



## Editorial—Educational Sciences – National and International Aspects

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To cite this article: Per-Olof Erixon (2010) Editorial—Educational Sciences – National and International Aspects, Education Inquiry, 1:4, 259-268, DOI: [10.3402/edui.v1i4.21945](https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v1i4.21945)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.3402/edui.v1i4.21945>



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Published online: 01 Dec 2010.



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## EDUCATION INQUIRY

Volume 1, No. 4, December 2010

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# EDUCATION INQUIRY

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Education Inquiry is looking for lucid and significant contributions to the understanding of contextual, social, organizational and individual factors affecting teaching and learning, the links between these aspects, the nature and processes of education and training as well as research in and on Teacher Education and Teacher Education policy. This includes research ranging from pre-school education to higher education, and research on formal and informal settings. Education Inquiry welcomes cross-disciplinary contributions and innovative perspectives. Of particular interest are studies that take as their starting point, education practice and subject teaching or didactics.

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# Editorial

## Educational Sciences – National and International Aspects

*Per-Olof Erixon, Editor*

I am sitting in a large auditorium (A 280) in the University of Geneva in Switzerland on a Saturday morning in September 2010. The room is filled with people who are involved in different ways in a large European research project of the 7th Framework Programme for Research in the Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities Theme (SSH), called EERQI – European Educational Research Quality Indicators. The goals of the EERQI project are to reinforce and enhance the worldwide visibility and competitiveness of European educational research. More specifically, the project aims to: (1) develop new indicators and methodologies to determine the quality of educational research publications; (2) propose a prototype framework for establishing such indicators and methodologies; (3) make this framework operational on a multilingual basis (starting with English, German, French and Swedish); (4) produce a search and query engine for resource harvesting and text analysis; (5) test the transferability of the EERQI indicators to other fields in the Social Sciences and the Humanities; and (6) develop a sustainability plan for the quality assessment of European educational research publications. The project hopes to improve the current standards of research quality indicators, especially for the fields of the Social Sciences and the Humanities (see the homepage <http://www.eerqi.eu/>).

As so often happens in European contexts we have access here to simultaneous interpreters both from and to English and French. To my great surprise, I still find that my research friends in the francophone area sometimes refuse both to speak and not least to understand English. At first, I feel a little upset. But after a while I think there is something good about the stubbornness with which French-speaking people persevere with their language. As a Swiss colleague pointed out, we must keep in mind that people in Switzerland are, apart from Rhaeto-Romanic, which is such a small language, expected to master at least three languages, i.e. French, German and Italian. Together with the reflections on an article by Lingard & Gale (2010) that I had just read, this Saturday morning University of Geneva experience forms the background for the thoughts on the direction and publication forms of educational research that constitute the focus of this editorial

Lingard & Gale (2010) take their point of departure in the so-called “Presidential Addresses” in Australia between 1974 and the present times, i.e. about 40 years. They are concerned with the definition of the field of educational research and the changing

and developing role of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) in representing and constituting this field. The 30-page article poses a number of interesting questions not only about how educational research should relate to policy but also to an increasingly globalised world. It also describes the historical development there of educational research that is largely reminiscent of the development in Europe and not least in Sweden: how the psychological paradigm dominated and was succeeded by more sociological perspectives, and then also by sociocultural ones, as well as the pressure from politicians that there should be “evidence” in educational research that is justified.

While these patterns do largely resemble each other, we also know that the developments of education and higher education systems have historically varied in different parts of the world, including Europe. Educational policy is, or has at least been, national policy, which has partially aggravated, but has also been, or at least might have been, an asset in international educational research communication.

One national aspect has also been that education in and research on education are and have been politically loaded and a battlefield for more or less well-founded political views on what is good education, and hence also on what is educational research. In Sweden we have a Minister for Education and Science who regards himself as having both the right and competence to call professors in the educational research area “muddled” and the educational policy that has been pursued during the Social Democratic regime “fuzzy”. He himself has a military training, no academic credits, and has probably never familiarised himself with any educational research. This circumstance is probably not only characteristic of Sweden. One may wonder how this is possible and how long a Minister of Health would have kept his post after expressing such an opinion about, for example, medical science. One explanation is that the educational research area has a special relationship with politicians in general and national politicians in particular. What Wagner & Wittrock (1991) called the “coalition of discourse” laid the foundations for the special conditions that apply to all social science research, where actors in the political field receive support and inspiration for their political innovations in discourses developed in the disciplinary fields, and vice versa.

But “the times they are a-changin” (Bob Dylan). National education systems are today operating according to a logic that has its basis in neoliberal management and market ideas. Competition and surveillance are emphasised by the comparative league tables the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) creates through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which evokes a lot of national concerns and is used as a tool to mobilise support for change agendas moving in the direction of the neoliberal surveillance policies such as more external examinations and more privatised choice opportunities. According to Dahlström (2009), this also includes the Education for All (EFA) agenda in the Global South.

## **The field of educational science**

The educational science field thus has a relationship not only with the research field of educational science but also with educational practice. This implies that the research that is conducted should relate to both more internal scientific and general problems within the field and also to the problems educational practice needs to elucidate and in the long term solve. Educational research is rooted in different national cultures, environments and languages and hence also in different value systems that cannot easily be transferred from one context to another, nor from one language to another, without the loss of valuable aspects. This is important for the ambition to internationalise educational research.

Research efforts in educational science must come together and relate to each other. They must be presented to an international audience, must gather external influences, relate to ongoing research in other countries and contexts etc. This probably means that we will publish ourselves in English to a great extent and in different English language journals. At present, I find it difficult to discern any tendencies indicating that English will be any less important in such contexts. This also implies that researchers active in the French, German, Spanish, Chinese etc. languages will also have to be published in English.

But this also means that people must develop national perspectives in their research, which entails that they will also, and to a considerable extent, write and publish themselves in their mother tongue. That is the language in which one can express oneself without hindrance, and it is the ideology of that language that one represents and takes one's ideas from. If the national perspective is not developed and taken care of, we risk an internationalisation of educational science that will be tantamount to the Anglo-Saxon or maybe even the American field.

Unfortunately, in a research context internationalisation quite often means precisely Anglicisation. This is problematic in several ways. For obvious reasons, those whose mother tongue is English have an advantage when it comes to expressing themselves both orally and in writing. A well-formulated contribution has an advantage over a less well-formulated one in a discussion, both an oral and a written one. Those whose mother tongue is not English are likely to hesitate to contribute to the discussion to a greater extent than those whose mother tongue is English. This is to the detriment of the scientific discussion in the field. In the long run, this state of affairs will result in a limited number of perspectives becoming dominant, thereby intellectually impoverishing the educational science field.

## **Hegemony**

Lingard & Gale (2010) claim that Ritvi's address, implicitly postcolonial in orientation, challenges the silent ethnocentrism and nationally bound character of Australian educational research. Ritvi's address in 1996 was the first one presented outside Australia and New Zealand and the first to canvass ethnocentrism in Australian

research. Australian research was seen as an outpost of the North American and European traditions, framed by “Northern Theory” (p. 29). Ritvi’s perspective can be developed so as to include – in a postcolonial perspective – the relationship among Anglo-Saxon countries, whereby the USA, Australia, Canada, Great Britain and South Africa, among certain other countries, represent a core of countries that through the English language exert enormous hegemonic pressure on other language areas and hence also on the content and way of thinking.

This might be called a hegemonic condition. The concept of hegemony as applied in contemporary social sciences is often drawn from the work of the Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). Hegemony is a condition of power in which the major cultural, social and economic aspects of life are influenced by a dominant group in society. This power is spread amongst the subordinate people in society through socio-cultural influences and the winning of consent. Intellectuals play an important role in establishing and maintaining hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). According to Gramsci, hegemony is about dominance over the culture rather than over economic and political influence. Power also prevails over attitudes, and in this way decides what the norms in society should be. It is a means of power and the moral leadership developed by political leadership. Through the dominant position of, for example, English language journals and publishing houses, Anglo-Saxon research is becoming hegemonically prevalent in the research field of educational science. It is becoming a hegemony not only with regard to linguistic superiority but also as regards the selection of what is considered interesting and relevant, and it is thereby colonising our thoughts and ideas already at the stage of conception.

Language is not only a linguistic row of words that are easily translated into different languages. It might be appropriate here to draw attention to Halliday’s (2004) three functions of language: *ideational*, *interpersonal* and *textual*. This implies that all languages/dialects etc. represent a perspective of the world or an ideology (ideational), their specific relations (interpersonal), which are also manifested in different forms of “texts” in a widened sense (textual).

Concepts and words may be deceptively like one another but, due to history and other contexts, they may have (and do have by definition) different meanings. It suffices here to mention the word *Didaktik*, which is a German word written with a capital D, the English *didactics* or the French *didactique* (Erixon Arreman, 2008). The translation problem applies not only to heavy concepts such as ‘didactics’, but in principle to all words and hence ideas. Only to a very limited extent (if at all) is it possible to translate words and concepts from one language to another.

With reference to the research that has developed about multimodality and multi-literacies, I would like to regard every national language/all different dialects etc. as different “modes”. Mode stands for “way” and, among other things, in literacy research for different ways in the sense of written text, image, mobile file, dance, sound etc. Bezemer & Kress (2008) coined the concept “transduction” for the translation or rather

interpretation that takes place when one tries to transfer the content of one mode to another. Transferred to the discussion of research publishing this means that everything that we have traditionally called a “translation” is in actual fact a “transduction”. In the same way as a word is not an image or that images lack words, a translation from for example Swedish into English is precisely only a “transduction”. The words and the content might partially tally, but something important gets lost, namely the specific ideational perspective that each language represents.

## **Conclusions**

It is a truism but worth repeating: What is somewhat loosely called the international audience, the international community or international research comprises representatives of different national and cultural contexts. This means that all research that is conducted is nourished by different national perspectives. In the Humanities, the Social Sciences, and Educational Science the study objects are often taken from the researcher’s own national context. Even though the study objects in Medicine and Natural Science are nationally rooted to a smaller extent, both theory formation, methods etc. emanate from the different cultural ways of thinking and forming concepts.

The issue of internationalisation is therefore a matter of hierarchies among different languages and hence cultures. As a remnant of the past, the English language has gained a dominant position in many contexts and fields, not least in science. Since language does not merely consist of a linguistic surface but of perspectives and ideologies, this means that the dominance of the English language also implies that the perspectives the language contains will also come to dominate and gain a disproportionate influence when it comes to posing questions, developing theories, interpreting empiricism etc. We can talk about the hegemony of the English language while being well aware that this framework contains a number of different perspectives and ideologies. In the world we live in today the English language dominates the publication of research results. It is also highly probable that English will be the dominating language for the publication of scientific results for a long time to come.

Based on this observation, I simultaneously think that scientific communication must never be merely a national concern. Research and research results must be communicated in contexts that include representatives of the field in different national contexts which might be called a diversified international audience (Weiner & Öhrn, 2009).

The consequence of this is that we must encourage researchers in our field to publish themselves in English. This encouragement might also be widened to include being published in other languages. American research may be extensive and self-sufficient, but should be published to a greater extent than is currently the case outside the American domain, which would also benefit the national American research.

At the same time, it is also important that our own cultural perspective develops in the educational science field. That is what constitutes our contribution to interna-



tional communication. If this aspect is neglected, there is a great risk that so-called international communication will be poorer in perspectives and eventually completely dominated by a few perspectives.

When looking into the future one can see that today there are movements that can contribute fairly effectively to scientific communication that is more equal from a cultural point of view. I envision how different forms of translation tools will develop at an ever faster pace. Google has started a development whose end we have clearly not yet seen.

Simultaneously, we can see that written culture, which is the foundation of scientific communication, is being increasingly challenged and partially decentred in the growing media society. As other modalities such as, for example, images and sound gain a more and more prominent position, we may also imagine that the restrictions on language will be partially overcome.

One may also think that those from other national and cultural contexts, such as my friends in auditorium A 280 at the University of Geneva on that Saturday morning in September 2010, will uphold their languages and hence perspectives in a research world increasingly dominated by the Anglo-Saxon perspective. This would also benefit other smaller languages such as Swedish, the language I myself have the best command of and prefer to write and think in and by means of which I do research in the educational science area.

### **This issue**

Jan Nieuwenhui's article "Social justice in education revisited" is based on a conceptual analysis of social justice and the trajectory of philosophical discourse. It is argued that much of the social justice discourse ignores the specificity of the geo-historical and social contexts of developing countries and it is premised that social justice in education should be based on a more holistic approach that takes these situational factors into account. Social justice is a primary concern of politicians and human rights practitioners, yet it has lost much of its currency as it has been elevated through philosophical debates to the level of an idealised or "*imagined social order*" of modern state formations. Based on the presented conceptual analysis, it is postulated that social justice is not an external condition or system. If it were an external condition or system, we could simply learn social justice as we learn any other content-based subject. But social justice is an ideal – a vision that must become *a way of life* that permeates all aspects of being human. For this reason, it cannot be legislated or achieved through international conventions or declarations – notwithstanding they are important instruments to promote social justice – social justice must come home in the hearts and minds of people and it must be lived. It requires that every citizen take responsibility to protect, advance and promote the values, principles and ideals of social justice, although for the marginalised and oppressed this is in itself not enough. They need access to resources and opportunities for developing and exercising their capacities or capabilities for living a decent human life.

In “Reading events from child to student”, Berit Lundgren and Liz Botha claim that the implications of reading competence for developing reflection and thinking are an important issue for student teachers to consider. Reading is also a competence, in which the language at the disposal of a person is included, to be harnessed for social development and mutual understanding. The article is based on a case study and is concerned with how some student teachers in South Africa and Sweden conceive of themselves as readers from child to student and the value of language for reading competence. In the article the authors reflect on the different reading practices in the two countries. The data consist of 25 written narratives with the theme, *I as a reader*, written by student teachers in South Africa and Sweden. By employing a socio-cultural basis for understanding reading, they can identify six reading practices concerning the students’ reading events in the narratives. One reading practice, critical reading, is more explicit in the South African students’ narratives than in those of the Swedish students.

In her article “Educational and socio-cultural experiences of immigrant students in South African schools”, Saloshna Vandeyar argues that the advent of democracy and the easing of both legal and unauthorised entry to South Africa have made the country a new target destination for black asylum-seekers, long-distance traders, entrepreneurs, students and professionals. As this population continues to grow, its children have begun to experience South African schools in a range of uniquely challenging ways. In addition to opening their doors to all South African children irrespective of race, colour or creed, most public schools in South Africa have also opened their doors to a number of Black immigrant children. There is, however, very little research on the socio-cultural experiences of Black immigrant students within the *dominant institutional cultures* of schools. Accordingly, this study inquires into the educational and socio-cultural experiences of Black immigrant students in South African schools? To what extent has the ethos of these schools been transformed towards integration in the truest sense and how do Black immigrant students perceive this in practice? Utilising the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory this research study attempts to understand the unique educational and socio-cultural experiences of Black immigrant youth in South African schools.

In “A global entrepreneurship wind is supporting or obstructing democracy in schools: A comparative study in the North and the South”, Eva Leffler, Gudrun Svedberg and Melodi Botha discuss the fact that policy documents for schools and education are being increasingly standardised all over the world and that some research claims that a global curriculum is developing in which aspects such as entrepreneurship, lifelong learning and sustainable development are common denominators. This is regarded as a sign that economic rationality is gaining ever more ground in education alongside, or at the expense of, a democratic educational ideal. The aim of this study is to discuss one of these aspects, entrepreneurship, as a concern for schools and education and to put entrepreneurship in relation to the democracy-fostering mission of

education. What do the policy documents have to say about entrepreneurship? Is there an inherent opposition between the entrepreneurial and the democratic justification of education? The paper is organised in two steps. The first illustrates the global spread of entrepreneurship in policy documents for education through examples from the north and the south, respectively, in this case Sweden and South Africa. The second step deals with the concept of “democracy”, which is crucially relevant to education. Both connections and conflicts between fostering entrepreneurship and fostering democracy are discussed, and an integrative perspective is tested as an alternative to dualistic attitudes.

In “Cultural Sites of Meaning: Challenges and Pitfalls for Gender-Based Research”, Hyacinth Skervin classifies four constructs of feminist identity and focuses on the role and implication of these identities in an educational field research project which aims to empower girls in diverse school communities in South Africa through human rights education. The subject is explored by examining specific genres of knowledge and inquiry in feminist epistemology and educational philosophy and interrogating the implication when juxtaposed in the research process and outcomes. A central argument in this discourse is that both the researcher and subject participants experience gender, activism and consciousness in such a way as can be linked to types within the given classification. The conclusions of the article challenge the dominant construction of gender and power in the research process and outcomes and argue in light of the impact on the validity and theoretical development of the research project.

Monika Vinterek explores in “How to live democracy in the classroom” the teaching of pupils in relation to their behaviour and attitudes in *everyday work* in the classroom. It is the educational objectives associated with democracy linked to the teacher’s teaching and fostering actions that are of the main interest. The results are based on an analysis of data from 120 hours of classroom observations and contextualised interviews with a primary teacher during a period of one and a half years. Using data from audio recordings and notes taken from observations, she has analysed the pupils’ behaviour and attitudes in relation to educational objectives and the teacher’s teaching and fostering actions. A democracy stance and democracy signs are important concepts used in the study. Her conclusion is that the way democracy is thought and lived in this classroom seems to hold great potential for promoting knowledge in and about democracy.

In “Changing teaching practice and students’ learning of mathematics”, Constanta Olteanu and Lucian Olteanu suggest that developing an understanding of students’ critical aspects can provide a productive basis for helping teachers make fundamental changes in their instructions and to improve mathematical communication in the classroom. The article forms part of a larger study aimed at supporting teachers in understanding their practice and improving it. Students’ tests, an examination of students’ mathematical work, teachers’ lesson plans and reports of the lessons’ instructions comprise the base data for this article. The analysis indicated that the

teachers were unable to describe the critical aspects of the students' learning at the beginning of the project. By giving teachers the training that allows them to become theorising teachers, they also obtain the possibility, as professional decision-makers, to develop the ability to identify the critical aspects of students' learning and consider how opportunities for learning can be enhanced.

In "Gender Equality and Education in Spain: Ideology and Governance", Benjamín Zufiaurre, Lucia Pellejero Gon, and Gaby Weiner explore the differential influences of government ideology and education governance on the gender policies of socialist and conservative administrations in Spain from 1983 onwards. The first national policies which favoured equal rights for men and women in education, employment, and social and political life were developed under a European framework and promoted by the National Institute for Women, as well as the governments of the autonomous communities. This was followed by a national policy strategy for gender which initially focused on education but whose influence gradually weakened. The situation changed once more in 2004 when the new socialist government developed a range of policies to promote equal opportunities for men and women. The paper closes with a reflection on how policy on gender equity has developed in Spain between 1970 and the present, and the impact of different political ideologies and discourses on that process. It is argued in the paper that, while policy researchers have long emphasised the impact of government ideology on educational policy and governance (e.g. Lingard and Ozga, 2007; Fullan 2001; Fullan et al., 1997), there are only a few analyses of the impact of different forms of ideology and governance on gender policy-making, of which the study reported in this paper is an example.

In "Is 'Excellent' good enough?", Knut Steinar Engelsen and Kari Smith seem to develop a deeper understanding of how assessment practices among teachers are developed during practice and in dialogue with theory and research evidence, with a particular emphasis on how the teachers differentiated their teaching in relation to students with different abilities. Both national and international evaluation studies have criticised Norwegian teachers for not being sufficiently specific and learning-oriented in their feedback practice. The feedback is largely characterised by general comments such as "Excellent" and "Good work", and less by feed-forward-oriented messages informing students about what to do to improve their learning. In this paper, they examine teachers' feedback practice as part of a 3-year research and development project in two Norwegian primary schools. The students involved cover ages 9 to 12. The findings suggest that the teachers provide little and vague learning promoting to low-achieving students. It appears that these students most often receive feedback that is meant to strengthen their self-efficacy, rather than informative learning-oriented, feed-forward comments. A key question seems to be how to help those students in order to empower them as self-regulated learners.

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