

## Enacting Anti-Racist and Activist Pedagogies in Teacher Education: Canadian Perspectives

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# Book Review

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## **Enacting Anti-Racist and Activist Pedagogies in Teacher Education: Canadian Perspectives**

By Ardavan Eizadirad, Zuhra Abawi, and Andrew B. Campbell.

Canadian Scholars, 2023, 300 pages

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### **Reviewed by:**

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The word equity has been used increasingly in teacher education in the context of describing the importance of educating future teachers about diversity, justice, and closing the current gaps amongst equity deserving children (Cochran-Smith & Keefe, 2022). In my work with students during their practicum placements, we engage with concepts surrounding issues of equity as they relate to their practice as student teachers. As a teacher educator, I am always looking for resources I can share with my students to help them navigate this critical element of their education. Vesely et al. (2023) created a tool that can be used in teacher education to build upon the instructor's capacity to engage in critical reflective practice surrounding their students' backgrounds, the sources used, and content being taught, the classroom learning environment as well as the ways students are assessed. Kulkarni et al. (2023) have formulated a much needed pedagogical framework for teacher educators centering on disability, critical race theory, and culturally sustaining pedagogies while centering the work of disabled activists and scholars of poverty in the United States. I was hard pressed to find a current text which approaches these areas of study from a Canadian perspective. While texts such as Belle's *Start with Radical Love: Antiracist pedagogy for social justice educators* address anti-racist pedagogies, it does not specifically address the challenges faced by teacher educators when engaging in

equity work with future teachers in Canada. *Enacting Anti-Racist and Activist Pedagogies in Teacher Education* is positioned as a much needed current and powerful resource which enables teacher educators to dismantle and re-think the ways in which we educate future teachers. In fact, this text is just as valuable to current teachers thinking about how they might transform the learning opportunities they provide their students through an anti-racist, activist lens. I was unable to find a similar text which takes up anti-racist and activist pedagogies in the way this text does. The closest companion text I could find was Lopez and Olan (Eds.) text *Transformative Pedagogies for Teacher Education: Moving towards critical praxis in an era of change* published in 2018. It is clear that we need an updated perspective.

*Enacting Anti-Racist and Activist Pedagogies in Teacher Education: Canadian Perspectives* provides a critical look at some of the core considerations surrounding anti-racist and activist pedagogies in today's classrooms. It centers on diverse voices, the importance of critical reflexive practice, and actively disrupts the norms of teacher education and the identities represented in our teacher education classrooms. This collection of chapters captures Indigenous, racialized, queer, and other voices from equity deserving communities. It actively and unapologetically brings into question traditional approaches to the education of our teachers, paving the way towards an anti-racist and radical praxis. As a teacher educator, it made me question my practice, it gave me hope that there is a path to transformation, and it afforded me the opportunity to take a critical look at my own practice through an activist lens.

While there are no hard and fast rules surrounding how to engage in activist and anti-racist pedagogies, this book maps out potential routes one may take. The questions at the end of each chapter are not only helpful for me as a teacher educator as I work at reflecting and improving my practice, but they also provide much needed introspection amongst both practicing and pre-service educators. The topics from resistance to Indigenous pedagogies to the learning experiences of Black girls and women to decentering whiteness are relevant and timely given the multitude of challenges faced in today's classroom. If we are to address the inequities in our systems, surely teachers and their practice hold the key.

In chapter 13, *A Love Letter to Activists*, the authors position love as a central and underlying component of activist pedagogy. The educator who educates with love centers the stories of equity deserving communities, creates safe spaces to co-create learning and

understanding without allowing for notions of safety to be weaponized by those in possession of dominant identities, and creates sites for new knowledge to be created (Tsang & Kodersshah, 2023). The authors encourage the reader to promote radical self-love so that we are better positioned to love and accept others. This text also challenges the reader to consider the ways in which whiteness pervades teacher education programs, the assumptions and performative gestures which are made, as well as problematic power dynamics within these programs (Briscoe & Shields, 2023). As readers we are challenged to consider what we can do to create space not only for our teacher candidates to thrive and grow as teachers, but to ensure that the next generation of teachers entering our systems of education are prepared to take up an activist pedagogical stance, to make change and create space for all their students to thrive.

The text concludes with a letter written by co-editor Ardavan Eizadirad, that captures the very essence of this text as it calls us all to action such as disrupting deficit thinking and hierarchies. We are called to teach to transgress, to be activists as members of communities. As a teacher educator, I recommend this book to anyone looking to challenge their own practices and assumptions as educators and in so doing, challenge pre-service and practicing teachers to do the same.

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