



## Editorial

The 14 articles in volume 60 fall into three categories: (i) those pertaining to higher education, (ii) those pertaining to the social cohesion outcomes of education, and (iii) those pertaining to debates over education efficiency. This latter category is the most numerous. So we begin with that.

### 1. Education and Efficiency

In the article titled: ‘School Accountability and Standard-based Education Reform: the Recall of Social Efficiency Movement and Scientific Management’ Jonghun Kim reviews the long history of educational accountability based on success/failure models. He concludes that this becomes a particular system of reasoning. In spite of the sophisticated empirical evidence on which it is based, the models normalize subjectivity. He argues that traditional models which seek social efficiency in schools deserve to be discarded.

The authors Michael Romanowski, Hadeel Alkhateeb and Ramzi Nasser continue this concern. In their article titled: ‘Policy Borrowing in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: Cultural Scripts and Epistemological Conflicts,’ they review the many imported policies and practices based on efficiency models and then point out that each one of them needed to be revised based on local educational epistemological beliefs.

In the article titled: ‘Does Schooling Foster Environmental Values and Action? A Cross-National Study of Priorities and Behaviors,’ David Post and Yi Meng analyze the assumption that schooling generates pro-environmental values and behavior. They find that it does not unless the data are subjected to techniques of multi-level modeling. They conclude that ‘contextual influences’ at the national level may well affect environmental attitudes and behaviors.

A half century of analytic work on teacher effects remains ‘a puzzling task’ according to Andrea Canales and Luis Maldonado in their article titled: ‘Teacher Quality and Student Achievement in Chile: Linking Teachers’ Contribution and Observable Characteristics.’ They point out the difficulty of identifying the characteristics of teachers which seem to make a difference in student achievement. Much of the measurement problem has to do with ‘sorting bias’, the tendency for better able students to gravitate to better able teachers. They find that teaching experience is associated with higher test scores in math but not in reading.<sup>1</sup>

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) has stimulated hundreds of studies of school efficiency and school accountability. In their article titled ‘Do Dropout and Environmental Factors Matter? A Directional Distance Function Assessment of Tunisian Education Efficiency,’ Hedi Essid, Fatma Ben Yahia, and Sonia Rebai relate education performance on PISA to characteristics of school infrastructure and school resources. They find that schools

with larger financial constraints have increased levels of school dropouts.

The PISA tests have been designed to assist nations with educational accountability, the rationale being that changes in performance in some ways reflect changes in educational efficiency. This assumption is questioned by L. Morsy, Tatiana Khavenson and Martin Carnoy in their article titled: ‘How International Tests Fail to Inform Policy: The Unsolved Mystery of Australia’s Steady Decline in PISA Scores.’. The authors seek to explain why PISA scores in Australia were on a steady decline between 2000 and 2015. They test multiple theories and explanations but in the end can find none which account for the change. They conclude that their analysis does provide clues as to where to look, but perhaps more importantly, their analysis questions the reliance of cross-national tests to make assumptions about what is successful or unsuccessful in a nation’s education system.

Parallel models are used by Melaku Tesfa Tesema and Johan Braeken to assess the association between regional and gender performance differences and educational opportunity. In their paper titled: ‘Regional Inequalities and Gender Differences in Academic Achievement as a Function of Educational Opportunities: Evidence from Ethiopia.’ They analyze the performance gap between ‘well established’ and ‘emerging’ (more impoverished) regions. If the gender gap in educational attendance is low, they discover that those particular emerging regions tend to perform as well as the more well established regions.

All governments promote schooling. But the reasons diverge, and in democracies with multiple layers of government and multiple parties and multiple ministries, those reasons may diverge significantly. How significantly is the subject of the paper titled: ‘Elitism and Its Challengers: Educational Development Ideology in Post Colonial India Through the Prism of Film, 1952-1966’. Peter Sutoris discovers that the ideological foundations of state-led education differ rather significantly on the basis of different groups of actors. He also finds that these tensions and competitions from fifty years ago mirror current debates and illustrate the gaps between state rhetoric and actual delivery.

Does greater opportunity to attend schooling affect female attendance and later female political knowledge? In the article titled: ‘Education Expansion and Its Effects on Gender Gaps in Educational Attainment and Political Knowledge in Taiwan from 1992 – 2012,’ Ya-Hui Luo and Kuang-Hui Chen find that the extension of compulsory education, particularly in the older cohorts, corrected the educational inequality based on gender and diminished the gender gap in political knowledge.

Since Milton Friedman’s thesis on school choice (Friedman, 1955) it has been assumed that competition would increase an education system’s efficiency. This assumption is not unreasonable. However, it treats schooling as if it were analogous to a business sector in which individual firms need to update their operations and skills in

<sup>1</sup> Mathematics and science have long been known as school-based subjects as opposed to language and reading which are more heavily influenced by home environments (Heyneman, 1976).

order to make a profit. The assumption that school choice increases competition has been tested by Youngran Kim in an article titled: "The Effects of School Choice on the Achievement Gaps between Private and Public Schools: Evidence from the Seoul School Choice Program." At one time, the city of Seoul had a program of random student assignment. But then Seoul changed to a system of universal school choice. The question was whether this new policy could diminish the long-standing achievement gap between public and private schools. The author finds that student sorting through school choice increases the achievement in private school hence widening the gap between public and private schools.

Low cost private schools are the topic of an article titled: "Regulating Market Entry of low-cost private schools in Sub-Saharan Africa: Towards a Theory of Private Education Regulation" by Donald R. Baum, Rachel Cooper and Oni Lusk-Stover. It has long been argued that low cost private schools hold out a meaningful educational opportunity in those circumstances in which public schools have failed. However, the effectiveness of low cost private schools is often handicapped by excessive regulation (Heyneman and Stern, 2014). Baum, Cooper and Lusk-Stover test this theory by analyzing regulations on low cost non-government schools across Sub-Saharan Africa. They find that onerous market regulations constrain growth, create opportunities for rent-seeking (graft and corruption), and increase the likelihood of 'uneven policy implementation', hence, inequity.

## 2. Higher Education

Post-secondary education suffers from inefficiency and occasional over-supply by comparison to employment opportunity. The first problem is addressed by Tristan McCowan in an article titled: "Quality of Higher Education in Kenya: addressing the Conundrum." He lists the categories of quality barriers as being: (i) a lack of resources (ii) poor governance, (iii) outdated pedagogical culture. The latter issue is addressed by Rosechin Olfindo in the article titled: "Diploma as Signal? Estimating Sheepskin Effects in the Philippines." The question is whether higher education adds to a person's actual productivity or whether a university graduate has higher earnings because employers use the degree as a 'signaling device', a proxy for potential productivity. The author finds that post-secondary training greatly advantages a graduate in the labor market over the experience of someone without post-secondary training, suggesting that a private investment in higher education remains productive.

## 3. Education and Social Cohesion

While much attention is paid to the economic effects of education, it remains true that the original intentions behind public schooling were social, the effort to create responsible citizens and a social cohesive society. How well do schools do this? This question is tested in Israel. In an article by Eran Gusacov titled: "Education for Patriotism and the Arab-Israeli Sector," the question is explored as to the kind of patriotism generated by public schools in Israel, and whether the nature of patriotism is the same in both Zionist and non-Zionist groups. The author concludes that education for patriotism contradicts the education characteristics in the home of Israeli-Arab students and hence, suggests that public schools in Israel do not lay a foundation for social cohesion. The suggestion is made that the current patriotism taught in public schools which uses an 'oppositional language' should be changed to a language of 'civil patriotism' of common solidarity and inclusiveness.

## 4. Summary

The articles in Volume 60 may reflect important shifts in educational research more generally. These include: (i) a shift away from the use of input/output models of school efficiency and accountability; (ii) a questioning of the use of cross-national tests of academic achievement to attribute performance to the characteristics of national education systems; and (iii) a shift from economic to social cohesion objectives behind public education.

## References

- Friedman, Milton. (1955) "The role of government in education", pp. 123-144 In *Economics and the public interest*, ed. Robert A. Solo, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Heyneman, S.P. (1976) "A Brief Note on the Relationship Between Socioeconomic Status and Test Performance Among Ugandan Primary School Children," *Comparative Education Review*, vol. 20, no. 1, Feb pp. 42-47.
- Heyneman, S.P. and Stern, J. (2014) "Low cost Non-Government Schools for the Poor: What Public Policy Is Appropriate?" *International Journal of Education Development* Vol. 35 pp. 3-15.

*Editor in Chief*  
Stephen P. Heyneman