
Paul R Carr, Marc Pruyn, David Zyngier

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Can Educators Make a Difference?

Experimenting with, and Experiencing, Democracy in Education

Edited by:
Paul R. Carr, Université du Québec en Outaouais  
David Zyngier, Monash University  
Marc Pruyn, Monash University


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As the title of this book suggests, how we understand, perceive and experience democracy may have a significant effect on how we actually engage in, and with, democracy. Within the educational context, this is a key concern, and forms the basis of the research presented in this volume within a critical, comparative analysis. The Global Doing Democracy Research Project (GDDRP), which currently has some 70 scholars in over 20 countries examining how educators do democracy, provides the framework in which diverse scholars explore a host of concerns related to democracy and democratic education, including the impact of neoliberalism, political literacy, critical engagement, teaching and learning for and about democracy, social justice, and the meaning of power/power relations within the educational context.

Ultimately, the contributors of this book collectively ask: can there be democracy without a critically engaged education, and, importantly, what role do educators play in this context and process? Why many educators in diverse contexts believe that they are unable, dissuaded and/or prevented from doing thick democratic education is problematized in this book but the authors also seek to illustrate that, despite the challenges, barriers and concerns about doing democracy in education, something can, and should, be done to develop, cultivate and ingratiate schools and society with more meaningful democratic practices and processes.

This book breaks new ground by using a similar empirical methodology within a number of international contexts to gage the democratic sentiments and actions of educators, which raises a host of questions about epistemology, teacher education, policy development, pedagogy, institutional cultures, conscientization, and the potential for transformational change in education.
CONTENTS

REVIEWS
"If there was ever a time to reclaim and renew the power of democracy it is in this historical moment, when people everywhere are calling for the remaking of society. Can educators make a difference? provides a powerful affirmation to the question, by critically bringing together a variety of philosophical and practical concerns. More important, the book serves as an invaluable pedagogical resource for educators committed to a genuine praxis of democratic life, in the classroom and beyond." Antonia Darder Loyola Marymount University

"Can educators make a difference in their students’ lives? Most people will automatically answer with an emphatic “YES”. But if we press a bit further and ask: Can educators make a difference in the democratization of societies? Probably we will find a lot more hesitant answers. These are two deceptively simple questions, but I don’t know any “educator” worth the title that doesn’t struggle every day trying to find satisfactory answers to those two questions. Can educators make a difference? Experimenting with, and Experiencing, Democracy in Education is one of those very rare books that will assist teachers, especially those working in teacher education programs, to find effective ways to strengthen the relationships of schooling and democracy. Using detailed analyses of experiments with democratic schools, and experiences of democracy in education, the contributors of this book provide both conceptually sophisticated, as well as proven practical, initiatives to assist educators worldwide to affirm their central role in schools as transformative critical cultural professionals; supporting the goal of making every teacher a teacher of democracy. This is an outstanding book and should be required reading in every teacher education program." Gustavo E. Fischman Arizona State University

"What a rich collection of thinkers and educators from around the globe, all deeply committed to fostering a thick and robust version of democracy. Their engagement of students, their use of a solid body of theory and data, and their bold challenges to thin and stultifying versions of democracy, come together in this welcome book. I am pleased to report that the question asked in their title is answered in this hopeful text, that it is a
resounding “yes,” and that there is still much work to be done." **Darren E. Lund University of Calgary**

"I loved this book! It is powerful. It asks hugely important questions about democratic and undemocratic/anti-democratic education, pedagogy, curriculum, organization, ideology and control. As well as asking what (and who) education does currently serve, its international group of writers/researchers/activists also asks what/whose purposes should education serve? And it goes further. It shows how, in different national contexts and with international/global resonance, teachers and students can do deep democratic education. This excellent volume, based on the “Global Doing Democracy Research Project”, really can and does take critical educators, social justice educators, educators for democratic citizenship forward. Exciting stuff!" **Dave Hill University of Middlesex (London)** in The Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies
I've seen many different ways educators approach teaching—from the traditional learning model to some of the most innovative and creative classrooms. For the purpose of this article, I will focus on some of the most creative and innovative areas I've practiced or have seen over the past decade across classrooms. The Importance of Creativity.

Teachers may just be surprised how many creative innovators are looking to give back—and giving back to youth can be one of the most fulfilling ways a successful founder can make a difference. For example, if you follow Don Wettrick's class, you'll see a host of innovators and entrepreneurs who have been and continue to be involved with his students. Unless you expressed your appreciation, chances are he's like every other educator—like you, now—who runs on one type of fuel: faith. There is no shortage of instructional literature on how to make a difference in our students' lives, but how do we know when we've succeeded? A recent Harvard study found that students are significantly more likely to attend college and earn more money later in life if they had a good teacher in school. In the new analysis, economist Gary Chamberlain used data from more than 800 schools in a single large urban area in the United States over a twenty-year period. Can educators make a difference? provides a powerful affirmation to the question, by critically bringing together a variety of philosophical and practical concerns. More important, the book serves as an invaluable pedagogical resource for educators committed to a genuine praxis of democratic life, in the classroom and beyond. Antonia Darder Loyola Marymount University

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