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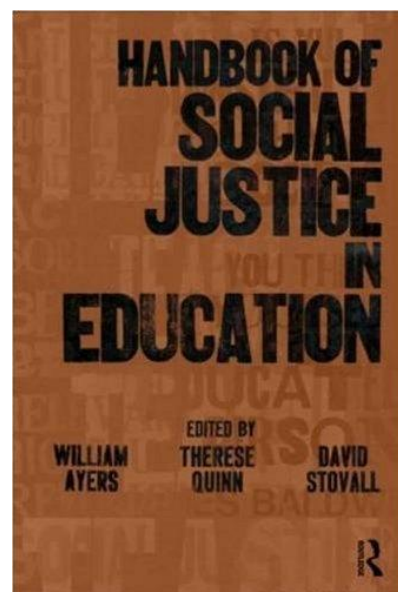
Ayers, William; Quinn, Therese & Stovall, David. (Eds.) (2009).
Handbook of Social Justice in Education. New York: Routledge.

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The *Handbook of Social Justice in Education*, edited by William Ayers, Therese Quinn & David Stovall, provides a comprehensive view of the field. The book is divided into nine Parts that develop the connection between social justice and education along different issues that are relevant for educational actors such as policy makers, school administrators, educators, and students. Each part is presented by an introductory piece that gives context to the chapters that follow. These chapters provide different perspectives on how social justice can be understood and enacted. As a useful resource, at the end of each part, we find a Response, a short summary of the issue discussed that works as a general conclusion to the book section. While providing theoretical arguments, the handbook provides concrete examples and experiences. From this perspective, this volume is a rich compendium of

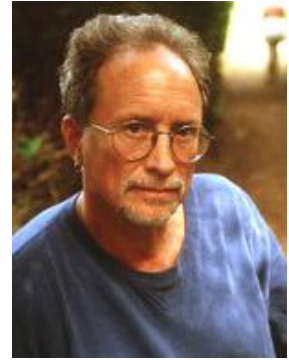


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events; of the works of social movements and activists; and of school and classroom practices that illustrate how social justice can be achieved in education.

Part 1 introduces the volume with seven chapters that combine theoretical and historical perspectives to understand social justice in education. In their chapters, Brown and Hall look at how the racial and economic divide in the US has been reinforced through the legal system, and how even the possibilities created by the civil rights movement have also contributed to racial inequalities. New pedagogical practices should be used to question these inequalities. In face of current educational policies, Mathison denounces that private interests are being privileged over the common good, as seen in the analysis of two websites: School Matters and the What Works Clearinghouse. In the same way, Leistyna argues that although policies discourage teaching students to be critical of social structures, there are plenty of examples of activist struggles from which students can learn to participate in public life. From a more conceptual perspective, VanOverbeke focuses on the efforts of historian Frederick Jackson Turner to put academic knowledge in the service of educating democratic citizens. Gabbard follows the anarchist critique to warn against state control and its attempt to hinder social justice struggles within schools. Boyles, Carusi, & Attick examine the limits of the notion of distributive justice, its application to education, and the need to replace it by a notion that better represents the goals of social justice.

Through five chapters, Part 2 offers international examples that show the importance of social justice in education. Kenway & Hickey-Moody contend that the culture of aboriginal Australians is now taught without referencing its past of White oppression, so it can be used as a commodity to attract tourism to the country. Keddie & Mills criticize the limitations of neoliberal strategies to achieve gender equality in education, which have failed to overcome the resistance that western categories produce in countries under Muslim influence. Tikly and Dachi review the need for social justice in Africa, and they urge addressing the lack of resources in areas such as educational access, quality education, and the promotion of local languages and cultures. Bekerman grapples with the complexity of bilingual schools in Israel.



He concludes that although these schools make a contribution to ethnic integration, they also reveal the difficulty for schools to serve the purpose of equality. Lastly, Hursh discusses how social democratic liberalism in the US was later replaced by neoliberal policies that promote individual competition and the deregulation of economy. In education, the result has been a deepening of inequalities in the face of accountability mechanisms and the efforts to privatize schools.

In Part 3, five chapters address the relationship between race, ethnicity and language, and social justice. Taylor & Skutnabb-Kangas claim that Kurd children's right to develop through their mother tongue is violated by being forced to abandon it when settling in foreign countries. Thumann & Simms assert that in schools the use of a pathological view has led to treat deafness as a deviation, instead of recognizing the cultural distinctiveness of the deaf. Allen and Leonardo engage with the issue of Whiteness and the rhetorical construction of White people as a superior race. Allen confronts the question, "what about poor White people?" commonly used to dismiss the role of race in the creation of social inequalities. Leonardo confronts the assumption that White people lack the knowledge to understand how race works, masking the way Whiteness actually uses race in its favor. Lewis, O'Connor & Mueller discuss the limits of existing research on African Americans' educational achievement; they rather propose using multilevel ecological analyses to understand race in relation to everyday racism, to class and gender, and to the complexity of culture working as a symbolic capital.

Part 4 is formed by six chapters that confront schools' failure to support students' gender identities and sexual development. Cosier suggests a framework that schools could follow to respect students' gender and, thus, make them feel safe to participate actively in their learning. Payne, through the stories of lesbian students, also makes a call to educators to promote affirming environments supportive of students' gender orientation. Similar stories can be found in the article by McCready on Afro American male gay students in urban schools. He proposes the use of different

conceptual tools, such as intersectionality, multiple masculinities, and antihomophobia to support their educational performance. Mayo reviews the experiences of Gay-Straight alliances (GSAs) that support minority gender students -their strengths as well as their difficulties, including those within these same groups. Blanchett emphasizes the need of a comprehensive school health education that includes sexuality education and HIV/AIDS prevention for all students, and gives special attention to students with disabilities. The last chapter by Smiler discusses that American students are taught about gender through the binaries of feminine and masculine, which does little to prepare them to understand the complexity of their sexual identities.

Part 5 looks at the relationship between disability and social justice. The first two chapters present the field of disability studies. Gabel & Connor describe it as a field of research that intersects with other areas, such as multiculturalism, critical race, and queer studies to expand the rights and possibilities of disabled people. In light of neoliberal discourses that exclude people with disabilities, Brantlinger claims that disability studies should fight such exclusion by joining other forces promoting the democratization of schools and a morality of social reciprocity. The last two chapters address the issue of labeling. Ferri brings a vast number of student voices that have been further marginalized by special education practices that label them as deficient students instead of honoring their diverse ways of learning. McDermott & Raley depict how these labels have been created in schools and how they stand against the core of democracy and its promise to provide everyone with the same caring opportunities.

The ten chapters that form Part 6 discuss how social justice can better serve the youth. For that purpose, Yang proposes a strategic education that along with empowering the youth, acknowledges that “empowerment” is in itself a process full of contradictions. Soep, Mayeno & Kurwa, revisiting an interview titled “Picturing war”, broadcasted by the Youth Radio in Oakland, describe the complexities of using the media to promote critical thinking among the youngsters.

Cammarota & Romero describe the success of the Social Justice Education Project, aimed at helping Chicano students improve their academic performance. Similarly, Tan presents the 5 E's of emancipatory education (engage, educate, experience, empowerment, and enact) which have helped him to support his marginalized students. Camangian describes the use of a critical literacy approach to motivate his students to write and share their stories to improve their academic performance and help them become agents of change. Akom calls for including the voice of the youth in educational research, through the creation of a critical race methodology that combines critical race theory with participatory action research.

The five chapters in Part 7 focus on the issue of globalization, specifically on its connection to neoliberalism. Rizvi & Engel provide an overview of this connection just as it has been promoted by organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and the new obstacles it creates to the promotion of justice in schools. Robertson warns that this neoliberal globalization has also blurred the boundaries between the "global" and the democratic nation state. Such transformation, also affecting the educational systems, does require the creation of new sites where citizens can exercise their rights to claims-making. In terms of alternatives, Chan presents the Alternative Globalization movement, which has opposed this neoliberal globalization, for example, during the 1999 Seattle protests. This movement has a pedagogical value in helping to think beyond hegemonic forms of globalization. Gandin provides an example of how local mobilizations, as carried out in the Citizen School Project in Porto Alegre, Brazil, can serve as an alternative to neoliberal globalization and constitute a model to 'work from below'. Fischman & Haas discuss that if critical pedagogy is to empower teachers' struggles, it must provide crucial insights into how neoliberalism operates and support teachers to become committed intellectuals engaged with others in navigating through the contradictions of educational change.

Four chapters in Part 8 deal with the challenges faced by social justice teacher education programs. According to

McDonald & Zeichner, these programs require a clear identity by basing themselves on a conceptual framework that integrates social justice perspectives and practices. Sleeter also proposes some key elements that should be present in social justice teacher education, especially in light of current waves of neoliberalism. In their piece, Cochran-Smith et al. present the critiques that circulate against social justice teacher education. These critiques rest on the political and ideological stand of conservative and neoliberal groups. Social justice education programs are required to challenge these critiques. Richert, Donahue & Laboskey propose several aspects that need to be present in teacher training and professional development of White teachers wanting to teach students of color.

Part 9 offers ten different narratives of classroom practices enacting the values of social justice. Brion- Meisels shares her experience as a history teacher helping her middle school students become aware of the dangerous of Whiteness and institutional racism. Casal describes how his poetry workshop has been a space to use writing to “draw the line” against human injustices. Lessing shows how his theater classes, built upon students’ stories, help them to value each other’s diverse gender and racial identities. Searle takes us into her English classes where low performing students bring their imagination into their creative writing. Reynolds and Torres’ stories center on their fruitful relationship with their students; closeness and support are two values that have helped their students grow. Gutstein presents the “boundaries project”, a unit implemented to discuss a community problem using math as the tool of analysis. Lampert presents an interview with artist Josh MacPhee in which he explains JUSTSEEDS, an art project intended to honor those that have struggled in favor of social change. The final piece by Kumashiro illustrates how teachers can discuss about issues of gender and diversity in the classroom to produce “antioppressive” changes, whereas Michie suggests different strategies that can help novel teachers persevere in teaching social justice.

Overall, the Handbook of Social Justice education is certainly helpful for those interested in learning more about

the connection between social justice and education. Through its pages, the reader will learn that such connection can take many forms and angles. However, some readers may feel disappointed with such diversity of perspectives as it can move to more questions and concerns instead of certainties. For that reason, the reader must remember that if social justice represents a commitment to promote those principles that make democracy and equality possible, then understanding how it can be enacted needs to be in permanent motion to respond to the ever-changing dynamics of social institutions and the shifting of power relations through cultural, political, and economic practices; and this also in the field of education. For that reason, the Handbook needs to be read as a source of thought-provoking and inspiring ideas that rather than imposing themselves on us, are an open invitation to reflect on our own efforts and struggles in making social justice possible. From that perspective, as the editors conclude, the Handbook is a collection of ways in which to engage with social justice in order to change the world, “these are stirrings, awakenings, openings. Each is a cry for justice. Each is a step along the way. We are taking the journey together” (p. 728)... and we, as readers, are all invited.

About the Reviewer

Eduardo Cavieres-Fernández is a PhD candidate at the University of Wisconsin- Madison, in the program of Curriculum and Instruction. His research focuses on teachers’ understanding of democracy and social justice. He also supervises elementary student teachers in the department of Curriculum and Instruction.

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