

Book Review

Hidden Curriculum in Teacher Education Programs

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Bibliography of the reviewed book: Mazawi, A. E., & Stack, M. (Eds.) (2020). *Course Syllabi in Faculties of Education. Bodies of Knowledge and their Discontents, International and Comparative Perspectives*. Sydney: Bloomsbury Publishing. ISBN 9781350094253

Introduction

The careful study of teacher training can provide several possibilities for researching education. Not least of which being: exploring the causes and effects of lowering registration rates, which are evident on an international scale, discovering the discrepancy between training and actual school experiences, familiarizing with the positions of the student body, and identifying the many crises of each career stage. A 2020 paper by André Elisa Mazawi & Michelle Stack, titled: *Course Syllabi in faculties of Education* focuses on a special segment of teacher training. Building on the experiences of educators, they have observed the transformation and execution of course syllabi as practiced in multiple nations.

Most exchanges in the paper will not only unveil the different contexts of employing course syllabi, but many other aspects of teacher training, which, through the experiences of educators shed light on the challenges pertaining to cultural diversity, provenance, power hierarchies and gender. The authors' goal was to inform everyone involved with teacher training about the sensitive subjects affecting educators. The essay can be viewed as a unique tool of sensitivity training which exposes some underlying elements of subjective educator approach to course syllabi in regards to discrimination and inequality. Do any faculties of education properly represent the diversity of society? Can they provide the kind of knowledge that a student of any race and cultural background can relate to (Mazawi et al., 2020).

Review

André Elisa Mazawi and Michelle Stack have published a paper that embodies cultural diversity in even its superficial appearance. It displays a white base upon which different shapes and colors from numerous patterns, some discernable in 2 dimensions, others in 3. The assortment of tightly arranged shapes form a grid, leaving some elements either protruding or stuck on the edge.

All 22 authors of the paper are employed in tertiary education in the field of teacher training across 7 nations (Iran, Qatar, Canada, Zambia, India, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom). A diverse set of discussions were had due to the different political and social climates of teacher training courses. The educators have taken great care to address every aspect of designing syllabi, including personal experiences, expertise as well as affiliation to the community and citizenship.

The aforementioned factors divide the analysis of 16 studies into the 4 chapters that make up the essay. In Chapter One, Geopolitics of Knowledge Course syllabi are examined for their external contexts, such as geopolitical and ideological setting. The subject of improving social justice will be the focus of Canadian educators Schultz, Elfert and Karsgaard. Correlations between the historic legacies of Australia and the Republic of Zambia and their modern methods of teaching will receive a comparative analysis by Thomas (Australia) and Serenji-Chipindi and Mwaka Chipindi (Zambia). Mehran and Adli will showcase Iranian

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conditions within the context of the many ideological and geopolitical elements that influence education and the work of its faculties (Mazawi et al., 2020).

All research conducted in chapter two, Building “the House of Life” is focused on the views of educators involved in teacher training. Specifically their views on indigenous inhabitants, racism, historical traditions, colonization and migration. Q’um Xiiem delves into the teacher training programs of the indigenous inhabitants of Canada. Mazawi identifies the effects colonial oppression and the constant battle for land has had on teacher training. Gill (India), Uppal, Opini and Neeganagwidgin (Canada), study how the life events and general conditions of teachers in training have affected education (Mazawi et al., 2020).

Chapter 3, Intersectionalities in Context is dedicated to the contexts of inequality dimensions. The section features studies aimed at gender related questions, such as works that address the challenges of female acknowledgement (Al-Muftan (Canada) and AlKhateeb (Qatar)), difficulties resulting from ethnic diversity (Sabharwal, India) and prejudice experienced by disabled people (Mazawi et al., 2020.)

In chapter 4, Challenging Relations we expand on the concept of designing syllabi is with the work of Samuel Rocha (2020), while the Canadian authors seek answers to expose the true correlations between the courses’ concept, program and knowledge (Neeganagwedgin and Opini). The final section gives us a holistic image on the experiences educators have faced during teacher training programs, while maintaining a thematic arrangement (Mazawi et al., 2020).

The paper offers an interpretive frame to the viewer by presenting all aspects associated with course syllabi. Such a blueprint of higher education courses basically serves as a document that assures accountability from educator and student alike. Syllabi provide bullet points which allow for greater control over the degree of liability and efficacy in the process of passing knowledge. It is through these means, that educators can be held accountable, by both higher and lower participants of the educational hierarchy.

A plan of the course informs students of the structure, goals and requirements of the program while also offering an estimated timetable and methodology for amassing the needed expertise. Syllabi fill both a supportive and a motivational role. But besides the recommended know-how, course syllabi will also encompass all classroom interactions and the impressions of every participant. They are a means of discussion, acting as a conduit affecting the recipient in an interactive fashion thus aiding both explicit and implicit goals. Not all aspects are as evident as are the objectives of attaining knowledge, which are focused on achievement.

Course programs may reflect the level of expertise, which the professional community has deemed the standard, however an educator’s autonomy is still imperative to their formation. An educator’s choices in required reading are very reflective of their standards, not just in terms of how they view the profession, but in their politics and social standpoints as well. No course’s mandated literature is exempt from political influence, they represent the convergence of ethical, sociopolitical and personal views. An educator’s ability to bestow knowledge is influenced by their position, institutional relations, political attitude, national and social circumstances and opportunities in their given setting. The constant interactions between the process of nurturing society and the craft of education all have their effects on teachers. What critical elements will any educator choose to insert into their syllabi is dependent on the geopolitical and social setting in which they teach (Mazawi et al., 2020).

Syllabi flexibility and fluidity are crucial for several reasons. First off, the current views and values of an educator won’t necessarily match those they will hold in future events.

It is also important to note: despite systemic obligations and pressures, no syllabus is ever set in stone, they are subject to changing from one class to another in accordance with the group and the situations at hand. Last but not least, course plans are expected to be widely accessible by having established goals that are clear and discernable by all. Syllabi must also adhere to the idea of equal opportunity and all forms of legislation meant to protect one’s rights. Respecting student right and properly supporting the disabled is crucial.

The idea of syllabi being adaptive reflections of cultural diversity adheres to the principles of Samuel Rocha. Instead of treating curriculum as a mold, Rocha placed emphasis on the process of education, the transformative nature of teacher-student relationships, creativity and experience. Hamdan views course syllabi as a personal investment that can guarantee the progress of Saudi-Arabian social relations. Glick maintains that the goal of a syllabus is to advance integration and thereby counteract systemic oppression. Glick sees integration as a space for communal thinking and improving relations. Neeganagedgi and Opini also view the efforts of making both curriculum and syllabi accessible as a shared acceptance of responsibility and a collective endeavor to achieve change both inside and outside of an establishment. Such receptive and equitable approaches to teacher training promote reimagining curriculum in a manner that will mitigate social tensions by improving relations.

The discourse within the paper addresses the sociopolitical correlations influencing the creation of syllabi by highlighting the ambivalences surrounding it, such as the reproduction and compensation of inequality.

Syllabi often travel beyond the perimeter of the classroom. By delivering critical interpretations with awareness of the ideologies, powers, historic traditions, systems of habit that had formed them, educators are bridging the gaps in social phenomenon.

Racism, the social class system, gender and disability-based discrimination and many other social influences can be found within the institutions and are affecting educators and students alike (Mazawi et al., 2020).

Course syllabi can unknowingly either aggravate or moderate reproduction of inequality within schools depending on political and social restraint. As such it is impossible to divorce the process of designing course syllabi from its given social contexts (Mazawi et al., 2020).

Education encourages open communication in states with evident difficulty for the colonized and colonizer communities or the privileged and disenfranchised groups to live besides one-another. That subject holds particular relevance for indigenous populations whose minority culture is at risk of disappearance by the education policies of the dominant community. A study conducted by Schultz, Elfert and Karsgaard illustrates how limiting the options for syllabi will impede an educator's professional judgment and performance, considering the influence the craft has on deescalating the conflict between colonization and decolonization. A goal which the authors suggest could be achieved if emphasis is placed on teaching students the history and culture background of their lineage.

The authors point out how attempts to unify and homogenize syllabi have only ever made negative impacts on an otherwise culturally diverse image and have hindered educators' attempts to adapt to their dynamics with participants from dissimilar backgrounds.

Expanding the spectrum of human solidarity (such as equitability, fairness and the need for emancipation) can be considered the result of expansion within tertiary education. Analyzing the curriculum through the lens of ethnography could lead to new ideas for learning possibilities and strategies for inclusion regardless of mandatory course material, which could in turn relieve cultural and ethnic tensions within teacher training courses (Mazawi et al., 2020). Teacher trainings are inseparable from the concept of decolonization in colonized nations, such as Palestine, India and Canada (Mazawi et al., 2020). Syllabi can inadvertently become a means of rebellion, especially in areas where the educators are also experiencing race-based discrimination regardless of it stemming from the faculty or the student body (Mazawi et al., 2020). Students who are part of a dominant societal group often reject and also outwardly resent an instructor who is not part of that same group. Gender and ethnic-based exclusion and discrimination can manifest in the loss of one's professional credibility, authority and the questioning of their expertise (Mazawi et al., 2020). An educator may experience prejudice on several grounds if they happen to be a part of multiple minority groups, making their plight for equal rights that much more severely hindered. Dalit women in India and Saudi Arabia (Hamdan, 2020) for instance experience a striking extent of systemic oppression from both their colleagues and students. The phenomena can also manifest while the roles are reversed. Women in India who come from a higher social status find it difficult to accept that lower-class students do not view their rights as innate. There's noticeable ambivalence in the treatment of disabled people as well. Educators often treat their disabled students with unreasonable positive discrimination regardless of their actual needs and struggles (Mazawi et al., 2020).

The subject of social justice, the handling of racism and prejudice is absent from the official syllabi of teacher training courses. If we are to train educators for the future it is imperative that we include intersectionality, our ever-widening understanding of solidarity as well discover the root of all prejudice. One of the hardest challenges of teacher training is designing syllabi with the proper tools of social justice, which could ensure equal rights and treatment to all minorities (Mazawi et al., 2020).

The views of every educator are informed by their surroundings, the style of their delivery, their inventory the standards of which are based on their worldviews. In a sense one could say the educator themselves become the curriculum. Inclusivity and the decline of loyalty are showing signs of solving the trials of education, meaning teachers in training will retain culturally adaptive expertise (Mazawi et al., 2020).

Conclusions

When reading the book, the complexity of the subject should become quite evident for the reader from the preface alone. It is worth noting that both said preface and the summary provides a decent basis for those who don't wish to indulge in the complete volume. Addressing the issue strictly through societal confrontations

could prove particularly interesting to us, as the idea of analyzing discrimination to this degree is unheard of in Hungarian education. The idiom book can however be needlessly dry and complicated, which hinders one's investment. Judging by the title of the book, the reader keeps expecting a dive into specific matters, the study however keeps its focus on the effects of sociopolitical settings.

References

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