

# Education Policy Analysis Archives

Volume 1 Number 4

April 26, 1993

ISSN 1068-2341

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A peer-reviewed scholarly electronic journal.

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## Book Review Issue

### Abstract:

This issue of the Archives contains reviews of three books:

- Robert Leestma and Herbert J. Walberg (Eds.), *Japanese Educational Productivity*, reviewed by Steven J. Fountaine
- Thomas Sowell, *Inside American Education: The Decline, the Deception, the Dogmas*, reviewed by Susan Haag
- Chester E. Finn Jr. and Theodor Rebarbar (Eds.), *Education Reform in the '90s*, reviewed by Kent Parades Scribner

### JAPANESE EDUCATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

Edited by Robert Leestma and Herbert J. Walberg; Vol. II  
Center for Japanese Studies, The University of Michigan,  
Ann Arbor, 1992 (\$24.95)

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To the outsider, the Japanese educational system often appears contradictory: students consistently achieve superior results on international comparative tests while several assessments of the Japanese educational system have labeled it outdated, rigid and uncreative. Yet why would a nation that continues to train superior students look to other countries, particularly the U.S., for answers to the educational problems it faces? *Japanese Educational Productivity*, the second volume of a U.S. study of education in Japan, tries to resolve this contradiction and also presents research to fill the gaps in the knowledge of the Japanese educational system-what works in

Japan and why.

In 1983, American companies were recognizing the decline of American economic competitiveness. When *A Nation At Risk* was published that same year, educational policy makers were also becoming aware that American youth performed poorly on measures of academic achievement compared to other industrialized nations. American educators were greatly concerned over the causes of this decline and its implications for America's competitors, especially Japan. Consequently, as a by-product of U.S.-Japan trade negotiations, a cooperative research project was begun and the first volume of the U.S. study by the U.S. Department of Education, *Japanese Education Today*, was published in January, 1987. The principal stated purpose for the U.S. study was the development of a comprehensive and accessible understanding of Japanese education in cultural context-to find out how and why the school system works and how the Japanese accomplish what they do. In the first volume, then Secretary of Education William J. Bennett shared his own analysis of the possible implications for American education by identifying a dozen important principles in Japanese education. Bennett concluded that what worked for Japan would work for the United States. Among the policy makers who worked on the first volume and who shared Bennett's beliefs were the current editors of this second volume. Robert Leestma was the director of the U.S. study and is a leading practitioner of comparative education. Herbert J. Walberg was a member of the advisory committee of the U.S. study and is a well known researcher of educational productivity. Scholarly work from the original report was organized into this second volume, with Walberg's concept of productivity as a unifying theme. The result is a collection of research contributions divided into ten chapters of empirical data and observations with differing points of view and perspectives. In addition, this second volume attempts to define the course for further research on the Japanese educational system and probe further into effectiveness in education.

The introduction to this volume begins with comments by American education policy makers under the conservative Reagan administration. In a foreword by Lamar Alexander, former U.S. Secretary of Education, a preface by Chester E. Finn, former Assistant U.S. Secretary for Educational Research and an introduction by Herbert Walberg, one of the editors of this collection, the goals of this second volume are set forth: to examine the exceptional accomplishments and productivity of Japan's schools and the distinctive features of its educational system, especially as it compares with educational practices and policies in the United States and in other countries.

The main body of the book fittingly begins with "An Overview of Japanese Education" by Nobuo Shimahara of Rutgers University. Whether or not the reader is familiar with the Japanese system, this first chapter is necessary reading for the following chapters. Shimahara analyzes the structure, policies, and current issues of education in Japan and notes several highlights of the modern history of Japanese education since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, which ended the feudal era. Of particular interest are the "reforms" of the education system which have periodically altered (sometimes drastically) the fundamental structure of education in Japan according to its economic need. Shimahara believes he knows what made Japan and its educational system the envy of the world. He describes the spirit of hard work, credentialism (educational credentials as an indispensable determiner of social mobility and employment), and meritocracy (competition for those credentials) that influenced the formation of school policies and curricula. He describes the centralized control, monitoring of industrial needs, moral development, diversity and choice that have further shaped educational policies in Japan. Shimahara, however, seems oblivious to the contradictions of these periodic reforms in Japanese educational policy and blind to the motive of an intense desire to compete at any cost.

This competition begins at an early age and the onset is seen in Lois Peak's "Formal Pre-Elementary Education in Japan." Peak describes the considerable learning experience Japanese children acquire in the form of preschool (or day care) and enrichment lessons in such

"Western-derived" activities as piano and swimming and "Asian-derived" lessons on calligraphy and the martial arts. Peak believes that Japanese children gain a head start before elementary school by careful, humane lessons in socialization. This head start employs a curriculum that is largely free of the centralized control that characterizes the elementary and secondary systems in Japan. Peak asserts that Japanese pre-elementary children are better prepared than their American counterparts in reading and arithmetic, although she admits that no one knows where the Japanese students develop these skills because they are not explicitly taught and the area little researched. Instead, Peak points to several factors which influence the early learning experiences of Japanese children. She asserts that parental interest in early education, family background and attitudes towards a child's educational participation and achievement all contribute to high achievement levels and the superiority of Japanese students in general.

The third contribution deals with two techniques that are thought to be the keys to high academic achievement of Japanese students. In "Classroom Management and Student Guidance in Japanese Elementary and Lower Secondary Schools," Tokuo Kataoka explains the guidance and operation of Japanese classrooms and how small groups of children assume considerable responsibility for the social order of learning. He gives several examples that illustrate how management and teacher guidance constructively influence moral development and academic interest in the special context of group life in Japanese schools.

Kataoka's theory of guidance and practice is linked in his mind with the process of student classroom cleaning. Kataoka finds great educational significance in this activity and believes that students can comprehend the "moral significance of cleaning," its spiritual value, the responsibility involved and the group cooperation needed to accomplish it. Several more examples of activities that foster the collective life of Japanese students are presented while the controversial issue of the inadequate development of individual personality and creativity is ignored and left "to be solved later."

The competitiveness of the Japanese educational system is clearly seen in the two chapters that make up the central part of this volume. These chapters deal with Japanese mathematics and science curricula and explain why the Japanese see mastery of science and mathematics as the way to give their students special insights and a competitive edge in many fields.

"An Analysis of Japanese and American Textbooks in Mathematics," by Harold Stevenson and Karen Bartsch presents a detailed and carefully analyzed report that compares the content of lessons in mathematics texts in Japan and America for the first through the twelfth grades. Although Stevenson and Bartsch admit that many of the Japanese innovations in teaching mathematics followed the development of the "new mathematics" curriculum in the United States, they believe that the ways in which Japanese educators have modified and are utilizing ideas from this curriculum could be informative for American mathematics educators. Not surprisingly, Stevenson and Bartsch find that Japanese mathematics texts produce superior results in the performance of Japanese students. They explain that the superiority of instruction rests with the texts which are rigorous and fast paced. This accelerated pace permits Japanese textbooks to introduce more advanced concepts at an earlier age. Stevenson and Bartsch point to a striking cultural reversal, the brevity of Japanese texts divided into discrete units, as a key feature that puts the burden on students and teachers to make links and develop concepts on their own. American texts, they contend, neither make high demands on their students nor encourage independent thinking in problem solving. They believe that improved performance in mathematics by American students will depend on altering the textbooks and the instructional practices in American schools.

The stated purposes of "Science Education in Japan," by Willard Jacobson and Shigekazu Takemura et al., is to analyze and find ways to improve the science curriculum in Japan and the United States. Similarities between the two countries in elementary and secondary science curricula from two recently completed comparative studies are discussed. Results show that

although students in Japan and the United States differ in achievement, the correlates of and possible influences on achievement appear to be similar. Books in the home, interest in science, active experimentation, textbook use, homework, interesting teaching, and the general quality of school life are associated with higher achievement in both countries.

Traits of Japanese students are analyzed from an American perspective in "An Analysis of Cognitive, Noncognitive, and Behavioral Characteristics of Students in Japan," by Leigh Burstein and John Hawkins. The authors compiled a considerable amount of research from seven studies published before 1985 on the comparative performance of Japanese students. A key element in this corpus is the research conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. In this contribution, Burstein and Hawkins review several studies and commentaries on the causes of exceptional performance of Japanese students and ask whether the evidence of Japanese academic superiority is solid or contrived. Challenges are made to the assertions that Japanese student performance is substantially higher than that of American students. Burstein and Hawkins review international results of the SIMS (the Second International Mathematics Study) and conclude that although the Japanese students score exceptionally well in computational mathematics, there was little performance information outside the fields of math and science. They cite results from the data of a study by Stevenson and colleagues which cast doubt on exceptional Japanese student performance at all ages. In Stevenson's study, Japanese student performance is lower than American students in cognitive abilities, in reading performance, and higher in mathematics and science. In addition, the results show the limitations of any study which attempts cross-cultural comparisons. The chapter concludes with an interpretive account by Burstein and Hawkins of family, educational, and social factors that lead to high Japanese achievement. They point to three features of Japanese schooling that they believe are outstanding. First, the Japanese school year is longer than that in the U.S. and additional time is spent studying more subjects for more years. Second, Japanese education is more systematic, comprehensive and uniform than in the United States. Third, the nature of learning in Japanese schools places a strong emphasis on convergent thinking skills. The authors warn that there are inherent limitations of cross-cultural comparisons. Such comparisons, then, ought not to be used to indict the educational system of any country.

The psychological literature on the definition, assessment, and promotion of creativity is reviewed by Catherine Lewis in "Creativity in Japanese Education." Lewis concludes that creativity may be construed differently in Japan and the United States, but that several creativity enhancing and inhibiting factors can be identified from studies of Japanese child rearing and education.

The competitiveness of Japanese academic life is the subject of Robert August's "Yobiko: Prep Schools for College Entrance in Japan." In Japan, university entrance examinations play a decisive role in matriculation to prestige universities that bring corresponding advantages in later life. This strong and persuasive emphasis on one's academic background in Japan has led to the curious Japanese institution called the "Yobiko," or "cram" school, which aims to prepare students to pass entrance examinations and sometimes gives them a second or third try at university entrance. August believes that successful cram schools build up a substantial knowledge base in students' minds, rather than merely rote memorization. August supports the yobiko system. He believes that some schools concern themselves with a deeper and longer view of learning and culture that adds to their legitimacy as educational institutions.

Koji Taira and Solomon Levine, in "Education and Labor Skills in Postwar Japan," suggest that an individual's level of education plays an indirect but decisive role in recruitment, training opportunities, compensation, and promotion in the work force. However, greater importance in Japanese labor skills is put on direct, on-the-job training. They describe examples of training procedures in various firms and cite data showing that Japanese workers are the most experienced at their present jobs among workers in the countries surveyed. They believe that not

only can greater experience lead to greater expertise, but also companies can afford to invest more in the human skills of their workers if they are to be employed for comparatively long periods.

The concluding chapter is Robert Leestma's, "Further Research: Needs, Opportunities, and Perspectives." Leestma draws on his experience of conducting the U.S. Study of Education in Japan to provide a candid assessment of what is not yet known about Japanese education. While his study resulted in considerable knowledge and a fresh perspective useful for the United States and possibly other countries, there is still uncertainty about some topics, and there is much more to know. Leestma points the way and identifies some major needs and opportunities for further research. He also provides some insightful perspectives on the interrelationship of school, society, and educational change in Japan.

*Japanese Educational Productivity* should be approached cautiously. Parents and educators who wish to find the reasons or causes for the decline of American scholastic achievement will be disappointed. This volume serves up what is at times dubious scholarly work and argues that academic success comes from adopting a system similar to what works in Japan. However, as a educator who worked in Japan for many years, I believe that comparisons to the values, purposes and culture of Japan are unproductive. Change in American education should not occur based on the rationale that in order to assure academic success and continued advancement it is necessary to keep up with the Japanese. The arguments presented in this volume articulate the conservative side of the "what's wrong with America" debate. The problems facing American education cannot be resolved by focusing primarily on foreign practices, especially from countries that look to the U.S. for answers to solve their own problems. American educators should devote attention to improving the quality of education in the United States and concentrate on changing a system which no longer serves today's diverse and troubled youth.

## About the Reviewer

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## Inside American Education: The Decline, the Deception, the Dogmas

Thomas Sowell 1993, Free Press, Division of MacMillan, Inc. (Price \$24.95)

Reviewed by Susan G. Haag  
Arizona State University

The book is divided into three parts: Schools, Colleges and Universities, and Assessment. Impaired Faculties, "Classroom Brainwashing" and Assorted Dogmas are included under Schools. Damaging Admissions, New Racism, teaching and preaching, and athletic support are found under Colleges and Universities; and the Empire Strikes Back and Bankruptcy are found under Assessment.

Sowell begins with a message about the low quality and continuing deterioration of American education. He expresses surprise that the "results were not worse than they are because of the counterproductive fads, fashions, and dogmas of American education from kindergarten to college" (p. ix).

His major tenet is that the school curriculum has been invaded by psychological conditioning programs which detract from intellectual development and promote an "emotionalized and anti- intellectual way of responding to challenges" facing all individuals (p. ix). These programs are seen as undermining the parent-child relationship and shared values which make a society possible. He has named this the "psychotherapeutic curriculum system"

which teaches children to disrespect and disobey their parents.

## **Decline, Deception, Dogmas**

In Sowell's opinion, a decline in educational performance in public schools and colleges began in the 1960s. SAT scores, first-hand observations by teachers, and reports from professionals in business are arrayed to support this assertion. The young people in the United States do not meet the academic standards of their peers in other countries, but Sowell feels that this is just the tip of the iceberg. While the national test results have declined, the grade point averages of students have climbed-- phenomena that are by no means unconnected. He suggests that without systematic deception of parents and the public by rising grades, it is unlikely that the decline in performance could have continued so long. The question he poses is, "Whose agendas are being advanced as American education declines?"

He identifies "performance and deception" as one of the dominant dogmas, where students are taught to "feel good about themselves." Sowell's research indicates that this deception has not translated into a rise in student achievement or performance. Having opinions without knowledge is not of much value. The phrase "I feel" as opposed to "I think or know" is overused in the classroom. Sowell argues that "I feel" is often the more accurate term because students are "confident incompetents" when discussing social issues and world events.

Dogmas about the larger society such as role models, diversity, and "the importance of self-esteem" have increasingly intruded into the classroom, crowding out basic skills. Sowell perceives this as a reflection of the changing views among educators as to the role of education. He argues that behind much of the curriculum are the organized efforts of outside interest groups who are determined to get their special messages to the classroom. Opposed to these efforts, Sowell believes that the purpose of education is to give students the tools to analyze and to reach conclusions based upon logic and evidence. The attempts of schools to encompass far more than they are capable of handling are partly responsible for why they are handling education in basic skills so poorly.

## **Schools**

Teacher performance is declining, just as student performance has recently declined. Sowell maintains that to understand why efforts to improve teacher effectiveness have failed one must 1) understand the teaching profession, 2) understand the institutions that educate teachers, 3) understand the individuals who want to become teachers, and 4) understand the institutions that attempt to educate children.

Research indicates that those majoring in education score lower on the SAT on both the verbal and quantitative scales than those majoring in art, music, theater, biology, business, math, humanities or health occupations. He suggests that "throwing more money at the educational establishment translates into having more expensive incompetents" (p. 27). He suggests that ordinarily, more money attracts better people, but the "protective barriers" of the teaching profession keep out better qualified people. He does not further identify these "protective barriers"; he only implies that a boring, outdated curriculum, found in education courses, repels talented individuals.

Regarding educational research, Sowell argues that the whole history of schools of education has been a desperate attempt to gain the respect of other academics by becoming research-oriented rather than by improving the classroom skills of teachers. "But both theoretical and practical work in education are inherently limited by the low intellectual level of the students and professors attracted to this field" (p. 28).

Brainwashing is a recurring theme throughout this book. Sowell argues that educational

programs such as drug prevention, sex education, gifted and talented programs, bilingual education, and "Quest" are mere attempts to reshape attitudes and beliefs to fit a different vision of the world from that which children have received from their parents and their social environment (p. 48). This "classroom brainwashing" is part of the agenda that undermines the parent-child relationship. Four methods which help to change learners' values are identified: 1) "desensitization" which breaks down both intellectual and emotional resistance; 2) "isolation" from familiar sources of emotional support; 3) "stripping the individual of normal defenses," such as reserve, dignity, a sense of privacy, or the ability to decline to participate; and 4) rewarding acceptance of new attitudes and values. In Sowell's opinion, brainwashing can develop into child abuse; he cites Phyllis Schlafly's book *Child Abuse in the Classroom* to support his assertions.

The principle of these various programs is that decisions are not to be made by relying on traditional values passed on by the parents. Those values should be questioned. Carl Rogers has been identified as one of the psychologists responsible for creating these programs. Rogers, described as having a "dismissive attitude toward religion and contempt for American- culture," is an advocate of "cultural relativism." Cultural relativism, a recurring theme in attitude-changing programs, holds that "what our society believes is one of many beliefs with equal validity"(p. 48). So, individuals have the option to choose for themselves what to believe and value. However, in Sowell's opinion, students are not actually allowed to choose for themselves, and generally do not think for themselves. He defines the attempt to impose such views as a new orthodoxy throughout public education, and argues that it is accomplished not only through classroom brainwashing but also through institutional power. Central to this questioning of authority is a questioning of the role of the primary authority, the parents. Sowell argues that undermining the parents' moral authority can begin quite early.

Several groups, whose interests are being served, are mentioned, in addition to sponsors and promoters who are pushing psychological-conditioning or attitude-change programs. He indicates that big money prizes are available to those "who qualify" for multi-million dollar federal grants.

In Sowell's opinion, the most widespread social dogmas revolve around "multicultural diversity"; however others include relevance, educating the "whole person," the emphasis on ethnic "role models," in addition to a general de-emphasis of authority. Sowell's definition of multicultural includes an agenda of separatism in language and culture, a "revisionist view of history as a collection of grievances to be kept alive and a program of both historical and contemporary condemnation of American society and Western civilization" (p. 71). He argues against this agenda for the same reason he argues against classroom brainwashing, because of the methods geared toward pushing students toward a set of pre-selected beliefs, rather than toward developing their ability to think logically and reason.

Cultural relativism, a theme running through the brainwashing agenda, finds "the prominence of Western civilization in the schools intolerable" (p. 71). Disparate beliefs exist and are expected in a free society, however the beliefs are not the problem. Sowell states that this agenda attempts to impose such views as a new orthodoxy in classroom brainwashing and institutional power. He cites examples of this in administrative procedures and practices, in textbooks, and in school enforced teacher workshops which reflect the agenda.

## **College Admissions**

The author argues that "preferential admissions," prevalent in higher education today, leads to substandard academic performance whether those admitted are privileged or underprivileged. Sowell states that what has been unique about students, "preferentially admitted by race, has been the large numbers involved, the magnitude of the preferences, the magnitude of

the hypocrisy, and the magnitude of the academic social disasters which have followed" (p. 131). The following results, according to Sowell, are not surprising: Minority students experience more academic problems, social problems, and as a result are involved in militant political activism. In addition, universities have experienced an increased hiring of minority faculty.

The question is not whether minority students are "qualified" to be in college, but whether they are systematically mismatched with the particular institutions (Sowell, p. 146). The larger issue is the impact of the admissions double standard. For example, at Georgetown University Law School, the median test scores for blacks was in the 75th percentile--higher than required test scores of all students at other law schools, but lower than any white student at Georgetown University Law School. Sowell states that this mismatching of minority students negatively impacts their lives and the lives of others. The blacks' performance suffers because they cannot compete with the white students, and from the beginning, the students are set up for failure. Sowell argues that these double standards promote the "new racism" on campus. The white students resent the minority population, not for being there, but because of their perception of how some of these students got there. In addition, the black students perceive that they are "substandard" from the beginning. This promotes inferiority and insecurity in their performance.

In Sowell's opinion, the general decline of educational performance began in the 1960s. He uses, almost exclusively, test score results from the SAT or ACT to document the decline. He must be using the same evidence that the former Bush Administration and the Secretary of Education were using. Bush announced in Lewiston in 1991 that a new decline in verbal SAT scores tells us that "our schools are in trouble." Are these conclusions consistent with the data? There are contrasting views.

David Berliner stated in a recent address to the American Association of Colleges for Teachers Education (AACTE) that the average total score of the SAT has declined since 1965, but the decline "over the 27 years translates into 3.3% of the raw-score range- the equivalent of five fewer items answered correctly" (Jaeger, 1992, p. 120). Sowell's overuse of SAT scores to support the underlying premise that U.S. schools are failing American children is hackneyed.

Another assertion, that American students do not meet the academic standards of their peers internationally, is equally commonplace. American student performance has been discussed relative to those in other industrialized countries on tests of math and science over the last 30 years. Drawing generalizations about specific groups of students from data gathered in international studies is problematic. A report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) concluded that international surveys have not achieved high degrees of reliability across groups sampled. "There is a considerable uncertainty as to the magnitude of measured differences in achievement. Inconsistencies in sample design and sampling procedures have undermined data quality" (Medrich and Griffith, 1992, p. viii).

Additionally, one has to question how alike are the worlds of U.S., Japanese, and German children? Jaeger, in his 1992 article "Weak Measurement Serving Presumptive Policy," concludes that the three nations experience vast differences in economic support and family structure that are necessary to school success. He states that our poverty and divorce rate are much higher than the above countries, and that U.S. teens are more actively employed, leaving less time for studies. Jaeger argued that these circumstances are associated with differences in national and international performance. As Robert Stout points out, in one way or another, "schools are being asked to raise academic standards to better prepare American workers for international economic competition. At the same time, schools are being asked to cope with hundreds of thousands of children who do not have basic necessities" (Stout, 1993, p.303).

Although Sowell is eager to lay complete blame at the door of the American public school system, special interest groups and school bureaucracy, he dismisses poverty, divorce, single-parent families, gang violence, drug abuse and teen crime and pregnancy as mere "excuses."



Sowell's thoughts are totally consistent with the former Administration's position on the effect of expenditures for education. As cited in the Philadelphia Inquirer, on April 19, 1992, in an article headlined "Bush Urges Education Revolution, the President declared "Dollar bills don't educate students." The Administration called for an educational reform, but one that does not cost too much.

This book provides a frank, definitive statement of Sowell's thoughts on contemporary American education. Sowell's stance typifies those ideas that the conservative right find so appealing. Specifically, his discussions center around the general deterioration of American education, the decline in SAT scores, the poor performance of American students relative to those in other countries, and the need for cheap educational reform. Sowell's assertions are shop-worn, imitative and unenlightening, and repeat the same cliché-ridden message that has been perpetuated since *A Nation at Risk*.

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### About the Reviewer

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## EDUCATION REFORM IN THE '90s.

Edited by Chester E. Finn, Jr. and Theodor Rebarber  
1992. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. (Price: \$24.95)

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A volume on the scant successes of the "first wave" of education reform (those following the release of *"A Nation at Risk"* in 1983) would seem apropos as a new administration in Washington comes to grips with educational priorities for the near future. Chester Finn, not only a staunch defender of the past two administrations' educational policies, but an active participant in the post-Risk reforms, has compiled a disparate collection of thought provoking analyses of a decade in which "excellence" was the watchword and "efficiency" was the call to arms.

Education Reform in the '90s reports on a 1990 conference held at Vanderbilt University, entitled "Better Education Through Informed Legislation." In attendance were representatives from the National Conference of State Legislators, and Vanderbilt University's Educational

Excellence Network, "an association of more than 1,700 reform-minded educators, scholars, policymakers, journalists, and others interested in improving education" (p. 7).

These analyses were grouped into three broad themes: 1.) Restructuring Reforms: ways of altering educational administration to encourage flexibility and professionalism, 2.) Accountability Systems: mechanisms that measure progress toward explicit educational outcome goals and create incentives for success in achieving them, and 3.) Parent-Enabling Programs: methods intended to help families become more active participants in their children's education.

Several high profile policy analysts and respected scholars address these major themes in five sections of the book: The Changing Nature of School Reform, Revamping the System, Accountability for Results, On the Home Front, and New Reform, New Politics. Contributors to the effort include Francie Alexander, John Chubb, Terry Moe, Joseph Murphy, G. Alfred Hess, Michael Kirst, Thomas Payzant, Terry Peterson, and Gene Maeroff.

Joseph Murphy in "Restructuring America's Schools: An Overview" outlines a conceptual framework. Four strategies are presented as ways of achieving true school restructuring: School Based Management, "modeled upon the modern corporation" (p.11), Teacher Empowerment, Voice/Choice, which encourages parents and community to break the "privileged monopoly status enjoyed by public schools" (p.13), and Teaching for Understanding, a teacher centered reorganization of curriculum and instruction.

Michael Kirst follows with a presentation of "The State Role in School Restructuring." This chapter offers the most comprehensive analysis of the book. Here, Kirst examines the following components of restructuring: curriculum and instruction, school-level authority and decision-making, new roles and responsibilities for teachers, principals, parents, and community, accountability systems, and the creation of social and health service links. Kirst though, offers these components only as a model. Since education remains a state responsibility, he asserts that, "it is up to state policymakers to find the restructuring approach that works best in accordance with the norms and traditions of education in their state" (p.35).

Chapter Three, "Educational Choice: Why It Is Needed and How It Will Work," summarizes the Chubb and Moe argument in Politics, Markets, and America's Schools. Their analysis addresses the relationship between school organizations and student achievement. The chapter examines schools as institutions, political institutions, and market institutions, and conclude that educational choice remains the most effective alternative for school reform. The chapter includes a state-level proposal for implementation of system of educational choice. The chapter also includes a section which addresses a number of questions that frequently surround the issue of educational choice.

"Restructuring the Chicago Public Schools" by G. Alfred Hess, Jr. follows the Chicago School Reform Act from the Illinois state legislation to its eventual implementation. This chapters offers practical examples for many of the reform proposals made in other chapters. Thomas Payzant continues the field based theme with "An Urban Superintendent's Perspective on Education Reform." School reform in the San Diego schools is highlighted. Examples portray central office restructuring, policy implications of school restructuring, governance, interagency collaboration, parent enabling and choice, as well as accountability and assessment.

Terry Peterson, executive director of the South Carolina Business-Education Committee, describes an outcomes based system of assessment in this chapter. "Designing Accountability to Help Reform" presents a model which attempts to address school, district, and statewide education accountability. South Carolina examples support the use of assessment data in the formulation of goals, identifying areas of need, rewarding improvement and intervening in "bankrupt schools."

"Accountability and Assessment California Style" summarizes the main forces in the reform of the state's curriculum. In this chapter, Francie Alexander examines the areas of curriculum, accountability, and assessment. Included also in the chapter is an analysis of the New

California Education Report. Issues addressed in the section include measurement choice, quality indicators, and district education reporting.

Gene Maeroff in "Reform Comes Home: Policies to Encourage Parental Involvement in Children's Education" presents educational troubles as inseparable from the maladies of the society in which they exist. Values, Poverty, Family Breakdown, Drugs, and Inner City living have contributed to the failure of schools according to Maeroff. Schools can aid parents by improving communication with the home, and train them to reinforce the efforts of the schools. Once again the parent-school relationship is portrayed by a one-way flow of information. The school is seen as a place where the community can go to "get fixed." Maeroff correctly identifies parental involvement as an integral part of school reform. However, he fails to address the disappearance of meaningful employment opportunities for many in the inner-city and the subsequent social and economic drain on community support structures.

In the final chapter, Finn and Rebarber declare a national crisis in education and return to their opening commentary regarding educational leadership and its overly restrictive political structure. Decentralization of control and limited constraints on parental decision-making characterize their vision of reform. Finn closes by admitting to being "slightly perplexed about how choice ever came to be so 'controversial' in elementary-secondary education, considering how much it is taken for granted in almost every domain of American life" (p.185).

Education Reform in the '90s closes by examining the changing politics of education reform. In this final section, Finn prescribes increased lay (business) leadership in education decision making. He favors decentralization of control and decision-making, greater flexibility in school choice, increased parental empowerment and new forms of tests and assessments to measure educational outcomes. Implicit in his prescription for the future of education reform is the assumption that educators should identify high return children, as indicated by performance criteria, and concentrate our investment on them. At the same time, reformers would be wise to channel "low performers" into areas whose requirements are more compatible with their skills. Finn's vision creates a more streamlined system beneficial to those already in advantaged positions. Reform, as described in Education Reform in the '90's, will succeed in producing internationally competitive test scores for some while most of children will, in growing numbers, find themselves occupying positions among the marginalized, economically excluded classes.

Although some chapters such as Kirst's "State Role in Education" and Payzant's "An Urban Superintendent's Perspective on Education Reform" seem to be thoughtful analyses of the current educational structure, the book, in large part, provides a selective perspective on the options facing the reform movement in the United States. Finn's approach to educational reform seems to parallel many of the major tenets of "America 2000." From this perspective, Finn describes educational investments as a form of capital. Increased educational investment will result in higher employee skill and higher levels of job productivity. Finn argues that some of the problems in the current educational system lie in the political failures in state departments of education which have not allowed individual freedom in the ways parents invest in their children.

Despite his best efforts, Finn's analysis seems to be masking a more fundamental political agenda which allows for less responsibility in the education of all our nation's children and greater latitude in replicating the current political and economic structure. Education reform, in this analysis, assumes the individual's ability to identify, and invest in the "right" skills. Finn's explanation ignores those groups who, in increasing numbers, are either not privy to such investment information or are marginalized by depressed socio-economic status. Hence, Finn's reform platform realistically fails to prepare the disadvantaged for participation in a market system founded on the spirit of fair competition. Although the problems cited by Finn are real and worthy of considerable attention, the structural concerns of segmented labor markets, ailing community support structures and inequitable funding of schools are, for the most part, ignored.

Perhaps Finn's effort would be strengthened by incorporating a broader range of

perspectives. In this collection, contributions by analysts who examine issues of ethnic minorities, women and the poor are sorely missed. The restructuring and reform efforts presented by Finn continue to tinker with the way schooling is delivered. If the improvement of educational opportunities for all of our nation's children is a national priority, then policy reformers must be more responsive to the social and economic inequities which preclude meaningful learning environments in too many of our nation's schools.

## About the Reviewer

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