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Book review of "Educating for Citizenship and Social Justice: Practices for Community Engagement at Research Universities"

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BOOK REVIEW

EDUCATING FOR CITIZENSHIP AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: PRACTICES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

REVIEWED BY

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In this edited volume entitled *Educating for Citizenship and Social Justice: Practices for Community Engagement at Research Universities*, editors Mitchell and Soria present twenty-one chapters written by thirty-five individuals who are academics, researchers, administrators, and graduate and postdoctoral students at universities in the United States. The volume is organized into five parts: two separate chapters, followed by two parts with seven chapters in each, and a third part with four chapters in it (including a concluding chapter) spanning 314 pages, including the index. In the first chapter, "Introduction: Educating for Citizenship and Social Justice—Practices for Community Engagement at Research Universities" (pp. 1-10), Tania D. Mitchell, an Associate Professor of Higher Education at the University of Minnesota, and Krista M. Soria, an analyst at the Office of Institutional Research at the University of Minnesota, frame post-colonial alternatives to community engagement in view of the concepts of citizenship and social justice. They contend that the social justice aim of service-learning suffers from the challenges of "Rhetoric-reality gap (Butin, 2007)," and "the difficulty to institutionalize social justice aims," among others (p. 3). In addition to highlighting the content of the forthcoming chapters, this introductory chapter also challenges the very notion of service-learning. One way they do this is by identifying the failure of service-learning to address inequality, and its tendency to preserve inequality intact.

In "Chapter Two: Undergraduates' Development of

Citizenship at Public Research Universities: A Data-driven Imperative for Social Justice", authors Soria, Mitchell, Lauer, and Scali make the case that research universities need to create even more opportunities for their students to take part in their community's social and political affairs. The chapter begins with a statement of its clear purpose, which is "to present data related to students' development of capacities for citizenship and engagement in social justice advocacy efforts at research universities" (p. 12). The researchers used a longitudinal series of surveys administered to ten cohorts of undergraduate students. They used a sample of over one hundred thousand students in 18 public research universities in 2016. The researchers found that college graduates are not developing the skills necessary to take part in community issues and social change. They also argue that higher education is hardly successful in developing learners' capacity to transform the challenging and oppressive conditions that impact people's lives. However, some of their findings appear to be in stark contrast to other chapters in this volume which describe the success of particular universities in community engagements. Apart from this, the chapter offers readers perspectives that justify the need to further explore possible alternatives and models of engaging learners in different contexts in higher education institutions and beyond.

Organized under "Part I: Academic Models for Community Engagement" (pp. 33-126), chapters three to nine focus on citizenship and civic engagement while simultaneously addressing social justice issues such as dem-

ocratic imagination, deliberative dialogue, color blindness, and race. An interesting contribution in this part is "Chapter Five: Constructing a Knowledge Base across Classroom Contexts: Pre-service Teachers Assess Language and Literacy in an Urban Head Start Program" (pp. 59-70). Authors Browne and Madden researched educators' community engagement in terms of enacting responsive pedagogy to address questions of diversity, equity, and access. Their research was primarily focused on a collaborative project among Rowan University supervising faculty, Literacy Studies/Early Childhood students, and Head Start teachers which aimed to identify alternative ways of administering early literacy assessment to urban preschool students while fostering cultural awareness for preservice teachers. Nine female middle-class preservice students, eight of them white and one African-American, took part in the pilot language and literacy assessment project. The researchers found that pre-service teachers taking part in the project evade discussing issues related to difference. They discuss difference in superficial ways, and rarely unpack what they meant by "different" (p. 64). Based on such findings, the chapter makes a compelling claim that teacher education programs have not adequately prepared candidates to engage with diverse students. It recommends that issues of racism and inequality should be made explicit. It also recommends "More needs to be done in the university classroom to bring discussions about race, ethnicity, equity, and socioeconomic status as critical understandings in creating enacting pedagogies" (p. 67). In spite of this, the focus of the chapter goes astray from what is indicated as its objective and research question. Unlike what is indicated in the topic, it shifts from discussing pre-service teachers' assessment of the Language and Literacy Program to discussing their personal experience. Similarly, in the section entitled "Analysis of Project Through Preservice Teachers' Voices", the researchers indicated "as the project progressed, the data pointed mostly to preservice teachers' learning" (p. 62).

In "Part II: Program-Based Collaborative Models for Community Engagement" (pp. 127-236), chapters ten to sixteen present different institutional programs and projects and their potential to engage students across disciplines. For instance, in Chapter ten, Mitchel (2018) evaluates the Citizen Scholar's Program, a 2-year academic service-learning program at the Commonwealth Honors College at UMASS, and participants' conceptions of social justice. Similarly, in Chapter Eleven, authors Andrade,

Cushing and Wesner explore how Science Shops—organizations that implement community-engaged research by bringing together academics, and community-based organizations—"foster a culture of critical civic engagement" (p. 150).

"Part III: University-Wide Initiatives to Foster Community Engagement" (pp. 237-300), consists of four separate chapters followed by a concluding chapter. In the first chapter in this part, "Chapter Seventeen: Community Service and Social Justice at Research Institutions" (pp. 239-250), Soria and Mitchel investigated whether college students' participation in community service is associated with the students' engagement in social justice issues. To do so, they relied on "Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership data (Dugan, 2015)" from which they selected a sample of 4387 students from 19 research universities in the United States. Their findings show that students' participation in community service initiatives promotes engagement in social justice issues. They found that community service projects implemented in student organizations tend to foster student engagement in social justice.

In "Chapter Twenty-One: Conclusion: Educating for Social Justice—Learning from Service-Learning Alumni", Mitchel highlights the interrelatedness of social justice and service-learning, and reiterates the challenges in defining social justice itself. In general, the book presents a critique of community engagement, including the need to engage in inward reflexivity of teacher candidates who take part in community engagement. It profiles alternative approaches to community engagement across universities. It discusses successful institutional practices of community engagement. However, unlike similar works such as Peterson (2017), its presentation of issues related to transforming higher educational institutions so that they will bring social justice is minimal. The book makes an interesting read for higher education scholars, students and researchers, and other stakeholders. It is perhaps best suited for academics, researchers, school teachers, and leaders in the fields of community service, international education, and adult learning, among others.

Reference

Peterson, T. H. (2017). *Student development and social justice: Critical learning, radical healing, and community engagement*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.