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# The Greenwood Dictionary of Education (2nd edition) [Review]

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Collins, John W. III and Nancy Patricia O'Brien, eds. *The Greenwood Dictionary of Education*. 2nd ed. Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2011. ABC-CLIO eBook Collection. Web. 18 Jan. 2012.

With 850 new or significantly revised terms in addition to previously published content, the second edition of the *Greenwood Dictionary of Education* brings the 2003 version up to date. New content includes selected coverage of terminology from the fields of neuroscience, educational assessment, and technology, as well as updated entries on evolving educational practices and theories. Unfortunately it's difficult to determine the scope of the additions: as a traditionally-organized alphabetical work without an index, this work—as with most dictionaries—is most useful for known-item searches. The keyword search in the ebook version does search word definitions in addition to head words, which is enormously helpful and could help a novice or general user to find related terms. In fact, this reviewer wished that a strict adherence to a dictionary format had been set aside in favor of options to optimize flexibility in searching. For a variety of users, a topical index would be quite helpful, especially given the fact that “contributing editors were also responsible for defining the boundaries of their topical areas” (x) while compiling and writing entries.

That said, as a dictionary and not an encyclopedia or other hybrid work, definitions in the *Greenwood Dictionary of Education* are wonderfully to the point. This is a particular strength when it comes to entries relating to educational philosophy and theory. On the other hand, some technical definitions, especially for many of the newly-added terms from neuroscience, need more context than a subject-specific dictionary can really provide.

Any specialized resource has to grapple with what to include and what to leave out. With regard to the fast-moving field of information technology, editors John W. Collins III, librarian and faculty member at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and Nancy Patricia O'Brien, head of the Education and Social Science Library at the University of Illinois, describe the scope of the *Dictionary of Education* this way: “Terms from closely related fields used in the context of education are included, but we have tried to avoid terms that focus on specific aspects of information technologies used in education. We expect that readers can find those terms in specialized dictionaries that deal with computers, electronic resources, and other related areas when needed” (x). While understandable as an editorial decision, the effects are puzzling and lead to inconsistencies. For example, the *Dictionary* includes the terms “critical literacy,” “quantitative literacy,” and “search string,” but not “information literacy,” although the latter is alluded to in the excellent bibliography, which includes a link to the *ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*. Though the editors' cited rationale may also be the reason for including relatively few terms related to games/gaming, their absence is particularly notable since the Foreword calls out “gaming strategies as a learning technique” as one of the areas of expanded coverage.

There's no question that educators, education scholars, and advanced students of education would benefit from a work like the *Dictionary of Education* that offers discipline-specific, contemporary definitions. Ironically, though, they might also be the very audience who would benefit from a more inclusive and interdisciplinary approach. To a lesser degree, general users could use a dictionary like this as well for help in understanding the educational terminology frequently bandied about in popular contexts, but might be better served by a more extensive encyclopedic treatment.

In sum, the *Greenwood Dictionary of Education*, 2nd edition, has its shortcomings. It does make good on the expectation to significantly expand upon the 2003 edition, despite gaps in content, and the fact that it offers a concise and updated alternative to education encyclopedias while maintaining similar breadth makes it a unique resource. In the end, the *Greenwood Dictionary of Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, is a necessary update to the 2003 work, but format limitations and some overly-narrow topical parameters leave room for improvement.