Book Reviews

Vandra Masemann, Mark Bray, Maria Manzon eds. (2007) *Common Interests, Uncommon Goals; Histories of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies and its Members*, Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong (pb) and Springer (hc) 384pp. ISBN 13:978-962-8093-10-6. US\$38/HK\$250

Reviewed by David Radcliffe (University of Western Ontario)

I agreed to review this book with some misgiving. It is definitely a volume that needed to be assembled, before the recollections of the past are lost or forgotten, but I have never been enthused by the specifics of organizational structures. What I found, however, is an excellent collection of papers that can be read for several different narratives.

In principal the book is a record of how the WCCES came into being and how it has developed. Part I consists of the personal records of the presidents of the Council, from its inception in Ottawa in 1970 to the present. The years from 1970 to 1979 have been researched and presented by Vandra Masemann and Erwin Epstein, and from 1979 to the present each succeeding president has personally contributed a chapter. Part II consists of reports from twenty-one national and regional members, and the editors have compiled another chapter summarizing information about a further fifteen groups.

Each presidential term had its own set of challenges and negotiations, which framed the evolution of the council. The first theme, then, is a story of how the structure of an organization linking a diversity of associations together was formulated and established. At the same time, it is also a roll-call of personalities, individual scholars and researchers in the field of comparative education, and of their roles in the development of the Council. I asked myself whether any particular names should be singled out in this review, but have decided that there are so many names in this *dramatis personae*, that, with the exception of Joseph Katz of the University of British Columbia, the conceiver and prime mover in the creation of the Council, it would be invidious for me to single out any other actor. I am sure, however, that readers of these accounts will find the personal references fascinating.

The internal “politics” of how to frame an association are one aspect of the account. This is complemented by the discussion of the external politics of the Council’s role in the wider world society. WCCES presidents have had to engage with, for example, South African apartheid, American policy towards Cuba, world reaction to the events in Tiananmen Square, Chinese policy towards Taiwan, involvement with the World Bank, and the status of the Council in relation to UNESCO. Moreover, of the thirty-six constituent national societies reported on in

the second half of the book, several have had to deal with political constraints on research and teaching, and in some cases even direct repression. How should an academic association recognize and respond to such issues? Like it or not, it is clear from these accounts, that the executive officers of associations such as the WCCES have to be prepared to confront and deal sensitively with political pressures.

The organizational and political story is told against a background of the academic debate about the definition and purposes of Comparative Education *per se*. How strictly should the methodology be defined? The research disciplines represented by scholars who claim to be practising comparative education range across the spectrum of the humanities and social sciences. I remember one conference at which, after fairly heated debate about what is and what is not legitimate comparative education, the President wearily suggested that we should just recognize that comparative education is simply what our colleagues in the association do. What we do is illustrated by lists of conference themes over the years of both the World Council and of its member associations. The book revisits the 1970's arguments for, and against, the addition of "and International" to the formal names of member societies. Some of the member societies have used the term "foreign education" to describe their purpose. Choice of terminology has carried a freight that is positive to some members, and negative to others. In Part III, the final chapter, Maria Manzon and Mark Bray tease out and elucidate these and other "patterns, themes, and interpretations".

One former president refers to "World Council's development from a 'club' of a handful of members to the global umbrella organization that it is today". That is a neat summary of complex and detailed story. I will close this review with a quotation from the final chapter. "Kazamias (2001) called for the re-invention of the historical dimension in comparative education, arguing that this, among other benefits, would help to humanize the field. This work on the histories of comparative education societies is a major response to that call, and the editors hope that it will be a catalyst for further historical research... [because]... histories can also be guides to the future." The editors can be congratulated for their success in achieving their historical objectives, and their very significant contribution to the future of the field.

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Srivastava, Prachi and Walford, Geoffrey (Ed.)(2007). *Private schooling in less economically developed countries. Asian and African perspectives*. UK: Symposium Books. 214 pages.

Reviewed by Deo H. Poonwassie (University of Manitoba)

Private schools are highly regarded as elitist in North America; it is seen as the domain of the rich and influential where children of the wealthy are schooled for powerful positions by choice. Public schools are generally the roost of the comparatively poor where students attend because it is a legal requirement up to a certain age; either ideologically or financially parents ensure that their children attend these schools. In economically developed countries (also known as first world, developed or industrial countries) schooling, whether private or public, is not an option, it is a given. The question is a matter of quality and proper preparation for further training. The same is does not pertain to schools in poor countries.

In less economically developed countries schooling is a lot more complex than a simple division between public and private domains. In their book Srivastava and Walford put together nine research-based chapters that inform the world of a promising phenomenon that has been happening in several parts of the world but given little currency in the world of institutional learning: the schooling of the poor through private enterprise. World organizations and multi-national corporations recognized the need for eradicating illiteracy but saw the solutions as working through their established bureaucracies.

In 1990 several countries held an historic meeting in Jomtien, Thailand, with lead organizations - The United Nations and The World Bank – for the express purpose of providing Education For All (EFA) by the year 2000. This was clearly an ambitious timeline and a second meeting was held in Dakar in 2000 to confirm that the Jomtien target was not met; a new timeline was established to accomplish the goals of EFA by 2015. The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008 - “Education for All by 2015: Will we make it?” forms the basis of a background paper “Recognizing the achievements, addressing the challenges and getting back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015”; this paper was the focal point for a panel discussion on April 1, 2008 at the UN General Assembly Thematic Debate on the Millennium Development Goals. Some revealing facts about EFA include: 72 million primary age children are not enrolled in school; projections are that 58 out of 86 countries that have not yet reached Universal Primary Education (UPE) will not achieve it by 2015. Yet there has been some progress in increasing the number of children attending school (growth of 6.4% worldwide). The leading causes of exclusion have been identified as poverty and marginalization.

In an article by James Tooley (2005) published in the Cato Policy Report, he lists seven features of private education for the poor based on field

research:(1) a large majority of the schools serving the poor are private; (2) the majority of private schools are not philanthropic but are businesses; (3) teachers in private schools are paid less, and there is less absenteeism with a high level of teaching activity; (4) the pupil/teacher ratio is smaller in private schools; (5) in countries where there are low fees to attend public schools (China, Ghana), private schools are less expensive; (6) private schools offer free or subsidised tuition; (7) private school students outperform public schools on achievements in English and mathematics. The research results are compelling in support of a shift in approach for providing schooling if the goals of EFA are to be met; this shift is essentially from State and multi-national control to that of local and micro entrepreneurial providers. From Tooley's research it appears that private schools in poor countries provide better opportunities for schooling than the public schools.

All chapters in this book support Tooley and his team's findings. The issues considered in this volume on private schooling in less economically developed countries are: *providers* (role of NGOs, religious groups, entrepreneurs and Government assistance), *accessibility* (elitism , poverty, affordability), and *quality of schooling* (teacher qualification and availability, facilities and academic performance). The countries where field work was conducted include: India, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Nepal; macro reviews of private schools in Asian countries and sub-Saharan Africa are also included. The data and conclusions presented in this book are undeniably supportive of the positive role of private schools in poor countries; they fulfill a role that public schools cannot address to any appreciable extent.

The nine chapters included in this book by Srivastava and Walford are carefully chosen to highlight the importance of small business private schooling in poor countries. The complexity of schooling in the chosen countries (listed above) reveals slightly different stories depending on the source of data; for example, Igor Kitaev's chapter "education for all and private education in developing and transitional countries" is based on data from government reports commissioned by UNESCO and when this is compared to field based data as seen in Bangay's and Caddell's chapters, "the importance of a nuanced discourse on private provision (is highlighted) taking into account the differences of what is supposed to happen 'in principle' and what happens 'in practice'". (p.11)

All chapters in the book, regardless of the source of data and countries examined, underscore the great necessity for affordable schooling to millions of children in poor countries. The dependence on large organizations (World Bank, UNESCO) for funding to alleviate the deplorable conditions for schooling is somewhat misplaced because of the funnelling of assistance through established government bureaucracies where it is mostly misdirected. This book provides convincing data for supporting small entrepreneurs in local villages and slums that are already doing more with less resources for schooling the children of the poor.

Srivastava's chapter (8) "For philanthropy or profit? The management and operation of low-fee private(LFP) schools in India" provides a detailed description and analysis of low-fee private schools in Uttar Pradesh. The motives for owning and operating LFPs are varied but Srivastava is clear in the conclusion:"...whether LFP schools are operating for profit or philanthropy, we are only at the beginnings of understanding the impact of LFP schooling on the educational opportunities of disadvantaged groups."(p. 183)

The definition of private school (sometimes called independent schools) in Canada and the USA is rather simple as defined by the Canadian Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) and the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS); in the case of Canadian private schools some funding is available from Provincial Governments if they meet certain requirements, hence these schools are not completely independent. Srivastava and Walford are very careful in not providing an universal definition of private school, but instead point out the various meanings and categories of these schools. For example, private schooling in India may be categorized as government, private aided, and private unaided which includes recognized and unrecognized schools.

I highly recommend this book to scholars, educators and especially to those interested in comparative education; it provides interesting data and perspectives to inform the discussion on the role of private schooling in less economically developed countries as well as stimulate the mind to formulate solutions for a large and persistent problem.

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Paul. R. Carr and Darren E. Lund eds. (2007) *The Great White North? Exploring Whiteness, privilege and identity in education, Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education* (Volume 11), Sense Publishers (pb) 244 pp. ISBN 978-90-8790-142-4.

Reviewed by: Kelly Crowley (University of Western Ontario)

In their book, "The Great White North? Exploring whiteness, privilege, and identity in education", editors Carr and Lund have compiled a series of essays that seek to visualize "whiteness" as a concept for research and analysis. A common theme that runs through the pieces in this book is the danger of white invisibility. That is the authors hope to bring the concept of whiteness to the forefront of

discussions, so that there is a greater understanding of the inherent power and privilege given to those of a white background. For example, in his essay Frideres states, "Whites do not recognize or acknowledge their unearned racial privileges because whiteness operates by being invisible, so ubiquitous and entrenched as to appear natural and normative" (p. 45). In addition, in her article Wihak states that, "Thus, both White students in educational counselling programs and White professionals currently practicing in schools may have an undeveloped White identity" as "Whiteness is not something that distinguishes them as individuals" (p. 97). This is in contrast to individuals from minority backgrounds who are, from a young age, made acutely aware of their ethnicity due to social inequalities that exist. Many of the authors in this book feel that one way of addressing these inequalities is to make White individuals aware of their ethnic identity and in turn their privileged social position. In order to do this, a sense of Whiteness is necessary. In exposing Whiteness, the authors inevitably also raise larger issues of multiculturalism, racism, and identity in Canadian society. Whiteness is understood as part of a complex Canadian identity that seeks to fulfill the dream of a tolerant multicultural society, but struggles with the realities that come along with different cultural groups living within a political system that generates economic and social inequities.

Another concern in this book is the dominance of White voices in education, specifically in the Canadian education sector. The editors of the book seem to be very aware of this concern as is evident in their selection of contributors. In their introduction, Carr and Lund describe their editorial process. They state, "We wished to produce a book with people from a range of cultural and racialized identities, and with a variety of perspectives of Whiteness, with the stated desire that each author problematize Whiteness through inquiry that was both personal and critical" (p. 4). The book is also intended to highlight the diversity and wide expanse of Canadian society. As a result, the editors have compiled essays from Canadian scholars who represent the majority of provinces. All contributors are Canadian except for Brad Porfilio who is an American. For example, Caouette and Taylor are from Quebec, Wihak is from Alberta, Comeau is from Saskatchewan and Tilley and Powick are from Ontario. Each of the contributors to this volume has also had experience working with a variety of cultural groups in Canada. These groups include a variety of aboriginal communities from various provinces and the territories, minority academics and inner city impoverished students. Due to their own personal experiences with multiculturalism, racism and/or other issues surrounding identity formation, the contributors to this volume are quite open about their own personal identity and cultural association. The majority of authors identify themselves as white. However, within this white ethnic association there is a diversity of religious, sexual, gender, and socio-economic backgrounds. The diversity and complexity of

the contributors' identities nicely reflects many of the larger issues raised in this book about whiteness and the social implications of coming from a white background in a multicultural society.

In addition to white identified contributors, Carr and Lund have also included pieces from authors who identify as members of a minority group. Two examples are Tracey Lindberg and Laura Mae Lindo. In her piece Lindberg, an aboriginal woman, "provides eleven theorems related to indigenous peoples' survival in non-Indigenous institutions" (p. 67). Specifically, she examines how indigenous academics can survive and thrive in an academic setting while continuing to maintain and embrace their indigenous roots. This is despite efforts within these settings to eliminate or degrade these roots. In her article, Lindo, a black woman, discusses her own struggles to enter the academic world of philosophy, a traditionally white dominated field. These pieces present a refreshing examination of whiteness and white privilege. They examine the issue from a perspective that has often been ignored or discounted in academic discourse. It is a shame that a book that seeks to breakdown white academic privilege has so few pieces written by minority contributors. However, perhaps this is more a reflection of the current academic reality rather than a deliberate oversight. For the record, this reviewer is also a white academic.

Given this breakdown in contributors and the volumes title, it is not surprising to find that *The Great White North?* has a distinctly Canadian focus. However, the arguments and analysis raised in the pieces in this volume can also have international relevance since they tackle issues that resonate across borders and can be applied to different cultural contexts. As Tilley and Powick state in their article, "Although our research is context-specific and findings are of local and very personal value, we argue that whatever the differences across post-secondary/public school contexts national and global, the interrogation of Whiteness and White privilege is work that needs to be done" (p. 116). Oftentimes Canadians define themselves by the ways in which we are different from our American neighbours. As Carr and Lund point out, this is particularly true in our perception of the Canadian record of racial (in)tolerance. Given the current political climate in the United States and the debates surrounding race that are defining the presidential race there, it seems like a very appropriate time for Canadians to also take a step back and reassess our own record of systemic and institutional racism.

The book itself is divided into five sections. The first section entitled, "Conceptualizing Whiteness" contains three essays that examine the construction of White identity in Canada. Each author in this section uses personal experience to document the complex process of identity formation. The second section entitled, "The Whiteness of Second Peoples" is comprised of three essays that explore the impact of interactions between white and aboriginal peoples on each

group's identity and their perceptions of each other. These interactions take place within a social field created through a history of colonialism and inequity. Section three "Developing and De-constructing White Identity" again uses the author's personal experiences to show how identity is a fluid construct that is forever changing as experience and the society around us changes. The essays in the fourth section "Learning, Teaching, and Whiteness" examine how identity issues play out at various levels of the education sector. There is an essay (Levine-Rasky) that looks at how elementary school selection is impacted by racial issues. Another essay (Comeau) deals directly with anti-racist education and curriculum. The final essays of this section (Solomon & Daniel and Porfilio) look at how pre-service and working teachers deal with issues of race and privilege in their classrooms. Finally, the fifth section of this book addresses the institutionalization of whiteness. It is entitled "The Institutional Merit of Whiteness". Woven throughout all of these sections is a special connection to the role that education plays in the continuation of White privilege and racial inequities.

When first given the task of reviewing this book, I felt that I would get a good understanding of what exactly "Whiteness" was or at least how it was to be understood within an academic, research context. A label such as white or black has always been a bit troubling to me since reality rarely fits nicely into neat categories. After reading the book, I am not sure if I truly grasp what Whiteness is. Is it a political category related to social power? Is it a biological category solely related to ancestry? Or is it a cultural category indicating certain cultural characteristics? I think the point of this book is to say that it is a bit of all of these things. The uncertainty I'm left with almost seems to be beneficial because uncertainty often creates dialogue. A dialogue around what it means to be White is a goal of this book, to erase the invisibility of Whiteness and have people question the normalcy of White privilege. Thus, by not clearly defining Whiteness and pinning it down to one conception, the editors and contributors have successfully produced a volume that will bring the issue to Whiteness to the fore of academic and social discussion.

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