Preface

As the U.S. economy is being weakened in light of our global competitors, more policy makers and educators have realized that deep and continuous cuts of teachers’ salaries and benefits would be detrimental to the next workforce generation. Teachers at all levels possess the right kind of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and above all, the right kind of instructional strategies to turn our next generation into a productive and competitive workforce. In cultures other than the Western cultures, teachers are called “engineers of the soul,” which means one of their major responsibilities is to influence the minds of our students of all ages. Because other countries do not cut funding in education at all levels, and because other countries invest more in education, their students have repeatedly scored higher than U.S. students, including college students, on standardized assessments in math, reading, and science. The test results of the 2009 PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) paint a vivid picture of the 15 year olds’ capabilities in reading literacy, mathematics literacy, and science literacy. It is so telling that U.S. students receive lower test scores than students from other industrialized nations including the newly emerged industrialized countries such as China and India. From the 1957 National Defense Education Act, Nation at Risk in 1983, to the most recent No Child Left Behind Act, none of these education acts has helped U.S. students gain an advantage over international students. Now, continuous funding cuts in education at all levels have compounded the existing issues that have plagued U.S. education. Further cuts could make U.S. students lag further behind. Substantial investment in research, infrastructure, and education is one way out of this economic recession in the United States. Investment in education is considered as human capital investment, which is the key driver of economic competitiveness in the long term.

As universities deliver courses and programs in international education in the United States, they have one common goal, that is, to align education with the next-generation workforce in order to keep the U.S. economy the only super power house, not to be surpassed by any other economy. To attain this goal, we must compare U.S. education with that in other major economies in the world. We must study the opportunities and challenges as revealed by educational models utilized in other countries. It is through comparison with others that we learn and make progress.

U.S. education at all levels should be designed to be responsive to modern economic challenges to make it possible for every American family to ensure that children and adults are prepared to find a successful niche in the global economy. The motto for policy makers and educators in this country should be: “Where there are jobs, there are Americans.” As other major economies invest more in human capital, policy makers in the United States should realize that human capital investment has three times the positive effect on economic growth as physical investment. To keep the world’s best-skilled, most innovative, and most dynamic workforce in one country is sheer nationalism, which contradicts the concept of globalization.
The authors in this book address the relationship between education and the next-generation workforce in different countries to bring out the competition that truly drives education at all levels, from K-12 education, to higher education and adult education. Competition has changed business norms and the relationships between countries. To position the United States for the future, we should not be afraid of competition. We should learn from other cultures, especially those educational models that have helped better prepare their next-generation workforce.

Objective of the Book

*International Education and the Next-Generation Workforce: Competition in the Global Economy* features full length chapters authored by leading experts offering an in-depth description of international education and the next generation workforce worldwide. The skills, knowledge, and a wealth of international experience of these leading authors contribute to the literature in this area that has been less addressed by other scholars and researchers. Given the content of such a ground-breaking volume, the book may serve as a required textbook for both undergraduate and graduate students as well as a premier reference book for all university libraries.