



## Editorial



### Background

I was appointed Editor-in-Chief on January 1, 2014. This is the final issue of this first year. The year has been productive. In 2013 the journal had fallen behind in processing articles. In addition to the 450 new candidate articles received during 2014, the associate editors and I processed 300 articles from 2013. In 2013 IJED published 37 articles; in 2014 IJED published 77 articles. Today, I am pleased to report that the IJED is up to date. Four special issues are well underway. “Education and the Post-2015 International Development Goals”, introduced by Simon McGrath, appears in this issue. In addition there are 19 new articles on topics which are summarized below. Today, authors submitting candidate articles can expect to receive expedited yet thorough reviews and personal encouragement. We actively seek articles which raise new questions, and which pave new ground in theory and public policy.

The articles in this issue fall into five general categories: (i) questions concerning the role of the state, (ii) new ideas concerning particularly vulnerable children, (iii) new explorations of the teaching profession, and new findings with respect to (iv) culture and (v) inequality. Concerning the *role of the state*: In her article “School Management and Efficiency: An Assessment of Charter vs. Traditional Public Schools,” Anne Flaker summarizes evidence from the state of Massachusetts. She finds that charter schools, schools publically financed but released from many burdensome regulations, outperform traditional public schools in both reading and math, and are particularly effective in urban areas. In an article titled “Low Fee Private Schooling in India: More Questions than Answers? Observations from the Young Lives Longitudinal Research in Andhra Pradesh,” Renu Singh and Colin Bangay find that private provision is not accessible to the poorest children. In her article titled: “Constitutional Rights to Education and Their Relationship to National Policy and School Enrolment,” Jody Heymann asks whether guaranteeing the right to education in a country’s constitution is associated with educational effects. She finds that these rights are associated with particular national policies and they in turn are associated with higher net enrollment, independent of intervening influences. In her article titled: “Who are the Custodians of Pacific ‘Post-2015’ Education Futures? Policy Discourses, Education-for-All and the Millennium Development Goals” Alexandra McCormick finds that these international programs have a paradoxical influence. While they facilitate debate and legitimize broader participation they seem to underpin

the status quo in terms of donor and state dominance of educational agendas. What might we conclude from this important group of articles? Findings seem to suggest caution on several fronts. One might well be cautious about whether low fee private schools provide an effective answer for the poorest sector of the population in India and whether state monopolies provide sufficient flexibility to be as effective as the less bureaucratized public alternatives. One might note that constitutional provisions may have indirect positive effects, yet international frameworks such as Education-for-All may simply reinforce the underperforming influences of both the state and traditional donors.

In terms of *vulnerable children*: Mathew Jukes, Catherine Jere and Pat Pridmore in their article titled: “Evaluating the Provision of Flexible Learning for Children at Risk of Primary School Dropout in Malawi,” report on a study school attendance of at-risk (usually orphan) children. They find that if these children receive additional school supplies and the helpful influence of a ‘school buddy’ and the wider community, they are less prone to drop out of school. They also find a spill-over effect with the same positive outcomes on the non-at-risk children situated in the same experimental schools. Aulo Gelli, Edoardo Masset, Amadou Sekou Diallo, Jorge Hombrados, Kristie Watkins and Lesley Drake are concerned with children who live in food insecure areas. In the article titled “Agriculture, Nutrition and Education: on the Status and Determinants of Primary Schooling in Rural Mali before the Crisis of 2012,” they find that the provision of school meals has a particularly strong effect on school attendance. Paul Lynch and Patricia Lund are concerned with albino children in Malawi. In their article titled “Identifying Strategies to Enhance the Educational Inclusion of Visually Impaired Children of Albinism in Malawi” they discover several interventions which work to increase school attendance and performance. Nerine Guinee is concerned with women’s feelings of empowerment in a society where there are multiple barriers to equality of participation. In the article titled “Empowering Women through Education: Experiences of Dalit Women in Nepal,” the author finds that educational attainment is helpful but insufficient to over-come the effects of family and caste. Amando Amorim Simoes and Ricardo Sabates are concerned with children of impoverished families in Brazil. In their article titled “The Contribution of Bolsa Familia to the Educational Achievement of Economically Disadvantaged Children in Brazil,” they discover that financial incentives, when carefully targeted, have been very effective in increasing the length of school participation. They ask, however, about when it would be justified to reduce the level of

monetary incentives and expect children to attend based on the intrinsic rewards of education. In low income countries, there is a wide range of pupil ages in the same class. Njora Hungi, Moses Ngware and Benta Abuya are interested in the age, within a class, when reading is most effective. In their article titled “Examining the Impact of Age on Literacy Achievement among Sixth Grade Primary School Pupils in Kenya,” they conclude that for grade six it is between age 10 years, six months and 11 years, five months, thus suggesting that effort to control the age range may be important. Zachary Intemann and Elizabeth Katz are concerned about the children left behind by a parent who has migrated to another country seeking economic opportunity. In their article titled “Migration and Children’s Schooling and Time Allocation: Evidence from El Salvador” they find that these children will complete more years of school. What might readers conclude from these explorations of education and vulnerable children? On the one hand, educational attainment may not be sufficient to overcome barriers and handicaps in the wider Nepalese environment. On the other hand, some interventions, such as food supplements, monetary incentives and inter-personal support, work well. While it is true that some children remain particularly vulnerable, some may benefit from the incentives derived from a missing but economically supportive parent.

Concerning the *Teaching Profession*: Sharon Tazto is interested in the degree to which female teachers are deployed to rural areas. In her article titled: “Using the Capability Approach to Improve Female Teacher Deployment to Rural Schools in Nigeria” she notes the extreme imbalance with respect to teacher gender because of active avoidance or attrition from rural assignments. She argues that a deployment policy informed by the concerns expressed by female teachers has the potential to overcome the barriers to rural deployment. Tabitha Grace Mukeredzi is interested in ‘cohort knowledge’ among those training to become teachers. In her article titled: “Re-envisioning teaching practice: Students Teacher Learning in a Cohort Model of Practicum in a Rural South African context”, she argues that teachers acquire knowledge and skills from their training; they also do this acquisition differently in different cohorts. The article titled “Social Relations as Predictors of Achievement in Math in Kenyan Primary Schools” by Ivy Kodzi, Moses Oketch, Moses Ngware, Maurice Mutisya and Evangeline Nderu is more than about teachers. They find that when teachers correct homework and keep students engaged during math lessons, their students performed better. But they also find that student performance improved when head teachers had good interpersonal relations with teachers and when parents provide material and financial support to the school. In essence their article supports the point that student performance is nested in an environment of good social relations from many points of view.

With respect to the *influence of culture*, both articles concern themselves with China. Bih-Jen Fwu, Chih-Fen Wei, Shun-Wen

Chen, and Hsiou-Huai Wang concentrate on the question of why students are so diligent, why they study so hard and why effort is so important to them. They discover that they do this for reasons of ‘moral image’, the belief that the harder they work the more moral they may appear to others. They find that prestige is associated with one’s effort. Xin Hong, by contrast Yanqing Ding and Mun C. Tang are interested in the culture gap between girls and boys with respect to learning mathematics as opposed to language. They find that small positive gaps in girls’ language performance and larger negative gaps in mathematics performance existed across all grades, whereas being a minority or being from a lower socio-economic background were relevant factors in some but not all circumstances.

In terms of *inequality*: two articles come from China, a third from Ethiopia. Nardos Tesfay and Lars-Erik Maimberg are interested in horizontal inequity (across ethnic groups) rather than vertical inequity (across socio-economic groups). In their article titled: “Horizontal Inequalities in Children’s Educational Outcomes in Ethiopia” they make the argument that poor educational participation and progression are more a function of horizontal than vertical inequalities. Jin Xiao and Zeyun Liu concentrate on another measure of horizontal equality, that of geography. In their article titled: “Inequalities in the Financing of Compulsory Education in China: A Comparative Study of Gansu and Jiangsu Provinces with Spatial Analysis” they compare the inequalities between wealthy and impoverished provinces. They find that rising inequalities in China are largely due to widening gap among spatially stratified groups and that the life chances of a child born in one province is dramatically different from a child born elsewhere. In their article on ability grouping, Yu Zhang, Dongsheng Chen and Wen Wang analyze the differences on China’s university entrance examination between low performers who have been integrated into high achieving classrooms and those who have not. In their article titled: “The Heterogeneous Effects of Ability-Grouping on National College Entrance Exam Performance – Evidence from a Large City in China” the authors find that placing low ability students in high ability classrooms raises their scores without affecting the scores of high ability students in those classrooms.

Taken together these 18 articles illustrate two tendencies in our field. First is the slow but steady reduction in the boundaries between low, medium and high-income countries in the pursuit of intelligent education policy. Second is tendency, again slow but steady, change in the direction of the lessons. What used to flow from ‘center to periphery’ now often flows in the reverse direction.

Editor-In-Chief  
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