

SHELLEY HASINOFF & DAVID MANDZUK. *Case Studies in Educational Foundations: Canadian Perspectives*. Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press. (2015). 216 pp. \$39.95 (paperback). (ISBN 978-0-19-544854-2).

One of the burning questions that challenges values education is: Why should future teachers study educational foundations? Dewey (1913) defines teaching as an “intellectual enterprise” which means “intellectual awakening and enlightenment” (p. 39). This implies that teachers should be equipped with solid educational foundations upon which they can develop critical thinking skills. In *Case Studies in Educational Foundations: Canadian Perspectives*, Hasinoff and Mandzuk specify this quality as *the habit of mind* that enables teachers not only to identify *uncertainties* but also to debunk *unwarranted certainties* in values education. The uncertainties refer to something unknown due to insufficient data, lack of knowledge, or skills, while the unwarranted certainties allude to unexamined assumptions (*myths*), unjustified faith (*bandwagons*), and unsupported fears (*moral panics*). What distinguishes uncertainties from unwarranted certainties is that with uncertainties, we know that we do not know something; however, in unwarranted certainties, we are certain about something that we do not in fact know. Unwarranted certainties are not easily spotted because they often take the form of myths, bandwagons, and moral panics and hence become significant barriers to critical thinking. Overcoming unwarranted certainties, as the authors argue in the overview, is “neither an easy nor an intuitive process” (p. xxi); it requires constant scrutiny, which comprises the knowledge of history, philosophy, and sociology of education.

In order to avoid unnecessarily sophisticated debates in the discussion of educational foundations, Hasinoff and Mandzuk provide 30 case studies for teachers to “[develop] the critical thinking skills and flexibility of mind” (p. 160). These case studies were collected by professors from faculties of education, graduate students, and educators across Canada. They can help teacher candidates bridge theory and practice in pedagogy and make sense of myths, bandwagons, and moral panics.

In general, this book is organized in a logical and succinct fashion. There are five chapters in total; the discussions from Chapter 2 to Chapter 4 are exemplified respectively with 10 case studies followed by five reflective questions. The first chapter includes three essays, one each on the history, philosophy, and sociology of education that make the case for why each of those disciplines matters to teachers. The authors highlight that the study of educational history can foster a “historical-mindedness... [that] we can use for examining, interpreting, and acting upon contemporary educational contexts” (p. 3). In other words, it makes us “less susceptible” (p. 2) to unwarranted certainties. Furthermore, the study of philosophical inquiry and sociology of education can equip teacher candidates with the critical thinking skills they need to examine both “the intended and unintended functions of educations” (p. 14). Simply put, critical thinking skills enable teachers to recognize the gaps between expectations and reality.

From the second chapter to the fourth chapter, the authors discuss the three unwarranted certainties: myths, bandwagons, and moral panics. Chapter 2 defines the concept of myths in education, the myths of normalcy, gender, ability, digital divide, constructivism, rewards, multiculturalism, and secularism. Different gender expectations, for instance, are often socialized in the hidden curriculum of schools even though educational policies mandate the equal treatment of boys and girls. “Good, quiet girls” and “tough, naughty boys” are often the stereotypical images demonstrated in school discourses and the attitudes of some teachers. The case “When I Grow Up I Want to Be...” examines exactly the impacts of gender expectations for females based on biological and religious factors in a small rural community. Chapter 3 explores bandwagons, namely, full inclusion, single-sex education, the future of school libraries, privacy of information, reflections, sustained silent reading, accountability, and community involvement. Bandwagons are generally rooted in myths and are time-sensitive, over-generalized solutions. People support them because they are popular or likely to be successful; however, the positive appearance of bandwagons is based neither on verifiable facts nor evidence-based conclusions. They are often driven by “self-proclaimed experts and gurus” (p. 64) instead. Chapter 4 examines moral panics that pervade education, issues like diversity, bullying, social media, cell phones, violent video games, professional identity, youth and youth culture, and moral education. Moral panics are also rooted in myths and influenced by bandwagons; they are exaggerated fears and outrage aroused by threats to the moral fabric or stability of society. The last chapter wraps up the whole book, inviting readers to revisit these trends and challenges in light of educational history, philosophy, and sociology. In the summary, Hasinoff and Mandzuk reiterate that “our aim as educators is to reduce these (uncertainties) by becoming better informed, more thoughtful, and more willing to disrupt our certainties about what constitutes effective teaching and learning” (p. 165).

This book is notable in that it contains not only comprehensive discussions but also what is to date hotly debated specific educational cases in Canada. In debunking the myth of normalcy, for example, the authors first analyze the social “profile of the normal child” (p. 21) who bears a remarkable resemblance to the majority of teachers, “namely, white, able-bodied, and a native English-speaker” (p. 21). The authors contend that this profile of normalcy affects the way teachers perceive their students. Teachers tend to too readily correlate students’ performance with certain characteristics, such as “body build, gender, race, ethnicity, given name, attractiveness, dialect, and socio-economic level” (p. 22). This statement is corroborated by the case “This Suit’s for Wearing.” In a performing arts class, a group of diverse students are categorized as “slow learners” (p. 32) by their teacher, Morris, who appears to ground his pedagogy in the myth of the normal child. After a series of conflicts, Morris starts to discover the individuality among each of these students and value each of them by their individual performance rather than the profile of the normal child. The given example demonstrates a perfect combination between fundamental educational principles and their practical implications in a real educational context. In the process of applying educational values, Hasinoff and Mandzuk endeavor to make plain to the teacher candidate how to think critically in real school life, which is characterized by its complexity and diversity. This book, therefore, is well designed as a rehearsal for implementing the foundations of education that “enable educators to recognize the validity of certainties that are warranted and to challenge those that are not” (p. xix).

The greatest strength of the book lies in its critical stance even of its own analysis. For instance, in identifying unwarranted certainties, the authors bear in mind that “great ideas can appear to be bandwagons when there is insufficient professional development or weak administrative support to sustain them” (p. 66). This acknowledgement saves the authors from oversimplifying the difference between unwarranted certainties and reasonable ideas supported by insufficient evidence.

The only quibble about this book is on the notion of “social capital” (p. 75). This term was originally coined by Pierre Bourdieu (1991, 1994); therefore, Hasinoff and Mandzuk should have acknowledged it in the book and credited the original author.

Nonetheless, this book, overall, makes a great contribution to the field of values education in Canada. It will certainly be beneficial to both pre-service and in-service teachers. The case studies provided in this book present a profound analysis of the current problems in Canadian values education. It thus serves both as a real-time rehearsal and a conceptual tool for teachers who are interested in expanding their knowledge in values education and in tackling controversial issues in the classroom. This book should be introduced as a textbook for teacher education programs in Canada.

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