



The Culturally Inclusive Educator: Preparing for a Multicultural World

Samuels, Dena R.
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Book Review

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The Culturally Inclusive Educator: Preparing for a Multicultural World has the potential to complement and advance efforts of educational institutions and educators who grapple with becoming more inclusive. Dena Samuels's work will convince those who have not begun this work to begin. Even more, it will equip them to do so.

Agreeing with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's claims that "education is the civil rights of our generation" and that "great teaching is about so much more than education; it is a daily fight for social justice" (116), Samuels' work demands both self awareness and institutional struggle. Because a "social justice journey is a marathon, not a sprint," a training plan is required. This book is one such training plan.

For the individual educator, Samuels offers numerous tips, including an extensive not-to-be missed list of inclusive educators characteristics (108-9). Yet, for all the difference individual educators can make, in order to make the deepest impact, this "bottom up" approach (e.g., addressing microaggressions in the classroom) must be combined with a "top down" commitment (e.g. recruit and retain diverse faculty and administrative leadership, develop inclusive curricula, demand rigorous assessment of diversity trainings). Samuels stresses institutional diversity practices instead of relying solely on "individual champions who come and go" (76).

Samuels is hopeful even as she admits that becoming culturally inclusive educators and educational institutions is a long-term and, at times, difficult venture. She speaks from the experience of investing in the process.

I have learned that my skin color . . . represents something, whether I want it to or not . . . when I become aware of my easily manifested entitlement, I tangibly feel the sting of inequality, even as the recipient of unearned privilege. It is important that I have deeply felt this pain, not as White guilt, but as a reminder that these systems of inequality affect us all, obviously to different degrees, and that my objective is to dismantle them (90).

Some readers will be introduced to new vocabulary such as microaggression, noun-based identifiers, nondominant (instead of minority), meritocracy, and code switching. Others will be surprised by research results. For example, studies have found that voluntary inclusiveness trainings may produce more inclusive behavior than mandatory trainings (43), and that training faculty when they are in graduate programs is more beneficial than when they are in their teaching positions (44). Yet others might be surprised to hear that faculties and institutions are not as prepared as they think they are (24). Minimally, readers will gain much from the extensive bibliography, helpful appendices, and references to various survey instruments.

Other than a desire to read more about instances of institutional and classroom success, I am satisfied with this book's ability both to convince me that my own "minor actions can make a major impact," and to encourage and guide me toward amending my practices and the practices of our educational institutions.

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