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Editorial

IJED Volume 79 Editorial

Two articles in Volume 79 are invited essays. The first focuses attention on the provision of faith-based education and follows an earlier invited essay titled: 'Global Education Challenges: Exploring Religious Dimensions' in which it was pointed out that religious institutions play significant parts in national and international education systems and approaches in many countries, sometimes as critical partners or as significant critics,' (Marshall, 2018, p. 184). The earlier essay focused on the reasons to pay more attention to the religious dimension in education. The contribution of this essay is to illustrate how it might be done; it is to set a precedent.

For the most part, sector work sponsored by foreign assistance agencies is limited to schools managed by government ministries. This essay includes faith-based schools and school systems managed by religious bodies. The title is: "Faith and Education in Bangladesh: a review of the contemporary landscape and challenges," authored by Sudipta Roy and Samia Huq.

The authors catalogue numerous differing systems of faith-based institutions in Bangladesh within Islamic, Christian, Buddhist traditions. They describe the relationships with one another, their differences in approach and the degree to which they overlap in philosophy. The authors pose a basic universal question – the degree to which faith-based schools systems contribute to or handicap social cohesion in the general society. Their contribution may help inform broader issues of social policy and provide an illustration for how education sector work might be conducted by foreign aid agencies in the future.

The second invited essay consists of a brief history of the origins and original purposes of the *International Journal of Educational Development* and suggestions for what the journal might emphasize in the future. The essay is titled: 'Possibilities and Priorities for IJED in Times of Uncertainty: a 40th Anniversary Analysis," by four scholars who have played a significant role in our field and with our journal: Michael Crossley, Kenneth King, Simon McGrath and Keith Watson.

Regular articles in volume 79 seem to fall into two categories. The first might be thought of as reflecting 'disappointments', that is, research results which have not met aspirations or hope-filled expectations. Each article describes the imperfect relationship between schooling and its anticipated effects.

Preschool for instance (attendance prior to the legal age of compulsory education) is today considered a normal, even required, part of the education sector. Children who have attended preschool are thought to be better prepared for the expectations of the regular primary school grades. They are expected to be better behaved, to be more diligent, less likely to drop out of school early and to be more advanced with academic skills. If preschool attendance becomes more common is it possible to expect that academic achievement would be augmented on a national level? In their article titled:" Do Increases in National Level of Preschool Enrollment Increase Student Achievement? Evidence from International Assessments", authors Rolf Strietholt, Nina Hogrebe, and Henrik Daan Zachrisson find little support for the policy expectation that expanding preschool enrollment per se leads to better student achievement on the national level.

Does literacy have a positive effect on reading as adults? In an article titled: "Failing Adult Learners: Why Rwanda Adult Basic Education Policy is Not Delivering," Pamela Abbott, Roger Mugisha, Peter Mtika and Wenceslas Nzabalirwa find that their reading courses fail to meet adult learner expectations or make a significant improvement in their lives. They emerge with a discouraging conclusion– an absence of a 'culture of reading', poverty and poor organization combine to reduce the efficacy of the education.

It is common to assume that the level of health knowledge would be greater if a population was literate. Nevertheless, in the article titled: "Heath and Well-Being Outcomes of Women and Children in Sub-Saharan Africa: Examining the Role of Formal Schooling, Literacy, and Health Knowledge," Hayley Pierce and Kathryn Foster conclude that in 27 countries, educational attainment and literacy do not guarantee greater knowledge of health.

The last article in this group concerns the imperfect effect of literacy on gender equality. It is common to anticipate that more schooling would affect literacy and that in turn would affect later outcomes among adults. However, in the article titled:" Aiming Higher: Learning Profiles and Gender Equality in 10 Low and Middle-Income Countries," Michelle Kaffenberger and Lant Pritchett find that in six out of ten countries, less than half of the adults who had completed primary education could read. They conclude that unless quality could be radically improved, universal primary education will leave 30 percent of the females effectively illiterate.

Disappointments have also emerged with respect to schooling and social mobility. Since government-provided schools can be of low quality, it has been suggested that low-fee private schools can be better. However, in the article titled: "Educating Rural Migrant Children in Interior China: The Promise and Pitfalls of Low-Fee Private Schools,' Christine Wren finds although these schools are oriented to meet the immediate needs of migrant families, they do so at the cost of the children's long term social mobility.

One would hope that schooling might over come the handicaps of poverty and social caste. However, in the article titled: "Caste-Class Association and School Participation in Uttar Pradesh, India: Evidence from National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) Data," Sandeep Kumar Tiwari, Kirtti Ranjan Paltasingh, and Pabrita Kumar Jena discover that education has a stronger mitigating effect on class than on caste. The

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adverse effects of being born into a low caste may continue after high levels of school completion and monetary advantages.

To what extent can schooling over generations affect the adverse consequence of being born into a low caste? One might hope that over time, education would provide an escape. But it may not be so simple. In the paper titled: "Intergenerational Changes in Issues Related to the Education of the Cobbler Community in Mumbai," Dronacharya Ramkisan Wankhede follows the effect of greater education over three generations in which all younger respondents became literate. In the first generation, all were illiterate. In the second generation many had become literate. In the third generation all were literate. However, even the third generation continued to assist their fathers in cobbling work and were not compensated sufficiently to escape poverty. The conclusion in this instance seems to be that if education cannot provide an escape from a profession dominated by caste, that the returns normally expected from education may not be forthcoming.

Another article in this category of 'disappointments' concerns the effectiveness of university/industry partnerships. It has been hoped that a relationship with industry would have a positive effect on universities. However, the the article titled: "Development of University-Industry Partnerships in Kazakhstan: Innovation Under Constraint," Dilrabo Jonbekova, Jason Sparks, Matthew Hartley and Gulfiya Kuchumova discover that university-industry partnerships in Kazakhstan remain weak and ineffective. For instance, industries failed to use university capacities to assist with research and development. They attribute this failure to heavy faculty teaching loads, poor institutional support for research, constant changes in the higher education system and little consistency in the priorities of the fast-revolving Ministers of Education.

A last article which describes education disappointments concerns the effect of high stakes examinations. In the article titled: "High-Stakes Examination Policies and Transformation of the Turkish Education System," Havva Ayse Caner and Sezen Bayhan find that changes in high-stakes examinations in Turkey have underpinned the 'neoliberal Islamization' of education. The article concludes by suggesting that exam content designed by hegemonic powers can distort policies and generate new forms in inequality.

Now for some good news. Much research focuses on changes in the average achievement levels of a population. But what about individuals at upper or lower ends of the achievement spectrum? Might an intervention have different effects on students at different levels? In the paper titled: "Average vs. Distributional Effects: Evidence from an Experiment in Rwanda," Minahil Asim suggests that an intervention to make pedagogy more effective and engage students in reading activities outside of school had quite interesting results. On students at the 25th percentile the intervention had a modest but positive and significant effect. Moreover, the intervention had a positive, significant effect on females at every level. From this she concludes that programs and policies should be tailored to the backgrounds of different categories of learners.

Our final article concerns an issue which has preoccupied research on teachers for decades: the uncertain connection between content knowledge, remuneration and teaching practice. In the article titled: "Comparing Teaching Practices, Teacher Content Knowledge and Pay in Punjab," Ali Ansari uses a survey of public, private and Public Partnership Program (PPP) schools to make comparisons. The results are worthy of attention. They can be summarized in six statements: (i) private school teachers emerge with low classroom observation scores. (ii) Teachers in both private and PPP schools have lower content knowledge in Urdu language but not in English or Math. (iii) After test-based requirements were put into place for teacher recruitment, teachers in public schools now have 30 percentage points higher in math knowledge and have higher math content knowledge of the curriculum. (iv) Male teachers in public and PPP schools get paid more after controlling for intervening influences. (v) Math content knowledge is highly correlated with pay in private but not in public or PPP schools. And lastly (vi), female teachers with higher qualifications have higher wages in in PPP schools, but male teachers with higher qualifications do not.

Summary

From the manuscripts in volume 79 we might reach three impressions. Our original human capital assumptions about the relationships between schooling and economic development are neither linear nor consistent. While these assumptions might have been both at the low end of the development spectrum 50 years ago, the fact that educational access has significantly improved today and presents us with a new set of issues and responsibilities. These require far more sophisticated design, more careful targeting of educational interventions and less blanket coverage for our expectations.

Secondly, the common habit of ignoring the provision of education through faith-based schools and institutions should cease. To understand a nation's educational challenge requires an understanding of the religious sector. This is not only true for reasons of more accurately tracking national changes in knowledge and skills but more importantly, for understanding a nation's prospects for social cohesion.

Lastly, we owe a significant debt to those who helped launch the idea of IJED 40 years ago. Now we must reflect the more mature nature of education and development which confronts us.

References

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