BOOK REVIEW

Knowledge-building: educational studies in legitimation code theory, edited by Karl Maton, Susan Hood and Suellen Shay, London, Routledge, 2015, xvii+264 pp., £95.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-415-69233-5

A challenge facing higher education researchers, especially those new to the craft of research, is that of moving between theory and data effectively in order to mediate research findings clearly to readers. For postgraduate students and academics publishing their research, working with data and designing effective and fit-for-purpose methodologies can be a challenge. Moreover, this is not necessarily an easy area for supervisors and research mentors to assist with. In addition to researchers, practitioners working in academic development also need ways of using research – either empirical or conceptual – to augment their work with lecturers to improve teaching and learning.

There are many handbooks that detail the differences between qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research. There are many theoretical texts to choose from. But there are few texts that offer researchers and those mentoring researchers insight into how methodology and theory connect in research studies, as well as practical tools to navigate the chaos of research, bringing theory and data into conversation in relevant and problem-oriented ways that can influence practice effectively.

Karl Maton, in his introduction to this edited collection, argues that in spite of many claims within educational and social research for the need to connect research with theory more effectively, 'the two frequently remain divorced or, at best, not on speaking terms' (p. 1). The central premise of the book flows from this: we need to move beyond calls for more theory-informed research into education and society towards generating ways of demonstrating enactments of research that bring theory and research together meaningfully. The need for the research we publish to make clear its theoretical and methodological underpinning and enactments is crucial for effecting sustainable and meaningful change in practice within the field. This text, located within the growing field of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) research, within the broader field of sociology of education, takes a generous step in that direction. Building on Maton's 2014 text, *Knowledge and knowers. Towards a realist sociology of education*, this text delves into how LCT concepts – particularly in the dimensions of Specialisation and Semantics – can be enacted within educational research and practice.

The text is divided into two parts: Part I is structured as a 'how to' of sorts, introducing the two key dimensions of LCT's conceptual and analytical 'toolkit' that the authors have employed in their research studies, and showing, in four chapters, how these conceptual and analytical concepts have been enacted in different research studies. Rather than report on the findings of the studies themselves, the Part I chapters explain how the research was actually done: how theoretical choices led to methodological choices and processes, and how the researchers navigated doing qualitative (Chapter 2) and quantitative/mixed-methods (Chapters 3 and 4) research. Chapter 5 provides an illuminating take on interdisciplinary research and enacting complementary analyses of shared data using LCT and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL).

It is important to note, as the authors do, that these chapters provide no definitive guide to doing research with LCT or SFL; rather they use their own projects to reveal how they used the tools selected from LCT and SFL that fit the practical and/or research problem addressed. These chapters provide readers with useful insights into doing educational research that connects and mutually transforms theory, data and the researchers (also lecturers or practitioners) themselves.

Part II builds on Part I with six chapters by researchers who have used primarily LCT, but in some cases also selected tools from SFL to enact complementary analyses of their data. Reflecting on how LCT has enabled fresh insight into the organising principles underpinning teaching and curriculum in disciplines or fields as diverse as English Studies (Chapter 8), Jazz Studies (Chapter 10) and Freemasonry (Chapter 11), this part of the book brings the research processes and theoretical tools discussed in Part I to life in exciting and generative ways. While these studies cannot speak to one another in terms of their substantive focus, what is illuminating for readers is how chapters in both Parts I and II speak to one another through the theory they make use of, thus enabling cumulative building of insight into both theory and practice across the volume, and also in relation to the wider field of LCT studies. Across all the chapters in both Part I and II, what strikes the reader is how each chapter starts with a problem based in educational practice, and then shows how the selection and use of relevant theoretical and methodological tools has addressed that problem, transforming educational practice in novel ways. Thus, the book offers useful tools for change to both researchers and educational practitioners alike.

Even if readers of this volume are new to LCT research and theory, they will be able to make sense of the theory and how it has been enacted in the studies included. In addition to Maton's introduction (Chapter 1) and explanation of LCT's conceptual 'architecture' (Chapter 12), each author introduces each of the concepts they will be enacting, thus helping the reader to develop a growing understanding of the two LCT dimensions used here, as well as gain insights into SFL.

Given present global concerns connecting higher education and social justice issues, educational researchers and practitioners will find in this volume a generous, challenging and generative contribution to research into education and society that provides invaluable insights, ideas and tools for enactment in their own contexts.

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