

## BOOK REVIEW

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### On Pushing Boundaries

Alan S. & Marlowe, Bruce A. 2010. ***Educational Foundations. An Anthology of Critical Readings.*** Los Angeles/London/New Delhi/Singapore: Sage Pub., 234 pp.

Reviewed by V.L. Mendiola

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Pushing boundaries, this book – a must for TEIs libraries – presents provocative essays that tease, challenge, goad professors of education to make their discipline make a difference, take risks, less concerned with method than with content. The research articles come from some 25 social activists, established writers, innovative, humane educators, school administrators, daring practitioners, eminent scholars, social critic, policy shakers. They know full well the vantage point from where they speak of, as drawn from years of teaching, engaging in research, founding a school, administering one, rendering consultancy (that counts), demonstrating exemplary professionalism, in other words, learning from the school of hard knocks, so to speak.

The book is conveniently divided into six major parts to answer such questions as “Why teach? Who are today's students? What makes a good teacher? What do good schools look like? How should we assess student learning? How does one develop a critical voice?” And more, as offshoot of these perennial queries in educational matters. As sort of reading organizers or come-ons, each section unfolds a common incident, some intriguing situations enough to set the tone of the entire piece or tie up with educational constructs each section discusses. More pointedly, the anthology aims at reaching those who have the “call” for teaching, the beginning teachers, as well as those who have considered their job less than a source of livelihood, but as a life-force, their career. Or simply the book directs itself at the lay(wo)men keen at exploring burning issues that continuously beset schools and schooling.

Far from offering a plethora of how-tos or teaching methodology, the book slants more toward discussing, analyzing, examining teachers', administrators' ways of “doing things”, questions national

policies on education, on maintaining quality instruction, the disservice to instruction of organized testing, political conflicts, power play in school setting, individual integrity clashing with authorial voice, even the ability of students after graduation to survive the harsh demands of everyday life.

Probably, the selling point of the book lies in fusing classical essays in education (e.g. Freire's concept of banking in education, Kohl's motivation theory that leads people choose teaching, Tomlinson's learning to love assessment; moreover, Meier's recount on how Central Park East (New York) has revolutionized teaching in a progressive school catering to a student population of blacks (45%), Hispanics (30%), and whites (25%). Or Weimer's working out her theory on deficit paradigm in specific teaching situation.

These classic readings are matched by eye-openers in the critical book in a number of equally forceful topics. Consider, for instance, Delpit's "Ebonics and Culturally Responsive Instruction"; Nieto's thinks aloud on racism, discrimination, and expectation of students achievement; Marlowe and Page warn us to reject disabling instruction, much less Di Giulio takes a sharp delineation between great teaching and great testing. Washer stresses learning plans to educate one student at a time, or savor Donnel's response to Weiner's deficit thinking; Newkirk opposes educators' mania for rubrics; Growe prefers that teachers model as 'transformative intellectuals'. The editor themselves – teachers in their own right – encourage us to leave our comfort zones, i.e., from silence to dissent, a stance or motion Winfield seconds when he advocates that teachers become 'activists' in and out of the four walls of the classroom.

A book certain to raise the hornet's nests for many years to come, it defies rigid educational practices that stifle more than encourage students to grow into distinct individuals, frowns on pedagogy that stresses more on mastering method than content, questions relationship between the teacher and the taught, schools managers and subordinates, personal and communal thinking. But the reader need not blush for doubting his or her own way of viewing education from a better, critical light, as s/he reaches the last few pages. And now for the third reading . . .