



UNSW
SYDNEY

Arts & Social Sciences

School of Education

EDST5034 Current Issues in Education 1
Term 1, 2020

The School of Education acknowledges the Bedegal and Gadigal people as the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we learn and teach.

1. LOCATION

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences - School of Education

EDST5034 Current Issues in Education (6 units of credit), Term 1, 2020

Course Lecturer: Pasi Sahlberg

Office Location: Morven Brown, room G48

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Availability: Contact for appointment

Classes: February 22nd and 23rd; March 21st and 22nd, and May 2nd

2. COURSE DETAILS

Course Name	Current Issues in Education I
Credit Points	6 units of credit (uoc)
Workload	Includes 150 hours of study, including class contact hours, individual readings, class preparation, writing, communication, teamwork, and assessment
Schedule	https://moodle.telt.unsw.edu.au/course/view.php?id=50334#section-8

3. SUMMARY

Education is one of the most discussed and contentious social issues around the world. It divides people across a spectrum of opinions from those favouring a radical reversal of traditional practice to those clamouring for return to educational basics. In many countries, education is at the heart of political debates often according to ideological principles and priorities. The rancorous debate embodies fundamental questions facing society including: What is the purpose of education? How much do teachers influence the quality of education systems? Will technology be the saving grace for the future of education? Do we need tougher accountability in order to improve public school systems? What are the roles of standardized testing, alternative education, private education, and online learning? Should OECD's PISA test stand or should it fall? How about NAPLAN here in Australia? Too often reformers choose a side to debate and preach rather than problem solve. These current issues in education are not easily solved with either-or solutions. Instead, answering these questions require constructive dialogue. Identifying, discussing and troubleshooting these global educational issues are the essence of this course.

To achieve these lofty goals – this course will invite students to a personal and collective journey to the world of current hard questions in education. This first course will take an international look at some of the burning questions that are common to education systems around the world. This course that is based on a cocktail of individual reading and writing, small group processing of selected issues, and “crucial conversations” during the Term promotes skills for creating alignment and agreement by fostering open dialogue around essential, emotional, and risky topics in global education dialogues. Our collective aim is to build an enriching learning community that supports authentic conversation and disciplined dialogue on the most difficult questions facing today's world of education policy. Students will gain access to prominent thought leaders, through reading and video links, and an opportunity to develop their own leadership identity and promote their own

perspectives on major educational challenges. Importantly, the course will also facilitate opportunities to learn how to leverage social media and other means of communication for sharing ideas.

In the end, this course is built on an assumption that we need to better understand these complex problems before we are able to find sustainable solutions to local educational challenges here at home. This course provides students with an overview of current international issues in education related to their research interests, examines issues to be considered choosing a research topic, and identifies literature search strategies.

4. IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Attendance: It is expected that any student enrolled in an EDST course with the School of Education will make a commitment to their learning and attend all classes in full where content is delivered in a face-to-face mode except in certain circumstances where absence is due to illness, misadventure or unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control.

This course requires that students:

1. Attend and participate actively in all class sessions and planned activities.
2. Complete required readings and writings to be properly prepared for each scheduled class and to complete all course assignments on time.
3. Play an active role with peers during classes and the course.
4. Complete the assessment tasks described in this Unit Outline.

5. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Outcome	Assessment/s
1 Critically engage with theory, research and practice to identify current issues in education.	1,2
2 Articulate a research topic in education and provide an argument for why this topic should be investigated.	1, 2
3 Use a systematic process to locate and evaluate academic and professional literature related to a research topic in education.	1

6. PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

Capability	Assessment/s
1 Advanced disciplinary knowledge and practices Demonstrate an advanced understanding of the field of education as it relates to their specialist area of study, and the ability to synthesize and	1, 2

	apply disciplinary principles and practices to new or complex environments.	
	Inquiry-based learning	
2	Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of research-based learning and the ability to plan, analyse, present, implement and evaluate complex activities that contribute to advanced professional practice and/or intellectual scholarship in education.	1
	Cognitive skills and critical thinking	
3	Demonstrate advanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills	1, 2
	Communication, adaptive and interactional skills	
4	Communicate effectively to a range of audiences, and be capable of independent and collaborative enquiry and team-based leadership	1, 2
	International outlook	
5	Demonstrate an understanding of international perspectives relevant to the educational field	1
	Ethics	
6	Demonstrate an advanced capacity to recognise and negotiate the complex and often contested values and ethical practices that underlie education	2

7. RATIONALE FOR THE INCLUSION OF CONTENT AND TEACHING APPROACH

Rationale: The course provides students with an overview of current issues in education related to research interests, examines the issues to be considered in choosing a research topic and identifies literature search strategies. The teaching approach attempts to actively engage students as they discuss current theory and practice, and learn new information and skills. Students will be required to take responsibility for their own learning in this course.

Teaching strategies: The learning activities in the course include: (a) seminars, which will use a range of teaching strategies (i.e., explicit instruction and student directed learning) targeting critical, reflective and creative thinking; (b) discussion with colleagues; (c) self-directed reading; and (d) the preparation of written assignments.

8. ASSESSMENT

Assessment Task 1: Select, describe and justify a topic for a small research project in education.

This assessment task should not exceed 2,000 words. You are expected to take a comprehensive and critical look at your own professional learning and link that to your research project. This task should not just focus on new knowledge and issues that you have learned during the course but also on how these are linked to important questions to be explored further.

Assessment Task 2: Develop an annotated bibliography that includes 10 or more cited relevant sources you have located on your research topic.

This assessment task should not exceed 4,000 words. You can rely on some literature used during this course, but you are also required to find other sources. This task can include reviews or commentary of some of the books you have read during this course.

9. COURSE CONTENT AND STRUCTURE (more details in Moodle)

Week	Activity
	Access website resources to help guide your project via Moodle. Make sure you have all required books and learning materials ready for the first seminar.
1	First seminar (22 nd and 23 rd February): This seminar is an orientation to the overall programme, introduction to this course and learning about other students.
2-4	Independent work/online contact with group members Read course literature and explore more relevant literature. Read at least ten Op-Eds in various media, choose the current issue related to your research project, write draft versions.
5	Second seminar (21 st and 22 nd March): Current issues in Finland, Canada and the United States. Key topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Educational Reform Movement and the Finnish Model - Success factors in Canadian education policy and practice - The big picture of American school system
6-10	Independent work and work with group members Writing Assessment Task 1. Due April 17 th . Reading further course material. Revise or write another op-ed.
11	Seminar 3 (2 nd May): Review and feedback of the writing assignments, conversation about the readings, and discussing individual research ideas. Key topics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - International and national student assessments - Future trends in global education
12	Final course work (Assessment Task 2 due May 7 th)

10. RESOURCES

Required books

There are four required books that all students should read. Three of them are listed below, fourth one is based on student's choice and interest (this book should fit to the literature that supports the objectives of this course).

Adamson, F., Åstrand, B., & Darling-Hammond, L. (Eds.) (2016). *Global Education Reform. How privatization and public investment influence education outcomes*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Dintersmith, T. (2018). *What School Could be*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sellar, S., Thompson, G., & Rutkowski, D. (2017). *The Global Education Race: Taking the Measure of PISA and International Testing*. Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: Brush Education Inc.

Recommended books

Abrams, S. (2016). *Education and the Commercial Mindset*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hargreaves, A. & Shirley, D. (2012). *The Global Fourth Way. The Quest for Educational Excellence*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin.

Malone, H. (Ed.) (2013). *Leading Educational Change. Global Issues, Challenges, and Lessons on Whole-system Change*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Ravitch, D. (2020). *Slaying Goliath. The Passionate Resistance to Privatization and the Fight to Save America's Public Schools*. New York: Knopf.

Sahlberg, P., Hasak, J., and Rodriguez, V. with associates (2017). *Hard Questions on Global Educational Change. Policies, practices and the future*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Zhao, Y. (2018). *What Works May Hurt*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Further optional readings

Fischman, G., Sahlberg, P., Silova, I., & Marcetti Topper, A. (2019). *International Large-scale Student Assessments and Their Impact on National School Reforms*. In: L. Suter, E. Smith, & B. Denman (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Comparative Studies in Education*, New York: SAGE.

Fullan, M. (2011). *Choosing wrong drivers for whole system reform (Seminar series 204)*. Melbourne: Centre for Strategic Education.

Jensen, B., Weidmann, B. & Farmer, J. (2013). *The Myth of Markets in School Education*. Melbourne: Grattan Institute. (online)

OECD (2012). *Equity and Quality in Education. Supporting disadvantaged students and schools*. Paris: Author. (online)

OECD (2018). *Equity in Education. Breaking down barriers to social mobility*. Paris: OECD (online)

OECD (2019). *Trends Shaping Education 2019*. Paris: OECD. (online)

OECD (2019). *PISA 2018 Results*. Paris: OECD (online)

Sahlberg, P. (2016). *Global Educational Reform Movement and its impact on teaching*. In Mundy, K., Green, A., Lingard, R., and Verger, A. (Eds.) *The Handbook of Global Policy and Policymaking in Education*. New York: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 128-144.

Sahlberg, P. (2019). *Facts and Myths About Finnish Schools. (Seminar series 290)*. Melbourne: Centre for Strategic Education.

UNICEF (2018). *An Unfair Start. Inequality in children's education in rich countries*. Innocenti Research Center. Florence: Italy. (online)

More reading resources will be available during the course.