

A CASE STUDY APPROACH TO A MULTICULTURAL-MOSAIC IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

This article is a book review of *Mellen Studies in Education* by J.J. Van Patten and T. Bergen.

Van Patten, J.J., & Bergen, T. (2003). *Mellen studies in education*, Volume 79. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press.

This book provides an exceptionally balanced, easy-to-read array of case studies drawn from the numerous practitioners in the field of education who contributed to the literature. The authors have the unique ability to take complex situations and present them as 23 case scenarios suitable for use with dialogue in beginning undergraduate classes in education. Drawing from the practical expertise of various educators, it is a much-needed contribution to a hands-on, student-centered curriculum. These readings and analyses of cases adapted from real-life situations challenge students to view the educational process from several perspectives. A learner-centered milieu, with Socratic inquiry as a foundation, helps students to begin their journey as reflective decision makers.

Blending theory and practical challenges to conflict resolution, every chapter is filled with cases designed to present the reader with thought-provoking questions. Samples from a myriad of cultural, ethnic, and racial environments are presented to reflect the diversity of the American public school and the challenges this mosaic brings for formal classroom discussion in the context of global education for the 21st century. A noticeable feature of the book is the open-ended nature of the way cases are adduced, covering an array of topics as well as an excellent reference list of suggested readings, annotated bibliography, internet resources, and glossary.

Some of the topics, with discussion questions that receive an extensive systematic review, include diversity issues in America, education and society, future connections, meeting the needs of children with exceptionalities, technology issues, and ethical and civil behavior. These issues are examined from a brief historical perspective, and regional as well as urban-rural differences and trends are addressed to involve students in critical thinking and decision making. The challenges of ethical and professional responses to open-ended questions are a prominent attraction of this literary work.

Field testing of several of these cases has revealed a positive increase in student dialogue and interest in the reviewer's classes. I recommend this book to colleagues because it challenges readers to reflect on the uncertainty of situations that need practical solutions, issues which teachers at all grade levels face daily.