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Book Reviews

Taiwan Education at the Crossroad: When Globalization Meets Localization by Chuing Prudence Chou and Gregory Ching. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. xxiii+291 pp. \$75.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-230-11089-2.

Like other Asian nations, Taiwan is well known for its keen interest in education. There is a firm belief among many Taiwanese that academic success is a stepping-stone toward a higher-quality life. Even in the face of power shifts and foreign occupations, Taiwanese society has maintained a highly centralized education system, a contributing factor that made it one of the world's fastest-growing economies between the 1960s and 1980s. It seems odd that not many scholarly works are published about education in Taiwan, regardless of its abiding importance. For example, between 1975 and 2010, not a single peer-reviewed article about Taiwanese education was published in the *Bulletin of the Japan Comparative Education Society*, a journal of great importance to comparative education scholars in Asia. Similarly, there is also a paucity of scholarship on Taiwan's educational system from North American academics; for example, there are only three articles about Taiwan listed in the *Comparative Education Review's* cumulative index (1957–98), as compared to the 44 articles on China and 10 articles on Hong Kong.¹

This long-awaited book, *Taiwan Education at the Crossroad: When Globalization Meets Localization*, is a valuable contribution that fills a void in the study of Asian education. Author Chuing Prudence Chou is a leading scholar of comparative education in Taiwan and has written numerous books and journal articles in English and Chinese. Chou is also known as a staunch critic of Taiwan's ongoing education reform, which she argues is influenced by sociopolitical changes brought on by the demise of Taiwanese martial law (1949–87). Gregory Ching, the coauthor of the book, is a promising young scholar from the Philippines who obtained his doctoral degree in Taiwan.

Chapter 1 lays out the framework for the rest of the book and provides background information about Taiwan. In chapter 2, the authors summarize the historical development of Taiwanese education. Chapter 3 pays close attention to the age of educational restricting (1987–94) and the education reform era beginning in 1994 and highlights the public-private interaction that was a major driving force of educational change in post-1987 Taiwan. This chapter further illustrates the important role played by educational reform groups formed by citizens as well as a series of reform plans by the government. In order to follow the worldwide trend in reconstructing education and to respond to the social urge for democratization, pluralism, and liberalization of education, the government established a cabinet-level ad hoc Council for Education Reform in 1994. The council published five reports until 1996 that directed education reform in the new century. In the fourth

¹ See <http://www.jstor.org/page/journal/compeducrevi/cindex.html>.

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chapter, the authors contextualize Taiwan within regional education reform. Taiwan's reform policies have much in common with those of neighboring countries such as Japan, China, and Korea.

The following several chapters are detailed accounts of Taiwan's most recent education reform. The authors discuss a wide variety of topics on Taiwan's education system as a whole (chap. 5), course/curriculum/textbooks (chap. 6), budget allocation (chap. 7), and school structure from preschool to secondary education (chap. 8). The remainder of the book is dedicated to recent reform of rapidly expanding higher education (chaps. 9–14). These chapters demonstrate that Taiwan's higher education is inevitably influenced by neoliberal education reform as a global trend. For instance, Taiwan's new university funding scheme depicted in chapter 10 has brought market mechanisms into universities. In this new scheme, universities can enjoy increased autonomy, on the one hand, but, on the other hand, they are required to make more of an effort to make up for the decrease of financial support from the government by diversifying their sources of revenue. With the new funding scheme that stimulates competition among universities, Taiwan's Ministry of Education is carrying on competitive grant programs just like neighboring Japan, China, and Korea. Since attaining international competitiveness is a common goal of these programs, Taiwanese universities need to increase the number of international faculty and students, joint degrees with foreign universities, and hosting international conferences. In addition, to evaluate universities in terms of research, the MOE depends greatly on quantified indicators such as the SCI (Science Citation Index), the EI (Engineering Index) and the SSCI (Social Science Citation Index) as international standards. In such circumstances, Taiwanese universities are involved in global competition whether they like it or not.

Making us aware of much similarity between Taiwan's education reform and those in other countries, the book also refers to the uniqueness of the Taiwanese case. The authors reflect the cross-strait educational exchanges between Taiwan and China. Despite the long-standing and unsolved political rivalry between these two countries, interaction in the realm of education and academics has increased since the 2008 political turnover. After a controversy that lasted more than a decade, the Ma Ying-jeou administration crossed the Rubicon and decided to accept degree-seeking undergraduate and graduate students from China. This open-door policy is accompanied by another policy of accreditation of degrees that Taiwanese citizens obtain at Chinese universities certified by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of China (Taiwan). Although the effect of these new policies and the future of the cross-strait relationships are still uncertain, this changing situation should not be overlooked.

While *Taiwan Education at the Crossroad* highlights the significance of "cross-straitization"—a new concept coined by the authors—the book raises more questions than it answers about this emerging area of study. For example, How are educational exchanges between Taiwan and China different from those between other conflicting countries? What factors can make or break successful educational exchanges? Although the authors underline the concept of "cross-straitization," actual references to the concept are only limited and are not sufficiently examined.

A follow-up edit of the book with detailed investigation on the effects of educational exchanges will enhance the theoretical applicability of their discourse.

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Global Education Policy and International Development: New Agendas, Issues and Policies edited by Antoni Verger, Mario Novelli, and Hülya Kosar Altinyelken. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012. 296 pp. ISBN 978-1-4411-4390-7.

This edited volume, which comprises 3 sections and 14 chapters, seeks to familiarize the nascent reader to the dialectics, tensions, and prospects of the emerging area of global educational policy (GEP) studies. The editors define GEP studies as “the different ways in which globalization processes, agents and events contribute to educational policy change on a range of scales, and with what consequences” (7). At first reading, this definition appears aloof and equivocal. However, upon a keener reading of this volume, one finds concealed in the intricacies of this definition of GEP studies, as well as within the chapters—ranging from new theoretical and methodological advancements illustrated by case studies to commentaries from experts—three poignant themes emerging: governance, participation, and scale. Later, in reviewing the case studies in this volume, I will return to these three themes and explain why I see them as woven throughout this volume. Of note here is that these themes, while not always explicit across the edited collection of essays, challenge the orthodoxy and cyclicity of the current debates within comparative and international education. The authors accomplish this by heeding to earlier calls by academics within the field who advocated for movement away from methodological nationalism and the overuse of the analytics of global and local dichotomy. Instead, they suggest that we focus on scrutinizing the problematique of the “multi-level, multi-scalar (local, national, regional and global) sites and spaces” (8) that exist in various policy fields, or “policyscape.”¹ This analytical lens runs throughout the chapters in the book and brings a fresh, compelling framework to the debates within GEP studies.

This volume deals with the long-standing topic of the movement of policy ideas across national borders in a new way, by asking innovative questions and identifying novel techniques to study old phenomena. The editors position the global as a key element in understanding the nascence of educational policies. I conceptualize this volume as posing a sort of “prisoner’s dilemma,” with a comparative twist in that it pulls the reader into subtly pondering whether or not the reforms illustrated in the volume have indeed gone global or are about to go global.² The prisoner’s dilemma has three possible outcomes: (i) either both prisoners betray each other; (ii) one prisoner betrays the other while one remains silent; or (iii) both prisoners remain silent. If readers were to apply the prisoners dilemma to GEP in this volume,

¹ Stephen Carney, “Negotiating Policy in an Age of Globalization: Exploring Educational ‘Policyscapes’ in Denmark, Nepal, and China,” *Comparative Education Review* 53, no. 1 (2009): 63–88.

² William Poundstone, *Prisoner’s Dilemma: John von Neumann, Game Theory, and the Puzzle of the Bomb* (New York: Anchor, 1992).