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Edited by Mary Hamilton Bryan Maddox and Camilla Addey

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LITERACY AS NUMBERS

Researching the Politics and Practices of
International Literacy Assessment

Edited by **Mary Hamilton, Bryan Maddox** and **Camilla Addey**



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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Camilla Addey is a researcher in international educational assessments and global educational policy. She recently completed her PhD, which focused on the rationales for participation in international literacy assessments in Mongolia and Laos. Her current research enquires into PISA for Development from a governance perspective in lower- and middle-income countries. Her research has established International Assessment Studies as a field of enquiry. Dr Addey previously worked at UNESCO in the Literacy and Non-Formal Education section and taught English as a foreign language at the British Council in Rome and Paris. She is one of the directors of the Laboratory of International Assessment Studies. She is author of *Readers and Non-Readers*.

Tannis Atkinson completed her PhD at OISE, University of Toronto, after several decades' experience in adult literacy including as editor of the journal *Literacies*. Currently a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Sociology and Legal Studies at the University of Waterloo, her research focuses on the governing effects of literacy statistics in Canada, particularly how they are mobilised in social policies, and on how educators both comply with and resist policy imperatives. She is currently working on a book tentatively titled *Obligated to Read: Literacy, Coercion and Advanced Liberalism in Canada*.

Tonia Bieber is Postdoctoral Fellow in the Kolleg-Forschergruppe project 'The Transformative Power of Europe' at the Freie Universität Berlin. Previously she was a Senior Researcher in the research project on 'Internationalization of Education Policy' within the TranState Research Center 597 'Transformations of the State' at the University of Bremen. Specialising in international relations and comparative public policy, she has published widely in the field of European integration and internationalisation processes in social policy, especially education policy, in Western democracies. In particular, she is interested in policy diffusion and convergence research, as well as empirical research methods in this field. Tonia holds a PhD in Political Sciences from the University of Bremen and Jacobs University Bremen.

JD Carpentieri is a Lecturer in Adult Education at the Institute of Education, London, where he conducts research for the NRDC (National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy) and teaches a Masters module on international adult literacy policy. In addition to research and lecturing, he has contributed to a number of policy forums. This includes serving as Rapporteur for the European Union High Level Group of Experts on Literacy, a pan-European expert group charged with investigating and improving literacy policy.

Jeff Evans is Emeritus Reader in Adults' Mathematical Learning in the School of Science and Technology, Middlesex University, in London. His research interests include adult numeracy; mathematical thinking and emotion; images of mathematics in popular culture; public understanding of statistics. He has a lifelong commitment to numeracy, mathematics and statistics teaching to adults, with a focus on the range of methodologies used in social and educational research. From 2008 to 2013, he was a member of the Numeracy Expert Group, which was responsible for the design of the items used to measure adult numeracy in PIAAC. His recent activity includes talks, webinars and articles aiming to consider the relation of international surveys of adults to alternative policy discourses, and to facilitate access to, and critical engagement with, the results by researchers, practitioners and policy-makers.

Radhika Gorur is a Senior Research Fellow at the Victoria Institute, Victoria University, Australia. Her research has sought, broadly, to understand how some ideas and practices cohere, stabilise, gain momentum and make their way in the world. Her current research focuses on the ways in which numbers – particularly international comparative data – are being produced, validated, contested and used in contemporary education policy. Her research is driven by an impulse to engage in productive critique, going beyond deconstruction to create arenas in which diverse policy actors can engage in seeking ways to move forward. She uses assemblage and other concepts from Science and Technology Studies and Actor-Network Theory as the main analytical and methodological approaches in her research. She is one of the directors of the Laboratory of International Assessments for Research and Innovation.

Sotiria Grek is a Lecturer in Social Policy at the School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh. She works in the area of Europeanisation of education policy and governance with a particular focus on transnational policy learning, knowledge and governance. She has recently co-authored (with Martin Lawn) *Europeanising Education: Governing a New Policy Space* (Symposium, 2012) and co-edited (with Joakim Lindgren) *Governing by Inspection* (Routledge, 2015). She is currently writing a monograph on 'Educating Europe: EU Government, Knowledge and Legitimation' to be published by Routledge in 2015.

César Guadalupe completed his Education Doctorate and MA in Social and Political Thought at Sussex University. Dr Guadalupe is a lecturer and researcher at the Universidad del Pacífico (Peru) and non-Resident Fellow at the Brookings Institution (USA). Between 1992 and 2012 he worked on establishing connections between policy questions and research design, and between research results and decision-making

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processes in civil service institutions both in his home country (Peru) and at UNESCO. From 2007 to 2012 he led UNESCO's Literacy Assessment and Monitoring Programme (LAMP), conducting field tests in eight countries (ten languages) as well as four full implementations of the programme.

Mary Hamilton is Professor of Adult Learning and Literacy in the Department of Educational Research at Lancaster University. She is Associate Director of the Lancaster Literacy Research Centre and a founder member of the Research and Practice in Adult Literacy group. Her current research is in literacy policy and governance, socio-material theory, academic literacies, digital technologies and change. Her most recent book is *Literacy and the Politics of Representation* published by Routledge in 2012. Her co-authored publications include *Local Literacies* (with David Barton); *More Powerful Literacies* (with Lynn Tett and Jim Crowther); and *Changing Faces of Adult Literacy, Language and Numeracy: A Critical History of Policy and Practice* (with Yvonne Hillier). She is one of the directors of the Laboratory of International Assessment Studies.

Bob Lingard is a Professorial Research Fellow in the School of Education at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia, and is Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia. He researches sociology of education and education policy. He is an editor of the Journal *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, co-editor with Greg Dimitriadis of the Routledge New York book series, *Key Ideas and Education*. His most recent book (2014) is *Politics, Policies and Pedagogies in Education* (Routledge).

Bryan Maddox is a Senior Lecturer in Education and International Development at the University of East Anglia. He specialises in ethnographic and mixed methods research on globalised literacy assessments and the literacy practices of non-schooled adults. He has conducted ethnographic research on literacy assessment in Nepal, Bangladesh, Mongolia and Slovenia. With Esposito and Kebede he combined methods from ethnography and economics to develop new measures of functional adult literacy assessment and the assessment of literacy values. His ethnographies of assessment provide accounts of testing situations, and how standardised tests travel and are received across diverse cultural settings. His recent research collaborations 'inside the assessment machine' combine ethnographic accounts of assessment practice with large-scale psychometric data. He is one of the directors of the Laboratory of International Assessment Studies.

Kerstin Martens is Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of Bremen, Germany. Her research interests include theories of international relations, international organisations, global governance, and global public policy, in particular education and social policy. She heads the research project 'Internationalisation of Education Policy' located at the University of Bremen. She is co-editor of several books, including *Internationalization of Education Policy?* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), *Education in Political Science: Discovering a Neglected Field* (Routledge, 2009). She holds a PhD in Social and Political Sciences from the European University Institute, Florence, Italy.

Gemma Moss is Professor of Education at the University of Bristol. Her main research interests include literacy policy; gender and literacy; the shifting relationships between

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policy-makers, practitioners and stakeholders that are re-shaping the literacy curriculum; and the use of research evidence to support policy and practice. She specialises in the use of qualitative methods in policy evaluation, and innovative mixed methods research designs. She has recently co-edited a Special Issue of the journal *Comparative Education* with Harvey Goldstein. Other publications include ‘Policy and the Search for Explanations for the Gender Gap in Literacy Attainment’ and *Literacy and Gender: Researching Texts, Contexts and Readers*.

Dennis Niemann is Research Fellow in the project ‘Internationalization of Education Policy’ within the TranState Research Center at the University of Bremen. His research interests include the internationalisation of education policy and the role of international organisations in global governance. In his recently completed PhD thesis, he analysed the soft governance influence of international organisations on domestic policy-making using the example of the OECD’s PISA study and its impact on German education policy. He has published on recent internationalisation processes in education policy, with a special focus on secondary and higher education reforms in Germany.

Christine Pinsent-Johnson recently completed her PhD at the Faculty of Education of the University of Ottawa. She carried out a comprehensive analysis of the curricular and policy changes instituted at both the federal and provincial levels using the OECD’s international adult literacy assessment. She also has approximately two decades of experience working in adult literacy programmes in Ontario, Canada. She is currently leading a study to further examine assessment practices in Ontario adult literacy programmes, which have been shaped by OECD testing methods, in order to build on initial findings from her doctoral research that indicate there are unevenly distributed impacts on learners, educators and access to meaningful and relevant educational opportunities.

Sam Sellar is a Postdoctoral Research fellow in the School of Education at the University of Queensland. Dr Sellar is currently working on research projects investigating the measurement of subjective well-being and non-cognitive skills in large-scale assessments, the development of new accountabilities in schooling and the aspirations of young people. Sam is Associate Editor of *Critical Studies in Education* and *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*.

Janna Teltemann is a Senior Researcher in the project ‘Internationalization of Education Policy’ within the TranState Research Center at the University of Bremen. She holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Bremen. Her research interests are quantitative methods, migration, integration and education. In her PhD project she analysed the impact of institutions on the educational achievement of immigrants with data from the OECD PISA Study. She has published several papers on determinants of educational inequality, results and methodological implications of the PISA Study as well as on OECD activities in the field of migration.

SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

The manifold dimensions of the field of teacher education are increasingly attracting the attention of researchers, educators, classroom practitioners and policymakers, while awareness has also emerged of the blurred boundaries between these categories of stakeholders in the discipline. One notable feature of contemporary theory, research and practice in this field is consensus on the value of exploring the diversity of international experience for understanding the dynamics of educational development and the desired outcomes of teaching and learning. A second salient feature has been the view that theory and policy development in this field need to be evidence-driven and attentive to diversity of experience. Our aim in this series is to give space to in-depth examination and critical discussion of educational development in context with a particular focus on the role of the teacher and of teacher education. While significant, disparate studies have appeared in relation to specific areas of enquiry and activity, the *Cambridge Education Research Series* provides a platform for contributing to international debate by publishing within one overarching series monographs and edited collections by leading and emerging authors tackling innovative thinking, practice and research in education.

The series consists of three strands of publication representing three fundamental perspectives. The *Teacher Education* strand focuses on a range of issues and contexts and provides a re-examination of aspects of national and international teacher education systems or analysis of contextual examples of innovative practice in initial and continuing teacher education programmes in different national settings. The *International Education Reform* strand examines the global and country-specific moves to reform education and

particularly teacher development, which is now widely acknowledged as central to educational systems development. Books published in the *Language Education* strand address the multilingual context of education in different national and international settings, critically examining among other phenomena the first, second and foreign language ambitions of different national settings and innovative classroom pedagogies and language teacher education approaches that take account of linguistic diversity.

Literacy as Numbers is a timely critical analysis of the current dominant political reliance on international comparative measures of literacy based largely on quantifiable evidence in the context of school and adult education. As the apparent paradox in the title suggests, the contributors to this volume focus on the prevailing ideology of literacy assessment and provide a critical but balanced evaluation of this perspective while challenging readers, educationalists and policy-makers to reconsider the educational and socio-political assumptions of global measurements of literacy education. As such the book fits very well within the framework of this series.

Michael Evans and Colleen McLaughlin