**Major Assignment #3**

**Book Review**

Angela McCormick

Educational Administration & Human Resource Development, Texas A&M University

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Dr. Elizabeth A. Roumell

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Vella, J. (2008). *On Teaching and Learning: Putting the Principles and Practices of Dialogue Education into Action.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. 232pp. $36.00 (hardcover).

Overview

Jane Vella is pillar of research, practice, and experience in the adult education field, specifically the critical pedagogy of dialogue education. She is a practitioner, teaching since 1953 in more than forty-three countries. She is an academic, authoring 10 distinct works. Currently she serves as an adjunct professor at the School of Public Health of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is also the CEO of Global Learning Partners. One of her best-known qualities is her accessibility to the learning community, always giving her email address to interested parties and encouraging conversations. *On Teaching and Learning* is an opportunity to relook at knowing and refocus teaching as a learning centric practice for all involved.

Evaluation

“One assumption of dialogue education is that every human being comes with power.” (p.6). This book enables educators to access their own power of learning centric teaching in order to activate the intrinsic power in all learners. Vella’s 2008 book is full of helpful tools and stories that bring dialogue education off the pages and into the reader’s professional role. These tools crafted and communicated through the experienced words of Jane Vella create an easy to read, yet profound arena to practice and apply dialogue education. The book itself is continuing a conversation she has already begun about dialogue education from earlier works of hers. Vella’s work is inspired and built upon the work of Paulo Freire. Freire, a Brazilian revolutionary teacher, envisioned thousands around the globe with the use of dialogic approach to confront the oppressive educational systems in all societies. (p. xvii). This 2008 work expects exposure to the concept of dialogue education but does not require the reader to have read previous works by the author. When referencing necessary frameworks for understanding further steps Vella gives guidelines and restates her previous work. That holds consistently to the ethos of dialogue education, “To invite men and women of all ages to celebrate their own power as they contemplate, examine, struggle with and manage for their own context new learning, new content.” (p.70). *On Teaching and Learning,* supports its subtitle of *putting the principles and practices of dialogue education into action* through each chapter always closing with an implementation challenge. Vella effectively teaches through the book in conjunction with an active reader. Similar to any learning environment, one could cover the material and gain some benefit, but Vella assigns learning tasks along the way inviting the reader to not gain information, but to truly practice the principles she is arguing bring lasting change in a person, group and community. Dialogue education requires commitment and is not a simple vision of of information transmission, nor is it, “An end in itself; it is toward making society what it can be: a place of peace.” (p.xix). And Vella walks the reader from the initial seven design steps through creating learning tasks and into noting the necessary indicators for the identified outcomes. Finally, Vella exemplifies a teacher willing to learn as she addresses the need to add an eighth step to her seven design steps structure. (p.133)

Recommendation

“The dialogue is not a dialogue between teacher and learner, but among learners, of whom the teacher is one.” (p.xxi). With this frame set by Vella’s own words, I would highly recommend this book to anyone in the field of adult education, formal or informal in nature, that seeks to increase the learning, transfer and impact of the material they teach. One particularly applicable aspect for today’s world, is the expressed articulation and encouragement of thinking through how one would achieve these principles digitally and through online learning communities. I would recommend this book to anyone who is required to teach online courses to take advantage of the resources found at the end of each chapter in how that practice would look in an online setting.