

‘RESTLESS, IMPATIENT, CONTINUING, HOPEFUL INQUIRY’

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Bourn, Douglas (ed.) (2020) *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Global Education and Learning*, London: Bloomsbury.

The instruction from Paulo Freire regarding the urgent need for critical inquiry is tailor made for this publication edited by Douglas Bourn, co-Director of the Development Education Research Centre, University College London. In this thirty-three-chapter tome we have a marker in the research base and formation of global education (GE). The first comprehensive collection highlighting the international and cross-disciplinary nature of the field, the book addresses the spectrum of topics that comprise an educational framework for learning about global and human development in its broadest sense. In a world where we have had the first modern pandemic, with half of humanity under lockdown and the human rights implications therein, the remote digitisation of public and commercial working practices, we have reached a point where the whole process of globalisation has suffered an alarming, yet predictable, shock. In response, we need to look for new answers to these global issues and for a pedagogy of change.

Books dealing with education for mutual understanding and societal integration, focusing on the nature of citizenship, have been in the field for fifty years and more, but this text is one of the first to try and bring together the discourse from various and quite diverse global perspectives. Drawing on GE theory and practice from three continents, it highlights the approach taken to learning and teaching from non-governmental organisations, policymakers and, indeed, ministries of foreign affairs around the world. The aim of the Handbook, as Bourn notes, is:

“to demonstrate the different ways themes such as learning about global issues, being a global citizen and bringing global perspectives

into schools, communities and universities can contribute to a distinctive field of GE and learning” (2).

The scale of the project gives a sense of the range of people and places concerned with such innovation in education.

Surveying the way in which academic research profiles GE and how it has evolved substantially since the early 2000s, this textual reaffirmation of the importance of global learning *vis-à-vis* human development, emphasises the significance of knowledge transfer and anticipates further engagement across the range of academic sectors. Interestingly, and naturally, it has a strong voice from the global South, which has historically been a problem with texts on GE. In this, its contribution cannot be understated. It also celebrates the manner in which the sector has evolved since its inception and presents a better understanding of the role of Centres of Global Learning in the design and growth of the field. The growth of the GE sector is registered in a number of ways and is charted by Bourn in chapter two (11-22). What is also noted is the welcome emergence of university departments, academic units and institutes working in a range of subjects pertinent to GE and, indeed, education in development.

The GE research community has expanded to include dedicated researchers in the field, PhDs, international journals, book series and the outworking of a range of activities which have brought together development practitioners, policymakers, theorists and NGO representatives. We have also seen the emergence of a second generation of GE specialists who are generously represented in this text and who confidently carry forward what the book notes as the ‘values base of GE’, notably, ‘social justice, equity and human rights’ (3). It is a comprehensive review of the current debates and issues, but crucially promotes actions that can enhance the values base of the discipline itself. The scope of the book is impressive, with the publication drawing in writers from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia, the Americas and from across Europe. In this, it registers how GE is reflected in education systems around the world. It provides a platform for academics and builds on the Academic Network on Global Education and Learning

(ANGEL), a network of 500 and more researchers globally who work in this discipline. The book is a product of this network and is, in a way, a first significant statement from the network, with the hope that it will continue to be a formative repository of ideas and leadership.

The book is a testament to the growing interest that is being paid to the subject beyond the development non-governmental organisation (NGO) and GE sectors. There has always been a link between development practice, development studies and GE, emanating from a necessary cross-fertilisation of work as they have evolved parallel paths. This can be seen very clearly in chapters covering topics as diverse as pedagogy, citizenship, Ubuntu, spatial applications, school linking, transformative education and immersive learning, giving some notion of the spectrum of the field and its inter-connectivity. This can also be seen in the collective themes that are engaged and presented as subsections of the book: Challenges for Today and Tomorrow; Theoretical Perspectives; Impact of Policies and Programmes; Global Perspectives in Higher Education; Global Education and Learning within Schools; and Learning and Experience and Being Global Citizens. The strength of the GE message comes out strongly again and again. Malgorzata Pieniasek, in her chapter on Ubuntu, distills the rationale behind GE down to two key principles carried through the lens of African philosophy: empowerment and solidarity, which ‘can result in increasing of motivation for people to become active as responsible global citizens for a sustainable future’ (86). In her chapter on Paulo Freire, Tania Ramalho concludes with a clarion call to arms: ‘Citizens everywhere still have doubts and ingeniousness, and the struggles for social justice and the fight for peace are far from over. Supporting the creation of peace, CGE [GE] backs the search for answers through engagements with practice in the never-ending mission of fostering social – and environmental – justice’ (58).

In these times of exceptional international difficulty, where communities around the world are fighting to deal with the destruction caused by COVID-19, where climate change has had an extreme impact on many of the most vulnerable regions, and where war and human rights abuses are

proliferating, education and educators are adapting to new global understandings, new means of doing things and alternative models of societal interaction. Young people, in particular, are searching for education that will facilitate a philosophy that provides hope and ways through adversity and divergence. People on a global plane are searching to define a common humanity and GE is uniquely placed to give direction to this search and create interdependent responses to complex global issues.

By way of introduction to this text, La Salette Coelho, from the University of Porto, states that: ‘Due to the plurality of “voices” presented, this book is a must read for scholars and students interested in ensuring that education and active citizenship play a relevant part in promoting global justice’ (n.p.). Much of the debate across the myriad of chapters pose further questions and anticipate further investigative research. In this, the text stands as both a Handbook and an invitation to the GE sector to build on the ideas presented.

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