

Previous ECERS

- ⇒ 2013: Istanbul
- ⇒ 2012: Cádiz
- ⇒ 2011: Berlin
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Conferences before 2000

- 1999: Lahti
- 1998: Ljubljana
- 1997: Frankfurt
- 1996: Seville
- 1995: Bath (joint BERA/EERA)
- 1992: Twente, 22- 25 June

ECER 2011, Berlin

The European Conference on Educational Research 2011 took place at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.

⇒ [PDF Conference Flyer](#)



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Multimedia

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Conference Dates

Emerging Researchers Conference	12 - 13 September	Monday- Tuesday
Main Conference	13 - 16 September	Tuesday - Friday

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Territorial inequality and school-based curriculum: Voices from Portuguese and Czech rural schools



Author(s): [Francisco Sousa](#) (submitting/presenting), [Silvie Kucerova](#) (presenting)

Conference: ECER 2011, Urban Education

Network: [14. Communities, Families and Schooling in Educational Research](#)

Format: Paper

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Session Information

[14 SES 01 A](#), Educational Aspects of Rural Schooling – Possibilities, Challenges and Changes

Paper Session

Time: 2011-09-13
13:15-14:45

Room: KL 25/134,G, 70

Chair: Rune Kvalsund

Contribution

Territorial inequality and school-based curriculum: Voices from Portuguese and Czech rural schools

Urban education - the conference theme of ECER 2011 - is a hegemonic phenomenon. Besides operating as "greenhouses for educational change and educational reform all over the world", as stated in the conference website, cities are becoming increasingly closer to a status of exclusiveness in the provision of formal education (Kvalsund, 2009). As a logical result of general changes in the geographical organization of society, the network of elementary schools in economically developed countries during the last decades has been characterized by reduction and territorial concentration (Hampl, 2000). The main causes of these phenomena include: decreases in birth rates and other demographic variables (Caldwell, 2006), pressures to close small schools for the sake of cost savings (Åbeg-Bengtsson, 2009), and a tendency to increasing the variety of specialized teachers and specific kinds of learning environments at the earliest stages of schooling (Bell & Sigsworth, 1987). This process of concentration has strongly increased the polarization of space in terms of access to elementary education, which raises issues of territorial and social inequalities (Warrington, 2005). In many countries, including Portugal and Czechia, concentration of formal education in cities has been made at the same time as the curriculum has been, to some extent, decentralized. Accordingly, legislation has called for the adaptation of national curricula to local realities through School-based Curricular Projects in the Portuguese schools and School Educational Programs in the Czech schools. Instead of being used to promote local ownership of the curriculum, those devices have frequently been viewed by local actors as useless (Řezníčková, 2009) or as a bureaucratic burden (Freire, 2005), which has frequently led to the production of formal documents that convey a stereotyped view of the local reality. In the specific case of rural schools, stereotypes sometimes consist of "folkloric" views of the rural world, which neglects the fact that nowadays "the rural world is 'impure', colonized by the urban world and by the global culture" (Sarmiento, 2003, p. 65). In order to understand how the local territory is represented in rural schools' curricula, it is important to study how teachers in those schools view the local territory and the extent to which they teach knowledge about that same territory, including knowledge about its relationship with the urban world. Given the rural students' disadvantage in terms of territorial inequality, "folkloric" representations of the local territory can only contribute to worsen that same disadvantage, by failing to consider the students' culture and the fact that it is strongly influenced by the urban culture. Curricula that represent the local territories by taking their complex relationship with the urban world into consideration are, in principle, potentially more empowering to students, in terms of the development of competencies that enable them to deal with territorial inequality. In the light of these assumptions, we are studying how knowledge of the local territory is translated into local curricula in some Portuguese and Czech rural schools.

Method

This study is focused on eight rural schools at risk of closure - four in Czechia and four in the Azores, Portugal. The main research techniques being used are document analysis and interviews with school leaders and teachers. Accordingly, we are analyzing School-based Curricular Projects from the Portuguese schools, School Educational Programs from the Czech schools, lesson plans and other documents that provide data on promotion of knowledge about the local territory. We are interviewing the leaders of the eight schools and some of the teachers - ten in each country -, in order to characterize their perspectives on the importance of teaching knowledge related to the local territory. Firstly, we intend to understand the extent to which they consider this issue as a relevant one. Secondly, we intend to characterize different kinds of approach used in teaching knowledge related to that same issue.

Expected Outcomes

When data analysis is finished, we expect to be able to discuss different kinds of approach used in teaching knowledge related to the local territory in rural schools. We intend to organize that discussion around the following questions: How important is knowledge about the local territory from the perspective of curriculum decision makers at the local level in those eight schools? What are their representations of the local territory? What kind of knowledge about the local territory is promoted? Is teaching focused on factual knowledge only or does it also address controversial issues, including the relationship between the rural world and the urban world, the hegemony of the latter and the competencies that the students, as citizens, may eventually develop in order to deal with territorial inequality? By tackling these issues, we expect to understand if territorial inequality is passively accepted as a given in those schools or if some kind of critical attitude with regard to that same inequality is being translated into the curriculum.

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