

Editorial

In line with the aims of the CEPS journal, in the present edition we establish the twofold task of gaining insight into the formation of education politics, policy and research in Central and Eastern Europe as well as the reasoning behind it. We invited experts to interview former ministers of education in an effort to shed light on the structuring and practices behind important decisions, especially in countries that were, at the time when the ministers held office, facing transitional changes in political orientation, economy and society as a whole. In parallel, other authors from the region were invited to contribute papers on specific issues, drawing on national experience disclosing gaps between policy and practice.

As a result, we present five articles, the first four of which provide unique insights into national practices from the field.

In the first article, entitled “Policy Reform Efforts and Equal Opportunity – An Evidence-Based Link? An analysis of current sector reforms in the Austrian school system”, Corinna Geppert, Sonja Bauer-Hofmann and Stefan Thomas Hopmann, all experts from Austria, undertake an evaluative discussion on the link between politics, policy and research in the context of the current political ambitions of Austrian political parties related to the realisation of equal opportunities in the national school system. Analysing statements by political parties and comparing them in the light of research, the authors ask whether reform efforts undertaken sustain the current state of research and what the consequences of these efforts are, while trying to understand the reasoning behind education reforms. Seventy different statements were taken and divided into eight core areas, of which the article examines four: the school structure of comprehensive schooling, all-day schooling, autonomy, and the standardisation of student achievements. Discussing each topic, the authors firstly conclude that isolated change in school structure is not sufficient to improve equality of opportunity in education, and they suggest placing the emphasis on the prevailing conditions in individual schools, instructional quality, the existence of non-school resources and further educational options. The same applies to all-day schooling, as the extended period of time alone only has a small effect and usually does not fulfil expectations. The results of research on the impact of intra-curricular and extra-curricular conditions (social and educational capital) favour the latter. On the subject of autonomy in the heavily regulated and hierarchical school system in Austria, the authors’ conclusion favours greater autonomy and highlights the need to encourage individual schools to practise a client-related and need-based pedagogical process. The

last core area discussed is the standardisation of student achievements, mainly through centralised exit examinations. Research and practice offer no evidence of sustained performance improvement or improved social equality of opportunity in this area. What such standardisation does tend to do, however, is to transform negative effects of autonomy into positive effects.

In the second paper, Ivan Ivić and Ana Pešikan present education reform in the Republic of Serbia since 2000. The focus is on the two major reform waves: 2000–2003 and 2004–2005. The authors analyse why those broad educational interventions failed. From 2005 to 2010, there was a period with no major changes. The paper then presents the new phase in improving education policy in Serbia, which commenced with the adoption of the Trends in Development and Upgrading of the Quality of Education and Upbringing 2010–2020 in 2010, and with the conception and proposal of the Strategy of Education Development in Serbia to 2020+ in 2011/12. Finally, the authors outline the basic innovations in approach and conception in the new “epoch”.

In their paper “A Forgotten Moment in Education Policy: A Hungarian-Swedish Case Study from the Early 1970s”, Hungarian experts Tamás Kozma and Zoltán Tózsér uniquely present the roots of important initiatives of education policy in Hungary. The presented study is based on personal memories and knowledge, primarily aiming to contribute to the understanding of the historical period of the late 1960s and early 1970s in Hungary. As part of the symbolic value of the Swedish socio-democratic movement and as an interposer between East and West, the summer university of 1971 was the only window on Western Europe for Central European countries, specifically Poland and Hungary. The salient issues at the time included the measurement of student achievements and the assessment of student results. The authors emphasise the contributions of the summer university to the improvement and development of education policy, and its undisputed impact on establishing some of the central Hungarian institutions in the field of education policy and research, such as the Hungarian Educational Research Association, the National Pedagogical Institute and the Didactics Department, as well as mentioning the role of some of important individuals in the process.

In their paper “The Curricular Reform of Art Education in Primary School in Slovenia in Terms of Certain Components of the European Competence of Cultural Awareness and Expression”, Rajka Bračun Sova and Metoda Kemperl offer a critical analysis of the curricular reform of art education from the perspective of curriculum theories rather than art or pedagogical theories. The authors claim that, despite the reform, the curriculum for art education does not realise selected competences of cultural awareness and expression, as

it neglects artistic literacy as well as authentic experience of art. No concrete recommendations exist on encouraging the experience and understanding of art works. This is also a fundamental difference when comparing curricula in the field of aesthetic education, specifically those of music and literature, which include a knowledge of artworks from different periods and their placement in the historical context, whereas the art class does not. Furthermore, integration is not possible due to conceptual differences and the structure of the curriculum.

The last of the focus papers presents, as an interim report, an initial analysis of interviews with former education ministers, as well as a possible methodological instrument (one of many, but relatively rarely applied) for understanding structuring in the field of education politics and policy. The article entitled “Positions, Dispositions and Practices in Education Policy in Central and South East Europe (research in progress)” aims at providing an insight into research on top decision making. The authors, Slavko Gaber and Živa Kos Kecojević, present some of the material that has been gathered as part of an ongoing research process of understanding the structure and dynamics in the field of education, focusing especially on the level of the system. In line with these efforts, the interviews were conceptualised in collaboration with the participating experts primarily following the Bourdieuan approach in *La misere du monde*. With the interviews, the authors have tried to understand the conceptualisation of education policy and politics in South East Europe in the last twenty years by attempting to disclose the effects of the positions and dispositions of the participating ministers, who were all members of governments from the period after 1989 but have not held office in the last four years. The authors believe that this will help us, among other things, to reach beyond the logic of binary oppositions between policy and politics, between corrupt and heroic politicians, liberal and social reasoning, etc. At the present time, only parts of four (out of five to eight) interviews that have already taken place are presented, with the remaining interviews being scheduled to take place by the end of 2012. Ministers, as key decision makers in the field, were asked to talk about their social and political background, as well as their professional and educational experience, in the hope of disclosing their type of rationality and their reasoning regarding the conceptualisation of education politics in the last twenty years. The interviews with former ministers from Austria, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, as well as a short preliminary analysis, aim to offer some insight and seek to provide ground for the further research that is to take place. At this point, the analysis is focused mainly on presenting snapshots of their positions and dispositions: family cultural capital as a background for their own cultural capital, positions

(employment positions and functions) as dispositions for education policy making (from prior employment (position) to the post of minister), positions and dispositions in practice (the main reforms during the time of the ministers' mandates). The material gathered, as well as the material yet to be collected, should serve as part of ongoing efforts to undertake a structured analysis of education policy in the region in the times of transition, transformation and metamorphoses in education.

In the present edition, the *Varia* section of the CEPS Journal offers a paper by two Slovene authors, Marcela Batistič Zorec and Andreja Hočever, with the title "Planning and Evaluating Educational Work in Slovene Preschools". In the paper, the authors examine the changes in Slovene preschools after Slovenia's independence in 1991. They determine that in the socialist period the national educational programme for preschools was highly structured, goal- and content-oriented and subject to schoolization. In 1999, the Curriculum for Preschools brought conceptual changes towards education "based on the child" and the process approach, as well as giving more autonomy to preschool teachers and their assistants. In the empirical study, the authors examine changes in planning and evaluating educational work compared to the past. The results of the study show that the majority of professional workers have reduced the high level of structure and rigidity in planning. The authors also acknowledge that there is better cooperation between preschool teachers and teachers' assistants. Unlike in the past, they find that most professional workers regularly evaluate their educational work. The authors gathered the data in two phases (before and after the training) while training professional workers on the Reggio Emilia concept, and therefore also investigated the (probably indirect) influences of this training. They conclude that after the training the participation of children in planning and evaluating educational work was higher.

In the third section, there are reviews of two monographs. The first reviewed by Živa Kos Kecojević is *Perspectives on Educational Quality: Illustrative Outcomes on Primary and Secondary Schooling in the Netherlands*, edited by Scheerens, J., Luyten, H. and Van Ravens, J. (2011, Dordrecht, Heidelberg, London, New York: SpringerBriefs in Education. ISBN: 978-94-007-0925-6); and the second reviewed by Nika Šušterič is *Education, Disability and Social Policy* (first published in 2011, Bristol: Policy Press) edited by Haines, S. and Ruebain, D..

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