

Noticias**First ISA Forum of Sociology: Sociological Research and Public Debate**

Research Committee on Sociology of Education RC04
(Barcelona, Spain, 5-8 September 2008)

Accountability, standards, testing, and inequality: Critiques, collaboration, and future research

Accountability has become the hallmark of educational systems in much of the developed and developing world. In some instances standardized achievement testing serves as a central indicator of educational progress and against which school systems, national groups, and future labor market participants are measured.

The standards-based school reform movement that spawned this use of tests is laden with numerous unintended consequences, including potentials for widening, rather than narrowing the gaps among social groups in a society and among societies in a globalizing world. RC04 seeks a dialogue among scholars to address the issues of accountability, standards, the use of achievement testing, and their effects on inequalities.

Session 1: The use of international data sets for national educational policies

Session Chair/Organizer: Rami Yogev, Tel Aviv University, Israel. Yogev@post.tau.ac.il

Numerous national ministries have relied on the PISA, OECD, TIMSS data sets to assess where their countries rank in the world and to seek educational reform efforts to improve those rankings. Numerous nations have come to believe that the test results illustrate to prospective employers and investors the extent to which there exists a competitive labor pool in the country. Issues of the use and misuse of test score data should be addressed by participants at the conference. Likewise, there are numerous methodological issues associated with the reliability and validity of the data sets, given differences in the nature of the test versions used in various nations.

Session 2: High-stakes testing

Session Chair/Organizer: A. Gary Dworkin, University of Houston, USA. gdworkin@mail.uh.edu.

Some nations have adopted and others are considering adopting tests that determine student access to continued education, access to any education (and hence the UNESCO concern over "Education for All"), and the continued employment of school personnel. Many of the tests are externally imposed, which changes accountability of school personnel from "a professional to a bureaucratic" model.

Session 3: Accountability, standards, and teachers

Session Chair/Organizer: Lawrence J. Saha, Australian National University. Lawrence.Saha@anu.edu.au.

This session will examine the impact of accountability systems on teacher morale, teacher turnover, and the effectiveness of efforts to recruit teachers. Further, attention will be paid to the extent to which effective teachers can be measured through the use of student test scores.

Session 4: Accountability for and by whom? Standards for and by whom?

Session Chair/Organizer (Acting): A. Gary Dworkin, University of Houston, USA. gdworkin@mail.uh.edu.

What are the variations in standards-based accountability movements around the world and what are the appropriate groups who should establish standards? To what extent should educators shape policy and to what extent can corporations or national legislative bodies define what students are expected to know?

Session 5: Education for All

Session Chair/Organizer: Antonio António Teodoro, Lusophone, University, Portugal. a.teodoro@netvisao.pt.

This topic is central to the agenda of the International Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO and under that theme structural and socio-cultural barriers to access to schooling are to be addressed. Additionally, papers can address nuances in a society's obligation to promote the equality of educational opportunity for all of its citizens.

Session 6: Post-secondary education, adult education and employment opportunities in a world economy

Session Chair/Organizer: Jeanne Ballantine, Wright State University, USA. Jeanne.Ballantine@wright.edu.

While many nations have mandated educational access through junior high school or high school, it has been known that a high school education provides limited access to good jobs. What is being done in different nations to provide post secondary education and specialized vocational educational opportunities to labor forces and to provide access to retraining to adults whose skills are no longer commensurate with technical demands? Are pools of low-paid labor being created by differentials in educational opportunity within large economic blocs such as the European Union?

Session 7: Immigration, education, and inequality

Session Chair/Organizer: Jaap Dronkers, European University Institute, Florence, Italy. Jaap.Dronkers@eui.eu

Migration can have positive and negative consequences for equality of educational opportunity for the children of immigrants, but also for the functioning of the education in the countries of destination. The first focus of this session will be in accounting for differences in the academic performances of immigrants from different countries both within a single society and across different societies, The second focus of this session will be the individual micro and

macro factors of origin and destination, societies and cultures, that influence the educational achievement of the various immigrant populations. Papers should propose evidence-based policies that would enhance educational opportunities for all.

Session 8: Access, quality and sustainability in educational reform: Challenges, possibilities and the way forward

Session Chair/Organizer: Shaheeda Essack, South Africa. essack.s@doe.gov.za. A unified concept on educational reform cannot be applied equally to all countries across the world – especially within the context of the north/south divide. The distinct socio-political and economic inequalities within and among countries and their onerous relationship with the implementation of educational policies (often well-meaning) is a compelling reason to pause and consider the effectiveness and sustainability of educational reforms in the developing world. In considering the effectiveness of educational reform programs, the following must feature as critical factors:

a. *Access*: Has education become more accessible to those who are most marginalized? What factors determine and ensure increased access to primary, secondary and higher education?

b. *Quality*: In terms of what it means for educators and learners in the context of the relevance of curricular to broader socio-economic and cultural needs; with regard to national and international assessment practices; and with respect to diversity, heterogeneity and socio-cultural inequalities.

c. *Sustainability*: Is reform sustainable and within the realm of national political imperatives? What factors determine sustainability? Is there a likelihood of north/south collaboration? What can it potentially offer those who seek this collaboration as a mechanism for sustained educational growth and development?

Joint Session 1:

The Role of University Research in the Future. (Co-sponsored with RC07 and RC23).

Session Co-Chair/Organizer: Tamás Kozma of The University of Debrecen, Hungary (kozmat@ella.hu).

Joint Session 2:

Leisure Education in a Changing World. (Co-sponsored with RC13).

Session Co-Chair/Organizer: David Konstantinovskiy of the Institute for Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (scan21@mail.ru).

Proposal Submission Procedure

Submissions of proposed papers should be by electronic mail and must include:

- (a). The title of the proposed paper and session preference;
- (b). Names [beginning with the first author], affiliations, mailing addresses, e-mail addresses of all authors; and
- (c) An abstract of a maximum length of 250 words.

Deadline for proposals: December 1, 2007 to the program chair, A. Gary Dworkin at [gdworkin@mail.uh.edu](mailto:gworkin@mail.uh.edu). Proposals will be distributed to the session organizers. ISA will provide details on pre-registration and submission of final abstracts to Cambridge Sociological Abstracts later.

Travel Grants

There are a limited number of small travel grants available to help graduate student participants and presenters from B and C category countries to attend the Forum.

Research Project: Schooling, Globalisation and Refugees in Queensland, Australia

Funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC), this project explores schooling for refugee students in the Queensland public education system. The project aims to study how educational institutions address the needs of refugee students and the role played by education and broader social policy. The project's innovative research approach combines interviews with visual methods of data generation to examine school-based practices and stimulate discussions of global and local policy. Orientation and preliminary research for the project was conducted during 2005. The main data gathering phase of the project was undertaken during 2006 and 2007. The project has generated a website and is currently drafting article and other publications.

<http://www.usc.edu.au/Research/ResearchandInnovation/Projects/Refugees/Refugees.htm>

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Research Project Update: A Comparative Study of Teacher Burnout and Turnover

In the July issue of the Newsletter, Professors Saha, Sharepour, and Dworkin announced their intention to begin a new, multi-national study of teacher burnout and turnover in light of the growing educational accountability movement. We have received e-mails expressing interest in the project from colleagues in Denmark, Russia, South Africa, and India. An updated survey instrument will soon be shared with colleagues who are interested in collecting samples of teachers in their own countries. The data will be pooled and papers will be presented at a mid-term meeting of RC04 or at the 2010 World Congress of Sociology. Collaborators will become co-authors. The logistics of the surveys will be discussed in a series of e-mails among the participants. Please contact:

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Lawrence J. Saha, Professor and Editor: *Social Psychology of Education: An International Journal*. The Australian National University. Australia. Lawrence.Saha@anu.edu.au

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