Nonformal Education and Civil Society in Japan. Edited by Kaori H. Okano (Routledge, Taylor and Francis, London and New York, 2016), xiii + 202 pp., £100.00 (hbk), £24.49 (ebk), ISBN 978-0-415-74530-7 (hbk), 978-1-315-79796-0 (ebk)

Historically, nonformal education has played, and continues to play, a significant role in lifelong learning in most educational jurisdictions. Its educational intent, and the flexibility and responsiveness that it draws from its position on the margins of formal educational provision have ensured its prominence not only in leading formal education change but also in addressing the contingent shortcomings and limitations of formal education. In countries with strong civil society traditions, it has also drawn strength from community involvement, especially through voluntary, not-for-profit and other non-government organisations.

Globalisation in different forms has characterised the project of modernity throughout its evolution since the Renaissance, and has been an important driver of educational change internationally. With the more recent impact of contemporary communications technology and the general loss of faith in traditional verities – both products of the modernist project – the influence of globalisation has reached unprecedented heights. Nevertheless, educational systems continue to be strongly influenced by national and local histories and traditions.

Correspondingly, situations that are now driving the development and evolution of nonformal education are often global in their general nature but national or local in the particular expression, as are the trajectories of the forms of nonformal and formal educational responses to those situations. Each country's experience and construction of more global drivers, and its responses to them, are thus culturally contextualised. In that contextualisation, though, there are important lessons for other educational jurisdictions, since the particular interplay of factors in any one context will foreground considerations and courses of action that throw light on those of others. The state of nonformal education in Japan is thus, not only of interest in itself, but also illuminates the experience of and alternatives open to nonformal education in other countries.

The unique historical development of modern Japan – through its recent progression from a highly protectionist and culturally isolationist monarchist society, to a centralised liberal democracy following World War II – has seen the rapid development of civil society and, with it, the contemporary need for nonformal education. The forms of contemporarily significant nonformal education programs thus have recognisable parallels with those in other countries, but they are, in themselves, interestingly singular. English language articulation and informed reflection on that singularity, though, has been very limited to date: a dearth to which the authors of this volume have sought to respond by drawing the work together, and which they have done most successfully.

The Editor, Kaori H. Okano, describes the work as being an outcome of the collaborative teamwork of its contributing authors. The refreshingly and uniformly high quality and consistency of its presentation across the individual chapters supports that claim. It is a joy to read. All contributors are scholars of Japanese nonformal

education, with research experience in Japan, the majority currently working at universities there, the remainder from Australia and United States.

The volume has been written for an international readership that is not, or not or not assumed to be, conversant with Japanese educational systems and culture. Appropriate historical background is thus provided, both in Kaori's introductory chapter and in each of the substantive contributions, contextualising the programs being examined. The vision of an international readership has also seen the contributors seeking to locate the notion of nonformal education in Japan within international conceptualisations, especially those of the Unesco Institute for Education. This has raised some interesting points of interpretation, through which, for example, what is here termed 'in-house training' (p. 134) by employing organisations appears to have been excluded, although in many other educational jurisdictions such education has been seen as major part of nonformal education. Conversely, alternative schools are *included*, on the ground that they are outside the Japanese Government definition of formal or 'Article One Schools'. And, similarly, employment-related programs in universities are here considered to be nonformal in nature, on the basis of their involving partnerships with employers and government agencies, although in other countries they are seen as an inseparable part of formal higher education.

The ten contributions are descriptive and explanatory, rather than critical. Following Kaori's introduction, each of the following chapters focuses on a substantive form of nonformal education provision and engagement in Japan. Each is scholarly yet accessible, well grounded in appropriate literature, and drawing on pertinent research, including work of its author. In most cases, a well articulated illustrative case study is included. Each chapter also pays explicit attention to the relationship between the form of nonformal education provision that is its subject and the government agencies or formal educational sectors with which it is associated.

I mention here the author and primary subject of each of the substantive works in the sequence in which they appear as a reference point for their diversity. Tomoko Nakamatsu's contribution examines homework clubs run by community volunteer (civil society) groups for migrant children. June A. Gordon looks at Dôwa, a form of nonformal literacy education for Burakumin, descendants of pre-modern lower-caste Japanese peoples who continue to be marginalised by Japanese society. Eiji Tsuda examines community-based after-school care programs and their impact, not only on the children, but also on the adults and the communities as a whole. Thomas Blackwood looks at the educational roles of extracurricular clubs, especially sports clubs, in Japanese schools and their influence on the moral development, self-efficacy and self-worth of the students. Hideki Ito's contribution examines alternative schools for futôkô students – those with long records of school absenteeism. Kaori's own substantive chapter examines 'schools for foreigners' as a category of educational provision particular to Japan and lying outside the formal education system. Jeremy Breaden focuses on collaboration programs in or associated with universities to develop the 'intercultural competence' of graduates of the national higher education system that has traditionally paid little attention to the employment capabilities of its graduates. Chizu Sato's work looks at the kôminkan – community halls as major form of government-supported adult education providing social education or education for democracy. Finally, Koji Maeda looks at university programs for the elderly – a form

of social education heightened in importance, not only by the age profile of Japanese citizens but also by the developmental needs resulting from the traditional Japanese devotion of employees to their employing organisation throughout their working lives.

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