

The book cover features a white background with a pattern of small, colorful triangles in red, teal, yellow, and dark blue. A dark blue banner with a slight gradient runs diagonally across the middle. The title is written on this banner in a bold, yellow, 3D-style font. Below the banner, a red ribbon-like shape also runs diagonally, containing the authors' names in white. The overall design is modern and geometric.

UNDERSTANDING & USING
**CHALLENGING
EDUCATIONAL
THEORIES**

KARL AUBREY AND ALISON RILEY



'The key concepts of each theorist are clearly presented and contextualised, enabling readers to understand how they link to, and have been influenced by, others in the field, whilst at the same time recognising how they may be viewed as "challengers" to more traditional ideas on education.'

JANE CAWDELL, SENIOR LECTURER IN EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF BRIGHTON

Some of the most important developments in educational thought have been put forward by theorists who have challenged existing notions about the aims of education and its role in society. But how do these ideas relate to today's classrooms and how can you use them to improve your own teaching practice?

This textbook gives you a clear overview of fifteen thinkers who have offered challenging perspectives on education, including influential sociological thinkers (Bourdieu, Foucault, Mezirow, Bernstein), those who have questioned the orthodoxy on schooling (Holt, Darling-Hammond) and other key names whose writing has helped shape our views on teaching and learning.

Each chapter includes:

- practical examples showing how theories can be used to inform classroom teaching
- critiques of each theorist exploring opposing viewpoints and the strengths and weaknesses of different ideas
- reflective tasks inviting you to apply what you've read to your own educational experiences

This is essential reading for anyone on university and school-based initial teacher education courses training to teach in different educational settings, including early years and adult education, or studying education at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

KARL AUBREY and ALISON RILEY are lecturers in education at Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln.

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INTRODUCTION

WHY A BOOK ABOUT THEORISTS WHO CHALLENGE EDUCATIONAL THINKING AND PRACTICE?

This is a companion volume to our *Understanding and Using Educational Theories* (2016) and, as such, aims to complement the theories already covered. Similar to our previous volume, the purpose of this book is to introduce students to theories and enable them to link theory with practice. The difference is that this book contains what could be perceived as *challenging* theories. We have used the word *challenging* in an eclectic sense. For example, characters like Bourdieu, Foucault, Giroux, Bernstein and Mezirow could be considered challenging because of the supposed complexities of their ideas. Maslow and Rogers are quite established educational thinkers, but this volume aims to explore the wider aspects of the thinkers and explore other features of their work in addition to their well-known concepts. Neill, Holt and hooks are perhaps challenging in the sense of their radical approach to teaching and schooling (or indeed non-schooling). Stenhouse, Goodlad, Darling-Hammond and Noddings offer alternate ideas on the curriculum, schooling, teacher professionalism and moral education, respectively.

We contend, as we did in the last book, that current education policy and resultant practices are being ideologically driven with the object of competing in the global marketplace. Consequently, the principal purpose of education, to foster personal growth and fulfilment, is being neglected. This book adds to the breadth and depth of evidence from these contemporary theorists which counter the increasingly prescriptive and competence-based notion of education championed by educational policy-makers. As such, the book offers readers the opportunity to adopt a critically analytical approach to their understanding of education generally, schooling, teaching, and culture that encompasses the learning process, both for adults and children.

We reiterate the point that this book is not intended as a comprehensive appraisal of each of the theorists' work, rather it acts as more of an introduction into the way of their thinking and possible applications of their ideas. However, we argue that these theories, based upon empirical research, augment those of the previous book and allow readers to challenge current policy and practice. The book provides a valuable foundation for students who wish to explore the theories in more depth, it also makes links between the different ideas of the educational thinkers. Finally, it is hoped that the book will provide food for thought about creating meaningful learning opportunities in practice.

We continued to find deciding which theorists to include problematic. Again we sought opinions from colleagues and students, including postgraduate students, and finally considered that the conditions for inclusion would be that firstly all thinkers should have a degree of 'challenge' in their ideas as we have explained, and secondly we thought they should be reasonably contemporary. Finally, we wanted an international and cultural blend, and with diverse areas of focus. Therefore, we have included theorists from mainland Europe, Britain, Canada and the United States – with, for example, focuses in social reproduction and power, the morality and freedom of schooling, alternate ways of forming curricula, race, teacher professionalism, and humanistic approaches to teaching and learning. Once more, grudgingly, we have omitted the social reformers and classical educational thinkers.

WHO WOULD FIND THIS BOOK RELEVANT?

We hope this book has a use and appeal for a variety of readers with an interest in education and learning, whether formal or informal. Our aim is that it will be of assistance in bridging the gaps between theory and practice and in enhancing readers' own professional development. We also have a goal that it will enable students to advance their skills in critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation in their research and assignment submissions, regarding perhaps those thinkers they may have already been aware of but need additional ideas and further reading about. Furthermore, our desire is that it will be of benefit to both undergraduate, and more than the first book, postgraduate students (many postgraduates wished they had been introduced to some of these *challenging* ideas). Once more our aspiration is that this book will be valuable for those who are concerned with all sectors of education from early years, formal stages of schooling to further, higher, adult and offender education, as well as informal education such as youth work. Again this will include students on work-based degrees and their progression routes, as well as those undergraduates undertaking teacher education for all sectors of education – schools, further and higher education and youth work. It is our hope that teachers and practitioners, whether studying or not for formal programmes might find this volume of interest.

ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE OF CHAPTERS

Chapters in the book are sequenced in an approximate chronological order, starting with Abraham Maslow and finishing with Linda Darling-Hammond. We have adopted this arrangement so that readers can follow how educational thinking has evolved over time, and in relation to the characters' focuses of concern. Furthermore, the sequence makes it possible for the reader to make links, not only between the theorists included here, but between other significant thinkers they may wish to explore further. We have avoided organising this book in a manner which places the thinkers into theoretical categories such as constructivists, behaviourists and humanists, as we feel this is too simplistic and does not reflect the complexity and the multidirectional nature of many of their ideas; we consider in their own way they are *challenging*.

Each chapter considers a particular theorist and follows a common arrangement of sections. Firstly, the learning outcomes indicate what readers should be able to do having read the chapter; this is followed by a list of key words which are pertinent to the theorist's work. The introduction aims to set the scene, by outlining the significance and impact of the theorist's work, before briefly considering their biography. The next section explores the theories in greater detail, and then links these theories with other educational thinkers. This is then followed by a critical examination of their ideas, based upon evidence from other theorists and other academic sources. The subsequent section offers suggestions for ways that that particular theorist's ideas could be applied in the reader's practice. Then, ahead of the summary, readers are invited to reflect upon the chapter and complete a task which ventures to consolidate theory with their current or future practice. Each chapter ends with suggestions for further reading which readers can follow for further in-depth study, as well as a list of references that have been cited in the chapter.

As we have noted, the opening chapter starts with Abraham Maslow's concept of the humanistic approach to education. Chapter 2 then goes on to Rogers' idea of learner-centred teaching. Chapter 3 focuses on Neill's freedom to learn in the quite radical environment of Summerhill School. Chapter 4 explores Goodlad's concept of schools and teaching from Goodlad's North American point of view. Chapter 5 considers Bernstein's ideas on social class, pedagogy and the curriculum. Chapter 6 concerns Bourdieu's theory of society from an educational viewpoint, whereas Chapter 7 outlines Foucault's notion of power and control in education. Chapter 8 contemplates the notion of moral education in Noddings' thinking. In Chapter 9 we look at Stenhouse's thoughts on linking the curriculum with theory, research and practice. Chapter 10 is an opportunity to consider the radical aspects of Giroux's thoughts on critical pedagogy. Chapter 11 investigates Gardner's ideas on multiple intelligences. In Chapter 12 we learn about Holt's idea of unschooling or home schooling. Chapter 13 examines bell hooks' work on education as a practice of freedom. The ideas of Mezirow's transformational learning are reviewed in Chapter 14. Finally, Darling-Hammond's ideas for reforming schools and teachers are considered in Chapter 15.

USING THE BOOK

We have followed the previous book in suggesting how to use this book. There are a number of ways in which this book can be read. Perhaps you could read it as a whole entity where you start from the introduction and finish at the end – which would offer you a sequential and chronological order of the theories as they evolve. However, it is suggested that it would be more beneficial if you chose the chapters and theorists that interest you so you can begin to know, or refresh your understanding of their ideas, to consider the criticisms of them and how they link to others and how to apply their ideas in practice. Furthermore, you could track the links with other like-minded theorists as well as use the references and further reading to delve deeper. We again also suggest that readers use the reflective tasks to consider and reflect on their ideas and practice, which hopefully will develop future practice and understanding. Nevertheless, regardless of the way you use this book it is our deepest hope that it will help with your understanding of the ideas of these theorists, and add to your criticality for your practice and your assignments.

REFERENCE

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