
Book Review

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Ginie Servant-Miklos, *Pedagogies of Collapse: A Hopeful Education for the End of the World as We Know It*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2024, 282 pp., ₹4131. ISBN 978-1-3504-0049-8, ISBN 978-1-3504-0048-1.

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“We are staring collapse in the face”

That’s the sentence with which Virginie (Ginie) Servant-Miklos begins her book *Pedagogies of Collapse: A Hopeful Education for The End of the World as We Know It*.

Climate crisis and collapse became the buzzwords only in the 21st century. But the predictions of rising temperature began almost 200 years ago with Joseph Fourier discovering in 1824 that the Earth’s atmosphere traps heat. Eunice Foote further added in 1856 that water vapour and carbon dioxide could be causes for the temperature increase. In 1896, Svante Arrhenius discovered that the burning of fossil fuels emanates carbon dioxide, which could lead to climate change. We had enough time, if not to stop the climate crisis, but to slow it down.

The 20th century also witnessed discoveries related to greenhouse gases, which include the Calendar effect and the Keeling curve. The Meadows Report of 1972 warned us of a potential societal collapse if unsustainable growth continued. Yet, those who went through education since the 70s never heard of the term climate crisis, let alone being taught the knowledge and skills to address it. Even when the signs of climate crisis are evident, learning in denial seems to be the norm, with little concern for the catastrophe ahead of us. The extreme weather conditions would eventually spiral into pandemics, wars and socio-economic inequalities, leading to a systemic collapse, warns the author.

The book is a wake-up call, especially for those on the frontlines of witnessing the impact of collapse. The discourses on the climate crisis revolve around plastic



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recycling rather than a ban on producing plastic items. We still discuss gross domestic product and economic growth when our global consumption stands at 1.76 planets per year. The COP29 dispersed with decisions to pour currencies from the Global North to the Global South and the carbon credit trade. These narratives depict the chasm between the ignorant present and the horrific future.

The continued preference for a capitalist economy over individual and societal well-being makes the education system incapacitant to address the crisis. Moving beyond traditional models of knowledge acquisition and standardised testing is a necessity. The book introduces a new educational paradigm, Pedagogies of Collapse, and a new educational framework, Experimental Pedagogies (XP), for educators to emulate, adapt or be inspired by to design new frameworks and techniques relevant to their specific contexts.

Pedagogies of Collapse emphasises existential awareness, emotional resilience and critical thinking. The four key dialogues for Pedagogies of Collapse include Speak the Truth to provide students with an honest understanding of the ecological and social crisis we face; Make Space for Grief to recognise and acknowledge the profound grief and anxiety as a response to collapse; Take Appropriate Action Now to develop skills for survival, community building and social change; and Imperfect Solidarities to overcome individualism and encourage a shared responsibility.

XP framework discusses five interconnected dimensions, viz. Cognitive, Individual, Group, Societal and Global, as lenses in critical pedagogy. Jigsaw Learning, Problem-oriented Project approach and the card game COLLAPSE are some of the other techniques shared by the author to help students understand the depth of the impact.

The discord she feels of being part of the intergenerational injustice is evident in her writing. She was part of a privileged generation that benefitted from consumption while shifting the burden of climate mitigation and adaptation to the generations to come. She warns us of our cognitive biases, attachments to destructive systems and collective bargains to maintain the status quo. The educator, activist and builder in her is unable to remain dormant amidst the reality. In her present capacity as Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology at the Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, as the Chair of Fair Fight Foundation, a women's empowerment charity, as a contributor to the Design Impact Transitions Platform through the Master's Programme in Societal Transitions and European University of Post-Industrial Cities (UNIC) consortium of European Universities through the Master's Programme in Superdiversity, Ginie shares her expertise in environmental and social education, environmental psychology and experimental pedagogics. The book is one more step in using her full capacity to meet the challenge.

Finally, the author reminds us that living in a world marked by collapse and committing to make a positive difference in the world is not easy. Self-care is the only immunity against burnout and compassion fatigue, according to her. She also directs us to Learn through dialogic engagements, Love compassionately and Live lightly. Controlled degrowth, doing less, buying less, building less and travelling less are a few steps we could collectively take.

Unlike other books that discuss the climate crisis and the role of education, what differentiates this one is the practitioner's voice and the personal touch shared through lived experiences. A must-read for anyone associated with the education system and genuinely concerned about climate change. To enliven a drive to action, read word by word from cover to cover. The book is accessible freely through Bloomsbury Open Access Publications.

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