



Kapur, V., & Ghose, S. (Eds.). (2018). *Dynamic learning spaces in education*. Singapore: Springer.

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Globalisation and digitisation have dramatically transformed virtually every aspect of social, economic and cultural life, making them more innovative, dynamic, complex, and often conflicting. In spite of the changes that followed the technological trends, education as such is still a traditional domain, which needs to be modernised in terms of purpose, content and methodology.

The book *Dynamic Learning Spaces in Education* is "an appropriate forum for presenting and analysing the contemporary educational space, positing theoretical and practical issues, that temper educational discourse" (vii). It gives the floor to 21 practicing teachers and educationists to elaborate on educational reform, transformation of the traditional classroom and pedagogical practices in order to meet the demands of the contemporary global and dynamic world, and its global citizens.

I found the idea of gathering quite a large number of authors to contribute to the general context extremely interesting and fruitful, since each of the researchers has brought his or her own expertise, experience, thoughts and insights to the book. This enriched the content with different perspectives and linkages between theory and practice, and, eventually, made the book multi-dimensional.

Overall, the book incorporates four main directions of the collective explorations on:

1. The digital learning culture, its potential and possibilities.
2. The new edge classroom and its teaching strategies.
3. Social justice and inclusive practices.
4. Voices from the field.

Each of the above directions is further broken up into three to seven studies. All studies contain profound analyses of the issues in terms of methodology, theory, praxis and outcomes, and are well-referenced. The book also comes with a short but comprehensive conclusion, providing a holistic view on the discourse.

Part 1 is dedicated to potential and possibilities of digital teaching and learning. This topic is elaborated in terms of the functions and elements of modern education, and, that is more important, as a developmental phenomenon of new digital learning culture. Globalisation and digitisation have brought palpable changes in society, making it more open, vibrant and interconnected, which requires corresponding transformation of schools and education principles.

For this reason, the issue of teachers' personal and professional development is of crucial importance, because the teachers are respected as the catalysts and the key agents of the transformation. "They have to turn their schools into learning organisations where capacities to learn and structures that support learning are widespread among the teachers as well as the learners" (52).

All three sub-sections of Part 1 explore this issue from different prospects:

- theory and practice of e-learning culture;
- deconstructing teacher education - technology and the intern; and
- technology integration in language teaching.

In their studies, the authors share their approach to and results of teachers' education, and conclude that in the digital world today, it is vital for teachers to be "exposed to cutting-edge technologies, individualised pedagogical strategies and advanced data systems ... [which] will enable them to work effectively in a rapidly evolving world ... and to embrace new and more effective approaches that address the needs of twenty-first century learners" (53).

Part 2 is devoted to interactive teaching-learning strategies. The underlying idea of the section is anchored in the thesis that "to succeed in life, the learner requires different skills and knowledge that those which are required for academic success. Classroom and teaching strategies need to be reconfigured to focus on learning rather than teaching, with the learner as the initiator of the learning process" (386). Thus, redesigning the classroom and adopting interactive instructional methods that stimulate critical and analytical

thinking, the spirit of inquiry, active construction, situated learning, social interaction, is essential in the twenty-first-century school.

The following sub-sections convey about how the issue has been tackled through the use of different methods:

- project based learning;
- cooperative learning;
- errors as learning opportunities;
- pedagogical concept knowledge;
- reflective practices;
- pedagogical reforms to foster life skills; and
- redesigning the school classroom.

Sharing their positive experience and insights, all the practitioners, however, mention that the key obstacles for wider rollout of the practices lay in three main areas:

- still quite a small proportion of teachers are ready and willing to implement the engaging methods in their classrooms;
- traditional curriculum, knowledge memorising and examination oriented teaching approaches are not flexible enough for grasping and absorbing the pedagogies that develop skills and customised learning;
- a lot of case-by-case changes in education methods are taking place across the nations, but to have quantity shifts, systematic transformations are needed.

Part 3 covers the topic of social justice and inclusion in modern education. A society with social inclusion strives to ensure equal opportunities and engagement for all its members. Moreover, "the space for diversity of opinion provides the checks and balances critical for the development of society, ... [and] fostering flexibility and continuous change. ... [E]ducation for an inclusive society is an acceptable norm today and the aim is to create an education system that will develop the potential of all children... while recognising and valuing their differences" (21).

In this respect, the studies which contribute to the chapter, examine the topic from different, and sometimes, very special perspectives:

- *diversity* – dealing with giftedness in an inclusive school environment;
- *human rights* – how are they positioned in the teaching and learning process;
- *multilinguality* – issues of mother tongue instructions in a multilingual context;
- *social issues* – how disparities in family backgrounds affect the educational opportunities.

Once again, the authors stress on the key importance of teachers and their education in creating an inclusive educational setting, executing inclusive practices, and facilitating the development of a well-rounded personality, and developing the potential of all children while accepting their differences.

Part 4, "Voices from the Field", gives space to the practitioners who elaborate on the theories, restructuring them into meaningful knowledge. There are reflections on a number of subjects and authors' developments that can be interesting as such, or as a starting point for further independent developments or questions:

- *Social constructivism in education* (a theory that builds on Vygotsky's works) or the more recent term "interactive constructivism" – applying the concept of Zone of Proximal Development for locating the construction of knowledge to the realm of activity. It was interesting for me to follow how the imagery (metaphors of rivers, fireworks, etc.) has been used to illustrate the concept and to bring it to life in different settings. So, what else can be employed in interactive education constructions?

- *Classroom heterogeneity and dynamism* – the discussion on the dynamic classroom in terms of a) quality and utilisation of resources, infrastructural provisions, b) students' engagement with learning, c) classroom management, teachers' actions and need-based strategies. Are "varying levels of learning, diverse backgrounds, abilities, and disabilities serving as opportunities to teachers in bringing multitude of perspectives, fresh pedagogies, ideas, and opinion to the class"? (316)

- *Ethics of inclusion* – five case-studies on students with special education needs (autism, dyslexia, comprehension issues, visual disability): issues, teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, and parents' viewpoints, a good reflection of the author on "the case for and against inclusion". The debate is still open - "are we trying to promote an idealistic concept? ... is it something which looks good on paper or does it also have some merit in this practical world?" (327)

- *Blended classroom* – the use of the internet and e-resources in language teaching, issues and solutions, pedagogic possibilities and importance of teachers' ITC skills. Reading this sub-section, I was thinking: in the technological era, literacy is taking different forms, and so is the technology used as a means to learning the language, or vice versa?

- *Reflective teaching* – the need and the importance of reflection in education, theoretical constructions, essentials and methods of reflective practice in teaching, case-studies on reflective practices as an integral part of the teaching process. Can reflection be a tool for practicing critical thinking, empathy, social skills, or creativity?

- *Childhood in theory and in reality* – different aspects of childhood studied via examples of one of the regions in India: schooling, involvement in work, engagement with peers, leisure, community, participation, etc. The study "stresses the lacunae in the historical and sociological study of childhood where the voices and experiences of children

are not given a credible and legitimate stance" (380). What is it to be a child in other countries? Is it a life story or just an adult interpretation of normative and expected childhood experiences?

The final chapter logically concludes the book in terms of offering the readers a wider discourse on translating theories and ideology to practice.

On the whole, I would sum up the obvious virtues of the book:

- a clear structure, methodology, and detailed instructions;
- a variety of topics and viewpoints;
- a plethora of examples, case-studies, and practical knowledge;
- a wide range of sources and references.

The book offers a good grounding for educators "who are committed to the profession of teaching, imbued with theoretical insights, practical understanding, and the ability to adapt to changing times" (389) and will definitely be of value for those who look for quality discussion on the varying facets of education and its contemporary challenges.

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