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**REVIEW ESSAY:  
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION:  
LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY**

Edited by W. James Jacob, Sheng Yao Cheng, and Maureen K. Porter.  
Berlin: Springer, 2015, 467 pp, \$179.00, ISBN: 978-94-017-9354-4  
(Print) 978-94-017-9355-1 (Online)

This book offers the reader a look at the Indigenous education proposals, cases and issues of six major geographic regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Canada and the United States, Latin America, and Oceania. Additionally, this book provides an overview of the struggles for truly indigenous educational reforms toward halting the reproduction of Indigenous marginalization and hegemonic discourse. The collection consists of conceptual as well as empirical work from twenty-eight Native and non-Native scholars with extensive connections with the Indigenous communities they discuss, either by way of birth or through their service learning endeavors. The book was edited by Sheng Yao Cheng, and Maureen K. Porter. Cheng is a professor of curriculum and teacher education at the Chung Cheng University in Taiwan, whose research includes studies with Taiwan Aborigines and American Indians. Dr. Porter is an educational anthropologist, who has collaborated for more than a decade with the Quechuan people of southern Perú.

The book is divided into five sections:

1. A Global Review of Indigenous Education: Issues of Identity, Culture, and Language

Kenfield, Yuliana. "Review Essay: Indigenous Education: Language, Culture and Identity, edited by W. James Jacob et al." *Critical Multilingualism Studies* 4:1 (2016): pp. 95–98. ISSN 2325-2871.

2. Thematic Issues on Indigenous Education
3. Language
4. Culture
5. Identity

All sections consider the political aspects of Indigenous education as well as presenting rich data that promote the critical understanding of global and local efforts toward fostering not only an “inclusive” educational policy, but also an anti-assimilationist one.

The authors of this book are activists and scholars who have in common a long history in education, sociology, anthropology, sociolinguistics, language policy, human rights and communal practices. The pursuit of visibility for Indigenous peoples is highlighted throughout the book, which is materialized in the incorporation of Indigenous languages, cultures and identities in the praxis of education. The authors acknowledge efforts toward creating the space for indigenous pedagogies in recent educational reforms globally, while finding nonetheless that most of the reforms remain symbolic. The visibility of indigenous pedagogies, epistemologies, and research are critical for the authors because, as they argue colonial practices are still alive in all postcolonial territories where indigenous peoples live. Further, the growing interconnectedness of the Global Native and non-Native peoples globally requires a legitimate multicultural approach to education, one which recognizes various indigenous pedagogies.

As always, it is difficult to critique a book written by so many individuals. Most readers who pick up this book will focus on certain sections carefully and skip others entirely, depending on their own interest. I present below some critical aspects of the presentation. The format of the book allows the reader to first get immersed in the six regional perspectives through the *Global Review section*. Although the *Thematic Issues on Indigenous Education* section presents important contexts such as information and communication technology and Indigenous education, formal and informal indigenous teaching and learning, and policy debates; for this reader the policy debates chapter does not offer sufficient information to deeply understand the policy issues in the six regions that the book presents. The policy debate chapter focuses on five countries only: China, Mexico, Taiwan, Uganda, and the United States. These countries are certainly the major representatives (in quantity) for a panoramic overview of the six regions, however it is noteworthy that the authors pay more attention to China policy debates than the other cases.

The section *Language* brings together discussions and explorations of both macro-sociolinguistic issues for language planning and policy as well as micro-sociolinguistic aspects on identity formation, language revitalization and language recognition from collective local efforts. This section provides the reader with critical information about the sociopolitical forces that either hinder or support the indigenous language preservation and revitalization. For educators, this section also presents best practices recommendations for language instruction in multilingual classrooms. The chapters in this section present cases in Europe, Africa, Oceania, and United States. Jacob's discussion on the macroaggression and microaggression practices against linguistic diversity is worth dwelling on extensively. Jacob highlights that those practices are not casual or isolated acts; rather, they response to historical macro-assimilationist policies such as boarding schools, as well as micro-historical colonial stigmatization of the Indigenous peoples through the "othering" social construction. These practices lead to the cultural and linguistic genocide.

The section called *Culture* is a source and spark for critical reflections on indigenous epistemologies, cultural wisdom and the redefinition of the concept of culture itself. Cultural dissonance between school culture and student culture constitutes the major concern of the cases presented throughout this section. A major contribution furthermore is the introductory chapter by Porter, which lays the critical lenses for understanding the problematic aspects of framing indigenous education across cultures. Key concepts found in Porter's essays are:

- lines of inquiry to consider when developing culturally responsive and relevant curricula;
- the importance of the four D's of culture: dual, dialogical, dynamic, and distinctive in educational policy and program design;
- discussion of the advantages and limitations of framing culture through the metaphors of "rights" and "resources" in international discourse;
- the critical role of cultural wisdom for a legitimate dismantling of Western worldviews and epistemologies in learning and teaching
- the role of indigenous research methodologies to support meaningful education reforms.

The *Identity* section includes a particular proposition worth reviewing, namely Cheng's claim that indigenous peoples' identity is found in three forms: individual, communal, and external. The discussions around the role of citizenship in identity formation are also rather provocative. The issue of autonomy in education underlines all the contributions in the book to some degree. Given the complex post-colonial scenarios covered by the authors' articles, it is not surprising to see considerable discussion of the various political and pedagogical strategies employed to move away from Western educational models. My criticisms of the book are minimal. Several editing errors are found throughout the book, the most salient being the following incorrectly rendered Native names: Dibé Łizhiní and Nałanı. In sum, this book will be useful for policy makers, human rights scholars, social researchers, and community leaders, who envision alternative forms of educational systems which truly create a space for the indigenous ways of knowing. Ultimately, this book serves as a critical foundation for the larger questions of education and globalization.