

Book Reviews and Recent Publications by ISTE Members

Growing a Soul for Social Change: Building the Knowledge Base for Social Justice.
Tonys Huber-Warring. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2008, 414 pages.

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The book *Growing a Soul for Social Change: Building the Knowledge Base for Social Change* is the premiere volume in the book series, *Teaching <--> Learning Indigenous, Intercultural Worldviews: International Perspectives on Social Justice and Human Rights*. The volume provides much needed information regarding teaching and learning in building the knowledge base for multicultural education and social justice. The essays and research studies show how education can be a source of promoting social justice skills and dispositions. The book emphasizes holistic, interdisciplinary, and inclusive teaching methods and curriculum that recognize and respect diverse cultural paradigms in developing practices that promote development of critically conscious perspectives.

Each of the 20 chapters makes a unique contribution in building multiculturally responsible and responsive teaching methods and curriculum. Furthermore, the editor and 33 authors adhered to anti-racist, anti-colonial, and non-hegemonic methods of writing by including full names of authors in the reference sections and incorporating diverse voices from different nations, including Australia, Botswana, Canada, China, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Nigeria, South Africa, and the U.S.A.

I also liked the relevance of the content in the book in terms of education systems within different nations. The authors challenge stereotypes, pre-conceptions, and generalization of students' experiences, suggesting that in the process of teaching one should understand the differences of cultural experiences, backgrounds, aspirations and goals of people. Moreover, the authors suggest that it is important to ensure respect for other people's cultures and avoid using the Western model as a norm for teaching <--> learning.

The authors also demonstrate how experiences have a role to play in teaching and learning; "Experiences provide the possibility of blending and merging the boundaries of power and role between learner and teacher to enhance reciprocal exchange of teaching and learning" (p. 30). It is important to understand the social infrastructure and the social system concerned, which will lead to developing a model of teaching in relation to the environment and culture. I believe people learn and understand more when there is no hierarchy of power between them, which creates an equitable level of sharing teaching<-->learning experiences. I have found this to be important at all classroom levels, experiencing this myself in my early education and later in my graduate study.

The authors discuss the importance of creating a curriculum that takes into consideration the culture, language and identity of the students. They use examples to highlight how acknowledging students' background contributes to one's understanding and learning. The authors argue that cultural identity plays an important part in how people view and react to their own world, how they view themselves and how they learn (p. 174). The authors emphasize the need for students and teachers stepping outside of their own cultural realm to learn other people's cultures.

The authors explore teaching difficult human rights topics—religious conflict, democratic action, and genocide—from interdisciplinary, holistic perspectives. Teachers and students are encouraged to explore and stay open to new knowledge and ideas to continually build their knowledge base as critical thinkers positioned to make informed decisions for social justice.

Finally, the authors suggest that practices vary according to cultural and ideological contexts. I support that such concepts as identity and community development, democracy, multiculturalism and social justice should be used in relation to their specification in local, cultural, and historical contexts. Using one culture as a norm and frame of reference, by assuming the universal applicability of such concepts, leads to constructing monolithic images of people, ignoring their culture, history, language, religion, and life experiences. But the norms and values of each culture have meanings that are important to the concerned culture while they may be irrelevant, invisible, or antagonistic to other cultures.

The book has opened my eyes to other possibilities, seeing education, regardless of the field of study, as one way to bring about social justice by creating responsible global citizenship. I recommend this book to all people who aspire for social justice as I feel the book is exhaustive and inclusive enough to be used by students and teachers in international settings.

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