

Aspects of home and the wider world

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This issue of the *International Review of Education* looks at a wide variety of topics in various global regions. The first three articles might be grouped under “different aspects of home”: home schooling, home in terms of geography and home in terms of language. They are complemented by one article on school leavers’ transition to employment and two articles discussing aspects of literacy.

Central Europe is our first point of call with *Yvona Kostecká*’s article on the legal status of home education in five post-communist states, namely the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland and Hungary. Since very little research has been done on home schooling in these countries, Kostecká builds her analysis on its legal evolution after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989. In the Czech Republic, home schooling became possible in 1998/99 – albeit only as a temporary “educational experiment” and only at elementary school level; it was not until 2004 that the relevant Education Act was adopted. Slovakia had to wait the longest; here home schooling was in fact not legally possible until 2008. Slovenia passed the relevant law in 1996. The first country to make home education legal (in 1991) was Poland, followed by Hungary in 1993. While there are many similarities in the legal environment for home schooling in these countries, such as mandatory enrolment in a local school which acts as supervisory entity and sets exams, there are differences in terminology, in individual regulations and in policy outcomes.

We next turn to Cyprus, where a geographical sense of home and identity is problematic for indigenous people who were subjected to the “refugee experience” in their own country when it was divided in 1974 following the Turkish invasion of the north of the island. Aiming to theorise its role in relation to the representation of refugees in society and schools, *Michalinos Zembylas* conceptualises emotionalisation and explores the implications for peace education, which is met with refusal by some due to the reproduction of self-other dichotomies in educational policies

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and practices. Zembylas also examines alternative possibilities of promoting peaceful coexistence, arguing that policy makers and teachers need to make an effort to understand the language of emotion in order to change self-other and us-them dichotomies.

Our third article looks at home and identity in terms of language in some African countries. *Birgit Brock-Utne* argues that the outcome of children's education in most African countries is doomed from the start. As soon as children enter school here, they are confronted with a language (an ex-colonial language such as English) they do not understand. Instead of being taught to read and write in and through their mother tongue, these children are expected to acquire literacy and learn maths and science from teachers who are often themselves not very proficient in this legally prescribed language of instruction. One prevailing and persistent attitude seems to be that since English is the language of science and technology, it is best to teach and learn those subjects in English rather than having English as a separate language subject – as is the practice, for instance, in many continental European countries. By comparison, some Asian countries, such as Malaysia, teach science and maths in local languages which demonstrably results in a much better educational outcome, a higher employability of school leavers and economic prowess. Brock-Utne suggests that successful Asian practices might serve as useful models for African education.

We visit Japan next, where *Mikiko Eswein* and *Matthias Pilz* examine (in German) the phenomena of “Freeters” [composed of the English word *free* and the end of the German word *Arbeiter* which means worker] and “NEETs” [an acronym for Not in Education, Employment or Training]. Both these terms refer to young adults who do not move into employment immediately after completing their formal education, mainly due to meagre qualifications rather than social background. Their situation is further affected by the fact that work experience or internships in formal education and a system of qualification for on-the-job training were only recently introduced in Japan. Eswein and Pilz also discuss the changes in Japanese recruiting procedures from a traditional system of close links between individual companies and individual institutions of formal education to a system with more openly advertised vacancies inviting job-seeking members of the wider public to apply. While the number of *NEETs*, who are not actively seeking work, has remained relatively constant throughout the 21st century, the number of *Freeters*, who are earning a living of sorts by working in a series of part-time or short-term jobs, quadrupled between 1982 and 2005, then declined in 2007 and rose again slightly due to the economic crisis in 2010. It is hard to tell, especially in the aftermath of the Tsunami catastrophe of March 2011, how demand and supply of the Japanese labour market will develop in the future and for how much longer the phenomena of *Freeters* and *NEETs* will be playing a role in it.

Our fifth article addresses the problem of child brides in developing countries. *Cristine Smith*, *Rebecca Paulson Stone* and *Sarah Kahando* investigate existing evidence of whether girls' schooling or their mother's literacy have any influence on delaying marriage. Postponing early marriage is a critical public health and education goal since it avoids problematic pregnancies and poor health in babies and women while prolonging girls' schooling and improving their subsequent

employability. Other elements which are relevant for a girl's age at marriage are the economic status of her family, customs of paying a dowry to or receiving a bride price from the groom's family, and rural or urban residence. In their review of available literature, Smith, Stone and Kahando found that while the correlation between girls' schooling and age at marriage has already been documented to some extent, the factor of their mothers' literacy, acquired either through formal schooling or (and this is of particular interest in terms of a possible lever for action) through an adult literacy programme, still requires substantial research.

This issue concludes with an article by *Michelann Parr* and *Terry A. Campbell* who argue for an expansion of the narrow definition of literacy from being the ability to read and write to being the ability to decode and interpret the wide variety of signs and sounds we are surrounded by. Aiming to go beyond Koïchiro Matsuura's UNESCO conceptualisation of literacy by including even more forms of literacy and taking its dynamic nature into account, Parr and Campbell coin the acronym WORLD to stand for Word, Orality, Re-vision, Literacies and Discourses. Suggesting new theoretical and practical ways of understanding and teaching this holistic kind of literacy, the authors address literacy instructors and policy makers in particular. Parr and Campbell discuss each element from their acronym in a separate section, each of which is then concluded by a set of reflective questions. The authors illustrate the universality of their approach with a few ideas from a poem, a children's book, a dystopian novel for teenagers and a film.

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