

Book Reviews

Indigenous Philosophies and Critical Education: A Reader (Foreword by Akwasi Asabere-Ameyaw) edited by George J. Sefa Dei, New York, Peter Lang, Paperback Edition 2011, pp. xvi+476, CDN\$ 55.30, ISBN: 978-1-4331-0814-3.

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The book is a collection of essays which brings out the importance of indigenous knowledge than a mere 'contest of marginals'. The Essays in the book challenge the imperial procedures and tries to find the meaning of indigenous in relation to traditions: folk, local knowledge, cultural struggles for identity; and their representation and legitimation throughout the world. The book covers a wide geographical area and attempts to deal with Indigenous philosophies exhaustively.

The book is divided into five parts: **The First Part** deals with essay by different authors, dealing with Indigenous knowledge as philosophy and the implications of Decolonization. It broaches the conceptual and practical question of indigenous philosophies of knowing and talks about resisting Eurocentric ways by challenging the validity of western conception of "truth", "philosophy" and "objectivity". The second chapter takes up the notions of 'Indigeneity' and indigenous from anti-colonial and African feminist theoretical perspectives. It provides the critical approach by re-conceptualizing Indigenous perspectives from concepts such as 'Migrant' and 'Diasporic'. It shows the intellectual and ontological shift in current notions of indigeneity which is important when we talk about African diasporia and experience.

The remaining three chapters provide insights about holism and holistic thought from various parts of the world: in Asia, focusing mainly on Aryan school of thought primarily Hinduism and Buddhism, wherein all beings are connected and life is circular; in Australia, the socio-political ideology of assimilation with respect to colonial discourses and colonizing projects of "civilizing" and "educating" indigenous people; and about the divergent contextual complexities, contradictions, practical challenges, and critical pedagogical approaches in the Australian higher education sector.

The Second Part attempts to deconstruct the colonial and reconstruct the indigenous knowledge production through notions of space-time, unified knowledge and questions of identity and representation. Indigenous knowledge systems are democratised by means of tracking the trajectories of social differences i.e., race, gender, religion and culture. In other words, indigenous knowledge is about claims of local authenticities and construction of social meanings. The ideological colonization

by western knowledge is being fiercely contested by many scholars even as indigenous knowledge is increasingly resisted.

Indigenous knowledge is represented in western discourse in multiple ways and it is subjugated and regarded as subordinate in the context of hegemonic dominant knowledge enacted through the governmental regimes of the state. Michael Davis turns to some of the literature on the theories of place and how they contribute to understanding of indigenous knowledge and identity formation. The discussion is situated in his on-going work with aboriginal traditional owners. Martin Cannon's 'Ruminations on Red Revitalization' explores complexity of identity differences, and nationhood in indigenous knowledge education. It highlights the myriad challenges faced in de-colonizing education and bringing indigenous knowledge into the academy. He dwells on his personal experience of dealing with intergenerational displacement, language loss, histories of colonial injustice and dislocation. Central to his argument is the need to break with fictitious and homogenous identities. He refers to countries like India and Canada to bring forward his point and argues that to achieve the ultimate goal of a respectful decolonized education indigenous curricula must be developed from the bottom-up emerging from local or community based partnership, rather than top down imparting of academics.

Patience Elabor-Idemudia in 'Identity, Representation and Knowledge Production' shows how the question of identity and representation has implications of power in knowledge production. Proper knowledge production engages people's multiple identities and their ever changing tendency to fit into the postmodern society by influencing knowledge production using inter sectionalist framework, standpoint theory, insider perspective, and anti-racist discourse, as examined by the author.

In 'Indigeneity in Education', Dennis McPherson, argues that in India the prevailing control of Indian education is as harmful to native students, as destructive to native culture. He substantiates this claim through a careful examination of legislation concerning child welfare showing how native communities have fallen into applying the legislation of dominant society for themselves and for their children. The chapter offers some suggestion to rectify this unacceptable situation.

The Third Part delves into the dynamics of indigenous knowledge, wherein every knowledge moves through time and space confronting and sorting out strategies to bring about change in the traditional system. There needs to be explicit recognition of indigeneity in contemporary time as it faces both the possibilities and pit-falls. Local cultural resources of indigenous people have been least analysed. These voices need to be heard in the collective search for ways of social development within a global humanity. Indigenous knowledge is about resistance not in romanticised sense but resistance as struggle to face the tensions of today's modernised, globalised world.

Serena Heckler and Paul Sillitoe, in 'Education for Endogenous Development' take up the role of higher education in supporting endogenous development. It is anchored in the authors' own involvements in indigenous education in different contexts amongst indigenous people of Ecuador and Arabs of Gulf. Given the centrality of indigenous worldviews in defining the goals of development it is pointed out that one primary objective of endogenous development is to create an appropriate education system that enables people to interact effectively with the structures that determine the distribution of resource, empowerment and wellbeing.

Maria Shaa Tlaa Williams in 'Neo-colonial Melancholia' brings about the political issues of education. Indigenous people have been subject to US laws that govern Native American / American Indians in terms of land alienation, imposed western education and laws that restrict traditional religious practices. Hunting and fishing have deeply affected cultural practices such as language, music, and dance since nineteenth century. Public education propagates a system that does not serve the indigenous people.

Indigenous pedagogies of place and invasion from modernity describes how in the efforts to bring pre contact community knowledge into a cultural responsive pedagogy, one is challenged by the historic effect of colonization. Michael Marker in 'Sacred Mountain and Ivory Towers' shows how scholars working in academy act as conduits to community projects that are eventually helping decolonise the local elementary and high schools.

The Fourth Part talks about the indigenous knowledge and philosophies for schooling and education in Euro-American context which has largely been ignored or under explored. The section questions how we can conceptualise indigenous knowledge as indigenous science for transforming current school system. The colonial paradigm of the production, interrogation, validation and dissemination of knowledge needs to be replaced. All communities have their own active knowledge base, rooted in their local histories, cultures, cultural memories, identities, language, cosmologies and epistemologies, which actively nourish and inform social awareness and collective existence. Teaching about indigenous knowledge requires paying attention to such issues as pluralities and multiplicities of knowledge and recognition of contested representation of knowledge systems. There are long standing legitimate indigenous claims that western system of education do not adequately provide for the protection of indigenous cultural heritage and art. An appropriate anti-colonial education, including effective class room pedagogies and instruction grounded in indigenous ways can protect the integrity of knowledge. George Smith rightly argues that formal education has not paid adequate attention to knowledge system and cultural practices of indigenous people; formal school system is the central tool of colonising which has brutally, stripped learners' experience of their natal home culture. Educators in Alaska, Arizona and Hawaii have been experimenting with approaches that dilute the colonising message of school by bringing indigenous knowledge.

The paper '*Ua Lele Ka Manu: The Bird has Flown*' by Pauline Chinn and others discusses how the indigenous Hawaiian educators sought and shared understanding of indigenous inquiry methods in order to apply them in professional development programmes. Five themes emerged and they are: indigenous narratives, identity, sense of place, ability to connect science to indigenous inquiry and a broader focus for technological consumer oriented society. The author concludes with a call to re-establish sustainability.

Njoki Wane in her paper, '*The Kenyan Herbalist Ruptures the Status Quo in Health and Healing*' looks at indigenous healing in the context of rural Kenya. Through qualitative interviews with healers and herbalists she lays bare specific practices of African indigenous healing knowledge in Kenya. Healing tradition is passed from one generation to another through visions, stories and dreams. This way of knowledge transmission constitutes indigenous system of knowledge.

Lyn Carter's, '*The Challenges of Science Education and Indigenous Knowledge*' notes that globalisation and acknowledgement of diversity have meant that indigenous knowledge have become increasingly prominent in many educational disciplines. The author goes further to utilise the newer theorisations on post-colonialism and epistemological diversity to see how they may contribute to development of decolonising science.

The Fifth Part of the book looks into transformative strategies for our social settings. Decolonising dominant knowing requires that we nurture and uphold the strength and vitality of spiritually centred ways of knowing. Indigenous Spirituality is given a central place which otherwise is misinterpreted and demonised in Eurocentric discourses and public imagination about what is valid and invalid in the hierarchy of knowing. It is through spiritual resistance and working with notions of repair that oppressed and indigenous learners survive the everydayness of spiritual wounding and mental boundary. Indigenous struggles cannot be understood exclusively as questions about identity and subjectivity but must be viewed as a part of vast network of connections. Economic, Political, Symbolic and Spiritual considerations need to be taken into account in order to move beyond the Eurocentric interpretation. One of the biggest challenges facing indigenous people globally is the violation of their rights to land, culture and the spiritual realms within their own communities. This violation has been a part of the genocidal policies by the state.

Indigenous people have devised pragmatic ways of allowing these customs and traditions to serve contemporary political, cultural and social interest as well as territorial sovereignty claims. Indigenousness emerges as an art of specific historical contexts and forces that are simultaneously structural and cultural. In effect, reassertion of indigenous identities cannot be separated from economic and material conditions that give rise to ethnic revivalism.

Cynthia B. Dillard and Charlotte Bell's, 'Endarkened Feminism and Scared Praxis' deals with the centrality of spirituality in Africa-centred Indigenous knowledge. The chapter highlights the way in which engagement with indigenous knowledge through endarkened epistemologies is deeply troubling the western discourses on cultural framework and methodologies.

'Re/membering In-Between Japan and The West' by Kimine Mayuzumi unpacks her personal journey of decolonisation. In the discussion, the author centres an auto ethnographical account of her exploration as a graduate in the western economy, who conducted a life history interview with a female rural Japanese elder. The engagement in the four stages of calligraphy as metaphor in writing is a significant step in decolonising journey. This chapter posits that the indigenous knowledge framework provides possibilities to decolonise the colonised.

This last section in particular and the Reader as a whole, talks about decolonising the intellect, the relationship between knowledge, power and colonialism in creating meaning, maintaining hierarchies of power and knowledge. The unique and creative narrative and conversational style highlights some of the important dilemmas and tensions as we seek to decolonise knowledge and work with indigenous knowledge from an anti-colonial stance. The section also tries to answer the question that all anti-racism be necessarily anti-colonial in looking at post foundational anti-racism as one way of knowing and a way of resisting. The edited volume gestures towards enriching possibilities for knowing and acting based on indigenous knowledge within anti-racist thinking.

Indigenous philosophy has a multi-disciplinary edge that is inclusive of knowledge from the diverse science, arts and humanities. The book provides as well as much food for the intellect for scholars and students. It is a welcome resource with wonderful insights for research scholars who are dealing with Postcolonial Studies, Political Studies, Literature, Anthropology, History, Sociology, Gender Studies, Development Studies and Semiotics.