

Book Reviews

Experiencing the World Global Learning in Austria: Developing, Reaching Out, Crossing Borders by Helmuth Hartmeyer, Waxmann, Munster, 2008, 195pp. ISBN: 978-3-8309-2081-6

This book is an in-depth reflective chronicle of the emergence and evolution of global learning as a set of educational practice in Austria. In spite of its highly structured methodology, Hartmeyer presents the book quite like a personal diary given his active involvement in much of the processes of the evolution and transformation of global learning in Austria. The book therefore comes across as a practitioner's account of the tensions between local institutions, nongovernmental practitioners, policy makers and influences from the development cooperation discourse arena. Readers will gain insights into important shifts in the (re)conceptualisation of global learning in Austria as well as inspiration to reflect critically on some big questions that arise from the very processes of paradigm shifts.

The book begins by tracing the conceptual root of global learning (GL) in terms of non-governmental organisation (NGO) led development education that was linked to political education. It describes how the latter had been introduced into the Austrian school system through an educational decree, a policy instrument used by the Austrian Ministry of education to further educational policies aimed at specific competencies that promote 'ability for citizens to defend basic democratic rights and values of social justice and human dignity' (p.34). The book also shows how the rationalisation of political education in the school system became inexpedient in the wake of a new framing of global learning on what might be termed 'pedagogy of the other' (the crossing of borders in terms of content and audience) and the title of an important book by Werner Wintersteiner, one of the influential contributors to global education discourse in Austria referred in the book.

The book also provides the reader with an outline of ideological and dialectical shifts in the conceptual locus of global learning and its search for harmony with other more established strands of global education, such as intercultural education, environmental sustainability, peace education and citizenship education. The book will be useful to readers wanting to explore the converging but sometimes contentious concepts such as 'global dimension', 'global interdependence' and 'global citizen', where the term 'global' is often synonymous with a monolithic global north wanting to provide citizens/learners the skills to deal with the contradictions of a flawed structure of global interdependence. It also describes the strong influences of intellectual and policy discourses emanating from the arena of OECD regional development cooperation institutions.

For students and educators interested in comparative analysis, the book provides a detailed account of some of the leading intellectual works in global learning in the German speaking countries of Austria, Germany and Switzerland and the nuances in issues around perspective definitions. For example, global learning was described as an 'educational mandate' for the promotion of mature, responsible and participatory, active 'world citizen' and in another instance, as 'a pedagogical programme for the formation of the personality in the context of world society' (p.63). This reveals two broad conceptualisation of global learning in Austria; the first, internationally influenced and perhaps dominant view relates global learning to an educational response to the complexities of globalisation and the second (locally influenced) views GL as a pedagogical field that afford learners skills and values for action.

Another important issue highlighted in the book is found in the reference made to Wintersteiner 's work where he observed that in all the perspective shifts in global learning 'expected competencies' and 'the field of action' remain big issues for global learning even as it embraced ideas around 'learning' as the creation of spaces for critical reflection and meaning making of lived world experience (p.58). Hartmeyer's inclusion of a range of translated works originally published in German gives English speaking readers access to a collection of influential works on the debates and trends in global education in these important countries in a single publication. On approaches to learning, the book also offer critiques on the implications of the tendency in cognitive pedagogy to overly simplify compress and de-contextualise lived experiences into units of measurable samples and thematic 'class activity' whilst increasing abstract knowledge (p.56).

For students and educators with an interest in the field of globalisation, the book prompts important questions for critical reflection on how some converging concepts are engaged in the theory and practice of global education, notably; discrepancies in the conceptual premise of 'global society', assumptions of a monolithic 'northern constituency of global learners'. Other questions around learning include;

what approaches might increase ownership of the learning process that enables shared experience with the 'other' global learner? Is political competency incompatible or incommensurate with 'global dimensions'?

The book only partially addressed current issues around the lack of clarity in theoretical foundations in approaches to learning on global development and how the term 'development' is engaged within educational discourse- modernisation or sustainable livelihoods (Human development index HDI). This is important particularly in the context of the argument made in the book on how the reality of globalisation may have rendered uncertain the locations of centres of power. The discussions however omit to also mention how the same dynamics of globalisation makes obvious the locations of disempowerment and the need for a social responsibility to confront than adapt to the flaws in its current form. Another important issue the book missed to address is the uncritical location of the concept of global interdependence in the province of ecology and biodiversity than the problematisation of its current structure. It was also difficult to establish at the end whether educational response to globalisation implied a knowledge system that minimise the urgency of the realities of lived experience, but affording the 'global learner' the mastery of skills for comparative advantage in a globalised economy.

Published in association with GENE (Global Education Network Europe) Hartmeyer's book is however relevant to policy makers, educators and practitioners interested in understanding the historical dynamics around negotiating meanings between primary and secondary stakeholders as well as closer links between policy makers, practitioners, regional level institutional discourses and very importantly the knowledge constructing 'global learner'.

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Education for Sustainable Development: Challenges, strategies and practices in a globalising world edited by Nikolopoulou, A Abraham, T and Mirbagherie, F, Sage, Delhi, 2010, 276pp, ISBN 978-8132102939

This book brings together an impressive collection of articles and papers on a range of key issues for educationalists in the 21st century. In particular it examines critically and perceptively the dilemmas of achieving sustainable human development for all, including the most marginalised, in the context of a neo liberal paradigm of globalisation. One of the great strengths of this book is that it situates education for sustainable development (ESD) within the wider global education context, highlighting the challenges of globalisation and at the same time it addresses the age old question of what is the actual purpose of education? The primary focus is on the role of education in addressing inequality and exclusion and this is illustrated by

examples from a range of perspectives, including caste, gender, disability and culture.

The introduction presents a sweeping view of the issues and sets the context and history of ESD at the international level, from the birth of the concept at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. This is further contextualised by Michael Scoullos in chapter 3, where he summarises the international perspectives on ESD from Tbilisi to the UN Decade for ESD. The introduction goes on to highlight the problems of a scientism which links nature to economic growth and it identifies the need for a new discourse around nature which articulates its value for humanity's sake. In this regard, academics have an immense responsibility to come out of their disciplinary bunkers and link knowledge to the fate of humankind'. The political dimension is also addressed, in particular the sustainability challenges posed in relation to the role of the state, which is not always best positioned to balance national interests with the need to converge the local and the global, the macro and the micro.

The book is divided into 4 sections, grouping chapters under four headings:

Globalisation and the Politics of Exclusion

From Rio to Indigenous Cultural Resources: Education for Sustainable Development

Empowering the Human Capital: Challenges and Strategies in India

Ethical Paths to Citizenship

Most of the chapters in this book focus on the Indian sub continent, which is both a strength and a weakness: a strength because there is a great need for more research to be made available in the English language on ESD in the global south, a weakness because there is an opportunity lost for global comparisons to be made. Yet it is encouraging to hear the voices of the indigenous and marginalised groups (whether mediated or not) in a mainstream academic publication. These perspectives are presented in all their complexity and contestation, as in Prasad's chapter on 'Education for Sustainable Tribal Development' and Chawla's critique of medical models of childbirth in chapter 5.

Within the context of the politics of knowledge, there is also discussion on the importance of pedagogy, which Sinha in chapter 7 feels is not sufficiently addressed in the Indian educational system and which has damaging repercussions on literacy levels (Sinha, 126). Some of these concerns are echoed by Saxena in chapter 8 where she identifies an 'indifference to the research findings of the past many decades in the field of socio linguistics and psycholinguistics' and a predilection for the behaviourist paradigm of drilling and rote learning.

A number of authors, including Sinha and Prasad, indicate an impatience with simplistic, post colonial approaches to the empowerment and inclusion of indigenous and marginalised people and lean towards a capability perspective which ensures cultural and individual rights as an integral part of it. A number of

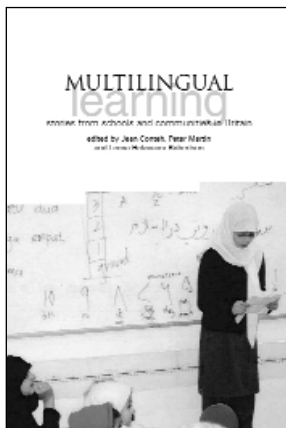
authors illustrate the need for a more confident, rigorous and vibrant research culture in the Indian subcontinent and the need for more appropriate research models (Chawla, 86; Sinha, 125).

The fourth section of the book with chapters by Kumar, Radhakrishnan and Mirbagheri engages with philosophical and ethical thought to offer what Kumar calls 'a case for moral cosmopolitanism in a divided world' (p.188). The complex issues of identity in a globalised world are examined and critical questions are asked about what this means in relation to sustainable development. The need for a meaningful concept of global citizenship is explored in relation to Gandhian, Islamic and liberal and communitarian thought.

This book is a very timely publication, coming at a time of when developing synergy between ESD and Education for All (EFA) is high on international agendas, particularly that of Unesco. However, there is a missed opportunity, in my view, to engage critically with these debates and to explore the potential for ESD to be conceptualised in relation to these. One of the reasons for this relates to what I feel is the one weakness of the book, namely the lack of attention to environmental issues, a key element of sustainability. This may have been partly because of the nature of a collection of this kind, bringing together a range of papers and articles from a range of different authors. However, this also offers a diversity of perspectives and a body of research and thought which will make a very important contribution to this growing field. In particular, this book would provide many useful key reading for students of development, education and sustainability.

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ALSO FROM TRENTHAM



Multilingual Learning stories from schools and communities in Britain

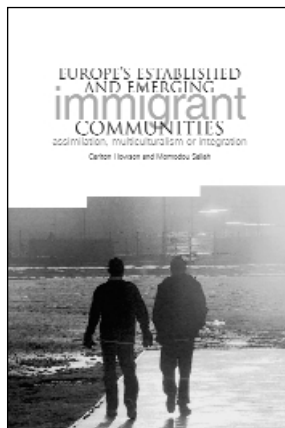
edited by Jean Conteh, Peter Martin
and Leena Helavaara Robertson

This thought-provoking book ... exemplifies how much a largely monolingual education system can gain from studying the processes of multilingual learning. **Educational Review**

This book is a timely and welcome addition to the literature on education and multilingualism. It is a compilation of multilingual learning stories that are rarely told even though they are of crucial importance. **International Journal of Lifelong Education**

This resonates very strongly with my own personal experience as a bilingual learner... it heightens awareness of multilingualism using real life contexts. I recommend this book to those dipping their toes into the area as well as those who have considerable knowledge of the issues. **UKLA Review**

ISBN 978 1 85856 398 5
168 pages, 244 x 170mm, £19.99



Europe's Established and Emerging Immigrants assimilation, multiculturalism or integration

edited by Carlton Howson and
Momodou Sallah

'...interesting and varied reading ... the case studies leave the readers wanting more.'
Runnymede Bulletin

The rapidly changing demographics in Europe, especially after post World War Two immigration, have raised significant social, political, economic, security and cultural questions over how established and emerging immigrant communities are managed – even though some in these communities hold citizenship in European countries. This book brings together some of the leading writers in their fields to explore a range of issues: religion, health, housing, refugees and asylum seekers, working in post conflict ethnic zones, community cohesion in rural areas, security, Gypsies and Travellers.

Essential reading for social science courses including community development, sociology, politics, social policy, diversity, health, education and international development at both undergraduate and post graduate level.

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