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## **Sociology of Education Research Network (RN 10)**

### **European Sociological Association**

#### **Biennial Report**

**September 2015 – September 2017**

#### **Introduction**

The Sociology of Education Research Network aims at enhancing cooperation among sociologists of education in Europe. European countries nowadays face many changes in the functioning of educational systems. Increasing diversity is generally considered one of the main challenges. Moreover, there is a continuing expansion, with outcomes that are equally positive and negative for specific social groups and for societies at large. Investigating these processes, with the objective to preserve social cohesion and stability, is one of the most important tasks of current educational sociology. The aim of the Research Network Sociology of Education (RN10) is to provide a forum for a variety of educational research, ranging from broad comparative research to everyday practices and processes in school, at all levels of formal education.

We are interested more particularly in the following issues (not exhaustive):

- Theoretical developments in Sociology of Education
- Comparisons of educational systems
- Education and citizenship
- Expansion and transformation of Higher Education
- (Higher) education and the labour market
- Changes in education
- Education and transition in Europe
- Social justice, democracy and equality in education
- Making differences and bridging differences
- Educational attainment and family relations
- Social divisions (ethnicity, class, gender) and inequality

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## **Activities in the reported period**

### **1. Organisation of the midterm conference**

#### **Education and Empowerment: Theories and Practices**

**Università Cattolica del Sacro cuore, Milan, Italy, 12 - 13 September 2016**

The call for papers for the midterm conference of the ESA-network Sociology of Education was distributed broadly, mainly electronically. We received 98 abstracts, of which 22 were rejected as these did not fit the theme of the conference. The others were accepted either for a paper presentation or for a poster presentation.

The conference lasted two days and consisted of 15 sessions. There were 78 participants. In total, 63 papers were presented and discussed circumstantially, and 9 were presented shortly in a distributed papers session. There was much interest in the papers and the discussion that followed with the public was lively and very informative. The fact that participants came from different countries in the world was an added value of the conference, which enriched the discussion a lot. Participants felt that the programme was successful and enjoyed the scientific and the social part. Afterwards we received very positive reactions of participants who let us know to have built very interesting new contacts, and to have been inspired for their own research.

Members of the coordinating board who were present were active in the contacting the participants and helping with the overall organization of the conference on the spot. Additionally, information was given at the end about our Research Network and participants were encouraged to join the ESA and send an abstract for the ESA 13<sup>th</sup> conference in Athens.

We are grateful and thankful for the help we received from the Università Cattolica del Sacro cuore in Milan, and from ESA that made the organization of the conference possible.

### **2. Sociology of Education RN10 at ESA 13<sup>th</sup> Conference in Athens 29 August-1 September 2017**

The RN sociology of Education had 33 sessions covering all the time slots in the conference programme. About 120 presenters made an oral presentation and about 20 colleagues gave a short paper at 4 round table sessions; this was a new construction of presentation and admittedly went quite well as chairs and participants reported to the chair of RN.

Members of the Coordinating Board issued the call for papers and made the abstract selection from more than 200 submissions; in total 160 participants were registered to the ESA conference; it is worth noting that the presenters, whose abstracts were rejected (19) were still registered to the conference.

Members of CB assisted in preparing the conference programme and chaired most of the sessions during the conference. Because of the bulk of sessions (33) other colleagues outside the RN were invited to chair sessions and who were very successful in their assignment. Some of them during the business meeting were elected as members of the next CB (2017-19).

The overall assessment was that it was a fruitful meeting generating 'food for thought' and facilitating further contacts among junior and senior researchers and faculty members.

### **3. Communication**

Information on the activities of the RN is widely distributed via Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1411403725748094/>) and through our mailing list. Currently (8/11/2017) the Facebook group of our network counts 295 members. The group is mainly used to spread information on upcoming events and conferences, and to share calls for papers.

### **4. Publications related to activity of SoE RN**

There is an upcoming special issue of AISHE-J: The All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and European Sociological Association (ESA) Sociology of Education Research Network (RN10). This Joint Issue is entitled "Higher Education, Inclusivity and Organizational Change" and will be guest edited by RN10 Co Co-ordinator Dr. Bernadette Brereton. The issue will examine the complex relationship between inclusivity and organizational change at higher level. Key themes of relevance to the topic are: change as a means of empowerment; the personal and professional aspects of development; and inclusivity from the European perspective and will be published on 28th February, 2018.

### **5. Action to be taken to improve participation of PhD students and early career researchers**

We encourage PhD-students and early career researchers to take part in our conferences, as ESA Conferences form a great opportunity for younger scholars to present their work and establish links and partnerships for international cooperation. At our midterm conferences we reserve places for PhD-students with none or limited funds, who are exempted from the conference fee giving thus opportunity to young scholars to present their work.

### **6. Actions to be taken to expand membership, especially from countries with overall weaker ESA membership, also attracting members from outside Europe**

We have no special policy to invite scholars from outside Europe, but we are open for cooperation and during our midterm conferences as well as in the last ESA Conference there were several presentations given by colleagues outside Europe.

### **7. Collaboration within ESA with other RNs?**

At the last ESA-conference in Athens a joint session was set up with RN 13 (joint session on cyberbullying). Informal contacts between members of different RN coordinating boards exist. In general, we are open for cooperation. In addition, members of the coordinating board present their work during conferences in other RN's.

### **8. Action to be taken to improve opportunities for publication of papers presented at the SoE RN meetings and sessions:**

We worked on the subject of publishing successfully. Details are provided above (heading number 4). It is our aim to develop further such opportunities.

### **9. Plans for further activities of SoE RN?**

For the next two years a general planning is as follow:

1. to keep the Facebook group up-to-date by regularly sharing interesting information
2. to organise a midterm conference in London, UK
3. to seek opportunities for collaboration with other scientific organizations
4. to organise the sessions of the RN during the next ESA Conference in Paris.

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