
Review: Book Review

Reviewed Work(s): Positioning Secondary-School Education in Developing Countries: Expansion and Curriculum by Donald B. Holsinger and Richard N. Cowell

Review by: Stephen P. Heyneman

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tions, policy mandates, and the reality where teachers are asked to implement such reforms.

In chapter 12, Jorunn Møller analyzes the impact of a policy of self-managing schools in Norway as it affects the work of teachers and the administration of the schools' organization in two senior secondary schools. In chapter 13, Ruth Ethell and Marilyn McMeniman examine the challenges associated with confronting "the tenacity and pervasive power of student teachers' initial beliefs and preconceptions about teachers and teaching" as a first step in learning to teach in New Zealand (p. 216). In chapter 14, Tapio Kosunen and Jyrki Huusko discuss the Finnish experience, with centrally mandated curriculum reform and decentralized implementation left to teachers and school communities, and conclude that professional development is not likely to succeed if it is mandated from the center without sustained support and outside expertise. Chapter 15 presents a case study of the innovative process begun by the reform of the Spanish national curriculum on a secondary school. This case, by Juana Maria Sancho and Fernando Hernández, illustrates the failure of innovations, among other things, due to teachers' lack of skills and expertise in managing reform.

The research tradition represented in this book is ethnographic, and as such the arguments presented are clearly circumscribed within the particular contexts studied. The excellent individual contributions and introduction by the editors of the book contribute to increasing the knowledge base of teaching and teacher development at the international level. Additionally, as the editors point out, the book helps to document the roles of teachers, teaching, and teacher development in postmodern times, where education is seen as "the key for a more positive, secure, and successful life for today's young citizens" (p. xv).

MARIA TERESA TATTO

Michigan State University

Positioning Secondary-School Education in Developing Countries: Expansion and Curriculum by Donald B. Holsinger in collaboration with Richard N. Cowell. Paris: UNESCO International Institute of Educational Planning, 2000. 92 pp. (paper). ISBN 92-803-1202-2.

So much attention in research and policy literature has been paid to basic and higher education that the middle part, secondary education, has seemed like a relative orphan. This gap was the subject of discussion at the World Bank in the early 1990s, and Donald B. Holsinger was engaged to help draft a World Bank policy paper on secondary education. The draft paper ran into political difficulties early on and ultimately joined several other papers seeking publication in Paris instead of Washington.¹ The reason for its problematic odyssey is one of the book's strongest virtues.

¹ Stephen P. Heyneman, "Economics of Education: Disappointments and Potential," *Prospects* 25,

Holsinger and his collaborator, Richard Cowell, divide their discussion into six sections. After an introduction, they provide a brief history of secondary education in Europe and the United States in chapter 2. In chapter 3, they lay out five universal dilemmas of secondary education, the degree to which it (i) needs to prepare youth for adult work, (ii) facilitates the transition to adulthood, (iii) selects the few for leadership roles, (iv) should be provided through a common experience or through multiple market-driven institutions, and (v) should differentiate between lower- and upper-level secondary schools. In chapter 4, the authors raise the essential question of when and how secondary education should be expanded. In chapter 5 (the origin for its problems with the World Bank 10 years ago), they expand on their primary thesis: that as coverage increases, curriculum needs to be diversified. This chapter also provides a head-on criticism for some of the World Bank's findings and policy recommendations on diversified curriculum. In chapter 6, the authors concentrate on the changing content of secondary education by drawing on the historical analysis of the shift from classical curricula in the 1930s toward the continuum one sees today, ranging among general/academic, diversified/comprehensive, and vocational/technical. Originally appearing as a paper by Cowell, chapter 7 concentrates on the trade-offs in secondary education and as such duplicates much of what had already been covered in chapters 3 and 4. The last two sections provide a summary and policy recommendations.

This short book should be required reading for students of comparative education and for incoming staff in development assistance agencies hoping to work in the education sector. While the main topic of secondary education is interesting, and the authors' summary clear, the main virtue of the book is that it considers the question of what is appropriate as having a dynamic response. Most previous work in the economics of education ignores the question of curriculum utility as being dependent on who is going to school. Holsinger and Cowell concentrate on the fact that the proportion of the age cohort receiving secondary education is changing rapidly and because of that, the characteristics of students and the purposes of education is shifting. Suppose the rates of return to diversified education were identical. The virtue of this book is that the authors would argue that a diversified curriculum would be more justified in a country with 60 percent of the age cohort in secondary school as opposed to one with 10 percent of the age cohort in secondary school. In essence, they argue for an educational, as opposed to an economic, interpretation of rates of return evidence, and as such they make an important contribution to our field.

The drawback, however, is that Holsinger and Cowell commence their description of the policy distortions of the World Bank near the middle of the story. The reader would have been better prepared to understand this part of the story had the authors begun with how the World Bank got involved in secondary education in the first place. The authors do not mention the fact that between 1962 and 1980, regardless of region or level of development, all countries wanting to expand secondary education were required to borrow for either vocational or diversified

no. 4 (December 1995): 559–83; and Claudio de Moura Castro, Marina Filinova, and Ann Litman, *Education and Production in the Russian Federation* (Paris: UNESCO International Institute of Educational Planning, 1997).

curriculum.² They do not mention the fact that in the 1960s and 1970s manpower forecasting had a virtual monopoly on the analytic tools within the World Bank, which precipitated numerous distortions in educational assistance. They do not mention the fact that the World Bank's research work on diversified secondary education published in the mid 1980s, which they so carefully criticize, was in fact an improvement over what had gone before.³

The virtues of this book well outweigh its drawbacks. Moreover, its publication through UNESCO illustrates, once again, how important it is for the world to have multiple and competitive institutions providing advice on international education policy.

STEPHEN P. HEYNEMAN

Vanderbilt University

Ethnography and Education Policy across the Americas edited by Bradley A. U. Levinson, Sandra L. Cade, Ana Padawer, and Ana Patricia Elvir. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002, 209 pp. ISBN 1-56750-673-9.

We do not often encounter discussions on the links between research and policy from the perspective of different cultures. Yet this is largely the purpose and the content of this book, which was put together from papers and discussions held at the Eighth Interamerican Symposium on Ethnographic Educational Research in October 1999 at the University of Indiana, Bloomington. Around twenty Latin American and Anglo-American researchers offered each other their research experience and ideas on the subject of ethnography and policy. The result is an interesting book that deals with the topic from at least four different levels of analysis: (a) conceptual discussion, for example, whether the word "policy" means the same thing in the two cultural contexts considered; (b) practicality, or how policy concerns have been, or may be, addressed by ethnographic studies; (c) procedural flexibility, enabling adaptation to policy-maker requirements without compromising the nature of ethnographic research; and (d) open-ended issues as presented by the participants at the meeting and included in the book. A number of the articles are translations from Spanish, not an easy enterprise, which explains why some of the translated articles are somewhat difficult to read. I will comment on articles that illustrate the points above but, because of space constraints, will have to leave others out.

Based on ethnography's concern with diversity and the building of concepts

² Stephen P. Heyneman, "Diversifying Secondary School Curriculum in Developing Countries: An Implementation History and Some Policy Options," *International Journal of Educational Development* 5, no. 4 (1985): 283–88, "Curriculum Economics in Secondary Education: An Emerging Crisis in Developing Countries," *Prospects* 18, no. 1 (1987): 63–74, and "Development Aid in Education: A Personal View," in *Changing International Aid to Education: Global Patterns and National Contexts*, ed. Kenneth King and Lene Buchert (Paris: UNESCO, 1999).

³ Stephen P. Heyneman, "The History and Problems in the Making of Education Policy at the World Bank, 1960–2000," *International Journal of Educational Development* 23 (2003): 315–37.