



## BOOK REVIEW

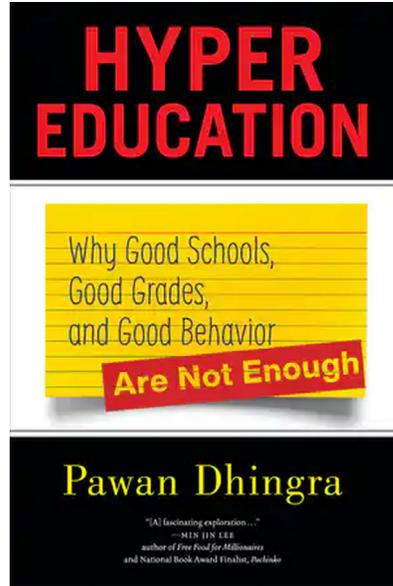
# Dhingra, P. (2021). *Hyper Education. Why Good Schools, Good Grades, and Good Behavior Are Not Enough.* NYU Press.

Louie Giray, Jelomil Edem

Polytechnic University of the Philippines

“Open your kids up to more this school year” is one of the advertisements of Kumon, a famous educational network that has learning centers in various parts of the world. Parents then are urged to enroll their children so as for the latter to succeed more. Kumon is only one of the numerous afterschool programs that is growing as an answer to the increasing demand of many parents wanting their children to become academically skillful and competent. Meanwhile, some parents look for tutors or, on their own, they lend their time to teach their children, as a supplement to the school education. This trend is named hyper education. This is a common practice of middle to high-class families, with the belief that it can ensure the future success of their children.

This topic is explored in *Hyper Education*, written by Pawan Dhingra. A multiple award-winning author and former museum curator at Smithsonian Institution, Dhingra is a professor at Amherst College. His research interests range from American studies, cultural sociology, and education. In the book, the author shows how Asian American parents make their children improve academically through hyper education, referring to the practice of extending education through privatized, extracurricular learning. Divided into three



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© 2022 Louie Giray, Jelomil Edem  
[jelomiledem.00@gmail.com](mailto:jelomiledem.00@gmail.com)  
[lggiray@pup.edu.ph](mailto:lggiray@pup.edu.ph)

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parts, this well-researched book talks about the different sides of hyper education and how it becomes a habit for Asian American parents to use it as part of their parenting style.

Part I starts that a good school being a learning environment that nurtures children's capabilities and skills. Through schools, students learn and become better. However, the author contends that parents and families increasingly become dissatisfied with their children's learning in schools, leading to their engagement in different private learning centers. This also results in the establishment of many private learning centers.

Greenblatt et al. (2019) comment that education is a means to acquire skills that are relevant to their development, which can subsequently mobilize individuals socially and economically. Parents understand this and so they want their children to have leverage in life. One way is through extra academics. Many Asian American parents do not have a choice but to engage their children in different learning centers that can help the latter develop more, because schools are not enough anymore given their inherent weaknesses. Even schools that follow innovative curriculum cannot satisfy some parents, these various expectations result in the foundation of different learning centers.

Moreover, Dhingra explains that public schools are not enough for some high-performing students. This also leads their parents to engage them in private learning centers, leading to more academic workloads for children. Nevertheless, schools are still viewed as the main source of education for students.

Part II focuses on the case that Asian Americans, especially the Indian American, parents infuse to their children that life is a competition, and the latter must stand out to get ahead in life and so the earlier that children are equipped with the skills that can differentiate them from others, the better. It is viewed as the safest course to any opportunity in the future.

Concerted cultivation, which refers to the parenting style that incorporates organized activities in the life of the children (Lareau, 2011), is present among Asian American families. Parents believe that academic pursuits, especially in math, are an important tool for the future. Hence, they enroll children in activities or learning centers that help them improve in academics, though the children express little fun. However, this does not mean that parents do not care about the enjoyment of kids and so they make sure that the tasks are enjoyable to do.

Parents believe that had they not pushed students in extra academics, they would have become violent or be led astray. Also, this is an anti-assimilation tactic that can make children immune from negative behaviors in the American culture. Parents believe that it can lessen uncertainty about the children's future, and this can be a way to compensate for the failings of the school and the curriculum.

Asian Americans see hyper education as a source of pride and a way to develop cultural values. These parents feel the responsibility to nurture the interests and capacities of children. Besides, it is a tool to develop hard work and to not spoil their kids, complemented with the delay of gratification. Hyper education and tiger parenting are commonly linked together. However, the author asserts that it is

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incorrect because hyper education is barely done without the appreciation for the activities; it is not also utilized in a tortuous manner.

Part III accentuates that hyper education has become a normal part of the lives of the youth, which is supported by parents and the community. Hence, extra academics and competitions have become part of their identity also. The usage of family outings, purchasing of software programs, and traveling abroad for contests are a manifestation that parents are willing to go the extra mile to facilitate children's success. These youths, however, sacrifice friendships and entertainment because a lot of time and effort is devoted to extra academics.

Meanwhile, parents may sometimes force children to compete against their will, thinking it would do good for them. They may use threatening techniques; the consequent effects, of course, are less enthusiasm or, worse, resentment among kids. Asian Americans are viewed still as foreigners and are frequent topic to racist critiques that no "real Americans" have been winning competitions, most especially in math and spelling bee (Pandya, 2017). This is contrary to the warm support of families and community members. Hence, youths feel that there is a disconnect.

Furthermore, teachers and other school personnel have mixed reactions to students who are taking extracurricular education. While some believe on its importance, others see it in a negative life since it exceeds the school norms and can cause children stress. These children try to fit in by not talking much about their academic achievements; seeing their extra academics as equals to sports, hence "brain sports"; and connecting it with popular endeavors. But, at the same time, they take pride in their unique academic which spotlights their good behavior.

The book contributes to the understanding of hyper education trend which is becoming prevalent not only among Asian American parents in the US but also in other parts of the globe. Interestingly, similar practice can also be seen among Hispanic and African American parents (America after 3PM, 2014). This book is well-researched, extensive, and has a lot of narratives. Moreover, Dhingra has painted a brilliant picture of the positive and negative effects of hyper education, incorporating the vivid voices and perspectives of the people who are engaged in it.

Though it is insightful, the book has points for improvement. First, there are numerous chapters and subchapters per part. Surprisingly, in the conclusion, it has many subdivisions, also. This can lead to confusion among readers. The primary points may not be well impressed and may not come across clearly to the readers. Valuing brevity, limiting it to three or four chapters per part is suggested. Second, curtailing the narratives to representative cases can help readers not be overwhelmed. Repetition of ideas across the chapters is noticeable. Hence, deleting the redundancy and focusing on the salient points can be helpful to make the book more impactful. All these can be put into consideration once the author plans to publish its next edition.

Overall, the contribution of this book is unparalleled. This is still recommended for parents, teachers, and other stakeholders who are engaged in the field of education. This can offer meaningful discussions and productive undertakings that can result in further enlightenment of hyper education practice.

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