

BOOK REVIEWS

Education, Globalization, and Social Change 1. Comp. and Trans. Hirota Teruyuki, Yoshida Aya, and Honda Yuki. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 2012. 354 pp. Hardcopies, ISBN 978-4-13-051317-3.

Education, Globalization, and Social Change 1 was published in Japan in 2012. It is a compiled epitomized version of *Education, Globalization and Social Change* edited by Hugh Lauder, Philip Brown, Jo-Anne Dillabough, and A. H. Halsey (Oxford University Press, 2006). The original book is a collection of essays, written by scholars mainly from Europe and U.S.A., about the situation of education mostly in their areas under the conditions of globalization, individualization, and neo-liberalism. The selected essays from the book in the Japanese version are as follows: Introduction. Hugh Lauder et al. "The Prospects for Education: Individualization, Globalization, and Social Change"; Chapter 1. Mark Olssen, "Neo-liberalism, Globalization, Democracy: Challenges for Education"; Chapter 2. W. Norton Crubb and Martin Lazerson, "The Globalization of Rhetoric and Practice: The Education Gospel and Vocationalism"; Chapter 3. Phillip Brown and Hugh Lauder, "Globalization, Knowledge, and the Myth of the Magnet Economy"; Chapter 4. David Guile, "What is Distinctive about the Knowledge Economy?: Implications for Education"; Chapter 5. A. H. Halsey, "The European University"; Chapter 6. "Rajani Naidoo and Ian Jamieson, "Empowering Participants or Corroding Learning?: Toward a Research Agenda on the Impact of Student Consumerism in Higher Education"; Chapter 7. Gareth Rees et al. "History, Biography and Place in the Learning Society: Towards a Sociology of Life-Long Learning"; Chapter 8. André Elias Mazawi, "Education Expansion and the Mediation of Discontent: The Cultural Politics of Schooling in the Arab State"; Chapter 9. Pauline Rose, "From the Washington to the Post-Washington Consensus: The Influence of International Agendas on Education Policy and Practice in Malawi."

The Japanese book is, however, not merely a compiled and epitomized edition but encompasses comparative studies on education. It book includes an article, as the final chapter, on education in Japan written by the Japanese editors: "Individualization, Globalization and Education in Japan: A Substitute for Comment" ("Kojinka, Glōbalizēsyon to Nihon no Kyōiku: Kaisetsu ni kaete"). The selected essays are, in essence, a 'map' which illustrates the underlying circumstances surrounding present-day education in Japan as well as in other countries. Each essay in the original book cautions about the problems of a globalized society. In addition, although discussing various phenomena of contemporary education critically, in their article, the Japanese editors consider each original essay circumspectly, because globalization impacts education separately in different countries. In essence, these editors chose some of the original essays in order to criticize education in a globalized and neo-liberalized world. Simultaneously they are cautious in their examination of the validity and reasonability of the criticisms from mainly European and American viewpoints on Japan.

The greatest characteristic of this ‘map’ is “the gospel of education” (Crubb and Lazerson: Chapter 2). The gospel of education is a belief that various problems in society can be solved by education. Such a belief has been rooted in education in the United States for more than a hundred years. The essence of the belief today holds that the higher and more advanced an education people get, the more they and their country are enriched in a fiercely competitive globalized world. Consequently, contemporary education has given weight to vocationalism. In vocationalism, the subjects and the curriculum are decided from the viewpoint of how effective they are for students’ employability and aptitudes to achieve success in a competitive global marketplace. This view has forged ahead with the reorganization of curriculums in higher, as well as secondary, education. Curriculum policymakers in Europe and America take full account of the needs of the working force and hence, as Crubb and Lazerson point out (142), downplay the arts, humanities, and similar academic subjects as ornaments for the curriculum on the supposition that subjects like these are not useful for a student’s future job nor a country’s workforce.

The supposition is in student and parent minds as well, because they also believe the “education gospel.” Except for a handful of elite schools, they expect universities to equip students with high-quality and useful knowledge and skills for their future. This condition brings about “utilitarian education” (Crubb and Lazerson: 140–3) and hence, consumerism in education (Naidoo and Jamieson, Chapter 6). In order to respond to consumerism, universities are administered under a business management model. As Rose points out in Chapter 9 educators and their institutions in this quandary cannot but foster good “personal capital” instead of a thoughtful person with a required educational accountability. In such an educational environment, the practical utility of skills is “served” to a student and the numeric score of a student’s “useful” academic abilities are focused on, as Naidoo and Jamieson remark. However, this kind of education cannot enhance students’ ability to engage with complicated knowledge (Naidoo and Jamison: 234). Besides, as Rees et al. clarify in their discussion about life-long learning in Chapter 7, that learning in school fails if it is just connected by a straight line to targeted attainment. (254).

What Naidoo, Jamison, Rees and others point out contradicts contemporary educational beliefs or the ‘education gospel’. As Brown and Lauder in Chapter 3 and Guile in Chapter 4 argue, sophisticated knowledge and work tends to have an advantage when people and their country are competitive in a globalized world and thus, are enriched. However, it is contradicted again: according to Brown and Lauder, sophisticated knowledge cannot guarantee prosperity because the number of high income jobs have been decreasing. The myth of an unlimited “knowledge economy” urging people to get “more” useful practical knowledge and skills makes them spend a lot of money for education in vain. Furthermore, as Olssen discusses in Chapter 1, such a condition could be a threat to democracy as the majority of education would just be obedient to money and power without the enhanced abilities of questioning.

The cautions and insistences in the essays selected for the Japanese book directly refer to the current situation of education in Japan. Japanese national universities, for instance, are at a point of crisis caused by a ministerial decree in 2015 ordering them to close down programs in the humanities and social sciences. The background of this

decree is revealed by the Japanese Parliament trying to resurrect the Japanese economy and compete in a globalized world by redirecting the use of education and research in the universities. Under an agreement between the Ministry of Finance and the Economic Organization in Japan, competitive pressure has been put on the universities by the neo-liberal reform of the nation and education following American and British policies. They believe people do not need humanities and social sciences in their life; useful practical knowledge and skills do guarantee enrichment and happiness for them and Japan.¹ In fact, the curricula of higher education and secondary education have been reorganized around the objectives of employability and vocationalism. It is this curricula which emphasizes utilitarianism and consumerism in education.

In addition, educational utilitarianism and consumerism arose due to special circumstances. Many universities in Japan have been weakened due to the drastic decline in the birth rate as they have had to compete fiercely to enroll high school students. In addition, the ratio of job offers to job seekers has been low since the bubble economy burst in the 1990s and the economic downturn precipitated by the Lehman Brothers' bankruptcy of 2008. Many Japanese companies have moved their bases overseas with a direct result in the low ratio of job offers nationwide. These conditions have given students and their parents a choice with regard to a university, brought about utilitarianism and consumerism in education, and led universities to administer a business management system to respond to consumerism. In fact, management theories such as those of Peter Drucker have spread to every aspect of education in Japan, such as syllabi, diploma, research, and payment. Parents expect universities to give their children a high quality of useful knowledge and skills for their future. Students also hold onto these expectations.

Addressing the concepts and realities of contemporary education, scholars in the original book as well as in the Japanese edition naturally raise alarms. In Chapter 9 Rose discusses the problem of money for education as having been a major problem since the "Washington Consensus", The Washington consensus model encompassed an unequal opportunity for education by enabling richer families access to better education. In this era in which English is the lingua franca the economic conditions have encouraged European and American universities to recruit children of rich families from all over the world. This also has stimulated competition in a global education industry.

Educational problems in Japan, however, are more serious in certain aspects than those in Europe and America. The education gospel is just rhetoric, as Brown and Lauder argue the ratio of the number of jobs to the value of better education has decreased. In Japan, however, companies regard a student's history of schooling, such

¹To be fair, after the ministerial decree, the Japan Federation of Economic Organizations made a statement that they thought much of humanities and social science. In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology insisted on intended fallacy. Still, except for them, nobody can say whether they are honest or not because many of the national universities in Japan have decided to downsize or reorganize their faculties of humanities and social sciences.

as scores, certificates, and academic record, as a mere potentiality of training for a future workforce instead of their true abilities, as Honda, one of the editors of the Japanese version, points out (312). In addition, the ratio of the number of jobs in Japan to the value of better education is less than in Europe and America. Japan is a “gig economy” (Honda: 312–2). Furthermore, Japanese public spending on education is lower than the average stipulated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The belief that better and advanced education enriches a person is literal and more rhetorical in Japan.

As Hirota points out, education in a globalized world is under the influence of supranational institutes, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the OECD (317). These institutions regulate the education of the world, ignoring the educational history, social reality, culture, and economy in each country or area, with a world standardization of higher education in the United States (317). Discussion of better education nationally, if blind to these realities, is deleterious and dangerous for education within each country or area. As the Japanese editors mention, it would be worse to just blindly follow academic and political recommendations or opinions for better education from Europe and America without critical analysis (308–15, 323–5). We should instead refer to and compare, for instance, the history of failures in education in Europe as Halsay discusses in Chapter 5. Mazawi examines power politics and the disorder of education in Arabdom in Chapter 8. Ultimately, we should circumspectly and seriously consider contemporary education within the context of each country or area in order to attain a genuine and superior education.

Dr. SUZUKI AKIYOSHI, Professor of American and Comparative Literature, Department of Intercultural Studies, Faculty of Education, Nagasaki University, Japan.