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Human rights education: reflections on theory and practice, edited by Fionnuala Waldron and Brian Ruane, Dublin, Liffey Press, 2010, 219 pp., £18.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-905785-88-9

Human Rights Education: Reflections on Theory and Practice is a welcome addition to the growing international literature on human rights education theory and practice. This edited volume emerged from a 2008 conference hosted by St. Patrick's College in Dublin, Ireland, to mark the 16th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and explore the role of human rights education in advancing the global human rights project.

Editor Fionnuala Waldron begins the book with a discussion of the relationship between human rights and education and situates the contribution of the book in the context of the increased discourse around human rights education globally. Waldron sees the volume as an exploration of the relationship between human rights theory and practice and invokes Freirian praxis as a way in which to understand the book's use.

In Chapter 2, Hugh Starkey applies a historical lens to human rights education through a review of the history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and its role in the shaping of an international human rights education agenda. Starkey argues that the cosmopolitan vision of human rights underpins both human rights education and citizenship education approaches across the world, and must play a central role in education in order to fulfil the promise of the UDHR.

James Banks, drawing also on the UDHR, in Chapter 3 argues for the importance of a conceptualisation of a multicultural, cosmopolitan citizenship within education. Banks' key idea is the potential for human rights education to encourage the development of transformative citizenship practices amongst learners.

Chapter 4 explores the relationship between human rights education and education for sustainable development (ESD). Peter Kirschlaeger highlights the similarities and differences between aims and approaches, and identifies ways in which human rights education can contribute to the ESD agenda and vice versa. Kirschlaeger calls for further exploration into the ways in which HRE and ESD approaches can be mutually beneficial.

Anita Prunty presents a case study exploring the rights of students with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) in Ireland in Chapter 5. She draws on data highlighting the absence of opportunities for ASD students to express their views on their Individual Education Plans to argue for a stronger consideration of children's rights in the formulation of special education policy in Ireland.

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Chapter 6 shifts to the interaction of human rights education and arts education through a discussion of the role of process drama in human rights education. Paula Murphy presents a discussion of an interactive workshop conducted at the conference on which this volume is based, and highlights the ability of drama to create a space for learners to engage with human rights issues in a creative and constructive manner.

Susan Pike argues for the critical importance of including children's views on local development in Chapter 7, which is concerned mainly with children's participation rights as an element of human rights education. Pike finds that the young people in Ireland surveyed attach significant value to their local experiences and want opportunities to make their voices heard. The chapter discusses how research findings on children's perspectives on their localities can be used to advocate for increased consultation of children in local planning.

Chapter 8 turns to the role of teachers in promoting human rights education. Drawing on a research study of primary school teachers in Ireland and their knowledge and understanding of human rights and human rights education, Ruane et al. argue that limited understanding and low awareness of human rights in schools contribute to an overall conceptual vagueness of human rights education in the Irish primary curriculum. The authors call for increased government investment in human rights education through awareness-raising campaigns and teacher education.

In Chapter 9, Colum Kenny explores the role of journalism education in advancing human rights. He shares lessons from his own work as a journalism educator and delves into some of the ethical issues that arise when reporting on human rights in order to illustrate the complicated relationship between media representation and the shaping of public attitudes.

Fintan McCutcheon draws on Aristotelian practice philosophy in Chapter 10 in order to explore the way in which human rights initiatives (referred to as 'actions' under an Aristotelian framework) engage and lead to transformative learning processes in schools. He highlights a range of actions within a single school year in an Irish school and considers their collective value in promoting a wider discourse of human rights across the school.

In the final chapter, the editors attempt to bring together several themes emerging in the preceding chapters. The idea of human rights education as transformative education is a frequent theme of this volume, as is the need for human rights education to have a strong and clear foundation on the principles contained within the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Convention on the Rights of the Child. Lastly, the book recognises the importance for human rights education of engaging with other educational disciplines.

The book's key strength is its well-balanced combination of reflection on strong theoretical foundations of human rights on the one hand, and insightful and diverse examinations of human rights education in practice on the other hand. This offers the reader a strong theoretical basis from which to interrogate practical application of human rights and human rights education principles. The contributions of Starkey, Banks and McCutcheon in particular offer several conceptual frames from which to situate the practice explored in the other chapters. Another strength is the considerable contribution of this volume to the empirical literature on human rights education in Ireland. A minor weakness of the book is in its loose thematic presentation of the chapters, which do not seem to be structured in a way that would group theoretical, practical and interdisciplinary chapters together and thus be clearer in its expression of key themes.

Overall, this book represents an important contribution to human rights education literature. It serves to further highlight both the considerable expertise and scholarship in the field, as well as to point to new directions for theory and practice that can continue to contribute to the aim of building a global culture of human rights through education.

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Literacy and the politics of representation, by Mary Hamilton, London, Routledge, 2012, 178 pp., £26.99 (paperback), £95.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-415-68616-7 (paperback), 978-0-415-68615-0 (hardback)

Literacy and the practice of writing in the 19th century: a strange blossoming of spirit, by Ursula Howard, Leicester, NIACE, 2012, 349 pp., £24.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-86201-564-7

2012 has been a good year for books about adult literacy. Mary Hamilton's *Literacy and the Politics of Representation* was published in July, followed in September by Ursula Howard's *Literacy and the Practice of Writing in the 19th Century: A Strange Blossoming of Spirit*. These are simply two very important books, written by two very important women. Each book is a new contribution to the field of adult literacy studies, each book can also be seen as celebrating the extraordinary career contribution of its author, and together, these two books most certainly mark this year as a very important time for adult literacy studies as an academic field.

Adult literacy studies is not the kind of academic discipline that is made flesh by rows of books within every university library. There is, compared to most fields, little sense of agreement on what students studying it at, for example, MA level should be reading or should have read before they start their course. Its relationship with less amorphous fields can also be confused and contested. Is it a form of sociology or social history? Is a branch of linguistics or English language studies? Does it have a relationship to literary studies? Does it share any territory with studies of children's literacy? Or cognitive psychology? All of these? None? What should I read if I want to know more about how to develop adult reading or writing? Where do I go and which experts should I be listening to?

This may be an overstatement. Perhaps it would be simpler to say that this is a field *in the process of finding its shape*, and the contributions of these two books cannot be overstated. The 2010 publication of Hughes and Schwab (ed.) *Teaching Adult Literacy: Principles and Practice* was a crucial step in shaping this field, by bringing together the living knowledge of hugely experienced adult literacy teachers. It shaped the field pedagogically. Hamilton and Howard's 2012 books are doing, and will do, the same thing academically.

Together they tell us, for example, that social history, literature and sociology are key elements of adult literacy studies. They tell us that the meanings people give to literacy, in their private and public lives, in their diaries and in the media, *are* literacy. They tell us that literacy cannot be understood without gaining the perspectives of individual readers and writers, and they show us how national and international educational policy, statistics and initiatives affect, produce and are resisted by these readers and writers. They demonstrate that literacy is both individual and communal, and teach us how the very ways we understand terms like 'individual' and 'communal' have been shaped by literacy.