

With Ms. Bell, Wallace revisits the book's key themes and suggests future research directions. Wallace's conclusion is straightforward: we must develop the political will to act on what research has already revealed.

Overall, *The Culture Trap* offers a fresh perspective on the education of Black Caribbean youths, a relatively understudied demographic. Doing so across national contexts offers an expansive, more nuanced approach for how we understand the role of racial-ethnic categories in education. *The Culture Trap* is exemplary for those interested in comparative educational research and African diaspora studies.

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Education, Skills and International Cooperation: Comparative and Historical Perspectives by Kenneth King. Comparative Education Research Centre, the University of Hong Kong; Springer, 2019. 381 pp. HK\$250.00/US\$38.00 (paper), ISBN 978-988-14241-7-4.

Kenneth King's *Education, Skills and International Cooperation: Comparative and Historical Perspectives* stands as a significant contribution to the fields of comparative education, African studies, and development studies. It is a collection of excerpts from 5 decades of King's scholarly work, each with an introduction and commentary, and assembled with an overall introduction to the book as a whole. The book offers a profound exploration of international and national educational priorities, particularly in the contexts of Africa, India, Japan, and China. By compiling 12 carefully curated chapters, King traverses a rich landscape of themes such as international aid, vocational training, informal education, and South-South cooperation, presenting a historic study that critiques and interrogates global strategies and practices over the decades.

Central to the book's impact is King's ability to blend historical, comparative, and interdisciplinary lenses. His narrative, deeply informed by fieldwork and policy engagement, allows for an exploration of education's evolution within diverse sociopolitical contexts. For example, King's reflections on the informal sector—identified by him at the same time as the International Labour Organization in the 1970s—demonstrate the transformative role of local economic practices in global development. As he observes, informal economies evolved from “artisan groups in major cities” to entities that “cut across entire economies,” challenging traditional education and skills development paradigms.

The thematic depth of King's analysis is matched by his ability to critique major international frameworks. From the Phelps-Stokes Commission's colonial emphasis on the politics of “practical education” to contemporary debates about the Sustainable Development Goals, King rigorously interrogates the motivations, assumptions, and outcomes of educational strategies. Notably, his critique of the “vocational school fallacy,” inspired by Philip Foster's work “The Vocational School Fallacy in Development Planning” (1965), illuminates how vocational education often fails to reconcile “societal aspirations with economic realities.” Revisiting this fallacy through a repeat study

of Foster's fieldwork in Ghana, King underscores the systemic inequities that such initiatives often fail to address.

A distinctive feature of the book is King's critical engagement with international aid and South-South cooperation. He critiques the "hazy discourse" surrounding concepts such as "skills" and "life skills," particularly their prominence in global education agendas set by landmark conferences such as Education for All in Jomtien (1990) and World Education Forum in Dakar (2000). His analysis challenges paternalistic assumptions underlying Western aid, offering a more balanced perspective that includes South-South cooperation. For example, King notes that the language used in China's and India's narratives about aid sharply contrasts with that of the West, emphasizing "mutual benefit" or "common development." The book might suggest further research into power asymmetries within South-South dynamics, particularly regarding China's growing influence in Africa.

Another strength is the book's exploration of grassroots education and skill acquisition. King's depiction of on-the-job mentoring practices highlights the fundamental, yet often overlooked, role of informal skill transfer in development. This emphasis on practical, local realities is juxtaposed with critical analyses of how global policies translate—or fail to translate—into meaningful change at the grassroots level. The voices of local educators, students, and artisans are the basis of King's decades of work in India, China, and Africa. His analysis is deeply grounded in fieldwork, incorporating firsthand narratives and insights into how policies are received and adapted. For instance, perspectives from the Kenyan artisans King describes as "unintended innovators of policy" vividly illustrates the interplay between global frameworks and local ingenuity.

What is also noteworthy is his reflection on methodology, especially his use of historical approaches and his acknowledgment of serendipity in research, which are both instructive and inspiring. His anecdote about discovering Kenya's informal sector exemplifies the unpredictability of research, reminding readers that "the best research topics often find you." This personal touch humanizes the academic narrative, making the book accessible to a broader audience.

In conclusion, this book is a masterful synthesis of Kenneth King's lifelong engagement with education and development. It combines historical depth, interdisciplinary breadth, and a critical perspective, marking it as a seminal work in the field. King's scholarship not only reflects his enduring legacy but also serves as a call to future researchers to approach education and development with the same curiosity, critical insight, and commitment. As Mark Bray, UNESCO Chair Professor in Comparative Education at the University of Hong Kong and King's first PhD student, notes in the foreword, "Kenneth King has had a huge influence on the field as a whole and is much respected both in his home country and internationally" (8). He further highlights the rare combination of academic rigor and policy relevance in King's work, underscoring the book's value as an essential resource for both scholars and practitioners. For anyone interested in the intersections of education, skills, and international cooperation, this book is an indispensable and significant contribution to the literature.

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