

the workings of Western education as a potentially uprooting and imperialistic influence have been documented. Can one then avoid a stale critique? Can one also strive for a fair critique that avoids the excesses of doctrine? E. Shiza's essay ("Reclaiming Our Memories"), Cleghorn's analysis of language issues, and Egbo's review of women's education show this to be possible but also exciting and fresh. In these essays of remarkable rigor and vigor, the authors weave argument and facts in ways that challenge received ideas on both sides of the debate. Egbo is most impressive in mustering evidence; Shizha offers a balanced discussion of both the yearnings and difficulties of reclaiming African histories; Cleghorn is exemplary in bringing updated evidence to bear on most of her review of language issues. Along with most of the other contributors, they bring the debate to a higher plane of evidence.

The last challenge was certainly one of unity. To fit fourteen different contributions in a volume—while minimizing overlap and divergence in tone and quality—is one remarkable achievement of this volume. The achievement is especially impressive since this project was apparently not created from the top down. It certainly helps that most of the contributors share a connection with Canadian universities—and this narrows the breadth of perspectives presented—but the convergence of this volume remains a remarkable feat nonetheless.

On balance, the range of issues covered and their treatment by the authors make this volume a valuable resource for advanced undergraduate education. Indeed, several of the contributions should be recommended reading for graduate students as well.

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*Undemocratic Schooling: Equity and Quality in Mass Secondary Education in Australia* by Richard Teese and John Polesel. 2003. Carlton: Melbourne University Press. \$39.95 (paper). ISBN 0-522-85048-0.

Critical readings of mass educational provisions constitute a recognizable genre in the sociology of education. In this book, Richard Teese and John Polesel provide for the largest social survey on secondary education conducted in Australia to date. The survey comprises documentary evidence of social research conducted at various Commonwealth government and research bodies in Australia. The book is a culmination of extensive and impressive work by the authors in the field of educational policy and management. Teese is professor of postcompulsory education and director of the Educational Outcomes Research Unit, and Polesel is senior research fellow at the Educational Outcomes Research Unit at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

The title of the book and its 14 chapters capture the attention of readers interested in the progressive account of Australian mass secondary education in the past 50 years. The chapters are arranged into five sections that contextually

frame the themes from the role of curriculum in social progress, the historical progress of stratified school systems, student advancement through school to further education, and its broad implications for educational reform. The underlying premise is a critical analysis of “how the curriculum which lies at the core of mass secondary education operates as an economic system” (12) and as a function of leading neoliberalist ideologies of the late twentieth century. Throughout the text, Teese and Polesel make the significant association between “the Machine of the Curriculum” and its affect on students, whose intrinsic values and self-concepts lead to particular educational choices. They pose essential questions about the effects of mass secondary education on notions such as gender distributions and prospective social change for quality and equity.

The book begins with a historical report of secondary schooling in which the authors account for the economic and social patterns affecting educational aspirations. Society’s dependence on schooling is described from the 1950s to 2000, with the general rise in qualification levels highlighted. The trend is explained in terms of the industry restructuring and economic expansion of the 1980s that were put into motion mainly through a vigorous expansion of the vocational education sector. This is aptly put forward as the making of “working-class space” in and through the curriculum. Described are the historical patterns and increase in social access through the curriculum. The reader is guided through the historical unfolding that constitutes curriculum development choices affecting social access. In this era of expansion, more “industrialized” content was introduced in the secondary school curriculum to respond to high unemployment rates. It is argued that the traditional and theoretical subjects, such as languages, mathematics, and science, were maintained at the highest stratum of accessibility. Reforms to the curriculum do not level the academic hierarchy in which elite, theoretical subjects with the “richest philosophical content” (44) dominate vocational subjects, which are located lower in the academic curriculum hierarchy. The education system here framed as reflecting utilitarian curriculum ideology is, according to the authors, formative of the social distribution of educational (dis)advantage and the assertion of academic power and subordination.

The second section details the progress of social access to the subject areas of mathematics, science, and the humanities by highlighting the effects of subject choice and achievement rates by gender and social class. Here the authors make use of statistical and demographic data, drawn mainly from the state of Victoria, to highlight temporal and cultural differences in school completion reported in terms of gender, age, socioeconomic family background, and subject area. The chapters focusing on gender differences in the postwar period are most revealing here and would be beneficial to scholars interested in the construction of gender binaries through the curriculum offerings generally. The examples support the idea that girls’ and boys’ subject preferences are traditional, with boys selecting and completing predominantly vocational and science-oriented subject areas and girls choosing subjects from the areas of humanities and languages.

A cross-gender recovery of student interest in the subject of literature is reported to be secured in the early 1990s. This was in all probability a result of the national shift in curriculum focus from classic literature into the study of the social aspects of meaning making through “text,” as it was introduced into the national

curriculum and influenced by the systemic functional linguistics movement. While the authors do not explicitly make this disciplinary reference, they state that the revival of literature studies in the curriculum produced social regression, where working-class boys were five times less likely than middle-class girls to have literature as their subject choice in secondary education. A logical progression of this argument flows into the recently debated “literacy crises” in Australia and the falling achievement levels among boys across the spectrum of school subjects that have resulted in remarkable government response in funding initiatives.

The implicit social conditioning that students are subjected to through the secondary curriculum is the focus of the third section. Here the hierarchical secondary curriculum is shown to act as a social differentiating mechanism between students that the authors confirm leads to decline in school attendance and motivation for subject preference and furthering of academic pathways. Gender differences receive meticulous examination and are assessed from aspects of curriculum practices and teaching modes; the conceptual versus practical nature of curriculum; group work versus individual work; and subject enjoyment, all in the comparative contexts of subject preferences, retention, and attrition rates among adolescent boys and girls. The authors convincingly demonstrate how the conventions of this elitist academic hierarchy sustain its discriminatory structure by bonding academically brilliant students through the sanctioning of certain curriculum values over others. It is argued that the bonding to such values “erases social origins to substitute cultural affiliations” (117) with the privileged academy, in which teachers form an affiliated and cultural authority. It is concluded that the hierarchy of curriculum thus generates a hierarchy among student groups, segregating them into lonely enclaves of abstract theoretical “knowledge inquiry,” and trivializes their preferred styles of collaborative learning. The reforms enabling the shift from elitist schooling to mass education receives justified attention in chapter 8, which provides evidence for the exclusion of the working class from elite private schools by means of expensive entrance fees and by more subtle means of cultural exclusion by blocking access to supreme forms of cultural capital, such as social codes of practice, elitist values, and attitudes.

Teese and Polesele conclude their survey data in the fourth and fifth sections of the book by drawing worthwhile implications of their analyses. These sections synthesize the enduring argument in shifting awareness to the aftereffects of secondary schooling. Here, reasons for early dropout rates, factors influencing the pursuing of further education, work aspirations and employment trends, and the hierarchical differences in higher education are accounted for. The selection processes leading to university study are paralleled with the discriminatory nature of the education system, which the authors claim “works as a giant mechanism of displacement” (182) that maintains the position of the academically privileged at the cost of low achievers, who are shunted further down the scales of inevitable educational disadvantage. The authors offer critical commentary of a system that is fraught with elitist and self-indulgent preservation of power and cultural capital. Implementation and solutions are not on offer, although suggestions of the need to improve quality of teaching and learning and their effects on the macrostructures of further and higher education are hinted at.

Nevertheless, Teese and Polesele offer a timely and critical reading of modern

educational progress in an admirably reader-friendly format. The book presents a strong study of the hidden effects of educational reforms related to examination outcomes and makes a significant contribution to the field. The detail and rigor with which the survey data are presented, and the implications drawn from them, lend themselves to both subject material and teaching content across all discipline areas that adopt a critical gaze at the legitimizing systems of social institutions, educational progression, and reform.

While the data are located mainly in the Australian state of Victoria, the considerable detail here provides a beneficial foundation upon which to expand data comparisons. It invites the opportunity for further research of comparative nature from other Australian states as well as other international settings. The book provides a significant contribution to the international readership in comparative education disciplines due to its effective integration of educational reform, historical fact, survey data, and national policy research, all the while generative of their sobering human social consequences.

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*Asia's Educational Edge: Current Achievements in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, China, and India*  
by Yugui Guo. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005. \$95.00 290 pp. (cloth).  
ISBN 0-7391-0737-2.

The era of globalization is characterized by the international flow of capital, technology, and knowledge. As the world's strongest economy, with the largest per capita income and research system, the United States has asserted global leadership and has greatly benefited from globalization. The United States attracts many talented international students and professional immigrants, especially from Asia. The foreign-born talent has helped to advance knowledge and propel the United States to a position of global leadership in science and technology.

However, according to Yugui Guo, the landscape is changing. Increasing numbers of Asian students return home after finishing their programs in the United States, and China and India, in particular, are building their economies and taking measures to retain their own talent. The U.S. government is aware that it cannot rely on imported talent and faces a structural imbalance between its huge need and inadequate supply of personnel in the high-tech economy. Such factors underpin the need for review of patterns and trends.

In an interrelated and interdependent world, in order to better understand one's own education system, it is useful to examine the education systems of other places. In this book, the education systems of five Asian economies have been selected not only because they are the top five sources of international students but also because their immigrants are believed to be "model minorities" (6), with high levels of education and earnings in the United States. To reexamine education in the United States and to produce policy implications, this book analyzes edu-