BOOK AND MEDIA REVIEWS

The conceptualisation of democratic citizenship education in non-Western societies

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Scholars posit that when non-Western societies (Kovalchuk and Rapoport call them post-authoritarian, post-colonial, and post-socialist societies) transition into democracies, their own knowledge, traditions, and histories are often considered hindrances to democratic progress. This spiralling tendency to replace local knowledge and values with Western ones is a cause for concern (p. 3). According to Kovalchuk and Rapoport, when it comes to citizenship and citizenship education 'an uncritical reliance on such frameworks (western) can result in inaccurate, oversimplified and distorted understanding of phenomena investigated in non-Western contexts' (p. 2).

Democratic Citizenship Education in Non-Western Contexts. Implications for Theory and Research, edited by Serhiy Kovalchuk and Anatoli Rapoport, details an oft-neglected aspect of citizenship education. This study amplifies the voice of indigenous knowledge and culture of the Global South, and serves as a comprehensive guide for examining and addressing the theories of citizenship education in non-western societies in order to bridge the 'dominance' gap of Western theoretical frameworks in the Global South. Kovalchuk and Rapoport challenge the extent to which Western theoretical citizenship education frameworks, and the ways in which they are used, are applicable in non-Western contexts. The book's eight chapters present and develop theorisation, and embrace differing perspectives of citizenship education. There are studies from Guatemala, Colombia, South Africa, West Africa, Lebanon, Israel, and Kosovo, from scholars in the field of comparative and international citizenship education. Gauging experiences from these non-Western societies contributes significantly to the narrative of democratic citizenship education and makes this book a robust resource for advancing knowledge on democratic citizenship in non-Western contexts for scholars, researchers, and educators in comparative and international citizenship education.

Kovalchuk and Rapoport discuss the upsurge of studies on citizenship education, yet there is only a minimal discussion on the 'theorization of citizenship education research' and their 'applicability to non-Western societies of Western theoretical paradigms that dominate citizenship education' (p. 1). The overarching concepts of 'Western' and 'non-Western' are explicated by Kovalchuk and Rapoport

in two ways. In the context of this book, the term 'non-Western' is used to represent 'post-authoritarian, post-colonial, and post-socialist societies of the Global South and East' (p. 2). This explication helps the reader to identify situations where the authors make references to Western Europe and the Global North, or post-colonial societies and the Global South. This sets the precedent which fosters the understandings of this book. Kovalchuk and Rapoport outline the three specific domains of theoretical lenses for researching citizenship education in non-Western contexts: (1) those that mechanically apply Western theoretical frameworks to non-Western contexts and do not attend to the specifics of the context, particularly during the data analysis - (2) those that deploy Western theoretical frameworks but consider the realities of non-Western contexts during the data analysis and challenge and extend such frameworks; (3) those that draw on context-specific, indigenous concepts of citizenship and citizenship education (p. 3)

Kovalchuk and Rapoport highlight a number of key concerns: the limited discussions on the theorisation of citizenship education research; the limited applicability of the theorisation of citizenship education research to non-Western societies; scholars' assertions about the limitations of using Western conceptual lenses to interpret the realities of non-Western societies; and the tendency for transitioning non-Western societies to remain recipients of citizenship education theories rather than contributing to them (p. 1). In addressing these issues, comparative education researchers suggest that western-generated theories and concepts should not be generalised. There also needs to be a prioritisation and inclusion of the local dialect and local traditions into research studies done in non-Western countries. This will enable researchers to better understand local realities, rather than viewing them as anachronistic and archaic (Sobe, Iveta, Alla & Kovalchuk, 2017). Prioritising indigenous knowledge will foster 'culturally relevant theoretical frameworks and avoid the marginalisation of local knowledge and traditions' (p. 3).

In fostering social understanding, civic engagement, and active participation in social discussions among young learners, we should check for covert apathy (Dwomoh, 2020). We should also be aware of the implications simulations can have for students who are asked to role-play a historical figure (Bickford & Dwomoh, 2020) in a democratic citizenship project.

In my practice as a social studies educator and researcher (with an interest in the impact of postcolonial theory on social studies and history curricula in Africa, the comparative aspects of educational reforms in the U.S. and African countries, and how multicultural citizenship and global citizenship are conceptualised, rationalised, and thought about in different educational systems), Kovalchuk and Rapoport's work provides indispensable and valuable information that addresses democratic citizenship education in non-Western contexts. The authors simplify terminologies in every cultural context to facilitate a smooth reading and transitions between chapters that I can use in the classroom. One such terminology is *Ubuntu*; this means 'a being that is constantly in the process of becoming' (p. 15). This concept is also seen as a 'path to guide national development' in the South African context (p. 18). The 'Adinkra symbols' of the Akan in Ghana, West Africa (pp. 27-28) and the 'Mande Charter of 1222' from present-day Mali (pp. 29-30) both advance the ideals of citizenship, democracy, cooperation, and power. Such knowledge does not only foster democratic citizenship education but also global citizenship education in a broader dialogue. This book undoubtedly is a great resource for scholars,

researchers, and practitioners in comparative and international citizenship education.

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