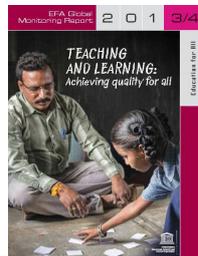


PISA-testing: Pedagogy or power and politics?

EFA 2013/14 launch Oslo Feb 2nd 2014

Svein Sjøberg
University of Oslo
<http://folk.uio.no/sveinsj/>

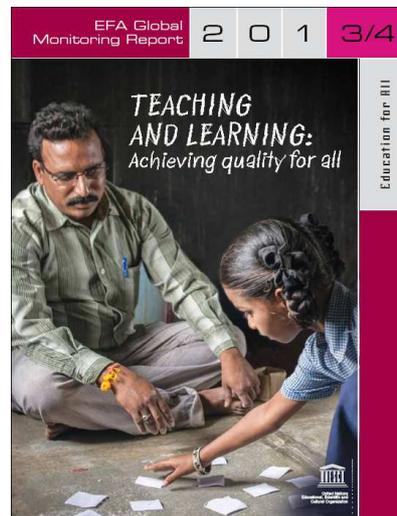


Concepts and Indicators shape reality

- ❑ UNDP changed the language
- ❑ From GDP per capita to
HDI: Human Development Index
- ❑ From counting *money* to focus on people's lives
- ❑ Introduced and defined 1990, and later refined
- ❑ Now an accepted indicator, and with always better data collected
- ❑ Has reshaped the way we talk about Human development, and is also a tool to focus on the essential

Education for all: “Achieving quality for all”

- Who **define** the concepts, indicators and benchmarks?
- Who are the **providers of data**?
- What are the explicit and implicit **values** and **perspectives**?



OECD



- Focus on Economy
- Belief that competition in a free market is the key to quality and progress
- «Soft power» --no legal, binding power
- **Governing by numbers:** Indicators, benchmarks, statistics, expert advice, and reviews
- "Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators is the authoritative source for accurate and relevant information on the state of education around the world."
- From 2000: PISA, now 5 testing rounds
- Made for the 30+ OECD countries
- Used by 65 countries, and growing...

Features of PISA

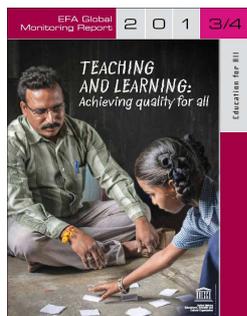
- ❑ Not testing «school knowledge»,
- ❑ Explicitly *not* related to curricula in any country
- ❑ Testing (some aspects of) of Reading, Science and Mathematics
- ❑ **Not** tested: social sciences, civics, history, geography, culture, ethics, foreign language, etc.
- ❑ From 2012: Also testing *Financial literacy*
- ❑ PISA data presented and used as a measure for the quality and efficiency of the entire school system
- ❑ PISA-scores and ranking now used globally as an objective and neutral indicator for quality
- ❑ “Fair testing” implies: no local or national context



Science educators (and the EFA report)

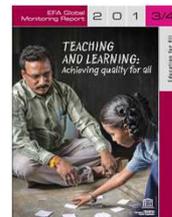
- ❑ The importance of curriculum relevance for Real life challenges
- ❑ Science educators (and national national curricula) promote
Context-based School Science

The launch of the EFA Report, Jan 29. 2014, Mogadishu, Somalia



UNESCO/- Local knowledge: In this school in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a teacher uses a corn cake recipe traditional to the area to explain quantities in a mathematics class

EFA Report favours Context-based education



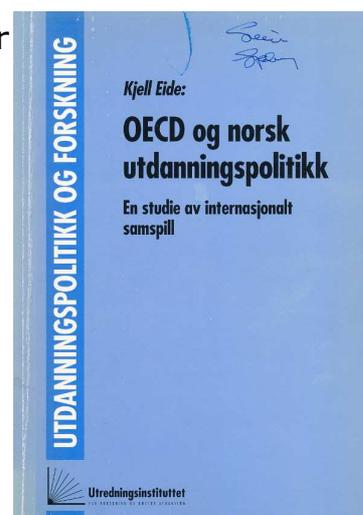
- ❑ An interdisciplinary approach ... hands-on, locally relevant educational activities can develop students' understanding of the environment and build skills for promoting sustainable development. ...
- ❑ Hands-on teaching and learning approaches and school- wide projects are used to link the curriculum to practical actions such as adopting recycling systems and water harvesting in schools, using alternative energy sources for cooking, cleaning up public spaces, creating indigenous gardens, and planting trees

OECD, PISA and politics

- Three key Nordic witnesses:
 - Kjell Eide, Norway
 - Ulf P Lundgren, Sweden
 - Pasi Sahlberg, Finland

PISA: the historical background...

- **Kjell Eide** (1925-2011)
- "Norway's man in the OECD for 30 years"
- In charge of OECD's work on education from 1961
- State secretary for social democratic government, later scientific advisor for various governments until retirement 1995
- Eide's last book (1995) «*OECD and Norwegian Educational Politics*»



Kjell Eide (1995) (pre-PISA...)

- - «in the 1980's, the US worked more aggressively to get key conservative political issues into OECD's educational agenda...
- -Quality in education, free choice of schools, private financing, market orientation, «accountability", efficiency and merit-based teacher pay
- -The ambition may be the OECD will launch their own comparative studies (like IEA's TIMSS etc.) on behalf of member countries.
- -**This will make OECD to a strong political actor, and will contribute to an educational «harmonization» that will surpass everything we until now have feared from the EU.**

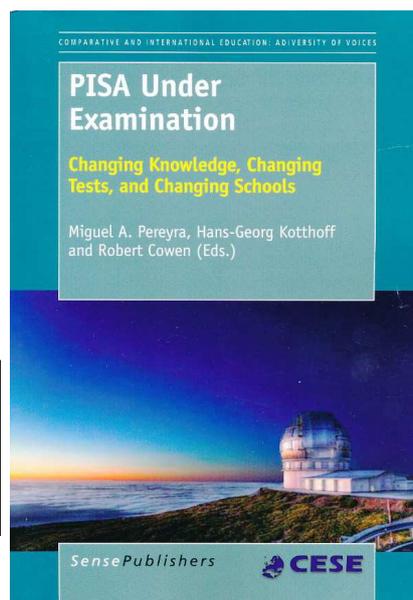
“PISA Under Examination. Changing Knowledge, Changing Tests, and Changing Schools” (2011)

- PISA: Background, aims, uses and misuses

ULF P. LUNDGREN

PISA AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT

One History Behind the Formulating of the PISA Programme



Ulf P Lundgren: “PISA as a Political Instrument” (2011)

- Lundgren leader of evaluation of Norwegian schools 1970-80's
- Director-general of : *the* Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*) 1991-2000
- Director-general of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet)
- Leader of the OECD's work on education
- Leader of the preparatory phase of PISA until 2000
- Now: professor, Uppsala University

Lundgren (2011) on PISA

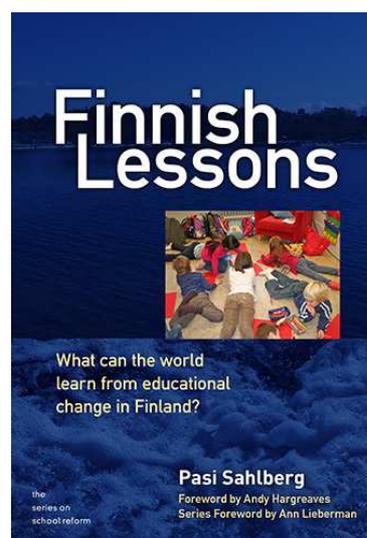
- We hoped that the outcomes of PISA could stimulate a debate on learning outcomes, not only from an educational perspective but also a broad cultural and social perspective.
- **Rarely has a pious hope been so dashed.**
- When the first results came they got an impact that was not expected, not even dreamed of.
- There is a general problem with any type of comparisons of educational outcomes. They are quickly translated through metaphors taken from sports.
- With PISA, the results were a shock in as it seems all countries....
- The PISA project and the effect of the PISA project cannot be understood from an educational, psychometric or technical basis.
- ***PISA has to be understood as part of a context that has been historically shaped by changing social conditions, both material and ideological.***

Lundgren (cont'd): To Finnish.. (sic)

- **PISA** is an example of what in a global world nationally is perceived as the answer to
- -- **what** is going to be taught,
- -- **who** it is going to be taught to and
- -- **how** the outcomes of teaching will be judged and
- -- used for **control and political governing**.

Pasi Sahlberg, key educator in Finland, the “PISA-winner”..

- PISA-tourism. A new national income
- Abu Dahbi wants to buy the Finnish education system...
- Many countries want to overtake Finland –
- -- and, in panic, introduce reforms that are the opposite of what Finland is doing...

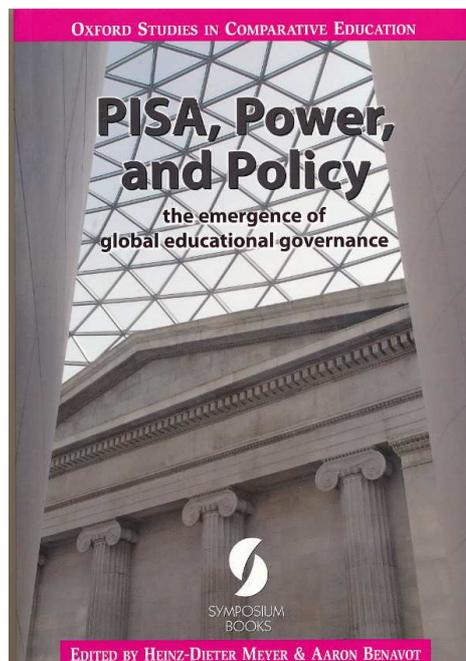


Sahlberg: “GERM: *Global Educational Reform Movement*”

- ❑ Finland has remained immune to market-based educational reforms:
- ❑ Increased competition and choice, standardization of teaching and learning, frequent testing, test-based accountability, merit-based payment, ranking of schools and teachers
- ❑ Belief in education as a marketplace
- ❑ **Finland has remained immune, but other Nordic countries have moved to adopt policies that are close to GERM**
(Sahlberg, 2011)

“PISA, Power, and Policy”

“*The emergence of global educational governance*” (2013)



**No surprise:
PISA has itself become
part of the global
economy
as actor in the privatized
educational market**

**PISA 2015 partly
“outsourced” til Pearson**



- World leader on the global educational market
- Pearson Education, Penguin, The Financial Times and The Economist.
- **75 percent of the profit comes from testing and educational programmes .**
(Globally, from South-Africa to Norway)
- Pearson inc. won the OECD bid for important elements of **PISA 2015**
- (PISA until now: run by consortia of academic institutions)
- Pearson Inc. defines the problem, sells the diagnostic tests – and provides the medicine and cure

PISA-testing, also for schools

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-22002525>



BBC NEWS
EDUCATION & FAMILY

2 April 2013 Last updated at 11:16 GMT

Schools can measure themselves against Pisa tests

By Sean Coughlan
BBC News education correspondent

Individual schools are going to be able to take international tests for the first time to see how they compare with the world's best school systems.

The OECD, which runs the influential Pisa tests, is to allow secondary schools to use the global tests.

This will initially be available in the United States, but the OECD wants to extend it to schools in the UK.

EFA Report: «PISA for Development» ?

- -The OECD is offering an alternative approach, redesigning its PISA surveys to be more relevant to developing countries while producing results that are comparable with the main PISA assessment.
- - **PISA for Development** intends to explore how best to include out-of-school youth, and its results will help inform future approaches. (p91)
- My advice:
Think twice about the implications of this kind offer...

