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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Kibler, A. (2005). *Implementation of Educational Policies for Minority Language Pupils in England and the United States*. Oxford: Symposium Books. Pages: 132 Price: 42.00 USD (paper)

Reviewed by Dr. Larissa Klein, University of Western Ontario

Amanda Kibler writes that “as a result of an increasingly mobile global population, minority and majority language issues in education are prominent worldwide.” (p. 31) Kibler’s particular interest is the English language education of non-native speakers. She presents case studies concerning two primary schools—one in England, and the other in the state of Texas—where pupils’ first languages are used to help them become more proficient in English. Analyses of relevant documents, interviews, as well as classroom observations “illuminate how teachers and schools serving highly diverse linguistic and ethnic populations function within broader language policy directives.” (p. 7)

In her brief introduction (Chapter One), Kibler writes regarding both England and the United States: “While policy rhetoric may support the notion that a pupil’s first language is a linguistic and cultural resource, literacy in this language is valued principally as a vehicle for learning English.” (p. 7) However, as Kibler points out, case study research makes it possible to see beyond such generalizations. We learn, for example, about how certain staff members regard students’ first languages as much more than just a means to another linguistic end.

In Chapter Two, Kibler discusses “Language Planning and Policy in Education.” She draws attention to the English-education-only policies in Arizona, California and Massachusetts, as well as other policies which result in “discrimination against speakers of minority languages.” (p. 14) Kibler also considers second language acquisition research which suggests that bilingual education is beneficial for pupils who are learning English. Incidentally, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development has an online “ResearchBrief” about “The Effects of Bilingual Education Programs on English Language Learners.” (March 2, 2004)

Chapter Three is a detailed presentation of “Language-in-Education Policies in England and the United States.” In England pupils learning English are referred to as ‘bilingual’ or ‘English as an additional language’ [EAL]; whereas in the United States, the term is ‘limited English proficient’ (LEP) (p. 21). In 1999, EAL students represented 8.1% of England’s compulsory school population. (Ibid.) In the United States, in 2000-01, LEP students made up 9.8% of the compulsory school population (p. 26). In this chapter, Kibler talks about literacy, curriculum, assessment, teacher training, and funding as they relate to EAL or LEP students. She also briefly discusses the history of bilingual education in England and the U.S. and looks at some specific policies concerning first-language support in the classroom.

In Chapter Four, Kibler sets out her methodology and explains her comparative perspective. She bases her approach partly on George Bereday’s

“stages of comparative methodology” (1964), as well as Edmund King’s methodology from *Education and Social Change* (1966). But it is curious that Kibler does not use the original texts: rather she tells about Bereday and King based on her reading of Phillip Jones’ *Comparative Education: Purpose and Method* (1971). At one point Kibler states that, although King’s “procedures of analysis have been criticized for their supposed lack of methodological rigour, they are exceedingly useful for this study.” (p. 32) However, one’s own methodological rigour is called into question if one decides to use someone else’s criticized ideas without exploring the full nature of the criticism.

Chapters Five and Six are the two case studies, beginning with the school in England that Kibler refers to as “Forest Hill Primary.” Here, more than 97% of the students are not native speakers of English: the majority of these EAL students speak Urdu or Punjabi, and others speak Arabic, Malaysian, or Indonesian (p. 37). The American school, which Kibler calls “Shady Ridge Elementary,” has an LEP population of over 40%, and 90% of these students have Spanish as their first language (p. 53).

In both case studies, Kibler focuses on the same six categories in the same order, giving details from her observations, interviews and other research, and showing how first languages are integrated into the curriculum. Detailed profiles of staff members (who are referred to by a letter and a number to preserve their anonymity), as well as extracts from their interviews with Kibler, are provided in the Appendices. Teacher S1 (at Shady Ridge in Texas) is one person who is particularly adamant about the importance of his students’ first language, i.e., Spanish, and he wants to “develop in [his] pupils the love for the language. (p. 59)

Following the two case studies, Kibler presents her “Comparative Analysis and Conclusions” (Chapter Seven). Two important findings of her case studies are: 1) “School environments have become more accepting of the presence of first languages.” (p. 70); and 2) “Individual schools and teachers have recognized EAL/LEP pupils’ first-language needs to a greater extent than that required by national policies.” (p. 76)

Thus ends the book, which turns out to be only 70 pages long given that Chapter One starts on page 7. Pages 77-124 are the Appendices, followed by a bibliography. While there is a lot of interesting and informative material in this book, it certainly could have been longer: it might have been useful for Kibler to integrate parts of the Appendices into the main text. Two other criticisms are the following:

1) Kibler says that she spent one week doing research at each of the schools (p. 36). Bereday, however, maintains that “for the sake of systematic observation the idea is to spend at least six weeks to three months in one particular school, preferably on its teaching staff.” (p. 14) While six weeks to three months may have been impractical for Kibler, more time would have given her the chance to expand her study. She could have told more, for example, about the interaction between pupils and staff members and also among pupils.

2) This book unfortunately has no index. Yet after the bibliography, there are four blank pages which could easily have been used for this purpose.

Even Bereday and King included indexes in their (typewritten) books in the 1960's.

Despite the above shortcomings, I look forward to seeing more of Kibler's work in the future. Perhaps she will eventually return to the two schools to revisit her study and see what is new in bilingual education. At the same time, others can follow Kibler's example and learn more about bilingual education, as well as explore the implementation of language-in-education policies in particular schools.

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Sumon Kamal Tuladhar. (2004). *The out-of-school children's program in Nepal: an analysis*. Paris: International Institute for Education Planning, UNESCO.

Reviewed by Amani Hamdan Alghamdi, PhD (University of Western Ontario)

The book gives a brief explanation and detailed statistical background of the education in Nepal, particularly the out-of-school program. Tuladhar offers an analysis of the Nepalese government's efforts to develop a non-formal education system (NFE) which operates parallel to the formal education system. Non-formal education in any developed country is a network of organizations and agencies which operate outside the conventional schooling system and government sponsored agencies. These agencies enable the upgrading of skills and improve quality of life in the rural sector. This occurs in urban areas of developed countries, Nepal in this case.

Tuladhar begins with a background of the literacy rates and description of non-formal education in Nepal. He states that, due to poverty rates in the country, education in Nepal is a privilege that is enjoyed by only a certain segment of the Nepalese population. The author gives a clear analysis of the Nepalese education initiatives, both formal and non formal, and highlights the overall state of the education system in Nepal. According to Tuladhar, the non-

formal education system is designed to meet the needs of children and adolescents who either have no access to school or who have dropped out.

One of the central points made by the author is that "despite efforts such as literacy campaigns and free education for children, education is not accessible to all, due to its indirect cost" (p.17). One of the challenges facing school age children in Nepal is that most take part in household responsibilities, such as carrying water, and looking after younger siblings in order to contribute to the family income. Such responsibilities hinder educational pursuits. Although the book mentions how the non government organizations are taking part in providing education for children, the book does not say if there are plans to provide financial support or loans for families in need. The children who took part in the out-of-school children's program are not able to help in the domestic chores, which adds an additional cost to poor families. How do non-government organizations deal with this barrier and how are they planning to alleviate the situation? Tuladhar does not address how the educational system in Nepal, both formal and informal, contributes to the work force. Is the school curriculum related to the occupational needs of the economy into which students may enter after leaving school? This is a logical question in light of the state of Nepal's economy.

In addition, when the author suggests that some ethnic groups are more privileged than others with regard to education due to the geographical location of their communities, he does not offer an explanation of what these socio-cultural privileges entail. While detailed information is provided about the ethnic groups in Nepal, no specific details are provided on the literacy levels of these groups. Additionally, in the 'out-of-school girls' education program, as Tuladhar indicates girls in the 7-13 age group were provided with educational opportunities. No mention is made regarding girls 13 and up and whether they have the opportunity to obtain education. What kind of programs are there for them? The author provides no answer to this question.

The book is an attempt to explore and understand the network of non government organizations promoting non-formal education for children in Nepal. Although it attempts to give a broad analysis of the education system in Nepal, it fails to highlight and explore the poverty in Nepal and its implications for education. Nepal is one of the poorest, least developed countries in the world with over half of its population living under the poverty line. The fact that over 70 percent of its population is illiterate should be the central focus of this report. Political instability continually challenges any advancement at the infrastructural level of the country. In addition, while reputable sources on Nepal indicate a marked gender gap disparity in the country, the author ignores inequities between male and female literacy rates and access to education. Although the book focuses, as indicated in the title, on the OSP (out-of-school children's program), an explanation of the program is not provided until the second half of the book. The last part of the book provides an overview of the textbooks, methodology, and teacher training in the NFE educational program. As an educator, I found this part of the book most interesting, and recommend it to teachers who are involved in developing programs and designing textbooks in

developed Third World countries. The last two sections of the book focus exclusively on OSP. These sections provide an assessment and critical reflection on OSP in Nepal. The perception of beneficiary communities Tuladhar listed could be said about education a child receives in any country. As an outsider, I would like to know about the unique beneficiaries of this approach. Also included in the critical reflection section are suggestions for improvements to the OSP, which I found provided a balance to the report.

The book, while describing and analyzing both formal and non-formal education in Nepal, deals in particular with the current non formal education programs as an example of what can be done to provide opportunities to poor children. *The out-of-school children's program in Nepal: an analysis* is an excellent statistical report and overview of the present status of NFE in Nepal and the different educational programmes implemented in one of the poorest countries of the least developed world. In addition, the report would benefit non government organizations that take part in advancing the education system, particularly with regard to women's education. More efforts are needed because females in Nepal still lack access to adequate schooling. Yet, the book's title should be more inclusive of its contents, since the author reviews more than the out-of-school children's program, and includes other non formal education programs, and provides statistical analysis of them. A more suitable title would be *The Non-Formal Education of Children in Nepal*.

Lawn, Martin; Grosvenor, Ian (2005). *Materialities of Schooling: design, technology, objects, routines*. Oxford, UK: Symposium Books. 217 pp. ISBN 1-873927-30-4.¹

Reviewed by Rick Kitto, (University of Western Ontario)

Just because you haven't given much thought to something doesn't mean that it isn't interesting and worthwhile. Triple negatives aside, just as good works of art help the viewer realize a new perspective, so too *Materialities of Schooling* provides fascinating insights into better understanding many elements of schooling frequently left both unexamined and tacit. Take a few moments to reflect briefly on these twenty questions.

Who holds the keys to a school (physically and metaphorically)? Have there always been fences around schools? Where is the principal's office in the school? Why? Why are student desks built the way they are? Have they always been like that? And what about uniforms? Windows? Interior lighting? Objects used in 'object lessons', science classes, and other lessons? From whence expositions of teaching materials? When? Why? Why is 'art paper' the size and shape it is? Has it always been like that? Why do we teach art? How does time management and utilization of space change in response to changing curricula? Are all material educational changes the result of curriculum changes? Political battles? Teacher insights? The zeitgeist?

The ten articles in this volume (the first of a developing series) address such apparently unassuming questions, and, in the process of contextualizing

and deconstructing them, address many fundamental issues of education in a new light. In general, each article moves through a process of examining the minutiae and history of the object in question (keys – uniforms – windows – wall space) to provide a concrete starting point for the discussion. The geographical diversity of the accounts – Mexico, Spain, Argentina, United Kingdom, Australia – amplifies the kaleidoscopic nature of the book. Particularizing the accounts in this way ensures that the reader cannot be familiar with the stories, although aspects of all of them resonate with someone who has experienced a variety of systems and changes over the years. Having such geographical and temporal diversity forces the reader not to take the accounts for granted since they cannot all be standard. Rather, by reading and deconstructing these narratives, readers are subtly encouraged to examine materialities from their own schooling, the better to understand the ways that schools work.

The main point of the book is that technologies and objects of schooling (from pencils to computers, from epidiascopes² to tawses) can be given meaning within a heterogeneous network of people, objects, routines, and politics. The materialities are examined in context, rather than being isolated, so life is breathed into them with 'insider' accounts. School desks are more than just places where students sit to do their work; windows are more than mere devices for illuminating rooms; the location of the principal's office is more than an architectural accident. Meaning is constituted by an unpredictable combination of influential educational thinkers; local, state, and federal politicians; enterprising and inventive teachers; budgets and the availability of materials; current architectural styles and beliefs; and the variety of reactions to Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinking and world-views.

Although the effect of having accounts from different countries, different educational systems and levels, and different times might seem likely to fragment the overall narrative, curiously it has the opposite effect. Each piece in the book is like a different band of light from a refracting object; collectively they comprise a spectrum. By thoroughly examining many diverse examples in context, the articles collectively establish a rather delicate framework – fragmentary and localized in the individual pieces – but built by clever editorial legerdemain into a 'bigger picture'.

For example, the final chapter describes a classroom management strategy in the United Kingdom recommended by the current 'National Literacy Framework' for teaching English to 11 – 14 year-olds: "a 'horse-shoe' arrangement of desks, that can facilitate pedagogic strategies based on whole-class teaching and a panoptical³ approach to behaviour management" (p. 205). That arrangement is reminiscent of an 1899 Spanish school model which had a "teaching center (... placed in the classroom dedicated to the upper grades, that is, the classroom run by the head teacher) and the option of a panoptic model" (pp. 58-59) for central supervision and control of all students.

Another example of an editorial thread is less heartening. In the very early twentieth century there was a 'pedagogical and hygiene' movement in which school furniture played an important part. John Dewey, for example, in

1900 wanted desks “to enable the child to work, and all these [available ones] are for him to listen” (p. 82). Maria Montessori some twenty years later also complained that “the bench-table ... [represented] the greatest example of the impression of slavery inspired by pedagogy” (p. 82), and recommended having separate desks and chairs for students. Fast forward nearly a century from these early child-centered educators to the present-day United Kingdom classroom described in the previous paragraph. “There was an absence of clutter: everything was shut away in cupboards, to be produced only when the occasion specifically required it” (p. 210) since any other arrangement would interfere with the highly constrained activities needed to prepare students for the standardized national examinations.

There are a few very small errors in the book. For example, a scale drawing (p. 51), clearly showing a scale of 1:200, is presented in a further reduced format (without warning) so that the apparently fairly large school library would be only 3.2m x 2.4 m (about 10' x 8'). In an account of rural schools in Mexico, Tlaxaca is described as “a small (4000 m²) densely populated state” (p. 20). Its area actually appears to be nearly 2000 km², so something got ‘lost in translation’ (perhaps literally). But such quibbles in no way detract from this rich historical account of how schools work; the fascinating glimpses into the ‘inner workings’ are illuminating and instructive.

Notes:

1. A note of concern: There appears to be another book with the same ISBN ... [CJS Online Books Received July-Sept. 2005](http://www.cjsonline.ca/books/cjsjulysept05.html) paper (1-873927-30-4); Louie, Vivian S. *Compelled to Excel: Immigration, Education, and Opportunity among Chinese Americans*. Stanford University Press, 2004
www.cjsonline.ca/books/cjsjulysept05.html
2. In my lexicon, an epidiascope is an ‘opaque projector’ – a device that can project an image of non-transparent objects, such as a page in a textbook, onto a screen that a whole class could view simultaneously. And a ‘tawse’, also called ‘the belt’ in Scotland, is what I would call ‘The Strap’ (frequently a razor strop in Ontario) – a leather strap for inflicting corporal punishment on students.
3. It is interesting to note that the ‘panopticon’ was proposed as a model prison design in 1787 by Jeremy Bentham, a British legal reform scholar.