

Book Reviews Recensions

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: POLITICS, LANGUAGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Tara Fenwick and Lesley Farrell (Eds.). Routledge, London and New York, 2011, 247 pages.

This book is an important and timely contribution to scholarship on educational research and knowledge mobilization (KM). It covers an impressive range of geographical sites (the U.K., Canada, the U.S., China, the Caribbean, and Australia), policy contexts (school education, educational governance, water conservation, learning management, academic publishing, and intellectual property rights), and disciplinary perspectives (public policy, law, digital studies, journalism, museum studies, and education). Its 15 chapters, divided into four broad themes, complement, speak to, and contest each other as they explore fundamental questions of what is knowledge; who gets to produce, control, and manage it; who it is for; what is meant by “mobilizing” knowledge; and, most importantly, various ways of “knowledge mobilization” (e.g., traditional positivistic means, arts-informed (painting, theatre, storytelling, exhibition), innovative pedagogies, media engagement, digital technologies).

The three chapters of the first section, “Considering the Issues and the Players,” provide the state of the knowledge in KM theories, research, and practice. Ben Levin and Amanda Cooper, Andrew Pollard, and Anne Edwards draw attention to the profound differences between research and practice knowledges and the fact that barriers to better KM exist in both research and practice contexts (e.g., universities lacking emphasis to make research accessible for educators/practitioners, and practice sites lacking incentives for using research evidence). All discuss ways to facilitate mutual engagement between researchers and practitioners and enhance user engagement with research knowledge.

In the second section, “Politics in Knowledge Flows,” Charles Ungerleider draws on his deputy ministerial experience in Canada to illustrate the different rationales driving researchers and politicians. While a marriage between these “strange bedfellows” (p. 63) is unlikely, he discusses strategies to partially bridge the divide. Jenny Ozga uncovers a Foucauldian universe as she discusses how data facilitates the pervasiveness of governance yet makes it appear “dispersed, distributed and disaggregated” (p. 73). Margaret Somerville writes about the flow of knowledge between indigenous and non-indigenous worldviews in an intensely political project on water conservation. She refers to “postmodern emergence” as a methodological stance to open up a creative and dialogic space in such politically charged research, and art exhibitions as “public pedagogy of place” to enable knowledge sharing between widely different paradigms (pp. 89–91). Phan le Ha writes about her identity as a mobile Vietnamese scholar in Australia as both “being” (referring to her

stable national identity) and “becoming” (referring to her transnationally mobile identity). Drawing on her own experience and that of Chinese diasporic scholars in English-speaking countries, she makes a strong case for decentring the global in discussions of KM across transnational sites.

The third section, “Languages and Enactments of Knowledge Mobilization,” offers grounded insights on KM. Ian Dyck discusses the intense negotiations across institutions, cultures, and professional knowledges in a joint Canada–Russia archaeological exhibition comparing the ancient nomads of the Prairies and the Steppe. He reflects on exhibition as a public education tool whose outcomes, however, cannot be measured by traditional means. Deirdre Kelly and Michelle Stack adopt the metaphor of a musical bridge as they set out to create a space where dialogue can take place between researcher-academics and journalists, since they operate under “different rules of the game” (p. 128). Tara Fenwick writes about the implications of engaging in arts-informed KM methods without an awareness of the complex philosophical questions it may raise. She sums it up as follows: “We did not know how much we did not know” (p. 146). Chris Chesher and Sarah Howard discuss the tensions between access to knowledge and the simultaneous management and control of it—both (ironically) facilitated by the growth in digital knowledge management and mobilization systems in universities. As new technology ensures unprecedented access to knowledge and knowledge sharing, it also gives rise to regulatory mechanisms: “These two features of the new knowledge environment are not dichotomous, they are simultaneous” (p. 154).

Michael Fraser opens the fourth section, “Responsibilities and Rights in Mobilizing Knowledge.” His overview of the evolution of the concept of intellectual property rights is very helpful. The strictly legal perspective, however, makes for a few jarring notes—e.g., when notions of private property, market economy, regulations of access, etc. are not complicated. Rui Yang shows how Western hegemony in scholarly publications is maintained through established citational, ranking, and indexing cultures biased toward Western, English-language publications. Drawing on empirical data on Chinese scholarly publications, he discusses the stringent network of domination that is hard to break through even with concerted efforts to support indigenous scholarship. Dolores van der Wey proposes a pedagogy of disruption in the face of conflicting epistemologies in classrooms. She draws on her experience of using indigenous literature to contest master narratives of settler colonials and overcome resistance to difficult knowledges. Bob Lingard, Ian Hardy, and Stephen Heimans combine insights from a range of post-colonial and post-structuralist scholars (e.g., Arjun Appadurai, Raewyn Connell, Linda Smith, and Gayatri Spivak, etc.) with their own research and teaching experience to challenge asymmetric power relations—the “silent (and sometimes, not so silent) valorization of Western epistemologies and ontologies”—in knowledge production and circulation (p. 212). It is a fitting conclusion to the collection as it reiterates and develops some issues raised by other contributors (e.g., van der Wey, Yang, Phan).

Overall, the book successfully captures the enormous complexities involved in the building, circulation, and “mobilization” of research knowledges. It indicates more work is needed on the hegemonic centre–periphery relations in knowledge production and mobilization (many contributors raise this issue but it’s central to only one chapter), and

on interdisciplinary variations in understanding, approaching, and mobilizing research knowledges. It also leaves readers with a sense of an amorphous regime of knowledge production and circulation that researcher-academics increasingly have to negotiate. However, the nuanced analyses and shared strategies for more fruitful KM demonstrate the robust engagement in KM issues that such a regime calls for. I noticed some inconsistencies in writing styles, which ranged from dense and wordy to clear and accessible. In the spirit of KM across professional sites that some contributors discuss (e.g., Ungerleider; Kelly and Stack), more efforts could have been devoted toward obtaining a balanced level of clarity and accessibility. Finally, I started the book with my own questions and doubts about research process (sometimes mired in not so transformative politics). I must say it has been a worthwhile exercise. Graduate students and younger scholars will find the collection especially helpful as it clarifies the state of the knowledge and practice in educational research and policy making. It tells them where there are reasons to celebrate and where to be cautious about current trends in educational research.

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THE HANDBOOK OF SCHOLARLY WRITING AND PUBLISHING

Tonette S. Rocco and Tim Hatcher (Eds.). Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2011, 366 pages.

The purpose of *The Handbook of Scholarly Writing and Publishing* is to equip emerging and established scholars with tools to become stronger writers. The book covers a wide array of topics about various points of the writing and publishing process, including reasons to write for publication, writing with authority, writing theory, writing for critical readers, addressing feedback, and writing a book review—which, following Hatcher and McDonald (2011), helped frame this specific review. There are chapters that link writing with being a qualitative and/or quantitative researcher, a mentor, a manuscript reviewer, a co-author, and a “foreigner” to the Western culture of scholarly writing. The conclusion of the edited book provides a list of literary resources for readers to continue their learning. Some authors construct their arguments based on (self-)narratives about writing struggles, while most put forth conceptual pieces. Each author engages with the literature, provides a critical discussion, and asserts suggestions designed to improve relevant skills.

The authors’ backgrounds range from emerging scholars such as senior-level graduate students to established scholars with extensive records of publication and editorship. They also arrive from a wide variety of academic disciplines such as adult education, research methods, and human resource development. Given the diversity in topics, writing styles, and authors, the information provided in this handbook can appeal to many types of audiences.