A twofold theme that courses through this book derives from the observations that:

(a) people’s values and culture affect the education that their society provides while, at the same time, education influences the society’s values and culture;
(b) the present-day transitional state of values and culture throughout the world is primarily a result of increasing globalization, a trend that invites speculation about what can be expected of education systems in the years ahead.

To illustrate its themes, the book is divided into two major sections. The first, “Values, Culture, and Education,” consists of five chapters by different authors. The second offers 13 national case studies by authors who trace changes in educational values and cultures in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, England-and-Wales, France, Germany, Japan, Poland, South Africa, South Korea, and the United States.

As with previous editions in the World Yearbook of Education series, the title of this 2001 contribution to the series identifies an issue of contemporary importance. Since the series began in 1933, the volumes have always been closely associated with the University of London’s Institute of Education. The 2001 volume is no exception, as all three of its editors are Institute faculty members. However, the 28 authors who contributed to the work have been drawn from a wide range of nations and educational institutions.

Most of the chapter authors center attention on worrisome trends in the values-culture-education linkage without proposing viable remedies for the identified problems. Several writers in Section 1 charge that such traditional cultural values as an understanding of the human condition and the compassionate treatment of fellow humans are being replaced by esteem for economic progress and the creation and acquisition of material goods. The authors claim that an increasingly globalized economy, controlled by transnational corporations, pressures schools to concentrate primarily on the production of efficient workers, thereby sacrificing such humanistic aims of that of creating moral individuals who have a clear conception of, and dedication to, social justice and the characteristics of a “good person.”

Included among the worries expressed in Section 1 are the questionable place of religion in present-day education and the age-old problem of how much the schools should try to conserve and transmit traditional culture rather than to promote new versions of culture.

In terms of organization and focus, the 13 country chapters in Section 2 are a very mixed bag of ideas about values, cultures, and schooling. Except for a few chapters that include topics generated by chapters in Section 1 (economic, religious, and legal...
issues), rarely do two authors of the country cases write about the same aspects of values, culture, and education. The virtue of such a potpourri is that it offers readers many different ways to view the values-culture-schooling combination. However, the lack of any commonality of topics from one chapter to another poses difficulties for anyone seeking to compare the countries along similar dimensions. Not only are dissimilar matters treated in the different country cases, but the predictions regarding the future of values, culture, and education are diverse as well. For example, Yoshiko Nomura’s chapter on Japan concludes with an expression of faith in the ability of universal traditional values, based on observations of the “natural and cosmic world,” to liberate humans from the present-day “grave of material and machine civilization, and from their own insatiable greed, ignorance, and arrogance” (p. 240).

Kai-Ming Cheng’s chapter on China, like several of the other country cases, ends with puzzlement over what may lie ahead for the values-culture-education formula: “It is no longer easy to predict how China will change further, given that it will evolve in a changed culture” (p. 255). In contrast, Janusz Tomiak’s analysis of recent developments in Polish politics and education leads to his optimistic estimate that “the prospects of Polish education and the place of Poland as a credible partner within the enlarged European Union in the near future have been substantially enhanced by the [recent political and cultural] changes proposed” (p. 266).

The complexity of altering educational practices in response to fundamental political/cultural change is emphasized in Pam Christie’s South Africa chapter which closes with the observation that: “A clear lesson from the South African experience in this period is how difficult it is to develop and implement policies to change schools and their cultures, particularly in conditions of deep structural inequalities” (p. 277).

Finally, Susan Douglas Franzosa writes despairingly about the United States Government’s “favoring the production of merely literate private individuals and competent workers” through a national curriculum imposed by achievement testing, “in the absence of any attempt to address widespread disparities in school funding, discriminatory tracking practices, and student and teacher disengagement.” Such trends, she contends, “will do little to counter educational inequalities or to create democratic communities within the public schools” (pp. 313–314).

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This is an introductory textbook in research methods in education. It is a little like what one commentator said of the American school curriculum “Ten miles wide and an inch deep”. This quote encapsulates the strengths and weaknesses of the book.

It covers a lot of territory. In the introduction it is stated that this 5th edition includes new material on: qualitative, naturalistic and ethnographic research methods, curricular and evaluative research, critical theory and educational research, feminist perspectives on research, research and policy making, planning educational research, critical action research, statistical analysis, sampling reliability and validity, event history analysis, meta-analysis and multilevel modelling, nominal group technique and Delphi techniques, case study planning, qualitative data analysis, questionnaire design and construction, focus groups, testing, test construction, and item response theory,