



**Education in Transition: International Perspectives on the Politics and Processes of Change.** Rosarii Griffin, ed. Oxford: Symposium Books, 2002. 208 pp.

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This volume, intended for a specialized audience interested in comparative education, globalization, educational reform, and international educational development--especially social issues relating to women and development--has important implications for researchers in educational anthropology, for school administrators, and for educational consultants. As a book about educational transitions, it is divided into three main sections: "International and National Discourses on Education"; "Countries of Conflict and 'Resolution' "; and "Gender and Development." All aim to examine the processes of change and the politics involved.

Paul Conway, Joanne Goodell, and Jim Carl ("Educational Reform in the USA") center discussion on the debates over the charter school movement, systemic initiatives, and assessment and accountability reforms. They predict that, in the future, assessment and accountability will be the most frequently touted and controversial aspects of reforms. They argue that the current fascination with a market model is driven by two concerns: evidence that American schools are not performing well in international achievement studies and the widespread belief that public schools have failed. The response has been the application of quasi-market principles to education; this "marketization" of education (p. 18) is based on the belief in the primacy of market forces and the hope that such accountability will improve efficiency. Politically and ideologically motivated, state-driven assessment reforms are now used as a "lever" for change. Although accountability and assessment appeal to a public seeking relatively quick and easy solutions to complex educational problems, the authors in this volume suggest that there may be negative aspects of America's testing "culture."

Rosarii Griffin with Colin Brock ("Reform and Transition in English Education") point out contradictions in using a market model to bring about simultaneous reforms in terms of quality and equity issues. Described is a 1988 reform that attempted to address the twin objectives of quality ("standards") and equity (equal access), even though these objectives were potentially competing components of the reform; market features invoked as a means of control may have been more in the interest of quality than equity. One interesting observation: the market model derived from the United States was even more profoundly influential in England than in the United States because of the immense domestic power of the British prime minister as compared to that of an American



president. While trying to address problems of standards and attainment in England, schooling has been transformed from a public service function to that of a commodity.

Even if accountability characterizes future reforms in much of the world, school personnel view assessments with some ambivalence. In Australia, Robin Burns ("To Market, To Market") demonstrates how a microeconomic reform agenda can result in educators losing their policymaking role when economics, rather than the social "good," becomes the driving force (p. 33). Thyge Winther-Jensen, in the very readable chapter "Tradition and Transition in Danish Education," claims that the Danish "naturalistic tradition," emphasizing immediate "practicability" rather than universal principles, has been able to resist all threats in the form of globalization and the market (p. 70). Nonetheless, he concludes that the tradition may need a critical overhaul.

Part 2 invokes a series of case studies illustrating lots of conflict but few "resolutions." In South Africa, Clive Harber ("Education in Transition") reports on failures in decentralization and democratization based on partnership between government, schools, and local communities. African schools remain largely monoracial, and gender discrimination is still a glaring reality. As for assessments--with their continuous record keeping and other demands--they multiply the administrative burden on teachers while trying to convince the government that something is being done. In fact, Harber (p. 120) reports that educators have recommended that the 66 specific "outcomes" and other complex assessment and performance measures be scrapped!

Stephanie Wilde's "Eastern German Secondary Schooling since 1989" reiterates the ambiguity characterizing assessments in the transformation process since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the disappointment of East Germans in being treated as second-class teachers. Julie McGonigle's "Integrating Segregated Schools in Northern Ireland" focuses on the "Education for Peace" movement. This case study tragically illustrates what can happen when people's concept of "community" becomes too limited. Only four percent of the schools in Northern Ireland are presently integrated (p. 164). It would appear that the Irish are too busy with survival issues to take seriously the American mania for assessment. Ruth Aedo-Richmond's "Dynamics of Improvement and Reform in Chilean Education" takes a wait-and-see (experimental) attitude toward the benefits of the market model of educational reform.

The "Gender and Development" section of this book asks the question: Are women really advancing? Mary-Louise Kearney ("Toward Gender Equality in Higher Education") concludes that deeply entrenched cultural traditions still discriminate against women. She includes a checklist of power-sharing objectives for future reforms. Xiangming Chen ("An Old Issue in a New Era") catalogues educated women in China's transition from a communal economy to a market economy but concludes that many traditional beliefs still hinder women from obtaining higher education. Ironically, current economic reforms may have intensified discrimination against women, as men are preferred in the new economic positions in China.



In "Education in Transition in Francophone West Africa," Claire Griffiths contrasts reforms in Gabon and Senegal. She maintains that no real challenges to the existing distribution of power in favor of men have taken place, citing cultural and ideological barriers: African women who try to challenge these inequalities are often charged with betraying traditional African values. In India, causes of male domination are multiple. Colin Broch ("Gender Education and Change") points out that, in spite of positive policies, there are many "constraining" factors, not the least of which is a culture that neutralizes the potential contribution of higher education for women (p. 273). In conclusion, he reiterates one of the subthemes of this volume with this slogan: "Without women, no development" (p. 274).

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