



Global Constructions of Multicultural Education: Theories and Realities. Carl. A. Grant and Joy L. Lei, eds. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001. 398 pp.

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Critical pedagogues and antiracist educators have long argued that the classroom is a site of contestation and struggle. In every classroom, there are glaring symptoms of power relations and struggle along the lines of race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, class, gender, sexuality, and so forth. Dealing with these differences in a humane, equitable fashion constitutes the paramount task for educators and educational systems. Representing a dynamic community of difference, schools serve as good starting places for a systemic transformative change aiming to upset structures of power and domination.

Global Constructions of Multicultural Education is an admirable attempt to highlight the multifaceted challenges of dealing with diversity in a variety of international, national, and local settings. This unique edited collection contains 15 chapters, discussing dimensions of multicultural schooling in such diverse regions as Australia, India, Europe, Latin America, Taiwan, North America, and South Africa.

Although the locales vary in terms of culture, history, politics, and socioeconomic conditions, the authors use similar methodologies to discuss the problems and challenges of multicultural education in each case. At the same time, they draw on the specificity of each case study in a manner that immensely enriches our understandings of difference, diversity, and multicultural schooling. In general, the authors focus on three important areas within the field of multicultural education. First, by highlighting the existence of real or perceived differences among student populations, they aim to conceptualize, articulate, and interrogate notions of difference. They establish that difference and diversity do exist in schools and they ask for a schooling system "that allows equality to exist as a dynamic community of difference" (p. 235).

Secondly, they explore the important issues of inclusion and exclusion of minority groups within multicultural education systems. How inclusive are education systems when it comes to issues of difference and diversity? How well do they respond to difference among the student population along the lines of race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, religion, and culture? Do all students feel equally included in the school system? What



can the education system do to make each and every student feel that they are equally included in the system? The authors address these significant questions in their respective chapters.

Thirdly, the authors discuss the importance of power, power mechanisms, and power configurations within education systems. In a chapter titled "What Can Multiculturalism Tell Us about Difference? The Reception of Multicultural Discourses in France and Argentina," Ines Dussel reminds us "power relations are deeply inscribed in our discourses, even when they are formulated by the minorities or by the periphery of the world-system" (p. 110). Time and again, the authors emphasize the importance of power as it directly affects relationships among students, among teachers, and between teachers and students as well as among teachers, students, and administrative personnel.

In essence, the book's various arguments and perspectives cluster around a complex question that Grant and Lei raise about the practice of multicultural education: "How can we effectively transform the existing Eurocentric, racist, sexist, classist, heterosexist, and ableist policies, curriculum, and instruction into a democratic and multicultural education?" (p. 219). Responses to this question include such constructive suggestions as the empowerment of minority languages; construction of alternative knowledge bases; transformation of curriculum; integration of marginalized knowledges; integration of equity pedagogy and antiracist education in processes of learning and teaching; equal representation; and creation of an empowering school environment.

Traditionally, it has been a habit of conservative politics to deny the existence of difference and diversity, particularly in Euro-American contexts. However, increasing immigrant populations and the increasing visibility of racial, religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural minorities have rendered the act of "denial of difference" almost impossible. More and more, powerful narratives in defiance of dominant politics and assimilationist projects are making it difficult for the school to function, in the words of Leena Huss, as "the motor of assimilation" (p. 142).

Global Construction comes to us at a point in time when politics of cultural supremacy are openly advocated, particularly in many northern countries that are receiving more immigrants and asylum-seekers from the south. Politics of cultural superiority and racism are practiced against these new immigrants who serve as scapegoats for internal socioeconomic problems. In defiance of politics of supremacy and racism, this book advocates the right to difference, to equal treatment, and to proportional representation. The insightful authors of this collection have correctly identified the education system as the main arena for transformative change and social justice. School is one of the important social institutions that reflect various racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and gender differences. It is through education, learning, and also unlearning that genuine social change can be initiated. Education has the power to both dominate and liberate, and school is at the epicenter of all these developments.



Notwithstanding its manifold contributions, *Global Construction* fails to effectively address the impact of global relations of power and domination, unequal north-south relationships, or the exploitative impact of global capital on education and schooling conditions in the south. The fact of the matter is that in the majority of southern societies, poverty and dire economic conditions play a major role in depriving millions of children of their inalienable right to education. Likewise, the destructive impact of corporate globalization coupled with Western cultural and linguistic imperialism culminates in marginalization and eventual exclusion of indigenous knowledges, languages, and worldviews from the school environment. Such exclusion, in turn, results in lifelong sociocognitive, educational, and developmental problems for millions of students in the south.

Including some alternative antiracist pedagogical views could have enriched the book. Although extremely important, multicultural discourse is often criticized for not being fully equipped to adequately address issues of power, injustice, and inequality imbedded in social structures. In our contemporary globalizing world, we cannot effectively interrogate certain sites of oppression in isolation from the others. All sites of oppression, exclusion, and exploitation are connected, and no single site can be adequately critiqued unless the interconnectivity and interdependence of all such sites are acknowledged.

Overall, *Global Construction* is an invaluable source and contributes to discourses of multiculturalism and multicultural education. Cultural heterogeneity is a fact of life in modern societies and this book provides profound insights on how various educational institutions, the curriculum, and the school environment can be transformed to effectively meet the challenges of cultural plurality. Surely, disciplines such as education, sociology, psychology, and political science will find this book informative and helpful. We recommend it to students and scholars of cultural studies and social inequality as well as to educators, pedagogues, policy makers, and social activists. Anyone who wants to understand the complex and multidimensional aspects of contemporary multicultural education will find it necessary to consult this book.

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