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Editorial

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A previous invited essay published in the IJED argued that the architectural infrastructure of foreign aid in education was ‘broken’ and needed to be fixed (Burnett, 2019). That manuscript, as intended, has generated considerable discussion and debate. In volume 78 we offer an additional manuscript with a parallel intention. This one argues that education assistance to Sub-Saharan Africa should be reprofiled to focus sharply on increased efficiency and effectiveness and linked closely to real progress on sustainable financing from domestic resources. The invited essay is titled: “Beyond Business as Usual: Aid and Financing Education in Africa.” In it, Keith Lewin points out that over a half trillion dollars in foreign aid has been directed to education over the last three decades with much of it going to sub-Saharan Africa. And while many nations have put this aid to good use and are now no longer aid dependent, other nations remain mired in repeated cycles of grants and sub-prime loans used to finance recurrent expenditure, leading to unsustainable debt. He argues that the aid architecture and goals with respect to these countries needs to focus on generating sufficient domestic revenue to finance education and other public goods and replace the politics of aid with the politics of social contracts between citizens and governments that raise and spend taxes. He concludes that aid should be used to catalyse the development of fiscal states that are not dependent on external assistance. This is the only avenue to sustainable development which avoids the ‘infinite do-loop of using aid to fill gaps rather than address their causes.’

It is common to assume that six years of primary schooling is roughly equivalent around the world. But experience tells us that resources matter and when some pupils are exposed to primary schooling costing many times the equivalent elsewhere, the results differ. But differ by how much? Public and private development agencies have recently allocated a great deal of effort to answer the question of how much actual literacy is acquired with exposure to typical primary schooling in low-income countries. The IJED has invited a group of experts to focus on the question of literacy as a special issue. Titled: “Schooled but not Educated: New Evidence from Learning Profiles on Addressing the Learning Crisis,” and co-edited by Michelle Kaffenberger, Luis Crouch and Laura Savage, this will be released soon.

In volume 78 we see the first of the articles designed for this Special Issue. In his article titled: “Girls’ Schooling and Woman’s Literacy: Schooling Targets Alone Won’t Reach Learning Goals,” Lant Pritchett uses a large multi-national Demographic and Health Survey to show that if literacy is defined by being able to read a simple sentence, then reaching a universal completion of the sixth grade will not bring the world any closer to universal female literacy. In Nigeria for instance, if all woman had completed the sixth grade, adult female illiteracy would only have fallen from 58 to 53 percent. Across 50 developing countries 40 percent of the women would remain illiterate even if all had reached grade six. The implications of these and other findings will be explored in some depth in the special issue.

Regular manuscripts in volume 78 fall into several categories. First is the connection between schooling and values. The original objective of public schooling had less to do with knowledge and skills and more with the inculcation of values required for successful adulthood, community membership and group citizenship (Heyneman, 2000). Three manuscripts in volume 78 address this issue. In his article titled: ‘Does Education Indoctrinate?’ Ishac Diwan argues that all states attempt to influence student values but that success often depends on the characteristics of the state itself. He finds that socialization works best under democracies and worst under autocracies. Whether state socialization is professionally acceptable depends in part on the level of education under scrutiny. In his article titled: ‘Internationalization of Higher Education in the Crucible: Linking National Identity and Policy in the Age of Globalization,’ Chuko-Chun Hsieh points out that higher education internationalization is used by political actors to promote domestic political agendas and that this constitutes the ‘death’ to the true universalistic goals of higher education. Lastly, in his article titled: ‘A Comparative Study of Global Citizenship and International Curricula in Two School Settings in Singapore and Australia,’ Suraiya Abdul Hameed argues that Global Citizenship Education (GCE) is not by nature competitive but when the curriculum implemented in a competitive elite school environment the principles of GCE curriculum can be contradictory to the schools’ other goals.

In spite of unprecedented expansion, high quality schooling remains scarce. And because of its scarcity the question of equity is a perennial concern. Several articles in volume 78 address equity issues. One concerns the equity of digital resource use. In their article titled: ‘Getting Closer to the Digital Divide: An Analysis of Impacts on Digital Competencies Based on the German PIAAC Sample,’ Bernhard Ertl, Andras Csanadi and Christian Tamai point out that the digital divide differs by work circumstance and other external factors. For those with access to computers both at home and at work, what digitally differentiates them is their generation (age). For those with access to computers only at home what digitally divides them is whether they had migrated from some other country or region.

Every nation and culture faces a dilemma with respect to educational specialization. Should those who show more academic promise be separated from others so as to maximize their human capital for themselves and the wider community? If so, at what stage should this separation occur? After elementary education? After secondary education? And through which mechanism? Should those with more potential attend a separate school? A special track within the same school? A

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special track within the same classroom? And what criteria should be used to justify this separation? A curriculum-based test of academic achievement? A non-curriculum-based test of academic aptitude? Classroom grades? And what level of flexibility should the separation include? Should those not chosen for advanced academic classes be given the opportunity to transfer into them? These issues have been of common concern and of significant political discussion in Comparative Education for the last half century.

Sema Bolukbas and Bekir Gur apply some of these questions to Turkey. In their article titled: 'Tracking and Inequality: The Results from Turkey,' they conclude that students with lower socio-economic status are systematically tracked into lower status schools, which is consistent with the experience from other parts of the world. They summarize their findings in the following way: 'tracking of all students based on the scores of the national high school entrance examination since 2014 poses new obstacles for the academic success of low-achieving poor children due to unintended consequences posed by the school environments'.

A third set of papers discuss issues of universities and post-secondary education. As institutions, universities in developing countries are often quite new. University traditions are untested and sometimes do not easily fit the local environments. In his article titled: 'University Reform and the Development of the Social Sciences in Indonesia,' Rochman Achwan, Meuthia Ganie-Rochman and Lidya Triana describe the process of indigenization of the social sciences. They argue that a natural tension exists between the need to be known through international social science journals and formats while, at the same time, be relevant to local interests. They describe this tension as a 'bifurcation' of academic dependency between local and foreign influences. They conclude however, that true development is to publish in international journals but emphasizing the prominence of local influences.

Similar bifurcation pressures are the subject of a discussion of university ranking in Kazakhstan. In her article titled: 'The Role of Rankings in Higher Education Policy: Coercive and Normative Isomorphism in Kazakhstani Higher Education," Saule Anafinova describes the pressure to model Anglo-American research universities as an ideal. She concludes by describing the need to identify appropriate Kazakhstani alternatives.

It is common to assume that specializations in mathematics, science and engineering are more likely to lead to higher wages and greater returns on personal investment in higher education. This issue is approached by Tuyen Quang Tran and Huong Vu Van in their article titled: 'Wage Earning Differentials by Field of Study: Evidence from Vietnamese University Graduates.' Contrary to common expectations however, they discover that wages of graduates in the arts and humanities are higher than the wages of graduates from the sciences, mathematics and engineering.

Prior to the encouragement of new forms of management in China, higher education had similar protocols, administrative procedures and requirements. There was no private cost to students; faculty were tenured, paid according to uniform criteria and, even through out-of -date, could not be asked to find new employment. The question becomes what to 'do' when a university is in dire need of modernization. This is the topic of the paper titled: 'University Social Responsibility in the Context of Economic Displacement from the Proposed Upgrading of a Higher Education Institution: The Case of the University of Groningen Yantai,' by Chen Chen and Frank Vanclay. The article criticizes the modernization of a university in China on the grounds that it did not adhere to an obligation to 'do no harm'. The authors view the dismissal of unneeded or out-of-date staff as constituting an abrogation of professional responsibility. This is quite an interesting and quite common issue, in business as well as higher education. In some instances, however, the need to re-structure is so great that radical operations are the only effective means of institutional survival. In one instance Tbilisi State University, the largest in Georgia simultaneously released every staff and faculty member. Each was invited to reapply for positions with new titles and functions (Heyneman, 2007). University restructuring is not a science and modernization has no common formula. What is true is that debates over the process will continue into the future. However, the question of professional standards probably needs to include future students and the wider community in addition to those currently employed.

Higher education in the former Soviet Union constituted a single system. When the Soviet Union dissolved and became 15 independent countries, the changes in the systems were parallel because many of the external pressures — financing, land ownership, control by sector ministries — were the same. One response to the collapse in public expenditures was the institutionalization of dual track tuition fees. This is the focus of the paper titled: 'Marketization of Higher Education and (the) Dual Track Tuition Fee System in Post Soviet Countries.' In the dual track system private tuition is not charged to students who perform well on the university entrance examination, but is charged to those who do not perform well. The author, Anna Smolentseva, characterizes the system as an instrument of marketization and constitutes the destruction of Soviet egalitarianism. She believes that the system is shaped by Anglo-American neoliberal thinking. The change from the Soviet method of financing higher education when public resources were adequate to a circumstance when public resources were not adequate is indeed dramatic, and indeed, heart-breaking. One might wonder, however, how universities could be sustained when public resources are inadequate and they are not allowed to raise and manage their own resources. Raising and managing their own resources is a method of sustainability among the world's leading universities which today constitutes the norm (Heyneman and Lee, 2013).

Several other articles in Volume 78 are worthy of attention. It is common to characterize 'parental involvement' as being an asset to children in need of direction in schooling. Children with parents involved with their schooling are said to be at an advantage. However, in the article titled: 'Parental Involvement and Educational Trajectories of Youth in Russia,' Ilya Prakhov, Olga Kotomina and Alexandra Sazhin challenge the concept of parental involvement as being linear. They find that 'excessive' parental involvement can be counter-productive but that 'rational' parental involvement is associated with educational success.

Volume 78 is illustrative of where the IJED is headed. In volume 78 is the first manuscript of a coming special issue on why schooling does not necessarily lead to literacy. There is a manuscript initiating what will likely be a healthy debate on whether foreign assistance to education in sub-Saharan Africa should not be replaced by maximizing local tax receipts and other domestic sources of finance. There is an article reiterating the long-standing theory on the inequity of tracking, but other articles which challenge long-standing theories of parental involvement and the economic virtues of studying STEM subjects. And lastly there are articles whose contributions point to unsolvable dilemmas — the tendency to use western research universities as a principal source for ranking criteria, the uncomfortable requirement for using international social science research journals as criteria of local social science development and the question of what to 'do' with staff who are unquestionably out-of-date when institutions need to be modernized.

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