

space in which children learn and develop is presented as the main focus of the study, with each author discussing issues like privacy and safety.

The study also highlights how the UNCRC acts as a framework for contextualising children's rights, reflecting on how the UNCRC can be used for the purposes of continued upskilling educators in the discussion on children's rights, ethics and online safety with further implementation of Articles 13 and 17 of the CRC.

The volume as a whole provides readers with insightful themes and discussions on issues surrounding children's rights and the UNCRC as a policy. The book acts as an introductory guide for policymakers in the field of education and sociology. The concept of childhood is introduced and presented in a sensible and cohesive manner.

The chapters all present diverse articles on numerous topics that introduce the reader to historical, thematic and contextual discussions concerning the CRC and its implications. Despite limited case studies which focus on selected countries, the book recognises the importance of educators, classroom environments and guardians in the sphere of the CRC and can act as a starting point for further research on children's rights within interdisciplinary approaches and methods.

The book allows the reader to see the concept of children's rights as an idea that stretches beyond the classroom and is influenced and affected by culture and economics. The conclusion brings together the resonating aspects of each chapter, before introducing an epilogue which draws out some of the key findings of educational research concerning children's rights.

If one is to consider Nietzsche, as quoted by l'Anson in the first chapter, "...counter to our time and thereby action on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come" resonates deeply with the scope of action in which the book can act as a stepping stone.

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Hyslop-Margison, Emery J., Thayer, James, *Teaching Democracy: Citizenship Education as Critical Pedagogy*. Rotterdam, Boston and Taipei: Sense Publishers, 2009.

"There is no escaping the world we now live in" is a statement that is true when participatory democratic decision-making is removed from the realm of public policy formation (Hyslop-Margison and Thayer, 2009, p.

37). This trend is seen increasingly today in various societal government intrusions in the era of the 'new normal'. Even though the book *Teaching Democracy* was published over a decade ago and should be read with its critical theory glasses on, it seems that in the current world its message that transformative citizenship education is needed is more relevant than ever. The latest trends in capitalism (neo-liberalism and hyper-globalisation) and dominant characteristics of societies across the world (rise of populist movements, racism, migrations and increasing human rights breaches) continue to transform our lives and societies that suit the image of the market (Heggart et al., 2018). We are facing a pandemic that is heavily tied to globalisation, consumerism and ecology. This is shown, for example, in the use of face masks that on one side are becoming a fashion trend and ways of promoting businesses and popular culture personas and, on the other, a tool of politics for controlling people around the world. The pandemic is a product of the global movement of people and goods, especially unsustainable tourism, overcrowding, transport, unnecessary business and scientific meetings and so on (Adam, 2020b). The description given by the book's authors applies today more than ever: "These are extremely tenuous times for modern democratic states and for democracy more generally as the international community has drifted dangerously towards a monolithic vision of the socially possible" (Hyslop-Margison and Thayer, 2009, p. xvi).

Today, children are bombarded with ideological messages designed to persuade them that appearance, wealth and conspicuous consumption influence self-worth and social status. Schools have a big role to play in teaching citizenship to our children, but what exactly do they teach? Do they aim to create critical citizens or simply loyal followers who will vote every 4 years and remain passive political participants? It seems the latter prevails since the dominant educational agenda is oriented to teaching children to fit with a predetermined 'social reality' that excludes students as future citizens from meaningful political participation. 'To obey and fit the model' is taught as the best strategy. The book *Teaching Democracy* aims to challenge such school curricula and proposes a model of citizenship education that borrows heavily from critical theory insights. It intends to both inform and empower future citizens to participate actively in social design and reconstruction (Hyslop-Margison and Thayer, 2009, p. xvii). More concretely, the book has two main aims. First, it wishes to articulate the threat to democracy by the current citizenship education approaches which promote passivity, compliance and protect the status quo. Second, it wishes to provide a way out of this anti-democratic trap and change those critiques into concrete political actions by providing (in

the authors' words) an "ideal pedagogical approach to appropriately educate our students as future democratic citizens" (Hyslop-Margison and Thayer, 2009, p. xviii).

The book is divided into five chapters. The first chapter discusses the current threats to democratic citizenship posed by the "monolithic and globally pervasive ideology of neo-liberalism" (Hyslop-Margison and Thayer, 2009, p. 1). Democratic choices are difficult, if not impossible when citizens are unable to imagine possible social, economic and political alternatives. The authors reveal how neo-liberal education programmes have exploited many of the tools of critical discourse and turned them into instruments of exploitation. In the second chapter, the authors begin to articulate their vision of what they understand as meaningful democratic citizenship. They review a range of existing international conceptions and policies related to the field and say that denying students the critical exploration of social realities is not simply anti-democratic but anti-educational and morally reprehensible. In the third chapter, the authors look for arguments for critical pedagogy, providing the necessary praxis to restore the democratic rights of students, workers and all citizens to participate fully in the organisation and restructuring of democratic societies. They review several contemporary international citizenship models and objectives and show how the majority of policies fall within the 'thin model' of citizenship that is discursively focused on the market economy and consumer objectives.

In the fourth chapter, the authors illustrate how critical theory can transform traditional notions of citizenship and citizenship education by reviewing perceived threats to formal political participation and analysing why these ideas and solutions are presently inadequate. By focusing on the work of critical theorists like Pierre Bourdieu, Zygmunt Bauman, Anthony Giddens and Jurgen Habermas, they develop a case for a programme of thick democratic citizenship. Education has a critical role to play in bringing about changes in the rapidly altering material conditions of a society that require an active political response originating in both the education and civil realms. "As such, a program that educates for citizenship and democratic participation within the context of global capitalism must re-evaluate what it means to participate as a citizen, to belong to a community, and reflect on the need to empirically and theoretically elucidate emerging models of citizenship and democracy based on these understandings" (Hyslop-Margison and Thayer, 2009, p. 95). Citizenship education based on critical theory is embedded within a transformative framework that views democratic citizenship and society as fluid, dynamic and flexible.

In the last, fifth chapter, the authors discuss the current state of understanding democratic citizenship by focusing on the example of various Canadian curriculum policy documents, which reveal differing understandings of what citizenship means and how it is manifested in curriculum development. They reveal that the majority of citizenship programmes are developed as a result of increased government attention to what constitutes a 'good' citizen – someone who possesses certain predisposed knowledge, often including banal historical facts about national history and electoral/legislative processes and uses this information in a certain prescribed fashion. Such a citizen is usually obedient and compelled to vote in elections when his civic duty allows him to do so. The passive stance adds to the growing sense of alienation so commonly seen in today's societies among many young voters who understand that their political choices amount to no real choice at all. On the contrary, the engaged democratic citizen does more than just occasionally cast a vote, he/she is engaged in a full-time endeavour that involves seeking new knowledge and constantly reflecting on that knowledge. He/she is constantly engaged in public debate, actively participating in their community by volunteering or engaging in various forms of political activism. A 'good citizen' is also an effective, dedicated and efficient worker who understands their fundamental right to form and join labour unions and create change in workplace conditions. Citizenship education based on critical pedagogy considers society and citizenship as dynamic, fluid and contestable constructs where fundamental social change is both imaginable and practically possible. Here, formal political processes are only one of the possible forms of political participation. In such an education, students are equipped with critical thinking tools, which amongst others involves discussions around globalisation, neo-liberalism, international trade agreements and their impact on their way of life.

Despite its occasional utopian rhetoric, the book is highly relevant for today's reflections on the state of citizenship education and discussions about active citizenship and critical thinking pedagogy. The pandemic is a clear sign of a civilization crisis in which the triangle created between globalisation, consumerism and sustainable development is defined by capitalist and market processes and trends (Adam, 2020a). The abolition of the capitalist production and regulatory system cannot solve the problems of civilisation, which are more deeply rooted in individualistic and consumer (acquisitive) behaviour. The pandemic crisis has taught us that a less wasteful consumer model and lifestyle is possible and that the old model which was indifferent to nature and balanced social development is no longer easy to replicate. As the authors of the book conclude, we should

teach all of our students the basics of the electoral process, the role of various government bodies and departments, stress the importance of voting, the importance and need for active political and social participation and to critically reflect on past and current national and international political and economic actions.

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