question of personal health budgets (PHBs). The recent and inchoate nature of PHBs and the tendency to ignore the major differences between social and health care make this feel something of a gear change and a distraction. I can see why it is included, but I could not really see what was being purchased with PHBs and just what PHBs are in practice. This was not the case in the extensive discussion of PBs in social support. Part five is an engaging summary of the book's key messages.