

Newton, E. & Knight, D. (Eds). (1993). *Understanding change in education: Rural and remote regions of Canada*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 310 pp., (softcover).

This book includes chapters from 12 contributors who wrote on educational change in different rural jurisdictions across Canada. At face value, few Canadians have attempted to write seriously on change in education from a rural Canadian perspective. Newton and Knight attempted this. Even fewer Canadians have attempted a systematic study of educational change in rural Canada. Newton and Knight attempted this, but came up short.

I am an instructor of an upper level undergraduate course on rural education which focuses on educational change in the midst of small community social dynamics. Over the years, I have been frustrated that Canadian references were so hard to find, so I was delighted to come upon this book. I included the book in my course reading list for three semesters and I wish to describe my experiences with it.

During the first semester, I assigned each group of students to read a chapter related to a topic in the course. I asked each group to take responsibility to identify the important information of the chapter and apply it to the Alberta context. As the group presentations proceeded it became clear that, despite their best efforts, students were struggling to understand the relevance of their chapter with the topic of change being discussed in class.

I altered the format in the second semester and asked students to read assigned chapters that I felt were most relevant to the next day's topic. This time, I took the responsibility to integrate the information presented in each chapter to the rural Alberta context. I found that the diversity of case studies in each chapter distracted students from the underlying concept of change.

After two tries, it was clear to me that I could not continue to keep the book on the reading list for the course, but since it was already published for the third semester I kept it and made further adjustments. I assigned chapters for reading, and when a topic was being discussed in class I tried to use the context of a particular chapter to give more meaning to the topic. The class silence indicated that students were confused. I was taking too great a leap in trying to make the content of all the chapters relevant.

In course evaluations, students commented that the book lacked focus. Several suggested that I should drop the book from my reading list. Many indicated that they did the first few reading assignments but then stopped as

they struggled to understand how each chapter contributed to the main theme of the book.

To help create a stronger, more unified emphasis, the editors might have more clearly stated the purpose of the book with the contributing authors. As it is, it seems that authors contributed manuscripts on virtually any topic on change in rural education; after all, change in education can be accorded a broad scope. Newton and Knight tried to use the framework from Tichy (1980) and Corbett and Rossman (1989) to glue the disparate case studies together. The framework included three types of problems that all organizations face: technical, political, and cultural. In fact, Newton indicated that he placed the manuscripts into one of the three sections of the book based upon whether they were predominantly cultural, political, or technical in emphasis. Was this the purpose of the book, to help the reader understand Tichy's concept? Or was it to document the process of change in small and rural communities in Canada?

Doug Knight had the task of summarizing what the reader learned in the book. Knight suggested several concepts: Change comes about as a response to an identified and generally agreed-upon need; participants in change have to demonstrate the ability and willingness to solve problems and to adapt; change may require modification over time, and even the original intent behind the change may be altered to meet emergent conditions; participants in change must possess the maturity to defer to other's needs over their own individual needs; participants in change must view the goal as a workable resolution to the problem; and, leadership is a key ingredient to successful change. As I read this summary, I wondered how they relate to Newton's earlier challenge to leaders to use the book "to further capitalize on the special advantages of small communities" (p. 9). The summary statements seemed so general to me that one could apply them anywhere, regardless of size or remoteness of the community.

Overall, I found the book to be interesting but not particularly useful. It was interesting to read the individual chapters and to gain greater understanding of the diversity of issues across Canada. To be more useful, the book might have addressed the fundamental differences between social dynamics in rural and urban communities and how these dynamics have impact on successful implementation of change. For instance, as a rural educator, I would like to understand how to adapt the change models presented in text books to accommodate the specific nature of power structures in rural communities. Or, I would like to understand to what extent teachers and principals are "really" included in a rural community, even after living there ten or more years. As a leader initiating change in a rural school,

it would be critical to understand how I am perceived (i.e., included or excluded) and how my involvement in the process may prevent or facilitate the acceptance of the change.

In addition, the book omits several major social issues with which rural educators across Canada find themselves confronted, like alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, youth flight from communities, helping victims of abuse, economic decline, and the impact of global forces setting rural agendas. It should be noted that the book did deal with school closure (indirectly) and school drop-outs.

To be more useful to practicing rural educators and to professors of teacher preparation programs, the book needs to take a more rigorous and systematic approach to investigating educational change in rural communities in Canada.

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Giroux, H.A. (1994). *Disturbing pleasures: Learning popular culture*. New York: Routledge, 202 pp. (softcover).

Once again, Henry Giroux presents a thoughtful piece on critical pedagogy, schooling, and popular culture. As is the case with his previous works in the last five years, Giroux focuses his energies on the politics of cultural representations and how these representations create/define/naturalize certain meanings while limiting other, potentially liberating, possibilities. True to his overall style, Giroux offers a penetrating analysis of popular culture while offering a map for teachers and cultural workers to use in trekking through the dense jungle of a consumer culture that hinges on noncritical teachers, submissive cultural workers, and mindless consumers who buy impulsively and accept the reality created by advertising agents, movie directors, and CEOs. *Disturbing Pleasures* is divided into two sections: the first looks at the objectification of certain representations in popular culture while the second concentrates on cultural studies with an interesting article on Freire and an interview with Lech Witkowski.

Giroux's turn to popular culture in the first part is a confessed return to his roots; an awakening, of sorts, in which he is coming to realize the pedagogical potential of popular culture. His study of popular culture is, more