

Book and media reviews

Rethinking citizenship for modern society

Banks, A. M. (2021). *Civic Education in the Age of Mass Migration: Implications for Theory and Practice*. New York: Teachers College Press. 160 pp., US\$34.95 (Paperback) ISBN: 9780807765791; US\$105 (Hardcover) ISBN: 9780807765807; US\$27.96 (Ebook) ISBN: 9780807779798.

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Citizenship, belonging, and identity are fundamental concepts for social science, civics educators or those involved in teaching citizenship education. Angela M. Banks's *Civic Education in the Age of Mass Migration: Implications for Theory and Practice* challenges us to reconsider the complex and changing nature of citizenship in more holistic and inclusive terms. To do this, Banks invites us through the book to move beyond confines of legal definitions of citizenship and consider the various ways in which citizenship in reality plays out in daily lived experiences of people in diverse and modern ways across the United States of America. The book challenges the taken-for-granted assumptions of how citizenship tends to be framed within educational spaces and classrooms. It critically contests the basic notions of citizenship education and practices. Banks posits that meaningful citizenship requires more of learners than simply knowledge of political processes; it may demand forms of resistance. As Banks notes, 'Responsible participation will at times require questioning, challenging and changing the status quo' (p. 18).

Key Takeaways

The book is aimed at American secondary school educators or those interested in engaging with a more holistic idea of citizenship. Filled with practical classroom activities and thought-provoking questions, Banks has carefully articulated both the inclusionary but also exclusionary power that citizenship education encompasses. Banks highlights that citizenship education when adopted in an uncritical manner can have an exclusionary power, as it marginalises those who may not conform or have the benefit of legal citizenship. The key strength in this is that the book encourages us to explore the link between membership, identity, and diversity that citizenship often encourages or, equally, leads to exclusion. This is artfully done by taking the reader through a historical journey illustrating the various ways in which political rhetoric and discourse over the years in the US has been used as an exclusionary weapon to exclude groups because of their race, ethnicity, class, and gender. This ultimately culminates in the conclusion that citizenship is a category that is not static; it has been ambiguous, disputed and changed over time.

Content and Structure

The book comprises an introduction and four chapters, offering an overview of civic education, insights into citizenship's implications, alternative foundations for citizenship, and practical classroom activities. Banks stresses the importance of considering citizenship's impact on civic education and who benefits from it.

Chapter 1 gives a brief overview of civic education in the US before considering why it is important. It then goes on to illustrate the 'ways that individuals with citizenship status participate within society can exclude various ways in which noncitizens participate' (p. 2). It goes on to show various ways in which authorised migrants participate in American society, despite their non-legal citizenship status. The chapter ends with key ideas for how educators who teach civic education may consider their practice so that it respects the diverse citizenship status of the class and moves to a more inclusive approach.

Chapter 2 explores how citizenship boundaries have been contested and changed over time in the US. Banks draws on key historical examples where race, class and gender have served as discriminatory markers for citizenship. Essentially, this raises questions on the 'de jure' concept of citizenship and how the law has been shaped by protective characteristics and used to exclude or include groups. Banks concludes that 'racial hierarchy, patriarchy, and capitalism have shaped the boundaries of citizenship' (p. 37).

In Chapter 3 Banks posits an alternative 'approach to membership in democratic societies that realigns the boundaries of citizenship with the *jus nexi* principle'. The *jus nexi* principle serves as a valuable tool for assessing which individuals' fundamental interests are affected by state actions. The objective is to prompt students to think beyond the traditional boundaries of

citizenship to adopt one that is more mutually inclusive and speaks to the experiences of modern diverse classrooms.

Chapter 4 concludes with some practical classroom activities that educators can use to critically engage with citizenship concepts and dimensions, such as the citizenship boundaries presented in the previous chapters. In this section Banks supports case studies with thought-provoking questions teachers can explore with students.

Conclusion

The book gives a powerful account of how citizenship status can be a factor in bringing the community together or polarising it further, depending upon how an educator draws on notions of citizenship. Given our age of mass migration, divisive politics and an increasingly globalised world, this book presents a strong case to reconsider traditional notions of civic education, in order to move to a more inclusive and modern approach. Although the concepts presented are transferable to an English citizenship education context, a teacher would need to draw on the local historical and socio-political context to make them more relevant to everyday classroom practice.