Book Review

Arie Kizel, *Enabling Students' Voices and Identities: Philosophical Inquiry in a Time of Discord*

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Prof. Arie Kizel's latest book, *Enabling Students' Voices and Identities: Philosophical Inquiry in a Time of Discord* (2024) offers a timely and insightful exploration of how philosophical inquiry can empower students to develop their voices and identities in an era of increasing social and political polarization. Drawing on his extensive experience in the philosophy of education and philosophy for/with children, Kizel, an ex-president of the International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children (ICPIC), presents a compelling case for cultivating critical thinking and dialogue skills as essential tools for navigating our complex educational world.

The book is structured around three key themes: the importance of student voices, identity formation ('Enabling Identities,' in Kizel's words) in education, and the power of philosophical inquiry as a pedagogical approach. Kizel weaves these threads together masterfully, demonstrating how philosophical questioning and discussion can create spaces for students to express themselves while also authentically engaging with diverse perspectives.

Kizel lays out his theoretical framework in the opening chapters, drawing on thinkers like John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and Matthew Lipman. He argues that traditional education models often stifle student voice and agency, whereas a more dialogic approach centred on philosophical inquiry can nurture students' critical reflection and self-expression capacity. This sets the stage for a deeper examination of enabling identity within educational contexts, providing readers with enlightening insights into this crucial aspect of education and dialogue.

The book's middle section delves into the challenges of identity development in our current 'time of discord.' Kizel astutely observes how social

media, political tribalism, and rapid cultural change have made it increasingly difficult for young people to forge coherent identities. He posits that philosophical inquiry offers a valuable toolkit for helping students navigate these turbulent waters by encouraging them to question assumptions, consider multiple viewpoints, and articulate their beliefs and values.

The book's greatest strength lies in its practical focus. Kizel does not simply theorize; he provides concrete strategies for implementing philosophical inquiry in diverse educational settings. Through vivid case studies and sample lesson plans, he illustrates how educators can create 'communities of inquiry' where students feel safe to voice their thoughts and grapple with challenging ideas. These examples span a range of age groups and subject areas, demonstrating the versatility of Kizel's original approach.

One particularly compelling chapter explores how philosophical inquiry can foster intercultural understanding and bridge ideological divides. At a time when many societies are grappling with intense polarization, Kizel's insights on cultivating empathy and intellectual humility through structured dialogue feel especially relevant.

While the book's arguments are generally persuasive, some readers may find Kizel's optimism about the transformative power of philosophical inquiry a bit idealistic. He acknowledges some practical challenges educators face in implementing these methods but could have engaged more deeply with systemic obstacles in educational institutions.

Additionally, the book's focus is primarily on formal educational settings. It broadened its impact by exploring how these principles might apply to informal learning environments or adult education.

These minor critiques aside, *Enabling Students' Voices and Identities* is essential to educational philosophy. Kizel's important work offers a hopeful vision for how education can evolve to meet the needs of students in our rapidly changing world. He charts a path toward a more engaged and reflective citizenry by emphasizing the development of critical thinking skills alongside emotional intelligence and self-awareness.

Educators, policymakers, and anyone concerned with the future of education will find valuable insights in this thoughtful and timely book. Kizel's passionate advocacy for student voice and identity development, grounded in rigorous philosophical inquiry, provides a compelling blueprint for nurturing the thoughtful, articulate, and empathetic individuals our societies desperately need.

References

Kizel, Arie. (2024). *Enabling Students' Voices and Identities: Philosophical Inquiry in a Time of Discord.* Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.