

Book Review

Decolonisation, Globalisation: Language in Education Policy and Practice

Edited by Angel M Y Lin & Peter W Martin

Multilingual Matters: Clevedon, UK, 2005

This book is not about language in international schools. It is, however, about the role of English and English language teaching in postcolonial contexts throughout the world.

Most international schools were set up in the period after the Second World War, developing since then to provide education in the English language (mostly) to an elite of international families. The 13 authors in this book write of the contradictions and tensions in the multilingual contexts of their countries across the world: India, Hong-Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Iran, Turkey, Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania. International school educators might question the relevance of such studies to the international school context; in fact the importance of these studies is that they offer critical analyses of contradictions and tensions in real cases of language education planning in multilingual contexts.

International schools offer “multilingual contexts” *par excellence*, and although there is currently a wave of interest in improving ESL programmes, introducing Mother Tongue programmes, and providing linguistic and cultural awareness training such as that presented in the *ESL in the Mainstream** course, the interest is coming almost entirely from enthusiastic and frustrated ESL teachers. Those who make policy decisions – school administrators; examining bodies such as the International Baccalaureate Organization; accrediting agencies such the Council of International Schools – may not be sufficiently engaged.

In the Foreword, Allan Luke points out that the authors have made choices in theory and practice that are tied to their historical standpoints as researchers and writers, and that the decisions that are made about how to plan the pedagogies of everyday life also depend upon our historical positions as teachers. In addition, it is only when we become involved in the complexities of state, identity, politics and power that are and must be the contexts for discussions of language and education that the difficulties of finding appropriate solutions

develop. Luke adds that the complex and contradictory push/pull demands upon governance and education may require potentially unwelcome hybrid blends of policy and practice, curriculum and pedagogy that are none too popular with senior systems bureaucrats.

Although the majority of the authors grapple with the challenge presented by the new economic thrill offered by the globalisation of English and its usefulness in the market-place, just when it seemed that post-colonial efforts were succeeding in re-establishing the value of native languages, the strength of this book, and its relevance to international schools, is its focus on the necessity for critical analytical approaches to language-in-education (LIE) and language planning and policy (LPP). These should be key issues throughout the sphere of international education: in the umbrella bodies mentioned above, and in the everyday workings of international schools. There is a need for more dialogue, serious research, and above all openness to the voices of the teachers who are, after all, those who educate the children, so that policies are based on the bottom up expertise which genuinely address students' needs.

*see the website www.unlockingtheworld.com for more information on this excellent course.

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