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Book Reviews

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Book Review

Shades of Globalization in Three Educational Settings: Views of India, South Africa, and Canada.

Ailie Cleghorn & Larry Prochner, Sense Publishers, 2010, pp 160

Aparna Mishra Tarc (York University)

In Shades of Globalization Ailie Cleghorn and Larry Prochner examine the complex impacts of globalization on early childhood education in India, South Africa and Canada. The project is ambitious: each of the selected settings of early childhood education is beset by layers of complex and distinctive colonial histories. These three settings resist a comparative analysis in the conventional sense. With a mixture of program analysis and ethnographic field work methods Cleghorn and Prochner begin to unravel the various historical, economic, cultural and socio-political contexts and connections that shape the understanding and delivery of early childhood education in each local setting.

At first glance one might wonder why Cleghorn and Prochner compare the operation of early education in, some ways, incomparable settings: within an indigenous community in a “first world” settler colony; a South African community afflicted by an apartheid past and; a modernizing India seized by poverty and the drive to modernize in the wake of British colonization. However, early on in the first chapter of the book the motivation for choosing and comparing these sites becomes evident. In our global times educating Aboriginal children in *Littlelake*, Canada seems to hold great resonance with the education of children in *Tswane*, South Africa and *Valabh Vidyanagar*, India. Perhaps the very existence of early childhood education in spaces where they previously did not exist is symptomatic of hyper-modernizing globalization.

As one engages in the holistic portraits of the schools that Cleghorn and Prochner paint, it becomes more and more apparent how deeply problematic is the imposition of early childhood education in these spaces. Infused with a dominant English language learning and framed by Western epistemologies and economic modernization the push for early childhood education around the world is embedded in a top-down globalization. While strong advocates of early childhood education, Cleghorn and Prochner are deeply concerned with this imposition and its effects on local culture and educational practice. The interviews demonstrate that community leaders and schoolteachers also worry about the state of childhood education given its orientation to modernize and reproduce particular childhoods universally in the Western mould.

In this book the authors begin to reveal and unravel the ways in which particular schools negotiate local culture with the globalizing project of early childhood education. Chapter two productively lays out the political and colonial landscape in which each school operates. In the following five chapters, we are given glimpses of the ways in which each school responds to and negotiates the multiple agendas of stakeholders, of communities, NGO agencies and global forces that place competing demands on the teaching and learning of children. Chapters three, four and five examine various programmatic impacts of globalization in each site. Insightful is the discussion raised in Chapters six and seven where the authors discuss the role of health education and the meanings of difference framing each site as shaping the delivery of educational programming. For example, in *Littlelake*, Canada “endangered” traditional knowledge is renewed into and by the curricular program to respond to the past and present lived experiences of Aboriginal children. Health promotion for children and mothers is intrinsic to the educational program in *Valabh Vidyanagar*, India. And children in *Tswane*, South Africa receive some Aids educational programming as a preventative measure against the illness affecting the inhabitants of an entire continent. While the authors might give more nuanced consideration to these examples of education shaped by the lingering social effects of colonial histories, their analysis does demonstrate how local

educational sites are responding to the differing effects of past colonizing and present globalizing projects.

Shades of Globalization is posed to make a timely intervention into the field of comparative studies, globalization and early childhood education. In places the analytical treatment of each site could be deeper; for future work the authors might compare and contrast more deeply the voices of the lived experiences of children against teachers' local responses to the lives to which they are entrusted to care within the global times they live. Still, the book compels globalization and educational researchers to pay closer attention to the vitally important roles that early childhood education and educators play in the making of our humanity. The book, through its interesting use of mixed methods, also draws attention to the limits of a comparative ethnographic approach when studying the complex operation of educational programs across diverse locations.

In some ways Cleghorn and Prochner's findings are hardly surprising given dominant research and media portrayals of marginalized communities struggling in difficult global times to use education as a means for cultural preservation and improved living. Although necessary to the wellbeing of communities, clearly the "preservation of culture" is not enough to interrupt the global wave of modernization reforming education on a global scale. The book left me wondering what is to be done to change the (false) promissory narrative and Western version of early childhood education that seems destined to reproduce inequity through its continued incapacity to see how education of the young has consistently fed directly into the commodifying grip of competitive individualism, consumption and unsustainability. Perhaps it is the adults that are in need of a critical and thinking education to produce the humane education and social conditions needed to intervene in the forces of globalization. The pressing problem of our times then is how to educate teachers of early childhood education to conceptualize and enact a critical and humane education that supports children and parents to examine and navigate with and against the global conditions shaping their existence whilst retaining and sharing aspects of

their unique lived experience and cultural knowledge with others. This book provides us with a place to begin.

Book Review

Talent Abounds: Profiles of Master Teachers and Peak Performers.

Robert F. Arnove, Boulder and London: Paradigm Publishers, 2009, 258pp

Ruth Hayhoe (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto)

This book is a true labour of love, carried out over a period of more than twelve years and bringing to readers rich insights into education from the perspectives of peak performers and master teachers across a range of areas, from classical music through jazz and modern dance to sports, mathematics and the culinary arts. What is common to each of the chapters is an encounter with persons of outstanding and widely recognized talent, whose achievements have demanded the highest standards of cognitive learning, while going far beyond that into the realms of aesthetic and craft sensibility, emotional expression and remarkable virtuosity in performance.

Robert Arnove is widely known and respected in the field of Comparative Education. He has decades of work behind him on educational policy and a sociological understanding of how education has reflected those economic and social forces in the world system that have created painful gaps in development and prosperity between global centres and peripheries. His work has also highlighted hopeful examples of how education has made a difference.

It is refreshing to see him now make a turn from the structural and sociological, to the more individual and personal in education. His career-long attachment to Indiana University, with its remarkable School of Music, as well as his exposure to the arts in different international environments, may have stimulated his interest in looking at education through the eyes of outstanding performers and the master teachers who helped to inspire and form them. Huge effort must have gone into the scheduling and executing of more than 100 interviews with these stellar personalities, including a group of award winning teachers, and then the crafting of their profiles. These enable the reader to understand some of the unique educational demands of achieving outstanding excellence in each distinctive field, as well certain features of learning and pedagogy that are

common across all fields. The result is a volume that invites readers to reflect on their personal experiences as learners and educators and aspire to greater self-discipline, strength of commitment and depth of engagement.

Different ways of structuring the chapters result in each being uniquely absorbing. Chapter One profiles a trio of remarkable performers on the violin, piano and cello, detailing their early family life and education, the teachers who most influenced them and the perspectives of their students and colleagues. It provides a multi-dimensional account of how their talent was nurtured and of the educational principles and techniques that led to its blossoming. Chapter Two moves to the arena of sports, profiling a duo of swimmer and diver who not only made international records, but raised these two fields to a new level of professionalism. Common to the teachers of music and sport was “that spark of inspiration they ignited to enrich so many lives.”(42)

Chapter Three presents a duo of jazz musicians, who raised this form of music to new heights, with one being “a major advocate for the preservation and dissemination of jazz as a national art treasure”(49) and both employing “problem-solving approaches to teaching that acquaint students with the fundamentals and history of the field.”(58) Chapter Four moves to a very different duo, that of saxophone and tuba virtuosos, two musicians who singlehandedly raised the profile of their instruments. Chapter Five draws readers into another musical arena, presenting six opera divas, all women, who came from different cultures and backgrounds and found different ways to balance family and vocation. All acknowledged the mystery of the voice as a divine gift they were privileged to cultivate in themselves and in the students they were passionately committed to. Finally, Chapter Six brings the first half of this volume to a full circle, with another musical trio: – two successful conductors and their mentor, the unparalleled doyen of 20th century music, Leonard Bernstein. Their depiction of Bernstein’s role in their lives goes to the heart of the teaching vocation: “He was perceptive enough to ...look at you and experience your work for a few minutes and then be able to ... get to the heart of the matter.” (113) Especially noteworthy in this trio is the commitment to public education and to “extending the joys of music making to an ever-expanding circle of audiences in powerful ways.”(114)

Chapter Seven moves on to a group of five modern dance masters, who drew upon the legacies of classical techniques as well as ideas and inspiration from other cultures in some cases, and went on to extend the field of what was possible in modern dance. In their teaching, they showed “how exciting programs in the

arts can lead to lives of extraordinary creativity and the cultural enrichment of many.”(135) Chapter Eight introduces a cross cultural and cross-national duo, an American woman timpanist and a Ghanaian man xylophone performer. The story of how the timpanist traveled to Ghana to learn from a Ghanaian Gyl player is riveting, giving insights into forms of learning and pedagogy that are unmediated by the use of note-taking or the printed page. Chapter Nine moves to a younger trio of musicians, one being the student of the master violinist profiled in Chapter Two. For all three, the consonance of family understanding and support, excellent teachers from an early age and a good educational environment made possible the early maturation of remarkable talent.

The final three chapters in this volume provide profiles of prodigies in mathematics, chess and cuisine. Two remarkable mathematicians are introduced, one a master teacher, the other a major contributor to new theory and, interestingly in light of the connections sometimes made between music and mathematics, the older brother of one of the musical prodigies profiled earlier. Four outstanding chess masters follow and then seven master chefs. A description of one of the culinary artists encapsulates the commonalities among peak performers in these different fields in the following way: “He regards recipes the way musicians see musical scores – as frameworks for improvisation. The results follow a discipline but they spring from the moment, not from a carefully plotted script.”(213)

In the final chapter of this riveting volume Arnove culls a number of important lessons from the rich narrative and empirical data he has presented, regarding the role of family and teachers in nurturing outstanding talent, the importance of public policies that open up learning opportunities widely – with many of the peak performers profiled having come from disadvantaged backgrounds – and the need to respect and be open to charisma. The gift of grace ends up being the only satisfactory explanation for some dimensions of the prodigious talent and remarkable achievement that is presented. However, this does not diminish the importance of unrelenting discipline in learning and unremitting effort to reach new levels of excellence in teaching.