

Commentary from the ESA Sociology of Education Research Network 10 Co-Ordinator*

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The Sociology of Education Research Network (RN10) of the European Sociological Association (ESA) is delighted to collaborate with our Irish colleagues in AISHE to produce this highly relevant and wide-ranging Joint Special Issue of AISHE-J and we congratulate our Vice Co-Ordinator Bernadette Brereton and her colleague Karen Dunne on their excellent work in bringing this joint special issue to publication.

Our network aims to enhance co-operation 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 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. Our expanding membership makes a strong contribution through publication, dissemination and conferences to a broad range of fields of enquiry including theoretical developments in education; comparisons of educational systems; education and citizenship; expansion, transformation and changes in higher education; (higher) education and the

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labour market; social justice, democracy and equality in education; educational attainment and family relations; and social divisions (ethnicity, class, gender) and inequality.

Every two years, our network organizes a midterm conference which this year takes place in August in London with the title 'Education and Social Cohesion'. The challenge for education to prepare young people for life in an increasingly diverse society is as pertinent as ever. European societies have become steadily more heterogeneous due to immigration, the incorporation of refugees and the fragmentation of traditional social classes into a plethora of social groups differing in education levels and lifestyles. Countries that have suffered disproportionately from the recent economic crisis have become more polarized. The education system at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary, is expected to socialize youngsters of all these different groups into the norms and values of society in order to retain social cohesion. This does not only concern integrating children of migrant origin but also enabling native majority children to engage with and manage cultural difference. However, over the last ten years or so, attention has increasingly focused on integration at the expense of "learning to live together", as governments have been quick to enlist schools in their strategies to counter alienation and radicalization among segments of the migrant population. Our mid-term conference aims to critically interrogate this recent trend and to explore all other issues related to the socialization function of education. We welcome all contributions that broadly address this theme.

Our next mid-term conference will take place in London on 30th and 31st of August, 2018 while the next ESA conference will be held in August 2019 in Manchester. More information on joining RN10 or hearing about our activities can be found at: <https://www.europeansociology.org/research-networks/rn10-sociology-education>.