

EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

What you are opening is the fourth English issue of the *Orbis scholae* journal. Its title – ‘Educational Change in the Global Context’ – is borrowed from the title of the conference that we have organized at the Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Education on the turn of August and September this year (see the conference report in this issue). Even though a large part of this issue is represented by the papers presented at the conference – including keynote presentations of Mark Bray, Wolfgang Mitter, Joe Tobin, and Tony Welch, and Botho Von Kopp’s paper presented in the sessions – there are also three papers that were not presented at the conference; they however do enrich our knowledge of other education systems and of the changes in education in general. We believe the set of papers provided in this issue will enrich the world-wide scholarly discourse on the global issues in education and the understanding of educational change, and namely the role of comparative education in understanding global issues and driving forces for change in different countries and world regions.

The issue is opened by Botho Von Kopp’s paper *Do we need comparative education in a globalized world?* Even though the answer to the question in the title seems obvious (especially to all those of us who work in the field of comparative education and are reading this issue), his question actually is what form of comparative education we need today. Referring to the criticism of the past development of comparative education, that was not research based, he then posts the critical stance to what PISA (and other large-scale international assessments) did to the field, bringing it on more advanced methodological level, but not really bringing the added value to the comparative education development. The paper also discusses the scholarly perception of the impact of PISA namely in the German context.

In the following paper, Alex Wiseman’s has chosen Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries as a case study for analyzing the impact of a ‘global educational community’ on the educational change. He critically reviews the literature on institutional isomorphism and he uses TIMSS 2007 data to analyze the case of GCC countries, which is particularly interesting since Muslim and Arab societies are traditionally resistant to Western ideology and culture.

Wolfgang Mitter’s paper analyzes the educational transformation in the East Central Europe (ECE). Building in part on the papers from previous issues of the *Orbis scholae* journal (the thematic issue 2/2007 on educational transformation and a Cesar Birzea’s paper in the 2/2008 issue – to follow the previous discussion on post-communist transformation, kind readers may download full texts of these issues from our journal website www.orbisscholae.cz in the section ‘Archiv’), his analysis goes back into history of the countries (region) concerned to see the recent changes in a larger picture; historical considerations are raised even when we try to define what East Central Europe means. He then reviews main trends and changes

in ECE and identifies four-level pattern of change – national, European and global level plus the level of modernisation.

While the Wiseman's and Mitter's papers focused on particular world regions with their specific local contexts being impetus for our general understanding of global forces on education, Mark Bray's paper brings out the global phenomenon of supplementary private tutoring and shadowing education, which blurs the boundaries between traditional private and public education. The forms and reasons for private supplementary tutoring are different in different regions, which makes the topic particularly fruitful for international comparisons. They also differ within regions and individual countries from the perspective of their users – dependent on whether tutoring is provided to high or low achievers. The importance of the issue of privatization of public sector is of even higher concern today, in the times of budgetary cuts being introduced in many (if not all) regions. So as Mark writes, even though supplementary tutoring is by no means a new phenomenon, the expanded scale of tutoring dates from recent decades.

Joe Tobin and Fikriye Kurban present the results of their comparative research project *Children Crossing Borders* on early childhood education and care programmes in England, France, Germany, Italy and the US which aim to serve recent immigrants. From the data obtained through video-cued ethnographic interviewing with pre-school practitioners and immigrant parents, they analyse differences in beliefs in both groups on what the goals of preschool education shall be – academics or play?

Immigration is certainly a global phenomenon (though not a new one) that brings us to comparing cultures not only between countries, but even within individual countries. In the opening paper to this issue, Botho Von Kopp reminded us of Jullien de Paris seminal comparative study in Switzerland, which offered variety of climates, languages, religions, etc. in twenty-two cantons of the Helvetic Confederation. To a certain degree, Australia also represents a unique single country case for the analysis of immigration and multicultural education, as represented in Tony Welch's paper.

Holger Daun's paper is similar to the topic of Wiseman's paper on the role of world models in education change happening in different national contexts. As an example, he analyses the changes in educational governance in Czech Republic, Greece and Sweden in the context of globalization and Europeanization. Daun stresses that the world models are mediated through European Union and further disseminated through the Open Method of Coordination in the member countries. Europe thus represents a special case for studying the impact of world models and Daun's analysis of marketization and choice in education, and decentralization tendencies in three countries shows that the results differ and that the models have been implemented/accepted in these countries at different levels and forms.

Hubert Ertl and Hugo Kremer in their paper look at the reforms of vocational education and training (VET) in England and Germany. In their research they interviewed VET practitioners in both countries, to see the relation between the macro-level agenda of VET reform and its translation to the level of school. Their

research is important for the present issue in two ways: (1) it reminds us that teachers are the key agents in the implementation of reforms and without them the reform would only remain written down; (2) it turns our attention to VET, which is an under-researched area in both, the national contexts and in comparative studies. Nevertheless, large (even majority in some countries) population of student cohorts have this school- or work-based experience and there are organization at the European level (CEDEFOP - European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) that stress the comparison and benchmarking, even though the academia is still not reflected enough the issue, its problems and importance. So the VET presents a challenge to comparative research for future. And the Open Method of Coordination in VET through the CEDEFOP, world models of relationship between the school and work are further issues for the theoretical concern with far-reaching policy implications.

Let us come back to the opening paper of Botho Von Kopp and his reminder the 1993 CIES presidential address, in which Stephen Hayneman was critical to the lack of research in comparative education. Today, there are some who worry that comparative education will be limited to large-international comparative studies without enough theoretical and contextualized understanding of local contexts and global trends. The present issue, we believe, is a positive example of balance of theoretical papers, policy and comparative analyses based on national statistics, contextualized interpretations of TIMSS data and as well unique comparative researches that use qualitative research methods (focus groups and interviews in this volume). We hope that kind readers will find this issue inspiring for their work and thinking.

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