

## Media Review

Trinowski, A. A teacher's perspective on ecojustice education: A review of Martusewicz, R.A., Edmundson, J., & Lupinacci, J. (2011), *EcoJustice Education Toward Diverse, Democratic, and Sustainable Communities*.

### **EcoJustice Education Toward Diverse, Democratic, and Sustainable Communities.**

Rebecca A. Martusewicz, Jeff Edmundson, & John Lupinacci. New York: Routledge Publishing, 2011. (ISBN 978-0-4158-7251-5).

Winner of the 2011 Critics Choice Book Award of the American Educational Studies Association, *EcoJustice Education Toward Diverse, Democratic, and Sustainable Communities* explains how cultural foundations affect our ecological system and our pedagogical responsibility. The overall goal of the book is to combine fundamentals in philosophy, economics, environmental education, and social theories with classroom practices for teachers so that we can prepare our students to become citizens who are ready to create change on our planet. The three authors are teacher educators who are active in EcoJustice Education, an international organization that focuses on providing teachers with the tools they need to begin working on improving their own classrooms and communities. The authors stipulate that we have a moral and ethical responsibility to educate ourselves, our students, and our communities, about becoming a more democratic and ecologically sustainable society.

After a very brief review of the depressing state of our world, the book shifts into an analysis of our current social norms and the purpose of our education system. The authors remind us that the purpose of education is to “help develop citizens who are prepared to support and achieve diverse, democratic and sustainable societies” (p. 8), and that our survival depends on our ability to change the course we are currently on. They suggest that those of us in Western cultures tend to forget that the ecological crisis is really a cultural crisis. We have learned to behave with each other and our environment in a way that is detrimental to our future. The book continues on to describe what EcoJustice Education consists of, including elements based on the understanding that we are all interrelated in our diverse human cultures and are a part of a complex system of life on this planet. EcoJustice Education stresses that we humans are not separate from our environment; we are one ecosystem. Earth is “more than a human” planet. This thinking goes beyond environmental education. Our cultural behaviors and beliefs need to change.

The authors describe our current public school system as having political, social, and economic goals. Public schools have been teaching our students to become citizens who obey laws, to be “good” people, and to be good workers in an industrial workforce. One of the key expectations of our public schools is to “teach students to continue the society in pretty much the same way it has always been” (p. 17). The authors argue that the purpose of education is to create citizens who can actively work toward a better society, a sustainable society, and to value cultural diversity for its role in improving our living systems. In very basic terms, sustainable communities “do not interfere with the ability of natural systems to renew themselves” (p. 22).

Professors Martusewicz, Edmundson, and Lupinacci discuss in detail how humans have differences in their views of the world and of their particular culture. Our mindset is created by our experiences in our community, and this shapes the way we think about the world. *EcoJustice Education* stipulates that “What we ‘know’ is always a matter of what we can say about the world – that is, the particular metaphors that we use to describe it” (p. 55-56). These learned concepts affect our Western

modernist culture and our system of beliefs or discourses. These discourses of modernity, which are discussed at length in the book, include serious issues of individualism, mechanism, progress, commodification, consumerism, anthropocentrism, androcentrism, and ethnocentrism. Sustainable societies, however, shift this thinking to a more holistic and ecocentric view focused on how our progress will affect our community as a whole in the future.

The book also examines our own common-based practices, as they still are a factor in our culture. Sometimes they can cause irreparable damage. *EcoJustice Education* states, "It is important to remember that the commons – our shared beliefs, practices and rituals – also includes many traditions and ways of living that undermine community and hasten environmental destruction" (p. 283). This book calls for educators not only to be aware of these, but to strive for change in our perceptions and thinking. Teachers are challenged to address how our mindset has come about, how it is maintained, and how to change it to better prepare our students.

This book is well organized, stays consistent in its overall message, and gives the reader a detailed and in-depth analysis of the authors' view on EcoJustice Education and the role it plays in the pedagogy of educators. The conversational tone of the writing makes you feel like you are in a classroom, learning from the authors. There are concepts discussed that really open up other areas of discovery and thought. Included with the text are diagrams, charts, and additional textboxes with key points to help illustrate what the authors are saying. At the end of each chapter there are activities listed for teachers to use in their own classrooms to help develop these concepts with their students. There is even a website to engage the reader in further research and educational possibilities (<http://cw.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415872515/>).

This book shifted my preconceived idea of fixing our problems simply by adopting conventional environmentalism. Recycling and reusing are not enough. There are many challenges to examining the cultural roots of these social and ecological problems. However, the authors show how we need to dig deeper into the heart of the destructive aspects of our culture, the serious nature of these issues, and how they are directly related to environmental issues. Changes to our educational practices cannot happen overnight but *EcoJustice Education* is an excellent book to use as a tool for furthering educational pedagogy and ethical responsibility in this area. With this book there is opportunity to expand beyond reading, to engage in actual activities in the classroom and community. This approach makes it more relevant and relatable to teachers by getting us involved with our students in ongoing efforts to improve our shared future on this planet.

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