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Book Review

Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis

Edited by Monisha Bajaj

University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. 366 pp.

\$49.95 (Paperback)

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Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis is a compelling and authoritative survey of the theoretical underpinnings, history, current state, and future of human rights education. This volume provides the field with an exhaustive text that addresses the concepts, complexities, and real world applications of human rights education. The breadth and depth of *Human Rights Education: Theory, Research and Practice* make it a more-than-worthy successor to HRE's first foundational text, George Andreopoulos and Jean Pierre Claude's *Human Rights Education for the 21st Century*. Like Andreopoulos and Claude's pioneering 1997 work, the text presents a vision of HRE that eschews understandings of human rights that equate democracy with imperialism, neoliberal conceptions of development, US/Western exceptionalism, or nation-building via occupation. Instead, the text represents a cohesive body of work that focuses on the ways by which marginalized groups and communities wield education by, for, and through rights as a site for resistance, empowerment, and self-determination.

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The 12 chapters of *Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis* are intuitively organized in three parts: Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations of Human Rights Education, Global Research in Human Rights Education, and Transformative Human Rights Education Praxis. These parts, and their constituent chapters, build upon and enrich one another so that the book provides a welcome and straightforward reading experience that rewards the reader with a thorough and nuanced understanding of HRE and the different forms it may take depending on the specific context in which it is practiced. The text shows that while the discipline of HRE is built upon the definition of human rights education set forth by the United Nations, transformative HRE praxis is rooted in and responsive to the cultural and historical contexts of the communities in which HRE programs take place. Through these 12 excellent and expertly researched chapters, readers will come to the realization that, for example, HRE in the form of basic education for members of the *dalit* or “untouchable” castes in Gujarat, India will be necessarily distinct from an Amnesty International funded HRE program in the UK. Still, these distinctive programs have made equally important contributions to the broader understanding of human rights education and any educator, activist, advocate, or community organizer seeking to pilot a human rights education program will find inspiration and encouragement in the case studies presented in the text.

In a chapter entitled “Evolution of Human Rights Education Models” Felisa Tibbitts provides a comprehensive mapping of human rights education as an emerging yet thoroughly considered scholarly discipline. Tibbitts’ work in this chapter and her clear definitions of the different forms of HRE ought to serve as a pillar for any academic inquiry of human rights education. The text appropriately builds upon Tibbitts’ models to foreground several case studies in which the goals of peace-building, reconciliation, affirmation, and empowerment are achieved in educational contexts in countries as diverse and divergent as Iraqi Kurdistan, Tanzania, Senegal, India, and the United Kingdom. One of the primary strengths of the book is the way it blends rigorous scholarship with compelling accounts of transformative praxis, illuminating educative processes students, educators, and com-

munity members undergo to allow formal research to inform transformative, community-responsive praxis, and vice versa.

As a primer and foundational text of human rights education, *Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis* might have benefited from the inclusion of more strictly quantitative research. Though *Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis* does contain several chapters that utilize quantitative data to illustrate program outcomes, the inclusion of additional quantitatively-oriented research may have bolstered the text's impact and utility as a reference for policy-oriented scholars and practitioners. One would imagine, however, that such research might be included in subsequent volumes as HRE establishes itself as an institutionalized field of study and its practitioners gain influence in educational policymaking. As HRE becomes more widely known and recognized as a global force for educational change, quantitative methods for designing, implementing, and evaluating HRE programs may become highly sought after as they inform future generations of scholarship and engagement. To that end, *Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis* seems designed to address its own limitations, as its positioning as a central text in the canon of human rights education is sure to inspire current, emergent, and insurgent generations of scholars to consider the role of research in the perpetuation of inequality and to innovate a wide array of methodological approaches that can be leveraged and employed to not only inform policy, but to specifically pursue and promote human rights.

Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis shines a light on an emergent field of study that centers the struggle of marginalized groups to demand and defend the rights guaranteed them by international law. In this respect, Bajaj and the contributors to this volume have succeeded in crafting a blueprint for epistemic systems rooted in community, justice, and peace. This collection of resources, as presented, can and ought to have a significant influence in informing popular and academic understandings of both HRE and the overarching importance of human rights and human rights advocacy in a domestic and international climate in which rights are under threat from the rising tides of nationalism, neo-fascism, economic exploitation, environmental degradation, racialized capitalism, and violence

and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. In the era of Brexit, Trump, Le Pen, Erdogan, and Kim Jong-un, this body of work represents a global force of change and sounds a clarion call for the transformation of education into a site of resistance and action. No longer should education serve the primary function of reproducing prescribed hegemonic ideologies when the programs profiled in *Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis* attest to the efficacy of education in the proliferation of universal human rights. By providing a theoretical and experiential foundation for HRE, *Human Rights Education: Theory, Research, and Praxis* proves not only that we *can* build and sustain rights-affirming knowledge bases and learning communities, we must.