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Summary and Critical Analysis

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Chapter 1: Non-Western Educational Traditions

From the outset, the chapter highlights the tragic viewpoint that informs the summary dismissal of indigenous knowledge from academic curricular. There is a sense of acknowledgment that such knowledge has the potential to contribute immensely to students' educational experiences but the dominant epistemologies of Western knowledge production has ensured that such understandings are kept at bay. While addressing the issue of ethnocentrism within contemporary scholarly discourse, it often prompts a learner to evaluate other cultures based on the rationale pegged to one's own culture (Reagan, 2018). Cultural ethnocentrism often manifests in an individual scholar based on the cultural bias exhibited in their work.

Epistemological ethnocentrism, on the other hand, is common to scholars in an entire study (Reagan, 2018). The evaluation of epistemology and the study of educational traditions can be fostered by accepting that knowledge is relative based on perspective, and knowledge can be constructed by any individual. In addition, the chapter posits an argument that tradition is better understood as an ongoing process rather than it being static (Reagan, 2018). The chapter also explores other issues regarding tradition in education such as understanding culture and the potential misrepresentation of culture. Overall, the chapter posits an outlook of the book's purpose which is to urge other minority traditions, especially those from Africa, to penetrate the Western world within a pedagogical context. The main objective of actively studying non-western educational traditions is to develop granular understanding of the common principles that are embedded within all educational concepts and how different societies have strived to realize these principles.

Chapter 2: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly: The Western Educational Tradition

The second chapter's main goal is to identify and understand the main themes that are incorporated within educational histories and traditions of various societies that have evolved from the European tradition. However, the chapter does not commit itself to providing its contextual definition of western culture based on the argument that "...there is no single western culture in any really meaningful sense..." (Reagan, 2018). Despite this approach, it is noted that there is a strong sense among many people in the West that there is a shared set of assumptions and values about the world. The liberal arts, eventually divided into 'humanistic' and 'scientific' arts, are often considered to be the main pillar of the Western educational tradition. These two concepts have played a significant role in informing the characteristics and the nature of an 'educated person' (Reagan, 2018). It is an approach that dictates employment patterns and also used as a measure of one's acquisition of knowledge. The tragedy of applying Western education as a benchmark is evident in science and scientific procedures. The conceptualization of scientific procedures dictates how science should take place. However, it is inaccurate to aim to standardize education and knowledge regardless of plausibility of arguments presented in support of the same. For example, what was considered to be science in ancient Greece is considered to be philosophy by contemporary scholars (Reagan, 2018). In reference to literacy, the chapter highlights how it was an unnecessary skill initially and was limited to theologians, but later grew in necessity due to the spread of Christianity. As a result, Western ideas were embedded in democracy and also through the spread of Christianity. The chapter evaluates the contribution of Western education and how it has been beneficial to humanity, but still highlights that there is also a need to embrace non-Western education for a better perspective.

Analysis

One of the main issues that emanates from the readings is the determination of the purpose of education. In the second chapter, Reagan seems to set out to determine the purpose of education in regard to how Western education came to dominate other epistemologies. One concept that is recurring in the two chapters is that education is meant to impart knowledge to a student. However, it is also noted that knowledge is relative. As far as the purpose of education is to impart knowledge, one of the main failures in the contemporary education system is that it does not acknowledge the subjective nature of knowledge. There is the need for acknowledgment of this subjectivity, but one must also be cautious against granting validity to all knowledge as granting the legitimacy of an individual's or a group's perspective is by no means the same as granting its validity or accuracy (Reagan, 2018: p.9). Therefore, by failing to appreciate the subjective aspect, the contemporary education system tends to produce entities that are rigid with regards to the knowledge they have acquired and resist any form of knowledge that suggests any variance from theirs. It eventually accentuates cultural ethnocentrism. In order to solve this problem, the education system should work toward developing and instilling concepts in the education system that equip students with the skills to muffle the desire to be biased and appreciate other perspectives.

References

Reagan, T. (2018). *Non-Western Educational Traditions: Local Approaches to Thought and Practice* (Fourth Edition). New York; Routledge.

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