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We are pleased to present some unusual, perhaps uniquely important, analyses in this volume.

It is a fact that to keep young women enrolled requires that schools welcome them. One underappreciated means to do this is to make them feel comfortable with respect to their monthly menstrual cycles. This is the focus of the paper titled: “Attention to Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools: An analysis of education policy documents in low- and middle-income countries,” written by Marni Sommer, Chantal Figueroa, Christina Kwauk, Meridith Jones and Nora Fyles. The authors review policy documents in 21 countries to discover how the education sector is addressing menstruation management. They conclude that national education policies inadequately provide for sufficient water and sanitation and other menstruation-related facilities. They conclude by providing illustrations of how such improvements could be made.

Another underappreciated arena concerns the role of religion in public education. Prior to independence in Uganda and many other British Commonwealth countries primary and secondary education was organized through local churches and mosques. Following independence schools were nationalized. The argument was that governments could be more efficient and more neutral with respect to sectarian loyalties (Heyneman, 1977). Fifty years later however, the question is whether something important was sacrificed. Today many families choose to send children to fee paying faith-based private schools instead of government schools free of tuition (Heyneman and Stern, 2014).

On the other hand, many public schools remain loosely associated with their original faith organization. This issue is analyzed in a paper titled: “Precarious Values in Publicly-Funded Religious Schools: The Effects of Government Aid on the Institutional Character of Ugandan Catholic Schools” written by Anthony D’Agostino. The author analyzes a single Catholic secondary school in some depth. He discovers that, even today, the institution appears to show a clear and coherent institutional identity that fosters a positive school culture. But this identity is handicapped by state monopoly over personnel and student selection.

The transition from party/state monopoly to market economy has been among the most cataclysmic events of the modern age. It has scrambled long-held traditions of occupational prestige, social safety nets, curricular content, and areas of personal responsibility. How have people been able to cope and what has their educational experiences been able to offer in terms of their coping strategies? This is the subject of investigation in a paper by Nazim Habibov and Chi Jo Cheung titled: “The Role of University Education in Selecting Active Strategies for Coping with the 2007 Global Crisis in 28 Transitional Countries”. The authors used a cross-sectional survey to investigate whether a university education affected an individual’s choice of coping strategies. They discover that having a university education has a positive causal association with the use of coping strategies and suggest that a university education is an important tool for the use of coping strategies in times of economic crisis. Their work expands the use of the human capital model to quantify the effect of education beyond the use of monetary returns.

What makes international students happy? This is the question raised by Aye Alemu and Jason Cordier in their paper titled: “Factors Influencing International Students Satisfaction in Korean Universities.” They surveyed international students from 69 countries in 62 Korean universities. They discover that students from ‘the East Asian cultural sphere’ were more satisfied with the experience that from elsewhere.

The Chinese also have very large programs designed to attract international students to local universities. These students originate from many countries. How have the students from Africa fared? This is the issue explored by Hezron Makundi, Huib Huyse, Patrick Develtere, and Lettice Rutashobya in their article titled: “Training Abroad and Technical Capacity Building: Analyzing the role of Chinese Training and Scholarship Programs for Tanzanians”. They find that the trainees were ‘largely positive’ on grounds of being exposed to Chinese modernity and the importation of equipment and technical literature. However, they also find that efforts to transfer knowledge have been regularly impeded by problems of cross-cultural communication, attitudinal differences, and the fact that Tanzania does not have the capacity to absorb the technologies in the training curriculum.

By definition low-income countries are dependent in many ways. How does this dependency characterize itself in terms of research on education? This is the subject addressed by Rui da Silva and Joana Oliveira in their paper titled: “40 Years of Educational Research in Guinea Bissau: Mapping the Terrain.” They analyzed 148 studies published between 1975 and 2015. They find that language issues heavily influence the content of what is studied and, as one might expect, the research agenda itself is mainly established by external influences.

Early childhood education (ECE) is taken as an important priority across all makers of education policy. And the debates over philosophy, pedagogy, and implementation have been a popular focus for development assistance agencies, NGO’s and governments. But what do parents think are the most important purposes of ECE? This is the topic addressed by Sarah Kabay, Sharon Wolf, and Hirokazu Yoshikawa in their paper titled: “‘So that his mind will open’: Parental Perceptions of Early Childhood Education (ECE) in Urbanizing Ghana”. They report what parents say is important to them in terms of play, homework, mobility, language and diversity.

How good are universities in developing ‘generic competencies’? This is the subject of study by Cecilia Chan, Emily Tsz, Yan Fong, Lillian Yun,

Yung Luk and Robbie Ho in their article titled: “A Review of the Literature on Challenges in the Development and Implementation of Generic Competencies in Higher Education Curriculum.” They selected 56 articles from which to draw conclusions. They find that higher education pedagogy and curriculum, differences in student experience and learning strategies as well as higher education mission and institutional compliances are not aligned to ensure effective competency development. They also conclude that this lack of alignment may be attributable to a’ lack of an agreed conceptual base’.

References

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