

## Book Review

Kimonen, E., & Evalainen, R. (Eds.) (2013). *Transforming teachers' work globally: In search of a better way for schools and their communities.*

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This book places teachers' work and its transformative potential, at the heart of a collection of perspectives of remarkable depth and breadth. The editors, Eija Kimonen and Raimo Nevalainen, and contributors examine teachers' work in culturally and politically diverse systems. Geographically, their "search [for] a better way" spans the northern hemisphere from Japan to Washington State, USA, and from India to the Baltic. Academically it is interdisciplinary, with substantial historical, philosophical, sociological, and political components interwoven throughout, fronted by a psychologically grounded chapter which introduces the book's social cognitive constructivist approach to learning and pedagogy.

The justification for a review in the *Journal of Research in Rural Education* is that while its unifying theme is teachers' work in outdoor-oriented and community education, the illustrative material is located principally in rural schools and their communities. In the vast educational literature, urban contexts are the norm. However, in this volume Kimonen and Nevalainen turn the tables, and make rural the implicit norm.

The book's explicit purpose is to "outline the complex character of teachers' work in their school and communities... in the light of research findings regarding innovative approaches and reforms" (p. x). Teachers are seen as "crucial for successful change...for the long-term development of their professionalism, and for the advancement of the

school's socio-cultural processes" (p. ix). Their work, the editors suggest, is "to create learning environments in which teaching and education are linked to real-life situations ... [such that] ... learning [can be] connected with student's life, experiences and practical problems." Their "search for a better way" includes Japan, China, India, Russia, Finland, England and the USA. Given this wide cultural and political diversity, Kimonen and Nevalainen bravely suggest that "innovative teachers should create a school culture that lays stress on the autonomous control of learning, encourages flexibility, and develops interactiveness both in the school and between the school and the surrounding community." The notion that *teachers* create the school culture should be self-evident, but in increasingly prescribed regimes, this could be either daring or romantic.

The "better way" would seem to be through *outdoor-oriented education*, concerned with the "interrelationship between the education in school and the reality outside of school" (p. 55). This way seeks answers to "the ultimate questions about education in school: What is the function of education?" (p. 56) and what education's content, means and location should be. Kimonen, in Chapter Three, differentiates between outdoor-oriented and outdoor education. Outdoor-oriented education is a superordinate concept that encompasses outdoor education. Here, she cites Donaldson & Donaldson's (1958) classic definition of outdoor education as "education *in, about* and *for* the outdoors" and hence refers to the "reality outside of school." whilst distinguishing between "outdoor oriented work education" from "outdoor oriented activity education" (p. 56): both are linked to work-based production but the latter less visibly so. These two guises are shown to reflect the different societies' values and aims for education: the former describing Indian, Chinese and Soviet approaches, while the latter better fits the US, UK and Finnish forms of outdoor oriented education.

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The book's 11 chapters are grouped into three parts: I *Enhancing Transformation in Teachers' Work*; II *Examining the Changing Nature of Teachers' Work*; III *Reforming Teachers' Work in a Comparative Perspective*. Part I opens with a valuable framing chapter by La Tefy Schoen who derives the social-cognitive constructivist approach that underpins outdoor-oriented education, and introduces two key constructs intrinsic to it. These are "authentic pedagogy" as expounded in the 1990s by F. M. Newmann and colleagues, and the value attached to the development of children's psychological self-regulation. Schoen demonstrates their effectiveness in an exemplary mixed model comparative study of three matched pairs of schools in the US, which differ only on their degree of academic improvement over a two year period.

Kimonen authors three substantial chapters, which provide a strong backbone for the book. She compares and contrasts the US and Indian approaches to teachers' work in outdoor-oriented education in relation to its aims and values (Chapter Three), its philosophical bases (Chapter Eight), and its processes of child socialization and pedagogy (Chapter 11). A hallmark of these chapters is the analytical tables which facilitate comparison between, say, the aims and values of outdoor oriented education across different eras, such as Early and Late Industrialism in the US, and Traditionalism and Modernization in India. In Chapter Eight, Kimonen traces their philosophical bases through Peirce and Dewey, amongst others, in the US, and Gandhi in India. She discusses the growth of internal resistance to 1920s' openness to and experimentation with international (Western) influences on education in India, the Soviet Union and China. In some parts of China we learn that, "Dewey's ideas on education were applied intensively in school experiments" (p. 216), but met strong internal resistance in the 1930s and 40s. In the West, Kimonen identifies a post-1980s' resistance to outdoor oriented education, as policy-makers made an essentialist case to prioritize scientific and technical expertise over what they saw as Rousseauian child-centered education. Yet, more recently, driven now by concerns about global competition, she sees the principles of outdoor-oriented education being subverted to the service of essentialist reforms, with "robust efforts to standardize the experiential activity based units of study within the ideal educational program" (p. 224). Finally in Chapter 11, Kimonen draws the various themes together using Berger and Luckmann's (1967) constructs of socialization in her analysis of outdoor-oriented education socialization processes in India and the US.

Kimonen's chapters contribute greatly to the book's robust internal coherence, achieved also by means of a common deep structure for the various contributions. This ensures accounts of the major reforms that have affected teachers' work over the preceding 50 -100 years. These

histories provide essential background information for readers' understanding of teachers' work in each national context.

Also in Part I, Hammerman and Hammerman (Chapter Two) focus on the evolution, diversity, and research-based benefits of outdoor education, and derive an instructional model for teachers' work in outdoor settings. Nevalainen and Kimonen (Chapter Four) analyze Finnish rural schools' teachers' participation in school and community activities. This could be seen as another aspect of the reality outside of school in outdoor oriented education, namely teachers' social engagement in their schools' communities. Strong school-community links are a particular feature of Finnish education (Kalaoja & Pietarinen, 2009).

The chapters in Part II provide the closest connections with teachers' work *per se*, and could be, in that sense, a good place to begin. Nevalainen and Kimonen (Chapter Five) illustrate how teachers in rural schools can implement curriculum change, against the odds. Alsbury and Jackson (Chapter Six) then exemplify how teachers in a small rural K-12 school serving a Finnish community in Washington State, USA, successfully implemented community-sensitive State policy *and* collaborative working. They did so in spite of the national, centrist "No Child Left Behind" initiative. Liu, Cui and Lu's chapter (Chapter Seven) shows teachers as change agents in rural primary schools in West China. They describe ambitious reforms for science education, and take us inside classrooms where teachers were attempting to translate new policy into practice, with very limited resources. These glimpses of classroom life and the teachers' endeavors and self-awareness of changes in their practice are a highlight of this book, touching the nerve of teachers' work. In this region of China, the UN's Millennium Development Goals for universal primary education and to reduce gender inequality in enrolment by 2015 are still to be convincingly achieved.

Congman Rao's chapter in Part III complements Liu et al., with details of reforms in teacher education in China and Japan since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Rao concludes that Chinese teacher education, while progressing, lags 20 years behind the Japanese reforms. He notes that, "Ironically, in the 1980s, while Chinese and Japanese primary school students were began to attract attention as successful examples in many developed countries, the Japanese and Chinese Governments were launching radical education reforms" (p. 297). The book's Afterword, is from the perspective of Raina, Nagpal and Panda, of New Delhi, India. They recognize that "teachers' work is often misunderstood or viewed superficially, stereotypically or non-holistically" (p. 341). This book makes a great contribution to the correction of those misconceptions.

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