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Guest Editorial: A Non-thematic Issue

Péter Bagoly-Simó/Institute of Geography, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Introduction

Dear readers of RIGEO,

Welcome to a non-thematic issue on geography education. The rationale behind such an unusual approach is threefold. First, thematic approaches tend to keep manuscripts within a specific framework of schools of thoughts or methods. The papers collected in this issue reach beyond the limits of mainstream scholarship on selected aspects of geography education. They do so by considering—in addition to the mainstream discourse—scholarship published in other languages than English. It was my intention to support the authors in giving voice to knowledge normally accessible to specific communities. Second, authors participating in an issue often feel the need to conform to specific editorial aims and objectives. In doing so, result presentation might experience some alterations according to editorial requirements and needs. The papers published in this issue were free from such constraints. Third, the authors raise issues that might seem unrelated, yet they reflect research needs and interests of specific communities of geography educators at a certain moment. In contrast to regular issues, the paper presented here were developed, reviewed, and, finally, published at the same time.

Insights

Ingrid Hemmer and Michael Hemmer explore the relationship between teacher and student interest in topics and regions. Research in German geography education on interest became relevant during the 1990s within the movement towards more student-centered school geography. Quantitative in nature, the study is the only longitudinal work of large scale carried out in German geography education. Earlier findings (Hemmer & Hemmer, 2010) had an impact on both academic research and teaching (e.g. textbook and educational material development). The findings of the 2015 time of inquiry showed that the significantly higher interest in topics teachers displayed only partially corresponded to those of students. In addition, both groups were more interested in Western regions as opposed to Eastern ones. Given the longitudinal nature of the study, the authors reflect on these results in light of previous inquiries (1995 and 2005) and conclude that interest in Eastern regions remained unchanged, while environmental issues experienced a decrease. The latter finding is particularly interesting as German school geography and geography education rely on the paradigm of human-environment interaction and prioritize (an often normative) Education for Sustainable Development.

In many countries and regions, standardization became part of the transition from a Future 1 type curriculum to a competence-based Future 2 curriculum (Young & Muller, 2010). The community of geography educators reflected on various aspects of standardization both in national contexts (Haubrich, 2008; Bednarz et al., 2014) and in international comparative manner (Butt & Lambert, 2014). Andreas Schöps takes a

closer look at the state of standard implementation into lower secondary geography in the 16 German federal states eleven years after the Educational Standards in Geography for the Intermediate School Certificate (DGfG, 2014) were published. Collected with a research tool designed for implementation analysis, the results reflect a gradual implementation process across the states. Still, one of the most striking findings is the willingness of state-level curriculum-makers to implement non-binding standards without little adaptation.

Matthias Kowasch explores the representation of resource exploitation and consumption in German geography textbooks. Overall, the paper follows the tradition of content analysis in textbook research, a rather undertheorized field (Bagoly-Simó, 2014). However, the study breaks with the tradition of focusing on either content or competence acquisition. The author not only discusses the representation of theories (Resource Curse Thesis and Actor Analysis), he also focuses on the topic's contribution to Education for Sustainable Development. The results are hardly satisfying due to a number of reasons. Viewed in light of decades of work in Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development in Germany, of special concern is the finding that most tasks merely contribute to awareness raising—the aim of early Environmental Education.

Research on misconceptions and conceptual change enjoys growing interest among geography educators. Influenced by the model of educational reconstruction (Kattmann et al, 1997), several studies explored misconceptions connected to physical-geographical processes and structures, such as the greenhouse effect, global warming, water springs, deserts or plate tectonics (e.g. Reinfried et al., 2015). However, research on topics belonging to human geography carried out within this theoretical framework faces serious challenges. The contribution of Anett Kádár and Andrea Farsang to this field is special in many ways. First, the theoretical framework complements the mainstream by particular theories and results coming from Hungary. In doing so, the paper distances itself from the discourse in conceptual change research that quite often claims universal relevance and applicability. Second, the authors worked with students of both secondary and tertiary level. In doing so, they raise questions regarding the dynamics of misconceptions. Third, the comparative glance is a refreshing addition to the existing scholarship.

The paper by Caitlin Finlayson, Meredith Gregory, Clara Ludtke, Christian Meoli, and Michael Ryan explores some possibilities of student-led research. Using food preferences and food waste as a case study, the authors argue that involving students into research projects or developing projects with students offers both a deeper understanding of how spatial problems can be solved and facilitates a much better understanding of geography's nature. As geography education in the German-speaking countries dedicates little attention to higher education, the paper is a welcome addition to this issue that points out much needed research in specific regional communities of geography education.

Horizons

The five papers of this issue explore quite different aspects of geography education. What might seem arbitrary at first, actually offers insight into additional perspectives, theories, and practices. It is the aim of this issue to open up new horizons by stressing the importance of work published in other languages and under slightly different (theoretical) frameworks. It will be of great value if these articles help to generate further research and initiate dialogue on the established.

Finally, this issue of *RIGEO* concludes with Simon Catling's Book Review of Colin Brock's (2016) recent publication *Geography of Education: Scale, Space and Location in the Study of Education*.

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