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Laihiala-Kankainen, Sirkka. 2010. Struggle for the direction of Russian education policy. The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus 41 (4), 331–341.

The turn of the millennium has been regarded as a turning point in education in many European countries. National education policy is to an increasing degree carried out in an internationalizing environment and the development of education is more than ever before influenced by supranational organizations. A similar trend can also be observed in Russia where a struggle for the direction of education has been going on for about two decades now. In this article, the guidelines of Russian education policy and the debate over their direction from the Perestroika to the present are discussed, with a special focus on the decisions concerning general and higher education. The primary data consist of documents dealing with educational reform and Russian articles published in scientific journals of education. The heuristic starting point is O. N. Smolin's view of four ideological orientations that carry weight in today's Russian society, including the development of education. These orientations are not mutually exclusive but converge and are interlinked in many different ways in education policy debate. It has been difficult to find common ground in a situation following a period of transition in which challenges to developing education are posed not only by national disagreements but also issues in globalization such as economic growth, competitiveness, and supranational directives concerning education.

Descriptors: Russia, education policy, values, general education, higher education

Malinen, Olli-Pekka – Savolainen, Hannu – Engelbrecht, Petra – Xu, Jiacheng. 2010. International and comparative study of inclusive education. The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus 41 (4), 351–362.

Inclusive education is a global phenomenon with strong local flavour. When crossing borders it receives a new meaning and implementation. This article is based on our research project on inclusive education in Finland, China mainland and South Africa. The main theme of our project is inclusive education from teachers' perspective in these three countries. This article aims to: 1) Describe inclusive education as an international research topic 2) describe the local implementation of the global inclusive education agenda by using the cases of Finland, China and South Africa as examples 3) introduce to the field of international and comparative research on inclusive education and potential challenges of conducting such studies.

Descriptors: inclusive education, comparative research, Finland, China, South Africa

Salmela-Mattila, Maria. 2010. Time and space for university – Systems theory as a framework of comparative research. The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus 41 (4), 374–385.

The article discusses comparative higher education research in the framework of luhmannian systems' theory. First the article introduces systems' theory, especially as seen through the concept of observation. Secondly, comparative methodology and its central concepts of time and space are

discussed; here, particular attention is paid to the conceptualisation of time and space through Niklas Luhmann's systems' theory. Thirdly, the article aims to explain the theoretical construction of university-environment-relationship through the disciplinary structure of a university. In the end, the writer returns to the central observations of the text and to a few remarks upon the university as an organisation of the autopoiesis of science and higher education and to what this means to research in comparative higher education.

Descriptors: comparativemethodology, interdisciplinarity, systems theory

Simola, Hannu – Rinne, Risto. 2010. Contingency and education policy: In search of theoretical premises for comparative research. The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus 41 (4), 316–330.

The popularity of comparative educational research and its increased political relevance have not contributed to the development of the theoretical conceptualisation and self-understanding. Rather, these phenomena have ossified certain trendy concepts (such as efficiency, accountability and quality) taken as granted. In this article one promising concept, contingency, will be introduced and tested in relation to its analytical power for a historical and sociological study of some education policy events. Following Hand Joas, the ambitious concept of contingency will be seen as dialectics between uncertainty and coincidence on the one hand, and between freedom and *Spielraum* on the other. In this angle, two central and internationally divergent events of the Finnish education policy will be analysed. These two events are the birth of the Master level comprehensive school teacher education and the developments of the Finnish model of Quality Assurance and Evaluation (QAE) in comprehensive education. The concept of contingency appeared to open the both events essentially. The Master level teacher education seemed to be born due to the unintended conjunction of two unconnected reforms and against the explicit will of teacher education reformers. Understanding the Finnish QAE model appeared impossible without three contingent events that are a radical municipal autonomy and revaluation of the Comprehensive School, both arising from the severe recession of the 1990s. The third contingent event was the PISA-success in the 2000's. The first factor buffered demands for recentralisation while the two latter ones created barriers against market liberal progress in education policy. The article concludes to propose that contingency should not be seen as a single or separate explanation but rather as a concept that connects different dimensions of actions and events. In comparative studies we should accept the contingent dimension of the reality and integrate it to all conceptualisation in use.

Descriptors: comparative education, sociology and politics of education, political history, contingency, complexity

Takala, Tuomas. 2010. The global agenda for education policy in developing countries – the cases of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative and Afghanistan. The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus 41 (4), 342–350.

Analyses of the impact of globalization on educational policies have typically referred to policy in a seemingly global perspective, or have focused primarily on European countries. The validity of such analyses for the conditions of developing countries is limited by the fact that the dependence of the latter on external funding and the related possibilities of influencing them through external agendas and development cooperation agencies are thereby neglected. In contrast, research that deals with the role of development cooperation in the formation of national policies in the education sector has looked at these questions extensively. This article analyzes the impact of the global education policy agenda for the developing countries, as defined by the Education for All – process and particularly by the World Bank, through two cases: the findings of the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative and references to gender equality in education as found in documents of the Government of Afghanistan.

Descriptors: development cooperation, Education for All, World Bank, education in Afghanistan

Välimala, Jussi. 2010. Field knowledge in comparative higher education research. *The Finnish Journal of Education Kasvatus* 41 (4), 363–373.

This article deals with possibilities to obtain knowledge about the social dynamics of higher education systems, in other words, how these systems work in reality. This kind of knowledge is called field knowledge in higher education research. Despite the fact that higher education researchers have recognized the need to learn from their everyday experiences, they have not considered in a systematic way how to use their everyday notions and experiences as a research material. The article explores possibilities to develop field knowledge into a legitimate form of academic knowledge in higher education research.

Descriptors: field knowledge, higher education research, social dynamics