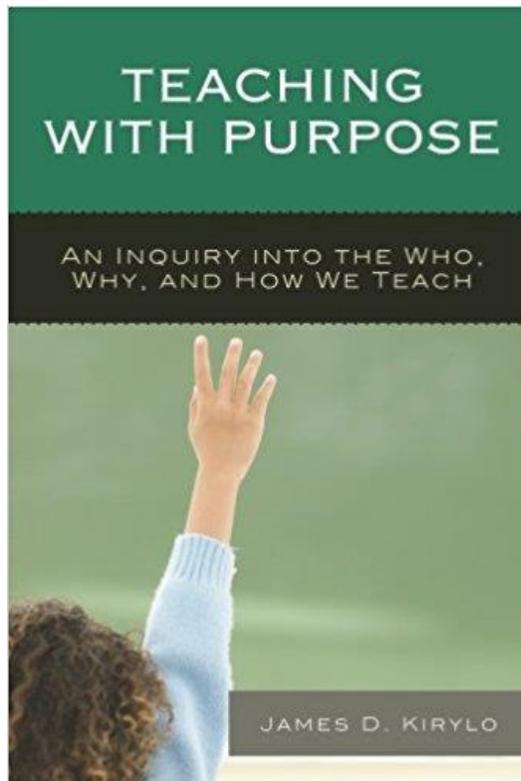


Book Review

An Inquiry into the Who, Why, and How We Teach

“Teaching with Purpose” by James D. Kirylo

By Amitabh Vikram Dwivedi



Teaching with Purpose: An Inquiry into the Who, Why, and How We Teach by James D. Kirylo is written in an academic tone with a motive to provide essential understandings that are crucial in order to better conceptually and contextually teach with a sense of purpose. The book is divided into seven sections: each section has an unequal number of chapters, ranging from two to six, excluding the introduction. Both chapters and sections start with a quotation. The text is further supported with a list of appendices (A-C), illustrating derivative and

historical unfolding of inspiration, a response to the Tylerian rationale, and a sampling of parental voice and testing. The author believes that “there is a certain relevance of this book for all K-12 educators, but the particular targeted audience is geared toward elementary school teachers who are continuously seeking to refine their craft” (p. xv).

In Section I, “From the Inside Out,” there are five chapters. In chapter one, Kirylo states that the purpose of education is for people to learn. Once teacher candidates are declared qualified and certified to teach, they intimately come to learn this privileged journey requires one to live an examined life. Kirylo claims that a personal philosophy of education is a most arduous undertaking. Epistemological, ontological, and axiological considerations and questions are not for the faint-hearted or the superficial. The author argues that if one’s personal philosophy of education does not resonate well with respect to the school’s mission, a teacher then has one of three options: either to inform the administration to subvert/transcend the school’s mission, to compromise with one’s philosophy, or to quit/shift to another job. In “The Decisive Relevance of Disposition,” the author writes that in order to promote a classroom environment of equality, justice, fairness, and tolerance, it is essential that a teacher examines “personal values, beliefs, and attitudes when it comes to concepts related to race, gender, language, expectations, and economic class” (p. 15). In

chapter five, Kirylo states that there are six desirable dispositions of significance for a teacher, namely love, faith, hope, humility, compassion, and persistence. However, these dispositions of a teacher may vary from context, setting, circumstance, and student population. A good teacher is a reflective teacher, and a person who frees oneself from acting on impulse or thoughtless routine.

In Section II, “Entering into Relationships,” there are six chapters. The author believes the nurturing of relationships is foundationally a brain thing. The building of meaningful relationships at a school setting richly feeds the brain in maximizing the likelihood of learning, growth, harmony, and the building of the collective community. Chapter seven and eight deal with fostering the teacher-student relationship, and cultivating a dialogue between teachers and their pupils respectively. Further, the author writes that the building of trust has no room for pretense, but rather is shaped by an “environment that is genuine in the way people communicate with one another” (p. 43). Teachers also engage in relationships with others—such as parents, caregivers, colleagues, and the wider community—who also deserve their respect and consideration. Finally, Kirylo claims that to be in any relationship is to celebrate diversity.

Three chapters in Section III focus on providing an artistic endeavor to teaching. An artistic teacher not only provides children with important sources of artistic experience, he/she also provides a climate that welcomes exploration and risk-taking and cultivates the disposition to play.

Section IV, “The Glue that is Educational Psychology,” discusses the value of psychology for the teacher. Kirylo argues that it is preferable for teacher candidates to have child development as a degree major. In chapter sixteen, the author discusses developmental

psychology with reference to John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The next chapter provides an overview of behaviorism, cognitivism, and humanism.

Section V deals with five components of knowledge: 1) pedagogy, 2) classroom management, 3) learning, 4) students, and 5) subject matter. Kirylo argues that the defining mark of the effectiveness of teachers is established by how knowledgeable they are. While discussing the five components of knowledge, the author takes into account the theoretical viewpoints of Paulo Freire and Vygotsky.

The subsequent section is dedicated to assessment, evaluation, and testing. The author states that assessment and evaluation have two different implications. Assessment in a school setting is not something teachers do to students, but rather an activity that they do with and for the students. In contrast, evaluation is the process of making value judgments on the gathered formative or summative information, data, and happenings. Kirylo discusses the historical background and development of intelligence testing, such as the IQ test, Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), and Thronk Handwriting Scale. Also in chapters twenty-three and twenty-four, the author discusses four harmful effects of high-stakes testing, and emphasizes performance and portfolio assessments instead.

In the final section, the author argues that teacher leaders naturally emerge in a school setting as evidenced through the distinction they pedagogically demonstrate, the authentic dispositional commitment they exhibit, and the energy they radiate to inspire and challenge others. Kirylo argues that teacher leaders are those who are critical pedagogues, and “critical pedagogues are those who have a fundamental grasp of critical pedagogy” (p. 153.). Such teachers authentically understand who and why

they teach, are contextually aware, are clear about the critical aspects of teaching, and think globally, but act locally.

Overall, *Teaching with Purpose* offers a new hope to teachers seeking guidance for how they can develop basic human virtues while teaching. It would have been beneficial if the book had included more personal narratives and examples to demonstrate alternatives. The text underscores what it means to be an insightful teacher, but it should not be taken as a guidebook or a crash course in teaching. It is an inspirational text, and one can feel motivated after reading it, and later on he/she can reflect upon the matters discussed in the book. On the whole, this is a useful, handy book for teachers, language philosophers, researchers, as well as a helpful text for teacher-leaders who believe in self-understanding, developing caring relationships, and the ability to inspire.

“Teaching with Purpose: An Inquiry into the Who, Why, and How We Teach.” By James D. Kirylo. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016. ISBN: 978-1-4758-1294-7

About the Author

James D. Kirylo is associate professor of education at the University of South Carolina. His published works include *Paulo Freire: The Man from Recife* and *A Critical Pedagogy of Resistance*, among other books and articles in a variety of professional journals.

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