

left Germany, there remain educators who question whether locating the study of education in the university has been more advantageous for practice in the schools. There are also those of us who prize the classical and scientific education denied to us in U.S. schools in the aftermath of the progressive period and now eroding even in undergraduate higher education. It might be said that we never recovered from the forces that shook confidence in the school in Germany between 1918 and 1943.

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Education in Transition: International Perspectives on the Politics and Processes of Change edited by Rosarii Griffin. Oxford: Symposium Books, 2002. 292 pp. \$38.00 (paper). ISBN 1-873927-09-6.

What do we make of books whose titles signal to us something entirely different than what we find in the content? Readers, perhaps more than authors, are highly opinionated and impatient individuals who tend to dismiss such books prematurely because they find the title misleading, the conceptual framework not sufficiently concise, or the book chapters not rigorously selected. Taking a step back, however, and reflecting on why the author of a book has chosen a particular title might reveal important insights into new conceptualizations that are occurring in a field. This volume edited by Rosarii Griffin, *Education in Transition: International Perspectives on the Politics and Processes of Change*, is such a book. The title hoisted the flag of transition research, but the individual chapters sail under a broader notion of social and political change, leaving deliberately narrow definitions of transition behind.

It is important to understand why *Education in Transition* is not just another transition book, a genre of analysis that mushroomed in the 1990s. In 1989, when socialist systems started to crumble one by one, researchers responded with case-by-case analyses of the transition from postsocialism to capitalism in countries of transition. Transition research was celebrated as a new interdisciplinary field that attracted tremendous academic curiosity and scrutiny from scholars in various disciplines. In the first half of the 1990s, authors tended to view the lack of civil society as the smallest common denominator of postsocialist countries and attributed the fact that countries in transition were ruled by chaos more than anything else to the slow pace in liberalizing economies and decentralizing and democratizing governance. As with other intellectual debates experiencing a sudden boom, the academic debates on civil society building were, in retrospect, short-lived. In the second half of the decade, these debates inspired a host of critical analyses of core transition concepts (e.g., civil society building, decentralization, democratization, and private sector involvement), pointing out that transitology, the study of transitions, is neither new nor exempt from its own ideological biases.

A review of articles in the *Comparative Education Review* reveals that transition

was indeed a recurring theme prior to the 1990s. In earlier periods, the transition theme emerged in the context of education and political change, in particular from colonialism to postcolonialism, from capitalism to socialism, and for all kinds of other revolutionary changes, such as from secular to religious governance (e.g., Islamic revolutions) and vice versa. Transitologists have not only been criticized for claiming as their own a research territory inhabited for decades by comparative researchers studying education and political change, but they have also been rightfully accused of using linear interpretations. For example, they were enamored with the chase for traces of institutional and individual thinking and action that might be reminiscent of a socialist past. Countries where they found such traces were assigned transition status and retained as objects of study.

Facing the prospect of an empty nest, transitologists continued to broaden their definitions of transition. Their objects of study not only included educational systems that had recently undergone dramatic political change but also soon embraced all those systems that manifested a carryover of values, practices, and beliefs from an old (in most cases, socialist) system. Such a conceptual approach, which we might bluntly refer to as a “political cleansing approach,” is ideologically biased and countercultural. How can anyone possibly expect individuals and institutions that had experienced from 20 to 70 years of socialist culture, depending on the country, to fall into cultural and political amnesia? Other comparativists (e.g., Robert Cowen) hit the mark when they asserted that using linear comparative frameworks to interpret developments in countries of transition is of limited value.

Griffin, editor of *Education in Transition*, clearly and unambiguously distances herself from linear studies of transition that tend to express the transition phase as “a kind of ‘no man’s land,’ a nebulous time, when things do not change as quickly or as efficiently as proponents would like” (p. 9). Such linear studies imply that educational reforms that were developed during times of a transition were frequently implemented in such haste that sufficient time was not given to examine viable alternatives or to reflect on likely consequences of such reforms. The international group of scholars gathered as contributors of the edited volume question “the nature of that urgency; and the *real* motivation for change or ‘reform’” (p. 9). Besides examining the politics of transition reforms, the authors describe the processes that occurred when particular reforms were selected and implemented and analyze the consequences of those reforms on education.

The 13 chapters of the book are grouped into three parts: (1) international and national discourses on education, (2) countries of conflict and resolution, and (3) gender and development. The first part of the book scrutinizes neoliberal educational reforms in the First World from a critical perspective. According to the editor, neoliberal reformers focus on the reform of structure and provision of schooling, which they view as prerequisites for enhancing the quality of education, which, in turn, is indispensable for retaining international economic advantage within an increasingly competitive global economy. The case studies from Australia, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and the United States all reflect, to various extents, that recent educational reforms in these countries have been driven by an economic interest in outcomes.

The second part includes two excellent case studies (postunification Germany and postapartheid South Africa) that traditional approaches to transitology would

qualify as typical examples of transition. In addition, this section of the book covers two other case studies that, according to the editor, reflect internal conflict that moves toward some kind of resolution. While there is much to be said for stressing the internal societal conflicts that radical political changes generate (e.g., re-stratification of society, loss or gain of old or new political allies, etc.) and analyzing the challenges that these conflicts pose for institutions across the board, including the educational system, the editor is perhaps not sufficiently diligent in her choice of words to explain the selection of cases for the second part of the book. “These countries will be loosely referred to here as ‘second world’ countries, i.e., post-industrialised or industrialised countries emerging from some kind of conflict, either sectarian [Northern Ireland], communistic and dictatorial [East German], racial [South Africa], or dictatorial and fascistic [Chile]” (p. 16).

By way of introducing the case studies of the book, the editor redefines a term with a fixed meaning—the Second World (exclusively comprised of socialist systems)—without addressing the original meaning or specifying the boundaries of the second world to its adjacent worlds (First World and Third World). She also intersperses controversial pairs of adjectives (communist and dictatorial to describe the German Democratic Republic [GDR], and dictatorial and fascistic for Chile). Why not refer to the former GDR simply as a socialist system (communism was the ideology, and socialism the political system) and to Chile as either a fascist or a dictatorial system? Are there fascist systems in place that are not at the same time dictatorial? If that is not an option, why not add one or two sentences for the puzzled reader to clarify why these descriptors have been used?

Finally, the chapters grouped in the third part of the book attempt to shed light on transitions at the local level and address gender, in particular. Griffin states, “of course, gender issues pervade all other forms of traditions. However, here it is a given a category of its own, as gender issues tend to be predominant particularly in strong patriarchal societies [such as Senegal], often governed by oppressive regimes [as in China], or where there is strong link between the Church and the State [e.g., Gabon]” (p. 16). Again, the choice of descriptors to summarize complex political systems is difficult to absorb. In addition, it is unfortunate that all the case studies for this part of the book are from the Third World, implicitly suggesting that gender inequality is anathema to the rest of the world.

The introductory chapter by Griffin (pp. 13–28) sets out the conceptual framework for the book and convincingly describes why transition research should be more closely associated with the broader research on education and political change. Apart from the aforementioned few glitches in justifying the selection of cases for the book, it is intellectually very stimulating and leads one to reflect on transition research. Most of the chapters are well researched and written. I would like to confine the review to two examples: the chapter by Robin Burns and the chapter by Stephanie Wilde.

In her chapter, “To Market, To Market: Current Trends in Educational Policy in Australia” (pp. 31–48), Robin Burns focuses on school reforms in Victoria, Australia, and discusses the “Schools for the Future” reform that was launched in 1992 by a Liberal-National party coalition. Immediately following the arrival of the new government in Victoria, massive budget cuts in the public sector were carried out (230 schools were closed, others were amalgamated, and 8,200 teaching po-

sitions were eliminated), and a new model of quality monitoring was put in place: authority and responsibility were increased at the school level, and formal guidelines and accountability measures were established at the central level. Burns's chapter offers important background information on the political and cultural context of the Victoria school reform and a refreshing critical perspective on the Schools for the Future reform. It is interesting to learn, for example, that the Australian government adopted the corporate style of management based on efficiency and effectiveness under a Labor government in the late 1980s: "At both national and state levels, it was Labor governments that implemented corporate managerialism in the late 1980s; subsequent conservative governments have refined it" (p. 33).

Burns highlights the impact of corporate managerialism on education, such as the substitution of neutral managers for educational experts in educational administration and "a greater separation of policy-making and policy-implementation, with the former largely removed from educational professionals" (p. 45). The Victoria model of self-managing schools is a good example for the first part of the book because it represents a convincing case of how international debates affect reforms at national levels. In the last few years, the Victoria model has, for better or worse, become one of the largest export products (along with standards- and outcomes-based education) in education. Education officials and administrators from Victoria actively seek to expand their market and export their model of self-managing schools abroad, and in fact, the Victoria model has been selectively borrowed by policy makers in many other countries.

In her chapter, "Eastern German Secondary Schooling since 1989: New Beginning or Missed Opportunity?" (pp. 129–49), Stephanie Wilde reviews the impact of unification on German education reform from a critical perspective. In line with Claus Offe's analysis of developments in Germany since 1989 (fall of the Berlin Wall), Wilde asserts that the German transition case is special in two regards: "This conceptual difference of a change 'from outside' [i.e., western Germany] characterises the transformation process in eastern Germany, and differentiates it from the processes under way elsewhere in former eastern Europe. Eastern had a perceived advantage over the other countries in that it had a western 'partner' [i.e., western Germany] to turn to for support" (p. 131). She also agrees with Offe that unification happened to the eastern German population, rather than with them.

Wilde's chapter describes in detail the complete dismantling of the former GDR education system and its replacement with the tripartite education structure (*Hauptschule, Realschule, Gymnasium*), education laws, curricula, and administration of western Germany. Wilde argues, in accordance with the well-known German researcher Christa Händle, that "it would have been advantageous for both systems to combine, for example, the experience of external school reforms in the GDR with the traditions of inner school reform in West Germany" (p. 144). Wilde hints here at West Germany's historical reluctance to change its controversial tripartite secondary school structure, which tracks students into three distinct performance and outcome levels.

Education in Transition provides an excellent overview of recent education reforms in selected countries and emphasizes the political context of these reforms.

It is a valuable resource for researchers interested in political change, transition, and comparative policy studies in education.

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Japanese Higher Education as Myth by Brian J. McVeigh. Armonk, N.Y.: Sharpe, 2002. 301 pp. \$25.95 (paper). ISBN 0-7656-0925-8.

Brian McVeigh has written a passionate book that is based on thorough research informed by years of intense and varied personal experience in Japanese education and society. He notes that Japan has provided greater access to higher education among its youth than most other nations but exposes the emptiness, the wasteland, of Japanese higher education. He concludes that Japanese higher education, for the most part, does not educate most of its students and that its participants, including students, faculty, higher education bureaucrats, and politicians, uphold the myth despite the harsh realities. McVeigh brings a wealth of evidence that undermines the false facade of Japan's higher education system.

The underlying tone of the author is one of frustration and despair about the wide gap between the myth and the reality of higher education in Japan. McVeigh cares for the young people who passively accept the sham and who are not encouraged by their teachers to see through the myth or even question the everyday defects that most students experience regularly. When basic myths are not congruent with evidence, then an educational system and its society are deeply troubled. What strikes this reviewer is that the myth as McVeigh describes it has not been effectively challenged by the Japanese themselves. Several Japanese critics have conveyed messages similar to McVeigh's but with little effect. Myths do change in time, as information that does not fit the prevailing paradigms increasingly leaks through the filters of the mind. But Japan's higher education, like that of most established bureaucratic systems of mass education, seems impervious to genuine reform. One could blame the illusory power structure.

Could it be, then, that McVeigh's factual descriptions of Japanese higher education may fit comfortably into a scheme of meaning that is different for the Japanese and that the myth McVeigh describes may not be the same myth subscribed to by the Japanese themselves? Perhaps the Japanese as a people, for some reason, are especially immune to cognitive dissonance. But the lack of examination of these possibilities is not the major criticism of the book.

McVeigh recognizes the effectiveness of the social functions of higher education in Japan—a sorting mechanism, placing young people into their appropriate places in a presumably meritocratic society, providing a space for youth to occupy for a time in a consumer society, socialization, and the like. But he recognizes that the smooth and effective performance of a social function is not education, especially not higher education. McVeigh understands that education is not only a descriptive term but also a word that implies values that are laden with hopes for