



Colloquium: International Assessment Research in Education (1964-2012): Cause for Optimism

Speaker:

Jack Schwille, Professor, Michigan State University

Date / Time:

February 14, 2013 - 3:45pm - 5:30pm

Venue:

10th Floor, Auditorium, Pixel A, APU

Abstract:

For the last fifty years, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) has provided an international context for seeing education and educational reform in a new light. IEA has developed, implemented and spread the word about a whole series of international assessment studies. Beginning with the First International Mathematics Study in 1964 and continuing until 1995, a first series of core IEA assessments in mathematics, science and reading literacy were carried out. After 1995 this work continued with trend studies (known by the acronyms TIMSS and PIRLS) in the three core subjects. More recently the PISA studies sponsored by OECD have added to this literature. In addition, various IEA spinoffs have increased the value of this body of research, including, for example, the TIMSS video studies of 1995 and 1999, and the first IEA teacher education study focusing on mathematics (TEDS-M 2008). The number of participating countries has grown to sixty-four in TIMSS 2011.

All of these efforts have enabled IEA to create an international body of knowledge addressing such questions as: (1) What is the intended content of the curricula to be taught in school and how does the curricula of various subjects vary between and within countries? (2) What content is actually taught and how does it vary? (3) What of this content is actually learned by samples of students selected to be representative of each country? (4) What is the overall yield in a given subject, defined as the percentage of the age cohort that reach specified levels of subject-matter knowledge? (6) What is the actual variation in how certain subject-matters are taught? (8) How well are beginning teachers prepared to teach their subject-matter? The results show that educational systems around the world differ substantially in their curricula, teaching, achievement and context. But in spite of these differences, the studies give cause for optimism by indicating that under favorable conditions: (a) Nearly all children can learn to high levels of subject-matter knowledge; and (2) disparities in achievement among students within countries can be reduced, making systems more equitable. These issues are discussed

with special reference to TIMSS results for 2011 which show that some countries have high achievement and high equity, others have either relatively high achievement or high equity, but not both, and others are relatively low on both counts.

A Note on the Speaker:

Jack Schwille is professor and assistant dean for international studies in education at MSU, who in 2013 will have had a 50-year career in international research in education, starting as a doctoral student in 1963. Since 1972, after initial research on France and French education, one of his primary interests has been in cross-national studies of educational achievement, primarily in civic education and mathematics. Currently, he is co-director of the 17-nation TEDS-M teacher education in mathematics study, the first international assessment of student learning in higher education based on national samples. He has also worked extensively on international development in education, primarily in Africa, with major projects first in Burundi, then Guinea and now Tanzania. At the same time, he has been a college administrator for over 25 years with responsibilities for developing an international dimension in research, teaching and outreach throughout the college. His areas of expertise comparative higher education in general, comparative teacher education, international development issues, other areas of educational research and practice, assessment, measurement and evaluation, social foundations of education.