

Book Review *Anti-Islamophobic Curriculum*

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Rahat Zaidi (2017) *Anti-Islamophobic Curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 132 pages, paperback, ISBN 978-1-4331-4256-7, \$57.09 CDN.

In the book *Anti-Islamophobic Curriculum*, Zaidi explains the rise of anti-Islamophobia in Western society and believes that education is the key to promote understanding and relationship building in order to counteract the phobia.

Chapter one connects the readers to the Canadian perspective of multicultural policy, from its inception to present day reality. Since the passing of the Immigration Act in 1869, “Canada was seen a destination for migration” (p. 12). The Multicultural Act in 1988 ensures the value and dignity of all Canadian citizens regardless of their ethnic origins, language, or religious affiliations. However, with the recent new waves of immigrants coming to Canada, Zaidi contends that religious diversity issue has become more important and contentious.

Chapter two of the book focussed on the challenges of multiculturalism from the global and Canadian standpoints and how governments have responded to these challenges. One of the most significant challenges is how society can support meaningful civic engagement and global citizenship within the immigrant community when there is an undercurrent that only certain codes or norms are more acceptable in mainstream society. Zaidi provides examples of the cultural intolerance which demonstrate how multicultural policies are being viewed as failures in other parts of the world. Muslims emerged as the ethnic group at the centre of the multicultural discussion as terrorist attacks carried out by different religious extremist factions gave rise to the fear of radicalization and phobia towards Islam and the Muslim people. Zaidi posits that in order to respond effectively to the issues of multiculturalism, it is better to understand multiculturalism in terms of relationship. Only when authentic relationships are built, “the result can be an understanding of how people can live together and still maintain their unique attributes” (p. 35).

In chapter three, Islamophobia, its developments and ramifications are examined. Zaidi contends that the media has played a role in fueling phobic sentiments about certain practices exercised by Muslims, such as female circumcision or honor killings, without mentioning that such extreme practices are not prevalent in all Muslim society. Terrorist attacks throughout the world before and after 9/11 stoked the embers of Islamophobia into a fire of hostility toward Islam. In addition, when mainstream society perceives that members of traditional Muslim groups are rejecting the values of the very same society that they are making their new home in, this perpetuates more distrust and Islamophobic measures, such as the banning of religious headwear. Zaidi presents an effective argument that fears of a culture are borne out of a lack of understanding of that culture, and suggests that “educational institutions are the key places where phobic thoughts can be addressed in a positive manner and turned into a well-informed, receptive viewpoint” (p. 55).

In chapter four, culturally sustaining pedagogy and anti-phobic initiatives are discussed. Zaidi presents several pedagogical models as possible means to stem sociophobic sentiments: the “culturally relevant pedagogy” (CRP) which is primarily for African-American students but can be applied to other cultural groups; the “culturally sustaining pedagogy” (CSP) which includes cultural pluralism and promote cultural equity within the school system; the “culturally responsive teaching” (CRT) and “culturally responsive learning” (CRL) in which cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspective of ethnically diverse students are an integral part of teaching and learning. Globally, the compiled list of educational initiatives to mitigate the effects of sociophobia is encouragingly extensive. Zaidi also notes the efforts by ethnic communities, Muslim included, to build their own cohesive community within a Canadian context. To that end, current school curriculums, although already recognizing the pluralistic nature of Canadian society, should expand to acknowledge the newer history being created by the arrival of immigrants from different countries in recent years.

The final chapter of this book highlights features of one anti-Islamophobic curricular initiative sponsored by the Canadian Islamic Congress for K-9 students called “Living Together: Muslims in a Changing World”. Zaidi outlines several entry points in the Alberta Social Studies Curriculum where this curriculum can fit into the already existing program. At these entry points, lesson plans about symbols and celebrations; traditions; the culture of food and its connection to geography; cultural contributions to the

Arts, the Sciences and Civil Society; Immigration; and Identity and Connections can be logically implemented in the classroom.

The approaches proposed by Zaidi are intended to help educators address the cultural realities in the world and in the classroom in a practical and user-friendly manner. For multiculturalism to succeed in Canada, efforts should be made to understand cultures other than one's own.

About the Reviewer

Mylan Doan-Nguyen is currently a Doctoral Student at the University of Calgary, specializing in Leadership in the Non-profit sector. She has been working with newcomers to Canada for nearly a decade in the area of language assessment using the Canadian Language Benchmarks. With a strong interest in the area of capacity enhancement, she wishes to assist people in realizing their potential in the face of adversity.

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