



Comparative Education Research Centre
Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong

Things are on the boil in Comparative Education at the University of Hong Kong!

The University has designated Comparative Education as one of 21 themes for strategic research development, and has invited Mark Bray, Chair Professor of Comparative Education and Editor of the CERC/Springer

(Kluwer) *Studies in Comparative Education* series, to lead a group of comparative education researchers in their efforts to enhance the global standing of the field at HKU with the resources offered by the university. This invitation to Mark follows his recent election as President of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) at its world congress in Havana in October 2004. He had been Secretary General of WCCES since 2000, while CERC has provided the secretariat for the World Council.

CERC has been at the centre of the University's global profile in comparative education, perhaps most notably as publisher with Springer of the *Studies in Comparative Education* series. CERC is already established as the leading centre of comparative education research in Asia, and is ready to contribute to this effort to establish the University of Hong Kong as a leading centre of comparative education research globally. CERC has the

From the Director

experience, the global name recognition, and the institutional apparatus in place to provide this service as needed by colleagues working in the broad field. Six research sub-themes of the constituent theme have been identified, where colleagues in the Faculty, across the university, and further afield, are especially active.

Numerous Faculty colleagues in these areas have already published their research through CERC, and many more stand to do so in the immediate future. These colleagues have published in a series that includes books by leading researchers such as Philip Altbach, Harold Noah, Max Eckstein, Neville Postlethwaite, Gu Mingyuan, Ruth Hayhoe, Robert LeVine and Alan Rogers. By our inclusion of these authors in our lists, we have established a vehicle that serves as a prestigious publishing outlet for our own Faculty colleagues as well. This is one of the inclusive ways in which CERC is able to provide the service and the institutional structure for colleagues in the Faculty broadly involved in the field of comparative education. CERC looks forward to the contribution it can make to put the University of Hong Kong at the centre of comparative education research globally.

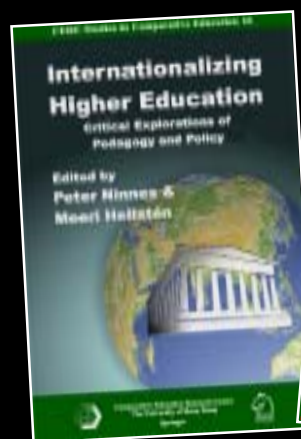
Mark Mason

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New Books Published by CERC

Please see back page for details.



My First World Congress

Emily Mang

“The President of Cuba, Fidel Castro, had a fall ...” reported the in-flight TV news on the night I was in Toronto en route to Havana. The scene was replayed again on the screen during the flight to Havana the next day. I and the stranger sitting next to me could not help but give each other a quizzical look ...

“Next”, the immigration official at the Havana airport called out followed by the standard questions: “Why are you coming to Cuba?”, “Where are you from?”, “What are you doing in your country?”, and “How long are you going to stay?” Having answered this series of questions, I was told to stand at the end of the queue and wait. The good thing was that I was not alone. A colleague who was travelling with me had the same fate in the other counter. So we just waited, for almost 30 minutes, without a clue as to what the problem was. Finally, an immigration official came to us, returned our passports and let us through. The reason why we were held up was because we both used the British passport (BNO), but the Cuban immigration officials had no idea why people from Hong Kong would hold British passports! Others who used the HKSAR passports had gone through the immigration smoothly. I never expected such a problem arising from our colonial legacy!

This was an interesting start for my journey to the XII World Congress of Comparative Education Societies, which was held in exotic Havana from 25 to 29 October 2004. The details of the Congress can be found in pages 10 and 11 of this CERCular. Here, I would like to report about my attendance for the first time at a World Congress of Comparative Education Societies. I had participated in a

number of conferences of the US-based Comparative & International Education Society (CIES) and a few other international conferences, where setting up the CERC book display table was a rather predictable task for me. The CERC book table (indeed, it should be called the CERC bookstore with the impressive quantity of books brought to the Congress by the HKU team) was well located in the exhibition area of the *Palacio de Convenciones de la Habana*. It functioned not only as a venue for book display and sales, but also as a hub for conference participants, as well as a negotiating table for various CERC deals! In addition to the HKU team, it was a focal point for members of the CERC International Advisory Board: Robert Arrove, Beatrice Avalos, Nina Borevskaya and Michael Crossley.

Another interesting experience was how our Cuban hosts made their Chinese visitors feel very special! Wherever we went, the Cubans would approach us excitedly, wondering if we were from Japan. As soon they realised that we were “chino”, they got even more excited, and exclaimed “Bruce Lee! Jacky Chan!” in the fighting post!

I was very pleased to know that the mirror website of the Congress operated by CERC had proved very useful. CERC ranked third among the most active links to the Cuban Congress Committee, facilitating e-mail communications from participants on Congress issues, especially during the many power cuts in Havana prior to the Congress.

CERC is delighted to see that the books were welcomed by the Congress participants, and that the reputation of the Centre’s contribution to the field has grown substantially over the years!



*The HKU team at the
CERC Book Table
(from left) Hu Jingfei, Maurice Cheng,
Emily Mang, Mark Mason,
M.V. Mukundan and Mark Bray*

The University of Havana



*The entrance to China Town,
Havana*

The Catedral de San Cristóbal





CERC was invited to contribute to UNESCO's Educational Equity Project

in South and East Asia in Bangkok in December 2004. CERC's Director, Mark Mason, accepted the invitation with the brief to offer a conceptual and methodological critique of the framework that the UNESCO Institute for Statistics was using to assess the extent of educational equity within countries in Asia. The review opened some interesting methodological issues in comparative education research.

The meeting brought together policy makers and educational experts to review the midstream results of the Educational Equity Project, which had collected sub-national data from 16 primarily large or federal countries from around the world. The core countries in the Asian region were Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Pakistan. The project aimed to describe national policies related to equity, to assess the extent of educational equity within countries, and ultimately to make recommendations to national governments about how they might more effectively enhance educational equity.

The review meeting requested the consulting educational experts to address questions about the project's conceptual framework, the implementation of the framework, and the analysis of educational equity to date. What issues or analyses were missing? What issues needed to be addressed in a different way? What was the applicability and utility of this approach to measuring educational equity in Asia? These questions required the consultants to draw on a wide range of knowledge and experience, ranging from the philosophical and sociological to the mathematical and statistical. Discussion focused on educational politics and policy, access, retention, class size, and educational outcomes.

The first assumption made (rather unquestioningly) was that governments are indeed committed to educational equity. It may seem strange to some that governments might not actually be committed to equity in education, given the rhetoric that typically surrounds most government pronouncements in this domain. But there are many examples of this, of course, perhaps the most extreme being the South African apartheid government's education system, which, despite apparent commitments to "separate but equal" development, was designed to fail most of its black students, both to provide labour for a mining and agricultural economy and to constrain aspirations to upward mobility. The literature abounds with descriptions of educational systems, albeit less extreme, that perform a selective function of sorting students into manual and various levels of skilled labour. This is no less the case even in the so-called

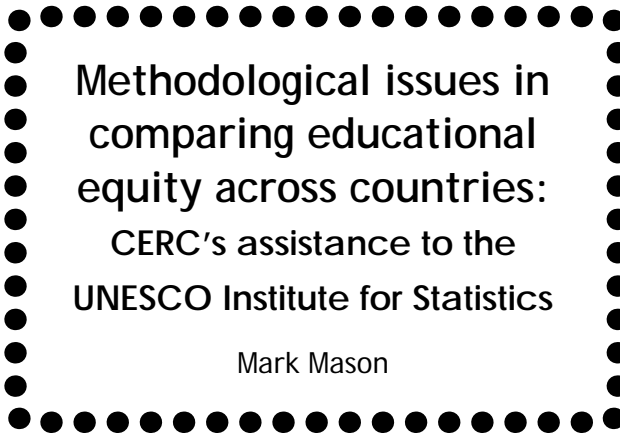
"knowledge" or "post-industrial" economies like Hong Kong which espouse the rhetoric of "lifelong learning" but continue to sort and channel their students into different levels of the economy in a remarkably inequitable manner.

Other commonly held assumptions about educational equity were raised for critical scrutiny in the meeting. Would class size, for example, provide a reasonable measure of educational equity? Conventional wisdom, and much of the literature, point to the benefits of small classes. But aspersions could hardly be cast at South Korea, with its class sizes of around 60, when it has done so well in the recent PISA study of student achievement across the OECD countries.

The geographical unit of comparison then proved to be a thorny issue. Representatives from the Philippines reported that the more they disaggregated their regions (and the Philippines does have a large number of different regional educational jurisdictions), the more inequity was revealed. This came as no surprise, of course, but raised the issue of whether we would find the axis along which educational goods were distributed simply by disaggregating along regional or

geographical lines. Interestingly, the case of Australia, although the odd one out in many respects in this group of countries, was also considered, and proved instructive in this regard. If one were to divide Australia into its constituent states and territories, very little educational inequity would be revealed. This is because educational goods in that country are unevenly distributed less along the axis of regional educational jurisdiction (in this case states and territories) than along the axis of race. Aboriginal children do far less well than white children in Australian schools. Disaggregating by region would not reveal this, because the different educational outcomes registered by Aboriginal and white children respectively in Sydney in New South Wales would be balanced and thus hidden by similar disparities in Brisbane in Queensland. Further disaggregation by region might still not reveal this, unless the researcher happened to cut Sydney up into districts along lines that happened to coincide with the racial boundaries in that city.

What emerges from this is the point that comparative education researchers cannot hope, in their assessments of educational equity in a particular country, to find the axis along which educational goods are differentially distributed simply by disaggregating that country along regional lines – an obvious point for the reason that educational goods may not be differentially distributed along regional lines in that country. There is more to it than this, but it would require more space for discussion than we have here! CERC looks forward to developing these discussions more substantially and to contributing further to the UNESCO Educational Equity Project.


Methodological issues in comparing educational equity across countries: CERC's assistance to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics
 Mark Mason

12th Meeting of China Comparative Education Society (CCES)

Li Mei

The 12th Meeting of the China Comparative Education Society (CCES), held in Zhuhai on 20-22 November 2004, was the largest in the history of the Society. It attracted nearly 300 participants (130 scholars and 150 postgraduate students) from different regions and institutions of greater China, including Mainland China, Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions, and Taiwan. The annual meeting was held in the beautiful city of Zhuhai, and was hosted by the Zhuhai Branch of Beijing Normal University. Yu Rong'ai, the vice-Mayor of Zhuhai, and Miao Zhongzheng, the president of the Zhuhai Branch of Beijing Normal University, attended the opening ceremony.

Among the memorable features of the meeting were the inspiring keynote addresses. Prof. Mark Bray, the new president of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), presented a historical and comprehensive picture of professional bodies in comparative education from the perspective of the WCCES. He highlighted the contribution of the China Society, and encouraged it to keep an active and important role in Asia. Prof. Gu Mingyuan's keynote speech was "Issues in Discipline Construction of Comparative Education". Prof. Gu Mingyuan focused on research methodology in comparative education, Prof. Zhong Qiquan focused on the Chinese curriculum reform and the contribution of comparative education to this process. These lectures elicited stimulating discussions about new directions of Chinese education reform and the



(From left) Jiang Kai, Maria Manzon, Mark Bray, Zeng Min, Hu Jingfei and Li Mei

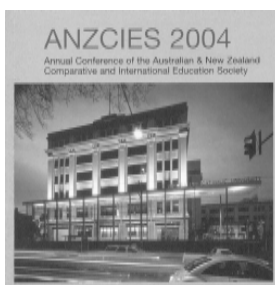
future of comparative education. The core theme for the meeting was 'Chinese Education Reform in a Global Perspective'. Over 100 papers were submitted on various sub-themes including: innovation of the Chinese education system and mechanism; education reform and the changing role of the government; reform of education across levels and types; and the development of comparative education. This meeting witnessed the election of new CCES officers. Zhong Qiquan, Chair Professor of comparative education and curriculum in East China Normal University, became the new president. The newly elected vice-presidents are Prof. Wang Yingjie (Beijing Normal University), Prof. Sun Qilin (Northeast China Normal University), Prof. Chen Shijian (Southwest Normal University), and Prof. Feng Zengjun (South China Normal University). The secretariat has moved from Beijing Normal University to East China Normal University, and Prof. Zhao Zhongjian is the new secretary-general.

The Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK) and the Comparative Education Research Centre (CERC) of the University of Hong Kong organized a small but strong delegation to participate in this event. They were comprised by Mark Bray, Wong Suk-ying, the president of CESHK, and five young scholars: Jiang Kai, Li Mei, Maria Manzon, Hu Jingfei, and Zeng Min. They promoted the profile of CERC in Mainland China and witnessed the vitality of the CCES upon seeing so many young researchers attending this event.

ANZCIES Conference

The annual conference of the Australian & New Zealand Comparative & International Education Society (ANZCIES) was held on 3-5 December 2004 in the Melbourne campus of the Australian Catholic University. It was organised by Joseph Zajda, on the theme 'Global Pedagogies: Equity, Access and Democracy in Education'.

The opening keynote speech was presented by Mark Bray on the topic 'Comparative Education and Allied Fields'. Prof. Bray highlighted the links between comparative and international education, both of which are given prominence in the ANZCIES name. He noted that among the 32 constituent societies of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES), four others have International in their names, while one has History and another has Development of Exchanges in its name. While the overlap of comparative and international education can contribute to



confusion, Prof. Bray pointed out, it is in many respects beneficial to both fields.

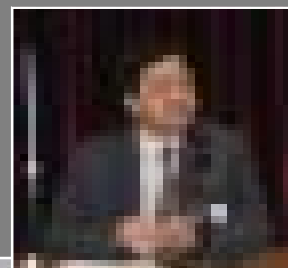
The conference was also the occasion to launch the book *Internationalizing Higher Education: Critical Explorations of Pedagogy and Policy*, which was published by CERC and edited by Peter Ninnes and Meeri Hellstén (see p.16). Peter Ninnes had been the ANZCIES President for the previous two years, and was re-elected for another two years. The book had been developed from the ANZCIES conference held in 2002 in Armidale, New South Wales.

ANZCIES is a fairly small society, but is close-knit and has a history dating from 1972. Dimensions of that history are being recorded by Christine Fox, who led a panel discussion on the theme during the conference. Christine's findings will in due course comprise a chapter in another book to be published by CERC. That book will focus on the histories of the WCCES and its constituent societies, and will highlight not only changes over time but also variations around the world.

CESHK Conference

On 29 January 2005, the annual conference of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK) was held at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, hosted by its Department of Educational Policy and Administration. The theme was "Approaches and Strategies in Comparative Education". Lee Wing On, Head of the host Department and former President of the Society, presented the opening keynote address, entitled "Comparing Values: Revisiting Methods and Approaches in Comparative Education". The conference closed with a Plenary Session entitled "Perspectives on the History of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong (CESHK)", during which the founding president, Bernard Luk, and two former presidents, Mark Bray and Gerry Postiglione, as well as the current President and Vice President, Wong Suk-ying and Greg Fairbrother, had a very fruitful discussion with the floor. The conference attracted over 40 scholars, with foreign delegates from Malaysia, Russia and the United States.

(Right) Lee Wing On giving the opening keynote address
(Bottom) From left: Mark Bray, Bernard Luk, Gerry Postiglione, Wong Suk Ying & Greg Fairbrother at the Plenary Session



Regional Experts' Workshop on Education for International Understanding in Asia and the Pacific

Jiang Kai



Jiang Kai at the workshop

The Regional Experts' Workshop on Education for International Understanding (EIU) in Asia and the Pacific was held in Ichon, South Korea on 17-18 December 2004 on the theme 'Current

Status and Development of Educational Materials of EIU'. The event attracted nearly 20 participants from seven Asia-Pacific countries, including eight specially invited experts.

The experts' workshop was sponsored by the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU). APCEIU was established in 2000 under an agreement between UNESCO Headquarters and the South Korean government, to carry out the mandate of promoting and developing education for international understanding towards a culture of peace. APCEIU, the first regional centre of its kind, works in collaboration with 45 UNESCO member states in the Asia-Pacific, UNESCO offices, and civil society organizations in the Asia-Pacific region. Guided by UNESCO principles and declarations on education, APCEIU seeks to promote the EIU philosophy among individuals, communities, nations, and international/global systems, as well as to foster a sustainable relationship between humanity and nature.

Among the memorable features of the event were the expert presentations. Kang Soon-won, Dean of the

Graduate School of Education, Hanshin University, South Korea gave the opening keynote speech, *Peace and EIU in Asia and the Pacific*. During the two day workshop, various papers were delivered by the following regional participants: Akuzawa Mariko from Japan, Jiang Kai from Hong Kong, Rene Romero from the Philippines, Pranati Panda from India, Russell Bishop from New Zealand, Zahra Bazargan from Iran, and Chung Doo-yong from South Korea. Similarities and differences of EIU practices in Asia-Pacific countries were carefully teased out. Among the salient issues that emerged were: the tension between national identity and world dimension in education, the spirit of "harmony" rooted in Chinese culture, and the Islamic perspective.

After the presentations, the experts vigorously discussed the challenges and prospects for developing regional EIU models. The sub-themes included: commonalities and obstacles for EIU in the region; development of Asia-Pacific EIU models; and the role of APCEIU in promoting EIU in the region.

The participants greatly appreciated the warmth and hospitality of the South Korean hosts, and were especially grateful to Kang Dai-Geun, Director of APCEIU for his efforts.

The workshop proceedings and a book based on the experts' workshop and the participants' research reports on EIU will be published by the APCEIU on behalf of UNESCO in both English and Korean.

Further details on EIU as well as APCEIU activities can be found on the website <http://www.unescoapceiu.org>.

The University of Hong Kong has a long history of collaboration with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Over two decades ago, the University was officially designated the Hong Kong Centre for IEA studies, and various teams have worked on mathematics, science, early childhood education, literacy, and civic education. A team has also worked on the Trends in International Mathematics & Science Study (TIMSS), which evolved from the Third International Mathematics & Science Study (also called TIMSS) and has achieved particularly widespread recognition. Within the University the IEA Centre now comes under the umbrella of CERC.

Background



TIMSS is the largest international study of mathematics and science education in the history of comparative studies. It is conducted under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). TIMSS consists of an international test of student achievement in mathematics and science, and it probes different factors that account for student achievement through a set of questionnaires. Over 360,000 grades 4 and 8 students from 49 territories participated in TIMSS 2003. The Hong Kong component of TIMSS is conducted by the Faculty of Education of the University of Hong Kong (researchers: Frederick Leung and Benny Yung). In Hong Kong, 4,972 secondary two students from 125 schools, and 4,608 primary four students from 132 schools, participated in the study. Past studies included *The Third International Mathematics & Science Study (TIMSS) 1995* and *The Third International Mathematics & Science Study Repeat (TIMSS-R) 1999*. The areas tested in mathematics include: number, measurement, data, geometry, and algebra. The areas tested in science include: earth science, life science, environmental science, physics, and chemistry.

A press conference on the summary results of *the Trends in Mathematics & Science Study (TIMSS 2003)* was held on 15 December 2004.

Student achievement

Mathematics achievement of Secondary 2 students

- Hong Kong came 3rd among the 46 participating territories.
- There was an improvement over the performance in 1995 and 1999.
- 31% of the Hong Kong students were at or above the Advanced International Benchmark. This represents an increase of 8% over the performance in 1995, and an increase of 3% over the performance in 1999.

Mathematics achievement of Primary 4 students

- Hong Kong came 2nd among the 25 participating territories.
- There was improvement over the performance in 1995.
- 25% of the Hong Kong students were at or above Advanced International Benchmark. This represents an increase of 5% over the performance in 1995.

Science achievement of Secondary 2 students

- Hong Kong came 4th among the 46 participating territories.
- There was improvement over the performance in 1995 and 1999.
- 13% of the Hong Kong students were at or above Advanced International Benchmark. This represents an increase of 6% over the results in 1995 and 1999. 58% of the Hong Kong students were at or above the Intermediate International Benchmark. This represents an increase of 25% and 18% over the performance in 1995 and 1999, respectively.
- The performance gap between boys and girls was much reduced due to the relatively greater improvement in girls' achievement over the 1995 and 1999 figures.

Science achievement of Primary 4 students

- Hong Kong came 4th among the 25 participating territories.
- There was improvement over the 1995 figures.

- 7% of the Hong Kong students were at or above the Advanced International Benchmark. This represents an increase of 2% over the performance in 1995. 87% of the Hong Kong students were at or above the Intermediate International Benchmark. This represents an increase of 18% over the performance in 1995.
- The performance gap between boys and girls was much narrower due to the relatively better performance of the girls compared to the 1995 results.

Student Background and Attitudes

- Hong Kong was among the wealthier territories in the study. The GNP per capita for Hong Kong was US\$24,960, as compared with the international average of US\$9,833.
- The class size in Secondary 2 was 39, and that in Primary 4 was 34. These were higher than the international averages of 30 and 26, respectively.
- Students' self-confidence in learning mathematics and science was low, and the value they placed on the two subjects was rather negative.

Conclusion

Despite the relatively disadvantageous factors such as negative attitudes towards mathematics and science and large class size, Hong Kong students outperformed their international counterparts, and exceeded their performance in past years. In designing educational policy, the HKSAR Government should take the results of these international studies into consideration so as to retain our strengths and overcome our weaknesses.

Further Information

The international reports can be downloaded from the TIMSS website: <http://isc.bc.edu>. Information concerning the Hong Kong component of the TIMSS 2003 study can be obtained from: Frederick Leung (tel: 2859 2355; e-mail: frederickleung@hku.hk) or Benny Yung (tel: 2859 2535; e-mail: hwyung@hku.hk) of the Faculty of Education, The University of Hong Kong.

CERCular No.1 of 2003 reported on the Hong Kong component in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). Below is a report on a follow up study conducted in 2004.

Follow up in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

Tse Shek-kam, Joseph Lam, Raymond Lam, Loh Ka-yee

The Current State of Chinese and English Reading Literacy at Primary Four in Hong Kong (2004) was conducted by Tse Shek-Kam, Joseph Lam, Raymond Lam and Loh Ka-yee on 10-year-olds. It is a follow-up to a PIRLS study undertaken in 2001, and is supported by the Research Grants Council (RGC).

This was the first time that both Chinese and English were tested, since the 2001 tests were only for Chinese. In general, the 4,300 grade 4 students tested performed better in Chinese reading than in English reading. There was some improvement in the mean score of Chinese, climbing from 528 to 532, but the gap between good and poor readers widened, with the number of poor readers on the decline. Students scored much lower in English, with a mean of 381 compared to a mean of over 500 in English-speaking countries. In fact, only eight percent of our students reached a score of 500 and above, which would qualify them to study in those countries. This has implications for the medium of instruction policy in Hong Kong.

The difference between Chinese reading performance and English reading performance is much more pronounced in high-order reading tasks such as integration and evaluation. However, for those students with better reading performance, the discrepancy between their Chinese reading performance and English reading performance is less. This indicates that most upper level students are good bilingual readers. On the other hand, students performed well when reading for information but were weak in literacy. This latter involves reading for deeper meaning and requires imagination, experience and creative thinking. Finally, girls achieved better results than boys in both languages. These empirical data are important because for the first time, the Hong Kong government can be informed about how our students fare as compared with the rest of the world.

Economic reasons may have a role to play here. Families that could afford to buy books gave their children an advantage. In homes with 200 or more books, students scored a mean of 552 in Chinese and 359 in English, as compared with 517 in Chinese and 359 in English for those with fewer than 10 books. Moreover, students with domestic helpers scored 537 in Chinese and 406 in English, while those without scored 530 in Chinese and 362 in English. In fact, families employing domestic helpers enjoy a better socio-economic status (SES), and are thus able to provide their children more resources. However, students from families employing English-speak-

ing domestic helpers performed better in English reading than students from families employing non-English-speaking domestic helpers. Domestic helpers spent time watching television with children, chatting in English and teaching English. This indicates that English-speaking domestic helpers help students in English reading directly, and that higher achievement in English is not due to SES factors alone.

While Chinese parents are concerned about their children's education, they seem to invest their resources in the wrong area. Both indices of early home literacy activities of Chinese and English showed that only a few families have pre-school home reading activities with their children, in contrast to international standards in this domain. The situation of English is even worse.

Another poor investment is in private tutors. Most parents think that private tutoring can improve children's academic performance. Forty-three percent of students said they had private tutors. However, among students who had private tutorials, over 50% still failed in the Chinese reading test (scores below 532), and over 60% failed in the English reading test (scores below 381). This shows that private tutorials cannot help students meet the standards for reading proficiency. Only 12% of students had tutors because of poor academic results. Most other students attended tutorial schools to finish homework and be given more assignments. These assignments were, however, mostly not related to reading. They took up students' time, leaving no time for reading.

Unsurprisingly, in contrast, students who read more and enjoyed reading scored better. But so did those who spent up to three hours a day watching television. Students who did not watch television or watched more than three hours a day both scored the lowest. In fact, watching good TV programmes can help improve literacy.

Students' reading attitude in Chinese was positive; they were quite confident in reading Chinese. However, their reading attitude in English was very negative, and their English reading self-concept was lower too.

In order to enhance students' bilingual reading abilities, parents can encourage their children to: read aloud to someone or listen to someone read aloud at home, talk with their family and friends about what they are reading, read books for fun outside of school, find out about things they want to learn, and watch TV programs with good content outside school.

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(From left) Joseph Lam and Tse Shek-kam at the press conference

Havana impressions: A comparative perspective on education in Cuba

gained at the
XIIth World Congress of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies

Mark Mason

As a South African – who did his graduate study in New York but grew up in the midst of Apartheid education and the struggle against it – my visit to Cuba was an enlightening one. I was struck by what I learned about education in Cuba in comparison with my South African and US experiences. Fifty years of Apartheid on top of 250 years of colonialism wrought inestimable human costs on the lives of black South Africans. That much is well known, but for the first time, having benefitted from some exposure to education in Cuba, I really began to understand the human consequences of education. We might read and teach about education and human rights all the time, but the meaning of this phrase really started to come home to me.

The Cuban revolution, despite the USA's perspective to the contrary, does seem to be a revolution that is committed to the welfare of the country's poor. Perhaps I should preface this apparently naïve claim with my interpretation of the French revolution. I don't follow the school of thought that sees it as a victory for the liberty and equality of all groups in French society as they overthrew the tyranny of the nobility and clergy. To me, Marx's interpretation offers a more insightful perspective. It was about the overthrow of the feudal land-owning classes (the nobility and clergy) by the new middle class, or bourgeoisie, recently economically powerful by virtue of changing modes of production because of the industrial revolution. Hence feudal relations of production were rendered obsolete, and production for exchange meant new relations of production where the manufacturing, commercial and professional classes were economically dominant. By their appeal to the peasantry and to the working classes through slogans like "liberty, equality and fraternity", the middle classes gained power and economic privilege. The ideal of the free market was posited as a liberation for all from the chains of the feudal economy, but the peasantry and the

working classes stayed just where they were in the new economic and political order. Now the appropriation of economic and political power by newly created elites is pretty standard stuff in the study of revolutions and their consequences, yet it really seems that the Cuban peasantry have benefitted substantially from the revolution that overthrew the Battista dictatorship.

Yes, the Soviet Union had a large interest in the success of the Cuban revolution, and bankrolled it substantially. Yes,



Mark Mason in front of the Catedral de San Cristóbal in Havana's old town.

the question remains as to whether Cuba would have been able to achieve this astonishing degree of universal educational provision, primary health care, and other aspects of social welfare, with its own GNP. (Put against that question, however, must be the question of the consequences of the American blockade of Cuba.) But the fascinating, and heartening, fact remains: the leaders of the revolution appear not to have simply appropriated the spoils for

themselves. They have actually channelled the country's resources to the welfare of the country's people, the vast majority of whom are poor. That is a rare case indeed.

Through its policy – and practice – of universal basic education, Cuba has achieved about the highest rates of literacy in the world. We were proudly told that Cuba has one teacher for every 37 inhabitants. More than this, the schools play a central role in the provision of social and welfare services. Children are provided with a nutritious cooked lunch at school. Schools function as day care centres for children from families where both parents work. Day care specialists are at school from very early in the morning and again until late into the evening.

In my writing and teaching I have long advocated an increased role for the arts in education, not so much because they serve as repositories of a nation's cultural heritage, but because of their role in stimulating the imagination and there-

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fore critical thinking. Here I was struck by the central role played by the arts in education in their all too evident contribution to the development of children's self-confidence. It was interesting to note that the face chosen to show us in our tours of educational institutions was one led by the arts. Children greeted us with music and dance. Evidently Cuban educators put this at the forefront of their endeavours, and the consequences are obvious. In their performances (and everybody in each class was involved) children displayed a verve, a confident sense of self, that I have not seen anywhere else.

But this confidence, dignity, and sense of self that I experienced just about everywhere is obviously not just a consequence of children's engagement with the arts in education. It is also a consequence of their education in itself, of the very fact that they, all, are educated. Anyone who has witnessed the devastating consequences for individual lives wrought by Apartheid education would recognize this difference immediately.

I don't know that I've ever come across such a racially integrated society. While the USA paints itself, in the face of the contradictions between its black and Hispanic inner city neighbourhoods and its white suburbs, as a "melting pot", Cuba comes across as a genuine melting pot of the ethnic groups that make up its population.

In the country's construction of a national mythology and a post-revolutionary history and identity, it has made heroes out of Che Guevara, the revolutionary guerilla, and José Martí, the poet and educational visionary, and not out of Fidel Castro. Castro is strangely absent from Cuban society. (Few people know where Castro lives, but this is possibly more a consequence

of his apparently being constantly on the move in order to avoid the unwelcome attention of his neighbours to the north-west.) Had this been North Korea, or a few other one-party dictatorships I can think of, pictures of the "dear leader" would have adorned every other wall. We

would have been tripping over statues of Castro. Instead, it was Che Guevara's likeness that graced classroom walls, and statues of José Martí that adorned public spaces. Castro has apparently made clear his wish that no hagiography of his life be written. This is a regime that appears to show disdain for the trappings of power. The spectacular Capitol, Battista's grand stage, built to mirror Washington DC's Capitol, serves merely as the office of one of the government ministries.

Why then do we hear so often of the risky attempts by some Cubans to flee the island by boat in order to seek asylum in the US? From the conversations I had with locals, it seemed to be more the lure of Miami's bright lights than political persecution. I was reminded of the lyrics from the musical *West Side Story* that draws on the lives of the natives of an island just two to the east of Cuba, Puerto Rico: "I like to be in America, ... Everything free in America, ... I'll have my own washing machine, ... Life can be bright in America..." The relative absence of consumer goods is striking. Certainly, the population is poor if measured by these standards. But they are rich in their access to universal education, to universal primary health care, and in the low levels of crime that are associated with a low Gini coefficient (a measure of the degree of inequality in the distribution of income in a given society).

Yes, this is still a one-party state that still imprisons dissidents (and for this reason I had considered not going to the conference on principle – until I remembered that I live in China). But it appears to be that strangest and most rare of beasts – a benevolent dictatorship. And one that, in its commitment to the education of its people and to the provision of universal social and welfare services, puts its north-western neighbour to shame.



1



2



3

1. The Capitol building in Havana
2. The José Martí memorial
3. Che Guevara's mural, Plaza de la Revolución



The World Council of Comparative Education Societies was founded in 1970 as an international organisation of comparative education societies to advance their field of expertise. CERC hosts the secretariat and website for the WCCES, and many members play an active role in the organisation.

12th World Congress a great success

The 12th World Congress of Comparative Education Societies was held in Havana, Cuba, 25-29 October 2004. It was magnificently hosted by the Asociación de Pedagogos de Cuba (Sección de Educación Comparada). Nearly 1,000 participants from around the world took part in lively debates and a range of educational and cultural events. A selection of papers from the congress will be published in a special double issue of the *International Review of Education*. A selection of slides is available on the website: www.hku.hk/cerc/wcces/news/news.htm.



New President

Mark Bray has been elected as the new WCCES President. Mark has worked as a teacher, researcher and consultant in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, North America and the South Pacific, and currently holds a personal Chair Professorship in Comparative Education at the University of Hong Kong. He is an active member of several WCCES constituent societies. In 1994, he was appointed Assistant Secretary General of the WCCES, and became Secretary General in 2000.

News from Constituent Societies

The Comparative Education Society of India is currently undergoing a renaissance, thanks to the vigorous efforts of Nina Dey Gupta. Similar achievements are being reported in the Russian Council of Comparative Education (RCCE) through the work of Nina Borevskaya.

Sadly, the Ukrainian Council of Comparative Education now appears to be defunct and has been removed from the list of constituent societies.

The Mediterranean Society of Comparative Education (MESCE) successfully conducted its first "séminar préparatoire" about the United Nations' initiative "Dialogues Among Civilizations" - Mediterranean Edition, in partnership with UNESCO. The seminar was held on 25 Feb-

ruary 2005 in the University of Catania, Sicily, and was attended by around 50 teachers and socio-cultural operators. A second seminar is scheduled on 18 March 2005 to be held in Tirana, Albania.

The Association Française pour le Développement de l'Éducation Comparée et des Échanges (AFDECE) will collaborate with the Sektion International und Interkulturell Vergleichende Erziehungswissenschaft in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Erziehungswissenschaft (SIIVEDGE) and other bodies for a French-German Colloquium on international evaluations and school achievement. It will be held at the University of Potsdam, Germany, on 30 September and 1 October 2005. Further details: www.uni-potsdam.de/u/buero-fb and from e-mail: groux@rz.uni-potsdam.de

12th Congress of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES)

Havana, Cuba, 25-29 October 2004

The 12th Congress of the WCCES, held in Havana, Cuba, was the largest in the history of the WCCES.

The Congress was being held for the first time in the Caribbean and in a Spanish-speaking country, and it was particularly successful in promoting the field of comparative education in Latin America. During the Congress, a new Mexican Comparative Education Society was admitted to the Council, bringing the number of WCCES constituent societies to 32. In addition, the foundation was laid for a new Ibero-American Comparative Education Society, and advances were made in the development of comparative education in such countries as Argentina, Chile and Venezuela.

The core theme for the Congress was 'Education and Social Justice'. In addition to the main focus, 12 thematic groups addressed such matters as theory and method in comparative education, literacy, higher education, and new technologies. All plenary sessions had simultaneous translation for Spanish, English and French.

Among the memorable features were inspiring

keynote addresses. The Cuban Minister of Education presented a valuable opening plenary address on the theme 'Cuba: A Profound Educational Revolution'. Anne Hickling-Hudson, who completed her three-year term as President, presented a vivid and deeply-insightful account of postcolonialism in education during her Presidential Address. Other keynote speakers were Madeleine Arnot from the United Kingdom, and Salim Vally from South Africa.

The participants greatly appreciated the warmth, hospitality and enthusiasm of the Cuban hosts. Intensive preparations had included events in each of Cuba's 14 provinces which had explained the nature and value of comparative education and which had included competitions for papers to be presented at the Congress. International participants were able to visit Cuban schools and other educational institutions, and to learn about the major achievements of the Cuban people

in the domain of education.

Further details on the Congress, and on other dimensions of the WCCES, can be found on the website www.hku.hk/cerc/wcces.



(Back row, from left) Michael Crossley,
Mark Bray and Sheldon Weeks
(Front row, from left) Rosemary Preston, Anne
Hickling-Hudson and Beatrice Avalos

Conference Announcements of Constituent Societies

BCES 2005

Bulgarian Comparative Education Society Conference

18-22 April 2005, Sofia, Bulgaria

Theme: *Comparative Education in Teacher Training*

Enquiry: npopov@fnpp.uni-sofia.bg

Website: <http://edcollege.ucf.edu/cett/>

CIESC 2005

The XXXIII Comparative and International Education Society of Canada Annual Conference

May 28-31, 2005

University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario

Theme: *Empire and Education: The challenge of teaching and learning in a time of war*

Enquiry: csse@csse.ca

CESA 2005

5th Conference of the Comparative Education Society of Asia

30-31 May 2005, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia

Theme: *Education for World Peace*

Enquiry: cesa2005@pkisc.cc.ukm.my

Website: www.ukm.my/cesa2005

BAICE-Oxford 2005

The 8th UKFIET "Oxford" International Conference on Education and Development

13-15 September 2005, Oxford, UK

Theme: *Learning and Livelihood*

Enquiry: UKFIET-oxcon@bham.ac.uk

Website: www.cfbt.com/oxfordconference

SACHES Conference 2005

Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society Conference

16-19 September 2005, University of Dar es Salaam,

Tanzania

Enquiry: Dr Ndibalema Alphonse <nralphonse@yahoo.co.uk>

CESHK 2006

Annual Conference of the Comparative Education Society of Hong Kong

21 January 2006, Hong Kong Baptist University

Theme: *Continuity and Change in Comparative Perspectives*

Website: www.hku.hk/cerc/ceshk

Enquiry: cerc@hkusub.hku.hk

45th IEA General Assembly & First SITES 2006 National Research Coordinators' Meeting

The 45th General Assembly of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement was held on October 11-14, 2004 in Taipei.

The Hong Kong IEA Centre, hosted by CERC, was represented by Nancy Law. The meeting welcomed a new IEA member, the Palestinian National Authority, represented by the Assessment and Evaluation Center of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, making the total membership of 62 education systems.

The meeting received the final report from two completed projects: the Pre-Primary Project (PPP) and the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2003), as well as progress reports from three current studies: the Teacher Education Study (TEDS), the Second Information Technology in Education Study (SITES 2006), the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2006).

Preparations for TIMSS 2007 are already under way. A preliminary discussion on plans for the Civics and Citizenship Education Study (CCES) was also held.

An important resolution made at this meeting was the change in population definition in IEA studies. In earlier IEA studies, student populations 1 (pop 1) and 2 (pop 2) were defined according to the age of students. However, in order better to reflect the impact of schooling on student achievement, the General Assembly accepted the recommendation from the PIRLS/TIMSS International Study Center that the population definitions for all IEA studies will be as follows:

“The amount of schooling represented by the target grade should be comparable across countries.

The target grade should be the grade that represents respectively four (pop 1) or eight (pop2) years of schooling, counting from the first year of ISCED Level 1. So that students will not be too young for the assessment, the minimum average age at the target grade should not fall below 9.5 years for pop 1 and below 12.5 for pop 2. If so, the next grade up should be chosen.”



Participants in the 45th General Assembly

The *First SITES 2006 National Research Coordinators' Meeting* was held on February 19 to 21, 2005 at the University of Twente, Netherlands, with over 30 participants from Australia, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, China Hong Kong, Chinese Taipei, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Russia, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Thailand and the United States. This is the third

phase of the SITES study which began in 1997. The aim of this study is two-fold: (1) to evaluate the extent and impact of ICT in schools and classrooms on learning and teaching practices, and (2) to identify the factors that contribute most to the effective integration of IT into learning and teaching, particularly those involving student-centered pedagogical practices.

SITES 2006 is managed by a consortium which includes the University of Twente, The Netherlands, the University of Hong Kong and the IEA Data Processing Center. Nancy Law, Director of the Centre for Information Technology in Education (CITE) at the University of Hong Kong, together with the Study Director Tjeerd Plomp and the International Coordinator Hans Pelgrum, are responsible for the design, analysis and reporting for this Study.

Follow up in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)

(continued from page 7)

School teachers can improve students' bilingual reading literacy by asking them to: read books silently, and read books they themselves choose. They can also offer a variety of reading choices for their students to select from.

The research team has been invited to present these preliminary findings to various divisions of the Education and Manpower Bureau, Hong Kong SAR Government (including Curriculum Development

Institute, Quality Assurance Division, Reading Task Force, School Library Section, and Language Support Team), and to 10 primary schools. After a press conference, almost all newspapers in Hong Kong reported our research findings. The research team has also been interviewed by four radio programs and two television programs. Eight newspapers in The Netherlands and one newspaper in Belgium also echoed these research findings.

The 2nd Forum for Worldwide Comparative Education

Theme: Globalization of Education: Government, Market and Society

22-24 August 2005

Beijing Normal University, China

Sub-themes:

- Cultural tradition and education in the era of globalization
- International education market in the era of globalization
- Basic education reform in the era of globalization
- Higher education reform in the era of globalization
- International competition and education for international understanding
- Government, market, society and education reform

Deadline for registration form and paper:

The registration form, the abstract of the paper and the full paper should be submitted before **June 20, 2005**.

Language

Chinese and English (simultaneous translation will be available)

Registration Fee:

US\$350 (By 31 July 2005)

US\$400 (After 31 July 2005)

(Fee includes meals and banquets etc.)

Secretariat:

Comparative Education Research Center

Beijing Normal University

Contact Person:

Ms. Zhang Yuting

Comparative Education Research Center

Beijing Normal University

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Greg Fairbrother wins the Li Ka Shing Prize for his PhD dissertation

Dr. Greg Fairbrother, a Research Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education, has been awarded the prestigious Li Ka Shing Prize for the best research degree thesis at the University of Hong Kong in the Faculties of Architecture, Arts, Business & Economics, Education, Law, and Social Sciences (2001-2003).

Greg is affiliated with CERC's sister research centre in the Faculty, the Wah Ching Centre of Research on Education in China (CREC). CERC extends congratulations to Greg, and to his supervisor, Dr Gerry Postiglione, on this prestigious award. We are particularly pleased to note the importance of comparative education research methodology to Greg's success. In this extract from an interview with *The Graduate School Newsletter*, Greg pays tribute to the efficacy of this approach:



(left) Dr. Greg Fairbrother and Dr. Gerry Postiglione

"My research was about a comparative study of Hong Kong and Mainland China. ... I started out my studies in comparative education, but it was not really until the final stage of my research and writing that I realized just how important comparison was for reaching my conclusions. My study compared Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese political education, students' political attitudes, and critical thinking. If I had studied only either the Hong Kong or the Mainland Chinese case, I would not have been able to get the same insight into the situations, and probably would not have derived the same explanatory concepts that I did, and without comparisons would certainly not have reached the same conclusions that I did in my research. This [was] a strong influence [on my research]."

CERC is grateful to *The Graduate School Newsletter* for permission to reprint this extract and the photograph.

CERC's 10th Anniversary

CERC's 10th anniversary celebration was held on Tuesday, 30 November 2004. The current and the three former directors (Mark Mason, Bob Adamson, Mark Bray, and Lee Wing On) presented short talks on the founding and first ten years of CERC, followed by a cocktail party. Over 30 colleagues and CERC friends enjoyed this celebration.



From left: Bob Adamson, Mark Bray, Lee Wing On and Mark Mason.

Comparative Education: a University Strategic Research Theme

Comparative education has been identified by the University Research Committee (URC) at the University of Hong Kong as one of 21 constituent themes for accelerated development. Researchers in the field have been invited to apply for additional places for research postgraduate students plus seed funding of HK\$1 million. Additional matching funds will be provided by the Faculty of Education. With this recognition, comparative education sits alongside domains from across the university, including biotechnology, computational sciences, nanotechnology, China Studies, and public law.

In his capacity as Chair Professor of Comparative Education, Mark Bray has been appointed Convenor for this constituent research theme. CERC's institutional structure will be used to manage a significant part of the resources that are becoming available.

Within the overall theme, six sub-themes have been identified. Each of these sub-themes has a con-

centration of academic staff and research students at the University, and links with researchers elsewhere in the world. The six sub-themes are:

- comparative education research methodology,
- comparative perspectives on Chinese learners,
- comparative higher education,
- comparative studies of educational achievement,
- educational leadership and culture in comparative perspective, and
- comparative perspectives on education in Africa.

Commenting on the development, Mark Bray remarked: "This is a very exciting form of recognition and encouragement for the field. It positions the University of Hong Kong to build on its existing strengths and move to further leadership of the global field." CERC is indeed delighted to play a key role in this move.

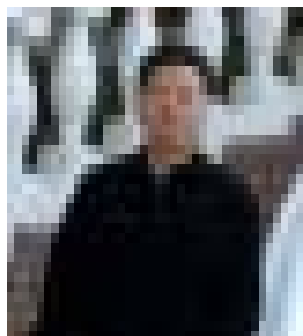
Visitors to CERC

- Jouni Välijärvi of the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, on 15 October 2004.
- Anthony Welch of the University of Sydney from 5 to 16 January 2005.
- Yang Ching-Yao of Tamkang University, Taiwan, on 24 January 2005.
- Angelita Romero, Danilo Villena, Aurora Briones, Chita Villamin and a group of four research students of the Philippine Normal University on 31 January 2005.



Philippine Normal University delegates with CERC staff

Research Assistant Professor



Dr Yang Rui received his MEd and PhD in Comparative Education in 1988 and 2001, respectively. He worked at Shantou University, China and the Universities of Western Australia and Monash in Australia until late 2004. He

joined the Comparative Education Research Centre of the University of Hong Kong in December 2004, as a Research Assistant Professor, having won the post in competition with nominations from all Faculties in the University.

Dr Yang has a strong commitment to research and publication. His current interests are in the fields of comparative and international studies in education,

higher education, and educational policy. He has published widely in these areas, with two co-authored Chinese books, one English book, and dozens of academic articles. They are published in 14 countries, predominantly in prestigious international refereed journals.

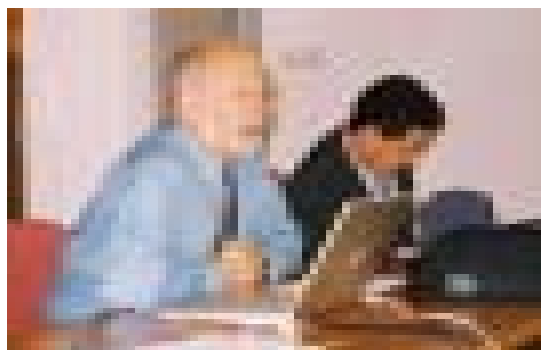
Dr Yang Rui is working towards establishing an international reputation. In 2003, Philip Altbach at Boston College and William Tierney at the University of Southern California invited him to write a 68-page chapter on China's higher education as the annual international topic for *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* published by Kluwer. Currently he is working on invited chapters for the *World Yearbook of Education 2006: Education Research and Policy* edited by Jenny Ozga, Thomas Popkewitz and Terri Seddon; *Comparative Education Research: Approaches and Methods* edited by Mark Bray, Bob Adamson and Mark Mason; and the *International Handbook of Urban Education* edited by Allan Luke.

Mark Bray:

Honorary Professor in BNU

CERC congratulates Mark Bray on his appointment in January 2005 as an Honorary Professor in the International & Comparative Education Research Institute at Beijing Normal University. This Institute is the premier body in the field in China, and traces its history to 1965 when the Foreign Affairs Institute was established under the guidance of Premier Zhou Enlai. Prof. Bray's collaboration with the Institute will further strengthen links between CERC and scholars in mainland China for the benefit of the international as well as the national field.

Seminars



12 January 2005: Anthony Welch, "Public and Private Higher education in Southeast Asia: Changing Balance, Blurring Borders".

CERC Management Committee (2003-05)

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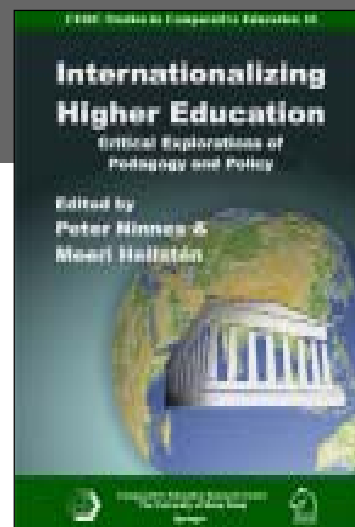
Internationalizing Higher Education Critical Explorations of Pedagogy and Policy

Edited by Peter Nannes & Meeri Hellstén

Globalization is a multifaceted phenomenon, and one of its major components is the internationalization of education. The increasing pace and complexity of global knowledge flows, and the accelerating exchange of educational ideas, practices and policies, are important drivers of globalization. Higher education is a key site for these flows and exchanges. This book casts a critical eye on the internationalization of higher education. It peels back taken-for-granted practices and beliefs, explores the gaps and silences in current pedagogy and practices, and addresses the ambiguities, tensions and contradictions in internationalization. In this volume, scholars from a range of disciplines and regions critically examine the commodification of higher education, teaching and support for international students, international partnerships for aid and trade, and the impacts on academics' work.

Peter Nannes is Coordinator of the Centre for Research on Education in Context at the University of New England, Armidale, Australia. His research interests include comparative and international education, the cultural politics of education, and education in post-conflict societies. He is President of the Australian and New Zealand Comparative and International Education Society.

Meeri Hellstén is a lecturer in education at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Her research interests are cross-cultural and comparative education, socio-cultural and identity issues in education, e-learning pedagogies, and effective teaching and learning in higher education. She convenes and teaches on a large undergraduate unit in educational psychology.



CERC & Springer
January 2005
962 8093 37 1; 231 pages
HK\$200/US\$32

CERC Monograph Series No.4



CERC & The World Bank
March 2005
962 8093 39 8; 113 pages
HK\$100/US\$16

Balancing the Books Household Financing of Basic Education in Cambodia

Especially in less-developed countries, governments face great difficulties in financing education systems. Households commonly have to make major contributions of resources in order to bridge the gaps.

Cambodia is among the countries in which government capacity has been particularly constrained, and in which the household costs of schooling have been especially high. This situation has created a major burden for poor families, and has exacerbated social inequalities. The Cambodian authorities in conjunction with donor agencies have devised policies to address the problem. They have had some significant successes, though many challenges remain.

This book presents empirical data on the household costs of primary and lower secondary schooling. It builds on previous research which received considerable attention both nationally and internationally, and shows changes over time. The book has wide conceptual and policy significance, not only within Cambodia but also internationally.

Mark Bray is Chair Professor of Comparative Education at the University of Hong Kong. He has written extensively on aspects of methodology in comparative education, and on the administration and financing of education systems. **Seng Bunly** is the Director of BN Consult in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He has conducted many consultancies for local and international agencies.

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