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Hayashi, A. (2022). *Teaching expertise in three countries: Japan, China, and the United States*. University of Chicago Press.

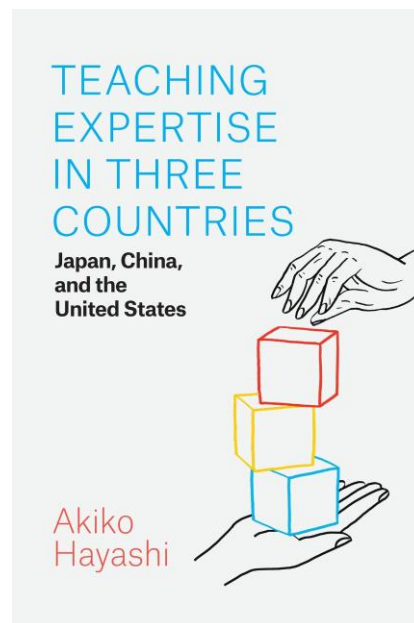
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Teaching Expertise in Three Countries will be valued by teacher educators as well as comparativists; it also contributes to the study of expertise beyond teaching. The book describes how preschool teachers grow professionally from early to mid-career and beyond. It is a rare study following the development of expertise in the same teachers over many years—13 in this case. It is also an exceedingly rare study comparing teachers' long-term trajectories across three countries.¹ As the author suggests herself, despite the focus on preschools many of the book's insights apply to elementary and secondary teaching as well. I suspect that this slim and readable volume could also bring comfort and inspiration to harried university instructors.

The author, Akiko Hayashi, is a U.S.-educated scholar from Japan, now an assistant professor at Meiji University in Tokyo. This new study builds on the foundation of Hayashi's prior collaborations with Joseph Tobin as a research assistant for *Preschools in Three Cultures Revisited* (Tobin et al., 2009) and their project on deaf kindergartens (Hayashi & Tobin, 2015a), and as lead author of their deeper analysis of the Japanese videos from the Preschools in Three Cultures projects (Hayashi & Tobin, 2015b). Hayashi deliberately chose to grow the new study from the prior research because she has a "Japanese" appreciation for "extended deep



¹ The only vaguely parallel comparative work I could find was a nine-year study in Europe (Czerniawski 2013), which did not go into nearly the same depth.

engagement in the field,” a preference for the “long perspective,” and a wish to care for and avoid wasting previously collected data (Hayashi, 2020).

I have been following Hayashi’s work in journals like *Ethos* and *Education Policy Analysis Archives* for about a decade. Given my related interests, the press recruited me as one of the anonymous readers of the manuscript for this book, but when *Education Review* invited me to write this book review, the press gave its blessing. It is important to add that the manuscript was already fully developed when I reviewed it, and I had no influence on the book content beyond minor editing suggestions.

Hayashi’s method for studying teaching expertise was to return to the six preschool teachers featured in *Preschools in Three Cultures Revisited* to conduct new video-cued ethnographic interviews with them and their directors and senior teachers. She used video clips of their teaching in 2002 to stimulate reflective group conversations on how they had changed as teachers in the intervening years. Hayashi also interviewed other teachers and early childhood experts in Japan, China, and the United States, using the 2002 clip from their respective country to stimulate discussions of differences between new and experienced teachers in general. In all, 120 educators participated.

The chapters focus on Japan, China, and the United States in turn. Rich quotations let dozens and dozens of the educators speak for themselves, vividly and eloquently. Hayashi then unpacks the metaphors in their talk to help readers notice deeper levels of meaning. A brief final comparative chapter makes powerful points after readers have digested the three cases.

Synthesizing the interviews, Hayashi argues that teaching expertise consists of several “skills, perspectives and habits of mind” (p. 164): a sense of calm and composure; being present and attentive in the moment; flexibility; the ability to hold oneself back from unnecessary intervention; and the ability to communicate that the teacher is aware and in control of the whole classroom even though using a light touch. This growing expertise involves many barely conscious “bodily techniques,” including eye contact, voice and positioning. As one U.S. educator put it, “part of what makes things go more smoothly is you know where to put your body and how to move it” (p. 130). Expertise likewise means focusing on the students instead of on one’s own performance. Hayashi summarizes these elements of expertise as “finding just the right balance between holding tight and letting go” (p. 172). (And yes, U.S. teachers talked about “letting go” with reference to the Disney movie *Frozen*, whereas some Chinese educators had Taoism in mind).

The teachers’ comments make clear that they learned how to “hold tight to their classrooms while appearing to hold back” (p. 174) through experience. But how, exactly? Hayashi draws out from the interviews what “learning from experience” means, returning again and again to the question of why it usually took at least five years for a teacher to begin to get to this point, while some never reached it. One answer is that teachers needed time to have lived through multiple instances of particular kinds of interactions with students, and with their parents, in order to anticipate how an incident might play out (and to discover that stressful incidents almost never lead to disaster). Teachers also needed time to reflect on mistakes made along the way, and to gain confidence in not just themselves but also their students’

ability to struggle through their own problems. Teachers' learning was also shaped by formal or informal guidance from mentors or senior colleagues, who supported their reflection and encouraged their risk-taking. The book title *Teaching Expertise* thus refers not only to pedagogical expertise but also to the teaching of expertise by mentors.

The portraits of mentoring in this volume could serve principals, directors and senior instructors at all grade levels. Meanwhile, the value of learning over the long run with gentle guidance from senior educators points to the importance of job stability. Hayashi notes policy implications in the United States, where low status, low pay and the financial instability of preschools force teachers—those who manage to stay in the profession—to navigate their own careers. She might have added that because they often navigate by moving to more financially stable schools where they enjoy more pedagogical freedom, policies devaluing early childhood educators and preschools harm children from less affluent families.

For comparative education scholars like me who wonder about cultural variation in a time of “globalization” and who have absorbed the insights from *Preschools in Three Cultures* and *Preschools in Three Cultures Revisited*, this book offers an important lesson, almost a corrective. This lesson is that the elements of expertise that Hayashi identifies appeared in all three countries. True, pedagogical practices looked different, sometimes strikingly different, from Japan to China to the United States; in addition, the careers of preschool teachers and the policy contexts differed across the three countries. But Hayashi also identifies cross-national parallels in what teachers learned. For example, learning the approach of *mimamoru*—of watching and waiting without taking action—described so vividly in Japanese settings in *Teaching Embodied* as well as in the *Preschools in Three Cultures* books—is not unique to Japan. Of course, Hayashi is “not suggesting ... that Chinese or US teachers come to hold back as much as their Japanese counterparts do” (p. 169); clearly “[t]he right balance between holding tight and letting go varies country by country, teacher by teacher, and activity by activity” (p. 174). Yet at the same time, Hayashi provides evidence that “in all three countries, teachers move along similar trajectories, toward intervening less often and less aggressively when children struggle” (p. 169).

In short, this study provides a deep portrait of teachers' professional development over the course of their careers—what they learn and how they learn it—going beyond the more typical novice-expert single-moment studies and beyond induction studies that end by the third year of teaching. It also makes a notable contribution to comparative studies of pedagogy. It accomplishes both while offering a text readable enough to engage undergraduate education students, or to entice those harried university instructors to enjoy the book with their feet up while discovering a better way to improve teaching than writing ever more exhaustive lecture notes.

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