

Preface

Many of the assumptions around good practice pedagogy are being reassessed in our time. Under the weight of a combination of forces, many of the older paradigms of learning are being questioned. These forces include the greater pressure around matters of intercultural exchange and the consequent weakening of ethnocentrically determined views about knowledge, teaching and learning. Hence, in an era that sees Western education increasingly influenced by the movement of peoples from non-Western regimes, many of the philosophical assumptions that have impelled pedagogical approaches over the past century are now under scrutiny. The forces also relate to new scientific understandings about the processes of learning. In particular, emerging insights from the neurosciences cast shadows of doubt on many of the dominant twentieth-century developmental theories and allied pedagogical practices, rendering them with more than an appearance of inadequacy to the task of educating students in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, philosophical work has continued to question the increasing trend towards instrumentality in education, reducing its purpose and goals to measurable outcomes that are less suited than ever to the diverse populations being served. In spite of the pompous claims made about them, such instrumentality actually undermines student achievement and, in turn, the true power of education to transform the life chances of the populations it is meant to serve. Hence, the inevitable conclusion is drawn that failure is at least as much a systemic as a personal issue.

Among the updated research that elicits such critique is that which deals directly with effective pedagogy, clearly illustrating the enhanced effects on learning when it is dealt with as a holistic developmental enterprise rather than one concerned solely with content, technique and measurable outcomes. This research includes volumes of empirical evidence and conceptual analysis from across the globe that point to the inextricability of values as lying at the heart of those forms of good practice pedagogy that support and facilitate the species of student achievement that truly does transform the life chances of students. In this book, we will explore

and uncover those volumes of evidence and analysis, illustrating their pertinence to student achievement, the vexed issue that lies at the heart of all for which education stands.

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