

BOOK REVIEW

Postiglione, G. A., Johnstone, C. J., & Teter W. R. (Eds.) (2023). *Handbook of education policy. Elgar handbooks in education*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Reviewed by *Tamás Kozma**

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Elgar's new Handbook of Education Policy – one of its quality Handbook series Policy – is not what it claims to be. It is not a thick handbook of the concepts, theories and techniques of education policy; nor is it a comparison of education policy decisions in different countries and governments. Instead, it is a listing, presentation and analysis of examples and cases that are more or less closely or loosely related to education. What these examples have in common is that they all require decisions, and can only be resolved by intervention from outside the education sector. The editors see education policy as 'solutions to education problems'. For them, education policy is about the practical management of educational institutions to enable education to adapt more quickly to a globalising world.

The editors have drawn the examples from their own experience. While working as consultants for a multinational organisation (in Mongolia and China), they were affected by the pandemic. The only way they could keep in touch with the authors of the forthcoming book was online. They witnessed how teachers and students in schools and universities could only communicate online. This experience made them realise how deeply traditional education is linked to face-to-face encounters. Today, traditional education still takes place in small communities, while the world is rapidly globalising. And a globalising world challenges human communication and human communities. In an era of globalisation, environmental protection, sustainability and demographic change, learning and teaching individually or in small communities is not enough. Changes in entire education systems need to be accelerated. The tools are available, as the pandemic experience of online learning and teaching shows. But adapting education systems requires intervention from outside the systems. This is what the authors and editors of this volume mean by 'education policy'.

The volume contains 21 chapters (papers) by 30 authors. The papers present a wide range of possibilities for education policy interventions in education systems and processes, from inclusive education to equity issues, from quality education to accountability, from 'public value governance' to 'knowledge democratisation'. The authors avoid theoretical discussions. A policy intervention is usually illustrated using the case of an education ecosystem. Thus, on the one hand, the volume presents educational policy interventions and decisions. On the other hand, it

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is also an international comparison of educational developments in different countries of the world in the post-Covidian period.

The editors of this volume present themselves as both academics and consultants in national and international policy. They consistently highlight their academic backgrounds and consulting work. Gerard Postiglione is a professor at the University of Hong Kong, as well as a consultant to international organizations including Unesco, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the OECD. Christopher Johnstone is a professor at the University of Minnesota and serves as the director of the Young African Leaders Public Management Institute. Wesley Teter works as a senior consultant at Unesco's Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau.

The editors' policy consultancy does not involve pedagogical, school, or higher education development. Their focus is on developing the system, governance and globalization of education (commonly referred to as the 'third, fourth and fifth missions'). In the introduction (pages 1-13), the editors emphasize that developments in education ecosystems and processes should align with globalization trends. To adapt to changing needs, traditional education levels should be redefined to prioritize learning over teaching. The main focus of schooling is no longer transferring knowledge but laying the foundation for learning. As learning is a life-long process, it leads to new organizational forms for teaching and learning.

Most of the authors are developmental policy consultants from Asia, Africa and the Middle East, rather than academic staff members. The editors have acknowledged that these regions will gradually emerge in the competition among educational ecosystems in the future. The majority of the authors have experience in or are involved in international developmental projects and programmes, which contribute to shaping the future. Education policy is neither a theoretical discipline of academia nor a mere adaptation of theories to reality. Education policy is among the processes that can bring about significant changes in the world. It is one of the primary messages of this volume.

The education policy outlined here is based on four key principles: The first of these is the 'management of uncertainty'. Managing uncertainty is crucial, especially considering that it is a permanent aspect of our world. The question is how to make decisions and plans amidst uncertainty. To achieve our aims and goals, it is essential that we do not base our decisions on conditions. The conditions should be viewed as the possibilities in which we achieve our pre-set goals. The second aspect of the new education policy is the ability to connect fast-developing technology ('high-tech') with the outdated technologies ('low-tech') used in many national education systems worldwide. AI is an example of high-tech environments, while the absence of the internet is an example of low-tech surroundings. The aim of education policy is to bridge the gap between these extremes.

The third aspect of a new education policy is to connect leading research with every-day ('low-tech') teaching methods. Despite providing current results, education research has yet to affect teaching practice. A new education policy must direct the latest discoveries into traditional teaching methods and processes. The fourth priority of a new education policy is to uphold quality teaching while promoting and maintaining education on a global scale.

The editors themselves provide criticisms of the volume. They suggest that the 'new type of education policy' presented in the volume lacks consideration of some of the new developments in our modern world. The papers fail to recognise the potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and analyse their implications, including the impact of Web3 technology. Web3 technology could have far-reaching effects, including a redefinition



of the aims and tasks of learning and teaching, and even the management of education. The demographic transformation of our world is fundamentally altering the traditional perception of school. This transformation is not only due to the demographic decline but also the internationalisation of migration. Global migration processes have an impact on the primary roles of contemporary education. Education systems can only attain new functions through a consistent education policy that is dedicated to achieving its primary objectives.

Funding is the most crucial tool of the new education policy. Governments can no longer finance education based entirely on their own needs. In a global education race, financing education is a vital matter, even if one does not believe in the economics of education and does not view it as an investment in human or national capital. The new education policy must provide certainty in an uncertain environment. The youth requires tangible certainties to avoid growing up in uncertainty, which can breed fundamentalism. Achieving stable foundations is crucial, and 'preparing for uncertainty' alone is insufficient. The education policy can inspire and guide society through challenging times, but it must be anchored in our practical experiences to safeguard our ideals and motivate future generations.

Development in education cannot occur independently, it requires external intervention. The stakeholders involved in the formulation and implementation of new education policies need to intervene from outside for meeting the demands of a globalising world. Learning has transcended the conventional boundaries. In our world, social learning is omnipresent, making the world one large school. The main objective of the interventions, selections, and developments summarized in the Handbook of Education Policy is to accomplish this goal. This handbook is recommended for those engaged in educational innovation and development, or for those who want to closely examine local educational systems in an era of globalization.

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