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Book Review: Critical Perspectives on International Education

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Book Review

Critical perspectives on international education. Edited by Yvonne Hébert and Ali A. Abdi. (2013). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers. 414 pp. (ISBN PB: 9789460919046)

Reviewed by Edward R. Howe, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor, Utsunomiya University)

This book resulted from the *Comparative and International Education Society of Canada* (CIESC) 2008 Congress's (CSSE) pre-conference symposium held at the University of British Columbia. I had the privilege of attending and recall vividly the insightful discussions that ensued at this extraordinary symposium on international education. Yvonne Hébert and Ali Abdi should be commended for bringing together a diverse group of authors and successfully editing a book of 26 chapters—a mammoth task, to say the least. Readers will be treated to critical perspectives on international education, mostly from scholars across Canada but with others based in the United States, South Africa, France, Jamaica, Japan, and Tunisia. The studies span the globe from North America to Europe, Asia, and Africa, including under-researched regions like Bhutan, Kosovo, India and Tunisia. As mentioned in Hébert and Abdi's excellent introductory chapter, the book reflects four competing theories: *world culture* (Baker & LeTendre, 2005), *world systems* (Arnone, 1980), *post-colonial* (Apple, Kenway, & Singh, 2005) and *culturalist* (Spring, 2008). In addition, they posit twelve major discourses within comparative and international education: *Technology as Critical to the Knowledge Economy*; *Lifelong Learning*; *The Learning Organization*; *Individual Responsibility*; *Accountability*; *Migration as Global Mobility*; *English as Language of World Communication*; *Living in Diversity and Multiculturalism*; *Education for Democracy*; *Social Development*; *Choice*; and *Building a Knowledge Culture as Integral to International Education, Moving towards Knowledge Socialism*.

Chapter 1 provides an effective summary of the chapters that follow. Hébert and Abdi note that there has been a major philosophical shift in comparative and international education with the emergence of global knowledge cultures and “efforts to change the world towards a more democratic, socially responsible, culturally sensitive model” (p. 1) are reflected in the contributions to this book. Nevertheless, this philosophy competes with pervasive neo-liberal agendas and the global marketization of higher education. Thus, most of the authors of this volume respond critically to four major themes to delve into significant social issues within international education: Redefining internationalisation and international education; Universities and knowledge-making in the global economy; Youth mobilities in terms of new issues, fragmentation and routes to knowledge; and Changing the world: critical perspectives on human well-being and on intensive transformative processes (p. 23).

Here I briefly summarize some of the highlights and limitations of this 387-page volume. Space restrictions prevent me from effectively commenting on all the excellent chapters. Firstly, I was pleased to see that several authors included the marginalized voices of those on the front lines of international education... namely, transborder students. Any critical perspectives of internationalization of higher education should herald these students' voices, for a great deal of *internationalization* is merely the

commodification of education at the expense of international students, with little concern for quality of educational provision, as I have argued elsewhere (Howe, 2009).

More than a few contributions stand out for their originality and depth of analysis. I read with interest, Shultz's *Exploring Partnership Principles and Ethical Guidelines for Internationalizing Post-secondary Education*, Chareka and van Dommelen's *From a Global Education 'Idiot' Teacher to a Competent Global Educator*, Guo and Alfred's *Intensification of Faculty Engagement in the Internationalisation of Adult Education: A Comparative Study of Canada and the United States*, Majhanovich's *English as a Tool of Neo-Colonialism and Globalization in Asian Contexts* and the final chapter, Willinsky's *Development and Open Access*, among others.

Unfortunately, this book suffers from several deficiencies. As is often the case in a project of this nature and scope, it can take several years for a book to reach completion. Authors must revise their work to incorporate new insights. Clearly, most of the papers included here were written prior to the 2008 symposium and many of the references weren't updated to reflect new data available. As I read this book, I kept thinking that many references were a decade out of date. For example, in Chapter 9 and Chapter 11 the authors speak of global trends in transborder student mobility, quoting statistics from 2003 (p. 150) and 2006 (p. 183) respectively with estimates of 2~3 million transborder students. More recent statistics are readily available. According to data from 2011, there are about 4.3 million transborder students (OECD, 2013). In Chapter 10, references are made to ESL "cash cows" but with data from as far back as 1997. How has this phenomena changed in recent years with the advent of Skype and MOOCs for instance? Surprisingly, some chapters don't seem to deal explicitly with the theme of *critical perspectives on international education* (for example, the chapter on Japanese Aesthetics and English Education). Furthermore, there are some glaring errors and typos that should have caught the attention of a proofreader. In Chapter 1 (p. 29-31), several chapters are mislabeled (chapter fifteen should read sixteen, chapter seventeen is really eighteen and so on). The Chernobyl accident occurred in 1986, not 1956. Also, the citation (Farrell, 2011) was missing in the references. Finally, in the very first paragraph of Chapter 2, it reads, "All ten provinces (except Nunavut) engage in international education (p. 43). Just for the record, Nunavut is *not* a province but a territory. This is something that one would expect Canadians to know but something our readers outside Canada will likely be confused about. These are just a few of the errors I found. Better proofreading is needed to avoid these pitfalls.

In sum, while there are some noticeable shortcomings of this book, it will be a welcome addition to scholars within Canada and elsewhere interested in exploring critical perspectives in international education. Like other volumes in the *Comparative and International Education: A Diversity of Voices*, it is an important contribution to the field.

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