

Book Review

Educators on Diversity, Social Justice, and Schooling: A Reader

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Singer, Sonja E. & Harkins, Mary Jane (2018). *Educators on Diversity, Social Justice, and Schooling: A Reader*. Canadian Scholars. 402 pages. ISBN 978-1-77338-049-0 (hardcover) \$ 69.95

In an increasingly diverse and complex educational landscape the book, *Educators on Diversity, Social Justice, and School: A Reader* provides fodder for educators and academics surrounding the implications of the state of education and schooling through a social justice lens. This book provides the needed context for educators and educational leaders to deeply consider why and how we can continue to evolve practice in order to embrace diversity and orient towards social justice in order to influence approaches in K-12 and post-secondary education. The book is parsed into three main sections for readers to conceptualize the realities of diversity, consider the multi-prong nature of social justice as a socio-cultural apparatus, and how these dimensions manifest in schooling. Each section culminates with guiding questions for readers to consider how the content relates or guiding questions based on where one is situated as one intakes the messaging. These sections also include resources and in accompaniment with probative questions, these provocations are intended across the book to cultivate the conditions for change through discourse, deep contemplation, and targeted self-reflection.

The first section includes Chapter 1,2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. Further, the flow of these sections provides a thoughtful road map which

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builds the case for understanding inequalities through various personal narratives such as in the first chapter which is autobiographical and reflects Didi Khayatt's experiences while linking race, gender, and class. Critically reflecting on these intersections creates an opportunity for the reader to consider the dynamism of 'self' and contextual facets which inhabit the latter from a social, anthropological, and constructivist positioning. In Chapter 2 an ethnographic study was distilled by Luigi Iannacci in relation to sociocultural, multiliteracies, and critical multicultural theories and how these manifested in school settings. Through a discussion of deficit approaches within a highly diverse population, Iannacci exposes the potential perils of displacing causal factors of student achievement and literacy complexities with preconceived notions around parental supports, precursors to literacy development, and diagnostic precipitated practice.

In Chapter 3, Wendy Mackey outlines her experiences as a student, educator, and educational leader pertaining to what she recalls as the entrenched systemic racism and subsequent barriers for African Nova Scotians within the local school system. Mackey deconstructs her journey through West African Griot historical storytelling. This powerful narrative evokes a visceral response as a reader as it skillfully connects and underpins a call to action based on the themes of culture, social justice, and schooling. Equity in education and how this is perceived from rich lived experiences serve to build on the case set in previous chapters as well as the importance of educators understanding and engaging in culturally responsive or relevant pedagogy to cultivate a foundation for success of all learners. Serving to advance the discourse, Manu Sharma in Chapter 4 highlights the experiences and constraints shared through interviews from teacher candidates and teacher associates who participated in a Diverse Schools Initiative focused on the implementation of culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy. This chapter serves to contextualize the implications of the variance in understanding and ability to apply culturally responsive and culturally relevant pedagogy and tasks readers to consider the myriad of perspectives and narratives shared by teacher candidates and teacher associates.

In Chapter 5, the authors continue to extend the conversation of culturally responsive teaching through the interchanges of two educators situated in an elementary inner city school and a post-secondary environment working with preservice teachers in Canada. Contextually, the main theme is to consider how higher

learning institutions focused on preservice education can support the advancement of diversity and social justice through a better understanding of culturally responsive practices. With a focus on decolonization, the educators share the importance of attempting to foster intercultural interchanges and dialogue to cultivate an appreciation of the path others have walked. Uniquely, Chapter 6 explores the institutional approach to the call for more dialogue and policy engagement around diversity and social justice. The platform for this chapter is inculcated in whether institutional approaches to bringing greater awareness to diversity reflects a cursory and perhaps reactive responsiveness to 'manage' the current climate and sensitivities around the challenge of diversity. Through this chapter, narratives such as institutionalization of diversity efforts, creating a checkbox culture, and diversity fatigue are shared not to minimize the importance of diversity-oriented interventions but to shed light on the possibilities for more authentic approaches.

The second section of the book is devoted to social justice with Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and a *mélange* of stories and personal context all situated to provide contrasting perspectives to the dominant narrative. This section unfolds with a discussion of privilege in a geographic context. Gowri Parameswaran provides food for thought based on the dichotomy of the north and south hemispheres linked to historical imperialism and colonial expansion. Parameswaran walks the reader through an adept discussion of the historical implication of divided hemispheres, emphasizing key hegemonic conditions such as trade, anthropological bias, and political favoring that may exacerbate the variance between the Global North to Global South. Another chapter uniquely brings awareness to social justice through play building methodology to help readers consider through a series of vignettes, the realities of inclusion, bias, and potential influences of hidden messaging. Building on this narrative, Chapter 9 highlights stories of educators who teach social justice and their experiences with students, parents, and their community. As a reader, the stories of community create a deeper appreciation for the nuances of race, social justice, and equity in said communities related to access to education, student success, and efficacy within K-12 environments. Chapters 10 through 12 reflect a high level view of advocates and educational leaders within the social justice space. In an effort to continue contextualizing the affordances and constraints, the authors of these chapters share key themes from the discourse around advocacy and the need for more informed

approaches to influence the dominant narrative around policy. For example, in Chapter 12, the exploration of the self, understanding the overt and hidden curriculum, how schools may exacerbate divides, and the affordances of information proliferation as a result of the digital era all provide further fodder to distill the ‘truths’ around why educational institutions exist, how policy influences practice, and how leaders and advocates can be positioned to strengthen gains in the social justice arena. As a reader, these chapters provide a succinct evaluation of the discourse, levers for change, and ruminations with a solution seeking lens.

The last section of this book includes Chapters 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 and focuses on schooling from predominantly a post-secondary research and instruction viewpoint focusing with dialogue pertaining to preservice programs. Throughout this section, themes such as providing space for Indigenous thought, discernment, and the connection between theory and practice are interwoven. For example, Downey and Sagy engage in a conversation as a means to emphasize the power of dialogue and scholarship through reflection. This poignant interchange provides readers with an example of how the dominant narrative can be disrupted and a pure appreciation of the right to heal from injustice in a learning context can be realized. In Chapter 14, the authors highlight examples of teacher educators as they call it, ‘working at the margins’ to foster learning environments where students begin to consider how to challenge dominant narratives to be transformative. Readers are encouraged to reconceptualize the role of teacher education, for preservice teachers to take time to unpack the ‘self’ for the purpose of inculcating dimensions of social justice, equity, and subsequent social change. In Chapter 15, Daniel and Antoniw reinforce the latter with the notion that through the apparatus of an ethic of social responsibility and mindfulness preservice teachers can leverage critical pedagogical practices to celebrate varying perspectives and bring a voice to those that may have been dampened in the past. They argue there needs to be a revision of ‘theory in practice’ and a deepening of servancy and awareness to act.

Chapter 16 intentionally links to the previous chapter as the authors share an authentic case of 11 teachers embodying social justice in physical education. Through the exploration of core tenets of inclusion and equity, physical literacy is used as a lever to reinvent traditional practices that may have marginalized or segmented those deemed able bodied from those who are not. These

authors interrogate and bring new possibilities for greater inclusive practice through physical literacy. Chapter 18, the reader is invited into a series of narratives from teachers in Indigenous communities reflecting on adaptive practices and the interconnectedness of relational-oriented classroom management. The author, Patricia Danyluk contends that the reference to classroom management may not be in vogue; however, within the 20 interviews of new educators located in Indigenous communities, unique methods coming from the roots of compassion and deep listening carved a path for students in these communities to find success within their own frames, practices, and socio-cultural contexts. This section closes with another example of how theory can be a ladder for practice in an ethnographic research project set with grade one and two students. The premise of the research was to observe students engaging with anti-oppressive children's literature to open dialogue related to gender and sexuality. The results underpin the importance of integrating opportunities for discourse through text which can create a level of safety and relational familiarity for students. Kate Paterson affirms there are tensions with power, positioning, and identity; however, the outcomes of the study provide promise for researchers and educators alike.

Singer and Harkens provide a prodigious collection of different mediums of text to advance the topics of diversity, social justice, and schooling. From such a vibrant canvas, teachers and academics will find themselves reflecting from varying angles about the history of education, theoretical and pragmatic implications of inclusion, and the conditions which need to be set to re-envision equity in where learning is positioned.

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