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PROFILE OF EDUCATORS

The work of Philip Foster

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His father was a leader in a British railroad union. Born on 22 January 1927 in London, Philip Foster grew up with an accent which made it clear that he was born to neither privilege nor wealth. He attended secondary school during WWII. Contrary to popular expectations about his class origins, he advanced to A Levels and eventually the London School of Economics and Political Science. He was sponsored by a scholarship from Essex County. He specialized in sociology. He did post-graduate work at Northwestern (1948–1949) and at the London Institute of Education (1954–1955). He then served as an education officer in the Acholi province of Uganda (1955–1958) where he met an anthropologist who later became his wife and mother to his two sons. He entered the University of Chicago as a student in 1958, but soon left to become a visiting lecturer at the University of Ghana (1959–1960), where in addition to his teaching he did field work for his PhD dissertation, leading to the award of his degree in 1962. He was appointed assistant professor at the University of Chicago in 1961, a year prior to receiving his PhD His doctoral dissertation became a book entitled *Education and Social Change in Ghana*, which was awarded the Laing Prize by the University of Chicago Press in 1968 for being the best book written by a faculty member in the previous 2 years. He was promoted to associate professor in 1964 and full professor in 1968, a rapid rise in the world of University of Chicago scholarship. He was appointed professor at Macquarie University in 1978 and Dean of the Education School in 1979. In 1981 he was appointed professor in the Department of Education and in the Department of Sociology at the State University of New York at Albany. He served as chair of the Department of Education from 1984 until his retirement in 1986. Philip Foster died in 2008.

In memoriam of Philip Foster (1927–2008).

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On meeting a soldier from a war long ago it might be forgiven if a youngster is unfamiliar with the detail of battle. Many of today's readers will be unfamiliar with the past described below. However, unfamiliar, it makes the battle no less ferocious and no less a source for lessons. Foster argued against many of the most popular but incorrect assumptions about education and development. Manpower forecasting was once the dominant methodology across national and international development agencies; no longer. It was once assumed that the "most practical" education focused on specific technical skills, such as farming or machine work, rather than liberal exposure to arts and letters, and that this was particularly true in Africa. No longer. It was assumed that peasants and poor people generally, would not have the wherewithal to know their own interests, would make irrational choices and should therefore be moved according to central plans rather than personal choice. Today this is regarded as patronizing. It was once debated whether the central function of schooling merely reproduced social arrangements, or whether it might help break down these arrangements. This is no longer a central debate. The poor want and deserve access to schooling just like everyone else. It was once argued that children should be educated in their mother tongue. Today the costs and political ramifications of this view are better understood. Political independence from colonialism was once thought to be the final objective, and the motivation for localization of curriculum and curricular purposes. Today colonialism is fading as the primary explanation for the mistakes of the present. Educational planning has become more pragmatic with respect to the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in a global economy. It was once argued whether qualitative or quantitative methods were inherently superior. Foster helped persuade us that at best, both offer insight; at worst, neither does. Foster's work helped make all these advances possible.

As a person he was polite but firm. Some mistook vigour for a lack of empathy. Those who knew him never made this mistake. He was a brilliant teacher, and could regale a class with stories from ancient Chinese examinations to the way a market woman in Ghana calculates profit. He was honest and principled, and passed these characteristics to students as forcefully as the assigned readings. His character was as powerful a pedagogical tool as his lectures.

Philip Foster could not easily have existed outside of the university. That his work was often unpopular serves as an example of the importance of maintaining the university as an independent and professional centre of inquiry. These institutions hold our greatest hope that the world may continue to see more individuals of Foster's calibre, and that, against all odds, they may continue to challenge and extend our understanding of the relationship between education and human development.

Published work

(1959/1960). The Egva Social Survey. Legon: University College of Ghana. (with P. Foster, R. A. Akyeampong, J. E. Ashon, J. G. Davis, and T. A. Djoleto.)

Foster and his wife led a team of nine students in a pilot study of Egya I, a small coastal village. The study included information on housing, demography, marital trends, education and literacy, religious affiliation and church attendance, associations, and excerpts from a series of essays by the students who conducted the study. Among other findings the survey explains a circumstance in which demand for primary education is low for rational reasons.

(1960). Comparative Methodology and the Study of African Education. *Comparative Education Review, 4*(2), 110–117.

Many comparative education scholars have written (often worriedly) about methodology. Foster is not worried in the slightest because comparative education "hardly constitutes a discipline." What it does provide is a comparison of common topics and interests using controlled comparison and other normal techniques to elicit insight. He suggests that the degree of generalization (in all education) is inversely proportional to the amount of reliable data available and challenges educators to pay particular attention to comparisons of groups with identical cultures, groups with different cultures, and urban–rural differences.

(1960). Review of *African Development and Education in Southern Rhodesia*. Franklin Parker International Education Monographs (No. 2). Columbus: Ohio State University Press. 1960. 165 pages. *Harvard Education Review, 32*(2), 228–233.

There is a reluctance of educators to grapple candidly with the functional impact of western schooling in Africa. They exaggerate the influence of schools on social dysfunctions and attribute too much to (an "academic") curriculum when there is "virtually no evidence for any of these assertions." "The most crucial thing about Western education in Africa is not what schools teach but rather that one has been to school when a large proportion of the population has not."

(1962). Ethnicity and the Schools in Ghana. *Comparative Education Review, 6*(2), 127–135.

In this article, Foster examines the problem of reconciling local loyalties to a common national identity. He explains the effect of having ethnic groups artificially lumped together at the end of the colonial period. His focus is on the role of schools in resolving ethnic conflict. He laments the "tragedy" that the requirements for maximum economic development (selective investments) are counter to the political aspirations of the masses (for equality of education).

(1963). Secondary Schooling and Social Mobility in a West African Nation. *Sociology of Education, 37*(2), 150–171.

This article contains the essence of *Education and Social Change in Ghana* and as such constitutes a unique extension of sociological theory into sub-Saharan Africa. Foster points out that the social structure in Ghana is significantly different from Western Europe. It is "peaked and constricted" at the summit. Only 7% of the male labor force in white collar employment, and the majority of them are in government. Differences in earnings between white collar and manual labour occupations have generated an explosion of demand for education. Secondary schools have expanded rapidly and constitute two clearly differentiated sectors, one traditionally of high quality and a newer second group of lower quality institutions. Surprisingly, however, and quite unlike "the stickiness" of the elite gymnasia of Western Europe, the overwhelming majority of the students in the high quality sector come from non-elite backgrounds. Foster establishes his theory in this article that social strata in sub-Saharan Africa do not constitute social classes. He bases his argument on the finding that, in contrast to Europe, student aspirations and expectations are not influenced by social background. His conclusion is that sociological principles of occupational

mobility and social differentiation, developed originally in Western Europe, must be attenuated in other parts of the world with very different social contexts.

(1964). Discrimination and Inequality in Education. *Sociology of Education, 38*(1), 1–18. (with C. Arnold Anderson).

This article focuses on the ways in which discrimination is conceptualized in education research. Anderson and Foster provide a typology of differential treatment of sub-populations in respect to education. They argue that the term discrimination refers to cases in which inequalities are attributed to prejudiced attitudes manifested in differential treatment of out-groups resting on invidious comparisons. When speaking of areas for investment to improve equality, the authors encourage international agencies to focus on growing the economy first, which will increase demand for education. The hope is that increased demand will serve as a surer impetus for increased supply.

(1964). French and British colonial education in Africa. *Comparative Education Review, 8*(2), 191–198. (with Remi Clignet)

French colonial purposes are often characterized as assimilationist (the making of Black Frenchmen) and British colonial purposes are often characterized as that of cultural adaptation (the adjustment of institutions to local political and cultural characteristics). This article shows that Anglophone and Francophone education systems have many characteristics in common when it comes to the societal impact of education and that both colonial traditions vacillated back and forth between assimilationist and adaptationist traditions.

(1964). Potential Elites in Ghana and the Ivory Coast: A Preliminary Comparison. *American Journal of Sociology, LXX*(3), 349–362. (with Remi Clignet)

This in-depth comparison of Ghana and the Ivory Coast adds nuance and depth to the homogenizing term "elite". The authors show that, contrary to popular belief, the "elites" in both countries are actually broadly representative of the population. The authors argue that vocational programmes remain unattractive to students because the economy does not reward such training, and students correctly recognize their employment prospects.

(1964). Secondary School-Leavers in Ghana: Expectations and Reality. *Harvard Educational Review, 34*(4), 537–558.

The article incorporates one of the first empirical surveys of secondary school-leavers in sub-Saharan Africa. Foster finds three characteristics: (i) that vocational school must make due with the "dregs" (students who cannot find a place in academic schools); (ii) that the demand for secondary education is growing rapidly in spite of the fact that an increasing proportion will not find a place in post-secondary education; and (iii) that school-leavers are no more unrealistic about their prospects than students in any other part of the world. In fact they are remarkably candid and specific about their costs and potential benefits; but it is also clear that attending school has much broader purposes than the economic.

(1964). Status, Power, and Education in a Traditional Community. *The School Review, 72*, 158–182.

Foster begins by stating that Africa is unique in the developing world in its commitment to education as the principle instrument for modernization. But in order to increase educational attainment, investments must be made which will increase the rates of return for education. This is contrary to the arguments of "educationists" who advocate indiscriminate investment in educational institutions. Foster also discusses the role of values. He states that institutions of formal education are a threat to traditional values and forms of authority. While inability to pay for uniforms, meals, and books keeps some children out of school, he argues that parents could afford school expenses if they would be willing to skip extravagant weddings and funerals. Finally, in another comment on the ineffectiveness of education tailored to "rural" needs, he points out that adults send children to school with the hopes that they will be able to leave the village, rather than remain there as farmers.

(1965). Potentials for Federation of East African Education Programs. *Journal of Development Studies, 2*(1), 59–81. (with C. Arnold Anderson)

This article looks at the prospects for sharing educational resources across three East African countries. It deals with the perennial challenges, such as the gap between aspirations and the attitudes necessary to satisfy them. These include the hunger for independence yet the refusal of outside expertise, even from one's neighbours. In their aspiration for autonomy, nations are inefficiently duplicating services such as medical education and other collaborative activities. Each country wants its own complete university. "Delusions of empire building" among faculties are causing illogical duplication of programmes. The key challenge is both to advance education and provide a context in which advanced education can yield social returns. A related point is that more work needs to be done to encourage educated individuals to pursue private enterprise, rather than government employment.

(1965). The Vocational School Fallacy in Development Planning. In C. A. Anderson and M. J. Bowman (Eds.), *Education and Economic Development*. Chicago: The Aldine Press.

Foster employs the example of Tanzania and its education for self-reliance policies to illustrate the fallacies in the arguments of using vocational education as an efficient mechanism for economic development. He argues that vocational aspirations and the occupations which young people enter are largely determined by the local economy and other factors outside of school. The crucial ingredients in student labour choices are the incentives within the economy. Rather than planning large scale, state-financed and state-provided manpower planning projects (which are likely to involve large scale miscalculations), he states that the costs of vocational training should be shared with the companies who want the employees. These companies know better than a government agency which skills are needed in their workplace. Further, training itself will not increase the number of jobs unless the economy supplies incentives to carry forth the activity for which the person is trained. He concludes with the memorable comment on large-scale, centralized planning: "Thinking big is, of course, sometimes an excuse for not thinking at all." This article is among the most widely cited in the comparative education literature. Essentially it extends the theory of human capital on the relationship between education and economic

productivity into the realm of what kind of education might make the most difference and how one might know. This article challenges the major assumption of the era, that an education close to a vocation was more "practical" than an "academic" education. Republished a dozen times, at one stage Foster laments: "I sometimes wish I had never written that confounded piece, for it has been quoted out of context so many times."[1]

(1966). African Secondary Education and the Secondary School Student. In R. P. Beaver (Ed.), *Christianity and African Education*. Grand Rapids (Michigan): Erdmans Publishing Company, 101–122.

Though it contains a discussion of the role of voluntary agencies in African education as well as arguments about the proper level of investment in secondary education, the article quickly shifts to a critique of grandiose plans to use education to create new kinds of individuals. Foster states that it is a fact that African students are burdened by habits of mind which predispose them to civil service rather than entrepreneurship. Yet he is generally conservative in his estimation of the power of schooling to groom individuals for participation in capitalism and democracy. He states, "I am not persuaded that schools play a crucial role in value formation." He then continues, "it is unlikely that the schools can really play a substantial part in the production of innovative or 'entrepreneurial' individuals."

(1966). *The Fortunate Few: A Study of Secondary Schools and Students in the Ivory Coast*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press. (with Remi Clignet)

This book follows the pattern set by Foster's *Education and Social Change in Ghana*. It contains an important survey of the history of education, social and economic development and an analysis of the student population in secondary schools. The analysis includes social and ethnic affiliations, attitudes of life adjustment, vocational aspirations and expectations. It also contains an analysis of career patters of former students.

(1967). Education and Manpower Planning: a Cautionary Note. *Nigerian Opinion, 3*(1–2), 111–115.

This article presents a concise but compelling argument against the practice of manpower planning. He finds fault with some of the prevalent techniques, such as polls of large companies to determine future needs, census data, and models which predict the needs of developing countries by using templates from fully developed ones. He states that manpower estimates tend to follow one of two courses. They are either so vague that they provide no guidance, or so strict that the state must rely on coercion in order to achieve them.

(1968). Comments on Hurd and Johnson, "Education and Social Mobility in Ghana." *Sociology of Education, 41*(1), 111–115.

This article illustrates the classic difference between sociological pessimists and optimists. Hurd and Johnson have criticized Foster's earlier article (mentioned above), saying that "higher education functions largely to place children in high occupational positions," a

[1] Foster, P. (1989). Why the issue of relevance is not so relevant. *Comparative Education Review, 33*(4), 520.

statement which Foster describes as "manifestly absurd." Foster points out that indeed there is an inequality of opportunity in Ghana, where a child of a technical worker has 58 times the chance of going to 6th form as the child of a manual worker. However, this does not mean that there is no mobility. He reminds the reader that 75% of the students at the University of Ghana come from non-elite backgrounds and that it is normal for inequality to exist simultaneously with massive social opportunity. In this article he also notes that differences in social status and wealth do not constitute differences in social classes. He characterizes Hurd and Johnson as being "gloomy prognosticators," a label which may fit other sociologists.

(1969). Education for Self-Reliance: A Critical Evaluation. In R. Jolly (Ed.), *Education in Africa: Research and Action*. Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 210–236.

This article is a response to the national education policy proposed by Nyerere, the president of Tanzania. He agrees with Nyerere that one of the fundamental challenges facing African states is how to reconcile "egalitarian objectives with programmes designed to maximize the rate of economic growth." However, he disagrees that increased inequality should be the greatest concern in a poor, generally pre-industrial economy. As economies grow, all people can benefit, even if some happen to benefit extraordinarily. Foster presents his arguments against manpower planning, vocational education, and collective planning in general.

(1969). Secondary Education: Objectives and Differentiation. In Centre for the Study of Education in Changing Societies (CESO) (Ed.), *Educational Problems in Developing Countries*. The Hague: Wolters-Noordhoff Publishing Groningen, 71–96.

Foster points out that the expectations from primary education have not been met, in part because they were too ambitions. It had been felt that expansion of primary education would lead to greater economic development. What it led to was an increased demand for secondary and higher education. Foster is critical of the results from the Addis Ababa Education Conference on grounds that the calls for Africanization, a switch from classics to local materials, and an emphasis on the "practical" constituted changes which were either superficial or counter-productive. "Most former colonial territories are littered with the wreckage of attempts to give secondary schools a technical or vocational as opposed to an academic bias." Foster rejects the suggestion that African secondary education should be structured as in the Soviet Union with prescribed academic, vocational and technical specializations. He is critical of those who argue that the freedom to choose one's own vocational career is incompatible with the "need" of development. Schools can do little to create a "parity of esteem" between different functions. Agricultural schools will remain unpopular as long as the economic returns to agriculture are lower than for other careers. Similarly, when teacher training is isolated from other forms of secondary or tertiary education it will be seen as being second rate.

(1970). A Comment on Educational Change in Pre-Colonial Societies: The Cases of Buganda and Ashanti. *Comparative Education Review, 14*(3), 377–380.

A historian has criticized Foster's comparison of Ashanti and Buganda societies in his book Education and Social Change in Ghana, but may think twice before doing so again.

(1970). The Nigerian Tragedy: An Educational Perspective. *History of Education Quarterly, 10*(2), 255–265.

This article constitutes a review of three recent books on Nigeria, all of which describe the development intentions of the 1960s as a decade of disaster. One book, edited by Hans Weiler, is described as being the most variable with contributions ranging from the insightful to the pedestrian. The others, by L. J. Lewis and David Abernethy, are more helpful. One theme Foster addresses is whether it is helpful to blame the British (or any colonial power) for the patterns of educational inequality. Although fashionable to level blame, if the colonial power had "used a strategy of educational proselytization it would have been denounced as a colonial attempt to ride rough-shod over regional sentiments." He observes that school enrollments cannot "be raised by edict alone"; what is required is an "active pattern of demand."

(1970). The Outlook for Education in Middle Africa. In F. S. Arkhurst (Ed.), *Africa in the Seventies and Eighties*. London: Praeger Publishers, 304–340. (with C.Arnold Anderson)

This article details educational developments in Middle African over two decades. It pays special attention to the role of international political conferences in shaping the trajectory of that growth (the authors estimate that the role is small). They argue against the conventional wisdom that mass secondary education is a prerequisite to economic development. They also come out in favour of the use of school fees in elementary school, arguing that they demonstrate commitment to education. They also suggest that an elitist educational system is compatible with the early stages of political democracy.

(1970). The Planning-Performance Gap. *UNESCO Prospects, 1*(4), 41–45.

The article rebuts arguments in favour of large-scale attempts to bend the mission of schools to serve utopian and unattainable ends. He speaks in favour of replacing "general pieties" with clear, measurable objectives.

(1971). Access to Education. In D. Adams (Ed.), *Education in National Development*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul and David McKay Company, 13–33.

Western states were free to modernize without strict attention by the public to issues of equity. African states do not have this privilege. They must balance equity with economic growth, and the two are not always readily compatible. As with arguments presented elsewhere, this raises concerns over manpower planning, rapid educational expansion, vocational education, the use of fees, and inequality.

(1971). Education, Economy, and Equality. *Interchange, 7*(1).

This commentary is a response to Reimer's "Alternatives in Education," a work which Foster describes as "a mixture of extraordinarily perceptive comment and reckless generalization." He is especially critical of Reimer's alleged failure to understand the necessity of tradeoffs, and that every choice involves sacrificing something of value. This is most visibly the case in his discussion of the tradeoffs between economic development and educational equality.

(1971). Education in Ghana. *Encyclopedia of Education*. New York: Maxmillan.

This encyclopaedia entry concisely presents the history, structure and organization, and problems of Ghana's education system. It covers all age groups, from primary to tertiary education. In the list of problems, Foster cites rapid population increase leading to a strain on school resources, inequalities in provision of schooling, and the relatively modest rates of return to education in some parts of the country.

(1971). Presidential Address: The Revolt against the Schools. *Comparative Education Review, 15*(3), 267–275.

On assuming the leadership of the Comparative and International Education Society, Foster uses his presidential speech to address the views of those who wish essentially to do away with formal schooling, including Ivan Ilich and Evertt Reimer. He makes three points. He agrees that schools are inherently inegalitarian and subsidize the rich at the expense of the poor. But he points out that this is not the whole story for it fails to distinguish individual from aggregate benefits, implying that there are multiple benefits to society even if the doctors and scientists stem from elite social backgrounds. He also agrees that schools are agencies of mass conformity, which coerce children, restrict creativity and induce passivity, but he points out that all institutions man has created have a coercive component. That, he says, is the meaning of legitimate authority. To suggest that schools are an agency of conformity is "platitudinous." Lastly, the alternative to schools is never laid out in detail by the "deschoolers." Foster suggests that were deschoolers in charge they would merely substitute the inequalities of schools for a system of differentiation which "would itself be even more invidious."

(1971). Problems of Literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa. In T. A. Sebok (Ed.), *Linguistics in Sub-Saharan Africa*. The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 587–767.

In this article Foster summarizes the present spread of literacy in Sub Saharan Africa, the relationship between literacy and development, and the economic and political implications of national language policies. He comments on the "romanticism" of national literacy campaigns and the apathy of most African governments toward adult literacy. He mentions that the relationship between literacy and development is nonlinear, with ambiguity ranging up to the level of 70% of the population. He points out that "countries are literate because they are productive rather than the reverse." He discusses the association of wide scale literacy with urbanization, missionary activity and particular ethnic groupings.

(1971). West Africa. In L. C. Deighton (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Education*. New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, 128–133.

This five page summary traces education in West Africa from the pre-colonial period to the era of independence.

(1972). Problems of Educational Development. In *Africa South of the Sahara*. London: Europa Publications Ltd, 56–61.

Foster summarizes the literature on education and economic growth and remarks that African governments should cease setting targets and employing master plans. Instead they should apply more cost and benefit analyses and make their social investments more efficient. He also criticizes African governments for expecting too much of schools in terms of vocational attitudes and for relying on shaky vocational curricular assumptions to back up their expectations. "Curricular ideologues frequently seem unaware of the incompatibility of many of the objectives that they set for the schools." While it is natural to have relevant curriculum, too much has been made of Africanization when it has been interpreted solely as replacing European with African content. "No magical outcomes may be expected from arithmetic texts," he says, "that use yams rather than potatoes as units in problems."

(1973). Status Attainment Processes. *Sociology of Education, 46*(1), 92–98.

In a comment on four papers, Foster observes that empirical sociology can be "parochial." "The mere piling up of data… will avail us little unless the research is informed by more general theoretical concerns."

(1975). Commentary on the Commentaries. *Comparative Education Review, 19*(3), 423–433.

Several neo-Marxist commentators have criticized Foster's "Dilemmas of Educational Development." This is his reply. He points out that tackling problems through revolutionary action treats all other reforms as though they were only tinkering social engineering and were doomed to failure. In contrast, he believes it perfectly possible that a measure of social development can be achieved through pragmatic means. He suggests that Martin Carnoy believes in freedom only so long as the choices people make agree with his own value orientations. Carnoy's idea of "false consciousness" really means that people don't agree with him. In this article Foster denies being in favour of laissez-faire capitalism and suggests that the state should have "a very considerable role to play in terms of supervisory functions, financial subventions, and direct involvement at all levels of the education system."

(1975). Dilemmas of Educational Development: What We Might Learn From the Past. In J. Brammall and R. J. May (Eds.), *Education in Melanesia*. Research School of Pacific Studies, the Australian National University and the University of Papua New Guinea.

In this essay, Foster takes on the role not only of the social scientist, but of the social philosopher. The central purpose is to chart a course of development for Papua New Guinea which may "avoid some of the more egregious errors in social an educational planning that occurred in the 50 s and 60 s." Foster stresses, "the dilemmas of development and the problems of planning for it are moral problems and I regret that some profound moral issues have only been too conveniently swept under the rug by the 'experts' and by the governing elites." He means that social scientists should take up moral questions. The job of the social scientist "is to indicate, on the basis of research findings,

what appear to be the most viable strategies and tactics to achieve certain already established national objectives. Strictly speaking it is not their task to formulate goals but, in practice, they only too often…attempt to decide what people ought to need rather than suggest the most expeditious means for achieving what people have already decided they want." The social scientist should show what means are connected to some given ends, but it is up to others to reach "pragmatic compromises" between competing objectives.

To succeed, he says, these ends must be based on the "aspirations and expectations of the majority," not what the governing elites claim is best for the majority. Broad appeals to national unity or other social goals are unlikely to change individual behaviour. Foster states, "People, of course, do not send their children to school for the good of the nation." Instead, we must capitalize on their selfish motivations for the benefit of all. Look at education as an investment by an individual in their own future.

However, a healthy respect for self-interest and market forces need not lead to a do-nothing government: "The soundest educational policies are those that are based on the operation of the market and not those that attempt to run counter to it. However…market is susceptible to manipulation and in some cases we may be able to get people to want to do what we think they ought to do. Planners can incentive the behaviors they think are best by manipulating price. But in doing so, they must keep in mind the lessons learned about the past failures of manpower planning, vocational education, and the rapid expansion of education systems."

(1975). False and Real Problems of African Universities. *Minerva*, *XIII* (3), 466–478.

This is a review of the implications of *Creating the African University* edited by T. M. Yesufe Ibadan and London: Oxford University Press, 1973. Foster uses the book to comment on the direction being taken in higher education and constitutes a classic argument against strident cultural parochialism which typified the higher education arguments following independence. One concern is the "willingness to indulge in rhetoric of cultural nationalism at the expense of a more matter of fact assessment." African university graduates are indeed "different" but this does not mean that they are alienated from their environment. Many claims are made about the important influence of higher education on society, but no mention is made of the resources necessary nor how they might be financed. Colonialism is treated as if it were a "dark age" for Africa even in the realm of social, cultural and intellectual development, but no mention is made of what the alternative might have been. Much is made of the indigenous African universities of Gao and Timbuktu, but no mention is made of the fact that they were simply extensions of a more general trend of Islamic centres of learning. Although there will be research on African problems and legitimate questions about the assumptions and conclusions reached elsewhere when applied to Africa, much is made of the need to indigenize the university to the African culture when in fact there is no such thing as African economics, sociology, chemistry or mathematics. "It makes no more sense to speak of an African university than an African refrigerator."

(1976). Education in Less Developed Countries. In S. E. Goodman (Ed.), *Handbook on Contemporary Education*. New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 67–71.

This brief entry presents an account of both the quantitative explosion in school in the developing world as well as the subsequent analysis of the relationship between education and economic development, political development, and social equity. Foster presents three

approaches to the study of education and economic development: manpower planning, rate-of-return analysis, and social-psychology. With regard to political development, Foster cautions that the impact of education on political stability is difficult to predict. While schools can help cultivate a tolerant and understanding political culture, inequities in access and quality can heighten ethnic conflict.

(1977). Education and Social Differentiation in Less Developed Countries. *Comparative Education Review, 21*(2/3), 211–229.

In this article Foster addresses the problem (common in the social sciences) of theories, having begun as reasonable, turning into gross ideologies. He argues that structural functionalism and neo-Marxism "constitute sociological cul-de-sacs"; that "they are couched at such a general level that they are singularly unhelpful…". Both are unilinear. Both constitute a set of propositions which are acceptable but "hardly helpful," while their theses are "largely spurious." "Whereas functionalists stress the operation of the market with all its consequences of differentiation, conflict theorists tend to concentrate on market imperfections." He concludes that "we would do well to abandon the rhetoric altogether."

(1979) World-Wide Policy-Oriented Research. In J. S. Shellard (Ed.), *Educational Research for Policy Making in Australia*. Sydney: Australian Council for Educational Research, 93–102.

One major reason that educational research has yet to provide aid to policy making is that, "Most educational researchers are neither by inclination nor training very much concerned with normative issues or with the value premises upon which their work is often based." The social scientist should have a limited role, if any, in setting objectives. The main issues to balance are equality and growth. A second major reason is the difference between the effects of education across different contexts. Coleman's findings in the U.S. are very different from those of Heyneman in the developing world. The third reason is that the findings of research are often counter to the aspirations of the population.

(1980). Education and Social Inequality in Sub-Saharan Africa. *The Journal of Modern Africa Studies, 18*(2), 210–236.

This article summarizes research concerning inequalities in access to education and the relationship between schooling, occupation and social status over previous 20 years. Foster sketches a general theory of social change, neither structural-functional nor neo-Marxist. He argues that both theories are true at an abstract level, but the real task is to see how this varies across nations, and to see if any structures or processes explain this variance.

He also moves move past the debate raging over which research methods are appropriate. He states that one cannot have a productive, qualitative discussion without quantitative data. There are instances, however, in which historians rather than sociologists are more useful. His literature review reflects a commitment to incorporating conceptual and empirical study, ranging over sociology, social geography, history, anthropology, and social philosophy. The methodological diversity of the studies is equally compelling: geography, history, case studies, large scale surveys, and in-depth ethnographies.

He concludes that repetition and attrition are apparently unrelated to school factors, a fact which may be depressing to educational reformers. He extends key arguments on the vocational school fallacy, rebutting the old objection that an overeducated workforce will

turn against the government because of frustrated expectations. Foster thinks instead that they are too busy making a modest living. He also warns against the rapid expansion of secondary and tertiary education on public resources alone. He states that a focus on subsidizing the highest levels of education could effectively transfer money from poor to rich students.

(1980). Regional disparities in educational development: some critical observations. In G. Carron & T. N. Chau (Eds.), *Regional Disparities in Educational Development: A Controversial Issue*. Paris: International Institute for Education Planning.

Foster questions the priority attributed to the equality of education. He says that educating everyone "up to their full potential" is virtually irrelevant as a principle in low income countries. Suppose gaps between rich and poor were to increase but economic progress were made by both groups, would this be preferable to having progress for neither? He believes that progress for both, though in unequal degrees, is still progress.

He observes that the definition of region as an administrative unit raises two issues. One is that there is likely to be more variance within regions than between them. Secondly, there would be considerably more variance if "region" were defined with geographical, topological, or cultural boundaries. He concludes that "as much educational decision-making should be left to the private arena and to processes of individual family and group decision-making." He denies that this position is a "capitalist" solution. He suggests that his principles are equally applicable in socialist as capitalist societies and gives the illustration of the differences within the People's Republic of China between the industrial sector (centrally planned) and rural communes (developed through local initiative).

(1981). In the Steps of the Master? *Harvard Educational Review, 51*(3), 465–468.

This is a letter to the editor which by its content should be classified as an article. It is critical of contemporary Marxist approaches to the sociology of education, stating that they are mostly "either exegetical in nature or based upon inferences about what the Master might have said if he had had time to say it." He argues that the more perceptive components of Marxist thought are not unique to Marx, and are expressed more persuasively by sociologists such as Weber. He bemoans the "scholasticism" of much Marxist writing.

(1982). The educational policies of post colonial states. In L. Anderson and D. M. Windham (Eds.), *Education and Development: Issues in the Analysis and Planning of Postcolonial Societies*. Lexington (Massachusetts): Lexington Books, 3–27.

Foster argues that no colonial power was consistent with respect to educational policy; none was solely concerned with replicating metropolitan content or structure. Educational planning with arguments over philosophy and direction had abundant precedent in the colonial era. Very little data were available and many errors were made because consequences were unintended. But unintended consequences continue into the independence era. These include an increase in the educational opportunity gap between regions, the implementation of social and ethnic quota systems, and dysfunctions between education and occupational mobility resulting from a massive increase in opportunity to attend primary school.

Foster points to several future directions. Modes of social reproduction should not be assumed to mirror those of Latin America or other parts of the world; sub-Saharan Africa is relatively open. A substantial portion of the unemployed aren't; they have multiple sources of cash but no wage income. The state should stay out of the informal economic sector. "Attempts to formalize the informal sector would be in direct contradiction to the forces that led to its development in the first place. And states would do well to emphasize more-general education at secondary and tertiary levels and to be cautious in attempting to expand relatively high cost vocational areas of study."

(1983). Commentary on Currents Left and Right. *Comparative Education Review, 27*(1), 33–37.

This article is largely a defense against charges of "positivism". Foster states that no epistemological or methodological stance can tell us what ought to be done in terms of policy. He later argues, "It is essential in academic life that alternative paradigms and differing methodological approaches coexist." Yet Foster makes clear that toleration for multiple approaches means putting them in critical dialogue with one another, rather than a "flabby intellectual relativism in which it is conceived that all roads lead to an intellectual Rome" (34). He attempts to distinguish science from ideology. Science is an intellectually open system; ideology is an intellectually closed system. He agrees with Epstein that a preoccupation with methodological rigour sometimes prevents us from examining the significance of the questions we ask and the moral implications of research. Thus, "training in the field should involve work in social philosophy and the history of social ideas."

(1984). Issues in Curriculum Diversification and Some Commentary on the Colombian and Tanzanian Studies. Washington, DC: The World Bank.

This report to the World Bank is part of a series of working papers on the issue of diversification and vocationalization of the curriculum. Foster attempts to clear up various confusions about his much-discussed views on vocational education. He emphasizes that his arguments were not simply about the failure of such education, but about the general relationship between education and economic development—namely, that in developing countries, education was more often the *product* of development that its catalyst.

(1985). Africa. In B. Clark (Ed.), *The School and the University*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 217–238.

This chapter presents basic statistical information on growth in African education systems from the colonial period to 1985. He argues that economic development in sub-Saharan Africa has increased the private rate of return for education, thus causing a surge in demand. He also discusses the role of examinations, teacher training, universities, and foreign assistance.

(1985). Comparative Education: Area Studies. In T. Husen and N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Education: Research and Studies*. New York: Pergamon Press, 853–854.

This encyclopaedia entry weighs the merits of various approaches to studying education systems. Foster examines the usefulness and limitations of case-studies, such as his own early work in Ghana, relative to international comparisons such as the IEA studies.

(1985). Economic Development and Education. In T. Husen and N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Education: Research and Studies*. New York: Pergamon Press, 1528–1536.

Foster states that development changes the role of education in a society. In traditional societies, education is concerned with the transmission of knowledge, maintaining stability, and recreating patterns of social differentiation. These tasks do not go away in developing countries, but are transformed by the new task of assigning individuals to various economic roles within the economic and social system. He describes education as a piece in the development jigsaw puzzle whose "linkage with other pieces is as yet obscure." While acknowledging the usefulness of cost-benefit analyses in education development, he cautions that such research does not yield any obvious policy recommendations.

(1985). Teaching and Graduate Studies. In T. Husen and N. Postlethwaite (Eds.), *The International Encyclopedia of Education: Research and Studies*. New York: Pergamon Press, 5085–5087.

This entry traces the maturation of comparative education in graduate programmes and academia more broadly.

(1989). Comments from Another Ivory Tower. *Sixth Educational Policy Seminar*. New York: Rockefeller Institute of Government, 49–54.

In this short piece Foster responds to a conference paper by Alexander. Foster gives his own intellectual biography, stating that he is a sociologist rather than an "educationist", and that his "long-term intellectual commitment has been to fundamental rather than policy-oriented research." Foster discusses his educational career, from the London School of Economics to his arrival in the United States in the 1940s. He discusses the extreme views of schools as purely tools of reproduction or of liberation, and praises Alexander for having been able to present a persuasive, balanced approach.

(1989). Some Hard Choices to Be Made. *Comparative Education Review, 33*(1), 104–110.

Foster begins this commentary by noting that the optimism surrounding African education in the 1960s has been tempered by the harsh reality of the 1980s. The population is growing while government resources are shrinking. Debt is rising while productivity is sinking. The centre of the commentary is a World Bank study on the future of African education. Overall, Foster endorses the Bank's educational policies (the most important of which is to concentrate government spending on primary rather than tertiary education), but adds that these policies will only be successful as part of a large package of economic and structural reforms. He states that education is not the prime mover at the early stages of development, but rather an accelerator once development takes hold.

(1989). Why the Issue of "Relevance" is not so Relevant. *Comparative Education Review, 33*(4), 519–524.

In commenting on an anthropological article, Foster makes two points. One is to caution against assuming that using schools for instrumental reasons constitutes a "disease." Using

schools to advance one's career constitutes rational behaviour and is accompanied by multiple other reasons. He points out that school leavers are not estranged from their communities. They may leave but send remittances and in many ways constitute an important community element. His second point has to do with an "ecological fallacy" in which the investigator launches into a set of conclusions remote from the data at hand; conclusions which will likely be utilized by policy makers to support their own planning agendas.

(1990). Literacy and Society with Particular Reference to the Non-Western World. *Handbook of Reading Research*, *11*. New York: Longmans, 26–45. (with Alan Purves)

It is said that literacy is a prerequisite for economic development, but exactly what is literacy? This article defines it, traces its history through ancient China, India and early Islamic cultures, and speculates on the degree to which this commonly heard proposition about literacy and development is true. The article points out that literacy usually spread only to a small minority of the population. In ancient China, where only 2% of the population may have been literate, the barriers included the extraordinary difficulty of the script. In pre-Mogul India literacy was similarly restricted, not for reasons of difficulty but rather for reasons of caste associated with the use of script. In the early Islamic world literacy originated with the reading of religious texts, and hence was restricted to those devoted to such texts. The article goes on to explain the implications of modern schooling in different cultural environments and concludes that even today the use of the written word has quite different purposes and levels of sophistication.

(1991). C. Arnold Anderson: A Personal Memoir. *Comparative Education Review, 35*(2), 215–221.

Philip Foster describes his 20 years with C. Arnold Anderson as the "ideal joking relationship." A pillar of American sociology, Anderson was both mentor and colleague. Some of what Foster says is true of Anderson, as he reflects on himself: "skeptical concerning the pretensions of governments and the supposed benefits of revolutionary change," a streak of Puritan morality, anti-technocratic in emphasis and a profound objection to central planning.

(1991). Literacy and the Politics of Language. In E. M. Jennings and A. C. Purves (Eds.), *Literate Systems and Individual Lives*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 37–50.

This paper deals with the problem of language policy in multilingual states. Foster argues that the intensity of debate over language policy in Africa stems from social and economic disparities. Shifts in language policy alone are unlikely to lead to long-term political reconciliation. National integration "might be better ensured through economic strategies than through 'progressive' and 'tolerant' literacy and language policies." When it comes to making difficult decisions about language of instruction, policy-makers are likely to be "damned if they do and damned if they don't": unitary strategies may cause rebellion, while pluralist approaches may further fragment the political culture. He states, "All language policies may be equal in the sight of God (or anthropologists) but I fear that they are not in the sight of Humanity." That is, the failure to educate ethnic minorities in the dominant language effectively shuts them out of a number of social, political, and economic opportunities.

(1991). Origins and Destinations in Jamaica. *International Journal of Educational Development, 11*(2), 149–159. (with J. Strudwick)

This article emerged from a major longitudinal study of Jamaican fifth-form students to determine the extent to which social background, academic performance, and school reputation predict educational and occupational success.

(1992). Commentary. In M. A. Eckstein and H. J. Noah (Eds.), *Examinations: Comparative and International Studies*. Elmsford (New York): Pergamon Press, 121–126.

In a book edited by two of Foster's oldest friends, he seeks to cut a middle path between those who champion standardized examinations and those who categorically jeer at them. He argues that examinations should be viewed in light of the social and historical context from which they emerge. Careful analysis shows that change is necessary, but radical reform is unlikely. He carefully distinguishes two central issues related to examinations: first, their use as pedagogical tools; and second, their role as instruments of status allocation. While conceding that they may have a deleterious effect on instruction, he states that they may be "infinitely preferable" to alternative methods of status allocation.

(1992). Comparative Education. *Encyclopedia of Educational Research (Sixth Edition)*. New York: Macmillan, 197–204.

A careful distinction is drawn between the need for improvement in other countries through education (international education) and the systematic study of comparative functions of education (comparative education). The influence of the study of history, sociology, economics and political science is discussed along with some predictions for future trends. These include the question of how well schools meet the educational agenda of the polity as well as the details of how classrooms genuinely function.

(1992). Vocational Education and Training. *Prospects, XXII* (2), 149–155.

With the publication of a World Bank policy paper on vocational education the editor of *Prospects* requested Foster's comment. He traces the long and sorry history of manpower planning, the belief in the early development years by some western economists that the peoples in developing countries were not sufficiently sophisticated to act rationally and needed to have the state plan on their behalf. He traces the origin of the assumption that vocational education was "more practical" than general education and noted that this was characteristic of the World Bank in the 1960s and 1970s. Foster characterizes the Bank's paper as "representing a revolutionary change of approach." He also points out that elites are likely to resist this approach because they had been "reared in the tradition of *dirigiste* state planning." He mentions two prerequisites for success of the new approach: political stability and the assumption that the state has a commitment to enhancing the welfare of its citizens. "The sad experience of some nations of the third world in recent decades sometimes makes us skeptical of this assumption and there is no development theory, market-oriented or not that begins with the premise that the state is predatory and not development-oriented."

(1998). Foreward. In M. A. Eckstein and H. J. Noah (Eds.), *Doing Comparative Education*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Press, 1–8.

This short piece places the careers of Eckstein and Noah against the backdrop of the history of international and comparative research in education. Foster charts the growth of the field in the United States with attention both to its quantitative expansion and qualitative improvements. A good deal of the piece deals with the limitations of scientific inquiry. He makes the Weberian point that, "although we know a great deal more about the *performance* of educational systems than we did three decades ago…I am not convinced that the level of discussion on the *ends* of educational policy has become more sophisticated. Research may tell policy makers what is sociologically possible, but it cannot inform them about what is desirable." He adds that decisions about "what knowledge is of most worth" would benefit more from social philosophy than increased technical expertise.

Author Biographies

Stephen P. Heyneman (United States of America) received his PhD in comparative education from the University of Chicago in 1976. He served the World Bank for 22 years. Between 1976 and 1984 he helped research education quality and design policies to support educational effectiveness. Between 1984 and 1989 he was in charge of external training for senior officials world wide in education policy. And between 1989 and 1998, he was responsible for education policy and lending strategy, first for the Middle East and North Africa and later for the 27 countries of Europe and Central Asia. In July, 2000 he was appointed professor of International Education Policy at Vanderbilt University. Current interests include the effect of higher education on social cohesion, the international trade in education services and the economic and social cost to higher education corruption.

Chad Lykins (United States of America) is a doctoral candidate for degrees in Philosophy and Leadership and Policy Studies at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. He conducts research on education policy, research design and methodology, and philosophical issues in social science and education.