

## Editorial

The articles for this special issue of IJPE arose out of the 11th biennial conference of the European Research Network About Parents in Education (ERNAPE) which was held in July 2017 at the University of Roehampton, London, UK. The conference theme was Intensification, constraint and opportunity: changing roles for parents, schools and communities. Addressing equity and diversity issues. The conference attracted participants from across the world and this global dimension of ERNAPE is also indicated by the composition of the articles presented here. The ten articles that comprise the special issue are based on research arising in Canada, Taiwan, China, Switzerland, Poland, Indonesia, the UK, Cyprus, Finland and Russia. This diverse representation indicates the growing and widespread international research and policy concerns and significance of parents, communities and education.

Both academic and public debates and practices around parents and education have changed markedly over the past 20 years involving for example an increase in a greater desire for parental involvement and 'the intensification' of parenting. Historic concerns, at least in the West, focused on schools' attempts to get parents to support the work of the teacher such as with regard to listening to their children read or to support the completion of homework. Whilst these remain issues of importance to schools and researchers, there is now a more critical research perspective on the need to recognise the contribution of parents and their values to education in a more equitable way. The articles reflect these concerns about the role parents can play in their children's education. In the past, amongst education professionals there has been an assumption that parents were not interested in their children's education if they were not visible in school, when in fact schools, at least in many Western countries according to research, kept parents at a distance. The adoption by some researchers, of the term 'parental engagement' (rather than parental involvement), may arguably be influenced by this shift towards a more equitable recognition of the role and part parents can or do play. However, for some parents being involved with their children's school is not always possible due to for example, socio-economic disadvantage, or necessarily desirable (preferring to be involved in their children's education in other ways). The papers included here show that the majority of parents are indeed committed to their children's education and learning experiences but in some instances, they need support to develop their confidence and educational knowledge and in other cases they want to have the opportunity to voice their views and have a say in how they feel their children should or could be educated.

The history of the recognition of the significance of parents in education is different across nations. However, a key influence as we see in Yulianti et al.'s article, is frequently government policy and investment. As we see here this has positive effects but we also know that government policy can be constraining and take on additional motives of surveillance and disciplinary power or as Mendel argues a process of governmentality. Yulianti et al. as well as several of the other articles which also demonstrate that parents' activities, involvement or engagement in relation to schools, are constrained by their socioeconomic status, including economic wealth, education and occupation. The comparative paper by Sormunen et al. of the Finnish and Russian contexts shows country specific cultural differences and raises the need for greater teacher awareness of difference and diversity and adaptation of their practice. In relation to this the authors also emphasise the need for these issues to be included in teacher education programmes.

Several of the papers discuss strategies for working with and providing opportunities for parental engagement. Deslandes and Barma analyse programmes which focus on homework support; Staub et al. examine communication and cooperation between schools that have implemented 'personalized learning concepts' and families and demonstrate strategies that have the potential to give the parents a voice in decision-making. Damianidou and Phtiaka undertook an intervention with parents of children who had disabilities and revealed the positive attitudes of the parents who had been given the opportunity to voice their views and perspectives.

A government funded and community based approach to supporting parents in educational engagement is presented by Hui-Ju Pai and colleagues who analyse a programme initiated with Atayal villagers in Taiwan. It is an interesting and inspiring example of cooperative action.

Mental health amongst young students is increasingly becoming a recognised issue which needs to be addressed. Yin Yu and Hsiu-Zu Ho explore the involvement of parents in young people's mental well-being within the context of Taiwan revealing some important effects. Another growing issue and contemporary phenomenon is the involvement of parents in their adult children's higher education presented in the article by Joanna Apps and Sarah Christie. Once again, we see the constraints on certain parents as a result of economic status and or the limits of their own educational knowledge and qualifications further pointing to the need to ensure strategies to facilitate positive and productive involvement for all.

Parental involvement of course raises the issue of power relationships and often power imbalances between parents and teachers/schools and the barriers schools wittingly or unwittingly erect which impede parents' involvement and engagement. Tensions between the 'rights' or desires of the parent and the protection of teacher professionalism ensue: an issue explored in this volume by Monika Rusnak. Rusnak also includes work which aimed to overcome the tensions arising from the lay-professional divide and potential challenges to the role of the teacher.

The articles in this special issue demonstrate the diversity of parental/family 'involvement' and 'engagement' across nations but also point to the similarities of concerns and potential barriers to the equality of opportunity for parents and families. Many of the articles however hold positive messages of the potential of constructive practices and initiatives and also the importance of government recognition and investment.

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