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New learning: Elements of a science of education

Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, Victoria, 2008, 252 pages. ISBN 978-0-521-69124-6, AUD69.95 (paperback).

At a time when scientific knowledge is elevated to a privileged status in the global hierarchy of research, Kalantzis and Cope's new vision for "education-as-science" is strategic. *New Learning: Elements of a Science of Education* challenges the notion that education is "... a poor cousin of other disciplines in the university", which is reflected in the "... lower levels of research funding, student entry requirements, and destination salaries of graduates" (p. xvi).

Forging a "New Learning" for the future of education, within a "globalist frame", this title disavows heritage approaches to education to embrace novel ways of learning and teaching for contemporary times. A foundation text aimed at educators and pre-service teachers, this comprehensive volume sets out to historically review and rethink education from paradigm to practice, and from epistemology to pedagogy. *New Learning* reconceptualises the enterprise of education, starting with the fundamentals of learning and ensuring that what is learnt outside of formal educational institutions is valued and included.

So what's new about "New Learning"? The authors critically uncover the very roots of the discipline of education, and then redefine the scope of education and its disciplinary position in relation to other sites of knowledge. Extending their previous work, such as *Learning by Design* (2005), they envisage genuinely novel ways of learning, in which every aspect from pedagogy to the architectonic spaces of classrooms is significantly different from current educational environments. Positioning education as a grand "metadiscipline" or "discipline of disciplines", conventional hierarchies of knowledge are turned upside-down as education is boldly seen as the cornerstone of other disciplines. Consistent with the authors' previous works, their central arguments concern the enormously disruptive changes that education currently faces – globalisation, social diversity, new technologies, and new kinds of learners. These challenge the fundamentals of education as it has been conceived. Familiar paradigms in the organisational structures of workplaces – Fordism, Post-Fordism, and the authors' own "productive diversity" – are reviewed systematically in relation to four recurring themes, including uses of technology and management.

The relation of the state to civil society is recapped, from a historical description of nationalism to neoliberalism, leading ultimately to the citizenship dimension of *New Learning* – "civic pluralism". However, while the elements of *New Learning* comprise

existing ideas that have been synthesised and reorganised in new ways, this volume spans a much broader terrain than the authors' previous work in literacy education. It cuts across disciplinary boundaries by bringing together elements of philosophy, sociology, developmental psychology, cognitive science, anthropology, political science, teaching and learning theory, and even human biology.

An intriguing synthesis of perspectives is the discussion of "learning personalities" (pp. 92-140) in which the intersection of material (e.g. social class, geographical locale), corporeal (e.g. age, race, sex, mental capacities), and symbolic (e.g. culture, ethnicity, language, family, persona) attributes of learners are explored in a very accessible way. Tracing dominant interpretations of learners in relation to these attributes over three general periods of education, the authors challenge the assumptions of the past, while envisioning seven ways toward a more inclusive and equitable way forward in education. The structure of the book is detailed and precise, with over 200 subheadings and novel organisational features such as links to a website – www.NewLearningOnline.com – that includes extracts from key texts, keyword definitions, and learning tasks. *New Learning* is a systematic and provocative foundation text in the discipline of education, which goes beyond conventional knowledge to vision an innovative picture of a futures-oriented education. It undoubtedly makes a significant contribution to the field of education and reminds us that learning, like happiness, is a journey rather than a destination.

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Reference

Kalantzis, M., & Cope, B. (2005). *Learning by Design*. Altona, Vic.: Common Ground Publishing.