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COLLABORATIVE BOOK REVIEW: Baker, D. P. (2014). *The Schooled Society: The Educational Transformation of Global Culture*

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Abstract

For many years the discussion of education as a global and social institution has been prevalent in Comparative and International Education. In his book, *The Schooled Society*, David P. Baker offers up a unique perspective on a much-discussed theoretical framework in which to view education as an institution. Through this work, Baker uses a multidisciplinary approach to explain the influence that mass education has on societies and informs the readers of new educational paradoxes that are being discussed in the field. Not only is *The Schooled Society* an explanation of educational influence on society, but it also provides reason for further research to be done to explain the existing paradoxes found in modern society and education.

The following book review, informed by the wide span of each contributing reviewer's previous educational and professional experiences, provides a variety of reactions to *The Schooled Society* and is intended to provide the reader with a holistic examination of the book. The primary review, authored by Calley Stevens Taylor and Amanda Blain Pritt, presents an introductory review and critique of the book's structure, premise, evidence, and conclusions as well as general statements about the book's contents. Following the primary review, Maria Spinosa Ebert, Angel Oi Yee Cheng, and Xia Zhao respond to the primary review and offer their own reactions to *The Schooled Society*.

Keywords

Education, Society

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Orientation to the Review

For many years the discussion of education as a global and social institution has been prevalent in Comparative and International Education. In his book, *The Schooled Society*, David P. Baker offers up a unique perspective on a much-discussed theoretical framework in which to view education as an institution. Through this work, Baker uses a multidisciplinary approach to explain the influence that mass education has on

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societies and informs the readers of new educational paradoxes that are being discussed in the field. Not only is *The Schooled Society* an explanation of educational influence on society, but it also provides reason for further research to be done to explain the existing paradoxes found in modern society and education.

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Introductory Review

The Schooled Society seeks to propose a broad and innovative new framework for understanding the role of education in modern society by examining the educational revolution and its impact on society. In Baker's schooled society, defined as a "wholly new social order where dimensions of education reach into and define nearly every facet of human life" (p. 8) education is a central defining principle—a major social institution—and understanding its effects on modern society in this way provides a rational explanation for many popular critiques of education. Baker points out that other frameworks see the massification of education as a potential source of social strife (e.g., the "diploma disease" predicted by Ronald Dore (p. 128)), and understand the institution of education as one that does the bidding of other social institutions. Yet, the perspective presented in *The Schooled Society* seeks an alternative understanding in which education and society are mutually affirming. The guiding question in *The Schooled Society* is this: to what degree has the education revolution changed society itself?

According to Baker, existing theoretical frameworks do not give a full accounting of the influence of education, as an institution, on developing and maintaining the modern society, which is characterized by mass education, industrialization and urbanization, and with more focus on education and less focus on non-education mechanisms of society. *The Schooled Society* serves as both a comprehensive explanation for education's influence on society and a call to expand research and scholarly inquiry into new ways of identifying and understanding the relationship between education and society. By examining a number of paradoxes and popular debates about education, Baker presents readers with new interpretations of existing data, creating not only new questions for scholars and educators, but a fresh appreciation for the value of education in the modern society. In this manner, *The Schooled Society* broadens the understanding of theory, research, policy or practice related to comparative and international education and other fields dedicated to the study of education and social influences. His creation of a unique theoretical framework not only sheds light on paradoxes that cannot be fully understood through previously existing discourses, but also delineates what additional research is needed in order to better understand the history, current behaviors, and future of the schooled society.

The Schooled Society begins by introducing the concepts that define the goals and organization of the book, and presents the author's initial hypotheses in a manner

appropriate for scholars and practitioners alike. Specifically, Baker's statement that "people today are so surrounded by the effects of education that it can appear as if there are no effects at all" (p. 6), and his response to the education-appreciation paradox, in which education is considered to be powerfully beneficial to society while simultaneously failing society prepare readers to expect a new and wide-reaching perspective. The remainder of Part 1, which is titled "Dimensions and Origin of the Schooled Society" and includes chapters two through six, carries the reader from the history of mass education at the primary and secondary levels to a thorough and complex analysis of the Western university as the chief agent for the development of what Baker defines as the schooled society.

In education's early stages, the right to be educated was reserved for the elite and wealthy. As education evolved it became more and more accessible by the rest of the population; it is this through this process that the education revolution brought traditional society to modernity and the postindustrial society. The second half of *The Schooled Society*, titled "Societal Consequences of the Education Revolution," addresses the theoretical value of the educational revolution's origin and its ability to affect culture and other social institutions. Topics include: how the education revolution has changed the nature of work, credentialing in the schooled society, and the role of education in redefining social deviance. Of particular note are Baker's observations on how the education revolution has changed the nature of politics and citizenship and his careful, though potentially controversial, analysis of how education and religion may be mutually enforcing instead of mutually exclusive. His concluding chapter provides a well-organized summary, suggestions for future study, and predictions for the future of the school society.

Baker uses a wide variety of sources from economics, history, student development, sociology, and educational research to support his analysis of the schooled society. Such variety provides opportunities for readers from many disciplines to connect to his work and also further emphasizes his point that education is a central social institution that influences all others. However, the data cited and examples discussed in-depth are primarily American, and the majority of non-American examples are from other western countries. His central argument is based on neo-institutional theory, which proposes that education has become such a major influence on society that it has now turned into an independent social institution, and supports his suggestion that education's influence on society has been taken-for-granted. Baker writes "the educational revolution socially constructs significant portions of the culture of modern society" (p. 10). According to Baker, the institution of education in society should not only be considered according to its impact on individuals; instead, the institution of education should also be understood by the way it "constructs influential ideas, social statuses, and new human capacities" (p. 12) and what makes Baker's analysis stand out against previous interpretations of the relationships between education and other social institutions is his ability to do just that.

An excellent, although potentially controversial, example of how Baker's framework can be used to reimagine or reinterpret education's impact on society is his examination of the relationship between education and religion in Chapter 11. According to Baker, like Dore's "diploma disease" that never came to be, predictions about the interplay between religion and education were also false. While it has been assumed that as education levels increase, religiosity decreases, recent research examined by Baker lead him to suggest that the opposite is instead true. In the schooled

society, individuals can be both educated and religious, though the nature of religious beliefs grows more abstract with increasing levels of education. In addition, religion as an institution also benefits from skills that predominate in the schooled society, including business practices and communication methods that have allowed religious institutions to grow to unprecedented size. These conclusions are drawn almost exclusively on American Christian data, with just a few references to other countries at the end of the chapter, and Baker closes the chapter by stating that the core values of the schooled society are essentially the core values of Judeo-Christian morality. Baker's failure to more fully consider the schooled society paradigm in the context of other global trends in religion, such as the rapid expansion of Catholicism in Africa and Latin America (Jenkins, 2012), or the modern practices of educated Islamists (Kurzman, 2012), prompts the reader to question whether the schooled society benefits religion broadly in the ways he suggests, or whether there's something about the American Christian culture that is uniquely open to the effects of the education revolution. And, if the latter is true, can the schooled society really develop into the new world culture that Baker predicts?

For the most part, *The Schooled Society* is well organized and written in a manner suitable for scholars and practitioners alike. The Introduction and Chapters 2 and 3 are clear, well thought out, and accessible to a variety of readers. Chapters 4 and 5, however, come across as out of place. While the central theme of these chapters, that the American university has been the main driver of the schooled society, is a valuable argument, these chapters are much denser than the rest. These chapters seem self-contained, perhaps more appropriate for a scholarly journal article than a text aimed at a wider audience, and this breaks up the flow of Part 1 and creates an abrupt transition to Part 2. It is unfortunate that Baker's argument for the role of the American university in the development of the schooled society was not addressed with requisite strength in a manner more in line with the tone and character of the rest of the book. In Part 2, however, the reader again finds well-balanced chapters with carefully and creatively drawn new conclusions about education and society, though Chapter 8, "The Transformation of Knowledge and Truth Claims," would have been better suited at the beginning of Part 2 than in the middle.

Some other elements of the text are also problematic. In the concluding chapter, Baker states that the schooled society perspective accounts for the role of education in defining social morality, but does not advocate for it. Overall, he does present information and examine paradoxes in ways that allow readers to formulate their own opinions. There are, however, several instances found in the book where the language used comes across as derisive or supportive, and it may have been more appropriate to include his warning against assuming advocacy from the concluding chapter in the introduction instead. For example, Baker's end to Chapter 8, "and that is how the schooled society has come to conceptualize and organize knowing and knowledge. It is open and purposely accessible for all. It is to be tried on and taken for a test drive around the block by any and all, not just celebrated by an awestruck audience or reserved in formalistic secrecy for the powerful few" (p. 218) reads sarcastic, while the text is shot through with neo-institutional terminologies like triumph, rise, and robust that Baker acknowledges imply a certain moral judgment.

There also is some lack of clarity in the relationship between the US and the schooled society. Many references are made to the schooled society on a global scale, but the weight of American examples in the text seem to contradict Baker's early

statement that “in a number of nations an advanced version of the schooled society is already fully evident” (p. 8). Baker predicts that the education revolution will intensify globally in the future, but when considering the work as a whole, the reader may question whether *The Schooled Society* is an examination of the way the schooled society functions in the US or an examination of the role of the American education revolution in establishing a global movement towards the schooled society.

Through thoughtful alternative conclusions to the paradoxes in and critiques of education, Baker has created a new framework for understanding the schooled society. Though it is likely that no one seriously doubts there exists a relationship between education and society, Baker has demonstrated that education indeed influences society directly in a manner far more substantial than has been recognized by earlier scholars. In this theoretical environment, education now reaches far more widely, scholars have new interpretations of societal changes to examine and educators should be inspired that education not only affects children individually, but is indeed changing society. *The Schooled Society* provides a new framework that acknowledges, then expands on traditional explanations and sets the stage for more innovative research and interpretations of pre-existing data. Baker’s theory counters many other claims about the effects of education not by discrediting them but by proposing a new way of viewing education and its role in society, and is sure to spark much discussion amongst education scholars and practitioners for some time to come.

Calley Stevens Taylor
Amanda Blain Pritt

The debates about education are endless. Policy! Curriculum! Practice! One thing that is not debated is school itself. In *The Schooled Society*, David P. Baker takes on the tremendous task of explaining the role of education in modern society beginning with the advent of mass schooling. A life before formal education is difficult to fathom. In his book, Baker explains the idea of a schooled society, which many members of the schooled society may not fully recognize or appreciate. But, perhaps that is the whole point. School has become so ingrained in most cultures over such a long period of time that the effects may not be easily or completely recognized.

In this one comprehensive book, Baker writes two parts. The first part is from a historical context and reviews the education revolution. The second part of *The Schooled Society* is more ambitious. The magnitude of a schooled society is established in Part 2 of the book, titled “The Societal Consequences of the Education Revolution.” Additionally, this section dives deep into the implications of what is suggested in a schooled society in the areas of higher education, technology, the rise of mass professionalism and many more. Baker explores the paradoxes of different theories and redefines the meaning of ‘worker’ in an educated society. When schooled individuals graduated and became members of the work force, there was a scare that there was going to be too many overqualified workers and not enough jobs. But instead of holding to the current positions, jobs were created that had never existed before. The transformation occurred in the capabilities of the worker and that changed society. But as schooled individuals ourselves it is difficult to comprehend any other lifestyle outside of the one dominated by education. Noticing the major changes in societies because of this schooling phenomenon does mean the reader must consider education as an institution with its own influences. Baker makes a case for the power of education by how it has changed

the thinking of entire societies by creating entirely different people. As more educated people entered the workforce, shifts towards mass professionalism emerged creating a workplace that is highly organized. This new knowledge society molds education and educational policy using a research base including data collection and empirical results.

Has the education revolution really been the single most significant force of change in our global society for the past several centuries? Anybody would agree there were many changes over this time period. Nevertheless, according to Baker, education has slowly but steadily seeped into every aspect of life worldwide. As a replacement for the traditional idea that the university is of service to society, the university is now a place for research and new knowledge. Unfortunately, much of what Baker presents in his book is not new information. In 1987, Ramirez and Boli published an article titled, "The Political Construction of Mass Schooling: European Origins and Worldwide Institutionalization." In it, Ramirez and Boli examine the state's nation-building tactics in educational systems in Europe and the institutionalization of mass education throughout the world. They develop a model of the legitimate national society that began during the Industrial Revolution. Ramirez and Boli's article explains how society dictated what was taught in schools in order to produce a desirable society. In Chapter 3, Baker writes about the change of focus at the university level. But in 2006, Meyer, Ramirez, Frank and Schofer write how the view of higher education must be seen as a separate institution. The view of the university is the focal point and local organizations are dependent on the research and findings of the university to inform their decisions. This modern way of thinking means the university as an institution actually appoints local situations by defining purpose. As a result, it was society that dictated education, but now it is education that dictates to society.

Baker took on a huge undertaking by compiling all of this information plus his own research to publish a book that includes the entire scope of the education revolution and its implications. While there is not much new information, the implications run deep and many of his conclusions are embedded in society so they are difficult to draw out. It is not the newness of the information that is interesting but the organization of the information that is thought-provoking. The paradoxes in higher education and religion are among the most interesting sections and they may provide a model of how education will change over time. Although Baker's emphasis really is on Western culture, it makes sense to organize this book in this way because of the political and economic influences of the West in the twentieth century. Besides, an appealing aspect of this book is the opportunity for further research. There was a progression starting before mass education until present day education and its effect on the global culture in the early 21st century. Education is dynamic and while predictions are made and theories are established, the second part of this book will raise many questions. Baker encourages researchers to further study this phenomenon. Perhaps comparative researchers can conduct a study on Eastern cultures to truly acquire a sense of a transformation of global culture.

Even though on the surface the schooled society seems to be a global phenomenon, there are underlying contextualized truths that are much more difficult to tease out. *The Schooled Society* attempts to bring those truths to light. Baker tries to contextualize the institution of school itself. The reasons behind mass education have changed over time so this is one reason why mass schooling has been so sustainable and has grown so much. The basic framework has stayed intact because the inner workings have changed to meet the need of society. Due to pressures from organizations or other

professionals, these isomorphic changes hit on two levels, globally and contextually. If this change is sustainable then the context will always remain a variable, but the framework will always remain intact. Globally, the result of mass education is not difficult to perceive but Baker's focus is not on the end result but on the isomorphic changes that have affected our society through mass education. The benefit of this book and others like it is that it has the potential to become increasingly relevant over time as it becomes even more difficult to understand the implications of a schooled society because society becomes more immersed in the effects of school.

Maria Spinosa Ebert

Baker begins *The Schooled Society* by introducing the concept of the worldwide education revolution, which he asserts took place over the past 150 years. Many new values such as social justice, gender equality, and human rights have emerged as a result of the education revolution. Even the general public has come to appreciate scientific research, which led to an increase in cognitive skills and a knowledge based economy. It has been a major driving force for the creation of capitalism and the rise of new professions in modern societies. In other words, education revolution has altered the nature of our social order organically.

Evidently, Baker has written this book through the lens of structural functionalism. He took on Emile Durkheim's perspective on education, which has been one of the main institutions for socialization of individuals in a larger group. Within this theory, education is a major way to build the capacity of humanity for future roles in society, social coherence, and betterment of the world, especially for the survival and sustainability of developed societies. Schools also inculcate the values of achievement and equality of opportunity so as to change personal, political or cultural involvements in societal development at large. Anyone who falls apart from the formal system is seen as deviant.

Conversely, Baker narrows his focus down to higher education, particularly a very western and American point of view, as the introductory section of this collective review points out. Within the field of comparative and international education, would the readers have a more comprehensive or objective view if Baker had used more than two or three countries with various levels of development to compare? In addition, the role of primary education definitely cannot be ignored, as childhood is a vital stage shaping one's character, which affects the suitability of individuals for certain careers.

A clear example of Baker's over-reliance on American and western perspectives is his chapter on religion and education. Baker assumes that modern forms of globalization come predominantly from or are largely inspired by the West, but in so doing Baker grossly over-emphasizes the effect of Christianity. There have been many major religions emerging throughout human history, including Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith. Some parts of the globe are very different from the West, e.g., Middle Eastern countries where the education system is fundamentally based on Islamic ideologies. People in these societies have experienced completely different civilization processes than those in the West. It would have been fascinating if Baker could have added this element into *The Schooled Society* and given the audience a more comprehensive (more global) view of how education has an overarching impact on society.

In addition, what will be the negative effects of explosive mass education on society at large? Baker only gave this topic passing attention at the end of his book. Readers might have a broader and more thorough understanding if Baker could explain this phenomenon in detail, or at least give the reader a framework upon which to begin to understand the balance of positive and negative impacts of mass education. For example, the overwhelming supply of undergraduate and graduate students in capitalist societies becomes a main concern for new generations. In reality, having higher levels of education does not necessarily guarantee good careers for young adults. How does a functional or institutional perspective address these concerns?

In *The Schooled Society*, Baker systematically unfolds the importance of education in the modern world. Some situations are undeniably true in the current post-industrial era. For instance, broadly recognized innovative values never existed in humanity before the education revolution. He explicitly elucidates how mass education transforms the population at large. A primary suggestion, however, is that Baker could use more examples from other countries, so that his arguments would be even more valid. This would have given readers a truly global perspective about what the schooled society is around the world.

Angel Oi Yee Cheng

The Schooled Society brings out many thought-provoking questions pertaining to education and society. Baker challenges the traditional perspectives on the relationship between education and society: that school-educated people are needed by the society. Based on the neo-institutional theory, Baker points out that, the “education revolution has produced a world where education is an independent social institution that shapes significant parts of *all other* core institutions in society” (p. 2). By taking this point of view, he thinks academic intelligence, social status and education as a human right are the cultural products of education rather than reasons or conditions for education. Baker also explains reasons for the development of mass education, the importance of credentialing in society and the mutual development between education and religion to round out an ambitious scope in his book.

In spite of a well-crafted argument throughout, however, it is likely that David Baker overestimates the power of education on society. For instance, Chapter 10 discusses the education-democratic paradox. Baker indicates that having an advanced education leads to “less reverence for external authority and greater independence of thought” (p. 254) as well as the ability “to challenge traditional political positions” (p. 250). In other words, with more education, people have specific knowledge about the government, its roles, and politics. Potential tumultuous relationships between government officials and the citizenry, therefore, increase with more education. However, where there is already tension in countries with government mandates stretching across decades, education is not advantageous to those in power as it raises greater activism among its people.

Baker’s perspective ignores the impact of government ideologies on education. While there is this mass movement toward a schooled society, there also exists a model for education that intentionally limits the educational attainment of its people. A democratic government needs people with higher levels of education to develop the country, but the government may take measures to restrict some people from being well-educated, especially people from the working-class or in poverty, for fear that

people with independent thoughts may lead to political, social, and economic revolution. As Friedman and Friedman (1990) point out, educational access, particularly higher education access, may promote social unrest and political instability. Countries with prolonged or unstable leadership in politics suppressed education and viewed it as a threat to authority. For instance, Smith (2011) analyzed the relationship between university enrollment and civil wars of forty-two countries in Sub Saharan Africa from 1997 to 2010, indicating that the increase of higher-level education raises the likelihood of civil unrest disturbances. Therefore, while Baker argues that education affects society, this is not an exclusive arrangement. Social, political, and economic factors still significantly influence education worldwide.

Additionally, as the introductory section of this collective review suggested, the data and examples cited in the book are largely based on western countries. This reveals a significant bias in the book's arguments and examples. However, considering that English academic resources mainly discuss American or western countries, it is understandable why Baker uses these data and examples to support his argument. Besides, the phenomena Baker discusses in the book are found all over the world, and he cites sources from other regions and perspectives, too. So, while there is the potential for a significant American and western bias in Baker's book, it should not be a problem for supporting his theoretical statements.

Finally, considering the relationship between education and religion presented in the last part of *The Schooled Society*, Baker should discuss more religions beyond Christianity since religions impact education differently worldwide. In other words, his theoretical and empirical approach to examining the relationship between education and religion is limiting. Baker could make a pan-religious argument, but instead he indicates that education and religion mutually instead of exclusively exist. However, Baker's explanation for these data is unconvincing. Also, Baker mentions that even China is becoming more religious over time, but there is not a convincing argument that the boom of religion in China is because of education. Other factors, such as the influence of western culture, may be more reasonable to explain this phenomenon. For example, if Baker discussed ways that mass education disseminates western culture and then connected that to the development of religion in China, it would be a more convincing – yet indirect and less tenable – approach.

By and large, Baker innovatively explains the relationship between education and society in *The Schooled Society*, and in ways that many readers may have never thought about. In spite of the critiques mentioned above, it is a valuable contribution to the scholarly and theoretical literature on the relationship between education and society worldwide, especially for educators and policymakers, because they more than others often take for granted the impact of education on society.

Xia Zhao

The Author Responds

I appreciate the student reviews of *Schooled Society* and the opportunity to react to reviewers' critiques. In general the reviews are fair and I agree with them. A few additional reactions from me might balance them out a bit.

On the issue of positive or negative advocacy of education and its consequences, I agree that I might have said more about the difficulty of intellectual neutrality of sociological analysis. In some ways though, the critique seems to fall under the “no

good deed goes unpunished” column, as to my knowledge, before my reflection on this, there has been no such discussion of, or apology for, the sometimes over-the-top vocabulary of earlier neo-institutional analysis of education. Further, the origins of the now problematic puffed up rhetoric was not political support for educational expansion; it was an attempt to gain attention to the topic of education and society in the field of sociology enamored with 19th century images of social class before the education revolution. Indeed it is highly ironic given the initial cynical stance of neo-institutional analysis about educational development that in some quarters it is now charged of being a political advocacy program.

There a bit of a misunderstanding in the review that states that I use a structural-functional theoretical approach. While neo-institutionalism (which is what the book attempts to play with and test) stems from the basic question of how is society possible, it is distinctly different from an older functional perspective.

Much was said about the use of examples and research from western nations. This is true because of the over-whelming amount of research from western regions and a paucity of similar extensive research from other parts of the world. Having said that, however, there is much comparative research on the institutionalization of education. This is the most regionally comprehensive literature in all of education research! Lastly, the crucial question to ask is: With less information about non-western regions are we missing a distinctly different relationship between schooling and society. From what I know, I do not see one, but more research is needed to say for sure.

Finally, the student reviewers are interested in the education and religion thesis. I am grateful for their comments and interest. I have gone on to develop this thesis more in an expanded paper. I do not know for sure if the thesis can be applied to all religions, but my intention is that it does. Again additional empirical research will prove important here.

David P. Baker

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About the Reviewers

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Amanda Blain Pritt is a current M.Ed. candidate in Globalization and Educational Change at Lehigh University. With a background as a classroom teacher, her research interests include gender equality in education, educational inequalities in developing countries as well as minority populations in the U.S., and teacher development.

Maria Spinosa Ebert recently completed the M.Ed in Globalization and Educational Change with a concentration on International Educational Development at Lehigh University. She is an ESL teacher in an urban school district and teacher consultant for Penn State University Lehigh Valley Writing Project. She travels internationally to research ESL/EFL structures and policy. Her interests include research and presentations in the areas of ESL, urban education and international education.

Angel Oi Yee Cheng, originally from Hong Kong, is pursuing her M.Ed. in Globalization and Educational Change with a concentration of International Education Development from Lehigh University. Her academic interest areas are higher education and global citizenship education. Prior coming to Lehigh University, she has worked at University of Southern California – International Offices – Hong Kong and Yew Chung Education Foundation to manage the international educational developments of all international schools in Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, Qingdao, and Silicon Valley. In summer 2014, she also interned at Baha'i International Community at the United Nations Office to work on the area of gender equality and the advancement of women. She is now a member of the Caring for Cambodia Steering Committee.

Xia Zhao, from Mainland China, is currently a doctoral student in Comparative and International Education at Lehigh University. She is a research assistant, and has joined a private tutoring research project and a parental involvement research project. In summer 2014, she participated in community service in Indonesia for two months. Currently, she is a UN NGO youth representative for the African Citizen Development Foundation. Her research interests include private tutoring (shadow education), parental involvement, gender issues, social equity and Chinese rural education.