

## Theorizing shadow education and academic success in East Asia: understanding the meaning, value, and use of shadow education by East Asian students

edited by Young Chun Kim and Jung-Hoon Jung, New York, Routledge, 2021, 278 pp., £33.29 (ebook) £120.00 (hardback), ISBN 9780367564605

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Theorizing shadow education and academic success in East Asia: understanding the meaning, value, and use of shadow education by East Asian students**, edited by Young Chun Kim and Jung-Hoon Jung, New York, Routledge, 2021, 278 pp., £33.29 (ebook) £120.00 (hardback), ISBN 9780367564605

This volume tackles perceived myths surrounding the academic excellence of East Asian students and moves beyond Western understanding to offer in-depth analysis of the crucial role that shadow education (SE) plays in students' academic success. This text provides indigenous insights into the uses, values, and meanings of SE and highlights unknown cultural and regional aspects, as well as related phenomena including transboundary learning culture, nomadic learning, individualized learning, and the post-schooling era from countries including Japan, China, Taiwan, Hongkong, South Korea and Singapore. The volume offers innovative theorization to highlight SE as a phenomenon which cannot be overlooked in broader discussion of East Asian educational performance, systems, and policy. As we know, shadow education has not been centred on in the discourse, this book intends to fill this gap in the knowledge. It provides detailed and contextualized explanations of both SE the previous countries mentioned before and how students achieve academic success through SE. The purpose of this book is to postulate, for the first time in the field of educational studies and related fields, SE as a crucial component and phenomenon that all educational research should consider.

The edited volume consists of thirteen chapters that are thematically divided into three parts of broad and overlapping themes: *Shadow Education, Transboundary Learning Culture, and Academic Success*, *Top Tiers of Pisa: World Class Learners and Use of Shadow Education*, and *Shadow Curriculum, Race for Academic Success, and Winner-takes-it-all*. The first part of the book has two purposes. The first is to discuss the limitations of the extant shadow education discourse by critically engaging in its research approaches and perspectives; the second is to "create more theoretical space for fresh hypotheses" (Baker, 2020, p. 314) to develop the shadow education discourse. The part addresses a new theorization of shadow education in East Asian countries to advance the discourse of East Asian students' achievement and their learning culture.

The second part (1) centralizes how East Asian students achieve academic excellence within the shadow education discourse, as this has been discussed as the peripheral aspect of their education; (2) reveals the distinctiveness and similarities of shadow education in each nation; and (3) provides an overall picture of East Asian students' academic success by providing concrete images and narratives of the countries in the top tiers. The narratives from each

country are varied and complicated to the extent that they cannot be subsumed to one factor or certain fixed images. All of the chapters in this part analyse the specific information about how these countries and students have gained “educational power”. Next, as the third and last part of the book *Shadow Curriculum, Race for Academic Success, and Winner-takes-it-all* discusses the dark side of shadow education to emphasize students’ academic success in schooling. This section examines the ramifications of shadow education practices and the unintended values that it produces as a by-product of these practices.

The volume’s core strength lies upon the eclectic positionality of the contributors. Fifteen authors from a wide range of geographies have contributed to this 260-page volume. More interestingly, the last chapter is authored by Etrich, a supplementary education expert. He collaborated with a colleague, Lauterbach, who also often does educational sociology research in SE in Germany. It provides a perspective on SE from the point of view of people outside East Asia. This will be the strength and weakness of this book. Another thing that can be detailed from this book is that some of the authors are not natives of the country they are researching, of course this will be biased. Like Robert Lowe, who is of British descent but in this case writes about shadow education in Japan. Likewise with Michael Mecve who is known to be an American citizen who writes about supplementary education in East Asia. Moreover, a Danish, Soren Christensen, who also wrote about shadow education in Singapore.



Geographically, one of the countries discussed in this book is Singapore, which incidentally is not part of East Asia, to be precise, Southeast Asia. However, culturally and ethnically, they still have similarities with East Asian countries. There are two countries, such as Mongolia and North Korea, as part of East Asia which were not included in this book. We assume that they were not included because shadow education is still relatively low or has not been found there. However, of course if it is equipped it will increase the treasures of theorizing shadow education itself.

The book clearly mentions contexts within the Asia Pacific region, such as South Korea, China, and Singapore. Thus, educational scholars and researchers from this region alone, particularly those whose interests are on shadow education, may find the book useful for further directions or such. However, there are other contexts that are not mentioned within the book but worthy for exploration in consideration for their huge shadow education industry, such as Indonesia and Malaysia.

Indeed, this text will benefit researchers, academics, and educators with an interest in international and comparative education, curriculum studies, and East Asian educational practices and policy. Those interested in the sociology of education and educational policy will also benefit from this book in the foreseeable future.


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