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Socially Responsible Higher Education: International Perspectives on Knowledge Democracy

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BOOK REVIEW

SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE HIGHER EDUCATION: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY

Hall, B. L., & Tandon, R. (Eds.). (2021). Socially responsible higher education: International Perspectives on knowledge democracy. Leiden: Brill/Sense. 305 pages.

In their book *Socially Responsible Higher Education: International Perspectives on Knowledge Democracy*, Hall & Tandon provide a substantial context on the roles of higher education institutions and their responsibility to promote social projects in their local communities. These conversations, comprised of 21 unique chapters, occur behind the ambitious 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and adopt an international perspective to examine outreach by HEIs to their local communities. This review will examine several chapters throughout the book.

In their introductory chapter, Hall & Tandon delve into "knowledge democracy," which acknowledges the existence of multiple views and epistemologies, their numerous forms of expression, and how they can be a valuable tool for deepening democratic values. Knowledge democracy, as described in the introductory chapter, acts as a common thread throughout the book.

The book's first section comprises six chapters that outline how HEIs can become spaces for civic learning. In the first chapter, de Albuquerque Moreira, Techera, Reis & Schurmann highlight the challenges of three South American nations and their social inclusion policies. HEIs in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay all enjoy an increase in enrollments; however, attrition rates remain problematic regarding students' race and socioeconomic status. The authors use the notion of Bourdieu's habitus to describe how HEIs have changed policies and practices by providing inclusive initiatives to non-traditional students.

The second section contains five chapters about decolonizing education and aligning HEI's focus to community learning and social commitments. The chapters cover an array of nations in South America, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Eurasia and discuss several topics such as disabilities, linguistics, and art education. In chapter 8, Jakšić-Stojanović takes the reader to a Montenegrin pilot project that bridged HEIs with community learning. A Montenegrin HEI took the initiative to implement painting classes at a children's hospital to provide community outreach and improve the teaching and learning process. The results of the pilot project evaluation found that student skills increased and the quality of teaching improved. Jakšić-Stojanović provides an exciting and creative approach to articulate the idea of improving student learning and teaching through a community learning approach instead of institutional, professional development initiatives.

The third section comprises four chapters and discusses engaged action and teaching themes. Topics such as legal education, public health, and service learning are all discussed in great detail. Chapter 14, in particular, offers insight into the implementation of service learning in the context of Chilean HEIs such as the Instituto Professional of Chile (IP Chile). Maulén discusses some of the challenges, including the institution and the community organizations, to be partners in developing the program. The author also outlines some of the programs and initiatives that are offered to the community, such as occupational therapy, social work, and graphic design. Various stages took place to achieve the development of these programs, such as funding, curriculum development, and strategic planning integration. Finally, support is given from the institution, students, and teachers. What has brought to my attention is how IP Chile implemented this methodology of its service-learning program as a first step to realizing its social responsibility goals. It seems as if it was no easy feat to reach out to stakeholders and implement this kind of programming across academic teams, as it could serve as a model for other institutions to link HEIs with their communities.

The fourth and final section of the book discusses the renegotiation of knowledge and society and comprises seven chapters. Chapter 18 discusses how Germany supports refugees in accessing higher education and highlights some of the challenges and recommendations of these initiatives. Berg outlines three missions of higher education: research, teaching, and service; the latter is this chapter's primary focus as it discusses reducing barriers for refugees. The author presents interesting data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which indicates that only 3% of refugees had access to higher education in 2019. The goals, as outlined by the UNHCR, would be for nations to reach 15% access to higher education. Berg found that most HEIs applied for funding to support refugee students; however, issues on how to support them with minimal direction and uncertainties surrounding the future of the programs remained the more significant challenges. The implications found in this chapter should be taken as a form of guidelines for implementing such projects, such as having an appropriate slate of personnel, ensuring that HEIs connect with relevant external agencies, gathering information regarding the experiences of the refugees, securing funding to support the program, and incentivizing social engagement as a positive factor for the ranking of HEIs.

Socially Responsible Higher Education: International Perspectives on Knowledge Democracy offers readers numerous examples of initiatives to increase access to knowledge. The book provides an overall framework for how HEIs can improve knowledge democracy for the public good and demonstrates diverse practical applications in local communities and institutions. It reiterates the importance of HEI's third mission – offering engagement and dialogue to the public – and how higher education should restore this purpose for the greater good. As an educator specializing in research in teaching and learning, this book has brought my blind spot to the forefront, as service to the community can sometimes be overlooked or, in some cases, be folded into the realm of research. Additionally, HEIs must make significant efforts to prioritize the third mission as a primary goal by examining communities' societal needs and addressing problems through thoughtful engagement and inclusion. I recommend all scholars and administrators pay close attention to this book as it offers creative solutions to increase social responsibility in local and international contexts.

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