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## IJED Editorial Volume 53



The articles in Volume 53 tackle some of the most controversial topics in our field. Two address themselves to the debates over whether egalitarian or libertarian school choice policies should take precedence. Three articles assess the long term effects of development institutions and the teaching profession. Four articles summarize the effects of specific interventions; half of which fall short of expectations. Four articles speak to the impact of human capital; all highlighting unintended and unexpected effects.

First the issue of **egalitarian (state) vs libertarian (free market) policies**. This question has long been a topic of interest to the IJED (Heyneman and Stern, 2014). However, in the article titled: “Between Equality and Freedom of Choice: Educational Opportunities for the Least Advantaged” Nicolas Brando argues that the egalitarian approach does not succeed in benefiting the least advantaged and is too restrictive on fundamental freedoms such as the right of a parent to choose to have their children attend a school with religious affiliations. On the other hand, he also suggests that the libertarian approach disregards the responsibility for those who can be harmed by other people’s freedoms. This is a terribly important issue where freedom of choice, when under-regulated, raises problems of social cohesion and lays the intellectual foundations for civil unrest and perhaps civil war (Heyneman, 1997). Brando’s article suggests that a compromise is necessary and that a program of redistribution may be able to maintain parental freedom without threatening social cohesion and at the same time adequately compensate the least advantaged.

But what happens when the egalitarian mechanism, because of a breakdown in state provision, is impossible to maintain? In the article titled: “School Choice and Parental Preferences in a Poor Area of Monrovia, Liberia” David Longfield and James Tooley point out that 18% of the school age children are not in school at all; that 72% are in private schools and only 9% attended public schools. When parents are asked for their opinions, they generally prefer private over government schools. This suggests perhaps that the theoretical arguments over egalitarian vs. libertarian policies do not pertain to those environments such as post-conflict environments, where government provision of education is simply not an option.

A second category of topics concerns **Long Term Institutional Contributions to Development**. The Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations and the World Bank have been active in promoting policies and projects to help stimulate economic development since the end of World War II. The foundations have sometimes been criticized for secretly assisting the expansion of American foreign policy and power (Parmar, 2012), and the World Bank’s education sector has been criticized as being subject to popular ideologies devaluing the contributions of higher education (Heyneman, 2003; 2012). Two articles in Volume 53 address these issues. In the paper titled: “U.S. Land Grant Universities in India: Assessing the Consequences of Agricultural Partnership, 1952-1972,” Simi Mehta, Rattan Lal and David Hansen argue that the long-term effects of establishing the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Tropics (ICRISAT) helped lay the foundation for an agricultural and educational revolution in Southern Asia. It assisted the region to attain self-sufficiency in food grain production in what was later termed the ‘green revolution’ which improved the prospects for hundred of millions of people.

In the article titled: “The World Bank and Education: Governing (through) Knowledge” Mike Zapp suggests that a fundamental education contribution of the World Bank has been as a producer, manager and transmitter of knowledge and in essence serving as the world’s most important distributor of education research.

Professional contributions to development have sometimes been questioned, but in the article titled: “Teacher Agency in Challenging Contexts as a Consequence of Social Support and Resource Management” Tilda Loots and Liesel Ebersohn suggest that despite deprivation, teachers in South Africa use ‘collectivist coping’ mechanisms to achieve ‘agency’.

A third category of articles concerns **the Effects of Human Capital**. In a paper titled: “A cross-Country Empirical Test of Human Capital and Innovation” Sardor Azam analyzes human intelligence and economic innovation. He concludes that more intelligent nations export more sophisticated and diverse products and are thus more innovative. In the article titled: “The ERASMUS experience and its capacitating potential: Analysis of Adaptive Capabilities” Maria Jesus Martinez Usarrilde, Juan Murillo Pausa and Rafaela Garcia-Lopez find that the European Union mobility program raises the ‘capacitating potential’ of its participants. In the article titled: “The Challenges and Social Consequences of Increased Female Participation at Ethiopian Public Universities” Paul O’Keeffe finds that recent increases in higher education opportunity have raised the level of female participation but at the same time have challenged the traditional patriarchal nature of the society. In their paper titled: “The Problem of Secondary Education Completion: A Case Study of Cabo Verde, A Small Island Developing State,” Emily Longenecker and Anthony Justin Barnum point out that, perhaps because of the absence of a clear public strategy, many students drop out of secondary education.

The fourth category of articles pertain to the **results from specific interventions**. The effort to expand early childhood education in rural China is assessed in an article titled: “On the Road to Universal Early Childhood Education (ECE) in China: A Financial Perspective,” Yisu Zhou, Hui Li, and Bi Ying Hu conclude that with only 30% of the cost deriving from public authorities ECE is underfunded and helps exacerbate inequalities. In an

article titled: “Failing to Catch-Up in Reading in the Middle Years: The Findings of the Impact Evaluation of the Reading-Catch-Up Program in South Africa,” Brahm Fleisch, Stephen Taylor, Volker Schoer, and Thabo Mabogoane find little or no effect of the intervention and that the effects of one-to-one tutoring depend heavily on the personality of particular tutors.

Decentralization has been a popular policy recommendation in many contexts and by many international development agencies. However, in the article titled: “Education Decentralization, School Resources, and Student Outcomes in Korea,” Dong Wook Jeong, Ho Jun Lee and Sung Kyung Cho discover that fiscal decentralization was associated with improved outcomes but that political decentralization was not. Making education free of private cost has also been a highly popular policy recommendation from international agencies and free education has been adopted by many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, free education without parallel investments in new infrastructure may negate potential gains from the new policies. This theory has now been tested. In the article titled: “School Fee Abolition and Changes in Education Indicators,” Ray Langsten examines changes in the Net Attendance Ratio (NAR) and the Primary School Completion Ratio (PSCR) across countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. He finds that the NAR increased following the abolition of school fees but that the PSCR remains unchanged or in fact declines.

Lastly there is a category of articles which derive conclusions based on opinion polls (surveys of professional perceptions). In an article titled: “An Explanatory Study of Teachers Perceptions of Prosocial Behaviors in Preschool Children,” Yassir Semmar and Tamader Al-Thani find that teachers believed girls exhibited more prosocial behaviors than boys. In the article titled: “Czech Elementary School Teachers’ Implicit Expectations from Migrant Children,” Katerina Machovcova finds that teachers believed migrant children to be successful only if they had lost distinguishing ethnic identifications. In the article titled: “Politicized Pedagogy in Morocco: A Comparative Case of Teachers of English and Arabic,” Gareth Small finds that the definition of good pedagogy differed between teachers of English and teachers of other subjects; that teachers of English benefit from different patterns of professional development, funding, pedagogical research and symbolic capital. In the article titled: “Monitoring Inclusive Education in Chile: Differences Between Urban and Rural Areas,” Mauro Tamayo, Jame Rebolledo and Alvaro Besoain find that in the opinion of program coordinators, rural schools are less inclusive. They are believed to have fewer benefits for children with special needs and fewer sign language resources.

### Final observations

Analytic work which relies on professional perceptions is of a lower standard of evidence than work which can empirically demonstrate differences. Opinions are just opinions. They are influenced by fad, mistake, and false impressions. And if true, it is not the case that opinions, of teachers for instance, should be the sole source of evidence when public policy decisions have to be made.

Debates over school choice, characterized as between egalitarian and libertarian motives, have for too long been bifurcated into opposing and uncompromising camps. It is time to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of both lines of argument and fashion public policies of compromise so as to allow parents maximum opportunity to choose without creating unnecessary inequalities or threats to social cohesion.

Policies of tuition-free education in low income countries are not free unless adequate parallel investments are made in infrastructure and new teachers. Where these investments remain unchanged or inadequate free public education is counter productive to both quality and equity.

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