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**Educating Tomorrow. Learning for the Post-Pandemic World**

*by Chris Brown and Ruth Luzmore, 2021, Bingley, Emerald Publishing, 187pp.: ISBN: 978-1-80043-663-3 (Print) £16.99*

This is a timely, accessible and thought-provoking book. Taking the COVID-19 pandemic as a monumental moment in time, Brown and Luzmore contemplate new possibilities and revolutionary change in education. They examine education over time as a vehicle for looking forward. They consider past wisdom including lost ideas and ideals and offer proposals for ways forward in the post-pandemic era. While other texts chronicle the impact of lockdown and recommend suggestions for education (e.g. Breslin, 2020), *Educating Tomorrow* is distinctive in that its readers, armed with their own imagination (and, arguably, a leap of faith), are taken on an informed journey to explore possibilities.

*Educating Tomorrow* comprises eight chapters. Brown and Luzmore set the context by outlining the destructive social and economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic with a vivid portrayal of its impact and the uncertainty of recent times. They also capture the sense of optimism and community which emerged along with realisation that the existing political and social status quo could be challenged, as the pandemic had shown. The post-COVID world, they purport, offers a new space where new ideas about the composition and organisation of society, including education, could be contemplated. The notion of ‘a blank slate’ is mooted, although there is recognition that we cannot start completely from scratch.

The second chapter takes a futuristic stance; possibilities for the post-pandemic world are contemplated. Economic changes are considered; the future of work and wealth along with increased leisure time and the idea of a universal basic income (UBI) are discussed. Technological developments, namely the rise in artificial intelligence (AI), automation, transhumanism and virtual reality worlds, consume much of this chapter. The rise of future inequalities is debated alongside calls for a more equal society and improved - work-life balance.

Chapter Three comprises a succinct historical overview of key developments, starting with ancient Greece and Rome, then travelling through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. The authors present various philosophical influences and scientific discoveries explaining how, over time, these have shaped society, politics and education across Western Europe.

The history of education in Britain from the nineteenth century (albeit the authors start their analysis in 1789) through to the present is the focus of Chapter Four. The reforms and restructuring across all areas of education are touched upon and attention is drawn to systemic factors including social class, inequality, access and opportunity. More recent pressures for school improvement, performance enhancement and accountability also feature. A convenient table (pp. 71-73) summarises these changes over time and shows how education can be shaped towards any desired societal purpose.

Rethinking the goals of education in Chapter Five, focuses on the essence of the matter in relation to societal success being regarded as synonymous with economic success. The political emphasis on Gross Domestic Product is a stark reminder of the well-documented subservience of all policy, including education policy, to economic priorities (Ball, 2021; Gunter, 2018) “rather than what really matters to us as a society” (p.77). Brown and Luzmore link the potential of UBI introduced in Chapter Two with increased leisure time. Possible utopias are contemplated from Confucius’ harmonious society and Plato’s Republic to those of Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels and Morris’ News from Nowhere. The authors observe similar themes emanating from these ideal societies such as, the importance of creativity, collaboration, the use of technology to generate time for other interests and caring for the environment; (the latter of which has its own subsection). The chapter closes with a commentary on developing a trust-rich society in a “post-truth world” (p.90-97), where trust in facts and science has diminished, yet must exist for society to progress and function successfully. Possible approaches that schools could adopt (p.95) include helping children develop research skills to appraise the trustworthiness of information.

What makes Chapter Six interesting is the consideration of “wise decision-making” (p.101). The idea of people having more time is discussed and, arguably, resonates with the notion of a leisure society, a trend which Veal (2018) contends started to fade in the latter part of the twentieth century and where the enduring struggle for time should be sustained, in the interests of human health, wellbeing and environmental sustainability. Brown and Luzmore propose assisting young people to understand how to make ethical decisions regarding their leisure time and suggest how schooling might also facilitate “purposeful thought” (p.115).

The penultimate chapter builds upon the notion of wise decision-making. Sections deal with negative and positive emotions, achieving well-being, effective collaboration and tolerance, and the importance of creativity. Aspects of purposeful thought are detailed along with teaching for promoting creativity.

In Chapter Eight, readers are reminded how homeschooling became the ‘new normal’ as the pandemic took hold. However, there was diversity in how schools responded, questions about the curriculum and pedagogy resurfaced, and the possibilities of technology to facilitate learning and communication were reignited. The pandemic crisis illuminated and magnified societal inequalities, the urgent need to address disadvantage and poverty, and also shone a light on a range of other possibilities for a post-pandemic world which Brown and Luzmore moot and explore in this book. Returning to the blank slate analogy they enthusiastically challenge the reader to contemplate possibilities for change given their delineation and examination of a range of past ideas and ideals. Brown and Luzmore have dared us, unequivocally, to look ahead with new visions for education and learning. Change of this nature, arguably, is a massive task, but for the sake of the education of future generation can we afford not to?

**References**

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