


Chapter 12

Harnessing the Power of Picturebooks in Teacher Education

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the transformative potential of picturebooks in teacher education, emphasizing their role in fostering socio-critical thinking among pre-service teachers. Picturebooks, traditionally associated with early childhood education, are highlighted as powerful tools for promoting equity, justice, diversity, and sustainability. Picturebooks can bridge cognitive, emotional, and ethical learning dimensions, encouraging pre-service teachers to question social constructs and challenge stereotypes, while developing critical consciousness. By integrating picturebooks into their teaching practices, educators can create inclusive and supportive learning environments that promote critical thinking, empathy, and social engagement among students. The use of picturebooks in teacher education represents a paradigm shift, challenging conventional notions of age-appropriate pedagogical resources and practices. While rooted in children's literature, picturebooks transcend their traditional audience, offering profound insights and enriching experiences for readers of all ages.

INTRODUCTION

'What is the use of a book,' thought Alice, 'without pictures or conversations?'
(Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll, 1865)

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-0040-5.ch012

The classroom has always been a small version of the wider world, reflecting its complexities, challenges, and opportunities. As educators, our mission extends beyond transmitting knowledge; we need to foster empathy, critical thinking, and a sense of social responsibility in our students. To prepare future teachers for this formidable task, teacher education must be transformative, equipping pre-service teachers with innovative tools and strategies to address social challenges. Among these resources, picturebooks have emerged as uniquely powerful instruments for promoting socio-critical thinking. Traditionally associated with early childhood education, picturebooks offer far more than engaging narratives and illustrations; they serve as vehicles for critical engagement with themes of equity, justice, diversity, prejudice, morality, and sustainability (Arizpe & Styles, 2016; Serafini, 2014). This chapter explores the transformative potential of picturebooks as tools for fostering socio-critical thinking in pre-service teachers, highlighting their ability to bridge cognitive, emotional, and ethical learning dimensions.

The use of picturebooks in teacher education represents a paradigm shift which challenges conventional notions of age-appropriate pedagogical resources and practices. While they are undeniably rooted in children's literature, picturebooks transcend their traditional audience, offering profound insights and enriching experiences for readers of all ages. Their unique ability to distill complex ideas into simple yet visually engaging narratives makes them invaluable tools for classroom discussions on socio-critical aspects. Beyond their immediate appeal, picturebooks foster a socio-critical environment where learners are encouraged to question social constructs, challenge stereotypes, and envision a more equitable world (Arizpe & Styles, 2016). By introducing pre-service teachers to the potential of picturebooks, we empower them to replicate these transformative socio-critical practices in their classrooms, spanning kindergarten, primary, and secondary education.

This chapter begins by defining picturebooks and examining their distinctive characteristics. Then, it covers the reasons why picturebooks should be used as tools for fostering socio-critical awareness in teacher education. After that, the chapter presents an overview of methodological approaches aimed at integrating picturebooks into lesson planning. Concrete examples of how picturebooks can be incorporated into different subjects and age groups are also provided. Finally, the chapter explores both the challenges and opportunities associated with using picturebooks in educational settings.

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