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Introduction to the Special Section: Learning from international education policies to move towards education systems that facilitate sustainable full economic, cultural and political participation

*Alison Taysum**

This is the second special edition of the Italian Journal of Sociology of Education that I have edited that focuses on Globalisation, Policy and Agency with the title of: ‘Learning from international education policies to move towards education systems that facilitate sustainable full economic, cultural and political participation’. The first special edition, Vol. 4, No. 1 (2012) ‘Learning from International Educational Policies to move towards sustainable living for all’ presented twelve papers including ten from ten different nation states that mapped the shifts in education policy and the underpinning ideologies from 1944 to the current date, a methodology paper, and an analysis paper. This second special edition journal presents seven papers that focus on seven nation states’ mapping of education policy eras and their underpinning ideologies. The papers in this journal in alphabetical order are from Egypt, Finland, Greece, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, and Korea. The aim of these special edition journals is to map the history of education policies in different nation states to understand the changes in policy in the past that have led to current policies which will in turn underpin the policies of the future.

As in the first special edition the authors of the papers in the second special edition use quantitative and qualitative data analysis, which draws

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on the methodological approach presented by Taysum and Iqbal (2012) chapter in the first special edition. The authors use these methods to map the complex histories of each nation state. Disseminating such policy learning is important so that nation states might learn from each other and develop a framework of capabilities. Reading nation states' education policy through Hodgson and Spours (2006) policy analysis framework may reveal particular eras in education systems and processes. Further, such researches may illuminate commonalities and differences in nation states' education policy as text and discourse (Ball, 2004), thus facilitating opportunities for critical analysis, reflection, and transformation. Such policy analyses are required to make a new contribution to knowledge with a sharp focus on policy learning to improve approaches to and engagement with globalization, policy and agency.

In the first paper of this special edition Emira examines Egyptian education policy from WWII to the current time and identifies that there have been three policy eras in Higher Education. These eras are hall marked by an 'education of the elite', 'education for all', and 'privatization of education'. Emira uses qualitative and quantitative evidence to reveal that these eras have all met a key challenge of political interference in the academic and the financial autonomy of the Higher Education Institutions. The political interference has had an impact on the building of trust in an education system that enables social mobility. The World Bank (2008) identifies that Egypt has focused on moving people out of poverty with the number of poor being reduced by 1.8 million, mainly through growth in the agricultural sphere. However, 10% of the population remain in chronic poverty and Emira reveals full participation in education processes and practices is denied which prevents full civic engagement, prevents social mobility, and replicates the conditions for the poor which prevents their trust in the governance systems (World Bank, 2008). In the second article Risku identifies two policy eras in the Finnish educational system. The first is 1944-1980 where the state worked to achieve social justice through centralized, norm-based and system orientated education. The arguments presented are critically located within Finland's socio-historiographical development, which make a vital contribution to knowledge in terms of understanding identity and participation in society. The second is 1980-2011, which is characterised by decentralisation where the state tries to develop local autonomy whilst advancing a social justice agenda. Risku identifies that the state interference in the second era is minimal through

decentralisation and with an education profession that regulates itself with regard to capability. The public trust the state education profession, and the governance systems. Further, OECD reveal Finland is ranked fourth in the world for highest social mobility (Causa & Johansson, 2010).

However the term social mobility needs to be used with caution because Hoskins and Barker (2014) identify that different methodological approaches to understanding social mobility reveal different outcomes. For example economists are interested with the labour market, sociologists and politicians are interested in movement between positions within a social hierarchy and other quantitative studies have measured fathers' and sons' incomes and do not consider women or welfare dependents (Hoskins, and Barker, 2014). Thus, both the Egyptian and Finnish papers examine the relationship the education system has with the state, which has implications for young people's and community members' levels of participation, civic engagement, social mobility, and trust in the governance systems. The relationship is considered in a context of a continuum where at one end the state is able to interfere with education systems, and the other end where educational professionals are trusted to regulate the education systems that are self-improving underpinned by research (Taysum, 2012).

In the third paper Kakos and Palaiologou bring into sharp focus the multidimensional crisis in Greece that has influenced relations between ethnic, national cultural, and religious minorities. They shed light on the impact of poverty, intolerance and political extremism that has resulted in exclusion, and a promotion of a mono-culture with a 'them and us' attitude within communities. However, Kakos and Palaiologou identify that although education policies have attempted to improve intercultural communication, underpinning these efforts is a rhetoric of a Greek identity, which suggests Greece is an ethnically homogenous, mono-cultural society. The distinctions that are explored through intercultural citizenship policies in schools, prevent discourse that may facilitate cultural alignment, and instead act as a counter-force to developing respect, trust, and tolerance which prevent full cultural, economic and political participation in society. In the fourth paper Berger examines the Israeli education policy shifts from 1944 to the current date and focuses on the essential aspect that all 20 papers have struggled to understand in both special editions; the tension between choice and equality within an education system that has private provision and state provision. Berger identifies three policy eras. The first begins in 1958 with the New State of Israel receiving thousands of refugees

including survivors of the Nazi holocaust in Europe, and Oriental Jewish communities from Middle Eastern Countries and Eastern countries. The new state of Israel had serious housing shortages with limited resources and there were significant ideological differences between those that supported capitalism and choice and those that supported socialism and equality. In the first era from 1958 to the late 1960s the education system was highly centralized, and Berger maps how education policy sought to reduce the conservative and socialist ideological influences within the education system. Berger then moves onto the second era, which began in 1968 with an integration programme that sought to address the differences in academic achievement between students of Asian or African origin and those of European origin. Berger presents a very clear, systematic and compelling critical analysis of the attempts to achieve integration. The third era in the 1980s introduced a move towards choice, privatisation, and decentralization. Here Berger maps decentralization of Israeli education within neo-liberal market forces in four areas of 'parental choice', 'evaluation and feedback', 'fundraising from external sources' and 'school based management'. Berger argues within this context: 'Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's), foundations and private donors may be seen as potential strengthening agents of public education, rather than as facilitators of its dissolution'.

In the fifth paper Maehara maps the shifts of education policies in Japan from WWII to today and reveals three policy eras. The first was reforming education policy for economic development post WWII to the early 1980s. The second era from the early 1980s to the late 1980s saw a shift to neo-liberal market forces. The third era from the 1990s to the present time is shaped by neo-liberal education reform. Maehara makes a very important contribution to knowledge by tracking the meritocratic single-track system through these policy eras and reveals how this has both enabled and prevented possibilities for social mobility. Understanding the meritocratic single-track system picks up on how low income house holds cluster together geographically and children from these households attend the same schools (Causa & Johansson, 2010). Maehara's critical analysis connects with the OECD's recommendation that policies aimed at increasing the social mix of students in education systems might influence social mobility (Causa & Johansson, 2010). However, increasing the social mix means considering how to work for cultural alignment in schools and communities (Taysum, 2013) the kinds of education policies that will enable this which

Kakos and Palaiologou critically analyse in their paper, and how this will be achieved when education is provided through private and state education systems.

In the sixth paper Mynbayeva and Pogosian explore two education policy eras from WWII in Kazakhstan. The first is the Soviet period with a focus on eradicating illiteracy through educational achievements underpinned by Communist ideology. The second education policy era is located within the period of Kazakhstan's independence. The education policies aimed to improve 'lifelong learning', 'integration into the global education arena', 'raising quality of education' and 'education competitiveness', 'the unity of three languages', and 'computerization'. The themes of autonomy and identity with regard to diverse communities with three different languages, are expertly handled by Mynbayeva and Pogosian. The result is a critical paper that addresses issues of diversity within education institutions, and communities that connects with Kakos and Palaiologou's arguments about trust and tolerance. These findings potentially have significant implications for policy makers.

In the final paper Yoon critically examines South Korean education policy from WWII to current times, and finds that education is seen as crucial for social mobility. However, the public have lost trust and confidence in the South Korean state education system and are investing in the private education system to achieve social mobility. Yoon maps shifts in education policy to reveal how the state education system is only for those who cannot afford the private education system. Thus choice is only for those who can afford the choice to send their children to private education, which is a barrier to social justice and equality. Yoon makes an important contribution to knowledge by demonstrating that the clash between choice and equality has a massive impact on participation in education, social mobility and full civic engagement. This is a theme that all twenty papers in these two special edition journals have critically examined.

These articles provide the policy context for the next stage of the research project, which is to understand how policy as text and policy as discourse facilitate three important aspects. The first is participation of young people and community members in education systems' processes and practices. The second is enabling the management of economic transitions and economic growth within ethical frameworks that provide young people with the opportunity to find their element and be creative

(Robinson, 2012). Such creativity is vital in national/international labour markets that are increasingly hall marked by multiple short-term contracts, which can stand as barriers to young people making long term plans, building careers, buying a home and starting a family (Horizon 2020, 2013). The third is developing cohesive communities that are characterized by trust for individuals, for the collective, and for governance/political systems, and economic systems and financial institutions. It is within this socio-economic-political history, and the education policy histories that have begun to be mapped in these special edition journals, that young people need to place themselves. It is within these situated contexts that the young people need to gain the thinking tools and skills required to establish with confidence 'what counts as evidence' when they are presented with 'facts' from cultural systems, financial institutions and economic systems and political and governance systems. The thinking tools may facilitate them making evidence informed judgements when participating in democratic processes and practices (Taysum, 2012). This is critical to young people leading their lives and their lifelong learning together within their communities, and societies, for full civic engagement.

Such leadership for learning is necessary as the work force (20-64 year olds) 'almost certainly' shrinks drastically in most countries comparatively to the growing elderly population (65+ years) that do not work and need to be supported (Raftery, Li, Ševčíková, Gerland, & Heilig, 2014).

The next stage of the research project aims to explore all these elements in the different nation states, and develop change strategies to improve full participation in education systems. The action research aims to reveal the impact of the change strategies and develop a framework for civic engagement that recognizes characteristics young people need, to be drivers in social change. Education policy supporting such innovation will be key, particularly when the privatisation of education systems in a context of neo-liberal market forces and a state education system need to work effectively to offer choice whilst achieving social justice, equality, social mobility and the eradication of poverty through full civic engagement.

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