



Editorial

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The editors and reviewers of the IJED try to find manuscripts which meet the necessary technical qualities for excellence in research. But they also encourage those manuscripts which are unusual. This includes new topics and ideas as well as findings or conclusions which diverge from the expected. Volume 72 contains several of these.

Many might anticipate that private tutoring would principally benefit privileged students in urban areas. However, this assumption is challenged by comparing private tutoring effects among students of differing socioeconomic strata in urban and rural China. In their article titled: "Are There Educational and Psychological Benefits from Private Supplementary Tutoring in Mainland China? Evidence from the Education Panel Survey, 2013–2015," authors Lunxun Sun, M. Najeeb Shafiq, Maureen McClure, and Sisi Guo find that private tutoring benefits rural students only.

Many might assume that the curriculum in Civics Education might underpin the official citizenship goals of the government. However, in their article titled: "From Civic to Citizenship Education: Toward a Stronger Citizenship Orientation in the Ethiopian Civics and Ethical Education (CEE) Curriculum," authors Bethel Ghebru and Mark Lloyd find that whereas the CEE text books emphasize sovereignty, patriotism and responsibility, the government's aims emphasize global citizenship, a more progressive orientation.

Small schools are thought to be inefficient. To counter their inefficiency, they are often 'rationalized' i.e., closed. It is assumed that larger schools will be more attractive and able to limit dropouts. However, in the article titled: "Pain without Gain? Impact of School Rationalization in India," Ambrish Dongre and Vibhu Tewary find that although villages with small schools are disadvantaged in terms of good roads and public services, the learning levels are no different than in large schools. They conclude that school rationalization can have severe consequences on children's access to school without any meaningful effect on their levels of learning.

The small school paper (mentioned above) is related to one concerning rural roads. Improvement in rural roads is assumed to positively affect access to schooling. However, in a paper titled: "Contribution of Rural Roads Improvement on Children's School Attendance: Evidence from Cambodia," authors Rika Idei, Hinonori Kato and So Morikawa find that although improvements in rural roads are associated with longer distances traveled and more two wheeled vehicles, there is no improvement in school attendance. This suggests that where demand for school is already high, children find a way to attend even when rural roads have not been improved.

It is sometimes assumed that the goals of top-ranked universities are virtually identical internationally. However, in the paper titled: "A Content Analysis of Top-Ranked Universities' Mission Statements from Five Global Regions", Tuncay Bayrak discovers that while the terms and themes are similar, there is a wide variation in how core values and purposes are communicated.

Some suggest that private schools should not be assisted by governments because they may skim off the best students, hence handicapping local public schools. However, in the paper titled: "Cream Skimming? Evaluating the Access to Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Programs in Education: Evidence from Punjab," Ali Ansari discovers that when PPP schools are situated in the districts with high rates of non-attendance, the children who end up attending are no more privileged than the children in public schools. This suggests that PPP schools do not, in these circumstances, skim off the best students.

It is often assumed that schools which under-perform have lower quality teaching. However, in the paper titled: "How Much Does the Quality of Teaching Vary at Under-Performing Schools? Evidence from Classroom Observation in Chile", authors Maria del Rosario Escribano Alisio, Ernesto Trevino, Miguel Nussbaum, David Torres Iribarra, and Diego Carrasco Ogaz discover that the variance in teaching quality is not between schools but among teachers in the same school. This implies that some of the best teaching is done in schools which under-perform.

It is common to find that university students are disproportionately from wealthier, more privileged backgrounds. But does the degree of inequality only reflect the country or are there more macro determinants? In his paper titled: "Inequalities in Access to Higher Education in Africa: How Large Are They? Are They a Reflection of the Historical Situation in the Metro pole 40–50 Years Ago?" Roy Carr-Hill finds that the levels of inequality today in Sub-Saharan Africa are not determined by the countries alone but are derived from the level of inequality in the prior colonial authority.

Everyone knows that the gender gap is high with respect to STEM and STEM-Related fields. But is that more true of low-income developing countries? And is it more true of isolated rural areas in low-income countries? One would think so. But in a paper titled: "The Puzzling Relationship Between Development and Gender Equity: The Case of Postsecondary Education in STEM and STEM-Related Fields", Lara Perewz-Felkner, John Felkner, Samantha Nix and Melissa Magalhaes find that the opposite is true in rural Cambodia. They discover that women's share of STEM and information technology majors is larger outside the capital and that women majors are over-represented in fields of health and information technology. They conclude that these fields have an inverse relationship between women's share and gender egalitarian characteristics.

In sum, many of the papers represented in volume 72 suggest that social research is not stagnant. Assumptions are often questionable and findings may surprise us. This is a healthy sign.

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