

Why History Education?

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Introduction

The book presents an anthology of competing perspectives on the values of history as an academic discipline and its place in formal education across the global landscape. Pivotal to the current intellectual discourses is the relevance of history as a school subject in modern society. Some of the most fundamental questions are: What kind of history curriculum would be ideal for all nations of the world? Does history have a place in the employment sector other than school teaching? What role does it play in community development? To what extent does it contribute to the economic growth and development of countries? How does it shape one's identity? These are some of the questions that triggered debates around the proposal by South Africa's ministry of education to make history compulsory for high school learners. The book navigates the complexities around history education and suggested solutions. The coverage of discourses by various scholars is quite extensive. Only a few have been selected for critical analysis in this review.

Structure

The book does not have chapters as part of the conventional structures in books. The layout has been uniquely presented. Its sub-division is largely informed by the perspectives of various scholars within the discipline of history education on an international scale. The literary style enables the reader to follow the arguments advanced in the book, and the competing perspectives. However, chapters would have been welcome as an acceptable and user-friendly, conventional literary style. The title is thought-provoking and inviting to a reader. It captures the essence of what the book seeks to explore. The table of contents has been well presented, clearly outlining where the reader can locate the discussions and arguments by various scholars within the book and the themes they deal with. Including the scholars' photographs helps the readers put a face to the ideas, debates, and arguments captured in the book. The editors are commended for putting together detailed and incisive accounts on the role of history education and the challenges it faces in modern society. The book covers a wide range of critical issues around history education and how scholars navigate them. The book demonstrates extensive scholarship in history education.

Context

It is interesting how scholars provide contexts in their critical engagement with the topic in this book. The readers have been provided a platform to tap into the essential realities of teaching history amid challenges of diverse magnitudes across global contexts. One can learn much from the experiences of other countries. Some scholars conducted empirical research on history education and shared the outcomes thereof, while others wrote conceptual papers. This provides a balanced version of problems encountered during the research process and suggested solutions. In the case of South Africa, the issue at hand was the proposal by the ministry of education to make history compulsory for all high school learners. Johan Wassermann, Leevina Iyer, and Zoleka Mkhabela examined the views of South African teachers on making history a compulsory subject. It stands to reason that the crisis history education finds itself in across the globe, calls for responsive leadership in educational circles. The interrogation of this crisis by the book is commendable. The trade of ideas by various scholars in response to the challenges facing the teaching and learning of history in schools could produce long-term solutions to the problems at hand. The heart of the contention is that history teaching is in a crisis almost everywhere.

Alain Lamassoure, a French European politician argues that history education is taught

differently from country to country in Europe. The author therefore sees the creation of the 'Observatory on History Teaching in Europe' under the auspices of the Council of Europe as a way to advance history teaching in Europe. The aim is to initiate a debate on the content and methods of history teaching on the basis of surveys to promote it throughout Europe. He observed that on the one hand, historians face the challenge of determining what should be taught and what should be researched. On the other hand, history teachers face the problem of how history lessons should be designed and structured to make sure that national histories are correctly captured. However, national histories have since become controversial. When measured according to our current ethical standards, we no longer have great men or great seminal events. He further argues that we limit ourselves to an overarching, detached history, composed of important economic, social, and cultural phenomena. Young people are not given a solid foundation to develop some kind of social identity.

Conclusion

The book has managed to capture the essence of the debates and discourses around the challenges faced by history education across the global landscape. The editors provided detailed accounts of theoretical reflections and models between national identities and the role of history. Authors of academic papers and articles on history education from all over the world shared insights on how to deal with issues relating to the teaching of history as a daily teaching practice, as well as educational media, everyday teaching, museums, curricula, exhibitions, and social media platforms. The new findings of this groundbreaking research have been widely shared in the book. Finally, the series has provided strategies on how history should be taught and advocated for a more competent approach to history teaching and learning.