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Hegeman, Edgell, and Johemsen's "Practice and Profile: Christian Formation for Vocation" - Book Review

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Johan Hegeman, Margaret Edgell, and Henk Johemsen
Practice and Profile: Christian Formation for Vocation
Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011 pb 337pp \$37.00
ISBN 978-1-61097-091-4

Wipf and Stock have continued to expand their education offerings with this welcome volume from professors from two Christian universities in the Netherlands and one in the United States. In their view, truly Christian education has four defining characteristics, which can be abbreviated as PISA, a term not to be confused with the similarly named international comparisons of student achievement that cause a loss of sleep for so many educators worldwide. Hegeman, Edgell, and Johemsen give chapters of the book to each of the four components of PISA: being *Practice* minded, being *Integral*, being *Spiritual*, and being *Answerable*. They sandwich these chapters—*sections* might be a better term, given the bounty of content in each—between the book's opening treatment of what they call a moral profile in education and their final section on putting PISA into practice.

Practice and Profile is thorough. If asked for their own ideal of a moral professional, not all readers of this title might select the same four components as those selected by the authors. But all readers will benefit by

reading this substantial treatment of what the authors call at the start of their book the “quest for a moral profile” (p. 1). Readers will discover early that one of the strengths of this book is the authors’ effort to connect what many Christian educators call worldview thinking with practice. These authors call young professionals to engage in deep reflection and to wrestle with the implications of their having adopted a Christian worldview. But thinking is not enough, and what *Practice and Profile* labels a moral profile must be realized in practice. On my reading, this connection is part of the genius of the book.

Readers of Hegeman, Edgell, and Johemsen’s volume will find themselves invited into the contemporary conversation about Christian education. At one point, for example, the authors echo Perry Glanzer and Todd Ream’s *Christianity and Moral Identity in Higher Education* (Macmillan, 2009), where they recognize the tension between our collective responsibility as educators to help students find their way into their vocations at the same time that a whole society is telling students that they alone are responsible for their own development. *Practice and Profile* refers to the work of Jamie Smith, questioning at one point whether he has underestimated the importance of worldview, but interacting at length with his work at another point (in the chapter on spirituality). This invitation into the contemporary conversation is part of why this book turns out to be less intimidating than it might at first appear.

The authors begin their chapter on practice-mindedness, the *P* in PISA, with a major treatment of competence-based learning and its expression in the Dublin descriptors or standards for qualification in professions. While recognizing the benefits of identifying competencies, they point to the limitations of any framework that speaks of qualifications without locating them in a moral framework. For them, professional practice “not only requires skills but standards and virtues as well” (p. 68). Readers will take heart that these authors have spoken clearly against the reductionism to skills and behaviors that so many educators face today.

For my time, this whole volume is worth reading. But the authors’ discussion of integrity (the *I* in PISA) could easily carry the rest of the book. They discuss integrity with reference to community and tradition, to wisdom, to the contemporary concern for authenticity, and to constructivism. While one could easily treat this section as a free-standing essay, it works well in the overall flow of the book, and I recommend it without

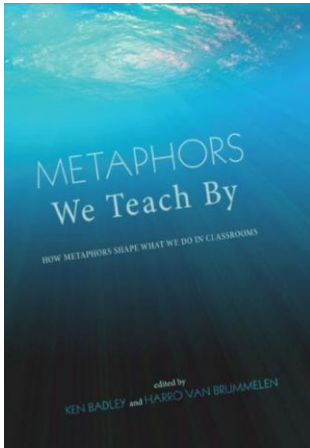
hesitation. Likewise the next section on spirituality (the *S* in PISA), where the authors connect the spiritual dimension to morality and argue that we need to make appropriate applications to professional practice. One gem in this chapter is their helpful schematization of the research literature on students' spirituality and spiritual development. This chapter, which runs to nearly 60 pages, might have been edited at a couple of points for length, but it is packed with riches, and readers will not be disappointed.

The *A* in PISA stands for answerability, by which Hegeman, Edgell, and Johemsen mean accountability. Here they treat accountability in a way in harmony with the rest of the volume. While professionals may be required to account for their work, on these authors' account the Christian professional—the moral professional—willingly answers for her work.

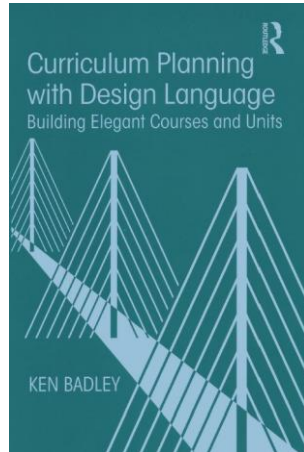
Practice and Profile is thorough. It represents only one theological tradition, but it addresses questions of professional education that transcend theological and geographical boundaries. All who teach professionals should read this title.

Ken Badley

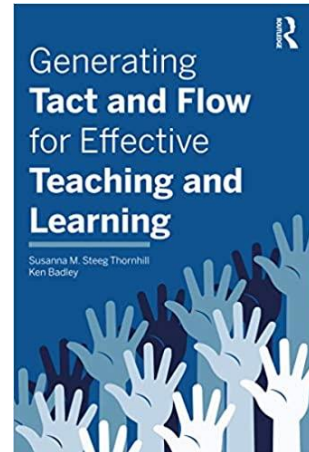
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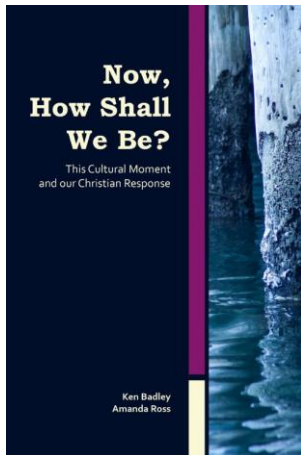
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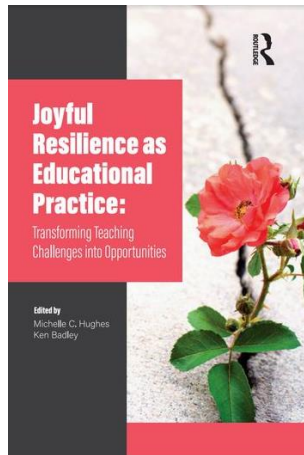
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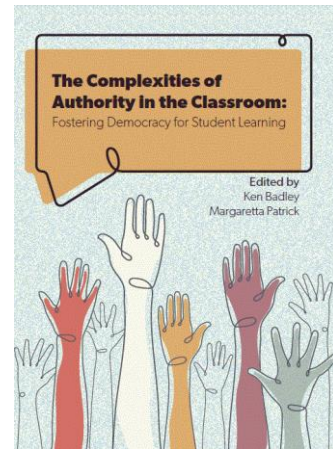
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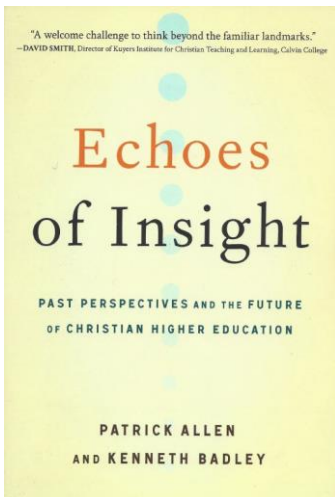


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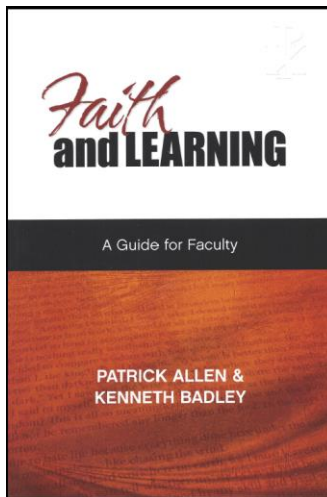


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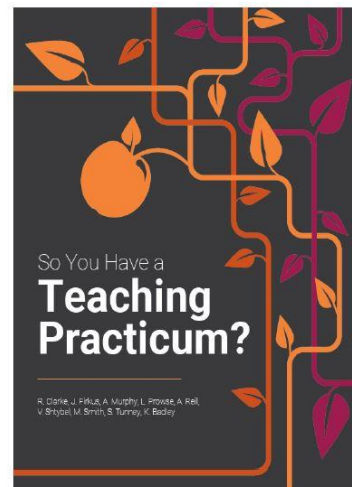


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