

BOOK REVIEWS

WILLIAM H. BOYER. *Education for the Twenty-First Century*. San Francisco, CA: Caddo Gap Press (2002). 264 pp. US \$24.95 (1-880192-38-1).

William H. Boyer's (2002) *Education for the Twenty-First Century* is an anthology of twenty-three of the author's articles which appeared in various journals in the decades since 1963. Boyer, Professor Emeritus in philosophy of education at the University of Hawaii, has contributed a timely collection to the debate concerning both educational and world futures. Appearing at a time when world history is entering an apparent phase of unending war and various parts of the globe are being re-colonized, Boyer's book provides a sense of how educators might intervene to help counter these developments. Boyer, whose primary interest is in democratic and sustainable futures, sees the current crises as outgrowths of the old world order based on war, poverty, and ecological destruction. Boyer suggests that the United States is providing the wrong model for the creation of a just and sustainable future.

In the three main sections of *Education for the Twenty-First Century*, Boyer provides an approach to reconstructionism, a term he uses to suggest an alternative model for creating a just and sustainable future. The first section called 'Goals of Education' consists of ten articles, each contributing important threads to the notion of reconstructionism. The second section, 'Critiques of Education,' consists of five chapters dealing with issues of values, freedom, capitalist economics, and miseducation. Section three, 'War Prevention Education' offers nine chapters dealing with aspects of peace education. The book's final section contains references and a glossary of key concepts and definitions Boyer uses in the presentation of his ideas concerning educational futures.

Before looking more closely at each of the three main sections of *Education for the Twenty-First Century*, it should be stated that that this book is overtly American and can be identified as such in ways that many educational texts from the United States cannot. The book is written by an American

educational philosopher with the explicit intention of criticizing dominant American educational systems because the author believes that the education system is contributing to a dangerous and destructive trajectory in world affairs. Lest readers be impatient with the explicit tone of the text, the reward lies in Boyer's humanistic point of view which underpins his outline of the means of stepping back from the more dangerous path in an attempt to use education as a powerful tool for the reconstruction of American society. To the extent that readers can identify themselves as fellow travelers on the more dangerous trajectory, Boyer's book has the potential to inspire change in how teachers perceive their roles in relation to world futures.

Section One: Goals of education

Regarding the goals of education Boyer claims that educators must work towards imparting the kinds of knowledge which will allow for effective citizenship. This knowledge includes reconsideration of the ordering of society's values. Boyer suggests a kind of topsy-turvy change whereby society should move from a non-sustainable present wherein the priorities are economics at the top, with social needs next and ecology at the bottom, to a sustainable future, where the priorities are reversed: the ecology will take precedence over social needs and the economy will be at the bottom. In the restructured society communities will function as laboratories wherein ecological and social needs will be given priority over the needs of the economy. Citizens will be moved to help restructure these priorities through participation in an education system which aims to empower students through the pursuit of environmentally sensitive, ecologically balanced goals.

To move the educational system in a direction which has the potential to help plan alternative futures means a re-emphasis on creativity within the schools. The kind of creativity Boyer has in mind is not easily recognized in the various artifacts of western individualism such as a fine painting or sculpture; rather it is what Boyer refers to as Type II creativity. This might be called social creativity and results when "people join collectively to guide the course of history" (p. 22). The notion that people can collectively guide the course of history gains reinforcement in classrooms which engage students in collective problem-solving while the institutions work to link knowledge learned in the classrooms to social actions in the communities.

Examples demonstrating Boyer's Type II creativity would be when a group of students decide to do something about a badly littered site near their school or when after a discussion of corporate intrusions in schools, students vote to boycott certain vending machines, and so on. More globally Type II creativity is at work when students engage their parents to support electoral candidates whose policies support multilateral solutions to problems of war and international instability. These examples are meant to suggest that Boyer's world view is holistic and he would have teachers, at all

levels of the system, work to break down fragmentation and compartmentalization of knowledge.

Boyer wrote much of his material during the long shadow of Hiroshima and the subsequent cold war. His writing reflects the urgency of a generation of scholars whose memory precludes embracing a new militarism and who believe that the schools hold the potential to produce a more engaged participatory citizen unwilling to continue the historical trends towards war. However, to accomplish this move towards an ecologically sustainable future, Boyer knows that education must undergo a thorough critique.

Section Two: Critiques of education

The second section of *Education for the Twenty-First Century* offers readers a critique of modern education centering around three concerns: questions of equality; questions of freedom; and questions of economics. Of particular interest in this section is the essay, co-authored with Paul Walshm entitled 'Are Children Born Unequal?' because this piece frames the basics of the dispute with the 'long in the tooth' psychometric tradition which has had tremendous influence in schools by acting on the notion that intelligence is somehow a measurable thing that, when projected onto a society, produces the well known bell curve.

Oddly, in Boyer's introduction to the piece he makes no mention of more recent and supportive research, such as that of the late Stephen J Gould's (1981) *The Mismeasure of Man*, which he perhaps should have done, if for no other reason than to point out that others share much of the critique of the pernicious use of the idea of intelligence. No matter, the critique is an important one because it reminds teachers that if intelligence is at least as much 'output' as 'input' then schools and teachers have an obligation not to hide behind notions of limited student potential in the perpetuation of poor teaching practices.

If one assumes, without compelling evidence to the contrary, that individuals are of equal intelligence, then the way is opened for serious reform of elitist education traditions. Once the door for this serious reform is wedged open, parents might dare dream that their first encounters with schools might be an interest and enthusiasm inventory against a backdrop of what's on offer in this particular institution aimed at developing those interests and enthusiasms. In the absence of this dream, schools will continue to produce what Boyer correctly identifies as "millions of people who think of themselves as failures – as social rejects . . . a travesty on the potentialities of an affluent nation" (p. 145).

The second theme in this section, freedom, deserves brief mention. Boyer cites evidence that the notion that schools and education have worked to strengthen freedom, particularly in the area of civil liberties, is highly

problematic. In part, Boyer blames this problem on teachers' voluntary submission to arbitrary authority when it comes to dealing with so-called controversial issues. This accusation is in itself of cold comfort to teachers whose lives are daily subjected to the weight of arbitrary authority. Certainly, though, Boyer's central argument that the schools produce conformity in an age of corporate control is one with which it is difficult to take issue.

The third theme in this section suggests that schools have been remiss in failing to teach that there is more than one economic system. Boyer believes students need to understand that capitalism is one form of economics and others, especially socialist and ecological economics, need to be taught in schools. Boyer's desire to use education to achieve the topsy-turvy movement whereby ecological concerns will drive social policy while the economy is placed in the service of such policy, suggests the necessity for citizens to understand and imagine alternate economic systems because capitalism will not work to achieve the transformation since it privileges its own capitalist economics. Worse, capitalism contains within its inherent logic the race towards war.

Section Three: War prevention education

As noted earlier in this review, Boyer's anthology was written in the shadow of war and during the cold war's immanent nuclear holocaust. The climate generated by all this was, of course, one of fear and the fear was widespread and rehearsed on a daily basis in schools as students were taken through air raid drills and fed a steady diet of war-related propaganda. This is a state of affairs that most people who grew up in North America during the 1950's and the following decades are familiar with from first hand experience. Boyer's discussion of war prevention education adds texture to this sense of fear by tracing the impact of the incipient militaristic culture existing within the United States, produced and nourished by the largest military industrial complex in history. Because of the sheer size of the American military, there are now staggering numbers of youth, in the hundreds of thousands, whose formative years are spent directly within a culture driven by expansionist and militaristic ideology. Boyer notes that the military is an instrument of violence controlled by the state and that "when men defend violence itself, they have taken on the 'morality' of a psychopath" (p. 193). Boyer is doing his readers a favor by pointing out the congruities between the American idolization of the military and the Nazi reverence for the same. Boyer believes that the idolization of violent means to an end has no place within a democracy.

In the closing pages of *Education for the Twenty-First Century*, Boyer offers advice for teachers engaged in peace education and then he ends with a piece entitled 'Obsolete U.S. Policies Fail to Deter Global Terrorism.'

Writing this review, in the closing moments of the latest round of American imperial policy in relation to the Middle East, it is appropriate to consider the wisdom of William Boyer who reminds us of the persistent failure of U.S. policy. Wisdom in the Old Frisian sense means to turn around. Boyer's overarching plea that teachers use education as a means to help achieve a reordering of a culture based on war, poverty, and ecological destruction is indeed timely. Placing the ecology first, developing social policy supportive of sustaining the world's eco-system and using the tremendous economic means at our disposal to implement such proposals involves the need to embrace wisdom, to embrace the turn around. Readers in all areas of education, formal and informal, will benefit from a careful reading of the wisdom proffered in *Education for the Twenty-First Century*.

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JOHN J. COGAN, PAUL MORRIS & MURRAY PRINT. (2002). Editors. *Civic Education in the Asia-Pacific Region: Case studies across six societies*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer. 201 pp. \$85. ISBN: 0-415-93213-0.

Modern life means democracy, democracy means freeing intelligence for independent effectiveness – the emancipation of mind as an individual organ to do its own work. We naturally associate democracy, to be sure, with freedom of action, but freedom of action without freed capacity of thought behind it is only chaos. (Dewey, *Democracy in Education*, 1903)

Civic Education in the Asia-Pacific Region is a timely compendium. This book deals with fundamental issues over a wide-ranging geopolitical landscape. As the eighteenth volume in the "Reference Books in International Education" series, *Civic Education* moves beyond many of the more targeted and restricted titles that have traditionally highlighted this series. This latest addition combines, compares, and contrasts education practices in six varying societies that geographically ring the Pacific Ocean. In fact, it is this very diversity and lack of symmetry that marks this book as a major contributor to the evolving contemporary debates swirling around the illusive topic of civic (or citizenship) education.

From a structural point of view, *Civic Education* is divided into three interconnected sections. As well as providing the necessary detail related to the research design and protocols, chapter one describes the literature base dealing with civic education and introduces the reader to the three overarching research questions that drive the study:

- What are the governmental policies (written and unwritten) related to civic education in schools?