

## Book and media reviews

# Analyses and solutions for solving the citizenship and civic education dilemma in multicultural nations and global contexts

Banks, James A. (2020). *Diversity, Transformative Knowledge, and Civic Education. Selected Essays*. London & New York: Routledge. 235 pp., £29.59 (paperback) ISBN: 978-0-367-86319-7; £96.00 (hardback) ISBN: 978-0-367-86320-3; £29.59 (e-book) ISBN: 978-1-003-01836-0

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This book is a collection of essays by Professor James A. Banks, from different points in his career. Its point of departure is the citizenship education dilemma of how to teach 'democratic ideas and values within such social, political, economic, and educational contexts that contradict democratic values and beliefs' - contexts where unjust power relations such as sexism, racism and social-class stratification are embedded (p. 6). To approach this dilemma, the essays are organized into three broad themes: 1) race, knowledge construction and transformative curriculum reform; 2) cultural democracy and civic education in diverse nations; and 3) diversity, global migration and civic education. In what follows, I elaborate on each of these in turn.

Part 1, Race, Knowledge Construction, and Transformative Curriculum Reform, includes three essays which analyse knowledge construction and knowing from diverse perspectives. In the essays, Banks analyses knowledge construction from multiple perspectives, taking knowledge about race as a starting point. He conducts historical analysis, elaborates on the positionality

of researchers and discusses the impact of researchers' lived lives on their knowledge construction. Banks provides a very practical outline of the nature of knowing and knowledge and the interrelation of objectivity and subjectivity in knowledge construction—and this account also contains a description of his own epistemological journey. He argues that understanding how knowledge is constructed is part of the process of learning and internalizing democratic ideals. He also states that understanding how knowledge is constructed, how subjectivity and objectivity are interrelated in knowledge and how power works within knowledge construction, will equip students with skills that enable them 'to participate in the construction of knowledge that will help the nation to actualize its democratic ideals' (p. 60).

In the two essays in Part 2, *Cultural Democracy and Civic Education in Diverse Nations*, Banks approaches the dilemmas of multiculturalism, the nation state, the global context and the possibilities of civic education. He argues that civic education, in mirroring cultural democracy, renders an individual's full participation in a nation's civic life possible (p. 99). The first essay was written in 1982 and the second in 2009. Written at very different times, these essays complement each other, and it is interesting to read them together. Banks addresses the question of multiple identities, the sense of belonging, and of being part of the nation state. In the essay from 1982, Banks writes about the goal of fostering an engaged American citizenry and he reflects on how young people can develop an American national identity while having multiple identities. He observes that schools should enable students to develop a commitment to a nation's political ideals as well as to achieve such competencies that enable participation in the nation's civic life. Banks also addresses the question of citizenship education within the global context. He believes that having a healthy cultural identification enables the individual to have a healthy national identification that, in turn, enables a positive and reflexive global identification (p. 109). In the second essay of this section, Banks writes about the changed context of intensified global migration. He finds that citizenship education needs to be transformed because of this 'deepening diversity' (p. 114). What Banks absolutely argues against is assimilationist notions of citizenship; instead, he wants to develop multicultural citizenship and cultural democracy as the basis for civic education. He ends the essay with a practical educational tool, *Stages of Cultural Development Typology*, which he hopes teachers can use to help students to 'attain higher stages of cultural development and develop clarified cultural, national, and regional global identifications' (p. 123).

In Part 3, *Diversity, Global Migration, and Civic Education*, Banks dives deeper into the questions of migration and civic education, and the concept of citizenship. In the first essay in this section, he analyses and describes different understandings of citizenship, and the way they exclude certain ethnically or racially minoritized groups. Banks introduces a citizenship typology which has four stages: legal, minimal, active, and transformative citizenship. The aim

is to educate students toward a transformative citizenship where they promote values and moral principles such as social justice and equality (p. 147). Here Banks provides a solution to the citizenship education dilemma: when transformative citizenship education is implemented, students experience democracy in classrooms and schools, and this is how the internalization of democratic beliefs and values is accomplished.

Moreover, in the second essay of this third section, Banks describes another typology of citizenship where transformative citizenship is also the goal. This typology includes failed citizenship, recognized citizenship, participatory citizenship, and transformative citizenship. The concept of failed citizenship that Banks brings to the discussion is interesting. He analyses the role of school in failed citizenship and connects it, for instance, to radicalization. Failed citizenship does not refer to persons failing; instead, Banks refers to the structures and institutions that marginalize and exclude individuals from becoming full citizens (160). In this chapter Banks also relies on implementing transformative citizenship education in schools, and he describes interventions that educators can utilize. In the book's final essay, Banks continues to examine the conceptualizing of civic education for noncitizens. He recognizes a gap in current citizenship education research if civic education for noncitizens is not considered.

This collection is vast and enables the reader to contemplate the question of civic and citizenship education from multiple perspectives. The book has a lot to give to both researchers and practitioners within civic education. The captivating texts move from theory to practice and from history to the contemporary scene. However, it would have been interesting if there had also been an essay elaborating in more depth the question of school and its limitations or paradoxes for transformative citizenship or civic education. I would also have wished for a critical elaboration of such values or ways of being that the students may have to internalize in order to become transformative citizens, but which are counterproductive to the very goal of justice and democracy. It would be interesting to further examine the paradoxes of becoming transformative citizens.

The last essay ends by discussing civic education for minoritized citizens and noncitizens. I would have been happy if there had also been a text on transformative citizenship education for majoritised students. Banks refers to the discussion, but wants to concentrate on ethnically, racially and linguistically minoritized students in this collection. Although I understand the limitations of one collection, I do believe that a more in-depth discussion on Whiteness and transformative citizenship and the dynamics of transformative citizenship of majoritised students and minoritized students could have made this collection even more wide-ranging in its analysis of the citizenship and civic education dilemma.