

a democratic society “must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder, the democratic conception in education” (Dewey, *Democracy in Education*). In other words, marketization of education without democratization of the workplace will have serious and negative repercussions for democracy in Canada.

There is however one area that this collection does not cover. The absence of the recent educational reform in Quebec robs the reader the opportunity to have a comparative look at different types of educational reforms in Canada. The MEQ reform, unlike the one in Western Canada, Ontario or Manitoba, is believed not to be top-down but to have originated from within the ranks. Based on a constructivist approach to teaching and learning, it aims at integrating the demands of a knowledge based economy with a democratic society. Despite this lacuna *‘The Erosion of democracy in Education: From critique to possibilities’* will be useful not only to students of education but also to students and researchers of globalization, multiculturalism and equity issues.

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WILLIAM J. SPURLIN. *Lesbian and Gay Studies and the Teaching of English: Positions, pedagogies, and cultural politics*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, (2000), 326 pp. \$33.95 (members \$27.95). (ISBN 1-8141-2794-0).

For most of us in the academic and teaching professions the discourse of gender politics, discriminatory practice, and equity is familiar. Education is principally a social act, insofar as we plan, prepare, and deliver curriculum

to students in a forum in which ideas are at times positioned as social directives – or at least as sets of parameters within which we interact with our natural and social worlds. Some of us, in our reflexive ways, have come to appreciate not only the importance but also the significance of taking into account the social politics of our students. In reading Spurlin's collection of papers, notes, and stories we are reminded of the degree of import our teaching has in terms of its capacity to include or exclude, empower or disempower, and enrich or marginalize the lives of students. *Lesbian and Gay Studies and the Teaching of English: Positions, pedagogies, and cultural politics*, Spurlin remarks, explores “the teaching of lesbian and gay studies from a range of disciplinary perspectives within the field of English.”

Spurlin has accumulated an engaging array of 16 essays located within the discourse of queer theory and ranging from discussions of the implications of curriculum and pedagogy to the politics of culture. More specifically this collection addresses English instruction within a discourse of queer theory on topics of: language arts, children's literature, English education, film, cultural studies, literary studies, and composition studies. In sampling each of these essays I was reminded of a comment made by Timothy Findley, whereby he made mention of the beauty in a text that can be pulled from the shelf and enjoyed for the moment. This set of essays lends itself nicely to this, and as such was warmly welcomed in my life that rarely offers up enough uninterrupted time to read beyond my immediate needs.

*Lesbian and Gay Studies and the Teaching of English: Positions, pedagogies, and cultural politics* locates its analysis in an epistemological crisis in which there has been a reintegration of pedagogical certitudes within the institutions of teaching and learning. Teaching, Spurlin notes, has the potential to create and/or perpetuate normative ideologies. Transforming pedagogies is presented as an issue of process – it is less a solution than a way of considering epistemological diversity. Each of the essays in its own way questions normative classroom culture, and reintroduces us to the transformative aspects of multicultural pedagogy. Consistent with a poststructural analysis, Spurlin positions the critical dialogue surrounding teaching (English) as matter of process, involving a “continual questioning, not the mere substitution of a new set of teaching practices as a simple solution.”

As a snapshot of the overall purpose of *Lesbian and Gay Studies and the Teaching of English: Positions, pedagogies, and cultural politics*, this collection of critical texts help to theorize queer difference as a lens through which we read, interpret, and construct identities. Furthermore, it considers the intersection of race, gender, social class, and sexuality as a complex interplay of personal politics. The analysis spans a range of instructional levels and connects the critical discourses of teaching lesbian and gay studies from kindergarten through to post-secondary teaching.

Heterosexism, homophobia, and the current analysis of same-sex desire, are not given the appropriate degree of significance as a socio-political position in teaching and learning. This text extends the dialogue of the sexual and gender politics of power and education, and functions as a useful companion reader for both teachers and students of queer theory and English instruction.

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GERALD K. LETENDRE & REBECCA ERWIN FUKUZAWA. *Intense Years: How Japanese adolescents balance school, family and friends*. New York: Routledge Falmer (2001). US\$50 / C\$75 (HB ISBN: 0-8153-3145-2)

In their new study, *Intense Years: How Japanese adolescents balance school, family, and friends* (2001), Rebecca Fukuzawa and Gerald LeTendre examine the lives of middle school students based on research they conducted in Japan between 1982 and 1995. They argue that as “young adolescents are moving between the world of children and the world of adults, their lives are affected by a broad range of social forces not found in other age groups” (p. 2). Given examples of social forces, they note that “[d]espite the Japanese predilection for depicting themselves as a harmonious and homogeneous society, the modern history of Japan suggests that it is a dynamic society prone to change, conflict and tension” (p. 1). By presenting case studies of five students, they attempt to convey the sense of balance that these students struggle to maintain in this changing Japan. They hope that discussing the experiences of young adolescents will provide a means to understand the forces that are shaping and transforming Japanese society.

The book begins with a discussion of “The Curriculum and Life in Classrooms.” The authors note that the emphasis of the middle school curriculum under the Ministry of Education has been “the development of the whole person or balanced individuals” (p. 11) rather than learning of academic subjects, which is to be realized through a well-structured curriculum combining academic and non-academic activities. While the academic classes are carried out in a highly teacher-centered manner, the non-academic activities, which occupy almost forty percent of the curriculum, provide students with the opportunity to take initiative, to be engaged in independent and group projects, and to build a strong bond with classmates and friends. It is through participating in the non-academic activities at school (e.g., clubs, moral education) that students develop personally and learn to manage Japanese social relations and the hierarchy of the adult world.

In chapter 2 “Exams, *Juku*, and the Pressure to Advance in School,” the author discuss the tensions inherent in Japan’s competitive exam system. As high school education has become the norm rather than a dream in this