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On the notion of education policy: Mapping its landscape and scope

1 On the notion of education policy

Education policy is a complex policy field that falls on the borderlines between education, economic policy and social policy. According to Callewaert (2006, 767), *policy* is 'a set of guidelines within a 'governing text'. At the same time, policy is a product and a process that 'is still being made, and re-made as it is being implemented' (Bowe et al. 1992: 14).

Policy is closely linked with the notion of power, which in turn can be defined as 'a relation between people, and is expressed in simple symbolic notation' (Dahl 1957, 201).

In the diverse constructions of policy, Jones (2013, 3ff., see also Ball 1994; Bell & Stevenson 2006, 17f.) identifies four types of key themes in the field of education policy: policy as text, policy as values-laden actions, policy as process and policy as discursive.

- Policy as text is based on the assumption that 'policy directly determines practices' (Jones 2013, 3). This understanding of policy focuses on the way in which policy texts are developed and implemented, i.e. 'how the policy is written and read' (Bell & Stevenson 2006, 17).

- Policy as the operationalisation of values and values-laden actions. This understanding of policy is based on the question what education is about, whom it is for and who decides on it. From this perspective, policy is part of its context.

- Policy as process. From this perspective, policy is a 'cycle of decisions' (Ham and Hill 1984) that helps analysing 'how actors and dynamics within implementation affect education policy outcomes' (Jones 2013, 8; see also Sabatier 1986).

- Policy as discursive. Here, policy is understood as 'mobilising specific 'discourses' within or across its various texts and processes' (Jones 2013, 10; see also Ball & Exley 2010). In this approach, the focus is on the policy contexts, and the language of policy texts which are being traced back to their sources in spoken language or social life. Here, policy is seen as 'representing and refracting reality' (Jones 2013, 10).

Still today, there is no unified view on what politics and policy are and that takes account of all these facets (Bohlinger 2015). Against this background, it seems that political science has

turned away from describing the 'true nature' of what policy and politics are. Instead, policy analysis has emerged and at its core is the question 'what governments do, why they do it, and what difference it makes' (Dye, 1978: 3). This involves adopting a system-theoretical perspective to analyse policy in terms of three dimensions: institutional (polity), substantive (policy) and processual (politics) (Hartwich, 1985; Windhoff-Héritier, 1987).

From this perspective:

− *Polity* refers to the forms or formal dimension of political life, i.e. state structures, measures of compliance and conditions underlying political action, as well as the relevant norms and institutions. Polity is the prerequisite for policy *and* the result of *and* the prerequisite for social change.

− *Policy* refers to the content of political decisions (policy areas), i.e. causes, aims and effects of political activities. The analysis of such policy areas (e.g. health, education, and social policy) is conducted from the perspective of the actors involved.

− *Politics* refers to the processes involved in representing and mediating between social, institutional and individual interests and resolving conflicts arising from them.

Today, political science has developed numerous categories for policy analysis which are essentially intended to explain governance and the possibilities, logics and instruments associated with it (e.g. Lowi 1972; Howlett & Ramesh, 1993; for overviews see Bohlinger 2015; Jones 2013).

Against this background, it is a central concern of this volume to understand the process of policy making in the field of education. Bell and Stevenson (2006, 19) have described the process of policy making as 'fuzzy, messy and complex' since it is based on 'compromise, negotiation, dispute and struggle'. This volume seeks to shed light on these processes. It analyses challenges stemming from the need to design, implement, govern and reform political processes that are related to educational issues. It deals with the effects and heterogeneity of educational pathways such as general, vocational, academic and adult education. The contributions address three core questions: How are education systems affected by social, economic and political changes over the time span? How do they respond to these developments? Which is the best way to structure, govern and reform an education system in times of global competition, political insecurities and pressure to deliver labour-market ready qualifications?

Mapping the landscape and scope of education policy

This international volume brings together contributions from multiple research disciplines and addresses four themes in education policy:

- Education policy in higher education

- Education policy in secondary and vocational education and training

- Reforming education policy

- Education policy at the crossroads of labour markets and the economy.

Education policy in higher education

Globalisation has been increasingly central to the development of the higher education sector worldwide, though taking different forms and influencing higher education reforms in different countries in different ways. The first section of this book, Education Policy in Higher Education, discusses issues intimate to the contemporary state of higher education governance across a number of countries, including Australia, Korea, Japan, Kuwait and Vietnam, within this globalising context. The collection of eight chapters in this section maps the terrain of higher education policy in the context of reduced public funding for higher education in some countries, of higher education policy borrowing in others, and of the influence of various economic, political and social factors on higher education governance. The chapters together tackle various aspects of education policy in higher education, such as the mode of teaching and learning, curriculum knowledge, university autonomy, and assessment practice, among others. Together, they also take into account the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, from policy actors, deans and academics, to university students.

Gavin Moodie's chapter opens this section by providing a critical analysis of the progress and prospects of the contemporary online teaching and learning revolution in higher education. The promotion of technology in education, the author maintains, is often intended to improve the efficacy whilst cutting the costs of education. The chapter frames the issues of online and face-to-face learning modes from an historical perspective, by examining key developments in teaching and learning, from the advent of printing, the blackboard, and classroom teaching, to the now online Learning Management System. Against that background, the author examines pedagogy, i.e., different forms and aspects of learning and teaching, to gain more insight on how certain technologies are incorporated in higher education but not others , and why some new developments in higher education transform its structure and processes and other do not. . By looking back in order to look forward, the chapter argues that unless the technology and pedagogy of mediated education improve or are better understood, face to face education is likely to continue to be the dominant mode of formal education.

Part of the debate about the economics of higher education goes further than the debate on the mode of teaching reforms. It extends to the role of governments in regulating higher education governance reforms in a globalising context. This is featured in a number of chapters in this section. The chapter by *Peter Woelert* discusses the trends and tensions in the system-level governance of Australian universities. The author provides a critical analysis of university autonomy and governmental control in Australia, which to him resonate with the trends of New Public Management (NPM)-influenced university reforms originating from the Anglosphere. Reflecting NPM ideas and principles, these reforms were driven to increase the efficiency and accountability, hence autonomy, of these public institutions and their operations, primarily focusing on 'value for money'. The chapter points out that in the case of Australia, the reforms are characterised by what he calls "governmentally prescribed and controlled performance-based governance" in various areas including research, and reduced public funding for universities. This goes alongside with an increase in universities' managerial and financial autonomy whilst there is a decrease in the other dimensions of university autonomy: policy, governance and intervention. The paper highlights the tension created by the coexistence of increasing managerial autonomy constrained by increasing performance based control. Together with the Commonwealth Government's reduction of funding for universities, this has constrained universities in what they could do. The chapter argues that the current developments with regard to system-led governance of Australian universities seem to go against the conventional interest of universities in terms of the

traditional sense of academic autonomy and with regard to several dimensions of university autonomy.

The chapter by *Ahoud Alasfour* continues by discussing the trend of higher education privatisation in Kuwait, exploring how global processes influence the production of national policies in higher education in this Gulf state. Whilst it may be common elsewhere that the adoption of privatisation policies is due to a lack of public funding, that is not the case in Kuwait, one of the wealthiest nations in the world. Through the chapter, the author reveals that globalisation has influenced national policy making for the higher education sector through 'soft governance' tools, such as networking, consultations and advisory groups. Based on empirical research using interviews with Kuwaiti policy actors from public and private sectors within the higher education (HE) system, the study identifies four major external forces shaping the privatisation of Kuwait's HE system. The first shaping force refers to the internationalisation of Western-trained Kuwaiti policy actors, being open to global experiences and practices, and establishing networks that promote certain ideologies for HE. The second is the influence of the regional trend of proliferating privatisation of HE across the countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council. The third is the nation's membership in international organisations and its endorsement of international agreements, such as the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS). Finally, it is Kuwait's increasing need for global recognition of its education that has been found to steer its HE reform by adopting a privatisation strategy. The author argues that the impact of policy borrowing or policy transfer on HE policy decision making in an increasingly globalising environment explains the distinct adoption of a privatisation trend in Kuwait.

In her chapter titled 'The profession-oriented curriculum in Vietnamese higher education', *Thi Kim Quy Nguyen* investigates a recent reform in HE curriculum in Vietnam. This reform is characterised by the adoption of profession-oriented higher education (POHE) curriculum, fitting within a project funded by the Dutch government. Unlike the case of Kuwait as discussed in Alasfour's chapter, Nguyen argues that the adoption of POHE curriculum policies in Vietnam was intended to promote a quality HE system to enable future Vietnamese generations to be innovative in contributing to the country's economic growth and competitiveness. In examining curricular knowledge as the basis for POHE curriculum policies, the author proposes a social realist approach to understanding curricular knowledge underlying Vietnam's POHE agenda. From the findings, the author argues that POHE curriculum is underpinned by instrumental and constructivist assumptions about knowledge, shifting the power away from the academics and professional specialists towards other stakeholders in the business sectors – and going against the intended goals of the reform agenda. The chapter presents a critical analysis of the POHE curriculum policies whilst providing a rich discussion of different curricular knowledge traditions.

Dong Kim's chapter continues with critical analysis of the challenges in the area of governance that academic deans face in the contemporary higher education context in Korea. In consonance with Peter Woelert's observation of the trends and tensions relating to NPM-influenced university reforms in the Australian context, Kim's chapter identifies many points of conflict between the Korean Ministry of Education (MOE) and universities, universities and academics, and among academics, within the current reforms in Korean higher education sector, as perceived by academic deans and professors. In Korea, the reform agenda emphasises changing university governance along the lines of NPM, as in Australia. The chapter starts with an historical overview of the development of significant higher education policies introduced by successive Korean governments, then presents an interpretation of

policies from the perspectives of academic deans as recorded in interviews. The study concludes that the identified techniques of governance associated with NPM, such as corporatisation, marketisation, diversification of funding, enhancement of competition and performance regime, may increase the efficiency and economic accountability of some universities. However, the study reveals that this mode of governance, which Kim calls "steering at a distance" by the MOE, may explain Korean academics' perceptions of being less appreciated whilst losing more of their professional autonomy.

The chapter by *Fumiko Konno* centres on the model of 'Faculty Development' in Japanese universities. Faculty Development (FD) may be known as 'academic development', 'staff development', 'professional development', or 'educational development' in other countries. Initially, FD was adopted as part of 'voluntary education reform' by a number of individual academics in Japan in the 1980s to improve their quality of teaching in higher education. According to Konno, at that time the FD concept originated from research on university teaching and education improvement initiatives from the United States (US) and European universities. Subsequently, since 2005, government policy has officially made FD compulsory across Japanese universities through the provision of a series of standards for the establishment of graduate schools, universities, and junior colleges. The author argues that once it was made compulsory, the concept of FD has triggered much debate regarding its definitions at the policy and practice levels, including misconceptions of the concept. The author argues that simply improving instruction, which is the narrow definition of FD, is not likely to enhance the quality of education at the institutional level. With the current revisiting of the concept in the US and European context, and through analysis of the development of FD in Japan, the author calls for the broadening and rethinking of the concept, and better awareness on the part of academics of FD, so that FD can become more supportive of academics at every stage of their career whilst contributing to improving the quality of education.

In the next chapter in this section, *Silvia McCormack* continues with an investigation into the ways in which the current economic ideology within the Australian higher education system has shaped the assessment practice within a mid-sized Australian university. In line with the discussion in Peter Woelert's chapter about Australian higher education governance, McCormack's chapter reveals how universities' efficiency measures on their operations, in responding to reduced public funding from the Commonwealth government, impact upon student assessment task design. Based on interviews with academics and university administrators, her study finds that assessment tasks were designed mainly for pragmatic reasons, such as allocated workload hours for assessment, tutoring budgets and class size, rather than for pedagogical reasons to promote deep learning opportunities for students. The chapter identifies the contradiction between government policy, university strategic plans and curriculum initiatives to highlight the value of 'authentic' and real life assessment experiences versus the efficiency measures typical of the 'conservative modernisation' trend which go against the achievement of the assessment goals.

In the last chapter of this section, *Thi Kim Anh Dang* focuses on an English language teacher education program at a leading Vietnamese university to explore higher education policies in practice. Teacher education (TE) in Vietnam in general has been largely framed by the unified national curricular framework, as can also be deduced from Thi Kim Quy Nguyen's chapter. This however is not the case in this study. Dang's chapter argues that the contemporary English language TE in Vietnam is a site of contradiction between state control and the country's vigorously growing market economy influenced by globalisation. Drawing

on interviews with 20 pre-service teachers within the TE program and policy documents, the study points out that within this Vietnamese context, especially at this leading university, which enjoys a high level of autonomy in shaping its curriculum, a complex network of socio-cultural-economic-political factors and multiple local, national and global actors govern the practices at the chalkface of these pre-service teachers. The findings, the author maintains, could provide valuable implications for policymakers in higher education in general, and TE specifically, to be cognisant of the complex influential networks beyond the institutional level, so that the TE and HE system can keep up with the rapidly changing economy in Vietnam.

Education policy in general and Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The next book section, Education Policy in General and Vocational Education and Training, focuses on the developments of education policy in senior secondary schools as well as in the vocational sector. This book section spans findings from Australia, Denmark, France, Germany and Spain pointing out that general, vocational and higher education pathways face similar challenges which are all related to forming and governing education policy that allows for providing labour-market relevant qualifications.

At the core of the contributions are school-to-work transitions and the role and reputation of vocational education and training. The section is opened by two chapters which are based on an historical analysis of policy reform in Australian secondary schools. They reveal the complex political and economic nature of general education. The chapter 'Elite, democratic, economic: Three phases in the development of Australian senior secondary certificates' by *Glenn Savage* analyses the evolution of senior secondary certificates in historical perspective in the Australian states of Queensland and Victoria. Once exclusively designed for university preparation, senior secondary certificates are now assumed to serve multiple purposes. Though both states have undergone many reforms with respect to the certification systems, the driving forces behind the reforms are very similar in both states. Starting from the mid-19th century, the author identifies three phases of the evolution of senior certificates: elite, democratic and economic. The first phase is imprinted by direct and stable university control over senior secondary certification. The second phase is characterised by major social and political developments resulting in multiple pathways and certificates such as the Tertiary Orientation Program, the Vocational Orientation Program and the Technical Year 12 in technical schools. However, an alternative view of this shift emphasised the constrictiveness and inequitability of this highly differentiated system. The driving forces behind this phase were the emergence of mass secondary education and a democratic turn in education resulting in a search for alternative pathways in education for increasing numbers of age cohorts. The third phase is a result of an economic turn in the 1980s and is linked with what the author calls 'an ideological shift to the right'. The abolition of technical schools in the 1980s, together with the upcoming economic rationalisation of education and threats of unemployment, led to an intensified political debate in the 1990s. At its core was the problem that the education system had failed to provide the labour market with relevant skills and qualifications. By the end of the 1990s the 'new economic language in education' (referring to output, human capital, power etc.) had reached the education system and resulted in an expansion of VET subjects and pathways in Australia's senior secondary education

landscape. Today, a new national phase of senior certificates is evolving which is aiming at a re-emergence of national certificates and which is fusing with the ongoing third phase.

In the contribution 'Separating the sheep and the goats - vocational programs in Victorian schools', *John Polesel* examines the establishment and demise of technical schools in the Australian state of Victoria, including the ideas of evolution of senior secondary school purposes and resulting changing curricula.

The contribution starts with the establishment of State Secondary Schools at the beginning of the twentieth century when the Commonwealth and State governments were in need of young persons with scientific and technological competencies. The contribution covers two periods in history, one at the beginning of the twentieth century when high schools and technical schools emerged, and one in the late 1980s when technical schools were abolished and new comprehensive senior secondary school certificates emerged. Still today, vocational and applied learning have a poor reputation and a low status in the hierarchy of the education system. It remains difficult for developing schools and curricula to find a balance between (narrow) vocational and (broader) generic competencies. In this view, schools have a responsibility to not only provide labour market-relevant skills but also to form responsible citizens who have all relevant knowledge and skills to understand and participate in society.

Though the following chapter does not focus on Australia, *Thomas Deissinger and Mariska Ott* identify similar problems for France and Germany. Their contribution focuses on the shift towards an academisation of vocational qualifications (particularly in Germany) and – at the same time – the trend towards vocationalisation of academic qualifications (particularly in France). At the crossroads of these two opposed trends is the development of so-called hybrid qualifications, a type of qualifications that is meant to motivate more young people to choose a vocationally-oriented higher education track. This trend seems to be a paradigmatic case of governing education at the crossroads of labour market needs and the striving for higher education attainment rates. It reflects the wish to improve the reputation of vocational education and training and to open up pathways to higher education while at the same time satisfying the demand for academic education. Similarly to the findings for Australia (see above), the authors identify a paradox they describe as vocationalisation of the general and generalisation of the vocational. Again, at the core of this paradox is the challenge to design educational programmes that provide labour-market relevant skills and a sound basis for an individual's personal, social and labour-market-oriented development.

The following two chapters, which evaluate the Spanish and Danish systems, illustrate current challenges each system faces as a result of changing political and economic circumstances. The contribution by *Concepción Maiztegui-Oñate* focuses on a new phenomenon known as 'immigrant Spain' that has transformed the demography of the country and enforced the education policy reform to address the educational pathways of a large number of Spanish students of foreign origin. Against this background, many of the young immigrants have been incorporated into so-called social guarantee vocational programmes in which there is a clear over-representation of youths from immigrant families, most of them from Maghreb, Latin America and Romania. The aim of these programmes is to provide basic vocational training and to improve students' qualification levels and their life paths. The author points out the difficult role of (vocational) schools and institutions which, in parallel, have to save students from failure and offer assistance in the transition process. Though Spain has achieved clear progress in developing and implementing (education) policies to support its heterogeneous population and to integrate students with an immigrant

background into the education and training system and despite a common first language, there remains a challenge to recognise the knowledge and skills the students have acquired prior to their arrival in Spain.

The last contribution in this section deals with dropout in Danish VET and its prevention. *Christian Helms Jorgensen* describes 'shifting problems and shifting policies to reduce students' drop-out' in the Danish system of vocational education. Drop-out rates from upper-secondary education have much increased due to longer and non-linear school-to-work transitions of young people in most Western countries. Though raising completion rates and thus preventing drop-out are high on the political agenda, it remains unclear what kind of problem drop-out is and how to reduce it. Two theoretical approaches frame this problem, a person-centred approach (young people are disadvantaged due to their personal characteristics) and a systemic approach (drop-out is caused by a failure of the education system), and drop-out is the result of the interaction of a number of factors and conditions of both perspectives.

While drop-out has been on the political agenda for decades, the theoretical approaches to the phenomenon have shifted massively over the course of time. Once a problem that was seen as an individual's failure and a wrong vocational choice, it was then seen as a structural problem of education systems, curricula that do not meet labour market needs and a lack of training placements. Though numerous policies were developed to prevent drop-out, many of them are based on opposite framings. The inconsistency of policies is a result of unintended consequences and side effects. It seems necessary to take the complexity of drop-out more seriously by focusing not only on deficient young people and low performing schools but rather to address some of the underlying social conditions and inequalities that contribute to drop-out.

Reforming education policy

The year 2016 marks 25 years since many countries of the former Soviet Union gained the independence, following in the footsteps of Central Europe. The collapse of communism and the disintegration of the Soviet bloc brought an unprecedented wave of economic, political and social reforms and required a paradigm shift also in education policy. Section three looks at how some countries transitioned from a communist type of education system, and how the European Union's policies affected the trajectory of their reforms. It deals with issues concerning governing and reforming education policy in post-communist space.

The section opens with *Malgorzata Klatt* and *Kate Elliott's* chapter: Education reforms and youth transitions in Central Europe – a case of Poland. It analyses the educational transformations in Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

This chapter identifies three main 'transition phases' - 'deconstruction', 'reconstruction' and 'Europeanisation' characteristic for most post-communist European countries. The detailed exploration of Poland's education system which goes back into history enabled the authors to trace the factors and motivations impacting different transformation phases and the results of these reforms. Poland is the largest of the post-communist Central European countries and has stood out in recent years for its students' consistency in achieving high results in the international rankings. Nevertheless, like many other European counties it still struggles with high youth unemployment, 'brain drain' and growing nationalism.

In the following chapter, *Vidmantas Tūtlys, Lina Kaminskienė* and *Jonathan Winterton* explore patterns of application of policy borrowing and policy learning approaches in the design and implementation of initial vocational policy and instruments in Lithuania since the 1990s. They identify several periods of policy change driven by the needs of radical post-Soviet system transformation and later more gradual adjustment of policies due to the EU accession. The Lithuanian example illustrates a growing policy learning trend rather than policy borrowing and presents a case of a country which is negotiating its national policies despite a complex global, EU and labour market forces pressure.

The third chapter in this section: Echoes of Europeanisation? Education as development and international integration in Mongolia by *Kate Elliott* contributes to our understanding of the current policy reform trends in post-Soviet space with the example of Mongolia. It builds on the concepts introduced in two previous chapters related to policy learning, policy borrowing and the forces of Europeanisation, with specific attention to language, curriculum standards and post-compulsory education policy development. The chapter provides evidence of small-scale influence of the EU policies and standards on Mongolia and illustrates in detail the complexity of reforming an education system in partnership with foreign interest groups and under international pressure.

Education policy at the crossroads of labour markets and economy

The final book section: Education policy at the crossroads of labour markets and economy, tackles issues related to improving the relationship between education and labour markets by focusing on the complexity of the relationship between work and education. The first chapter in this section, by *Stephanie Allais* titled Occupational standards in the English-speaking world: a product for export?, attempts to establish why the Anglo-model of occupational standards has not been successful in effectively linking qualifications and labour market needs. Although the author has established several interrelated problems through her detailed analysis of the UK and Australian systems related to occupational standards, this model seems to be very influential internationally. This is problematic as some developing countries which adopted the Anglo-model may not be able to find meaningful solutions for their weak systems.

The theme of relationship between education and labour markets is continued in the next chapter by *Leesa Wheelahan,* who considers the role of qualifications in addressing the 'skills problem' in the labour market. With the example of Australia, she explains how the narrow understandings of the roles and purposes of postsecondary education qualifications undermine their relationship to the labour market. Three core purposes of qualifications (to enter or upgrade in the labour market; to support access to higher level studies; and, to support social inclusion and social mobility) and their relation to occupations are explored in the light of the 'transitions systems' concept. The chapter shows that the role and purposes of qualifications depend on the specific nature of the 'transition system' but are also linked to specific occupations. The author suggests that policy frameworks should take into account not only the educational qualifications but distinguish between the types of educational pathways that link several sectors of education to the type of occupation.

The employability skills within the context of vocational education in Australia are further explored by *Allie Clemans* and *Anne Newton* in the chapter: Framing employability: a case

from Australia. The authors look back to the 1980s and how various policy initiatives and government reviews have shaped the development of employability skills since then. Several core messages about their purpose, character and function are established within the four phases of the development of employability skills in Australia. The authors also analyse how this particular evolution of employability skills is aligned with changes in the labour market in Australia. The authors suggest expanding the definition of 'employability skills' to recognise their connectedness to life transition points, by including other skills such as career self-management skills for example.

The issues of skills are further analysed in the next chapter by *Manuel Souto Otero:* Validation of non-formal and informal learning in Europe: research, policies, legitimacy and survival. The recognition of skills gained in non-formal and informal ways has been recognised as highly important, especially for individuals without any opportunity to participate in the workforce Manuel Souto Otero found, however, that there had been a relatively low volume of research on validation. The author focuses on the European Union's policy on validation and its discourse. Despite many criticisms, the EU has positioned itself as an influential actor in establishing arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and developing detailed recommendations for implementation by the member states.

The final chapter in the section, by *George Psacharopoulos*, originally published by the Brussels Economic Review, is worth re-visiting, as it considers the practical implications of the economics of education theory. The theoretical considerations and their implications for policy-making are directed towards bureaucrats responsible for educational planning, among others. Psacharopoulos also reflects on the influential role of international organisations in education policy-making. He argues that decentralization of education decision-making and the separation of financing from the provision may be the strongest but the hardest policy changes to implement.

3 Pushing forward the agenda for research on education policy

In this volume, we bring together multiple perspectives on education policy. More than twenty authors from all continents address recent developments in education policy at the crossroads of social, economic and cultural issues. The contributions address higher education, vocational/professional education, the returns of education, curriculum development, and the reform of education systems.

Though there is a great variety of ways in which education policy is researched, implemented, enacted and reformed, we find that some core developments and challenges are similar across countries and fields of education policy. And despite national diversities, many common social, economic and political characteristics and challenges can be found in all countries, as many education systems face the need to re-design, re-invent and reform their existing education systems and processes. At the core of these processes are:

- a striving for more competitiveness in the context of the effects of globalisation in higher education;

- a permanent tension between labour-market ready qualifications and personal development in vocational and professional education;

- an ongoing discussion about vocational and professional education as 'second chance' qualification;

- the search for the 'best' way of governing and steering education systems, borrowing education policies and developing labour force;

- a never-ending dispute about the value (and returns) of different forms and pathways of learning and qualification.

This book was constructed so as to provide an insight into these discussions and developments. However, its findings are far from providing final solutions. Instead, they clearly point to the need for more research in a field that is at the crossroads of so many different academic disciplines and policy fields. More research is needed on the questions of *who* is governing education policy, *why* and by *which* means. Particularly in times of massive shifts in demography, worldwide migration and mobility, national answers to these questions seem to be obsolete and call for a better understanding of the processes of policy transfer, policy borrowing, policy lending, and policy learning.

We hope that this book will help readers to better understand the processes of policy making, its theory, practice and outcomes. It aims at bridging the gap between the world of educational research and education policy. We hope that all readers will find it useful and inspiring.

Last but not least, we would like to take the opportunity to thank all the authors and reviewers for their tremendous work and patience in drafting, reviewing, revising, improving and finalising this book. It was a pleasure to work with them all in such a constructive and fruitful way.

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