

BOOK REVIEWS

Social Justice Language Teacher Education M.R. Hawkins (Ed) (2011) Clevedon. Multilingual Matters ISBN: 978-1-84769-422-5

Reviewed by

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Social Justice approaches to language teacher education are underpinned by a commitment to challenging educational and social inequities and redefining the role of teachers as crucial to future change. But what does Social Justice Language Teacher Education (SJLTE) look like in practice? This edited volume presents diverse and illuminating insights from teacher educators and researchers across the globe on the possibilities and challenges of practicing SJLTE. For teacher educators, teachers and researchers interested in how language teaching can 'make a difference' this book will prove an exciting and thought-provoking read.

This book draws together perspectives and experiences from a wide range of geographical and institutional contexts to explore what SJLTE means to those who practice and support it. By reporting and reflecting on specific instances, practices and pedagogies this volume's contributors provide valuable insights into the possibilities and challenges associated with an approach to language teacher education that puts a 'social justice' agenda at its core.

Following an introduction by the editor **Margaret. R. Hawkins** and a discussion of Social Justice Education by Ken Zeichner, the majority of the volume is comprised of seven chapters in which teacher educators from Africa, Australia, North and South America and Asia consider Social Justice Teacher Education through the lens of their own contexts and professional practice.

In the book's first chapter '**Teacher Education for Social Justice**', **Ken Zeichner** charts how SJLTE has developed and changed over time in response to other social, political and academic concerns. He establishes SJLTE as a reform that sees

preparing teachers capable of working within and beyond their classrooms to challenge and change existing social inequities as its key underlying principle. However, as well as setting out the goals of SJLTE, he also considers the wide variety of ways in which these aims are interpreted and put into practice by practitioners in different contexts. This discussion, along with his consideration of some of the perceived problems and limitations of SJLTE serve to open up issues and questions that are explored in the chapters which follow.

In her chapter '**Multimodality, Social Justice and Becoming a 'Really South African Democracy'; Case Studies from Language Classrooms**' **Denise Newfield** focusses on the efforts of South African language teacher educators working in university language, literacy and literature classes to integrate the aims of Social Justice Education with the development of crucial teaching skills and subject knowledge in pre-service language teachers. Newfield details three particular interventions from different time periods, both during the Apartheid and in the Post-liberation era to consider the role of language teacher education in overcoming past and present divisions. In particular, she focusses on how multimodal pedagogies can help to create 'semiotically open classrooms' in which both learner teachers and students can reimagine themselves and the South African nation.

In their chapter, **Mahia Maurial and Moises Suxo** ask the question '**Does Intercultural Bilingual Education Open Spaces for Inclusion at Higher Education?**'. The authors describe the sociocultural context of Intercultural Bilingual Education in Peru and consider the similarities and differences between this approach and SJLTE. They highlight how current undergraduate university-based teacher training programmes tend to undervalue indigenous ways of knowing and can close down spaces for inclusion of trainee teachers from such communities. Although indigenous languages and perspectives have recently become more present in these university contexts, the authors feel that current efforts over-privilege linguistic aspects of interculturality and ignore socio-political and culture aspects of knowledge. They suggest how enhancing intercultural relationships between academic and community life might further develop spaces for inclusion of indigenous students in higher education institutions.

Matthew Clarke and Brian Morgan's chapter considers '**Education and Social Justice in**

Neoliberal Times: Historical and Pedagogical Perspectives from Two Postcolonial Contexts’.

Matthew Clark uses the example of ESL reform and literacy testing in Australia to illustrate how neoliberal discourses that emphasise efficacy and accountability in education have developed and how they have contributed to reform agendas that run counter to concerns for social justice and equity. He goes on to reflect on how he supports language teachers to develop a ‘blue-print for action’ as part of a university course entitled ‘Culture, Identity and Education’, by introducing them to poststructuralist conceptual lenses that encourage practitioners to recognise multiple ways of perceiving reality and the construction of social difference. Similarly, Brian Morgan reflects on a university course in Canada that focusses on ‘Socio-political Issues in Second Language Teaching’ which foregrounds the importance of identity negotiation and teacher agency.

Robinah Kyeyune considers ‘**Enfranchising the Teacher of English through Action Research: Perspectives on English Language Teacher Education in Uganda**’. In her chapter she considers teacher training programmes in relation to the local language and English medium education context in Uganda and highlights how institutional power relations can lead to inequity both in the teaching of English and the education of teachers. She advocates for a strong emphasis on developing action research skills in pre-service teachers to empower them to act as ‘curriculum leaders’ who are able to respond to the situated needs of specific learners, as well as to creatively embody subject and institutional authority.

Margaret. R. Hawkins chapter on ‘**Dialogic Determination: Constructing a Social Justice Discourse in Language Teacher Education**’ considers a graduate-level language teacher education programme for practicing teachers, in a United States university. The course is built around the principles of Social Justice Education, but Hawkins’ analysis sheds light on some of the tensions and challenges that arise when attempting to apply an SJLTE approach to the teaching of ESL methods. She draws on empirical data from her own classes throughout the module and on lesson plans produced by the students to develop an understanding of why the discourse of Social Justice Education and its practices seemed to be only taken up in a limited way by the learner-teachers. She points to the situated and idiosyncratic meanings of Social Justice in specific contexts of teaching and learning and

how it is vital that teacher education programmes acknowledge and reflect this.

In ‘Creating a School Programme to Cater to Learner Diversity: A Dialogue Between a School Administrator and an Academic’

Franky Poon and Angela Lin present passages from their email correspondence over a period of 3 months, as they work together to develop a new English language programme to support students with special educational needs in a working-class area of Hong Kong. In an insightful departure from traditional academic register, this contribution documents the challenges involved in creating the programme and raising awareness of Social Justice concerns in teachers and parents. The frank and reflective dialogue between Poon and Lin highlights the potential of close collaboration between researchers and practitioners in attempts to provide education that promotes equity and inclusion.

The final chapter in the volume by **Kelleen Toohey and Bonnie Waterstone**, entitled ‘**Working for Social Justice in a Collaborative Action Research Group**’ provides an insight into the dynamics, possibilities and challenges present within the authors’ Teacher Action Research Group (TARG). The group was formed with the aim of investigating how classroom practices could make a difference to the learning of minority children and consisted of members from a range of practitioner, researcher and student-researcher backgrounds. Focussing on interactions between members over time, the analysis reveals how differently positioned individuals understood the key concept of ‘communities that work for social change’ in different ways. The chapter discusses how this range of subjectivities shaped the triumphs and tensions of the group.

The diverse and innovative perspectives represented in this volume illuminate the possibilities of applying a Social Justice lens to language teacher education. Theorised insights into the situated practices of language teacher educators will be useful to anyone seeking to reflect on how equity and fairness are promoted in his/her own practice and may serve as inspiration for how teachers can act for social justice in ways that are responsive and specific to their own local contexts.