

Book Review

Social Theory and Education Research

**Understanding Foucault, Habermas, Bourdieu
and Derrida**

Edited By: Mark Murphy

Routledge

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For education researchers wishing to have a deep vision, social theory is a prolific source. Although they have benefitted from the work of a large number of theorists in this field, Jacques Derrida, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault and Jurgen Habermas are more influential in shaping contemporary education theories. The effect of these theorists stems from their authentic works, applicable to



education studies. However, education researchers face a challenge, a lack of suitable reading material that can provide a sufficiently in-depth overview of this quartet of theorists. Therefore, there is strong need for a suitable guide to education researchers / practitioners to assist their acquisition and application of social theory.

Aiming to provide education researchers/practitioners and graduate students with theoretical and practical information on how to apply social theories into their research, this book appears to be one of the most updated resources on social theory and its applicability on education. As the title emphasizes, the book addresses the work of the quartet of social theorists.

The book was produced by the contributions of 14 authors from the field of education. It covers 336 pages including 5 chapters. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction about the theorist and goes on with an overview of characteristic terms belonging to the theorist. Then the authors provide detailed information and examples on how to use the social theory of the relevant theorist in an education research. Each chapter concludes with how to apply the theories into educational practices.

Chapter 1 discusses details about what social theory is. After providing some brief information on four social theorists mentioned in the book and their work rooted from the terms such as capital, social class, exploitation, political economy and liberal democracy Karl Marx put forward, the chapter gives important information on the dilemmas of educational researches concerning social theory and its practices.

In chapter 2, Julie Allan begins with the interest of educational researchers on Foucault and his work. The chapter focuses on how Foucault presents his ideas about reality in different discourses, from structures and discourses to the archeology of knowledge, the concepts of treatment and evidence. The chapter points to Foucault's changing focus based on genealogy, institutions such as prisons and schools, and the issue of sexuality and provides a critical perspective on what is normal.

In chapter 3, Terrence Lowat begins with the discussion on the benefits of teaching, authentic pedagogy, values, citizenship education, and servant learning, providing a more holistic learning experience to re-evaluate schools as transformative learning tool. This chapter argues that Habermas' theories of knowing and operational action deepen understanding of some issues such as teacher role, effective learning and schools as transformative learning areas in educational research.

Chapter 4 is about the relationship between Bourdieu's theoretical studies and education as well as the benefits of these studies to educational researchers. Shaun Rawolle and Bob Lingard discuss the key concepts of Bourdieu's work such as field, habitus, cultural capital, symbolic violence at the beginning of this chapter. They also mention his work in the context of being reflexive, denial of epistemic innocence and methodology in social sciences.

Chapter 5 covers Derrida's work. The chapter begins with the detailed discussion of the unique concepts concerning education philosophy of Derrida. This chapter also deals with how Derrida's deconstruction is adapted to educational research environments, particularly in the areas of program design and pedagogy.



This prominent resource has a few noticeable weak points. Initially, this book superficially outlines the key concepts underlying the theories of Foucault, Habermas, Bourdieu, Derrida. Considering the non-sociologist target audience, it could be challenging to understand abstract points and theoretical ideas behind their philosophies. They need more explanation on each theory for clarification. Secondly, the findings of the conducted research based on the social theories, especially those of Habermas and Bourdieu, mentioned in the book are unclearly expressed. They seem ambiguous. Lastly, the editor mentions the difficulties in grasping the social theories in the book at several times. Even though they are abstract and require substantial effort to understand, numerous repetition of this matter by editor / writers can be distracting for readers. Despite these problems, this book constitutes a worthy resource for those interested in social theories and education since it establishes a connection between theory and practice preserving the boundaries of both areas.

References

Murphy, M. (Ed.). (2018). *Sosyal Teori ve Eğitim*. (Translated by Korumaz, M. & Y. E. Ömür). Konya: Eğitim Yayınevi.

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