



The Routledge encyclopaedia of UK education, training and employment: from the earliest statutes to the present day

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In conclusion, with respect to its unconventional approach to teaching and learning and its remarkable structure balancing theory and practice, Fisher's book features a great source for teachers and teacher educators all over the globe.

Reference

Cam, P. 2006. *20 thinking tools*. Australian Council for Educational Research.

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The Routledge encyclopaedia of UK education, training and employment: from the earliest statutes to the present day, by John P. Wilson, Oxon, Routledge, 2010, 369 pp., £125 (hbk) ISBN 978-0-415-55822-8

The development of human capital in the UK (like in many other developed nations) has evolved rapidly in recent years. Unfortunately however, the changing nature, range and variety of systems, initiatives and agencies relating particularly to the fields of education, training and employment has invariably rendered this area (i.e., the development of human resource base) almost impenetrable to professionals and ordinary persons interested in making sense of the profound operations and relationships between its component parts. This problem is caused, more than anything else, by the lack of recognition of the overlapping nature of these three distinctive fields (i.e., education, training and employment) and the need to coordinate and join up activities in these areas. Through a thorough examination of materials from wide-ranging UK sources (i.e., publications from the Department of Work and Pensions; papers from the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, and their predecessors; and every annual report produced by the numerous education departments across the UK from 1839), this book has attempted and succeeded in capturing detailed information about the various bodies, agencies and initiatives that have developed in the UK over time in the area of development of human capital. Truly, the book has lived up to every word of its title. With relevant entries exceeding 1500, it has indeed crossed knowledge boundaries, providing for the first time in the history of the UK, and in the author's own words, 'an integrated map of national human capital development, and of the history, development and relationships between education, training and employment' (xxxix).

This contribution is aimed particularly (but not exclusively) at employers, policy-makers, government agencies, teachers, academics, students and other practitioners and individuals within the context of the UK who for one reason or another may have interest in making sense of the issue of the development of human capital. It may/would serve also as an invaluable asset for an international audience (especially government departments and/or agencies, policy makers and researchers/academics) who have an interest in understanding and/or studying the UK context with a view to enhancing and updating their own knowledge about how systems concerned with

human capital development in their own respective contexts and countries have evolved over time.

The book has a number of fascinating features which simply cannot escape commendation. The first concerns the alphabetical list of entries and glossary of acronyms illuminated at the very beginning. In general terms, not only are these up-to-date and captivating, but importantly, they serve as a guide to users thereby promoting and enhancing the user-friendliness of the book. Following immediately from the alphabetical list of entries and glossary of acronyms is the introduction. The brief history about the development of human capital provided under this section is succinct, informative and encapsulating of all the various bodies, agencies, institutions, initiatives and schemes that have been involved in the processes and development of education, training and employment in the UK over the years. This ends with a diagram with useful features explaining further how the book could be self-navigated. The third and most important feature is the entries themselves. They (the entries) are brief, precise and informative, and collectively they describe in considerable detail pre-school, primary, secondary, further and higher education initiatives; vocational education and training; labour market interventions, including those designed to return people to employment; and government strategies designed to enhance economic and technological competitiveness. An important aspect of the entries worth noting is the valuable suggestions for further reading with which most of the entries conclude. Apart from providing connections to associated items and enhancing a chronological tracing of statutes, agencies and initiatives, the further reading suggestions (and their cross-referenced structure) allow for follow-up independent reading and/or research.

In spite of all the positives, I do have a few criticisms of the book. One of these (although minor) is an issue which concerns the way and manner 'bold text' has been used throughout the book. The author explains (in the diagram which concludes the introduction on page xlv) that the use of 'bold text' within an entry signifies that there is a reference to that entry elsewhere in the book. However, the over-use of 'bold text' for this cross-referencing purpose has rendered certain pages of the book somewhat 'clumsy' visually. Further, some of the entries referring to specific initiatives, schemes or interventions do not appear to include reference to launch dates, periods in operation, dates of closure and the level of success or failure attained by these initiatives over the period they were in operation. Admittedly, the concern about the lack of adequate information on the level of success or failure of some of the entries, on the one hand, may arguably be said to have fallen outside the remit of this book. But on the other hand, the absence of some of these details within the entries shows clearly that the author has failed to show what one could describe as 'scholarly sympathy' particularly to members of the international audience (e.g., teacher educators, policy-makers, government departments and agencies, academics, etc) who may find the book as an invaluable resource and may thus want to use it for research and/or scholarly purposes within their respective contexts.

Nonetheless, and as pointed out earlier, the book constitutes a significant milestone in the UK particularly in the fields of human resource development, social policy and youth studies (especially the group of young people described and referred to variously in the literature as Not in Education, Employment or Training or 'NEET'). The simple language in which the book is written, its cross-referenced structure, style, presentation and general layout mean that the book would appeal and be accessible to a wide range of users. Those working in all aspects of policy making in

education, employment, training and career services need not look elsewhere for reference but get copies of this encyclopaedia. It is also a 'must have' book on the shelves of an international audience interested in understanding the development and dynamics of human capital in the UK.

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