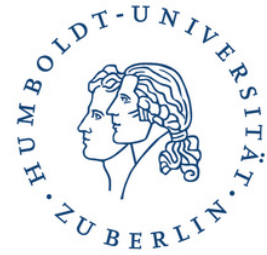




CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE

Contestations of the Liberal Script



“Agentic citizens,” “stakeholders” and social accountability in the era of e-governance

Workshop, June 3 and 4, 2025

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Geschwister-Scholl-Str. 7, 10117 Berlin - Room 1.35



Schedule of Events

Tuesday, June 3

14:00-14:30 **Welcome greetings, introduction of SCRIPTS and the workshop**

Florian Waldow, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Yasemin Soysal, Berlin Social Science Center WZB Berlin

14:30-17:00 **The use of data in the liberal, neoliberal & post (neo-)liberal eras**

3 presentations (each 20 minutes), followed by a coffee break (30 minutes), discussant (10 minutes), & a plenary discussion (50 minutes)

Emre Amasyali, Juliette Crespin Bouchaud, Matthias vom Hau, & Frank Borge Wietzke, IBEI Barcelona

A war of words: Education, language status grievances, and civil war

Pieter Vanden Broeck, University of Modena & University of Louvain

From governance by to government? On algorithmic management and the governing of education

Roser Cussó, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

The role of statistics in the evolution of policy

Discussant: Gita Steiner-Khamsi, TC, Columbia University

19:00 **Dinner at Restaurant Dieselhaus** (Forum an der Museumsinsel 10)

Wednesday, June 4

9:30-10:00 **Summary of the key discussion points from June 3**

Gita Steiner-Khamsi, TC, Columbia University

10:00-12:30 **The rise of the individual/human rights discourse in education: Global trends, variations and changes over time**

3 presentations (each 20 minutes), followed by a coffee break (30 minutes), discussant (10 minutes), & plenary discussion (50 minutes)

Anja Giudici, Cardiff University

Partisan visions of educational control and accountability between family and state: Recent shifts or long-term developments?

Minju Choi, Berlin Social Science Center (WZB)

«Reformism» and the liberal culture: Global trends in education reform, 1970-2019

Helen Seitzer, University of Bremen

From principles to practice: The global diffusion of educational rights and equal access

Discussant: Yasemin Soysal, Berlin Social Science Center WZB Berlin

Wednesday, June 4, continued

12:30–13:30 Light lunch

13:30–15:00 Stakeholderism, social accountability and citizen engagement

*2 presentations (each 20 minutes), followed by a discussant (10 minutes),
& plenary discussion (40 minutes)*

Walter Fritsch, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

*Stakeholder consultations in international education governance as acts of
performativity*

Paola Mattei (online), University of Milan

*Public engagement and citizen science in research: Restoring public trust in a
post-truth society*

Discussant: Gita Steiner-Khamsi, TC, Columbia University

15:00–15:30 Coffee Break

15:30–17:00 Tools of government and their varied impact

*2 presentations (each 20 minutes), followed by a discussant (10 minutes),
& plenary discussion (40 minutes)*

Annelise Voisin, University of Liège

*Policy instrumentation and institutional change: The education governance
reform of French-speaking Belgium*

Ana Werkstetter Caravaca, Free University Berlin

Teacher governance in Mexico between labour and education reforms

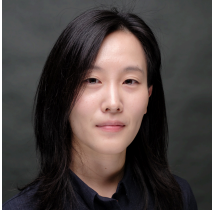
Discussant: Florian Waldow, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

17:00–17:15 Wrap-up

Florian Waldow, Walter Fritsch, Gita Steiner-Khamsi



Biographical Notes



Minju Choi is a postdoctoral research fellow in Global Sociology at the Berlin Social Science Center (WZB). She is interested in global cultural changes and their impact on national, organizational, and individual levels of society, particularly concerning issues of education, human rights, and citizenship. Minju received her PhD in International and Comparative Education / Sociology of Education from Stanford University. Prior to her PhD studies, she worked at various international organizations, including the World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF.



Roser Cussó is a professor at University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. She was a Maître de conférences at the University Paris 8 Saint Denis, 2006-2014. At UNESCO, 1994-2003, she worked on education statistics (collection, treatment, analysis), education planning, and technical cooperation with Member States. Her research relates to global education, population and economic statistics (quantification), and national minorities, mostly in international and supranational organizations (IO) including UNESCO, the World Bank, OECD, UN, European Union, the League of Nations. Her methods are multidisciplinary (demography, statistics, historiography, sociology). Her student years led her from the Autonomous University of Barcelona to Paris IEP-Sciences Po, then to a PhD at Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), and a post-doc at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB).



Walter Fritsch holds a master's degree in social sciences and is currently pursuing his PhD at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin where he also teaches seminars on Education in the Global South and Global Education Governance. His PhD focuses on stakeholder consultations at UNESCO and the OECD in their recent Future(s) of Education (and Skills 2040) initiatives.



Anja Giudici is a Lecturer in Education at Cardiff University (UK). She works on the history and politics of education in post-1945 Western democracies, with a focus on understanding how political and professional ideologies and interests interact in shaping education. Her recent research projects have engaged with the education politics of the far right (Swiss National Science Foundation), the effect of privatisation on education support personnel (Education International), and territorial inequality in education (Fritz Thyssen Foundation). The paper she will present at the workshop is co-authored with Micha Germann, Senior Lecturer in Politics at the University of Bath.



Paola Mattei is Professor of Public Policy and Political Science at the Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan, Italy. She is the Director of the Evidence-Based Policy and Research Action Hub (EPRA Hub) at the University of Milan. Previously, she was Associate Professor at the University of Oxford and Governing Body Fellow at St Antony's College, University of Oxford. She has been Visiting Scholar at Stanford University, Visiting Fellow at Sciences Po University, Paris, and at the Wissenschaftszentrum für Sozialforschung (WZB), Berlin. Her research to date has investigated public management reforms in public organisations; public accountability mechanisms, and citizens' public engagement policies; globalization and education policies (a new Handbook on Globalization and Education is forthcoming in 2023 with Oxford University Press). Underlying her research is the problematic relationship between accountability, democracy, markets and the contemporary reforms of public services. She has published several monographs and edited volumes with Palgrave, Bristol University Press and Oxford University Press. Her monograph *Democratizing Science* was published in September 2023 by Bristol University Press.



Helen Seitzer is a sociologist and political scientist with a focus on education policy and international organizations. As a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Bremen, she works on analyzing data on the development and diffusion of education policies. Her research focuses on the diffusion of education systems, particularly and the role of international organizations in shaping education policies. She utilizes a variety of methodologies, from event history models to quantitative text analysis.



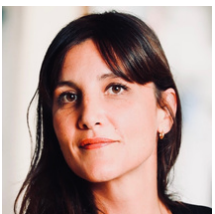
Yasemin Soysal is Research Professor of Global Sociology at WZB, University Professor at the Free University of Berlin, and the Deputy Co-director and a leading Principal Investigator of the SCRIPTS Cluster of Excellence. Her research brings global and sociological-institutional perspectives into the study of the historical development and current reconfigurations of nation-state and citizenship, with a specific interest in the diffusion, enactment, contradictions, and contestations of global cultural frameworks. Soysal received her PhD at Stanford University, held prior academic appointments at Harvard University and the University of Essex, UK, and has been a recipient of several fellowships, including German Marshall Fund, National Academy of Education, National Endowment of Humanities, Jean Monnet EUI, Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin, and Niklas Luhmann Distinguished Professorship, Bielefeld. She is a former president of the European Sociological Association.



Gita Steiner-Khamsi is the William Heard Kilpatrick Professor of Comparative Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, and the Honorary UNESCO Chair of Comparative Education Policy at the Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies. She has widely published on policy transfer/policy borrowing, school reform research, qualitative comparative policy studies, and global governance. She is a former series editor of the World Yearbook of Education and Past President of the (US) Comparative and International Education Society. Before she emigrated to the United States, she worked for close to ten years as a policy analyst and director at the Ministry of Education of the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland. She is currently a guest professor at the Centre for Comparative and International Education at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.



Pieter Vanden Broeck is a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Modena - Reggio Emilia and a guest lecturer at the University of Louvain. He is an affiliate of the Center for Organizational Innovation at Columbia University, where he previously held a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellowship at the Teachers College and Sociology Department. Drawing on economic sociology, the sociology of education, and global studies, he researches modes of governance and organizational forms that diverge from the national project of modern states. Currently, he studies how new forms of expertise coalesce around digital learning platforms, shifting the role distribution in education.



Annelise Voisin completed her PhD in education (University of Montreal). Professor (assistant) and researcher at ULiege (Belgium). I'm interested in education policies in a multi scalar, comparative perspective, and the teaching profession. Previous research fellowships and positions include the Center for Advanced Research in Education (CIAE) at the University of Chile (UCHile), the National Institute of Scientific Research (INRS Quebec/Canada), UCLouvain (Belgium), and the University of Montreal (Quebec/Canada).



Matthias vom Hau is Associate Professor at the Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals (IBEI). His research focuses on the relationship between nationalism and ethnicity, state institutions, and development. He has published widely on how states construct a sense of national belonging, and how civil society and ordinary citizens negotiate official identity projects. His work has also challenged the notion that ethnic diversity dampens the prospects of development by treating both as endogenous to historical patterns of nation-state formation. His current work maps distinct varieties of nation-building across countries, groups and time; tests different theoretical arguments about why they vary; and explores potential consequences for the politicization of ethnicity, inequality, and political stability.



Ana Werkstetter Caravaca is a project doctoral researcher at SCRIPTS — Cluster of Excellence at the Freie University in Berlin. As part of the research project “Negotiating the Future of Education”, Ana’s research focuses on colonial legacies in the global education policy field and ensuing epistemic inequalities.



Florian Waldow is a professor of comparative and international education at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Before taking up this position, he worked at the Universities of Münster, Germany, and Uppsala, Sweden. He has published widely on a variety of topics in comparative and international education. These include various aspects of policy transfer and the role of reference societies in education policy-making and aspects of educational assessment and the ways in which the ‘myth’ of ‘meritocracy’ manifests itself in different educational settings. More recently, he has become interested in notions and projections of ‘educational futures’ in the global governance of education. He is a member of the Cluster of Excellence “Contestations of the Liberal Script” (SCRIPTS).



«Reformism» and the liberal culture: Global trends in education reform, 1970-2019

Minju Choi, Berlin Social Science Center (WZB)

The new millennium began as a period of global optimism. There was extraordinary international cooperation around Education for All, the Millennium Development Goals, and, later, the Sustainable Development Goals. The liberal world culture that became dominant after World War II played a key role in driving many of the changes observed in education systems globally in subsequent decades. These liberal changes in education were accompanied by the belief that social transformation could and should stem from what was elaborated as reforms. 'Education reform' is a distinct form of social change that promotes systematic changes to the way that individuals are incorporated into society, economy, and polity. We argue that emphasis on education reform increases when liberal culture is stronger at national and global levels because of the distinctive attention liberalism gives to both reform as a path to social change and to education as the path to progress. Using a cross-national database of education reforms between 1970 and 2019, we show that global and national levels of liberal democracy and market openness promote discursive attention to education reforms. Global levels of liberalism also shape the extent to which education reforms emphasize concepts of human rights and justice or human capital and economic productivity, but national levels do not. Our findings support the idea that education reforms become more prominent under liberalism as a global cultural framework. As levels of liberal democracy fall worldwide and skepticism against the openness to global competition and economy grows, new arguments for the value and purpose of schooling may emerge. 'Reform' as a legitimate form of social change may also be undermined, as more drastic measures come to be seen as more effective in bringing about change in the world. Our findings have implications for the changing nature of education reform in a post-liberal world.

The role of statistics in the evolution of policy

Roser Cussó, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

This presentation analyzes the relationship between policy, in the broad sense (public administration but also global and public-private political action), and **quantification** (technical characteristics, statistical theories, related political practices and actors, etc.), i.e. the link between power and data technology. This involves considering (i) the analysis of the transition from the sequence of the Welfare State (State Accountability) to that of the Engaged State (Social Accountability) (Steiner-Khamsi, 2025: 125); (ii) the contribution of Alain Desrosières (2000) on the co-evolution of “State forms” and “statistical arrangements” (i.e. Welfare State development through large official databases on salaried work and its protection, and vice-versa); (iii) my own work on the specificity of the statistics produced by international and supranational organizations (IO) (Cussó, 2006), on recent fragmentation of such data (Cussó, 2019), and on the change in the mathematical-statistical paradigm which has accompanied the emergence of big data (Cussó, 2016).

The main **aim** is to discuss three trends, (i) the fragmentation of statistical sources (end of state and IO “monopoly”); (ii) the use of ad hoc databases; and (iii) the development of Bayesian statistics, as necessary to big data analysis, including Social Accountability (human annotation, data on opinion), and the impact of these trends on decision-making and the public more broadly (education, health...). My **hypothesis** is (i) that such statistical fragmentation loosened the dominance of frequentist methodology compared to statistical/machine-learning tools, the latter allowing for more diversity of hypotheses, and more adaptability to variable contexts; (ii) that ad hoc databases are not stable, they rarely allow for time series; (iii) that the rise of Bayesian statistical methods (and closely related machine-learning variants) undermines the relevance of more classical State, Market or Standard accountability (and new challenges there of underlying interpretability of decision making). In this context, policy implementation, especially in the case of social reforms, is both vaguely defined and constantly revised; it is often experimental or exploratory, without clear goals, without a precise set of variables to be tested over time; it relies on unstructured data including public participation and feedback, which are “custom-made” at individual or small group levels –see, for example, the study of goods pricing and inflation by combining social network data (Twitter) and classical databases (UN, 2014).

This evolution reveals a rather **flexible** policy configuration, subject to **continuous** reassessment, under the arrival of new (digital) data. Government responsibility is diluted, and public participation contributes to both the reform and its evaluation. Yet, **power** remains concentrated as it is exercised over the entire reform process. Frequentism led to a "hard" form of accountability with, for instance, indicators on school participation and achievement clearly linked to announced reform goals. Bayesian methods are more interactive and evolutive. Is this "policy-data" pattern more **unstable** than what preceded? Is it more **effective** (but by being more "invasive") via Social Accountability? Is it both a tool of reform implementation and a means of legitimizing change, insofar as the process is participatory and adaptable, though not as democratic?

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Stakeholder consultations in international education governance as acts of performativity

Walter Fritsch, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Stakeholder consultations have become a ubiquitous instrument for democratizing knowledge production and decision-making in international organisations. The OECD and UNESCO, two of the most influential IOs in international education governance, are no exception. Indeed, in their recent “landmark” initiatives on the Future(s) of Education (and Skills), both heavily emphasize that the outcomes of these initiatives will be the product of extensive stakeholder engagement.

As IOs in education rely on legitimacy, the involvement of so-called stakeholders is not only a general response to demands from their environments to democratize, but also reflects their own strategic choices regarding which audiences they wish to address and how they want to be perceived.

In my presentation, I will show how the two IOs differ in terms of whom they showcase as stakeholders and in what ways, arguing that UNESCO draws much more on (a specific kind of) academics than the OECD. The OECD, in turn, profoundly involves ‘experts’ from the technological and economic sectors of education, while both IOs highlight the importance of youth participation.

Combining this with views from these so-called stakeholders, it becomes clear that the consultative processes at UNESCO and the OECD are matters of performativity. ‘Stakeholderization’—the process by which individuals become ‘experts’, ‘student representatives’, or simply ‘stakeholders’, and thus sources of legitimation—resonates with both the included stakeholders’ as well as the IOs’ environments and is thus a matter of interaction between these two parties.

Partisan visions of educational control and accountability between family and state: recent shifts or long-term developments?

Anja Giudici, Cardiff

How to distribute educational authority between families and the state is a fundamental, and fundamentally contentious, issue of modern education. For theorists, the issue constitutes one of the core dilemmas of democratic government. Historians describe it as a key fault line in the formation of party systems in pre-1945 Western democracies. Challenging the educational authority of parents (and churches) was integral to the liberal (and later social democratic) quest for a more equal and active understanding of citizenship. Resistance to this programme, in turn, mobilised the modern conservative movement.

Since 1945, domestic and international educational landscapes have changed fundamentally, with conflicting implications for the debate over educational authority. Rising middle-class voters and international organisations have called for more state-led expansion and improvement of education. At the same time, neoliberalism and far-right movements have challenged state authority over education. How have parties navigated this changing landscape? Is the recent politicisation of parental rights a new trend, or does it highlight a continuing divergence in party approaches to educational authority?

To address these questions, the presentation draws on a novel dataset. The data include the positions on educational authority—defined as whether the state or families should determine the extent, shape, and choice of children's formal education—of all major party families in 20 Western democracies since 1960. We analyse these data both quantitatively, to understand long-term variation and trends, and qualitatively, to see how positions relate to different understandings of citizenship and statehood identified in the literature.

The analysis shows that partisan divisions over education authority have persisted in these countries in the post-1945 period - this is not a new trend. However, parties' positions on extent, choice, and shape do not always co-evolve, reflecting their reliance on different understandings of citizenship and statehood promoted in the post-1945 period.

Public Engagement and Citizen Science in Research: Restoring Public Trust in a post-truth society

Paola Mattei, University of Milan

There is growing concern in most liberal democracies about a rising wave of attacks against the legitimacy of science, including not only efforts to discredit individual scientists, but also a far-reaching campaign against institutions of higher education, expertise and the public intellectual. Public trust in the scientific community has been, for a while, under extraordinary pressure. The negative effects of the anti-experts and anti-science campaign concern the deterioration of the relationship between citizens and science, despite the best efforts of scientists to communicate their findings to a wider audience. This intellectual preoccupation motivates this paper, which draws from the book "Democratising Science". The paper will review different policy approaches adopted by governments to incentivise the empowerment of stakeholders and participation of citizens through coproduction arrangements, participatory mechanisms, community engagement and interaction with researchers.

From Principles to Practice: The Global Diffusion of Educational Rights and Equal Access

Helen Seitzer, University of Bremen

This presentation examines the global evolution of educational rights from the initial establishment of compulsory schooling, through the adoption of formal rights to education, to the incorporation of antidiscrimination principles and minority protections. It traces how states have incrementally broadened the scope of educational rights and which national and global pressures influenced this development. Using new longitudinal data on constitutional provisions, the analysis identifies patterns in the timing and content of legal reforms.

The findings reveal a complex and uneven landscape: while many states have expanded legal commitments to inclusive education, constitutional guarantees often lag behind the principles articulated in international human rights law. Using new longitudinal data on constitutional provisions, it analyzes how states define and extend educational rights, with particular attention to disparities related to gender, migration status, and minority origin.

Rather than assuming a linear progression toward greater inclusion, the paper explores the different rationales and temporalities behind the adoption of various educational rights provisions. It shows how the expansion of educational rights reflects shifting ideas about citizenship, equality, and state responsibility, and situates these developments within broader patterns of welfare state formation and social policy diffusion.

Policy instrumentation and institutional change: The education governance reform of French-speaking Belgium

Annelise Voisin, University of Liège

This presentation offers a preliminary analysis of the governance reform of the French-speaking Belgian education system, initiated in 2015. It draws on the theoretical contributions of Lascoumes and Le Galès (2004) on policy instrumentation, the literature on institutional change (Streeck & Thelen, 2005), and a preliminary analysis of institutional documentation and scholarly literature (1990-2023).

Situating this reform within the institutional context of Belgium— a consociational democracy (Lijphart, 1979; Bakvis, 1985) within a deeply divided society characterized by consensus-building and bottom-up policies (Dumont & Delgrange, 2008) — we emphasize that the governance reform is part of a gradual process of change initiated in the 1990s, while also capitalizing on a “policy window” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2025) to introduce a significant and systemic transformation.

We argue that key policy instruments such as strategic planning and contractualization, indicators and evaluation tools operationalize and shape this results-based accountability reform. These are complemented by other (principal and school support systems, fostering local participation, etc.), which have been instrumental in building consensus among stakeholders involved in the reform process.

We argue that layering (Streeck & Thelen, 2005) constitutes the primary mechanism driving the process of institutional change at work over recent decades. In this context, the introduction of performance indicators coupled with incentive and communication-based policy instruments (Lascoumes & Legales, 2004) can be viewed as a decisive step in consolidating a results-oriented governance model, which had remained underdeveloped until then.

While this hypothesis requires further investigation, it also invites broader reflections on the role of the French-speaking Community of Belgium: can this case be situated within broader debates on the forms of the state and interpreted through the lens of a strategic “state” (Commaille & Jobert, 1997) negotiating with entrenched actors? Or rather, as an evaluative “state” (Neave, 1998) asserting new steering capacities?

Keywords: Education governance, Education reform, French-speaking Belgium, Policy Instrumentation, Institutional change

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A war of words: Education, language status grievances, and civil war

Emre Amasyali, Juliette Crespín Bouchaud, Matthias vom Hau, & Frank Borge Wietzke, IBEI Barcelona

The education sector shapes the relationship between the state and the individual, but it is also crucial in shaping the governance of ethnic relations. This paper asks how state-imposed language restrictions at schools influence the likelihood of ethnic conflict. While much of the existing literature on civil war focuses on political exclusion and material grievances, the impact of language discrimination on group mobilization remains underexplored.

This paper addresses this gap by introducing a group-level analysis that examines the effects of language recognition policies on conflict dynamics. Using the Nation-Building Policies (NBP) dataset, which tracks state policies on language use and education since 1945, we identify two key forms of language discrimination: Educational Downgrade, reflecting reductions in the educational status of a group's language; and Educational Exclusion, indicating the absence of any language associated with a group in public education. By merging the NBP dataset with the Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) dataset, we demonstrate that language policies are directly correlated with the incidence of civil war, rather than its onset. In contrast, political exclusion variables are more closely linked to conflict onset, suggesting that different types of grievances play distinct roles in shaping conflict dynamics. This contrast highlights that language recognition policies primarily influence whether conflicts persist and escalate, while political exclusion is more likely to trigger the initial outbreak of violence.

Our findings challenge the assumption that language recognition policies at schools mitigate the start of conflict. Instead, we show that restrictions or absence of language rights can fuel support for violence and make conflicts more intractable. This study then underscores the critical role of language recognition policies in conflict prevention, emphasizing the need to address language-based grievances to reduce the risk of ethnic unrest.

Teacher governance in Mexico between labour and education reforms

Ana Werkstetter Caravaca, Free University Berlin

This paper examines the impact of global governance mechanisms on the teaching profession in Mexico, focusing on the intersection of labour and education reforms, based on the case of the 2013 Reforma Educativa. Building on Robertson's (2016) concept of the "thickening" of the global governance of the teaching profession, the analysis highlights how neoliberal frameworks have reframed education as a competitive, individualistic endeavor aligned with economic competitiveness. Mexico's reforms, heavily influenced by OECD recommendations and driven by PISA performance anxieties, largely neglected teachers' working conditions, reducing professional development to standardised assessments. This "one-leg" approach to reform weakened unions and positioned teachers as obstacles to national progress. Teacher unions, particularly the CNTE, actively resisted these homogenising reforms, contesting the OECD's universalistic vision and its instrumentalisation of education data. This paper argues that teacher unions are not passive recipients but active agents in negotiating global education agendas. Ultimately, Mexico's experience illustrates how global governance structures like the OECD's operate unevenly across national contexts, revealing both the limits of global educational standardisation and the ongoing importance of local agency in shaping educational paradigms and futures.