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- 1 In many countries, schooling has recently become the subject of much questioning, and even of concern. It has never been so widely questioned. And yet in reality, perhaps, it has never been so little discussed.
- 2 It is as if a legitimate and essential discourse, albeit a dominant and standardising discourse on assessment, fuelled by international comparisons and the uses to which the results are put, makes it possible to avoid a more sensitive issue, namely what basic values each society transmits via its school system, and how these vary from one country to the next.
- 3 To identify these values, the *Revue Internationale d'Éducation de Sèvres*, in Issue No.50, turned to a panel of internationally renowned experts in the field of comparative education.
- 4 In their studies, based on the observation of everyday life in the classroom and in schools in several different countries, they show how, in England, China, Denmark, the United States, France, Italy and Russia, the teaching practices implemented are so deeply impregnated with the specific history and cultural values of the country that it takes a foreign observer to identify them clearly.
- 5 Here, comparing serves to provide an understanding of the subtle differences that exist between the different countries. This is in keeping with a relatively new tradition in the area of comparative research, which manages to go from the micro to the macro, from a precisely focused observation of life in the classroom to a clear analysis of national conceptions of learning.
- 6 In so doing, these articles highlight the complex interaction at play in the classroom between policy, institutional structure, culture, values and teaching practices, as demonstrated by the authors, including Robin Alexander, one of the leading authorities in this branch of comparative education, and author of the first article.
- 7 The work of the Centre International d'Études Pédagogiques (CIEP) is built around this same, crucial plurality of approaches, as can be seen in the seminars it organises on curriculum reform or teacher training, and in the expert appraisals it performs worldwide.