

Report on the World Education Research Association 10 Years Anniversary Focal Meeting

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1. Introduction

The World Education Research Association 10 Years Anniversary Focal Meeting was held on August 5th at the University of Tokyo Yasuda Auditorium, and on the 6th, 7th, and 8th at Gakushuin University. This focal meeting convened 1,313 participants from 65 countries and regions, two to three times the attendees at WERA meetings over the past decade.

In 2009, after several years of preparatory meetings, WERA held its founding meeting in San Diego in the United States, and held a commemorative first meeting in Vienna in the fall of the same year. I was one of the founding members, and with that experience, served as chair of the Organizing Committee for the 10 Years Anniversary Focal Meeting to be held in Japan.

The opening ceremony of the meeting was held in the University of Tokyo Yasuda Auditorium. An opening speech was given by WERA President Ingrid Gogolin, a professor at Hamburg University, who expressed her hopes for the 10 Years Anniversary Focal Meeting thus.

We all share an interest in the further development of educational science and research - a science whose theoretical interest in knowledge and understanding is often combined with the impetus to contribute to the clarification of issues relevant to practice. The theme of the conference – Future of Democracy and Education: Realizing Equity and Social Justice Worldwide – encourages discussion of educational research at the highest level, driven by an interest in discovery and insight, but also by concern for the common good of future generations. I am grateful to be able to participate in this important event – and I am delighted to share with you the celebration of WERA’s 10 Years Anniversary.

Teruyuki Hirota, speaking as chair of the Japanese Educational Research Association,

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welcomed the participants and, recalling the history of Yasuda Auditorium as the symbol of the university-centered conflict in 1969, discussed the significance of holding the WERA Focal Meeting in Japan.

It is now necessary for Japan's educational research to undergo a further transformation. In particular, we must have more and closer exchanges with educational researchers around the world than so far, as the social change known as globalization is causing us to form close connections around the world. Additionally, in the last 30 years or so, many countries around the world have been achieving rapid development as emerging countries. There are more colleagues with whom we should be discussing things. Consequently, discussions on education must now take place with people around the world, surpassing national boundaries. I believe this WERA Tokyo meeting is a chance for important changes to take place in Japan's educational research.

Further, representing the University of Tokyo, Kiyomi Akita presented a message of welcome as the university's first faculty/graduate school dean and as an educational researcher.

The Focal Meeting not only set a record for participating countries and attendees, but also reached new heights for the numbers of paper presentations, symposia, and poster presentation submissions.

With an initial 933 submissions and a 30% rejection rate, 652 were accepted, three times the submissions for the Cape Town Focal Meeting in 2018. This amount consisted of 500 paper submissions, 103 poster submissions, and 49 symposium submissions. The paper sessions featured 129 sessions in total, consisting of three to four paper presentations each. There were also 16 Invited Symposia from WERA's various Member Associations, Institutional Members and International Research Networks (IRN).

Of 411 presentation applications from Japanese researchers, almost all were accepted. It is remarkable to have more than 400 presentations by Japanese educational scholars. Given the strong tendency of Japanese educational research to be domestically focused in comparison with other countries, the significance of over 400 presentations, most from young researchers, cannot be overstated.

2. Theme of the Meeting and Keynote Speeches

The theme of the WERA 2019 was "Future of Democracy and Education: Realizing Equity and Social Justice Worldwide". It is truly a core and common issue among world educationists. Modern education was basically constructed with domestic concerns, in particular the pursuit of establishing nation-states. However, the situation has drastically changed. Today, every domestic issue is global, and even global issues are domestic. We must open avenues leading to new ways of thinking in order to detect hidden linkages between domestic views and global ones. In addition, global education stands at a crossroads, facing the serious collapse of democracy, equity and social justice worldwide. World educationists are all suffering from the risks of public education. However, in any age, education has been a lighthouse, or a compass, for voyagers in troubled society. The WERA 2019 truly became an inspired voy-

age for its attendees to discover beacons and compasses of this kind with new colleagues beyond national borders.

In response to this theme, five keynote speakers were invited, each giving a keynote speech along the lines below. The first was Andy Hargreaves (University of Ottawa and Boston College, who spoke on “Equity, Identity and Well-being and their Implications for Educators and Policy Makers.” Hargreaves has advocated for educational reform in the name of “collaborationism” as a teaching principle within globalization. In his keynote speech, he presented the characteristics of educational reform in the global era as below (while somewhat long, the quotation is from his speech).

Top-down accountability, standardized achievement, and school autonomy within competitive market systems of school choice have comprised what I once called *The New Orthodoxy of Educational Change* (Hargreaves et al, 2001), and what Pasi Sahlberg (2011) labeled the Global Education Reform Movement or GERM. In the countries that have adopted and led with these strategies, there has been little or no progress in student achievement. Achievement gaps in some systems like Sweden have grown rather than narrowed. High-stakes and even mid-stakes tests have had pervasive negative consequences for student learning and wellbeing. Teacher recruitment and retention problems have also precipitated a crisis in the teaching profession. Any improvements that have been secured in places such as Ontario where top-down reform has been less competitive and less punitive than in the US and England, were, until the last few years, still confined to relatively simple and straightforward areas like literacy achievement.

We are now entering a new age of educational reform where the social and educational challenges are different and even more serious, and where the means to resolve them are changing. This is an *Age of Learning, Identity, and Wellbeing*.

Who are we?

What will become of us?

Who will decide?

What are these challenges? There are epidemics of escalating anxiety, depression and even suicide among young people, sometimes as a direct consequence of excessive emphases on competitive attainment among parents and by policymakers. One UK survey points out that 27% of young people believe that life has no meaning or purpose. Selfies, narcissism, and digital distraction have exploded among US adolescents from about 2012 when smartphone technology became almost ubiquitous. Robotics and Artificial Intelligence steal jobs from the many, but there are no policies addressing how to redistribute the resulting levels of astronomical wealth that accrue to the few. Perpetrators of school shootings in the US are highly likely to be isolated, bullied and lack senses of belonging in school. Mounting inequalities lead directly to ill-being, especially in countries or states where these disparities are most severe. The violence of separatists and supremacists of all kinds is creating a world of hostility rather than one of hospitality. Brexiteers, yellow vests, extinction disruptors, and members of many other social movements are venting their frustrations everywhere. Global warming does not respect national borders. The next generation fears that it may become the last generation. And all this creates distrust of leaders, withdrawal from citizenship, and loss of belief in democracy itself as people turn to demagogues, reality TV stars, comedians, and clowns for easy answers or any answers to their plight. The world is off its axis, and narrowing a few

achievement gaps or lifting up PISA scores, here and there, is not going to put it back on again.

The second keynote speaker was Stephen J. Ball of University College London, speaking on “Global Education and Neo-liberalism; or what makes Sarah happy.” Ball’s research has investigated evidentially the gradually expanding global education market under the neoliberalist economy, in parallel with research on Foucault. In this speech, he described how Sarah, studying with computers at a school in London, is sacrificed to education as it transforms into big business. A summary of his points is as follows.

This moment is a neoliberal intersection in another related sense also. It is an intersection between subjectivity and profit, between government and the digital economy – it is a quintessential neoliberal double. Neoliberalism is a global structure of economic relations, and a state of being. It is a big N and a small n, it is ‘out there’ and ‘in here’, it is molar and molecular, it is what we have become and all that we might be – it is the incitement of our desires and our pleasures in relation to which we can perfect ourselves and the insertion of market relations into fields of experience where the market was previously unknown. These manifestations, forms, flows and relations of neoliberalism are ‘joined-up’ at many points of our experience. It produces and oppresses us at the same time.

The third keynote speaker was Gert Biesta of Maynooth University in Ireland, speaking on “What kind of society does the school need? On democracy and education in impatient times.” His speech, as below, brought to light the contradictions of globalization and democracy in education.

The surprising result is that the modern school is increasingly seen as a problem, with high levels of dissatisfaction amongst teachers, students, politicians, the media and the public at large, who all want something better from the school, although they disagree about what this may look like. The question this raises is whether it is time to give up on the modern school and its promise and hand it over to Pearson, Google and other educational capitalists, or whether we should try again and, if so, where we might go. The reflections I offer in this presentation are primarily meant to think again about the relationship between the school and society, arguing for a more ‘obstinate’ school and a more ‘patient’ society. I argue that whether such a recalibration of the relationship between school and society is possible is ultimately a test of the democratic quality of society itself.

The fourth keynote speaker, WERA President Ingrid Gogolin, spoke as below on “Traditions of Democracy and their Challenges for Equity and Social Justice in Present-day Education.”

The dynamics of internationalisation and individual mobility as well as technical developments belong to the causes of diversification of diversity – increasing linguistic diversity within societies being one of them. The amount of people “on the move” – in abso-

lute figures as well as in relation to the population in general – is higher than it has been ever before in history. As a consequence of this, the numbers and types of languages which co-exist in one space within given societies are growing, and multilingual experiences have become actual reality even in areas which traditionally consider themselves monolingual. The mechanisms of homogenization applied by the education systems have obviously become obsolete. It is one of the major challenges of educational research to develop, test and validate innovative concepts which contribute to equity and social justice despite of the diversification of diversity. It may be more relevant than ever before that educational researchers around the world collaborate to this aim, given that the phenomena and challenges that education systems face with respect to increasing diversity are less linked to national experiences and interests than is the case in other areas of designing education.

The fifth and final keynote speaker, the educational psychologist Tan Oon-Seng of the Singapore National Institute of Education, spoke on “The Future of Democracy and Education: What can we glean from research, wisdom and pragmatics today for tomorrow?”, addressing as below the issues faced by teacher education, including recent trends in neurology and information science.

Teacher quality has come under focus in many education reform agenda. Policy makers, however, tend to focus on isolated agendas when attempting to enhance teacher quality. Some pay attention primarily to teacher recruitment, initial teacher training and accreditation. Others tend to focus too much attention on accountability and performance management, often linking appraisal of teachers to student performance and student test scores. How can we re-think and re-design teacher policies? What are the crucial features of teacher policies that work? How do we link teacher policies to empowering teachers and enriching the hearts of learners with feelings of competence, strong knowledge fundamentals, creative thinking skills and productive citizenship? The discussion will address elements of teacher policies such as quality teacher recruitment, teacher incentivization, initial teacher education, teacher accreditation alignment, teacher career paths, and teacher learning. Apart from dealing with strategies that directly affect teachers’ work, learning, and growth, we will also examine ecological factors such as systems for teacher performance management, school and teacher leadership, teacher symbolism in society, teacher policy contextualization and coherence, and future-oriented teacher professionalism.

3. Other Key Events: Pre-Conference Workshops, Invited Symposia and DEC Meeting

Various key events in the council plan were held at the Focal Meeting. First was the WERA 10 Years Anniversary Ceremony held in Yasuda Auditorium at the first day, featuring a discussion among founding members Ingrid Gogolin, Eva Baker, Felice Levine and Manabu Sato, followed by a signing ceremony by representatives of member associations.

The second key event was the Pre-Conference Workshops held on August 4th, the day

before the Meeting. The following three workshops took place.

1. : Learning to design and implement Education Interventions
Barbara Schneider, Katariina Salmela-Aro, Stephan Vincent-Lancrin
2. Successful Academic Publishing: A Global Perspective
Patricia Alexander, Felice J. Levine
3. Observing Japanese classrooms with DVD and doing lesson study to build Learning Communities
Kiyomi Akita, Manabu Sato

The third key event was a young researchers' meeting (DEC), with 50 participants from around the world, followed by a party hosted by Yuto Kitamura for further interchange.

The fourth key event was the WERA Invited Symposia, a project of the council members and the IRN (International Research Network), including the following 15 symposia.

1. Advancing International Comparative Research on Teachers and Teacher Education Joanna Madalinska-Michalak (Chair), Barbara Schneider
2. International Perspectives of Teacher Education for Early Childhood Educators: Is there an emerging science? (IRN Symposium)
3. Improving science education: creativity, critical thinking and engagement science Barbara Schneider (Chair)
4. Presidential perspectives on the importance of research transcending national borders Felice Levine (Chair), Eva L. Baker, Carol D. Lee, Kris D. Gutiérrez, Barbara Schneider and Vanessa Siddle Walker
5. Communicative strategies used by effective teachers in mathematics and literacy instruction with students who are linguistically diverse Geraldine Mongilo, Funke Omidire
6. Issues and Possibilities of Liberal Arts Education in Asian Higher Education Manabu Sato, Joshua Mok Ka-ho, Yuto Kitamura, Aya Yoshida, Eva Baker, Tan Oon-Seng.
7. Post-secondary Education Education in Multiple Contexts: Policies, Issues and Future Development Yuet Mui Celeste Yuen, Catherine Millet
8. Towards Equity and Social Justice: Ethics & Aesthetics, Reflexivity, Empowerment and Innovation: Core Reference Points of Professionalization Research in Organizational Education (IRN Symposium) Susanne Maria Weber
9. The worldwide use of administrative and other forms of Big Data for evidence-based policy making Felice Levine
10. The International Civic and Citizenship Education Study Andrea Netten, Paulina Korsnakova, Makito Yurita
11. Modern studies of education in Russia: global trends and local contexts Sergey Kosaretsky, Aydar Kalimullin, Roza Valeeva
12. Global South Perspectives on Research on Didactics- Teaching and Learning and Teacher Knowledge

- Ernest Kofi Davis, Samuel Yaw Ampofo, Asante Somuah
13. What is changing the classroom internationally?: Measuring innovation for improvement
A. Lin Goodwin, Felice Levine
 14. European Educational Research: Diversities, Context and Challenges Ahead
Joanna Madalinska-Michalak, Mustafa Yunus Eryam
 15. Towards New Narratives of Democracy and Education: Challenges and Possibilities in the Asia Pacific
Moon Suk Hong, Sheng Yao Cheng, Keita Takayama

4. Other Reports and Reactions

The Focal Meeting was held with a rock-bottom participation price of \$100, with most of its funding coming from contributions obtained over two years. Organizations contributing to the funding of the Meeting included Gakushuin University, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, the Foundation for the Advancement of Juvenile Education in Japan, Spring Nature, Kadokawa Dwango Education Corporation, Tokyo Shoseki Co. Ltd, the Kyoto Forum, and the Labo International Exchange Foundation, with additional support from the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Once again, we are very grateful for the help received, in particular the support of the Ministry.

As indicated above, the Meeting was held on a scale far beyond any predictions or expectations, and left participants and others extremely satisfied. An overview of the Meeting appeared in a full-page article in the *Yomiuri Shimbun* on September 27th (as an advertising article for Gakushuin University), taking full advantage of the opportunity to inform the populace about the activities of global and national educational associations.

Finally, the members of the Organizing Committee were essential in making the Meeting happen. Formed in October 2017 with 12 members (chair, 3 vice-chairs, secretary-general, 7 committee members) and two secretarial staff, it worked for almost two years and was additionally supported by the hard work of 80 volunteers, undergraduate and graduate students from Gakushuin University, the University of Tokyo, Sophia University, Oberlin University, Keio University, and Tsukuba University, crossing boundaries between institutions to work together and make the Focal Meeting a success.