

Philosophical, Ideological, and Theoretical Perspectives on Education, Gerald L. Gutek (2014). 2nd Ed. Boston, MA: Pearson. 452 p, including index.

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If the publication of this book is an indication that philosophy of education is regaining status in North American faculties of education, it is certainly with a revised format than that featured during the 1960s when the field was very much in vogue. In North America a half century ago, virtually every student in teacher training had to endure at least one course in philosophy of education with an emphasis on the “isms”—idealism, realism, pragmatism, and existentialism. Gutek *does* discuss those perspectives, albeit not in the traditional manner of linking them to essentialism, perennialism, and progressivism. In Gutek’s book, these persuasions are treated separately, without their traditional linkages.

This book’s title implies that its contents offer “something for everyone”—philosophers, ideologists, and theoreticians—anyone who is interested in studying the foundational bases of pedagogical practice. The book’s title may make it more marketable, but it is not necessarily helpful in elucidating what philosophy of education has traditionally focused on, nor where it is headed. This is not to say that philosophy of education has always remained static because categorizing teaching practices in accordance with the isms *did* diminish after the 1960s, giving way to a short-lived emphasis on ordinary language analysis (also known as linguistic analysis).

During the time when ordinary language analysis occupied the stage would-be teachers soon wearied of listening to queries such as, “What do you mean by that?” This stance escalated to the point that it became a fairly risky undertaking to ask someone, “How are you this morning?” The typical response to that question by an analytic-oriented-thinker would-be, “What do you mean by that? Why are you asking that question?” Shortly after these mind games came to a close, philosophy of education assumed a new identity as its proponents turned their attention to a more generalized form of educational foundations and concentrated on analyzing social movements, issues, trends, and challenges. Gutek is well aware of these developments and reluctantly includes a single paragraph referencing ordinary language analysis. His take on this perspective is aptly summarized: “As the influence of philosophical or language analysis declined in philosophy of education, more radical theorists in the Foundations were drawn to the Frankfurt school and the Liberation pedagogy ideas of Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire” (p. 423). Linguistic analysis was apparently followed up by the efforts of postmodernists to organize themselves in an attempt to oppose trends toward neo-conservatism and neo-essentialism.

The content of *Philosophical, Ideological, and Theoretical Perspectives on Education* is made up of seventeen

chapters divided into three sections. Part One, entitled philosophies and education, discusses the traditionalisms. Part Two, labeled ideologies and education, explicates concepts such as nationalism, “ethnonationalism,” liberalism, conservativisms, and Marxism. Part Three returns to a more classic treatment of familiar philosophical perspectives—essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, and social reconstructionism. The final chapter on critical theory and education begins with a section entitled, “Constructing Your Own Philosophy of Education,” which is a new feature in Gutek’s second edition. In fact, each chapter of the book includes a short section with that heading. While praiseworthy, these brief paragraphs are basically an attempt to encourage readers to inculcate and apply chapter contents to their own situation. In a way this approach takes a page out of William K. Frankena’s *Philosophy of Education* (Macmillan, 1965: pp. 6-9) in which he offered a very useful model to that end. Frankena suggested that anyone desiring to build a philosophy of education should first originate a statement of basic ends or principles of ethics social thought, then pair it with a statement of empirical and other premises about human nature, life, and the world. It should then be logically possible to deduce “a list of excellences to be produced” on the part of one’s students. Gutek might have done well to follow up on Frankena’s model because it could have contributed an element of specificity to the sections on constructing a personal philosophy of education.

The second part of Gutek’s otherwise commendable work is a bit problematic because it does little to clarify the underlying purpose of philosophy of education. Like the postmodernists whom Gutek charges with opposing neo-conservatism, he launches into a discussion of Karl Marx, Paulo Friere, and Karl Mannheim, under the heading of ideology as though that term can be differentiated from a discussion of underlying presuppositions of human nature, truth, life, and the world—which is what philosophy of education is all about. Chapter eight is particularly challenging with its dictionary-like annotated listing of terms such as nationalism, the nation-state, exceptionalism, ethnonationalism, patriotism, cultural transmission, and multicultural education.

Chapter nine continues with a litany of definitions including liberalism, neo-liberalism, economic liberalism, modern liberalism, human rights, utilitarianism, secularism, and individualism, as well as rationality and the power of reason. Philosophy of education may have wandered from its grounding in the isms or its short flirtation with ordinary language analysis, but these chapters convey the impression that philosophy of education basically wrestles with definitions of all kinds.

But enough has been said here and it must be acknowledged that Gutek has done the field of philosophy of education a service. The appearance of this volume underscores the need for teachers-in-training to perceive philosophy of education as a vital component of their educational experience. Would-be teachers must be challenged to think deeply about their own conceptualizations regarding human nature, the nature of society, epistemology (what *should* be taught), and how individuals learn. Even an occasional cogitation about cosmic concerns might be in order. Most importantly, inherent in Gutek’s deliberations is a cautioning that these undertakings must be accompanied with clarity of thought, consistency and cogency of reasoning, factual adequacy and objectivity of knowledge claims, and rationality of moral and purposive behavior.

Hopefully, the contents of this important book will be seriously investigated by the future classroom teachers of North America.