Editorial Preface

Educational Dialogue between “East” and “West” in the Global Era

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This special issue focuses on the question of how to grasp and reconfigure the educational dialogue between “East” and “West” in the age of globalization. Twenty-first century education has accelerated the formation of global academic skills, emphasizing the knowledge-based society and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competence that are demanded in globalized settings, as well as the construction of globally standardized curricula and evaluation frameworks, which have promoted innovation in education.

While globalization has promoted the standardization of schools, learning, and curricula, it has also led to criticism of the failure to take into account the diversity of education rooted in the differences in culture, history, and traditions of various countries and regions, including the East and the West. In addition, postcolonial issues and interest in the multicultural society have led to active study on ways to question and problematize the old framework of “East” and “West” itself. The educational dialogue between “East” and “West” in the global era is an ongoing issue.

One approach to a deeper understanding and study of this topic is to reexamine the ideas, philosophy, and history of education. In the history of education and educational philosophy, how have the “East” and the “West” been understood in terms of problematic constructs, and specifically, how can they be described from the perspective of contrasts, exchanges, and intersections? There is nothing new about the approach of understanding the world through the framework of “East” and “West,” and it is not without its own problems.

Elsewhere, it is noteworthy that in today’s globalized world, attention is being drawn to the meaning and richness of Japanese and other Eastern forms of education, which cannot necessarily be understood in their entirety through the framework of Western education alone. East Asia has long seen the exchange of traditional thought and culture, and the sharing of values, including Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. In this context, it is once again important to clarify how East Asian countries have encountered, accepted, and reconstructed Western concepts of freedom, human rights, justice, care, democracy, publicness, and civil society, and what differences in educational and human perspectives underlie these concepts.

Another important approach is to rethink dialogue in the dimensions of educational practices and policies. There is a concern that the advance of globalization may, if anything, lead

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to the rapid standardization of education and schools, causing the differences in their respective cultures and social contexts to disappear if not taken into account. On the other hand, it has traditionally been pointed out that certain conditions of education are unique to East Asia, such as high academic achievement, fierce competition for entrance exams, and a centralized education system.

In recent years, there have been new developments in the research and practice of “Japanese-style education” and “East Asian-style education.” For example, Japanese lesson study, special activities such as cleaning, school lunches, and sports events, high-quality science and mathematics education, ICT education, and cram schools are being developed overseas, and are attracting attention in the western countries.

However, these activities go beyond the mere import/export of effective methods and contents for the formation of international academic standards; they also evoke the need to reexamine the underlying history, culture, and social context. In addition, increasing global mobility and migration across borders, and the need for dialogue among different languages, races, ethnicities, and so on, create challenges for preparing multicultural education and curricula. Expectations are being placed on research on educational practices and approaches based on sociological findings.

Morimichi Kato examines the educational role of literature through the ideas of Coluccio Salutati and Motoori Norinaga. He contrasts Salutati’s emphasis on the educational significance of ancient poetry and the philosophical nature of poetry in response to criticism from scholastic philosophy, and Norinaga’s view of the educational significance of *The Tale of Genji* from the perspective of *mono no aware* in response to criticism from Buddhism and Confucianism. This paper develops an important perspective on the educational dialogue between “East” and “West” in the context of literature education.

Haruka Okui’s article focuses on the sharing and learning of skills that are difficult to verbalize and presents the “dialogue” that occurs in the interaction between instructor and learner as opening up possibilities for educational practices beyond the traditional pedagogical view, in which knowledge is assumed to be ready-made and translatable into words. The paper is very thought-provoking in its depiction of how the skills of puppetry are transmitted in Japan and France by studying a theater (Japan) and a school (France) and adding philosophical considerations.

The article by Yuka Kitayama, Yoriko Hashizaki, and Audrey Osler shows how the ethics of care may strengthen pedagogical approaches and curricula of citizenship education. It is argued that traditional citizenship education has emphasized political and legal rights, without focusing much on the emotional and personal aspects of learning. The ethics of care is presented not as a narrowly defined discussion of Western feminism, but as a broadly defined theory of care with a view to the particularity and universal vulnerability of human beings.

Yoshiko Kitada shows how Japanese lesson study has been modified in the U.S. context and how it has affected teacher agency. This paper is interesting in that it clarifies how Japanese lesson study and teacher professional development have been transformed and modified in the different social and educational contexts of Japan and the U.S. Lesson study deserves attention for its important role in the dissemination of research and practices from Japan to overseas, and forms a unique dialogue towards innovation in the globalized educational context.

Takeru Mashino aims to identify the general characteristics of service learning (SL) in
Japanese higher education in comparison to American higher education. An analysis of syllabus data available online from both Japanese and American higher education institutions reveals that SL in Japan, compared to the US, has become a method of skill development rather than a part of democracy. It is pointed out that SL is trying to lead students to democracy by suggesting that it is “not for democracy.” This is a fascinating study that addresses the differences and similarities between Japanese and American higher education regarding service learning, democracy, and so on.

Keita Takayama’s article navigates the “dilemma between intra-societal and inter-societal multiculturalisms” in comparative and international educational studies. Takayama examines Komatsu and Rappleye’s study, which relies on “a culturalist discourse” and mobilizes “Japanese difference.” This study includes an impressive and profound perspective that questions and relativizes the framework of the “West” and the “East” in the global age.

Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach goes beyond the traditional dichotomized setting of the dialogue between “East” and “West” to explore the potentiality of “world philosophies” in the globalized world in the postcolonial age, while also addressing concerns that some postcolonial discussion may lead to “neocolonialism.” Describing how non-Euro-American positions have been excluded from philosophical conversations while traditional philosophical traditions have been sustained by European and Euro-American philosophies, she considers the importance of creating “world philosophies” that transcend the defined boundaries of “East” and “West.”

Today, the effects of globalization are manifold, including economic disparity, poverty, occupations, information, environment, medicine, infectious diseases, and technology; the educational dialogue between “East” and “West” brings to light the differences in educational approaches to these issues. This special issue has contributed to the questioning of education in the “East” and “West” in the age of globalization, and to the opening of a new circuit for dialogue.