

## Preface

### A Picturesque Mosaic of Educational Reforms Worldwide

This volume contains selected papers submitted to the XVIII Annual International Conference of the Bulgarian Comparative Education Society (BCES) held virtually in June 2020. The XVIII BCES Conference theme is *Educational Reforms Worldwide*.

The Annual International Conference of the Bulgarian Comparative Education Society is a traditional, scholarly, interdisciplinary, high-level event. Education specialists from all over the world every year attend the Conference so as to present their studies. The Conference purposefully keeps to a small size, aiming at organizing the selection of papers of the best quality and providing excellent opportunities for presentations and discussions.

The goal of the XVIII BCES Conference is to provide a platform for in-depth discussions on educational reforms worldwide. The Conference attracts case, international, and comparative studies on reforms at all levels of the educational systems – preschool, primary, lower and upper secondary, postsecondary, and higher education; and in all educational streams – general, vocational, and special education. Authors present their theoretical, methodological or empirical studies on reforms of various educational aspects – aims, priorities, missions, governance, finance, structures, curricula, syllabi, textbooks, teaching and learning styles, innovations, examinations, graduation requirements, academic degrees, etc. Authors also focus on past and present educational reforms.

This year's book includes 38 papers written by 73 authors from 19 countries.

The volume starts with an introductory piece on school reforms in Bulgaria from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century written by the keynote speakers Nikolay Popov and Marina Pironkova. The authors present the cornerstones of school reforms during the First, Second, and Third Bulgarian State. They also discuss various cultural, social and political factors determining school development in Bulgaria.

Readers can learn from this introductory piece about the first Bulgarian schools in 'The Golden Age of Bulgarian Letters and Culture' (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century), the hard blow to the development of education under the Ottoman rule (15<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century), the main school reforms from the Liberation (1878) to the 1940s, the educational development during the Socialist period (1944-1989), the latest school reforms in Bulgaria since 1989, and the current school system in Bulgaria.

The other 37 papers are divided into 6 parts: 1) Comparative and International Education & History of Education; 2) International Organizations and Education; 3) School Education: Policies, Innovations, Practices & Entrepreneurship; 4) Higher Education & Teacher Education and Training; 5) Law and Education; 6) Research Education & Research Practice.

**Part 1** has 3 papers, forming an introduction to the six parts of the book and to the theme of the conference, namely educational reforms worldwide.

In the first paper, Charl Wolhuter outlines the societal trends defining the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the imperatives these trends are directing towards education. The term GERM (Global Education Reform Movement) which has gained currency to describe the education changes effected in response to these societal trends, is examined and found to be far too narrow as a descriptor of these changes. The author relates his vision for the momentous education innovations, presenting a mission for scholars in the field of Comparative and International Education to provide, from their expertise, guidance.

In the second paper, Nikolay Popov and Vera Spasnović in their twelve country comparative research give an outline of the comparative study of school counselling. The recommendation made by Wolhuter, is given a concrete example in the third paper, where Akvilė Naudžiūnienė zooms in on one country, Lithuania, and one subject, History, to show how, in one generation, the hierarchy of values taught in schools has changed.

These three interesting and rich papers are presented as a prelude for the rest of the papers in other parts, zooming in on particular aspects of the manifold education reforms taking place worldwide at the present time.

**Part 2** contains 6 papers. This part focusses on a comparison of international education in order to enhance education worldwide. The aim is to identify best practices for better education systems around the world.

The first paper, by Louw de Beer, Deon Vos and Jeannine Myburgh, explores the homeschooling phenomena in the BRICS member states. Homeschooling is gaining popularity globally and the rationale is explored. The second contribution, by Deon Vos et al., explores the challenges for teaching as a career choice in South Africa and Seychelles. South Africa and Seychelle share the same challenge but there are unique contextual challenges. Gender issues and the role women play in the role of principals are discussed in the third publication written by Leentjie van Jaarsveld. In his paper, Obed Mfum-Mensah accentuates the policy borrowing ideals which influenced Sub-Saharan Africa policy formulation. The next academic, Vesselina Kachakova, reviews the potential of ICT in education worldwide in several international studies. Lastly, Michelle Otto highlights the relationship between education expenditure and Gross Domestic Product in the European Union and BRICS countries.

A variety of important international issues are explored in this part. All the contribution focusses are on international contentious issues regarding education systems. Homeschooling, teaching as a career choice, gender, education expenditure, education policy formulation, and ICT in education are researched. The aim is to identify best practice internationally to augment education in the local context.

**Part 3** comprises an eclectic mix of 9 papers, dealing with the constant changes occurring across the world in education settings. Innovations in various countries are an ongoing theme throughout this part, with careful examinations of education structures, pedagogy changes, leadership styles, new approaches to learning, changes in attitudes of parents to schooling and comparisons of the applications of similar policies in different countries. The contributors come from a wide variety of

nations across the globe, but raise many concerns shared internationally by those whose lives are dedicated to improving learning and schools worldwide.

Some contributions use philosophy as a way to examine practice: Vimbi Mahlangu who uses Betrayal Trauma to discuss how toxic leaders can affect the trust and wellbeing of their employees, and Claudio-Rafael Vasquez-Martinez et al., exploring approaches to inclusion in Mexican schools. Historical and political contexts are used by Joana Quinta and Teresa Almeida Patatas to examine educational reforms in Angola, by Gillian Hilton who explores the move to home schooling in England, and by Amelia Molina, Adriana Estrada and José Luis Andrade who compare the human rights policies in Mexico and Costa Rica. Pedagogy change is also an ongoing theme in the contributions: Godsend Chimbi and Loyiso Jita, examining how teachers in Zimbabwe are coping with the use of more interactive learning styles, and Karen Biraimah and Brianna Kurtz, discussing approaches to the education of immigrants in south-eastern USA. In these wide-ranging examinations of education, social and emotional learning and relationship practices are explored by Maja Ljubetic, Toni Maglica and Željana Vukadin in early years education in Croatia, and by Mashraky Mustary in an investigation into teacher/student relationships in Bangladeshi schools.

In these contributions, the need for constant examination and reform of how we practice education globally is combined with an awareness that, though we need to adopt good practice from other countries, we also need to tailor those approaches to local needs.

**Part 4** has 3 papers – all of which speak to this year’s conference theme of ‘educational reforms worldwide’. Magdalin Anim and Gertrude Shotte’s research-based paper examines leadership roles of women in higher education in Cameroon. The context of the study is the University of Buea, a publicly-founded institution in the southwest region of Cameroon. The paper highlights, among others, key socio-cultural factors influencing representation of women in higher education positions in Cameroon, particularly the paucity of women’s representation in leadership positions at the University of Buea even though a sizable proportion of students and academics were female. The paper relates its findings to global practice where the paucity of women’s representations in leadership positions in higher education is still evident.

Marie Myers’ literature-based paper evaluates a university’s quality assurance and the extent to which cultures ‘inherent’ in the system hinders and facilitates the quality assurance process. The paper concludes with a proposition, among others, that a university quality assurance system takes cognisance of system culture and how it might ‘infiltrate’ the process of quality assurance and evaluation.

The third research-based paper, written by Gordana Stankovska, Ruvejda Braha and Svetlana Pandiloska Grncharovska, uses learning styles measurements, inventory and questionnaire – Grasha-Reichmann Student Learning Styles Scale, Grasha-Teaching Style Inventory and Children’s Attributional Style Questionnaire – to examine the relationship between optimism-pessimism and teaching and learning styles among university medical students. Not surprisingly, the paper finds, among others, association between learning and teaching styles and optimism-pessimism among the participant-medical students.

**Part 5** includes 8 papers exploring the policy, rules and regulations, and the laws guiding education systems across the world. Here authors share knowledge about their education systems and implementation of rules and regulations. In this part, the authors share good practice in education to learn about the flaws in education systems and areas for implementation based on ethical and legal obligations to observe as educators, at the same time ensuring discipline, equality, child protection and fairness in education systems.

The paper by Elizabeth Achinewhu-Nworgu centers on examining how students engage in their teaching and learning activities, a study of what obtains in a London based institution and implementation of learning activates that meet students' needs. André du Plessis examines the statutory curtailment of school autonomy and explains how the government is moving in the opposite direction with school governance and management autonomy being curtailed by the initial objectives in South Africa with reference to the draft Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill. The next paper, written by Queen Chioma Nworgu, provides a critical overview of the impact of social media on online small business owned and run by women entrepreneurs in London and highlights the impact of social media platforms on improving business performance.

Sharon Thabo Mampane contributes with two interesting papers. The first one is on understanding and application of the institutional performance management system within higher education departments in South Africa. In her second paper, she highlights gaps in higher education institution managers' understanding and application of IPMS for supporting and improving staff performance. Her paper centers on academic promotion practices within higher education institutions, enabling us in understanding the regulations and fairness and equity in academic appointment practices.

Tebogo Jillian Mampane's paper on the school inspector's role of supporting mathematics education in South African township schools helps us to understand that supporting mathematics educators provide opportunities that make a real and lasting difference in learners' lives. The paper by Chinuru Achinewhu equips us with the future of the African child in protecting the right to education of internally displaced children in the Nigerian education system. The paper explores the need to protect the legal right of education for children to secure their future rights.

The contribution by Uchechi Bel-Ann Ordu provides an analysis of the entrepreneurial leadership as one of the modern styles of leadership in organizations and its relevance to academic knowledge and the link to teaching and learning in the practical business world.

The papers in Part 5 contribute to a wide range of knowledge and understanding of the role of law, policy, rules and regulations in education systems around the world and the challenges faced by the educators to effectively implement what we preach in terms of consistency across nations.

**Part 6** consists of 8 papers exploring current issues in education in various contexts. Individually and collectively, these papers offer the readers an opportunity to learn from presented examples and findings in order to enhance their understandings and practices. The collection of papers includes a range of topics explored by authors from international as well as context specific perspectives. The key notions addressed in the papers can be captured in the following: innovation,

teacher education, development of human capital, professional development, research culture, research capacity building, and research enterprise.

The first paper, written by Ewelina K. Niemczyk, brings attention to the international climate of academic research enterprise. Her research illustrates the pressures placed on higher education institutions worldwide to build research capacity and to increase research activity along with the expectations placed on researchers to show high level of research productivity and efficiency to prove their research excellence. The author calls for more attention to institutional policies and practices that influence researchers work and on a larger scale the effectiveness of academic research enterprise.

The next paper, written by Franciska Bothma, centers on a South African context. The paper brings attention to the tensions between academic autonomy and accountability as well as the research vs teaching activity. The main question the author poses in her qualitative work is whether accountability in teaching-related work, if clearly defined and practiced, can be used as mechanism towards professionalizing higher education teaching.

The elements of academic autonomy are furthered explored by Zoltán Rónay and Ewelina K. Niemczyk in their work about institutional and individual autonomy in relation to research productivity in Hungarian and South African higher education contexts. In their reflective paper, the authors narrow the focus to how institutional and individual researcher's autonomy converge with two specific research productivity activities, namely dependence on funding and selection of outlets for research outputs.

Based on personal experience, JP Rossouw focuses on developing a faculty research culture in South African higher education. The author explores how academic managers such as deans, research directors and research professors may transform a weak research culture by embracing the principles of the innovation value chain. According to JP Rossouw, passive or negative attitudes of faculty members towards research productivity can be converted to positive attitudes and thus enhance research productivity.

The subsequent two papers are grounded in European context, namely Serbia and Slovenia. Nataša Matović and Emina Hebib present a research study about teachers as researchers and thus as reflective practitioners capable of assessing their own work. Based on the research conducted in four Serbian primary schools and a sample of 129 teachers, the authors explore teachers' engagement in school research activities that contribute to their professional development.

Klara Skubic Ermenc explores approaches to inclusive education in Slovenia from a comparative angle. In the paper, she describes key elements of inclusive policy in Slovenia, which reflect a human rights-based understanding of inclusion focused on students with special needs. The author pays special attention to three stages of the development of the concept of inclusion and aims to provide a foundation for further comparative research on inclusion.

The last two papers are based in African context, more specifically South Africa and Zimbabwe. Oliver Tafadzwa Gore brings attention to capabilities that matter most for disadvantaged students in South African universities. According to the author, inequality and inequity of outcomes persist in higher education despite policies to redress the effects of apartheid, which segregated black people from

accessing good quality education. In this paper, Oliver Tafadzwa Gore identifies the most significant capabilities for student disadvantage and urges higher education institutions to address these capabilities to ensure equal access, participation and success for all students.

In the final paper, Dairai Darlington Dziwa and Louise Postma explore building creative capacities through art teacher education in Zimbabwe. The authors argue that higher education institutions do not equip learners with creative and critical skills necessary for innovation. As a result, higher education does not contribute to the development of the human capital in the Zimbabwean labour market, which currently lacks the capacities to critically and creatively address technological, economic and industrial challenges.

All papers in this volume, written by authors from around the globe, and presenting national education reform experiences, comparative education studies, different research approaches, theoretical and empirical analyses of various topical education problems, make this edition an interesting, authentic and picturesque mosaic of educational reforms worldwide.

*The Editors*

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