

Review

E.D. Stevick and Z. Gross (Eds.) (2015). *As the Witnesses Fall Silent: 21st Century Holocaust Education in Curriculum, Policy and Practice*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Examining approaches to the Holocaust in curriculum, policy and practice.

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“Whatever the new century holds in store, and we desperately want to have hope for the new century and its new generation, Auschwitz will continue to force men to explore the deepest recesses of his and her being so as to confront their fragile truth.” (Elie Wiesel, p. 24)

Including the famous German Parliament address by Elie Wiesel in 2000, the collection of essays found in this book provides insights into the way the Holocaust is taught, the way it is included in the curriculum, and policy practices surrounding it in contemporary society. Thus, “As the witnesses fall silent: 21st century Holocaust education in curriculum, policy and practice” provides readers with knowledge to approach this very important topic in education settings. The Holocaust, that occurred under the authority of the Nazi Regime, continues to be one of the most (if not the most) terrifying episodes in modern human history. Some 70 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, that enduring symbol of humankind’s inhumanity to itself, it still resonates with students, educators, historians, politicians, the public in general. Trials are still being held to prosecute alleged perpetrators of war crimes during the Nazi era. For example, the ‘bookkeeper’ of Auschwitz, now-94 year old Oskar Groening has recently been sentenced to four years’ jail for facilitating mass murder.

What is it about the Holocaust that captivates people, even “as the witnesses fall silent” in a way that other human atrocities have not? Perhaps it is, as asserted by Rosengarten in his chapter “Why does the way of the wicked prosper?: Teaching the Holocaust in the Land of Jim Crow”, a way for Jewish people to “...remember the Holocaust and teach it as a way to defend our [Jewish] humanity and to give the gift of vigilance to a conflict-ridden world” (p. 49) that makes the atrocities of the Third Reich a topic that resonates with many people even now. Or, perhaps this period of history is filled with such trauma, violence, violations of human rights, and catastrophes that it necessitates remembering and being taught to current generations of students.

The importance of textbooks as texts that represent the past in particular ways is incorporated in this book, with an important chapter included from the internationally recognised textbook research institution, the Georg Eckert Institut, coauthored by Peter Carrier, Eckhardt Fuchs and Torben Messinger. In this chapter, an analysis takes place of how the Holocaust is represented in nations from every continent and region in the world and what types of references textbooks from these nations include. This provides a fascinating insight into the state of contemporary History curricula,

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on a global scale, and reinforces the importance placed on this topic by governments and education authorities from a range of political persuasions. What is interesting about their findings, as reported in this chapter, is how the Holocaust is named in the textbooks (as reflections of the official knowledge of the curriculum for each nation), and how this might reflect contemporary relationships between the nation any particular textbook originates towards the governments of Israel, Germany, Europe in general. In a section of the chapter titled, *Interpretive Paradigms*, the reader is introduced to various terms used to *name* the topic most commonly referred to as the Holocaust (in Western liberal democracies, in any case). For example, the textbooks of some nations avoid the term *Holocaust*, instead “...the Holocaust is not named, or is alluded to euphemistically as ‘driving out the Jews’” (p. 256) as is the case in an Indian textbook.

Sensitivities surrounding the very real trauma Jewish people, and other groups such as Gypsies, homosexuals, political and religious beliefs considered dangerous to the Nazi mentality need to be applied when discussing the Holocaust. With its mixture of eye witness accounts, ethnographic approach, action research, document analysis, and considered, scholarly approach this book achieves this demonstrating empathy to victims of the Holocaust and providing advice (even if not explicit) to educators on how to sensitively approach this topic, applying historical principles.

Like all topics associated with human trauma, the Holocaust is one that needs to be treated with sensitivity and accuracy by educators, regardless of whether they are teaching primary school, high school, college/university, or teaching within the field of memorial education. This book provides practical advice on how this topic can be approached, in a range of contexts, by educators from a range of backgrounds. For example, in this book, there are authors writing about educational experiences from the US, Germany, Australia, Scotland, Israel, Latvia, Estonia, and other European countries. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of ways in which educators, from across the globe, can approach the teaching of the Holocaust, can be found within its pages.

In a review, it is impossible to comprehensively deal with each and every separate chapter; however combined, they all provide an insight in to the way the Holocaust is being taught across a range of contexts. The 512 page book is divided into seven parts, consisting of: Introduction; Framing the Issues for a New Millennium; Reckoning with the Holocaust in Israel, Germany and Poland; Holocaust Education in Diverse Classrooms; International Dynamics, Global Trends and Comparative Research in Holocaust Education; Holocaust Education in National and Regional Contexts; and To Know, to Remember, to Act. These parts indicate the breadth of the book in its attempt to examine Holocaust education in, as the title indicates, curriculum, policy and practice; an aim it achieves very well. Edited by scholars Zehavit Gross and E. Doyle Stevik with support from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the International Bureau of Education, this Springer Publication is a valuable handbook for educators (whether school, tertiary, community, public memorial, or museum) to consider as a resource when approaching this topic. It offers a range of perspectives and a range of approaches to consider when teaching about the Holocaust. While not suggesting that the experiences of the Holocaust should, or even can, be essentialised to cross other examples of human suffering and trauma as it exists in both history and lived memory, it would be of benefit to educators to have a second volume of this superb book that

applies the same methodologies, empathetic understandings, pedagogical approaches, and analysis to other topics and events associated with gross acts of human rights violence and mass trauma so that educators have a comprehensive handbook on how to teach complex historical topics.