

EDITORIAL

This thematic issue of *Orbis scholae* is primarily devoted to the issue of equity in education. In the two-year lifespan of the journal this is only the 2nd English issue. In comparison to the English issue published last year and, entitled "Transformation of Educational Systems in the Visegrad countries¹", the present issue is in many ways different. The previous issue included four main papers that presented an analysis of post-communist transformation in four Visegrad countries using the same methodology, and even using a common structure for all the papers. The present issue is more diverse in many respects.

We are happy to see that the previous issue was welcomed by its readers and even provoked some responses. Cesar Birzea's paper represents one such response. In his paper he supports Gabor Halasz's idea of a 'second transition' in Central European countries that is represented by their accession to the EU. The author does not limit his analysis only to four Visegrad countries, which was the emphasis in the previous journal issue, and uses wider geographical coverage of more European post-Communist countries. For the topic of the present issue there is an interesting finding confirming that the transition process has differed to a great degree between those countries. We argued for the Visegrad countries in the previous issue that equity issues were not high on the political agenda in the early phases of transformation processes in 1990's. However, Birzea argues, that there was a quite different situation in Romania and Bulgaria, where the emphases on equalizing educational opportunities had priority in the same period.

A bridge between the previous issue and the present one is then constructed by Stanislav Štech in a paper that analyses changes in Czech education since 1948 from the perspective of justice. He describes the pre-1989 policy-approaches to educational equalization as a "statistical justice" approach and talks of 'compensatory approaches'. He sees a major reversal of this model after 1989, when the 'Liberal Era' with its emphasis on an individual model of success took the floor.

In the next paper Sally Power presents a brief overview of compensatory education in UK. She sees recent moves to a "politics of recognition" for schools in disadvantaged areas (e.g. alternative league tables based on contextualized value-added measures) as a dangerous "quasi-solution". She argues that politics must tackle, rather than simply recognise, the circumstances of the disadvantaged. Schools in disadvantaged areas need not just recognition but a "politics of redistribution". However, the heart of the matter lies in the difficulty of specifying and recognizing what policies have to compensate for. At the end of her paper, the author introduces an analytical framework based on B. Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing which can be used to compare and contrast different approaches to compensatory education which are part of various interventions being proposed and applied by policy-makers and their potential effects.

¹ The full text of this issue can be downloaded free of charge at the journal website <http://www.orbisscholae.cz>, in the section "Archive 2007".

Alan Dyson in his paper moves from the general level of policy-making to the school level and focuses on the role of the school in addressing various disadvantages. While admitting that schools constitute a rather weak countervailing factor to the overwhelming effects of socio-structural factors (class, ethnicity, gender) and that schools cannot hope to change patterns that are effectively shaped outside their gates, he suggests that the traditional dichotomy between what happens within the school gates and what happens beyond them should be questioned. Opening the school to the "outside" world is the core idea of community schools (called also extended schools, schools plus, full service schools), that have much to offer, even though they cannot by themselves solve the problem of disadvantage. The author reviews the various rationales community schools apply and describes what community-focused schools do and what they can achieve.

The logic of the order of the papers, moving from general policy analyses through school level approaches demonstrated by community schools' approaches, is completed by the fourth paper, written by Francesca Gobbo that reaches the classroom level. Her paper explores the potentials of an equitable classroom with its main motto 'learning from others and learning with others'. One concrete conception of an equitable classroom proposed by Elizabeth Cohen is called "Complex instruction", based on group work and cooperative learning, is discussed in the paper. Group and cooperative work by students uses their different cultural, linguistic and cognitive abilities as resources for learning, rather than as barriers. The author illustrates the experiences of applying such a didactical model in schools in the Bologna region by taking account of teachers' experiences and their reflections on using it.

One can ask whether today's research discourse on equity in education could be missing explicit mention of international student achievement projects, and particularly the OECD's programme PISA (Programme for International Students Assessment). Even though the answer is yes, this issue has not missed it! Laura Perry's paper examines the features of PISA that are useful for analysing educational inequalities. It reviews the analysis of educational equity and its measurement and synthesizes the findings from various studies into a larger theoretical framework.

The research paper in this issue, written by Stephen Gorard and Emma Smith, is based on the analysis of survey data of 13,000 15-years-old students from five European countries (England, France, Wallonia, the French-speaking part of Belgium, Italy and the Czech Republic). It looks at the impact of schools and student experience on how students might develop civic "values" of fairness, aspiration, and trust. The authors present a lot of concrete findings from the study highlighting the students' conceptions of justice as well as their experiences in schools and their attitudes formed through school experiences. The authors conclude with the appeal: "Citizenship is not merely a subject in school, it must be a way of life".

I started this editorial by claiming that the present issue is in many respects different from the previous one, devoted to educational transformation in Visegrad countries. The topic of this monothematic issue is more general than the previous

one. It touches various levels of the educational establishment (school system level, school level and even classroom level). We have been able to gather the texts from authors with different backgrounds according to the country where they live (Australia, Czech Republic, Italy, Romania, UK) and from various fields of expertise (educational science, anthropology, political science, psychology, sociology). I believe that the broad approach in this issue, one that values diversity, enables us to learn from each other across the traditional borders of the disciplines and narrow definitions.

David Greger