

EDITORIAL FOR THEMATIC ISSUE ON “EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES IN EAST ASIA”

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Globalization and education reform is becoming an important topic across the international arena. In response to global pressures for reform, national educational systems' quality is increasingly being compared internationally, and education changes are introduced. For example, uniformity of global curricula, instruction, and testing might result from worldwide trends such as the TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment). Also, the growth of English language usage and immigrants might contribute to a growing uniformity of global educational practices for the global economy (Springer, 2008). Nevertheless, there is considerable criticism of the ever-increasing global uniformity in education because ignoring differences in contextual capacity and culture at the national and local levels will result in unintended and unexpected consequences for educational practice (Carnoy & Rhoten, 2002).

In geographical terms, East Asia refers to a wide geographical area covering ten Southeast Asian countries in ASEAN, China, Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. The spectacular growth of many economies in East Asia over the past years has evoked studies attempting to explain this phenomenon in theories of human development. Many countries recognize the direct link between education and economic development and invest resources to promote education quality for the new global economy. Nevertheless, there is a correspondingly broad diversity of wealth, ethnicity, culture, religion, and education systems among these countries. The government decides the resources allocation and schedule based on national interests, including reforming the curriculum and identifying economic opportunities. Most importantly, the policymakers should elaborate on the distilling strategic suggestions from more developed countries because the great diversity could make the effects experienced differently. Thus, building the human capacity for competitive markets with minimum globalization risks for national development becomes a crucial principle for education reform.

At the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) meeting in 2000, the education ministers from member countries recognized the need to continually adjust the focus of education efforts to prepare for an ever-changing world and identified strategic areas including IT in education, teacher development, information exchange, and mutual understanding (Dale & Robertson, 2002). Unlike NAFTA's rule-based approach or the EU's Open Method of Coordination, APEC adopted 'concerted unilateralism,' in which all members achieve the common goal in their way. With unique cultural, social, and economic status, each country focuses on educational issues in its own right and takes individual action plans. This context has led us to start the dialogue, insightful commentary, and critique on the educational policies and practices of Asian countries. This thematic issue aims to facilitate reflection on strategies for addressing the challenges presented to their education systems under the globalized environment.

Facing fierce competition in the fast-growing worldwide economic system, many East Asia countries encounter new educational challenges. For example, knowledge and skill training for global markets, education for immigrants and migrant workers and their children, the balance of regionalization and globalization at schools, and the learning gap between underprivileged groups. This thematic issue covers several educational issues for culturally, economically, and learning disadvantaged students. Most of the articles included in this thematic issue are related to globalization, such as international cooperation, immigrant education, English learning, and international academic achievement comparisons. Specific summaries of the five papers included in this issue are as follows:

The paper "Culturally responsive teaching for the children of new immigrants in Taiwan: Perspectives of new immigrant parents" discusses the education problems regarding the children of new immigrants in Taiwan. From the new immigrant parents' perspectives, they expect Taiwanese primary school teachers to implement culturally responsive teaching to help academic development. Although government projects increase teachers' recognition of cultural differences, most Taiwanese teachers cannot implement effective communication styles, multicultural curriculum design, and culturally congruent teaching. Therefore, more policies to empower the children of new immigrants and improve their circumstances will foster culturally responsive caring and effective communication, along with multicultural curricula and instructional materials.

The paper "Teaching practices: integrating positive thinking in picture book creation for economically disadvantaged children" introduces a practical teaching program creating picture books to cultivate positive thinking for economically disadvantaged children. At first, teachers design picture books incorporating hopeful thinking and develop a teaching plan relevant to preschool children's real experiences. Through the teacher's storytelling and discussion of the story content, children could express ideas based on their own experiences, set specific goals, and devise feasible methods for handling adversity to achieve goals.

The paper "Fostering autonomous language learners at a Japanese university" proposes an approach promoting autonomous learning skills for Japanese students of mixed-level English abilities. Various activities are developed to prompt students to recognize their actions and decide what to do to reach their own goals. These measures include a weekly log to record any increase in learning hours outside the classroom, a learning log to identify the materials and method for self-study, and a presentation to demonstrate any findings related to students' motivation and learning habits. The results showed that the students promote engagement with English outside the classroom and reflection on learning. Besides, they recognized some improvements in their English learning skills, confidence, motivation, and learning habits.

The paper "A collaborative exchange to improve early childhood education outcomes" presents the systematic promotion of international strategies at higher education institutions forming global networks and international collaborative research teams. Through international joint research on solving regional problems of early childhood education, the constructive interaction enables researchers and professional leaders of childcare to understand the current situation and trends for childcare in the United States. Furthermore, promoting exchanges, including collaboration between researchers and contact with local experts and lectures to local students, leads to improvements in the quality of childcare and the training of teachers in Japan. As a measure for advancing sustainable international research, this study can be exemplifying a case of solving regional problems by promoting exchange for a diversity of cultures and research fields.

The paper "Affective factors contributing to southeast Asian and East Asian eighth-graders' science achievement in TIMSS 2015" analyzes the data of TIMSS to identify the affective factors contributing to eighth graders' science achievement among Southeast Asian and East Asian countries. The results indicate that Southeast Asian and East Asian Eighth Grade

Students' views, favorite, confidence, and value in science are positively and significantly correlated with their science achievement in TIMSS.

We hope these papers will provide their findings on tackling various challenges to promote understanding or bridge the differences under unique philosophies and social situations. Furthermore, we look forward to a growing community of researchers focusing on the global-scale educational issues and new advances in educational initiatives.

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