

Book Review

Education and Society in Hong Kong and Macao: Comparative Perspectives on Continuity and Change

(2004, 2nd edition)

Edited by Mark Bray and Ramsey Koo

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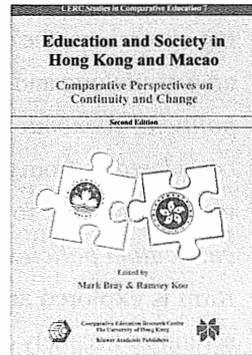
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A bridge between two places symbolizes both connectedness and difference. This is an admirable metaphor for this book that traces both the commonalities in and distinctions between the educational provisions in Hong Kong and Macao. First published in 1999, the book has distinguished itself as an in-depth and focused comparative study of the education and

society of Hong Kong and Macao in the context of continuity and change from colonial to post-colonial periods. The second edition has substantiated the first one by adding two new chapters — ‘Lifelong learning and adult education’ and ‘Language and education’ — that are important complements to the educational developments of the two cities under study. Some chapters of the revised edition have also incorporated updated data and materials that add currency to the book.

The book is divided into three main sections:

- *levels and sub-sectors* in which all levels of school education, the training of teachers, the state of higher education and the less clearly defined area of lifelong and adult education, are examined;
- *political, economic and social issues* where a broad range of topics are considered — from the role of the church, the nature of colonial transition, market and labor forces, and the ever powerful issue of language; and
- *curriculum policies and processes* where the nature of curriculum reform is explored and the context of three important curriculum areas scrutinized, namely civic and political education, history and mathematics.

The content of each chapter is skillfully and succinctly summarized in the introductory section written by the editors of the book (pp. 7–10). Each chapter traces the historical development of its theme, providing an excellent reference base of up-to-date descriptive statistics in doing so, so that the current contexts of Hong Kong and Macao can be clearly understood. In many chapters the potential influences of trends toward globalization, and of policy from mainland China, are also discussed.

The final section of the book ties together this intricate and rich tapestry. Bray’s chapter on the focus and methodology of the book is elaborate and illuminating. Though not all of the chapters of the book are meant to be multi-level analyses as mapped in the Bray and Thomas (1995) framework of comparative education analyses, the contents in general cover a wide spectrum that suggests the mutual influences of other levels. By combining locational and temporal comparisons, the book allows focused and in-depth

studies of both cities, thus adding values to the conceptual understanding of the continuity and change from colonial to post-colonial periods. Another feature of the book is that it uses a wide range of methods of inquiry in the explicit and active comparisons that are made.

In the last chapter, Bray re-conceptualizes and repositions the previous chapters in the Thomas and Postlethwaite framework that applies the principle of multiple causation to both horizontal and vertical dimensions. In addition, with reference to broader literature, Bray further substantiates the framework with other significant themes — the grammar of schooling, power relations in educational system, and the impact of globalization — that help broaden the classification of determinants of change and continuity.

In summary, the book is a valuable reading in comparative education. It analyses not only the patterns and forces of continuity and change, but also the interaction between continuity and change. It focuses on the comparative study of the two cities, but also yields lights on the broader contexts that have vital roles to play. Hence, the dialectic of the local, national, and global is clearly visible. The various chapters are indicative of the multiple perspectives for comparative studies, but also suggestive of the potential areas for further exploration. The book builds on and extends the value of the first edition. This will be a significant resource for those in many nations who seek to understand the development and possible future scenarios for this important region of south-east Asia.

Reference

- Bray, M., & Thomas, R. M. (1995). Levels of comparison in educational studies: Different insights from different literatures and the value of multi-level analyses. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65(3), 472–490.