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Editorial



This issue of the IJED continues to illustrate the variety of interests of our readership. The 17 articles fall into five groups: (i) the determinants of school achievement, (ii) teacher quality, (iii) higher education, (iv) questions of economics and human capital and (v) a last category which I will call 'other' but which in fact may be the most significant.

Academic performance (evidence of learning) is the focal point of all educational investments. Therefore how to influence academic performance is among the most constant inquiries among researchers in International and Comparative Education. We have six articles which pertain to this. In the article titled "The Impact of Professional Athletic Sponsorship on Educational Attainment in Western Kenya," Svitlana Maksymenko discovers that there is a strong association between professional athletic sponsorship and educational performance on the Kenyan Certificate of Education examination. This reiterates the importance of pupil motivation in determining achievement. On the other hand in the article titled: "Starting Behind and Staying Behind in Mathematics: The case of insurmountable learning deficits in South Africa," Nicholas Spaul and Janeli Kotze find that the performance gap between pupils from rich and poor families broadens over time suggesting that without a quick and effective intervention in preschool, the cost of remediation will grow. In the article titled: "Secondary School Quality and Gender Differences in Outcomes for Students: Evidence from Bihar, India" K.G. Santhya, A.J. Francis Xavier, and Shireen J. Jejeebhoy find that egalitarian attitudes in the classroom not only affects pupil performance but also their attitudes and awareness of gender roles and personal health. In the article titled: "Mental Health and Dropout Behavior: A Cross-sectional study of junior high students in Northwest rural China" Huan Wang, Yaojiang Shi, Yang Chu, Fei He, Qinghe Qu, Scott Rozell and James Chu find that mental health problems, particularly among children from underprivileged families, are a primary influence on children who drop out of school. In the article titled: "Islanders' Educational Choice: Determinants of Student Performance in the Cambridge International Certificate Examination in the Republic of Maldives," Shoko Yamada, Kiyoshi Fujikawa, and Krishna Pangenii find that children from underprivileged backgrounds on average perform worse than children of more privileged backgrounds. However, the suggestion is made that the source of the problem lies in an examination which has been developed externally but whether a locally developed examination can eliminate the tendency is left unstated. Lastly, in the article titled: "Winners and Losers of School Choice: Evidence from Rio de

Janeiro, Brazil and Santiago, Chile," Gregory Elacqua, Fatima Alves, Mariane Koslinski, Matias Martinez, Humberto Santos, and Daniela Urbina find that in both cities disadvantaged parents were less likely to choose high-achieving schools for their children, suggesting that there is a family gap not only in performance but also in information.

Three articles concentrate on teachers. In the article titled: "Does Teaching Quality Matter? Students learning outcome related to teaching quality in public and private schools in India," Renu Singh, Dudipa Sarkar Masters and Dudipa Sarkar define teacher quality as a combination of the proximity of their residence to the school, the level of professional qualifications, their attitudes toward schools and students and their teaching practices such as the frequency by which they check student workbooks. Students in low fee private schools outperform those in public schools and these characteristics of teachers are particularly important in understanding why. In their article titled: "What Do We Know About Primary Teachers' Mathematical Content Knowledge in South Africa? An Analysis of SACMEQ 2007," Hanna Venkat and Nicholas Spaul find that 79% of the grade six mathematics teachers have a knowledge of the curriculum content below the grade six/seven and the few teachers with higher levels of content knowledge are distributed inequitably. Lastly, in their article titled: "Designing a Program of Teacher Professional Development to Support Beginning Reading Acquisition in Coastal Kenya," Margaret M. Dubeck, Matthew C.H. Jukes, Simon Brooker, Thomas Drake and Hellen Inyenga argue that a literacy intervention must bridge the gap between current and intended teacher practice. This requires the intervention to be simple, replicable, cost effective to implement and well received by the teachers themselves.

Two articles pertain to issues of higher education. In their article titled: "Corruption in College Admissions Examinations in China," Qijun Liu and Yaping Peng suggest that corruption level is on the order of 15% and is due to poor examination design, low transparency, public tolerance of corruption, and the dominant pressure of occupational aspirations. In their article titled: "Intergenerational Mobility and Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education in Cyprus," Sofia Andreou and Christos Koutsampelas find that although private investment in higher education has increased, the parental effect on educational mobility has been reduced. This suggests that public policy on equality of opportunity has been relatively effective.

Five articles pertain to issues of economics and human capital. In the article titled: "International Migration and Human Capital in

Mexico: Networks or parental absence?” Jaime Lara asks about the educational impact when the head of household or senior sibling seeks employment in another country. He finds that migration has a negative effect on male school attendance but not cognitive ability. In their article titled: “Does Inequality in Educational Attainment Matter for China’s Economic Growth?” Nannan Yu, Bo Yu, Martin de Jong and Servaas Storm argue that inequality negatively affects economic growth, but that the size of the effect depends on the level of economic development of the locality. In China’s western region for instance, they find that inequality is more relevant for economic performance than is educational attainment. This suggests that policies to promote the equal distribution of educational resources in low income regions could be particularly effective in stimulating economic growth. In their article titled: “Measuring Access to Learning over a Period of Increased Access to Schooling: The case of Southern and Eastern Africa since 2000,” Stephen Taylor and Nicholas Spaul ask whether increased access to schooling translated into increased learning in the population of ten nations. They concluded that in all countries greater access to school attendance did increase learning and that this change was particularly evident among females and children from lower income households. In their article titled: “Is Child Labor a Barrier to School Enrollment in Low- and Middle-Income Countries?” Diane L. Putnick and Marc H. Bornstein find that

negative relationships occur between school attendance and child labor but that the negative relationship was more consistent between family and household chores and attendance than between work outside the home and school attendance. Lastly, in their article titled: “Special and Inclusive Education in Ghana: Status and progress, challenges and implications,” Lawrence Ameteepe and Dimitris Anastasiou describes the human capital implications of children with special needs, the progress of education policy in Ghana pertaining to children with special needs, and the challenges to come for Sub-Saharan Africa more generally.

In a category labeled ‘other’ we highlight one article by Dana Burde, Joel Middleton and Rachel Wahl titled: “Islamic Studies as Early Childhood Education in Countries Affected by Conflict: The role of mosque schools in remote Afghan villages.” The authors point out the importance of Mosque schools in Pakistan. They argue that mosque schools have been ‘sidelined’ in many policy discussions and often misunderstood. They find that children who attend mosque schools demonstrate higher literacy scores and conclude that this is particularly significant where access to public schooling is constrained or non-existent.

Stephen P. Heyneman, Editor-in-Chief