

Darling-Hammond, L., & Lieberman, A. (Eds.). (2012). *Teacher education around the world: Changing policies and practices*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Exploring Different Nations' Approach to Teacher Education

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Teacher quality is a key component of the educational policy discourse in countries around the world, with teacher preparation being at the center of many of those discussions. *Teacher Education Around the World: Changing Policies and Practices* (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012) considers how a variety of countries in different parts of the world endeavor to improve teacher education—from the preparation of prospective teachers to providing practicing teachers the support and resources needed to improve their teaching. Each chapter, except the last, in this edited book selects a country that traditionally scores highly on international education assessments and examines the teacher education policies in place in that country, the educational discourse around those policies, and the cultural zeitgeist that inform those policies and discourses. The final chapter, written by the book's editors, seeks to find common themes emerging from the earlier chapters that they believe can be transferred to other teacher education programs. Hammond and Lieberman (2012) use international educational assessments to select what they believe are exemplary teacher education programs, with the logical assumptions that if students perform well on these assessments then they are being taught well by good teachers, and thus teachers are being taught well in teacher-preparation programs, being given effective opportunities for professional development, or both.

Teacher Education examines policies and practices in several countries in Asia, Europe, and North America that traditionally score

highly on international educational evaluations. However, each chapter takes a different approach as each chapter's author or authors examine different aspects of their country's teacher education model. Some chapters endeavor to broadly describe teacher education in the country in its totality, while others focus more on current policies that directly influence teacher education in that country. For example, the particularly strong chapter on Finland's teacher education provides a thorough but concise description of the teacher education process, from training prospective teachers to the continuing education of practicing teachers, as well as addressing the cultural nuances that affect teacher education in the country. At the same time, another strong chapter focused on Canadian teacher education by thoroughly detailing Ontario's initiatives to improve K-12 education that began in 2003, and what role in-service teacher training played in those initiatives. Other countries studied in the book include The Netherlands, The United Kingdom, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia, and The United States. Each of these individual chapters takes a slightly different approach in balancing policy and procedures with the historical and cultural context informing those policies and procedures.

The volume is at its strongest when it focuses less on the individual programs and instead chooses to examine the historical and cultural influences underpinning those decisions and debates. Chapter 1 (Finland), Chapter 5 (Hong Kong), and Chapter 6 (Ontario, Canada) do an excellent job of

conveying the culture of the region as it related to education, how teacher education fit into that culture, and how the culture of education informed the policies, discourse, and decisions enacted affecting teacher education. For example, Chapter 1 describes how the Finnish people view education as “an integral part of the Finnish culture and society” (Salhberg, 2012, p. 4) and that teachers are held in high-esteem by the Finnish people. This contrasts to Ontario’s view of education and view of teachers after a contentious and divisive political campaign targeting K-12 teachers.

The government in office from 1995 to 2003 had alienated teachers by accusing them of being lazy, imposing a multiple-choice test prior to certification, cutting funding to schools, removing some bargaining protection, and imposing a new curriculum, all very rapidly. (Levin, 2012, p. 99)

This caused the general populous to believe that teachers were lazy and incompetent, and caused many teachers to not trust educational reforms imposed hierarchically. This contrast highlighted a key difference in educational reforms in the two places: Finnish schools were able to leverage the respectability of teachers in their educational reforms, while Ontario chose to make changing the public perception of their teachers a priority as part of the provinces educational reforms.

Conversely, when the text delves too deeply into the nuances of individual policies, the book can become slightly marred in jargon that, at times, is not adequately defined. For example, Chapter 2 (Singapore) uses many terms and abbreviations that, while probably common to anyone already familiar with teacher education in the country, serve to unnecessarily bog down the chapter for more novice readers not already familiar with the

terminology. Chapter 4 (The United Kingdom) also, at times, does not define its terminology to this reviewer’s liking, and, at times, fails to define terms that are introduced but that do not directly relate to teacher education. And again, while all terms are presumably common parlance to those already familiar with the country’s teacher education curriculum, the authors of the text should have more carefully written to avoid those confusions.

The true strength of *Teacher Education* lay in its final chapter, which is a meta-analysis of the proceeding chapters. In it, the book’s editors attempt to find common themes which could be transferred to other settings. The editors list several themes that emerge from careful study of the preceding chapters which they believe can be universally applied to improve teacher education. Among them are (a) the recruitment of highly able teacher candidates by using financial incentives, such as educational subsidies and high salaries, (b) preparing teacher candidates with coursework that integrates educational theories with teaching practices, as well as classroom experiences that reinforce best teaching practices, (c) using professional teaching standards to “focus attention on the learning and evaluation of critical knowledge, skills, and dispositions” (Hammond & Lieberman, 2012, p. 167), (d) using teacher performance assessments that reflect professional teaching standards and evaluate student learning, (e) creating induction models which ease the transition of new teachers into the profession, and (f) creating opportunities for the teachers to both improve their practice and advance through a career path. And while these are lofty ambitions, Darling-Hammond and Lieberman (2012) successfully argue that these traits are common among several of the successful education programs studied and that these core tenants can serve as a

foundation for a successful teacher education program in many countries.

Overall, *Teacher Education* serves as a quality summation of teacher education practices among several countries at the forefront of K-12 education. While this reviewer feels that (like many edited books) some chapters are stronger than others, ultimately each chapter serves as a satisfactory introduction to the chosen country's teacher education system. This would be an appropriate textbook to use in a

graduate-level class that examines teacher education policy; however, it may be best to begin by having the class read the chapter detailing the teacher education program with which most students would already be familiar. This would ease some of the minor flaws in the book and eventually highlight its strengths—observing how different countries and different cultures attempt to solve many similar concerns in teacher education, and what can be learned by examining those solutions.

References

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