portant knowledge bases of African economies (114). The authors point out that the state of science education and knowledge in schools has always been a worry to education policy makers and national development experts—noting that the progress made by many countries in the global south (particularly in the Pacific Rim) is due in part to attention paid to science and technology education.

The book concludes by calling for a countervisioning of development and asking all intellectuals and development practitioners to take a hard look at the challenges of a new understanding of our world through multiple knowledges: "We must deconstruct hegemonic ideas of 'development' and the development process itself" (217). A reconstructed alternative to development should be rooted in the values and local cultural systems of knowledge, with the primary goal of enriching the social, spiritual, and nonmaterial circumstances of people and allowing them to develop and use their full potential.

To close their arguments in chapter 13, Asabere-Ameyaw and colleagues sum up the new awakening with a paradigmatic shift of perspectives of development aimed to inform what we research and how such research is pursued. The authors insist (219) that the discourse of development practice must be guided by certain principles, namely, (*a*) retheorizing the link of education with development (what type of education; what model of development to be pursued, and the place of local cultural resource knowledge); (*b*) a need to prioritize African-centered education and to address the competing claims on national education budgets; (e.g., tailor African-centered education to respond to Africa's problems and development challenges as a national priority; (*c*) the pursuit of alternatives to neoliberalism (foster a countervisioning of development to be pursued, through a "decolonial" approach to schooling and education); and (*d*) emphasizing indigenous science and technology education (i.e., emphasis on technical-vocational education that offers immediate and direct practical solutions to everyday problems in local communities and satisfaction of local people's needs and aspirations first). This volume will be valuable for individuals pursuing higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels and particularly to those pursuing development policy studies and African studies.

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Asia's High Performing Education Systems: The Case of Hong Kong edited by Colin Marsh and John Chi-Kin Lee. New York: Routledge, 2014. 366 pp. $135.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-0-41583-487-2.

Over the last decade, Asia's education systems have gained their reputation for being the best in the world. Students in Asian regions have outperformed their Western counterparts in international comparative tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). However, there has been criticism of the overemphasis on performance rather than on competence, which has resulted in examination-oriented systems that encour-

age rote learning and undermine creativity and independent thinking. Despite the controversy, there is certainly something that the West and the rest of the world can learn from. Researchers and policy makers ask, What are the secrets of Asian students' remarkable performance? This edited book answers this question by illustrating the opportunities and challenges in curriculum development and education reform in one of the high-performing Asian regions, Hong Kong.

Asia's High-Performing Education Systems: The Case of Hong Kong is part of the Schools and Schooling in Asia series edited by Kerry J. Kennedy. It adds to the expanding literature on education in China, which, as Kennedy notes, has become the center of attention. The editors of this particular volume are Colin Marsh and John Chi-Kin Lee. They set the scene by providing Hong Kong's historical and demographic background and outlining its current education system in the first chapter. More importantly, they explain its current education policies and the overall aims of education for the twenty-first century. These facilitate the reader to contextualize and rationalize the key issues in later chapters. Marsh and Lee not only highlight the success of education reform but also point out its setbacks and tensions. While complicating the scene, this sets a more interesting agenda for discussion. The introductory chapter ends with a synopsis of chapters, allowing the reader to have a preview of the content of the whole book.

From the second chapter onward, the volume is organized in a way that zooms in from the macro level to the micro level to examine the changes of Hong Kong's education system from different perspectives. The chapters are divided into seven parts: from historical policy contexts, new curriculum approaches, changing classroom practices, school leadership, curriculum implementation and assessment to quality assurance and school evaluation. Such an organization makes much sense because the earlier chapters allow the reader to see the whole picture of reform at a contextual level, the middle chapters focus on changes at curriculum and classroom levels, and the later ones investigate assessment issues and how quality of teaching and learning can be assured and sustained after the implementation of the new system.

The first part of the book describes the historical and sociopolitical contexts in Hong Kong before and after the return of sovereignty to China in 1997. Having grown up in the context throughout the period witnessing and experiencing the changes, I have found the chapters in this section to be particularly moving. Key events such as curriculum reforms from a colonial to postcolonial context and later from the 3–2–2–3 to 3–3–4 education system and the school-based curriculum development initiatives are discussed, highlighting their rationales and tensions. An interesting episode is the irony of giving the so-called power and autonomy to school to implement new policies when they are in fact controlled by the central government. Marsh, Morris, and Lo call this "centralized decentralization" (44). This part vividly reveals the tensions between the intended curriculum and the constraints in reality that policy makers and curriculum developers in various contexts may also be encountering.

The middle chapters focus on the actual implementation of curriculum changes in different aspects. There are a few contributions relating to recent debates in Hong Kong, such as the introduction of moral and national education, fine-tuning of medium of instruction policy, liberal studies, and school-based assessment. Some discussion touches on politically sensitive issues, including Hong Kong people's na-

tional identity and patriotism and the use of Chinese or English in classroom instructions. These issues can be considered unique to Hong Kong because of its post-colonial status and one-country, two-systems approach. Curriculum reform has also resulted in teacher insecurity. A common message from various chapters is to remind teachers to be flexible and to recognize challenges and opportunities. The part on "School Leadership" offers insights into how school leaders and teachers can adapt to those changes. Another engaging part in this volume is the discussion of assessment for learning (AfL) in this examination-oriented context. While there has been emphasis on public examinations as a standardized assessment instrument, assessment is shifting toward a more school-based and formative approach. The book concludes with Lee's chapter on sustainability issues and future curriculum development at the policy and practice/implementation levels. Thus the volume comes to an optimistic end despite the challenges and tensions discussed.

Asia's High-Performing Education Systems: The Case of Hong Kong provides current analysis of the education reform in Hong Kong. As the subtitle suggests, this volume solely focuses on Hong Kong as the case. Despite its localized nature, scholars in other regions who admire its high-performing education system can learn from its successes as well as from its challenges. Nevertheless, the editors and authors could have strengthened the relevance to an international audience by highlighting how the volume and individual chapters have implications to wider contexts.

This book has fulfilled what it has promised to achieve at the beginning by highlighting how different agencies have cooperated in contributing to the education reform over the last decades. This has, however, led to a more descriptive nature of the volume. While some contributions are based on empirical evidence through rigorous research methods, such as surveys, interviews, and case studies, many tend to be built on a review of literature or contributors' reflections. The contributors of this volume are scholars, educators, curriculum developers, and well-informed practitioners who are based in Hong Kong and have been involved in curriculum reform to some extent. They have the capacity to comprehensively describe and critically reflect on the situation. A potential weakness to this may be insider bias, considering that almost all of the contributors are affiliated with the same local institution. More research-based chapters to evaluate the outcome of reform might have made the discussion and arguments in this volume more objective and convincing.

Overall, this volume is highly informative, well-organized and readable. It is a must-read for anyone who wants to find out the secrets of success in the Hong Kong education system.

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Gender, Religion and Education in a Chaotic Postmodern World edited by Zehavit Gross, Lynn Davies, and Al-Khansaa Diab. New York: Springer, 2012. 392 pp. $209.00 (cloth). ISBN 978-9-40075-269-6.

What does it mean to theorize the nexus between gender, religion, and education in the new millennium? How do distinct categories of women learn, experience, chal-