



IJED Volume 101 article summaries

Of the 14 manuscripts in volume 101, eight are classified as being in a special issue, six in the special issue on vocational education and training. Vocational education today comes in an era with wide shifts in manufacturing techniques, new demands for life-time flexibility, and a tidal wave of new technologies and technical platforms. The article by Presha Ramsarup, Simon McGrath and Heila Lotz-Sisitka titled: "Reframing Skills Ecosystems for Sustainable Just Futures" describes this situation. The authors come to the conclusion that the "current dominant approach to vocational education and training (VET) does not work in theory, policy or practice in the current context of unsustainability and global inequality." Their article recommends that new assessments of VET must address 'both structure and agency'.

This is substantiated in a paper by Preeti Dagar titled: "Rethinking Skills Development and Entrepreneurship for Refugees: the Case of five refugee communities in India, which analyzes the specific skill demands among Afghan, Rohingya, Tibetan, Chin, and Somali youth.

It is also substantiated in a paper by Emmanuel Estrellado, Primmada Charoensilp, and Shoko Yamada titled: "The Effects of Game-Based Soft Skills Training: A Quasi-Experiment with Ethiopian Garment Workers." They discover that using gaming skills in training results in significant positive improvements in the work-related soft skills which are in such high demand.

Does the Experience of vocational upper secondary schools help a student find 'decent work'? The question is explored by Seonkyung Choi, Huihui Li, and Keiichi Ogawa in their paper titled: "Upper Secondary Vocational Education and Decent Work in Indonesia: A Gender Comparison." They find that the vocational education experience makes a difference in terms of job security and access to the formal economy. They also find that men with vocational education are likely to have higher wages, health insurance, and pensions. Sadly, the same does not apply to women.

Are the macro-effects of massive expansions of vocational education consistent with political expectations? Evidently not. In the paper by Markus Maurer, Faruque Haolader, and Sheikh Shimu titled: "VET For All: Assessing the Case of Bangladesh," the authors find that VET expands because of the pressures from key policy actors even when VET is weakly linked to the labor market and when the demand for formal qualifications signals academic rather than vocational competence. Unfortunately, these political criteria for justifying vocational education is an old story, one not adequately accommodated In Bangladesh (Foster, 1965; Heyneman and Lykins, 2008).

One historical article in Volume 101 is categorized as being for the special issue on Faith-Based Education. Written by Ellen Regan and Deirdre Raftery and titled: "It was in the Very Air We Breathed: The Impact of Faith-Based Education in Ireland on the Growth in Missionary

Vocations and Volunteer Aspirations, from 1950." The article explores the ways in which faith, encouraged both at home and at school, contributed to religious and lay mission and volunteer vocations across much of the 20th Century Ireland. They show how both formal and informal sources taught Irish schoolgirls and young women about different overseas service and fostered the impulse to become a part of a large humanitarian movement. They summarize their assessment by saying: "that religious devotion in the home, together with faith-based primary and secondary schooling, promoted a strong 'missionary message', and influenced the decisions of many young women to become missionaries and international volunteers."

Much has appeared in IJED as other journals on the educational effects of COVID lockdowns. Relatively unexplored, however, is whether the time away from school is 'neutral' as an influence, that is, whether simply raising the time now in school can rectify the cognitive damage due to Covid lockdowns. Two articles in volume 101 address this issue. In one authored by Niaz Asadullah and Eric Tham, the question is whether the lockdowns affected a child's happiness, and whether a change in 'happiness' might affect a child's learning. Their article is titled: "Learning and Happiness During Covid-19 School Closure in Urban Malaysia." They measure the co-variants of happiness by assessing a child's access to reading materials, play, and religious activity and conclude that "the link between cognitive effort and emotional well-being is important for post-pandemic learning recovery interventions."

The second paper approaching the question of learning recovery is an assessment of multiple studies. Written by Maria Cortes-Albornoz, Sofia Ramirez-Guerrero, Danna Garcia-Guaqueta, Alberto Velez-Van-Meerbeke, and Claudia Talero-Gutierrez, it is titled: "Effects of Remote Learning During Covid-19 Lockdowns and Children's Learning Abilities and School Performance: A Systematic Review." In a review of 1787 different publications, not only do the authors find that scores have declined but they find widespread evidence of emotional problems not evident prior to the pandemic lockdowns. They say that "Educators, parents, and students reported disorganization, increased academic demands, and motivational and behavior changes".

Lastly, volume 101 also contains what is perhaps the first manuscript to attempt to measure the effect of climate change on educational outcomes. The paper is authored by Paola Palacios and Libardo Rojas and titled: "Impact of Weather Shocks on Educational Outcomes in the Municipalities of Columbia." They find that in areas shocked by excess rainfall, school attendance declines, academic performance declines, and school dropouts increase.

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In sum

Volume 101 set precedents of two kinds. It signals that the vocational education debates of thirty years ago are very much active. While economies and technologies have shifted radically, political expectations about vocational education often remain naïve and investments wasteful.

Secondly, manuscripts in this volume signal the opening of what one might expect to be a flurry of work on the effects — both cognitive and behavioral — of Covid lockdowns. The points made by the articles in this volume set the stage. There is tension among students; there are consistent and devastating behavioral challenges to norms and institutions; there is an increase in teacher burnout and what appear to be

propensities to leave the profession. The multiple aftereffects of COVID are being noted and solutions seem distant.

References

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