PASAA
Volume 62
July - December 2021

Book Review

Interculturality and the Political within Education
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Year of publication: 2021
Page: 139 pages
Publisher: Routledge
ISBN 978-1-138-59999-4

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Interculturality and the Political Within Education by Fred Dervin and Ashley Simpson (2021) has effectively engaged and encouraged readers, especially those who are unsatisfied with dominated existing Western-centered notions of interculturality, to go beyond just repeating ideas, concepts, and methods in current interculturality research.

This book includes six chapters, and five of them are written as conversations. Each chapter addresses a different aspect of interculturality: What to make of the notion of interculturality? (Chapter 1), Who was influential in the ways we understand interculturality? (Chapter 2), How does intercultural research and education influence experiences of interculturality? (Chapter 3), Can we prepare/get prepared for interculturality? (Chapter 4), and What is the state of research on interculturality today? (Chapter 5). The last chapter, “The intercultural is always ideological and political” is the authors’ reaction to a response to one of their critical papers about a

European team headed by two white British 'native speakers' of English created a reference framework of interculturality.

One of the main contributions of the book is a clear characterization of what is not interculturality, which is mentioned in the first chapter – "What to make the notion of interculturality?" According to the authors, there are two kinds of interculturality to consider: the macro level, which is about seeing through ideological intimidation and the micro level, which is about overcoming forced intersubjectivities. Also, in this chapter, the authors suggest researchers and educators be clear about their beliefs that underpin the concept of interculturality. Additionally, indoctrination is promoted, which entails sending individuals lists of "invisible orders" (about how to act and to think about "good" and/or "poor" interculturality) so that people follow the guidelines. In many ways, the content of this chapter complements a recent book on the same topic by criticizing the way people define the term of "intercultural communication" (Baker, 2015).

Archeology and openness were the main forces driving the second chapter – "Who was influential in the ways we understand interculturality?" The authors state that if educators want to create multicultural environments in their classrooms, they must engage in continuous self-reflection about their ideas and values. This is similar to Ling Cheng in her book about intercultural communication competence (ICC) when she highlighted the necessity of considering ICC as a lifetime practice (Chen, 2017). One option is to just be open about how other people's perspectives have influenced the way we re-consider our idea. It is necessary to get the support of the many different kinds of people that serve in roles such as academics, politicians, administrators, and leaders (amongst others). Furthermore, the authors suggest that it is important for novices and other students to understand the philosophical reasons for certain forms of intercultural research to aid in their decision-making.

The book's third chapter – "How does intercultural research and education influence experiences of interculturality?" provides evidence that people's views on interculturality are influenced by

study and teaching about other cultures. The authors assert that academics and educators often interact with students and each other in many settings (home, hobbies, services, etc.) that cannot be isolated from one another, including the contexts of study and teaching of interculturality. These contexts, in other words, are interconnected. It is important to be aware of how these interconnections have an effect on each other, and it is vital to express them. Additionally, the authors ask the readers to always keep a critical eye while interacting with other cultures and avoid being star-struck by the glamorous and popular figures in the area of intercultural understanding, who may only seem to be supportive when, in fact, they have ulterior motives.

In the fourth chapter – "Can we prepare/get prepared for interculturality?," the authors show us why we should reject any effort to prepare for intercultural interactions since liberal conceptions of it have led us to think that it is feasible. Also, the authors claim that the belief that intercultural competence is achievable via collaboration is something that has been manufactured by the Western model of competence. Even if it is made a top priority, intercultural competence is something that cannot be "controlled" since it is constantly in the process of being created. In light of this, the authors posit that it is prudent to consider how and why interculturalists have developed the concept that we may prepare for intercultural living, whose opinion(s) is/are at the top of this list, and which people have their voices ignored.

The fifth chapter – "What is the state of research on interculturality today?" – points out that intercultural study is worldwide, covering a broad variety of subfields, and focuses on a variety of issues. Despite this, the global public discourse has a disproportionate number of privileged voices: mostly those belonging to white academics, of whom many are in the West. Not only does the field change based on its focus and nature, but political and economic interests also affect what it studies, what it publishes, and whose voices it impacts. In addition, the authors detail the issues of interculturality, including the "false generosity" directed towards

periphery voices. They also provide ideas on how intercultural research might be better conducted. A theme often seen in intercultural study, and more broadly, is that ethics should be a cornerstone.

The final chapter – "The intercultural is always ideological and political" – provides a real illustration of how interculturality and politics interact within the context of education. According to the authors, a statement regarding interculturality can never be considered impartial since it is constantly affected by our own views, experiences, political thinking, and governmental apparatuses, among others. The authors use the example of a Reference Framework developed by a team of European academics for the Council of Europe (a supranational organization with particular worldviews) to assess the 'invisible' commands provided by its authors and the ideologies that accompany them. They call on academics, educators, and students to critically analyze the political and economic pressures that are exerting on the development of such frameworks.

One thing I found really interesting about this book is that it includes a number of reflective questions at the end of the chapter (from Chapter 2 to Chapter 5), which are very useful for readers who are interested in digging deeper into the research of interculturality in education. In addition, "desperate" instructors and academics teaching and researching intercultural competency following American and British models will find this book useful since they can help their students avoid just repeating these Western ideas, models, concepts without being able to put them into practice and use them in their own contexts and languages. However, there is a lack of investigation of the relationship between intercultural communication and language education, namely English as a lingua franca (ELF) in this book, which is previously confirmed by Baker (2015) that there are some commonalities between the two.

Despite the lack of the relationship between interculturality and ELF mentioned above, this review ends with a recommendation that the book would be worth adding to the library of anyone who are researchers, graduate students, and policy makers in the field of

intercultural communication in education, as well as anyone intrigued by the current discussion over the defining and understanding of interculturality.

References

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