



## IJED Vol. 97 article summaries

Volume 97 contains 17 manuscripts which span a wide gamut of education sector issues and debates. We begin with a book review by Nicholas Burnett on the education development role of international organizations. The book is titled: *The Role of International Organizations in Education* edited by David Turner, Huseyin Yolcu, Selda Polat Husevsahi (Brill Publishers Leiden, Netherlands, 2022). His review is critical. Burnett not only points out that the book fails to include three major players (The World Bank, UNESCO, and the Global Partnership for Education), but that it seriously misconstrues the education development functions and purposes of many of the others—the WTO, International Unions, OECD the IMF, and UNICEF. The Burnett review is a reminder that the first requirement for those who generalize about international organizations is to categorize them within their legal terms of reference: multilateral, bilateral and non-government charities and not hold them accountable for failing to live up to expectations essentially illegal for them to pursue.

Volume 97 also contains an unusual analysis of the textbooks published by ISIS. The manuscript is titled: “Education Under ISIS: An Analysis of the Calligraphy and Illustrations of the Physical Education Curriculum” authored by Tegwen Gadais, Laurie Decarpentrie, Ghada Touri, Alain Daou, Mazen Al-Khatib, Chirine Chamsine, and Oliver Arvisais. The authors review textbooks used by teachers of physical education. They conclude that the purposes of the textbooks were to prepare children to go into battle. They also observe that the text and illustrations contained only males. This manuscript represents an example of the tendency for some extremists to use schools as weapons.

Massive On-Line Open Courses (MOOCs) in higher education appeared to make access to high quality knowledge available to the public at low cost. The results, however, have often been disappointing. This conclusion is reiterated by the manuscript by Amardeep Singh and Karina Kakkar, titled: “Program Inclusive, Credit-Based SWAYAM MOOCs in Higher Educational Institutions of India”. They find that the MOOCs in India raised enrollment but not the rate of completion. They also find that the most effective platform was synchronous (participation at the same time as delivery). This may suggest that learning autonomously may not be in high demand if there is a choice of being present when materials are formally presented.

Parallel disappointment appears to have emerged in Tunisia with respect to the expectations of creating entrepreneurial universities. In the manuscript titled: “Informal University Entrepreneurship: The Missing Link in Transition Higher Education Systems,” author Saber Khelifi finds that there is a misalignment between ‘progressive measures and the traditional inconducive university environment’.

In a study of regional programs of scientific research, authors Yusuf Oldac and Lili Yang analyze the intra-regional scientific work within the

10 ASEAN nations. The manuscript is titled: “Regionalisation and Agency in Science Space: An Historical Bibliometric Analysis of ASEAN Science.” The authors find that the growth rate of intra-regional publications is faster than the total publications. The main leaders are Malaysia in terms of research funding and Singapore in terms of publications.

The subject of low-fee non-government schools is again the center of analysis in the manuscript titled: “Low-Fee Private Preschools as the Symbol of Imagined ‘Modernity’? Parental Perspectives of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in an Urban Informal Settlement in Zambia,” authored by Tacko Okitsu, D. Brent Edwards, Peggy Mwanza, and Scott Miller. Closely parallel to the previous findings about primary education (Heyneman and Stern, 2014), the authors describe the preschool situation as being one in which the supply of public facilities is inadequate, low in quality and of questionable effectiveness. To make matters more problematic, the government programs are based on ‘play’ and conducted in the mother tongue when the parents prefer more academic emphases in English. This mismatch between supply and demand is particularly characteristic of the low-income urban poor who seek to have their children experience ‘modernity’.

Differences between the programs offered through public facilities and private demand are also the focus of attention with respect to parent educational involvement in China. In the manuscript titled: “Effects of Parental Involvement and Family Socioeconomic Status on Adolescent Problem Behaviors in China,” by Haoling Ma, Dexian Li, and Xingchen Zhu. The authors outline four categories of parental education involvement: (i) supportive, (ii) disengaged, (iii) basic, and (iv) supervisory. Families of higher socio-economic status seem to prefer playing supportive and basic roles; families of lower socio-economic status seem to prefer roles of disengagement and supervisory. The latter roles are found to lead to many kinds of problem behaviors in adolescents.

The gap between the intentions of public policy and the handicaps presented by long-standing tradition is also discussed with respect to the problems of achieving world-class universities in China. In their article titled: “Challenges for the Government-Controlled Higher Education System in China,” authors Chengqi Xia, Xnge Li, and Shixiong Cao argue that the gap between world-class universities in OECD countries and those with world class ambitions in China is large and unlikely to be lessened over time. Their observations center on the long-standing traditions of command-and-control planning which, in effect, cripples university autonomy. They summarize their findings by saying that “China’s higher education system must change to permit more autonomy and a stronger focus on the job market; to pay university professors a fair wage; to provide more freedom to the administration of universities and research institutes; and to promote participation by professors

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in the administration of schools. It will also be important to place less emphasis on awards and titles and focus instead on letting the best research speak for itself."

The demand to be educated outside the country is the topic of another manuscript in Volume 97. This one concerns the business of acting as education agents on behalf of those wealthy enough to employ them for placement in an OECD-based university. The article is titled: "Pipelines by Schooling: Pathways to the United States and Rent-Seeking Practices by Education Agents," by Kenneth Chen. He finds that the education agents assist the client in gaining access to more elite selective universities despite lower grades and lower funding.

Asian customs of support for overseas secondary school students are also the subject of discussion in an article by Helen Sheehan titled: "Bring Your Support Team with You: The Role of Family and Friends in Supporting the Motivation of International Secondary Students." The motives for this extreme support for an overseas child stem from the home country. However, the result can be problematic. Sheehan points out that the lessons learned by the overseas youth are dominated by culture from the 'support group' rather than the school. In fact, the main goals, and attitudes which the school hopes to transfer can fail to be effective because of the 'support team'.

Child upbringing in Asia seems to be a common theme in Volume 97. In the article on play titled: "Bringing Playful Learning to South Korea: An Alternative Pedagogical Approach to Promote Children's Learning and Success," by Ji Young Lee, Hyun Ji Lee, Allyson Masters, Katelyn Flecher, Daniel Suh, Roberta Golinkoff, and Kathy Hirsh-Pasek. The childhood norm is described as being one of unending dismal acquisition of academic content. The authors point out that this can deaden a child's self-confidence and creativity. As a result, and parallel to other recent conclusions (Sahlberg and Doyle, 2019), they recommend that children be allowed to learn more through purposeful play.

Technology corporations (Microsoft, Apple, Facebook etc.) have very significant education aspirations. Should they be analyzed as being educational organizations? Should their purposes and successes be included in the normal literature on education and development? These are the questions addressed by Lara Patil in the article titled: "The Institutional Rationales of Technology Corporations in Educational Development." Her point is that by comparing the transnational technology corporations' engagement with traditional donors, one can make candid assessments. She suggests that by "adapting and applying the concept of donor logic to the institutional rationales of transnational technology corporations, this research expands the literature to include the underlying motivations and rationales of these actors in educational development".

Do religiously affiliated schools help develop a child's ability to make better moral judgements? One might think so. However, the evidence is a bit more nuanced. In the article titled: "The Impact of Public, Catholic and Waldorf Schools on Pupils' Moral Judgement," Matyas Turos finds that low SES parents tend to be more restrictive, and this modifies school impact. However, this does not seem to modify the impact of Waldorf schools where parents at all SES backgrounds are less restrictive in the raising of children. The differences in the SES level of parents helps determine the moral judgement of children and the ability of the school to enhance it. The author puts it this way: "In public and Waldorf schools, pupils in higher grade levels are more accepting of being out of control, and therefore more accepting of misdemeanor which leads to becoming less reliable, gradually causing a deterioration in behaviour. It is also true for Catholic schools that pupils with more uncontrolled attitudes are more accepting of misdemeanor and less positive about reliability, but for Catholic school pupils the last element of the chain of effects does not exist: attitudes do not manifest themselves in behaviour."

Do merit-based scholarships advantage those from more privileged backgrounds? This question has been a long-standing issue in education

sociology and is approached in the article titled: "Questioning Merit-based Scholarships at Nonprofit Private Universities: Lessons from Turkey," by Hilal Keskiner and Bekir Gur. They conclude that the answer is yes; the evidence from Turkey is not significantly different from other parts of the world. But the real question may not be whether rewarding merit performance advantages children from backgrounds which can support a child's higher performance, but whether rewarding students based on criteria other than merit works to enhance the system or threaten it.

After receiving their doctoral training at western universities, what happens when graduates take faculty positions back in their home countries. This issue is raised with respect to returning faculty members at universities in Central Asia. In the article written by Anatoly Oleksiyenko and Vatha Ros titled: "Human Agency and Legacy-Innovation Tensions in the Internationalization of Higher Education: Re-orientations Managed by Internationally-Educated Scholars of Central Asia," the authors conclude that the barriers to their effectiveness are many but that the 'agency' which they developed because of their overseas graduate training will provide them with perseverance.

What happens when school children are the subject of corporal violence from war, ethnic strife, and a breakdown in norms? This issue is addressed in the paper by Alexandra Blackwell et. al. titled: "Children's Schooling Experiences and Child Hope in South Sudan." They find that violence affects a child's mental health and that this affects females more than males. Females seem to have lower hope. But where hope exists, it is expressed through resilience.

What happens to children when teachers are absent, when they don't show up for work? Does academic achievement suffer? In their article titled: "Influence of Teacher Absenteeism and School Distance on Cognitive Skills in Ghana," authors Jacob Nunoo, Francis Taale, Joshua Sebu, and Adams Adama conclude that teacher absenteeism and the distance from home to school is a significant detriment to pupil cognitive achievement in Ghana.

## Summary

The articles in volume 97 are a fair representation of the trends in the interests and involvement of International and Comparative Education. There are concerns over the role and responsibilities of international development organizations; over the educational ramifications of international technology companies; over the degree to which an over-focus on academic success may not enhance childhood but threaten it. There is a new questioning of the assumptions that digital technologies represent the answer to problems of education access and quality; there is confirmation that in the hands of moral nihilists, schools are ready to be used as weapons; and there is the discovery that a child's moral judgement is more than a simple school effect. However, continuities persist. Corporate violence harms children. Parental involvement is not an unalloyed asset. When teachers are absent, children don't learn. Our field is a combination of the surprising challenges to popular assumptions as well as underlying support of the self-evident.

## References

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