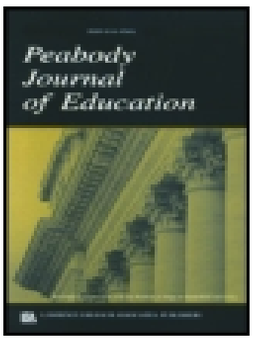

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Book Notes

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Book Notes

Mark Bray (Ed.). *Comparative Education: Continuing Traditions, New Challenges, and New Paradigms,* Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 2003, 264 pp., ISBN 1–4020–1143–1 (paperback, $50.00).

Reviewed by A. M. Arani
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This book contains papers linked to the work of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES). The WCCES is an umbrella body that brings together 30 national, regional, and language-based comparative education societies and that approximately once every 3 years holds World Congresses. The chapters in this book are revised versions of works originally presented at the 11th World Congress of Comparative Education held in South Korea in 2001.

The editor, Mark Bray, is the WCCES Secretary General and is a well-known figure in the field. Bray's editorial introduction summarizes the backgrounds and perspectives of each author and chapter in the book. The underlying theoretical orientations of these chapters, although not always explicit, can be divided into three main approaches: postmodernism, transitologies, and globalization. At the same time, some of these chapters can come under the heading of culture. Bray suggests that although some of these themes have been long lasting, others have arisen relatively recently in conjunction with broader economic, political, and social evolution.

The book is divided into three main sections. In the first section, "Conceptual and Methodological Approaches," David Wilson examines the history and future prospects of comparative and international education with particular reference to the impact of globalization and information technologies. Douglas Morgan, who is an Australian Aborigine, focuses on the hegemony of Western conceptions of science in indigenous societies. Third, in a chapter that breaks methodological ground by focusing on an

intersection of cross-national and internal comparisons within a small territory, Mark Bray and Yoko Yamato focus on systems of education in international schools in Hong Kong.

The second section of the book, "Political Forces and Comparative Education," contains five chapters. Wolfgang Mitter examines the effect of the collapse of Communism on educational policies in Russia, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. Tadashi Endo compares changes in two districts in Siberia and the Russian Far East. Joseph Zajda focuses on the impact of social and economic transformation on adult education in Russia since 1991. Hiroko Fujikane analyzes approaches to global education in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. In the last chapter of this section, Nirmala Rao, Kai-ming Cheng, and Kirti Narain focus on how state educational policy influences primary schooling in China and India.

The third section of the book, "Cultures in Comparative Perspective," has four chapters. Meesook Kim quantifies the cultural and school grade differences in language abilities reflected in middle-class Korean and White American children's narrative skills. Diane Hoffman describes in comparative perspective contemporary American mainstream beliefs concerning children's early emotional and behavioral development. Barbara Schulte undertakes a deep etymological and semantic analysis of certain words in the Chinese language. Hiroyuki Numata focuses on a broad historical view of concepts of childhood in Western Europe and Eastern Asia.

As Wilson observes in his chapter, the impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) on comparative education has not been explored in depth. In the past, comparative education was largely limited to elites who were rich and able to travel widely. Although ICT has broadened access, it still gives more access to the rich than to the poor. Thus, it remains that even in the information age, capital is a more important asset than knowledge.

Issues of inequity are also evident in other chapters. Although Morgan mainly focuses on differences between the underlying principles of Western science and the knowledge of indigenous peoples in Australia and the South Pacific, this problem is not confined to those groups. The issue is problematic in much of Asia and other parts of the world. In her chapter, Fujikane brings out one related dimension. As she points out,

> ideas about education for international understanding became very clear through the views of UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization] in the aftermath of the Second World War. Creating transnational sovereignty and learning more about others, it was argued, would eventually lead to world peace … but this idea never became a major theme in shaping school curricula, and the initial emphasis gradually lost popularity at both national and international levels. (pp. 134–135)

The question then is why organizations like UNESCO did not succeed in making a better world through education. Fujikane's answer relates to the Cold War; economic gap; injustice; and differences in social, cultural, and religious practices.

Yet these are complex issues. Educationists in UNESCO are very familiar with the situations in countries around the world. Surprisingly, in fundamentals, there is not much difference in curricula and approaches to education in Pakistan, India, Iran, Yemen, Egypt, Algeria, Palestine, Israel, the United Kingdom, Russia, and Japan. Definitely, one is not able to find even one sentence against White people (or any other race) in schoolbooks. One is not able to find a single sentence that teaches school pupils how they can prepare a bomb to use in a suicide attack or how they can use modern weapons to kill people who have only stones in their hands. In fact, formal education has no power to create huge social changes. A look at events in developing countries shows that most social, cultural, and religious leaders were not trained in formal education systems. Leaders of Islamic movements in Indonesia, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria, Afghanistan, and Palestine were trained in Islamic schools in which curricula, books, and context are totally different from those in mainstream formal education. Therefore, it is not a war between the rich and the poor or between the north and the south. This is perhaps a war between "formal education" and "informal education" or indeed is a war between Western perceptions (or in the words of Morgan, "Western knowledge") and non-Western perceptions. In Pakistan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, and India, religious schools train people to believe that only their religion is correct. Recently, some clergy in India took a decision advocating banning of the slaughter of cows, which provides cheap protein to millions of people. I have seen on television one great Swami saying, "Here is India and cow is holy; therefore everybody who does not like this ban may leave this country." According to his order, at least 300 million people should leave India.

Thus, the responsibility of the educationists, and especially of the comparativists, is great. Organizations like UNESCO have failed to recognize the role and power of religious schools in the previously mentioned countries, and it may be suggested that this dimension is underrecognized in the book under review. "Informal educational system," as I explained previously, can be a new area for researchers in the field of comparative education.

Nevertheless, the book contains many stimulating chapters; those in the second section of the book should be appreciated particularly. The authors make the point that political and socioeconomic forces play a vital role in shaping the education in Russia, Eastern Europe, India, and China. One of the main strengths of this section of the book is that data are collected

through multiple methods of observations, interviews, and surveys, which adequately validate the presented data and can be a good example for other researchers in the field.

Peter Schrag. *Final Test: The Battle for Adequacy in America's Schools,* New York: The New Press, 2003, 250 pp., ISBN 1–5658–4821–7 (hardcover, $25.95).

Reviewed by Michael A. Rebell
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Describing the new wave of state court adequacy litigations as "the most promising as well as the last attempt" (p. 13) to fulfill the equal educational opportunity vision of *Brown v. Board of Education*, noted journalist and author Peter Schrag has written an important new book titled *Final Test*, which comprehensively describes the origins, current status, and future directions of what the book's subtitle calls "the battle for education adequacy in America's schools."

Final Test describes in poignant detail the impact of funding inequities on individual students and why "money matters" in rectifying educational inadequacies. The heart of the book is a set of highly readable mini–case studies of recent (and in some cases still ongoing) adequacy litigations in eight states: Kentucky, California, New Jersey, Ohio, Alabama, North Carolina, Maryland, and New York. Intermixing important analytic insights, such as the effect of the elected status of judges on the ultimate outcome of the litigations in some states, with human dramas, such as the abusive cross-examination of plaintiff school children by high-powered corporate defense attorneys hired by the state of California, Schrag's overviews convey significant social commentary through delightful character sketches and engrossing stories.

Schrag's extensive research—he interviewed dozens of the educators, lawyers, and advocates leading the fight for adequacy and their opponents and personally reviewed thousands of pages of court decisions and transcripts—results in a nuanced portrait that demonstrates the powerful impact that state court litigation has on education reform throughout the country. Over the past 3 decades, after the U.S. Supreme Court declined to tackle the blatant inequities in education funding that existed in most states, advo-

cates have turned to the state courts. In what has proved to be the most creative flowering of state constitutional law in American history, litigation has occurred in 45 states, and plaintiffs have prevailed in most of them.

Schrag extensively documents the positive impacts of many of these judicial interventions. A landmark Kentucky case led to "an alphabet soup of interlinked school reforms in every area of K–12 schooling, from governance to child care" (p. 70). In New Jersey, litigation won publicly funded preschool and full-day kindergarten for the low-income, largely minority children in the state's 30 high-need school districts as well as a comprehensive school renovation and construction program, art and music programs, and other improvements (p. 117). Methodically evenhanded, Schrag is quick to also cite examples in which political realities limited meaningful school reform as mandated by the courts such as the political manipulations and judicial about-faces that undermined an extensive court order in Alabama.

Although he creatively catalogues the major impact that court cases have had in fueling the education adequacy movement, the one major drawback in the book is the lack of a theoretical perspective for understanding the courts' role and how the positive effects of judicial intervention can be maximized. At times, he adopts the stale clichés of the "judicial activism" debate of the 1970s, such as "generalist" judges may not "be equipped to manage" complex school systems (p. 233). The fact is that judges who are successful with remedies in these cases do not presume to manage large school systems. In contrast with the way judicial interventions were handled in some of the early federal desegregation cases, state court judges in the contemporary education adequacy realm tend to promote an effective judicial–legislative dialogue that respects constitutional separation of powers precepts by ensuring that each of the branches carries out the remedial responsibilities that it is best equipped to handle.

In this dialogue, the courts' prime role is to articulate basic constitutional parameters for reform and to set serious time lines for their accomplishment. The specific funding formulas and accountability principles to implement these parameters are the responsibility of the legislative and executive branches. New York's highest court, for example, recently issued such constitutional guidelines in *Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York.* After finding the state's education finance system unconstitutional, the Court gave the governor and the legislature about a year to

1. Ascertain the actual cost of providing a sound basic education.
2. Reform the funding system to ensure that every school has the necessary level of resources.

3. Provide a system of accountability to measure whether the reforms actually provide the opportunity for a sound basic education.[1]

The governor and the legislature could adopt any one of several available methodologies for a costing out study, and any of an even larger number of funding and accountability approaches would satisfy this mandate. In other words, the political branches are accorded broad discretion to create an effective funding and accountability system so long as they promptly meet their bottom line constitutional responsibility to fairly determine and provide the amount of resources students need to obtain an adequate education.

Publication of *Final Test* could not be more timely. As the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark desegregation decision approaches, Schrag dramatically relates the potential of the adequacy movement to the still unrealized vision of *Brown v. Board of Education*:

> For all the questions it raises, the adequacy argument is also a sophisticated and passionate declaration of faith in the great promises of American society: equality, opportunity and human and social betterment—a sine qua non for a modern technological democracy. (p. 249)

William H. Watkins. *The White Architects of Black Education: Ideology and Power in America, 1865–1954*, New York: Teachers College Press, 2001, 207 pp., ISBN 0–8077–4043–8 (cloth, $50.00).

Reviewed by Thomas V. O'Brien
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In this book, William H. Watkins scrutinizes a small group of powerful White elites who shaped the Black impulse for schooling in the postbellum America. In doing so, he builds on the historical work of James D. Anderson, Horace Mann Bond, and Ronald E. Butchart while employing critical theory.

[1]The references here are to *CFE v. State of New York,* 100 N.Y. 2d 893 (2003). Schrag's account of the New York case necessarily stopped before this June 2003 decision was issued.

Like these writers, Watkins approaches his study broadly and attempts to see schooling in its sociopolitical context. Watkins downplays the great migration and famous Washington–Du Bois debate over what constituted a proper schooling for the race. He sees these as minor developments compared to the thoughts and actions of "White architects" who stepped forward to offer a solution to the "Negro problem." Watkins writes about the establishment of Black schools as a social interaction between unequal groups and studies this interplay from the vantage point of the more powerful group. Thus, he casts his analysis as an expression of colonialism.

Watkins's subjects are 11 wealthy power brokers who he sees as men who were primarily interested in building profits, reducing class conflict in the South, and uplifting Blacks to the regional political economy. Watkins sketches and then evaluates the lives and impact of these architects—Samuel Chapman Armstrong, Frank Giddings, Phelps Stokes, Thomas Jesse Jones, four men from the Rockefeller family, Robert Curtis Odgen, William Henry Baldwin, and J. L. M. Curry—and successfully demonstrates how they were well connected to big business, government, and higher education. They operated at a pivotal time and place in U.S. history and saw a connection between the Negro problem and the future America. They also appreciated the significance of Black education, Watkins writes, and saw it as an arena that could be used to help them define 20th-century American society. They used their substantial clout to influence curricula and shape school policy, and this, Watkins suggests, allowed for the successful preservation of a social structure stratified by race, class, and gender. Consequently, Watkins concludes, their actions left an indelible imprint on the Black schooling, racial relations, and American ideology—marks that endure even today.

Watkins finds that his subjects were not evil but rather "forward seeking" men who were interested in the collective and private good. They recognized the need for a solution to the race issue in the wake of the Civil War and thought the proper solution could serve dual purposes: to unite the country and to lay the foundation for the emerging industrial-corporate order. Although they are cast as architects, Watkins is able to explain how philanthropic idealism, New South ideology, Darwinism, and religion shaped these men's values. Given his framework in critical theory, it comes as no surprise that Watkins is captious of his subjects as well as the enterprise and stratified society that they helped create. These architects, Watkins contends, were more than carpenters; they represented and made legitimate not only separate and unequal schooling but also a social structure of racial privilege, racial separation, and corporate capitalism. History, Watkins concludes, needs to hold these men accountable for the schools and the society they created.

Although Watkins's treatment of the architects and the political economy is compelling, two important titles are missing from his bibliography: Eric Anderson and Alfred Moss's (1999) *Dangerous Donations: Northern Philanthropy and Southern Black Education, 1902–1930* and Judith Sealander's (1997) *Private Wealth and Public Life: Foundation Philanthropy and the Reshaping of American Social Policy From the Progressive Era to the New Deal*. This is unfortunate because both books provide a nuanced interpretation of Northern philanthropy at odds with Watkins's view. Also, although Watkins mentions that Black activism played a role in tempering the architects' design, he provides no evidence to substantiate this claim. Aside from a handful of references to Du Bois and Washington, the reader learns precious little about how various designs of Black schooling were shaped by Blacks. Watkins is correct to state that Southern Blacks were far more than passive victims of well-heeled Whites, but his failure to cite primary or secondary sources to back up this point only serves to weaken his argument. What is needed here is a historically grounded discussion of how Blacks operated to influence the White architects' blueprint. Watkins would have done well to weigh sources cited by Adam Fairclough (2001) in *Teaching Equality: Black Schools in the Age of Jim Crow* and to weigh Fairclough's thesis that Black educators in the Jim Crow South were by and large discretionary agents of Black liberation. Finally, Watkins's analysis also fails to address how segregated Black schools in the North came about and established curricula.

In spite of these flaws, Watkins tells a provocative story about the growth of Black schooling between the end of the Civil War and the start of the Civil Rights movement. Watkins insists that we take stock of the key role played by a small number of powerful, behind-the-scenes men. As such, Watkins's book, when read along with the other books mentioned previously, helps to further one's understanding to the history of the growth and social purpose of Black schooling.

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Rexford G. Brown. *It's Your Fault: An Insider's Guide to Learning and Teaching in City Schools,* New York: Teachers College Press, 2003, 168 pp., ISBN 0–8077–4379–8 (paperback, $16.95).

Reviewed by Christina Hart
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For anyone who works in the front lines of the public education system who has ever wanted to say "it's your fault" to the uninformed policymakers, the out-of-touch university faculty, the uninvolved parent, and all other finger-pointing educational naysayers, this book is for you. Rexford Brown has written an entertaining, clever, anecdotal account of a behind-the-scenes look at the realities of modern public schools.

In an intensely personal manner, Brown gets to the core of serious issues surrounding America's schools: the special education system; the effects of educational bureaucracy; and the roles of the principal as a leader, the teacher as a professional, the parent as a parent, and the student as a learner. All of these issues are unfolded in a compilation of personal essays with witty titles such as "On Leading, Misleading, and Unleading," "Full Moon Over Middle School," and "Serving Time." The essay titles capture the almost comical nature Brown uses to invite the reader to join him as he details a thoughtful and insightful exploration of what it is really like to participate in a bureaucratic school system that he likens to an early 20th-century factory concerned with outputs and consumed with the conviction that time is money.

Each essay highlights hard questions and provides some commonsense answers concerning how to tackle tough educational issues through a lens that would focus on principles of learning. One issue for which Brown offers a particularly detailed account is that of special education. Brown follows the experiences of a special education student as she and her parents navigate their way through the convolutions and rigidities of a policies formulated as a result of formal legal compliance. Brown questions the extent to which the very laws that are designed to help developmentally disabled students are actually hurting them, as educational stakeholders struggle to meet the needs of an ever-increasing number of students diagnosed with learning and emotional disorders.

Another topic that Brown examines with surprising candor and insight is the degree to which educational stakeholders are held hostage to the rig-

orous pace of a time-based education system. Brown speaks to the heart of an issue that every educator knows is true when he describes how schools are designed not as organizations of learning but instead as bureaucracies that are "so tightly organized around time" that the principles of effective teaching and learning are secondary. By comparing America's school systems with the structure and operations of a mechanistic/bureaucratic organization that typifies a factory, Brown convincingly argues how these schools are suffering from an organizational form centered on time rather than what is known about learning.

In the essay that is the namesake of the book, Brown "takes no prisoners" as he scolds everyone involved with schooling. Brown asks the teachers to stop whining and to act professional, the students to cease with their narcissistic attitudes, the policymakers to consider eliminating some laws, and the board members to drop their political agendas and get in touch with the realities of the school. It is in this essay that Brown's humor succeeds magnificently in connecting with experienced educators as he puts into print the very criticisms and concerns that so many teachers and administrators have about their profession.

Throughout the book, Brown shares many of the thoughts educators often have about students, parents, fellow employees, board members, policymakers, administrators, and themselves—thoughts that are not shared outside of the faculty lounge perhaps because they are too revealing or too commonsensical to warrant serious consideration. Brown's wit is engaging, and the reader is easily drawn into the inside world of educators. Although Brown addresses some politically, socially, and educationally dicey topics, he does so in a tone that is inoffensive and approachable.

Because the book is limited to Brown's personal account of the major issues surrounding today's schools, there is no hint of validation for alternative opinions or differing sides of the major issues. However, Brown should not be condemned for this. This book is, after all, a personal account, and Brown is entitled to vent his positions. It is in these positions that the insight only an experienced educator and administrator can offer becomes apparent. Brown reflects on his real-world experiences as a director of a charter school he started and as a policy analyst and produces some very poignant observations about the state of modern public education. Brown's professional and personal experiences provide him with a credibility that firms the ground on which he stakes his opinions and suggestions. What is appealing about Brown's style is a bold sense of how to think about and convey the realities of working in a modern school in a humorous yet serious manner.

The intent of this book is not to develop a theory or contribute to educational research. Rather, it can best be described as an entertaining, fresh

look at the realities of modern public schools. The one fault of the book is Brown's attempt to limit the applicability of his insights to urban schools. One could make a strong argument that these challenges are of consequence to some degree in all public schools.

Mark Bray (Ed.). *Comparative Education: Continuing Traditions, New Challenges, and New Paradigms,* Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic, 2003, 264 pp., ISBN 1–4020–1143–1 (paperback, $50.00).

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Since its founding, comparative education has struggled with a problem of identity. Is it a compendium of interests in education, internationally applied? Or is it a discipline in itself with unique traditions of scholarship? If the former, it would include all educational applications of the social sciences (anthropology, economics, political science, sociology, history, psychology, etc.), all educational applications of the professional disciplines (law, school administration, university administration, public policy and management, curriculum and instruction, teaching and learning, and technology), and all the concerns of specific nations and/or regions (Africa, Latin America, postconflict environments, postparty states, and the like). If comparative education consists of all this, what might it leave out? On the other hand, if comparative education is a discipline with a specialized set of interests deserving of an independent and autonomous position among other disciplines, then what are those disciplines and what is their future?

This new book on comparative education consists of a dozen essays chosen by editor Mark Bray from among 390 papers presented at an international meeting of the World Council of Comparative Education. The essays previously appeared in a special issue of *International Review of Education.* Given the plethora of topics that could fit under the comparative education umbrella and the difficulty of finding papers of minimal standards from an international conference, one might be excused for having fairly low expectations of the product. However, this one is worth reading.

Following an introductory essay, the chapters are divided into three sections covering methods, political forces, and cultures. The result does not answer the basic comparative education dilemma. Faculty will not be able to use this book as a basic text. What makes this book compelling, however, is that most of the essays are interesting.

For instance, under the methodology section, there is a discussion that compares achievement, cost, and quality of the 47 international schools in Hong Kong. Are German schools better than French schools? One need not go to France or Germany when their schools may be in America's backyard. There is a chapter that provides a synthesis of international comparisons over the last 200 years, the author arguing that because comparison was so deeply influential in the era of the fountain pen, will it not be more influential with the methods from the Internet and the computerized library information systems?

With respect to political forces, three of the five chapters in this section concentrate on changes following the end of the party/state in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Deeply knowledgeable about the region, one author reflects on the profoundly important common processes—decentralization of management; privatization of financing; structural and curricular reforms; and the rapid introduction of standardized evaluation, testing, and selection. A more in-depth application are those in a second chapter that describes how these changes have affected Siberia and the Russian Far East. A third chapter on lifelong learning in Russia is also a surprise. The author correctly observes that the adult education "push" from within the Soviet system was surprisingly backward (in pedagogy, efficiency, and purpose) when compared to the norms of the West. What happened after this system had to confront the emptiness of its prior claims? Perhaps the most interesting chapter in this group is the one that compares the educational performance of China and India since the 1940s. China has outperformed India on almost every indicator, but is this because the role of the state under central planning was so different or because the underlying cultural attitude toward education was so different?

With respect to culture, there is an essay on differences between Korean and White American children in how they develop effective narrative skills when one culture emphasizes speaker competence and the other emphasizes listener competence. There is a chapter on what children have lost by educational modernization in both Europe and Japan. The author argues that in the Middle Ages, children had a miserable life, but in the 18th century, childhood was discovered by social scientists and social workers who established childhood as a period for protection. The author argues that childhood has returned to its previous level of low expectations and high pressure in both Europe and Japan, illustrated by the examination

hell in which young students study for unconscionable periods of time and universally suffer adverse consequences.

It would not be true to suggest that these chapters are of uniform quality. In one, the author argues that traditional peoples of Africa, Latin America, and Asia should have university programs dedicated to their own particular wisdom because it is totally different from Western disciplinary traditions (so much for anthropology). In another, the social hierarchy and the word for *work* in Chinese is said to have profound implications for vocational education. Neither chapter seems to be worth much attention.

Some of the virtue in this book lies in the diverse background of the scholar authors. For many years, the editor has been responsible for insights on education in China, Europe, and the United States from afar. The analysis of the Soviet Far East is through a Japanese perspective. The tendency in the post–Soviet world is from a German. The comparison of China and India is by a partnership from each country. If the future of comparative education were to depend less on its definition and more on the quality of interest and insight, then these essays would bode very well for the discipline.