Ed. John L. Rury and Eileen H. Tamura, *The Oxford Handbook of The History of Education*

New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
xvi+615 p. ISBN 9780199340033

TUNCAY BAŞOĞLU*

This handbook suggests a global, transnational perspective on the history of education as a field. Apart from an introductory chapter written by the editors, the text includes 36 articles divided into six parts. Each article describes a subject in the field and ends with a bibliography for further reading. As repeatedly stressed in the book, this field has developed since the early nineteenth century with the emergence of the modern nation-state. Its scope and content expanded and underwent some transformations since the 1960s with the introduction of new perspectives, issues, and methods through interaction with the discipline of history and the broader social sciences.

In the introductory article, the editors present a brief history of the field with special reference to scholarly contributions in the formative period. They then point out changing methodological approaches and issues. The editors do not explain how or why they devised and structured the book as they did, nor do they describe the difference between their book and previous studies with the same or similar titles. They also do not discuss the differentiation between "history of education" as a field and the history of "education" as a subject, although they prefer the former as the book's focus. In any case, the book—aside from its second half—concentrates on the history of modern education as it pertains to the last two centuries. A student might benefit from a discussion on the following issues: Is the history of education a discipline or field of research? If it is the former, what kind of discipline is it? Is it a subdiscipline of history or of education, or an interdisciplinary field with its own subject matter that

* Prof.Dr., İstanbul Medeniyet Üniversitesi İslami İlimler Fakültesi / Prof., İstanbul Medeniyet University Faculty of Islamic Studies, İstanbul, Türkiye, ORCID 0000-0001-5539-296X tuncay.basoglu@medeniyet.edu.tr

DOI: 10.26570/isad.1235854
Atıf/Citation Başoğlu, Tuncay, "Ed. John L. Rury and Eileen H. Tamura, The Oxford Handbook of The History of Education", *İslam Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 49 (2023): 183-188.

intersects with history, education, and sociology? What is the goal and function of this discipline?

The first of the book's six parts is dedicated to theoretical and methodological issues. The following three parts focus on the historical development of education in different geographical regions (the second part highlights the premodern period, while the other two focus on modern history, i.e., the last two centuries). The final two parts of the book are dedicated to much-debated issues. Although the book intends to present a wide range of perspectives and issues, it seems to focus overwhelmingly on popular issues in the West, even more specifically in English-speaking countries. Most contributors—28 out of 43—are from US universities, ten are from other English-speaking countries, and only four are from non-English speaking countries (Germany, Austria, Portugal, and Mexico). One writer is not affiliated with any university. Consequentially, this study is meaningful for understanding the formation and development of the field in the United States rather than in other countries.

In the first part, titled "Interpretive Frames in Educational History," four articles address transformations and theoretical and methodological issues in the field. McCulloch's article on Consensus and Revisionism examines the scope and methods used in the field and describes it as a subdiscipline of history (p. 28). Erickson's article points to education's relationship with urbân life and urbanization (p. 35ff.). Richardson's article on methods in the history of education provides a survey on the emergence of the historical method throughout history, then discusses the impacts of enlightenment, colonialism, and nationalism on history writing and the professionalization of history in universities. He then notes different accounts of education. Gottesman's article on theory in the history of education points to two different ways of addressing theory in the field: as a philosophy of history or as an interpretive frame (p. 67). He then briefly describes eight approaches in the field.

The second part, titled "Premodern Roots," comprises four articles on Greek and Roman antiquity, medieval Europe, premodern China and Japan, and precolonial indigenous education in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific. This section is the only one dedicated to the history of education in the premodern world. It falls short of sufficiently addressing the subject and is somewhat unevenly organized, as there is no chapter addressing other civilizations and regions such as the Islamic world, Sub-Saharan Africa, or India. However, most world civilizations developed in the middle temperate zone between China in the East and the Mediterranean Sea region in the West. Sub-Saharan Africa is only dealt with in an article

on colonial education under part five (p. 413 ff.). A notable weakness of the book is its neglect of Islamic civilization's educational tradition, which encompasses more than fourteen centuries and includes the world's most populous and civilized regions in the history. These regions also affected education throughout the world, including the West.

Part three, titled "The Rise of National Education Systems," includes seven articles that deal with the rise and development of modern education in nation-states, grouping them into seven regions (Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East). A similar imbalance in the handbook's regional focus is observed here, as all countries under Asia receive less attention than Australia and New Zealand. Moreover, the article on the rise of national education systems in Asian countries takes five countries (Japan, China, India, Iran, and Malaysia) as representative samples (p. 214), only briefly mentioning other countries on a single page. Whereas Türkiye, Indonesia, and Russia are briefly mentioned in different articles, Central Asian countries are unacknowledged, and Latin America is included as a continental package. The first part of the article on the Middle East presents a potpourri on premodern and precolonial education rather than a description of historical development. Even on just a single page (p. 243), many problematic or clearly false statements appear—for example, the disintegration of the Arab empire and the division of the region between the Ottomans and Safavids (and Qajars after them). Some false stories—like the Islamic Golden Age ending with the destructive effects of Ghazali's legacy against the rational Mu'tazila—are repeated. Talking about the Safavid ulema's independence vs. the Ottoman ulema's dependence is also an inaccurate historical assumption. As a matter of fact, the relative independence of Iranian *usuli* ulema developed later in the absence of a centralized state after the Safavids fell.

Part four, titled "The Emergence of Modern Higher Education," describes the development of higher education in three regions (modern Europe, the United States and Canada, and Asia) alongside two special and informative articles, one focused on the German university and the other on professional education in the universities. The articles on the regions suffer from insufficient space as their subject matter requires a more detailed description. Carpentier describes the history of higher education's development in Europe in four phases, and Hutcheson compares the United States and Canada rather than offering a historical account. Welch provides a broad description of the rise of modern higher education in Asia while pointing out the problem of defining "Asia" (p. 302-303).

Part five, titled "Inequality and Discrimination," includes six articles addressing inequality, gender, migration, race and ethnicity, the African diaspora, and colonial education. Part six, titled "Educational Reform and Institutional Change," comprises ten articles on such issues as children, religion, progressive education, schoolteachers and administrators, literacy, the transition from rural to urbân schooling, curriculum, informal education, and the relation of technology and education, ending with an article on the notions of transnational and comparative education. Tröhler's article on curriculum history is especially informative, as—moving beyond a narrow focus on the curriculum—it explores the relationship between education and culture with its suggestion that "the extrapolation of cultural idiosyncrasy to the global sphere is more hegemonic than global" (p. 534).

The emphasis on the transformation of the field and a need for global, transnational, and comparative perspectives is pervasive throughout the entire book. This emphasis—rather than accepting a limited regional or national perspective—is itself a merit. There are, however, also some methodological problems. For example, how should one compare and discuss the educational histories of so many diverse cultures and civilizations? The nature of the history of education is similar to the history of law insofar as it is challenging to treat globally or compare (although not incomparable) very different cases and issues that depend on different beliefs, *weltanschauungs*, and cultures. So, there is a risk of overlooking values and issues important to some people while assuming one's own values and issues are universally accepted.

The exclusion of religions and civilizations, especially Islam, represents a significant problem with the book's perspective. This exclusion reflects the secularizing orientation of modernity. While this absence may be understandable for a narrative that takes modern secular national systems as its focus, this approach is not always sound when addressing the history of education from the bottom. If the book's objective to surpass a narrative based on national systems is not limited to secular ideologies and issues, turning a blind eye to the religious revivals of our time is problematic. Moreover, the Islamic world is mentioned scantily and dispersed in different places, as though it never existed, apart from three pages in an article on the Middle East. Although a *madrasa* photo features on the book's cover, the image has no relation to the book's content. (No hint exists whether the image was selected by the editors or by the publishing house for marketing purposes). This may be due to a decision to abstain from addressing all the major religions and their effects on educational

history. However, a systematic exclusion is apparent. For example, the article on methods mentions nearly everything—even Turkic *ashiks*—from Bronze Age until the nineteenth century, except Islam (pp. 48-51). Another example is the handbook's handling of India, where educational history is described without mentioning the Islamic past (p. 221-22).

Another problem with the book's perspective is the absence of references to George Makdisi's works and his views regarding education in the Islamic world. Makdisi's work only receives mention in Welch's article on modern higher education in Asia (pp. 313, 315). Young writes, "contrary to some claims that the institutional roots of the university lay elsewhere, whether Islamic world or even central Asia, the university's rise is best explained as a response to developments specific to Europe" (p. 105), and Carpentier talks about "the spontaneous creation of universities" and their development out of "previous forms of higher learning such as the cathedral schools" (p. 261). However, they do not reference the related sources and instead resort to an imagined, unrealistic history. One may believe in Europe as a kind of geographical holy cradle dropped down from heaven—a unique isolated unit, spontaneously unfolding without being affected by the neighboring civilization for a thousand years. Nevertheless, this unrealistic and imagined historical outlook cannot provide a reliable methodological perspective in history, let alone as part of a global or transnational perspective.

There are also some data errors and inconsistencies to be corrected. The book states that "With the disintegration of Yugoslavia," "five states emerged" (p. 149). This fact was true at the beginning of disintegration, but now seven (six ex-socialist republics plus Kosovo) exist at the time of the book's publication. It is difficult to understand the causal or relational link between the Qajar period (in the nineteenth century) and Mongols (in the thirteenth century) in this sentence: "During the early and middle Qajar period, schooling was in a shambles, disrupted partly by the thirteenth-century Mongol invasions" (p. 219) as there are nearly six hundred years with all changes in between. Further, the transliteration of "Dār al-Fonūn" (see: https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dar-al-fonun-lit) may be "Dar al-Fonun" (p. 220), but it is not consistent with "Dar-al-Fonun" (p. 220) and "Dar al-Fanon" (p. 245). As far as I know, there is a saying, "Seek knowledge, even as far away as China," falsely ascribed to the Prophet of Islam. To say, "Seek knowledge, even as far away as Cairo" (p. 241) is a new interpretation. While this statement may seem logical from the Far West, the first capital city established in Egypt by Muslims was called Fustat; in fact, Cairo did not exist until the second

half of the tenth century. To suggest that "The most famous madrasas in the Middle East were Cairo Al-Azhar founded in the tenth century…" (p. 243) is anachronistic, as al-Azhar cannot technically be understood as a madrasa at the time of its founding. Instead, after several centuries had passed, it gained some madrasa functions and was connected with some madrasas, like Taybarsiyya in the Mamluk era. Al-Ghazali (d. 1111) might be understood as a scholar from the eleventh century but not the tenth (p. 243). The ruling family in Saudi Arabia can be referred to as Saudis or the house of Saud (ʾĀl Suʿūd, sometimes written as Al Saud or Al Suud) but not al-Sud (p. 252). The Kurdish minority is Sunni-Shafiite in Iraq, not Shiite (p. 253). The book also states that "After 350 years of British rule, India won independence in 1947" (p. 452). According to this statement, English colonial administration should have begun even before the foundation of the East India Company when an unknown and nonauthorised English tradesman first set his foot in an unknown part of India as if there was no state and no inhabitants in that country. Bailyn's work, titled *Education and the Forming of American Society* (p. 546), should be called *Education in the Forming of American Society*, as in the "Suggested Reading" (p. 552).