

Epilogue

It would be impossible to read the essays in this volume without beginning to see a variety of patterns emerge.

The first is that the schools in the countries reported reinforce the social, economic and political inequalities which already exist in their societies. The second is that the obstacles to lifting the more disadvantaged children from their near caste like status are daunting. Despite good intentions and legislation, changing schools via external reform has a dismal history of near misses and outright failures. The third is that the ideology of neoliberalism with its emphasis on economics and the chosen means of using the schools to reinforce the economic competitiveness and world domination or at least preeminence of a country infects nearly all of the governments reported in this volume.

A common lament is that the goal of a well- rounded education, of being concerned with the full development of human potential has been lost in the catechism of test scores and the narrowing of the curriculum to produce them. Another lost goal of education is the construction of a cohesive social fabric in which all people and classes share a common fate and that no one is really safe if only the rich are benefitting from that collaboration. Democracy is in danger if the wealth gap is seen by the people at the bottom as impenetrable and their condition hopeless. This is the catalyst for revolution.

Finally, it is clear that the schools of most nations have been fully captured by the state and made subservient to the state's priorities which too often are only interested in science and math test scores. The arts and humanities have been pushed into the closet as full blown curricular equivalents if they survive at all. Against this backdrop of educational reform talk is the example of Tsunesaburo Makiguichi, a Japanese practitioner who foresaw today's educational ills in his time and life, and struggled to create a pedagogy which was aimed at reinforcing the joy in student discovery and learning and not centered on memorization and spewing information back on school exams.

Such exemplars are few and far between in our current times. One can only hope that there is within the papers in this volume some contemporary disciples and that with time we can restore some sanity to what schools do in most nations on earth.

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