

## RECENZJE

STUDIA Z TEORII  
WYCHOWANIA  
TOM XI: 2020 NR 2(31)

**Arleta Suwalska**

Uniwersytet Łódzki

ORCID0000-0003-0713-8451

*„Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.” Solomon tells his followers (Proverbs 1:8-9).*

***Hard questions on global educational change, Policies, Practices and the future of education by Pasi Sahlberg, Jonathan Hasak, Vanessa Rodriguez and associates, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2017***

The book is recommended as a coursebook for teachers, who seek for indispensable knowledge about hard questions on global educational change, unfolded from varied dimensions and from different countries. This impressive book consists of nine chapters. This book reveals pedagogical aspects due to the global changes in the current world and tries to present the perspective of a better way in education. The researchers should perceive the practical aspect of educational reforms and their practical dimensions in the varied educational systems. In this light, there is need to understand deeper and wider what hard questions mean? The school choice issues with the standardised testing and the teaching profession are the keys to success of educational reforms.

The first chapter of the book, *How Do Educators Respond to Hard Questions on Educational Change?* reveals the teaching approaches, governance, curriculum and leadership. The neoliberal approach is widely observed in England, the USA and some parts of Australia. There is taken into account the economic approach and market competition in each country. In this light it is indispensable to understand the importance of knowing the Global Education Reform Movement. There are taken for granted not

only Educational theories, varied teaching methods, but curriculum and learning tools, too. Since 2000s there has been seen the Global Education Reform Agenda. According to Hargreaves, it becomes the main topic of international conferences.

On the other side, the first chapter unfolds, the breakthrough of constructivist approaches to education which is focused „ from the teacher (instruction or input) to the student (learning or output). Consequently, policymakers in each country started to ask for higher level expectation towards student learning, curriculum and standards with useful methods of teaching. The examples of faith in competition are observed in secondary academies in 2010, the charter schools in the USA in 2000, the voucher system in Chile in 1980 and in free schools in Sweden in 1990s. There is observed the global tendency GERM (Global Education Reform Movement). It was firstly promoted by private enterprises, globalization policies and reforms that „aimed to improve quality and equity of education systems around the world”<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the next manifestation is „standardized testing as the main means for accountability”<sup>2</sup>. In this perspective school performance is observed by students’ school achievements and is linked to evaluation and inspection of schools.

On the other side, in this chapter we read about theory of educational change which is deeply anchored in economic models of Milton Friedman. According to this model parents should have freedom to choose their childrens’ education and diversity of schools influences positively on competition between schools.

The second chapter *Can parental choice improve education for all* is deeply anchored in economy trends of the 20 th century. There is used Milton Friedman’s”<sup>3</sup> quotation in this book but for this review I paraphrased it into a short sentence. There is believed that the government’s role in financing the school was so big as it contributes to the waste of money paid by taxpayers. As a result, there is observed worse education system that would improve due to cooperation which still continue. Moreover, the authors popularized

---

<sup>1</sup> P. Sahlberg, Finnish lessons 2.0, *What can the world learn form educational change in Finland*, Teachers College Press, New York 2015.

<sup>B.</sup> Niemierko, *Diagnostyka pedagogiczna*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2009, s. 15

<sup>2</sup> P. Sahlberg, J.Hasak, V. Rodriguez, *Hard question on global educational change, Policies, Practices and the future of education*, 2017. p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> M. Friedman, R. Friedman, *Free to Choose: A personal Statement*, Harward Educational Review, Dow Jones and Co Inc 1980, p. 187.

the concept of homo economicus, presented by John Stuart Mill in the 19th century.

There is analysed widely the parental choice on the world stage in New Zealand, India, Finland, Chile, Sweden. In case of Finland, there is only 3 % of private schools and the 1998 Education Act enable the diversity of school options but there is the need to have education without fees. In this chapter of this book we read that Finland pays attention to reinforce the specialized educational opportunities. There is unacceptable to sort students inequitably according to test scores. Choice in Finland means that parents have the right to apply for a space for children in local options of specialized school. The current situation in Finland is described by Finnish parents as „good enough” throughout the country”<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, Finnish parents appreciate the social value of educational opportunities which are available to them and they feel well about equality, „rejecting the tenets of market-oriented schooling and the ideology of competition and giftedness”<sup>5</sup>.

The third chapter of the book shows the dimensions of Standardized testing. According to Popham a standardized test means „any test that is administered, scored, and interpreted in a standard, predetermined manner”<sup>6</sup>. Authors of this chapter underline that tests have been a part of the USA education since 2002 ( No child left behind, NCBL)<sup>7</sup>.

The fourth chapter of this book reveals differences between teacher education programs among four countries. In Finland there was used a highly selective system of future teachers application process. Finnish future teachers are accepted in proportion only one in ten applicant who studies at Finnish universities. The entrance exam is highly competitive and includes a 180-item multiply-choice test which is written on selected pedagogy articles, a pedagogical exam and an interview with the candidate. Furthermore, teacher education in Finland focuses on research, practice and reflection under the wings of autonomy of country's universities. As a result, each candidate for the teaching profession is able to examine the particular learning

---

<sup>4</sup> P. Seppanen, A. Carasco, M. Kalalahti, R. Rinne, H. Sinola, (eds.) *Contrasting dynamics in education politics of extremes: School choice in Chile and Finland* (pp. 3-28). Sense Publishing, Rotterdam, The Netherlands 2015, p.5.

<sup>5</sup> p.43.

<sup>6</sup> W. J. Popham, (2005), *Standardized testing fails the exam*, access date 05.04.2020, <https://www.edutopia.org/standardized-testing-evaluation-reform>.

<sup>7</sup> US Department of Education, 2009, *Race to the top programme: Executive summary*, Washington, DC, 2020 access date 05.04.2020, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>.

theory in the classroom. Teacher Education Programs usually last from five to six years and include learning theories, methodology of research and the field of study which candidate wants to study. Teacher education in Finland integrates pedagogical knowledge, practice and evidence-based decisions acquired in classrooms.

On the other side, Singapore has introduced high level of selection into teaching profession. Teaching is being honoured and admired profession that is why teachers must have high level of perseverance, interpersonal skills and commitment to teach at the highest level. The National Institute of Education obtained 16.000 applications for only 2000 places in Singapore single Teacher Education Programme. There are three tracks in teaching in Singapore (the teaching track, the leadership track and the senior specialist track). For successful candidates country pays for free tuition, fees and expenses. If the candidate fails to complete the teaching programme, he or she must pay the study cost back. Singapore Teacher education programmes provide understanding of multiply learning theories, focusing on range from bahaviorism to cognitivism. There is philosophy of teachers as researchers which is related to problem-solving, inquiry learning and teachers who are obliged to conduct research and to learn more about learning.

Chapter five *Do we still need teacher unions?* written by A. Adhikari, J. Brown and A. Klonsky tries to interest the readers asking gripping question if teachers play a progressive or a regressive role in the current school reform efforts. There are presented three different scientific perspectives due to author's nationalities (Nepal, The USA, the Northern Europe). Readers can study about the contemporary dimensions of teachers' unions because of conflicts in collaboration with their governments. In conclusion, authors underlined the need to lead teachers' unions to defend teachers' rights and to improve educational systems.

The unprecedented approach in this book is presented in chapter six: *Will Technology Make Schools Smarter?* Ch. Chen, R. Souraya and K. Wohlleben revealed their attitude from the perspective of Brave New World of Education. This chapter is an attempt to explain the question of whether technology contributes to expected change in education and what trends are possible in the near future. The highly diversified technology leads to emerge of significant questions. "Do digital devices change our intellectual behaviors and brain physiology, and if so, how and what does it mean for teaching and

learning in schools? Can machines teach us some things better than humans? Is there such a thing a unique, irreplaceable human element in education?"<sup>8</sup>.

Chapter seven-*Can Schools Prepare Kids For Work?* written by L. Basilotte, T. T. Wei Ting, S. Yoo explains how schools are responsible for students' preparation into job market in the light of equity and social justice. The authors offered three recommendations on global education taking into account the voices of policymakers, educators and business leaders. *Youth unemployment* was defined as the first indicator of these three measures. It presented a generation of people at the age from 15 to 24 who actively seek for employment. Two factors were taken into consideration: a deficit of jobs and an economic recession. The second indicator, *Diversity of Pathways*, tries to answer to the question if there are many postsecondary options for graduates and it analyses the flexibility of education system due to students' demands and abilities in school equalization. *Satisfaction of employers*, the third indicator, looks at the employers from requirements' side. It measures the graduates preparation, their skills and chosen career paths.

The eighth chapter, *Can Higher Education Be Transactional?* Written by Z. Goldman, W. Qiu, R. Tarnowski reveals the aspect of priceless, transformative higher education. The authors of the chapter started with a question: „What is my degree actually worth?"<sup>9</sup>. They all agreed with dr. Muriel A. Howard, president of American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) that universities role is to to help students improve their individuality, skills and place in the contemporary world. The authors perceive liberal education in a similar way as Cronan in his essey. Liberal education is about „gaining the power, the wisdom, the generosity, and the freedom to connect"<sup>10</sup>. As a result, they distinguish education as a personal participation in transformation which is conducted in the light of public good.

On the other side, higher education is treated as an extra service to which not everyone is entitled in the USA. „When comparing costs and benefits of various options, students evaluate many aspects of learning experience and its personal, academic, professional, and geographic fit for them"<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> P. Sahlberg, J. Hasak, V. Rodriguez, *Hard question on global educational change, Policies, Practices and the future of education*, 2017, p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> P. Sahlberg, J. Hasak, V. Rodriguez, *Hard question on global educational change, Policies, Practices and the future of education*, 2017, p. 107.

<sup>10</sup> W. Cronan, *Only connect...The goals of a liberal education*, „American Scholar" 1998 67(4), p. 108.

<sup>11</sup> W. Cronan, p.108.

Moreover, there are still such countries like Germany and Finland, in which public funding help students study in educational environment in which students are less burdened by paying by their education. The authors ask the tricky question: Is higher education less transactional in those countries?<sup>12</sup>.

The last chapter of this book, starts with the question *What Can We Learn from Hard Question?* It encourages readers to provide a space which would reflect the need in the global education to debate about the importance of varied postsecondary pathways and the importance of the future of education. The authors of the book underline that successful systems of education differ due to better and worse ways these countries cope with countries' educational politics and public discussions or debates about education. The authors claim that hard questions arise too often among politicians and authorities but they do not consider how „different scenarios about futures of school would influence these questions”<sup>13</sup>.

According to them, the purpose of education is perfectly understood by the highest performing education systems (the Canadian province of Alberta, Singapore and Finland). Moreover, in these countries education is a dynamic process which changes because of evolving societies and rapidly changing world. This is observed, in almost homogenous Finland, that teachers have to overcome obstacles due to refugee children from Syria. As new challenges arise, even the most successful educational systems raise unanticipated hard questions.

#### References:

- Cronan W., *Only connect... The goals of a liberal education*, „American Scholar” 1998 no. 67(4).
- Friedman M., Friedman R., *Free to Choose: A personal Statement*, Harward Educational Review, Dow Jones and Co, Inc 1980.
- Popham W. J., Standardized testing fails the exam, 2005, z dn. 05.04.2020, <https://www.edutopia.org/standardized-testing-evaluation-reform>,
- Proverbs 1:8-9, [https://www.funtrivia.com/en/Religion/Proverbs-16861\\_2.html](https://www.funtrivia.com/en/Religion/Proverbs-16861_2.html), z dn. 07.04.2020.

---

<sup>12</sup> P. Sahlberg, J. Hasak, V. Rodriguez, *Hard question on global educational change, Policies, Practices and the future of education*, 2017, p. 108.

<sup>13</sup> P. Sahlberg, J. Hasak, V. Rodriguez, *Hard question on global educational change, Policies, Practices and the future of education*, 2017, p. 125.

- Sahlberg P., Hasak J., Rodriguez V., *Hard question on global educational change, Policies, Practices and the future of education*, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York 2017.
- Sahlberg P., *Finnish lessons 2.0, What can the world learn from educational change in Finland*, Teachers, College Press, New York 2015.
- Seppanen P., Carasco A., Kalalahti M., Rinne R., Sinola H., (eds.) *Contrasting dynamics in education politics of extremes: School choice in Chile and Finland*, Sense Publishing Rotterdam, The Netherlands 2015.
- US Department of Education, 2009, *Race to the top programme: Executive summary*. Washington, DC, 20202 , z dn. 05.04.2020, <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>.