Book Reviews

The Muslims are coming!: Islamophobia, extremism and the domestic war on terror

Arun Kundnani, formerly editor of the journal Race and Class, is currently Adjunct Professor of Media, Culture and Communications at New York University and teaches terrorism studies at John Jay College, New York. *The Muslims are coming!* is based on three years of research (supported by the Institute of Race Relations) in the UK and America and is based on 160 interviews with young people, campaigners, youth workers, government officials and religious leaders. Addressing discourses around Islamophobia and the domestic war on terror is no longer the sole responsibility of government ministers and foreign policy think tanks, but is increasingly noted as an issue that senior leadership teams and teaching staff in UK schools must confront. In teacher education a focus on all areas of discrimination has become a mainstay, historically dominated by 'race' and gender but more recently aligned with the Equalities Act 2010 which specifies the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. A Pew report on *Muslim networks and movements in western Europe* states that in absolute terms, the UK has the region's third largest Muslim community, after Germany (4,119,000) and France (3,574,000), numbering 2,869,000, or 4.6% of the population.

This strikes at the heart of Kundnani's book: a Muslim presence in itself is perceived as a problematic notion. Despite its heavily politicised content including

comparative radicalisation narratives with the United States, a scrutiny of the infamous counter-terrorism strategy, 'Prevent' – which was hailed as the approach that would win over 'hearts and minds' – and a compelling insight into 21st Century crusaders of the far right, such as the English Defence League and the British National Party, Kundnani's book comprehensively exposes the demonised, pathologised perception of Muslims. In turn, it also offers transparency as to how this ideology has gained momentum over the last ten years. As a practising Muslim myself, I find much in Kundnani's book that is alarming, distressing and uncomfortable to take in. I see little, if anything, in common with the faith that I and the majority of other Muslims practice. This is precisely why I would recommend the book as an essential source for teaching on equality and diversity in teacher education; it clarifies how and why the distorting lens through which Muslims are portrayed in western Europe and America has become so well established, and reveals deeply rooted racist ideology at the very core.

The book is very readable. It is sharp, punchy and rich in evidence and is well suited to the needs of the undergraduate or postgraduate researcher. The content is unapologetically hard-hitting in delivering the paradox captured in the title, *The Muslims are coming!* To illustrate this irony, in reporting the Woolwich murder, the BBC's political editor Nick Robinson made a disturbing comment, describing one of the assailants as being 'of Muslim appearance'. This exemplar, captured in the introductory pages, reveals one of the major threads in Kundnani's book: the problematic nature of Muslim identity politics and the ease with which 'Muslimness' is somehow noted as a visible entity delivering on a 'them and us' discourse. The book goes on to explore (in fine detail) narratives of extremism following the war on terror. However, in relation to Muslim identity politics, the relevance to teacher education could not be more

acute. Kundnani argues that after ten years of rhetoric surrounding the war on terror, Muslims can only be perceived in this distorted way; a distortion embedded in a militarised political identity as a default way of understanding this particular faith group. The task for teacher education, based on the insights of this book, is to reinforce the integrationist model of diversity and multiculturalism, based on shared values. This book also reminds us of our responsibility to buck the trend in relation to an ideology that paints a picture of a faith group which is entrenched in racism.

Reviewed by Nasima Hassan
Senior Lecturer, University of East London

Beyond early reading
David Waugh and Sally Neaum (eds.)
Northwich: Critical Publishing, 2013
ISBN 978-1-909-33041-2

This useful text compiled by Waugh and Neaum explicitly sets out to address a double concern commonly voiced in Primary classrooms and backed up by recent research: first, that the recent emphasis on systematic synthetic phonics has impoverished the literacy offer to children generally, and, secondly, that it has particularly affected children's pleasure in reading. The book sets out to offer 'ideas and a rationale for developing reading, once they have mastered the early stages'.

There is always a danger that an edited collection of chapters by different authors may be disjointed but there is a strong thread that binds these chapters together so that the overall aim of enhancing children's reading remains clear. For example, different chapters provide particular and inspiring insights into important features of developing more sophisticated reading such as vocabulary and comprehension. The book also addresses the broader issues of the modern reader, the disaffected reader, and looks in depth at some particularly successful initiatives such as a school's engagement with 'creative literacy', using Harry Potter as a launch pad for literacy, or

the experience of providing successful literacy in alternative provision. This last example is particularly inspiring as the chapter 'A perfect storm' deals with the disaffection with literacy of those in pupil referral units and gives examples of effective interventions from the REAL (rethinking engagement and approaches to learning) literacy project including 'authentic literacy' and capitalising on 'teachable moments' rather than using the existing repetitive remedial approaches. It is pleasing to see both advocacy of a return to the reading aloud traditions of the classroom that provide children with access to that particular pleasure of listening to a well-read story and enhancing comprehension, and at the same time an engagement with the fast-changing literacy landscape of digital technology.

The tone of the book is immensely practical, addressed directly to the working classroom teacher or teacher-training student but with an emphasis that the strategies proposed have a sound research basis. The first chapter provides a helpful overview of current research and a carefully balanced approach to some hotly debated issues, steering clear of the more extreme claims of some lobbies, and encouraging readers to treat such findings with caution.

Each chapter has a similar design, with questions, reflection points and case studies that illustrate the key arguments. This house style works well for the busy teacher, providing theory and a pathway into practice in an accessible format, yet without 'dumbing down' arguments that have a rigorous research background. The further reading at the end of each chapter is also helpfully annotated so that readers can easily follow up on areas of interest.

The writers and the context for the book are located in the north-east of England and this has strengths and pitfalls given that the text potentially reaches out to a far wider audience. The case studies based, for example, on creative reading and Seven Stories storytelling centre (Chapter 9) provide inspiring examples for areas lacking this rich community resource, and the vignettes of classroom life provide an authentic voice that carries real weight in advocating meaningful literacy practices such as football fact files, playground designs, invented legends, tweets and texts which all provide launch pads for children's progress in literacy.

It potentially means, however, that the reader can feel excluded from this particular world and culture within which the writers have been so innovative. In particular, while the need for different strategies to engage boys in reading comes up in several chapters, there is scant attention paid to the literacy needs and

strengths of bilingual children. It does not seem that the writers would lay claim to scholarly breakthroughs, rather they are providing a range of creative strategies for enhancing the reading lives of today's children.

This text provides a gateway to just that, and it is easy to imagine students and teachers being encouraged to 'have a go' at some of these ideas, and for this the authors are to be much commended.

Reviewed by Fran Paffard

Senior Lecturer in Early Years and Primary Education, University of East London

---

Action research in education
Mary McAteer
London: Sage, 2013
ISBN: 978-1-446-24106-6

This highly readable and accessible guide takes the reader through the stages of doing an action research project in a cohesive and logical way. It follows through an action research process from the wonderfully titled 'What is this thing called action research?' right through to sharing your work through presentation and writing-up. This book will appeal to students undertaking practitioner research projects for the first time or who are action research novices. I will also be recommending it to colleagues new to the education faculty within which I work, as I think it will give them an excellent understanding of what is required with this approach as well as a good understanding of what action research is.

The book is divided into three very helpful sections: 'Getting to know action tesearch', 'Doing action research' and 'Sharing action research'. These sections, while taking the reader through the stages of action research chronologically, also provide opportunity for dipping in at the relevant points. Each section is subdivided into practically titled chapters.

The introduction sets out what the author aims to do. These aims I believe are particularly relevant within the current climate. The author aims to pull together

theory and practice and, while providing a 'rigorous practical and theoretical guide', she also aims to explore some of the tensions within action research. This is what makes it such a vital book, as it aims to do something slightly different than other texts in this field: it is practical, readable and very user-friendly while maintaining academic rigour and a strong theoretical base. The opening section tackles the question of what action research actually is. For someone new to this discipline and grappling with it for the first time, flummoxed by epistemology, ontology and interpretive paradigms, this section is wonderful. In user-friendly language, the author unpacks perspectives and models carefully, demonstrating that the focus is about improving practice rather than grappling with excessive terminology. The reader can expect to find lots of helpful examples, and practical advice drawn from the author's extensive experience as an action researcher herself, all broken up with helpful subheadings. This section signposts the reader very effectively to what they need to know.

In section 2, 'Doing action research', the author exemplifies her key points with some helpful case studies of novice researchers. I found 'Lauren's story' in chapter 3 particularly helpful as it demonstrates how misconceptions can occur and some of the pitfalls of the action research approach. Through this section, the author poses helpful questions for the reader through 'reflection' boxes. These are both practical and helpful as they draw in a new dynamic of a tutor supporting a student with a project, and I think anyone new to supervising MA dissertations will find this chapter particularly helpful. Usefully, short sections on data collection procedures are included in chapter 4. These are concise and again help the reader to choose the most appropriate procedures that arise from their question and paradigm.

Following on from a very helpful and practical chapter on using literature, there comes, in my opinion, the most helpful section, on using and analysing data. The author has achieved what I think is a brilliant balance between making claims from the data and the provisionality of that data. This chapter links beautifully with the first on what action research is, as it suggests that claims can be made, yet it is not about proving a point, but exploration, interpretation and suggestion. Many have wrestled with not presenting this as a dichotomy and I think the author manages to balance validity with provisionality superbly well.

The book concludes with writing up the research and I like this chapter's focus on telling the story of the research. It breaks down this often weighty and

difficult process for both novice researcher and supervisor and provides a great concept. The book finishes with what action research is all about: ..'*bringing further opportunities for reflection and unanticipated learning'.* I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I found it a refreshing and enjoyable read as well as being very helpful for my ongoing work with student teachers and novice action researchers.

Reviewed by Adrian Copping
Senior Lecturer, University of Cumbria

Leading professional practice in education
Christine Wise, Pete Bradshaw and
Marion Cartwright (eds.)
Milton Keynes: The Open University/London:
Sage, 2013
ISBN 978-1-446-25334-2

This book provides a reader's tour around the complex relationship of learners and learning and then beyond into the prickly act of organisational change. The three editors contribute to this book from a shared stance, as all are senior academics within The Open University. It would appear that the main aim of the book is to inspire debate following exploration of the key themes of defining leadership and change management, and it certainly succeeds in this respect. Part one includes some accurate, useful and enticing statistics on leadership impact. These, in addition to the research study, support the definitions of leadership values and developments of teacher leadership that follow. While only a few illustrations are provided, they are helpful and assist the understanding of methodologies within all environments, not just educational settings. As a leader of professional development in a secondary school, I found myself aligning my whole-school training plans to the descriptions of the 'roots' needed to successfully empower leaders and the existing connections to leadership. I also agreed wholeheartedly with the research included, as well as the suggestions provided.

Student voice and curriculum change appear to be merely mentioned within this section and while the material presented clearly focuses elsewhere, a more conspicuous link to leadership decision-making could have improved further debate around the subject, although the school case studies helped to illustrate the points raised. The section presents a robust argument for the need for all leaders to consider trust in relationships, decision-making methodologies and the links between leaders and leadership. While not every question a reader may have will be answered here, the book, and specifically this first section, is sure to raise not just further questions but also encourage 'rich and meaty' reflection. The attraction of part two is the perceived ability to 'skip' to a chapter relevant to a reader's particular interest or current work. In doing this, however, I felt that I had missed a crucial message and so re-read the section, and while I did gain a better understanding of organisational change, this part of the journey as a reader demanded much more of me. The 'big picture' and the unpicking of factors affecting the change agent were quite stodgy in parts. The text lacked some clear signposting and might have benefited from taking as its starting point the chapter on enhancing student outcomes. Chapter 12, on the role of middle managers as change agents, was a highlight, and much of the related and supporting evidence from the research chimed with the chapter's conclusion that caution and thought are needed for successful 'leading from the middle'.

Part three is a key section for readers interested in or actually responsible for leading professional development in an educational context. This is a major part of the book, largely due to the amount of very interesting background research and the need for the reader to fully understand all the components that create a vehicle for leading professional development. Once again, a different ordering of chapters might have allowed the themes to flow more fittingly, perhaps beginning with chapter 18, as coaching and mentoring so often frames the leadership and learning models in schools. Nevertheless, this book makes one want to discuss the material, particularly with a peer, and thus succeeds in its aim of inspiring debate. It is a useful, detailed and thought-provoking text and, due to its profusion of ideas and the number of research papers presented by field experts, is well suited to both postgraduate-level student reading and leaders and leadership teams in educational contexts.

Reviewed by Michele J. Burns
Deputy Headteacher, The Sandon School, Essex