



Editorial



This is the first issue of 2015 and the second double issue consisting of articles focusing on a special topic as well as those which have been submitted on their own. I hope readers will enjoy the depth as well as the breadth of the attached discussion. After 25 years of debate, the international education agenda has now turned from stimulating access to primary education to the learning which is supposed to occur within primary education. The articles of this special issue concentrate on this. Titled: Learning, Pedagogy and the Post-2015 Education and Development Agenda, the articles are introduced by the special issue editors Angeline Barrett, Yusuf Sayed, Michele Schweisfurth and Leon Tikly.

There are 22 articles which have been reviewed and accepted for publication through the regular process in this issue. Their topics fall into four categories. One, with two articles, concerns teachers. A second, with two articles concerns organizations and school systems. A third, with six articles, concerns issues of higher education. The last category with the largest number of articles (12) concerns primary education and various interventions to improve student achievement.

Teachers Both articles on teachers have to do with new ways to understand what they do. Kari Kragh Blume Dahi in "Narrative Learning through Life: Kenyan Teachers' Life-stories and Narrative Learning and What This Means for Their Relation to the Teaching Profession" describes how much one can learn about teaching by listening carefully to how teachers recount their life stories. In her article "Quality Teaching in rural Sub-Saharan Africa: Different Perspectives, Values and Capabilities" Alison Sarah Buckler draws on in-depth interviews with two rural Nigerian teachers and finds that their lives and work differs systematically from the official descriptions of their work available through public policy documents. From her interviews a list of capabilities was developed. She suggests that the capabilities list may be more accurate means to evaluate professional performance.

Organizations and School Systems The education policy role of an international organization is the subject of discussion in "The World Bank and the Global Governance of Education in a Changing World" by Karen Mundy and Antoni Verger. They point out that the World Bank has evolved over time and influenced by (i) the geopolitical and ideological shifts within many of its more prominent shareholders, (ii) the shift in relationship with the rapidly changing borrowers, and (iii) the dynamics of its internal culture. These three influences are tracked across four different time periods up to the state of strategic uncertainty which pertains today. In their paper "Segregation, Inequality, and Educational Performance in Northern Ireland: Problems and Solutions" Colin

Knox and Vani Borooh argue that despite the peace agreements the school system of Northern Ireland remains decidedly segregated. They point out that such segregation, which effectively keeps children from knowing one another, will lower the likelihood for the society to ever attain social cohesion. As a solution they propose to establish 'partnerships of excellence' in which capable students from divergent backgrounds would share resources and opportunities to excel.

Higher Education How can one assess university quality? There are many systems of ranking and several systems which try to compare the quality of universities across countries. However universities in one country may be advantaged or disadvantaged by the policy environment. In a paper titled: "International Rankings: Universities vs. Higher Education Systems" Benoit Millot compares systems which rank individual institutions with those which rank systems of institutions. Because the methods have commonalities, the results do too. He argues in the end that more attention be paid to the ranking policy environments.¹ Does more money/student or smaller pupil/faculty ratios affect higher education quality? In his article titled: "Enhancing the Link between Higher Education and Employment," Kye Woo Lee finds that these two factors improve the chances of employment even after controlling for type of institution and location. He concludes by suggesting that more emphasis be placed on these two variables when planning institutional problems of assistance.

What are the effects of branch campuses situated in other countries? In his paper titled: "Transnational Education and Skilled Migration: Evidence from Australia", Antonina Levatino suggests that enrollment in offshore institutions increases skilled migration to the nation sponsoring the higher education institutions, in this Australia. What happens when access to higher education increases? Does the participation rate of non-traditional social groups increase as well? In a paper titled: "Expansion and Equality in Chinese Higher Education" Changjun Yue suggests that the representation of the middle class increases but that the representation of the lower classes does not. In the case where higher education access has expanded, many still cannot attend. What happens to them? In his paper titled: "Challenges in Accessing Higher Education: A Case Study of Marginalized Young People in One South African Informal Settlement" Melanie Walker

¹ There has been one attempt to assess the characteristics of the higher education policy environment which encourages the development of world class universities (Heyneman and Lee, 2013).

explores this question. She uses an approach similar to those used by Dahl and Buckler (see above) to assess the aspirations and expectations of this marginalized group located in an informal settlement in South Africa.

What can a country do when its local system of higher education is inappropriately structured for a modern economically competitive environment and it cannot wait for reforms to take effect? One option is to finance its own scholarships for local students to attend universities which are better placed to offer an education with the necessary modernity. The Bolashak Program of Kazakhstan is an illustration. In terms of size the Bolashak program may be without precedent. In the paper titled: “Understanding the Human Capital Benefits of a Government-funded International Scholarship Program: An Exploration of Kazakhstan’s Bolashak Program” Laura Perna uses interviews of program participants to assess their experiences and personal benefits of the investment.

Primary and Secondary Education Five articles in this section deal with interventions which work. In an article titled: “Building Vocational Skills for Marginalized Youth in Uganda: a SWOT Analysis of four Training Programs” Cuthbert Tukundane finds that Vocational and Technical Education (VET) improves access to local labor markets and livelihood opportunities. In an article titled: “Achieving Universal Primary Education in Low Income Countries: The Contributing Role of National Governance” John Richards finds that good governance (political stability, government accountability and effective service delivery) may make the difference between countries which achieve universal education and those which do not. In their paper titled: “Joyful Learning? The Effects of a School Intervention on Learning Outcomes in Karnataka, India” Rajesh Raj Seethamma Natarajan, Kunal Sen, Vinod Annigeri, Arunkumar Kulkarni, and D.R. Revankar argue that a pedagogical technique called ‘Nali Kali’ works to improve learning outcomes among the poor. In their paper titled: “Achieving Gender Quality Equality in Learning Outcomes: Evidence from a Non-Formal Education Program in Bangladesh” Kevin Gee suggests that a program called ‘Shikhon’ (learning in Bengali) the performance of girls is equivalent to the performance of boys. In their paper titled: “Determinants of Early Childhood Development in Chile: Health, Cognitive and Demographic Factors” Dante Contreras points out that attendance in early childhood education programs have a positive effect on child development outranking many other influences including mother’s employment status.

It is not clear how Rwanda might rank in good governance investigated by Richards (see above) but in an article titled: “Rwanda’s Potential to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals for Education” Roger Sapsford points out that, while experiencing progress, the country is not quite there. Net primary school attendance is approximately 88 percent. Primary completion and universal literacy will also fall short of the country’s ambitions. The conclusion: progress is good, but success is not yet assured. To what extent is primary school attendance actually valued? In his article titled: “Education of Children of Nomadic Pastoralists in Somalia: Comparing Attitudes and Behaviour” Roy Carr-Hill points out that 26 percent of those interviewed said they would use additional resources to pay school fees and only 12 percent said they would keep the money for emergencies such as health care.

To what extent does private tutoring affect the delivery of public education? In an article titled: “The Influence of Private Tutoring on Middle-Class Students’ Usage of In-Class Time in Formal Schools in Taiwan” Ying-Jie Jheng finds that students ‘steal’ in class time to focus on the material and the techniques learned in private tutoring. The author suggests that this undermines teachers in formal schools and exposes the inadequacy of formal schooling by comparison to private tutoring.

To what extent does the distribution of school quality affect the measurement of school effects? In the article titled: “Inequality in School Resources and Academic Achievement: Evidence from Peru” Gianmarco Leon argues that inattention to the inequity in the distribution of school resources systematically under estimates their affect on academic achievement.²

Can orphans, including HIV/AIDs-orphans be effectively assisted through general social protection programs? In a paper titled: “The Impact of Orphan-hood on Education Attendance: Evidence from Zimbabwe” Wei Ha, Peter Salama and Stanley Gwavuya suggest that normal social protection programs do not eliminate the effect of HIV/AIDs-Orphan-hood. They conclude that in a comparison between double orphans and children with both parents, the probability of dropping out of school is as large as those children from wealthy and impoverished backgrounds.

And what about children with disabilities? To what extent has the increase in educational access affected them? In a paper titled: “Disability and Determinants of Schooling: A Case from Bangladesh,” Kamal Lamichhane suggests what we may have anticipated. Children with disabilities have more access, but those with comparatively greater family resources are the ones who take advantage of it. The author concludes that poverty reduction strategies should identify children with disabilities from impoverished families.

Millions of hours and dollars have been spent on improving learning strategies. So are their effects stronger than the effects of other factors? In a paper titled: “The Role of Reading Engagement in Improving National Achievement: An Analysis of Chile’s 2000–2009 PISA Results,” Juan Pablo Valenzuela, Gabriela Gomez Vera, and Carmen Sotomayor analyze the national changes in achievement and discover that it is a child’s attitude explain up to 25 percent of the variance in improvement while learning strategies are ‘unrelated’ to achievement. This suggests that children who are determined to learn will and children, from whatever background, are agnostic to learning, won’t. It is an important lesson.

References

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- Heyneman, S.P., Lee, J., 2013. *World class universities: the sector policy requirements*. In: Shin, J.C., Kehum, B. (Eds.), *Institutionalization of World Class Universities in Global Competition*. Springer, New York, pp. 45–59.

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International Journal of Educational Development

² This is one of the principle conclusions too from the re-analyses of the Heyneman/Loxley effect (Heyneman, forthcoming).