

EDUCATION AND ECONOMIC CRISES

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Education and Economic Crises

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The Spring 2010 issue of *Current Issues in Comparative Education* examines, across a range of cases and contexts, the impact that the recent global economic and financial crises have had on education and education provision. Though the contributions to this issue are timely, they are likely to constitute only an initial foray into a topic that education scholars and researchers will need to return to repeatedly over the coming years, if not decades. The impact of these crises, which unfolded in late 2007 and gained full force throughout 2008 and early 2009, are still having profound repercussions, reshaping the contours of the global order in ways still not readily discerned or clearly understood. Even if recent economic indicators suggest that (as of this writing) the 'worst may be over,' public sector budgets across both the developed and developing world are still under severe fiscal constraints. Growth and productivity rates remain tepid, and unemployment and social welfare protections have become ever-looming concerns, portending future difficulties and hardships for societies already suffering hardship. Perhaps an equally significant casualty has been the sense of confidence (or over-confidence) that the developed world and its governing institutions and agencies placed in neoliberal theories and ideologies as instrumental to economic growth and good governance. Whether these ideologies will be replaced with a system that mitigates the risk of future economic crisis while ensuring that education and other public goods are not only preserved, but delivered in more equitable ways, remains an open question that demands ongoing investigation.

The editors of CICE are pleased to present several contributions that add to the ongoing examination of how the economic and fiscal crises have impacted the educational systems of different countries, and the educational prospects of different communities and populations. We begin with an insightful analysis by **M. Najeeb Shafiq**, who in his article "**The Effects of Economic Crisis on Educational Outcomes**" provides a model that allows us to assess both the negative and positive effects of an economic crisis on the educational choices and decisions of households. Shafiq argues that while national education systems certainly come under strain during economic crisis, and educational outcomes tend to deteriorate, economic crisis can also be a spur that encourages rather than discourages household investments and policy innovation in education. The key task, therefore, is to identify mechanisms that help to lessen the effects of education sector deterioration by preserving or expanding options for families and households.

The remaining articles focus more specifically on tracing the impact of the global crises on specific contexts. **Gwang-chol Chang**, in his article "**Monitoring the Effects of Global Crisis on Education Provision**," discusses the ongoing efforts of UNESCO to maintain watch over public sector provision of education sector. While there is some encouragement to be taken in the fact that education has not been unfairly burdened with cuts in public sector spending, there are nevertheless worrying signs of deterioration that call into question whether the international community will meet the education Millennium Development Goals by 2015, only five short years away. Monitoring efforts such as those undertaken by UNESCO will continue to be necessary as integral, rather than exceptional, to international efforts to provide education for all. "**The Global Economic Crisis: Setbacks to the Educational Agenda for the Minority in Sub-Saharan**

Africa” – contributed by **Moses Shiasha Ingubu, Joseph Nyaga Kindiki, and Kyalo Benjamin Wambua** – provides an illuminating discussion of the impact of economic crisis on already-fragile efforts to ensure Education for All and other education objectives in countries with an array of vulnerable populations. The authors identify a number of different programs and initiatives that have mitigated the effects of the recent crises, while emphasizing that these have already solved the short- and longer-term effects of socio-economic uncertainty. Finally, in **Guangyu Tan’s “Under the Same Blue Sky? Inequity in Migrant Children’s Education in China,”** we learn more about the challenges faced by rural children and families who migrated to urban areas to take advantage of China’s explosive economic growth. These challenges, including various forms of institutional discrimination and inquiry, have taken on a new dimension as economic contraction forces many of these families back to rural areas where new difficulties in obtaining quality education await them.

New Features for CICE

With this issue CICE also inaugurates two new features. First, we include a **Special Section** that includes two responses to articles in our previous issue (Volume 12, Issue 1) on cosmopolitanism and comparative education. One of the long-held objectives of this journal is to initiate debates on a diverse array of topics in comparative education and related fields. For this reason, we are pleased to continue the discussion we started in our last issue by publishing responses to two of the articles in that issue. Specifically, **David T. Hansen** offers a sympathetic response to Dale Snauwaert’s article “The Ethics and Ontology of Cosmopolitanism,” providing an implicit challenge to ‘strong cosmopolitanism’ rooted in conceptions of human nature with a ‘quotidian cosmopolitanism’ reflected in the practices of ‘the street.’ **Andria Wisler** uses Noah Sobe’s article, “Rethinking Cosmopolitanism,” as an occasion to reflect upon her own experiences working and researching educational practice in the Balkans. In doing so, she succeeds in identifying new and complex dimensions to the relationship between cosmopolitanism and comparative education as a discipline and form of research.

In addition to this special section, CICE is also pleased to initiate book reviews as a long-overdue feature of the journal. We look forward to expanding our contribution to scholarly discourse and discussion by including reviews of current and recent literature in the burgeoning field of comparative education.

By adding these new features, we invite readers of CICE to participate in the development of this journal by providing their own contributions, including original articles, responses, and reviews of the published literature. We welcome your engagement.

The Effect of an Economic Crisis on Educational Outcomes: An Economic Framework and Review of the Evidence

M. Najeem Shafiq
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This article first provides an economic framework for understanding how an economic crisis affects children's educational outcomes; this framework shows that there are both negative (harmful) effects and positive (beneficial) effects on educational outcomes. A review of the empirical evidence suggests that the negative effects are typically stronger, and that national educational outcomes deteriorate during a crisis. Finally, a review of the interventions indicates that fee reduction, conditional cash transfers, media campaigns, and block grants help moderate the effects of an economic crisis on children's educational outcomes.

During an economic crisis, the slowdown of the economy is associated with reductions in hourly wage rates, numbers of hours worked, and the amount of public and private funds available for schools. Such conditions affect children's educational outcomes such as school enrollment, attainment, attendance, and performance. Drawing from economic theory, this article first provides a conceptual framework for understanding how crisis conditions affect educational outcomes; in particular, the framework specifies how the outcomes are affected by parental responses to changing adult and child labor markets and school quality. Next, this article reviews the available empirical evidence on the impact of an economic crisis on children's educational outcomes. Finally, it discusses the policy interventions that help moderate the effects of an economic crisis on children's educational outcomes.¹

Economic Framework

Several economic studies have theoretically examined the potential effect of an economic crisis on children's educational outcomes (for reviews, see Behrman and Deolalikar, 1991; Duryea et al., 2007; Fallon and Lucas, 2002; Dellas and Sakellaris, 2003; McIntyre and Pencavel, 2004; McKenzie, 2004; Schady, 2004). As mentioned earlier, a crisis affects educational outcomes such as school enrollment, attainment, attendance, and performance. In addition, a crisis affects children's labor activities, whether in the household or in the labor market.

According to the existing economic studies, a child is exposed to one or more of the following negative effects during an economic crisis:

- *Negative effect 1:* The reduction in adult income makes it harder for the parents to bear the direct costs of education such as tuition, fees, books, supplies, uniforms, and private tutoring. Educational outcomes are consequently harmed because the child is either withdrawn from school or inadequately prepared for it.
- *Negative effect 2:* The reduction in adult income may also force parents to become more reliant on child labor. As a result, a child who prior to the crisis was not a child laborer may become a child laborer; if the child was already a child laborer prior to the crisis, she may have to work longer hours. This increase in child labor hours can harm educational outcomes because the additional labor is physically and emotionally draining and leaves fewer hours for studying. Furthermore, parents who have traditionally relied on child labor may respond to declining child wage rates by requiring that their child work more

hours; again, such increases in hours worked is likely to harm educational outcomes.

- *Negative effect 3:* Reductions in hourly or daily wage rates of adults may force the parents to work longer hours, which in turn reduces the time that parents can devote to assisting their child with homework, reading, and other educational activities.
- *Negative effect 4:* Sensing weaker labor market prospects from a decline in school quality, parents may withdraw their child from school or become less supportive of their child's educational endeavors.

The theory also predicts, however, that a child can be exposed to two positive effects during an economic crisis:

- *Positive effect 1:* A reduction in child wage rates may make child labor less attractive for parents. As a result, parents may encourage their child to substitute educational activities for work, which can potentially improve educational outcomes.
- *Positive effect 2:* Parents may become more supportive of their child's educational endeavors if the crisis convinces parents that less-educated workers suffer more than educated workers.

The discussion thus far indicates that there are forces that worsen a child's educational outcomes and others that improve educational outcomes during an economic crisis. The net effect of a crisis on a child is therefore potentially ambiguous. By extension, the net effect of a crisis on all children in a country is also similarly theoretically ambiguous. As the next section shows, however, the large share of empirical research indicates that the net effect of an economic crisis on a child's educational outcomes is for the most part negative, and that certain children are especially vulnerable.

Several caveats about the potential educational effects of economic crisis should be addressed. Though unlikely, it is possible that a child is unaffected by all five negative effects and two positive effects. This may be the case for children whose parents and communities are entirely self-sufficient such as some indigenous groups. A second caveat is that this framework incorporates existing theories and that several other possible positive and negative effects are not considered because of a lack of theoretical and empirical research. For example, social norms about schooling may change during a crisis; these changed norms can affect educational outcomes positively or negatively. In addition, the psychological effects of enduring an economic crisis on parental support for education are unclear. The advantage of the framework presented is that it can be easily extended to incorporate new social and psychological research on the effects of an economic crisis.

Evidence

Only a handful of empirical studies have examined the net effect of an economic crisis on educational outcomes. The key reason for the lack of studies (compared to the large number of cases of economic crises faced by different countries) is that data collection initiatives are typically postponed or curtailed during crises. In general, the available studies are unable to examine all of the positive and negative effects that were presented in the framework. A few studies, however, address some of the effects brought up earlier in the framework section.

The available evidence shows that the net effect of an economic crisis on educational outcomes depends on the level at which children are being educated. During the 1980-83 crisis in Costa Rica, the decline in secondary school enrollment was larger than the decline in primary school

enrollment (Funkhouser, 1999). Consequently, Costa Rican cohorts that were of secondary school age during the crisis period eventually had lower attainment levels than cohorts who were of secondary school age before or after the crisis.

The net effect of an economic crisis also varies by family characteristics such as socioeconomic status, parental education, and employment status of the household head. Evidence from Indonesia indicates that children from poor households suffer more during a crisis. During the Indonesian crisis of the late 1990s, there was a 1 percent drop in overall enrollment among children, compared to a 2 percent drop among children from the poorest quartile of households (Thomas et al., 2004). In addition, households with educated adults are more reluctant to withdraw children from school during crisis periods possibly because educated adults have more accurate information on government programs, employment opportunities, and loans. For example, there is evidence from Costa Rica that enrollment rates dropped less in households with more educated adults, holding all other factors constant (Funkhouser, 1999). Regarding the employment status of household heads, there is evidence from urban Brazil that unexpected short-term unemployment of the household head causes a significant increase in the probability of urban 10-16 year olds children dropping out of school, failing to advance in school, and engaging in child labor (Duryea et al., 2007).

Along with family characteristics, the net effect of an economic crisis on educational outcomes varies by child characteristics such as age and gender. In Indonesia, unlike the evidence in Costa Rica cited above, younger children experienced larger reductions in school enrollment during the crisis of the 1990s (Thomas et al., 2004). As for gender, there is evidence that girls' educational outcomes decline more in an economic crisis than boys' outcomes. During Cameroon's crisis years in the 1980s and 1990s, girls were 83 percent more likely than boys to drop out of primary school, and 56 percent more likely to drop out of secondary school (Eloundou-Enyegue and Davanzo, 2003). At upper secondary levels of education, however, girls' educational outcomes in Cameroon were similar to those of boys possibly because enrolled girls were especially motivated, gifted, or selectively drawn from supportive families. At any given level of education, the outcomes of rural girls fared worse than those of urban girls during Cameroon's crisis periods. In addition, poorer households were much more likely to sacrifice the education of girls than of boys in Cameroon. In Brazil, the impact of the household head becoming unemployed was especially large for girls' education in the poorest regions such as Sao Paulo (Duryea et al., 2007).

There are some examples of crises not harming educational outcomes, suggesting a zero net effect, because the positive and negative effects cancel each other out. For example, school enrollment rates did not fall in Mexico during its crises in the 1980s and 1990s (Binder, 1998; McKenzie, 2003). Similarly, secondary school enrollment rates in Argentina during the 1998-2002 crisis were comparable to enrollments in pre-crisis years (Boo, 2008).

Curiously, there is evidence that educational outcomes can improve during a crisis, thereby implying the net effect of a crisis on schooling is positive. This seemingly counterintuitive positive net effect is a possible, though rare outcome according to the framework presented earlier. During Mexico's crisis in the 1990s, for example, school enrollment rates increased for children of secondary school age (McKenzie, 1999). In Peru, every year of exposure to its 1987-91 economic crisis was associated with a 4 to 5 percent increase in the number of grades completed (Schady, 2004). These results for Peru imply that children who were of school age during the entire period of the crisis completed one-quarter more grades than those who were not of school age during the crisis; in other words, one out of every four or five children exposed to the entire crisis period

eventually completed one more grade compared with children who were not exposed to the crisis. Among those who were partially exposed to the Peruvian crisis, the educational attainment of those with low exposure (between 1 to 2 years) was not affected by the crisis, and those with a high exposure (between 3 to 5 years) increased grade completion by 0.2 years; these results suggest that it takes time for households to adjust their educational and work decisions about their children in response to an economic crisis.

In the U.S., improvements in educational outcomes during the Great Depression are attributed to falling child wages rates and decreased employment opportunities (Goldin, 1999; Kisswani, 2008). In particular, secondary school completion rates increased in regions that were hardest hit by the Great Depression, such as Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania; these regions had the largest share of workers in the manufacturing sector and prior to the Great Depression thus had ample child labor opportunities. This case illustrates the positive effect identified in the framework: A reduction in child wage rates makes child labor less attractive for parents, such that parents substitute their children's educational activities for work.²

Crisis Impact on School Quality

Research on school quality in developing countries is challenging because formal data collection initiatives on schools are typically infrequent. Furthermore, during an economic crisis, data collection initiatives are halted, which makes it especially challenging for researchers to compare school quality before, during, and after an economic crisis. Despite such data issues, a handful of studies have addressed the impact of an economic crisis on school quality by using school quality indicators (or proxies) such as governmental and parental contributions to schools, school expenditure, and staff attitudes and behavior.

The Peruvian government of Garcia sharply decreased public expenditures during its 1987-91 crisis years and did not adopt any specifically educational interventions. Recurrent expenditures in Peru declined by 50 percent during the crisis but capital expenditures remained low and stable (Schady, 2004).³ The fall in recurrent expenditure for Peruvian schools was accompanied by declining real earnings for teachers and administrators, which increased teacher absenteeism rates because teachers began seeking other part-time employment.

The attitudes of school staff provide suggestive evidence on the impact of an economic crisis on school quality. In interviews of school principals in Indonesia in the crisis years of the 1990s, there were major concerns that school quality would decline because of falling monthly household contributions (particularly from secondary school level) and the rising cost of paper, books, supplies, and photocopying (Frankenberg, 2003).

To prevent a decline in school quality, there is some evidence that schools increase efficiency, i.e. doing more with existing resources and facilities, in the face of reduced government and household contributions. In Mexico, for example, it is argued that improvements in school-level efficiency helped maintain school quality and protect educational outcomes during its crisis years (Prawda and Psacharopoulos, 1993). There were similar responses by Indonesian schools, which responded to rising costs by relying more on writing on the blackboard and reading test questions instead of using printed materials (Filmer, 2001).⁴

Although the overall evidence is mixed, there is a real threat of declining educational outcomes in certain circumstances and for some particularly vulnerable populations. It is therefore worth

exploring the interventions that can moderate the effects of an economic crisis on children's educational outcomes.

Interventions

There are strong reasons for protecting educational outcomes during crisis periods (Jolly and Cornia, 1984; Reimers, 1994). As the previous section suggested, educated individuals become workers who are better at coping with crises and protecting their families from poverty. Furthermore, there are ethical and social justifications for protecting educational outcomes for the general populace (Lange and Topel, 2006). This section discusses three interventions that have helped households and schools cope in crisis periods.

The first type of intervention involves school fee reduction and cash transfers to poorer households. Indonesia's government launched the *Jaring Pegamanan Sosial* (JPS) scholarship program to encourage school enrollment during its 1990s economic crisis period. In addition, students were not dismissed because of their inability to pay fees, and uniform requirements were relaxed (Filmer et al., 2001). The JPS, along with several other interventions, was motivated by the large school dropout rates during Indonesia's previous crisis in the 1980s (Cameron, 2002). The JPS program began in 1998/99 academic year and was funded by development banks and donors. Between 1.2 and 1.6 million scholarships were disbursed to schools, providing Rp. 10,000, Rp. 20,000, and Rp. 30,000 per month for primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary school students; poorer schools received proportionately more scholarships.⁵ School committees—consisting of the school head teacher, the chair of the parent's association, a teacher representative, a student representative, and the village head—were responsible for selecting recipients. All students except those from the lowest three primary school grades were officially eligible. The scholarships were to be targeted to the poorest students, and decisions were made using school and household surveys. Overall, the JPS gave preference to girls, single parent households, large households, and the poorest households.

There is evidence that the JPS committees followed the official criteria for awarding the scholarships (Cameron, 2002; Filmer, 2001). The JPS, however, may not have reached some poor households and children because the poor were unable to pay bribes to government officials to obtain identity cards that were required to establish residency. An evaluation of the JPS reveals that a secondary school student receiving a scholarship had a 24 percent lower likelihood of dropping out than a similar child who did not receive the scholarship (Cameron, 2002). The evaluation also indicates that older children, children with more siblings, and children from non-farming households were more likely to drop out of the JPS.

In countries with existing conditional cash transfer programs for vulnerable populations, the introduction of additional school fee reduction and cash transfer interventions may be unnecessary. Mexico's PROGRESA program for children of rural households helped maintain school attendance rates during periods when household heads became unemployed (de Janvry et al., 2006). Other countries have also introduced stipend and scholarship programs, but evaluations of their effectiveness are unavailable. During Thailand's crisis in the 1990s, for example, the government provided scholarships for children from the poorest households; however, there are no evaluations of the Thai scholarship program.

A second type of intervention for protecting educational outcomes during a crisis is a media campaign directed at households and the broader society. In periods of uncertainty, such campaigns may help to reaffirm the many private and social benefits of educational attainment.

Government and non-governmental organizations in Indonesia, for example, launched a “Stay in School” media campaign during its crisis years in the late 1990s. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the “Stay in School” campaign helped maintain educational outcomes (Cameron, 2002).

A third type of intervention is block grants, which involve government and non-governmental organizations providing monetary assistance to schools. Indonesia’s government provided block grants to schools during its crisis in the late 1990s (Filmer et al., 2001). Primary schools, especially those with a religious orientation in Indonesia’s rural areas, were most likely to be grant recipients because they educated the least privileged children; since Indonesia’s religious primary schools in rural areas cater mainly to the poor, they received a disproportionate share of the block grants. Urban private schools and rural schools were the least likely to receive block grants. The Indonesian government requested that primary school fees be waived in grant receiving schools. As a result, teacher attendance and performance did not deteriorate and school principals overwhelmingly praised the block grant policy intervention (Frankenberg et al., 1999).

Given the severe resource constraints faced by government and non-governmental organizations during a crisis, priorities must be determined about the beneficiaries of interventions. The empirical evidence presented earlier indicates that crises typically cause the most harm to the educational outcomes of the poor, girls, younger children, and children with more siblings. Therefore, educational interventions are likely to have the greatest effect if they are targeted towards these vulnerable groups.

Conclusion

An economic framework for understanding the decisions of households and schools indicated that there are negative effects and positive effects on educational outcomes during an economic crisis. A review of the empirical evidence suggests that the negative effects are stronger, causing national educational outcomes to deteriorate during a crisis. In particular, the deterioration in adult labor markets and school quality dissuade parents from supporting their children’s schooling. The experiences of countries that have coped better with an economic crisis suggest that households benefit from school fee reduction, conditional cash transfers, and media campaigns. Another useful intervention for protecting educational outcomes is the provision of block grants to schools, which help pay for costs and therefore maintain quality of instruction.

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Endnotes

1. The labeling of a particular period as an “economic crisis” is up to consensus among domestic and international analysts, but such crises typically involve the following: reduction in business, consumer, and government investment, consumption, and spending; high inflation; large increases in unemployment and underemployment (that is, fewer hours worked); return migration; falling real (that is, inflation-adjusted) wage rates; increased real interest rates; and currency depreciation. These characteristics are typically more unexpected and severe in a crisis than in a “recession” or “downturn”. Most analysts declare the period a crisis if a country’s actual macroeconomic performance is far worse than predicted in the International

Monetary Fund's annual *World Economic Outlook*. In industrialized countries, however, milder recessions may be labeled crises. Finally, a prolonged period of economic crisis is sometimes labeled a "depression." Given this imprecision, the term "crisis" is used in this study indicate that there is general consensus that the term is appropriate. It should also be noted that the causes of an economic crisis vary and are almost always complex and contentious; some oft-cited causes include problematic fiscal and monetary policies, unexpected changes in the price of key exports or imports, and natural disasters.

2. At the higher education level, it has been estimated that the U.S. recession during 1968-1988 was responsible for increasing U.S. college enrollment rates by almost 400,000 students (Dellas and Sakellaris, 2003).
3. Recurrent expenditures cover everyday operations, such as teacher salaries, supplies, and utilities. Capital expenditures include additions to staff, teachers, faculty, and amortization of asset or property debt. It is worth noting that the reductions in expenditures are directly related to reductions in household educational expenditures. During Cote d'Ivoire's economic crisis in the 1980s, for example, school expenditure fell partly because real household educational expenditure fell by 50 percent among very poor households, 25 percent among mid-poor household, and 31 percent among non-poor households (Grootaert, 1994).
4. The impact of a crisis is not limited to schools. There is recent evidence, for example, that U.S. and Thai institutions of higher education struggled to meet recurrent and capital costs, and had difficulty with sustaining enrollments during crisis years (Vargo, 2000; White, 1978).
5. In 1998 U.S. dollars, these scholarship amounts were \$1.25, \$2.50, and \$3.75 per month for primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary school student. These values reflect the weak Rupiah and exchange rate of Rp. 8000 to US\$1. By 2000, the exchange rate had improved considerably to Rp. 2909 to US\$1.

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Monitoring the Effects of the Global Crisis on Education Provision

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This paper summarizes the experience and findings from the monitoring work carried out by UNESCO throughout 2009 to examine and assess the possible effects of the global financial and economic crisis on education provision in its Member States. The findings showed that although it was too early to ascertain the full extent of the impact of the financial and economic crisis on education, there was no obvious indication that education budgets were being cut more than any other sectoral budgets in many countries. However, there were reports that the crisis was having a severe impact in some countries and communities. It is feared that the aftershocks of the financial crisis will be lasting in social sectors, including education, particularly for the most vulnerable. This requires continuous monitoring on the part of UNESCO to fulfill its "watching" and warning functions and to encourage Member States to persevere in their efforts for educational development, keeping in mind that education is one of the most viable channels for economic recovery and sustainable development.

The world was in serious economic and financial turmoil through 2007-2009. In 2007 and into 2008, a compounded mixture of crises unfolded and hit the world: many countries suffered from dramatic increases in world food prices and high fuel prices through the first half of 2008. The global financial crisis, originating in advanced economies, intensified during the course of the second half of 2008 and severely hit world economies throughout 2009. According to IMF projections, there was negative global growth, with a 1.1 percent contraction of the global gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009, before expectedly rebounding to around 3 percent in 2010 (IMF 2009).

Compounded by the multiple effects of the global financial crisis, the world entered into an economic recession in 2009, leading to changes in several transmission channels, such as low demand for exports, and declining flows of remittances, private capital, and development aid (UNESCO 2009b). Depending on the size and structure of their economies, developing countries were variously affected: some countries posted a drastic downturn mainly because of the reduction in remittances or tourism revenue. In others, low domestic and international demand led to a sharp decline in earnings from manufacturing, construction and/or commodity exports. As the International Labor Organization's September 2009 statistics indicate, large numbers of workers employed in the formal sector, especially manufacturing, commerce and construction, lost their jobs, while others experience cuts in working hours, wages and health or pension benefits.

Regarding aid, especially Official Development Assistance (ODA), critical for economic growth and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in most low-income countries, the potential loss amounted to billions of dollars because of the crisis (UNESCO 2009a). The future prospect of external aid for developing countries is gloomy, as the economic downturn has deepened the fiscal constraints in those developed, "donor" countries.

Governments responded to surmount the crisis by taking various measures. Despite severe fiscal constraints caused by declining revenues, they deployed stimulus packages to restore aggregate demand and growth (UNESCO, 2009a). Counter-cyclical measures taken by advanced and emerging economies are considered instrumental for an economic recovery that is unfolding

earlier than initially anticipated. However, many governments are now faced with an increased deficit. Declining revenues often led them to revise their budgets downwards throughout 2009, including in social sectors. Exit strategies from the stimulus packages are being contemplated in some countries, to reduce budget deficits aggravated during the financial crisis period. Governments' efforts to reduce the deficits potentially detract from education budgets.

Monitoring the Effects of the Crisis on Education

UNESCO has monitored the impact of the global financial and economic crisis on the provision of education in its Member States. The findings from the monitoring aim to inform policy dialogue at the international level during meetings of the UNESCO Governing Bodies, as well as EFA-related international gatherings, on the potential risk of the negative effects of the crisis for achieving the Education for All (EFA) goals by 2015 (UNESCO 2009a). At the country level, findings are shared with governments to promote social protection measures to educate vulnerable populations, and to further tailor UNESCO interventions to country needs.

In 2009 UNESCO conducted a series of assessment exercises to monitor how the crisis is affecting various aspects of education provision in its Member States. First, it conducted a quick survey in fifty countries in March 2009, to understand the effects of the crisis on government budgets for education (UNESCO, 2009a). In a second stage, a series of case studies were conducted in August 2009 to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the impact of the crisis on budgets and education services in selected twelve countries (UNESCO, 2009b).

A most recent monitoring work was a local-level survey, conducted in November 2009 in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mongolia to examine the effects of the crisis on schools and households, especially the poor and other vulnerable families, and how they were coping with budget cuts and the drop in revenue.

Below are a few findings from three exercises of UNESCO's monitoring work in regard to the effects of the global crisis on education.

Impact of the Crisis: Findings from a "Quick Survey" in March 2009

A "Quick Survey" was launched by the UNESCO Education Sector (through the Section of Education Policy Analysis and Strategies) in March 2009 to collect data and information about the patterns of government finances in relation to education sector during the crisis. Both the data collected and the analysis undertaken considered the ongoing debate among the international community about the impact of the current crisis on the Millennium Development Goals. In doing so, UNESCO intended to fulfil its "watching" function, alerting governing bodies and partners about potentially adverse effects of financial and economic shocks on education, and contributing to triggering policy debate and identifying appropriate responses.

UNESCO was conscious of limitations in collecting education finance data through questionnaires mailed to its field offices. The limitations include incomplete or imprecise data from evolving situations, difficulties inherent to translating the current local debate about education into quantitative evidence and absence of coordination among local actors. Despite the questioning of the data raised through the Quick Survey, a few findings and lessons emerged from the March survey about the impact of the crisis:

- Many countries increased budget deficits at the expense of budgetary orthodoxy, often by means of stimulus programmes, providing a more favourable background for the

- preservation of education budgets than during past crises.
- However, low-income countries were unable to afford additional public deficits and should, therefore, receive preferential access to increased ODA.
- There are serious doubts about the willingness of the international community to fulfill its commitments towards increased ODA, especially among bilateral donors.

Education budgets were affected by the global crisis to a varying degree. In a few countries, education budgets for 2009 declined compared to 2008. In other countries, although education budgets appeared to be resilient, the increase in 2009 was weak and marginal in comparison with the steady increases recorded in previous years (UNESCO 2009a). In most low-income countries where school enrolments are rapidly rising, the negative or marginal growth of education expenditure implies reduction of per-pupil unit costs, cuts in school running costs, and further deterioration of educational quality (UNESCO 2009a).

On a positive note, however, there were no clear signs in March 2009 that education budgets were being cut more than other sectors in most countries. The proportion of education in government finance kept constant or even increased in many countries surveyed and across all regions. Stimulus packages, including increased social transfers in the education sector, were announced in not only developed countries, but also in many middle-income countries. However, low-income economies lacked the necessary fiscal capacity to afford or increase social programmes, unless supported by the international community (UNESCO 2009a).

Impact of the Crisis: Evidence from 12 Country Case Studies in September 2009

In order to complement the findings of the above Quick Survey, the UNESCO Education Sector decided to conduct a few country case studies with detailed interrogation of what is happening and being discussed at country level. The case studies considered the following limitations (i) the evolving nature of the current crisis, (ii) the general nature of the questions asked; (iii) questionnaires needing updates and/or review concerning accuracy and evidence.

This research was carried out in August 2009 for twelve countries, with support from local experts. These countries were selected based on two main criteria: (i) representative geographical distribution according to UNESCO's regional groupings; (ii) the likelihood of the severity of the effects of the crisis. Therefore three countries were selected for sub-Saharan Africa (Ethiopia, Ghana and Sudan), three countries for Asia (Mongolia, Pakistan and Thailand), two countries for the Middle East and North Africa region (Egypt and Tunisia), one Eurasian country, (Armenia), one European country (Moldova) and two Latin American countries (Argentina and Mexico.)

The overriding conclusion was that the impact of the global crisis was more visible in a few countries. All participating countries experienced an economic slowdown in 2009. Analyses confirmed the findings of the earlier survey conducted by UNESCO: while government revenues declined and budgets were cut in 2008 and 2009, education budgets were relatively resilient in a number of countries, though the increase has been less than in previous years. The countries that adopted stimulus packages most likely substantially increased capital expenditures on education.

Two categories of country situations were distinguishable, whether (a) the government has protected the budget for education expenditure, or (b) budgets for education were cut, even after borrowing from abroad. Where budgets were cut, teachers' wages were in general more resilient than other budget items. Similarly, primary education tended to be better protected than post-primary levels, since teacher salaries constitute a predominant share in primary education

budgets. Technical/vocational and higher education were more likely to be subject to budget cuts, partly because they usually consume more non-salary current and capital spending, and investment might have been delayed during the crisis.

There were four categories of government responses that were distinguishable, though often interlinked, among the twelve countries: (i) "Counter-cyclical" measures: such measures were mainly found in middle-income countries having manageable fiscal capacity, which allowed them to increase expenditure, even by borrowing or drawing on accumulated reserves; evident in Egypt, Thailand and, to a limited extent, Armenia. (ii) Targeted social protection: some countries implemented or reinforced targeting programmes that aimed to protect the most vulnerable during crisis; examples include Argentina, Ghana, Mexico, Mongolia and Thailand. (iii) Reform-oriented measures: aimed to seize the opportunity of the crisis to improve cost-efficiency, relevance and governance (Egypt and Moldova). (iv) Budget cuts: evenly distributed across all education subsectors in some countries. In a few countries, including in Ethiopia and Tunisia, the crisis did not lead to specific policy measures.

The country case studies suggest that most governments were able to protect their education budgets in 2009, illustrated by the share of education expenditure in government finance maintained or even increased in most countries.

However, signs of serious decline in government budgets for education in 2010 exist, amid decreased revenue and subsequent decline in government budgets in most countries. Government budgets discussed or projected in case study countries during the August 2009 survey reflect downsizing trends. Though agencies and countries projected economic rebounded in late 2009, exit strategies from stimulus packages were promoted to reduce budget deficits resulting from the crisis. This ,potentially jeopardizes social sector budgets, including education.

Country case studies indicated that vulnerable households faced difficulties in meeting school costs; children were moved to cheaper schools or public institutions that provided food or material support (UNESCO 2009b). There were instances of increased absenteeism, school dropouts and child labour. In some countries, educational quality and equity in public schools are jeopardized and demand for education decreased due to a decline in household income and an increase in family contributions to absorb rising indirect and direct schooling costs (UNESCO 2009b).

Impact of the Crisis: Local Accounts from a Community-level Survey in Two Countries

In order to obtain more evidence about how the global crisis affected financial flows to schools, student attendance, teaching and learning, the ability of households to support their children's education, and other education-related issues, a community-level survey was conducted in November 2009 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mongolia. These two countries are reportedly among those most affected by the crisis. The findings from the local surveys indicated that the global crisis was seriously affecting education provision, especially at the expense of vulnerable populations.

In Mongolia, school operational budgets decreased, student absenteeism and drop-out rates increased, requests for poor households to pay for school-related costs increased and more schools began triple shifts (UNESCO 2010a). The decline in government revenue led to cuts in educational spending, especially in operational expenses. Most schools passed on increased costs to families, while the income of families, especially among vulnerable groups, decreased during the crisis. Requests for increased parental contribution exacerbated the tension that existed before the crisis,

between schools and parents, and also between teachers and students. Student absenteeism increased due to the inability of households to afford extra costs and a need to supplement family income by means of child labor (UNESCO 2010a).

School-level budgets were reduced, leading to cuts in book and teaching manual costs, operational costs for instruction, administration and maintenance costs, and salary costs. In order to fill the gap, parents were asked to increase contribution to school maintenance and other school running costs, and teachers had to buy instructional materials out of pocket (equivalent to approximately ten percent of monthly salary). The number of teachers who live on salary loans from banks increased significantly (UNESCO 2010a). Teachers' motivation and performance were negatively impacted by their increased financial burden. The survey also indicated that household expenses for children's education increased dramatically. Particular increases were recorded in stationery, textbook, uniform, meal, transportation, and student tuition. Households used several measures to overcome financial burdens related to education expenses during the crisis, including bank loans and reducing household consumption (UNESCO 2010a).

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, where most (around 70%) of schools are already private and public schools depend on student fees (even for teacher salaries), the decrease in household income directly impacted school operations (UNESCO 2010b). At the start of the school year 2009/2010, schools allowed a waiver of fee payments, yet many families feared that their children would soon be expelled if fees were not paid until the end of the first quarter (UNESCO 2010b). A number of households sold family assets or reduced spending on basic goods to supplement school fees. Some poor families had to make a choice and decide which children were entitled to schooling. In most cases, younger children attending kindergarten were withdrawn as parents were not able to continue paying the fees. At primary and secondary school level, overage children, that is those who are above the normal school age often due to their late entry to school, appeared to be the first targets to withdraw as parents preferred to engage these children in income-earning activities.

Conclusion

The monitoring exercises conducted in 2009 by UNESCO showed that the status and prospects of the financial and economic crisis were still evolving. In major advanced economies, which were responsible for the emergence of the financial crisis, signs of recovery were being recorded and growth for 2009 was slightly better than initially anticipated. Yet the crisis has deeply affected the job market and the situation of the poor has deteriorated. Among developing countries, middle-income economies have been affected more severely than low-income countries, because of their relative openness to the global financial market and economy. Regarding the effects of the crisis on educational services and outcomes, it was too early to grasp the full picture as sufficient data from school censuses and household surveys were not yet available, additionally, there were difficulties anticipating the aftershocks in the social sectors.

However, the findings from monitoring the crisis provided a few insights into the possible and increasing adverse effects of the crisis on education. In 2009, UNESCO conducted three studies to monitor the effects of the crisis on education. At the time of the first Quick Survey in March 2009, the conclusion was that there was no obvious evidence that the crisis was affecting national education budgets in most countries. However, the in-depth case studies conducted a few months later showed that the effects of the crisis on education started to unfold in a few countries. Country case studies examining Mongolia and Pakistan indicated that vulnerable households were facing difficulties in meeting school costs. There were a growing number of accounts of increased

absenteeism, school dropouts and child labour. The local survey conducted in November 2009 in the DRC and Mongolia was the third study, which provided more insight on the severe effects the crisis exerted on education provision, especially at the expense of vulnerable populations.

In sum, countries have taken measures and steps to protect education budgets in 2009. When budgets were reduced, there was no evidence that education budgets were cut more than those of other sectors. However, it is feared that the aftershocks of the financial crisis will be profound in social sectors, particularly for the most vulnerable people. This compels UNESCO to continue monitoring the effects of the economic crisis on education in Member States and to encourage Member States to persevere in their efforts, keeping in mind that education is one of the most viable channels for economic recovery and sustainable development. In 2010, UNESCO is planning to conduct a few more school-level surveys, based on small sampling of schools in ten countries. These school surveys will provide more evidence on the effects of the global economic crisis on education provision in vulnerable countries, on governments' responses to cope with the effects of the crisis and on the implications of the crisis and governments' measures for the achievement of the EFA goals.

Developing countries are affected by a financial and economic crisis for which they are not responsible. So far, despite the budgetary constraints caused by the financial crisis, most governments have deployed commendable efforts to protect education budgets. One of the key messages from UNESCO's monitoring work is that as developing countries are trying hard to protect education budgets, they should not be thwarted in their achievement of the EFA goals by lack of resources (UNESCO, 2000).

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The Global Economic Crisis: Setbacks to the Educational Agenda for the Minority in Sub-Saharan Africa

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This paper captures the impact of the Global Economic Crisis on educational programs serving minority groups in developing countries. It has been established that the most vulnerable groupings include nomadic and pastoralist communities, slum dwellers, children in war zones, and women. Various educational interventions such as mobile schooling, dual shift learning, scholarships, and distance learning have been utilized to mitigate the aggravations these groups experience in an effort to catch up on education. However, this paper predicts that these programs will encounter economic obstacles thereby countering the key efforts of ensuring Education For All by 2015 in developing countries. Finally, the paper proposes policy interventions to help in shielding the vulnerable groups from the harms that the economic crisis will visit on the education sector.

Whereas all educational efforts and energies are combined to meet the split demands of Education For All (EFA) by 2015 and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in general, a new dimension of the imminent frustration of these efforts is quickly taking shape: the Global Economic Crisis. It has been estimated that on the global front, the effects of the Economic Crisis have used up funds in the excess of \$14.5 trillion, translated as 33 percent of the worth of the world's companies (Pittman & Ivry, 2009). Yet this is only in the developed world. The global crisis has typically been approached from a narrowly economic view, leaving educators and policy analysts the task of ascertaining the enormity of the effects of the crisis on the educational programs both in developed and the developing countries. Of particular interest to educators is the magnitude of the crisis on educational programs serving minority or disenfranchised groups in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Challenges to Educational Inclusiveness

The challenge of school feeding programs

In an effort to attain EFA goals, governments, in collaboration with donor funding agencies (especially WFP), set up programs to cater for the provision of a midday meal at school. Pupils commonly refer to these as school feeding programs, such as those arranged by Undugu society for pupils from Nairobi slums in Kenya (Ouma, 2004) and by WFP in schools located in deprived regions (Nzomo et al., 2001). Studies show that school feeding programs have remarkable positive effects on both access and retention of learners, especially in arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) and for nomadic families (Caillods et al., 2009; Kazianga et al., 2009; Lewis and Lockheed, 2008; Giffard-Lindsay, K, 2008; World Bank, 2008b). Given that households in such regions are already disenfranchised economically, the ability of such families to sustain themselves is almost nonexistent; thus there is over reliance on donor agencies, Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the government for rations to realize the efforts of school feeding (Nzomo et al., 2001). Yet these agencies and the government in particular rely heavily on funds from the wealthy nations both in the form of taxes from citizens and donations from philanthropists.

With the aftershocks of the economic crisis still raw, it is apparent that funds to be channelled to ASALs and nomadic regions to sustain the feeding programs will be limited due to cuts in funds from both government agencies and private companies. Consequently, less funding will have the dual effect of locking out and driving away millions of children from school. Worse still, following closely on the ravaging trail of the global economic crisis is the food crisis and drought that have left many nomadic families facing malnutrition and poverty. This will cause increased unemployment and poverty, less food security, poor quality of nutrition and a rise in illnesses among the school-going ages (Shah, 2009).

The harsh choice, aimed at mitigating the harsh realities occasioned by the economic crisis, will be to withdraw children from school to supplement their parents in searching for their own food and forage for the already dwindling livestock. The effects on EFA goals and MDGs are dire. With reduced access to school and with low levels of retention, ASAL regions and nomadic families are apt to experience even more poverty, more human rights abuses, and other forms of alienation (Jimenez & Patrinos, 2008).

Shift learning dilemma

Slums in Africa and other parts of the world form a residence that is characteristic of the poor in society. Families in these informal settlements are unlikely to receive the required levels of education due to both their poverty and the unavailability of such infrastructure as schools (Ouma, 2004) and if schools are available, poverty itself is a deterrent factor (Lewis, 2008; World Bank 2008b). The implication is that many children from the slums do not enroll in schools and if they enroll at all, their completion rates are very low (Oyugi, et al., 2008; Ouma, 2004). To boost enrollments and participation rates, system wide strategies such as double shift school system come into play. The rationale is that in slum areas such as Nairobi's Kibera, the umjondolo of Durban and the baladi of Cairo, parents could still use young children as labour (Ouma, 2004; UNHSP, 2003). Therefore, the child could still catch up on lessons in the afternoon shift if he or she missed the morning shift. Lewin (2008) and Bray (2008) also argue that double shift not only rapidly expands access but also improves on retention of learners since there is an increase in supply of school places. Moreover, this is an equity-focussed strategy that is viable among pastoralist areas (Giffard-Lindsay, 2008).

But the dual shift system has been found to be unstable and unviable. In Tanzania, for example, double shifting is a particular issue because it is concentrated among the youngest pupils. They are most at risk of premature dropout and repetition, and may also experience the least-qualified teachers at a time when their learning needs, and their capacity to learn, are probably greatest (World Bank, 2008c). There are economic costs such as extra services of tutors and the need for parents to get childminders to look after their children when not at school (Bray, 2008). The global economic crisis will be felt heavily by the poor in society, and these are the slum dwellers and street families. According to Shah (2009), already large percentages of households in Sub-Saharan Africa are poor, and the large number of people will face malnutrition and its associated illnesses. Education will suffer as households channel limited funds to medical expenses and scarce food. Since the shift system of learning seems to offer parents a way to keep their children working, there is a likelihood of children being overburdened with work. This will have an effect on their attention span as they settle for the afternoon class. Bray (2008) argues that many of the children who attend the morning shift seem more cognitively ahead of those who attend the afternoon session. Therefore, if children will be at work in the mornings and in class in the afternoons, the

implication is that their performance in class is likely to assume a declining trend due to reduced attention span. The most catastrophic effect, however, is that of children dropping out altogether in order to fend for the family, as is the trend in slums.

A major effect of the economic crisis on double shift learning is observed in school infrastructure. Limited funding towards this school programme has the implication that there is a breakdown of physical infrastructure such as limited water and poor hospital facilities, thereby seriously affecting school-going children. These situations create a strong likelihood for low participation, absenteeism and dropout altogether (UNESCO, 2008). Double shift schools also require increased expenditure on facilities such as furniture. This is due to the wear and tear resulting from overuse of the same facilities by two sets of students in a single day. This eventually translates into high maintenance costs (Bray, 2008). Such costs are transferred back to the parents, who can rarely afford them since there are other pressing economic pressures such as food provision and housing. Such commodities are hard to come by in such informal settlements and at a time of an economic downturn. Consequently, learners must make do with dilapidated infrastructure that will have a lasting effect on their overall performance, since school facilities and resources are designed and enabled to support continuous change and development of approaches to learning (UNESCO, 2002).

Guns to pens: redeeming child soldiers

Children in conflict zones, street children and prisoners form a cadre of a unique disenfranchised group in that their education was either cut short or they never began at all. Their return to formal education is most difficult given adverse effects of their new environments. The rehabilitation of these groups is necessary so that they can catch up on education. The dilemma is that most do not fit in the regular curricula of their states, occasioning such governments to come up with programs such as Non-formal Education (NFE). It has been found that NFE has the effect of improving the skills of many enterprising young people (Caillods, et al., 2009); and thereby provides a means for the youth to earn a livelihood, and to escape the shackles of poverty. In most cases the providers of these programs are NGOs and religious organizations, which rely purely on the donations made by their affiliates in the developed world (Hoppers, 2008). These are affiliates who in turn depend on taxes and philanthropic donations from well-wishers, and are facing the harsh reality that their supporters cannot as generously donate due to the effects of the Global Economic Crisis.

Research has shown that children exposed to war and genocide experienced a drop in educational achievement of almost one-half year of completed schooling, and are 15 percentage points less likely to complete third or fourth grade (Akresh & Walque, 2008). Prudently therefore, sustained effort is needed to reinforce educational institutions and offer a «second chance» to those youth most affected by the conflict. In Uganda for example, Save the Children Fund-Norway has since 1995 funded the ABEK (Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja) programme in response to the unique socio-economic dynamics of the Karamoja (Hoppers, 2008). Similarly, Unicef and WFP are involved in reforming child soldiers in the northern part of Kitgum and Lira and their target is 6-18 year olds. The rationale is that such young people have the strength to constructively use their energy in building and improving their own livelihoods and in peace building in conformity with the requirements of the agenda 8 of the MDGs.

A sticking point in the effort to integrate these youth comes in the form of sudden withdrawal of aid agencies due to budgetary restructuring occasioned by the harsh economic downturn. Consequently, such “periphery” educational programs such as NFE face the risk of being neglected or grossly underfunded. When such youth integration programs as NFE eventually

collapse, youth are very likely to return to violence as a means of survival (Hoppers, 2008). The chain effect is that even those children who had successfully been fished from the war fronts and the streets will feel the urge to go back to their original and perilous lifestyles. Educational goals such as EFA will therefore suffer on top of escalating cases of poverty and diseases.

Solutions to Educational Inclusiveness

Participation through loans and bursaries

Studies done by the World Bank in Ghana, Thailand and the Philippines show that student loans have significant effects on access and equity. These issues can be adequately addressed through education loan schemes and expansion of regional quotas in regional universities (World Bank, 2002). In Zambia and Malawi, studies show that close to 70% of students are entitled to bursary schemes, which are supposed to cover 75% of tuition fees for most beneficiaries, and up to 100% for vulnerable groups (such as double orphans). Bursary programs are also favoured to improve retention of girls in the schools (Sutherland-Addy, 2008; World Bank, 2006). Even though these educational programs are designed to uplift the educational participation of the disenfranchised in society, it is apparent that the programs are bound to suffer the economic costs associated with the Global Economic Crisis. In an effort to increase the participation of children from slums, orphans, ethnic minorities and People With Disabilities (PWDs), governments have echoed the call of many researchers that bursaries and loan schemes for such groups are necessary. It is also evident that (university) loan schemes targeting poor bright children are an equitable mechanism of enabling learners to access quality education. It should be noted that the source of funding for such schemes is mostly the tax payer of the respective government (Oyugi, et al., 2008).

The economic crisis has however brought in a new dilemma for governments around the world, and especially the Sub-Saharan Africa region. The social sector of many governments including the US is bound to suffer deficits due to low revenues resulting from low taxes from all sub-sectors. Further, it should be noted that in many Sub-Saharan African states, bursary schemes and loans have always seemed to favour the well-to do and not the poor orphans and other disenfranchised groups (Caillods et al., 2009; Helms, 2008; Lewin, 2008). With less allocations therefore, it is likely that many poor families will be locked out of attaining quality education. It is also bound to affect participation of those with nomadic lifestyles; many of the poor will have to drop out of school and equity may be compromised. It is especially bound to reverse the gains made on improving the participation of women. Despite the argument that loan schemes had a “negative dowry” effect, it has been confirmed that in fact loans are more of a stimulus rather than a deterrent (Woodhall, 2007). It is put more succinctly by Varghese (2009) when he says:

Many universities with investments in foreign banks have already lost their investments. Student support systems, scholarships and student loans will be severely affected. Some of the largest providers of student loans have lost heavily during the crisis, and some of them have filed for bankruptcy protection. (p. 5)

Further still, it is argued that “reduced household income levels may not be able to support the full cost of studies abroad” (p. 24). Moreover, major concerns are already evident in regard to the ministries’ of education bursary schemes that are beleaguered with inadequate finances to provide for all eligible needy students (Oosterbeek, & Patrinos, 2008; Njeru & Orodho, 2003). Therefore, economic crisis will complicate the whole issue of how governments will be able to raise sufficient taxes to use in the social sector. Also, foundations and charities that assist in funding educational programs are not entirely cushioned from the harsh effects of the global economic crisis. Their

infrastructural needs, including how to procure extra funds from diminishing contributors, will suffer.

Access: Women and distance education

The appearance of a variety of new institutions alongside the traditional universities—short duration technical institutes and community colleges, polytechnics, distance education centres, and open universities—has created new opportunities to meet the growing social demand for education. Of special interest to many educational planners is the role of distance education in bridging the gender gap in educational attainment. Studies show that distance education and open universities hold out the promise of increasing coverage and facilitating access especially of women to tertiary education (Mason, 2006; World Bank, 2002). Mason's argument is that "online courses cater to the lifelong learning market and can be useful for some minority learners" (p. 56) such as career women.

Distance learning has made higher education significantly more accessible, particularly in rural Africa, but lack of infrastructure and the cost to individuals and institutions to acquire new technology may limit progress (Altbach, et al., 2009). Distance education may be non-elite, usually job-oriented and has the capability of providing new avenues of access, targeting non-traditional student populations such as working women and responding to emerging needs for workforce development and family commitment. The upside, both quantitatively and qualitatively, may be impressive (Bjarnason et al., 2009). The upside is that a large pool of competent human capital is formed, and when this capital is constituted of a percentage of women, then the efforts at employment gender parity would be real. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), of the three billion people employed around the world in 2008, 1.2 billion were women (40.4%) and in 2009, the global unemployment rate for women could reach 7.4%, compared to 7.0% for men (ILO, 2009). One way to reverse this is to improve the skills and competencies of women to increase their marketability. A solution therefore presents itself through distance education since it has been found to favour such disenfranchised groups such as women, child soldiers and slum dwellers as Altbach, et al. (2009) notes:

Much of the appeal of distance education is attributed to its ability to accommodate the needs of a wide variety of learners especially employed women and other women who are attempting to balance family and school commitments and even the incarcerated (p. 133).

By example, the African Virtual University (AVU) project in East and Central Africa has taken a paradigm shift by developing an open and e-learning model with the aim of exposing students and their lecturers to rigorous scholarship and groundbreaking research. More specifically in Somalia, the programme has the capability of empowering women and enhancing their human capital (Makokha, 2009). AVU is therefore seen as a pillar in institutional development able to insulate women who have previously suffered marginalization in the hands of extremism. And to garner the full benefits of that distance education programs, specific infrastructural endeavors such as extensive use of ICTs have been undertaken. Mason (2006), for instance, states that to "improve quality, increase access, reduce costs ICT has been seen as the way out of the dilemma caused by the demand to reduce costs and increase access and student numbers" (p. 56).

However, setbacks to the distance education achievements are possible especially considering that there is a high likelihood of a freeze on educational programs (Varghese, 2009). There is also the imminent risk of the "digital divide" gap widening even further given that funding for digital programs is bound to decline in the poorer states thus putting them at a disadvantage

(UNESCO, 2009a), and damaging the gains made in e-learning. Consequently the quality of distance learning stands on the brink of failure. Altbach, et al. (2009) equally affirm that «freezes» on hiring, construction of new facilities, improving information technology, and purchasing books and journals are likely developments. . . (p. xx) that will upset distance education efforts of achieving equity and quality in education.

Policy Interventions

What are the possible policy interventions to cushion the vulnerable from the fallouts of the economic crisis? Even though there is dialogue about the ability of education to survive an economic downturn (Bjarnason et al, 2009), solutions to how developing countries (where most of the disenfranchised groups exist) can cushion these groupings, while maintaining equity and quality concerns, should be envisaged. A number of governments in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya and Namibia, resorted to increased borrowing to sustain their budgets and in turn maintain a substantial allocation to education (UNESCO, 2009b). The allocation to education should be upped to comfortably cover development expenditure in terms of improvement of infrastructure and other operational costs involving meal services and health equipment. Given that efforts to realize EFA by 2015 have generated huge enrolments in developing countries thereby occasioning a squeeze on the teaching force, governments have two options to improve quality: one, utilize teachers on contract terms; and two, reengineer and enforce the dual shift system. A special stimulus package should be reserved for these interventions.

The option of economic stimulus packages is significant in reinvigorating the economic systems affected by the economic downturn. Stimulus packages in underperforming economies can be used to amplify both the economic and the social sectors of the developing countries in a manner likely to reinforce economic infrastructure and more especially, the agricultural economies to improve food security and medium-level job creation. On the social sector front, an intensification of the development budgets for the education and health sectors is able to guarantee basic education improvement to support the huge number of hungry school children. If well instituted in the marginalized regions, the dynamics of equity will widen access to all school age children irrespective of region and gender. Moreover, development budgets in education are definite mechanisms for lifting off the educational spending burden of most poor households, thereby allowing room for improved access to education among the poor. Alternatively, the availability of stimulus packages in the health sector is a significant procedure of ensuring standard health to all. With enhanced health infrastructure through construction of health facilities and provisional medical equipment and drugs, chances are that many of the communicable and infectious ailments that distress the poor and school age pupils would be stemmed easily. The quality of life is bound to pick up as household expenditures on health diminish and savings made could easily be transferred to pressing demands such as provision of quality food.

Secondly, for tertiary and higher education, college-university linkages can be an option with benefits accruing in maximal utilization of faculty and infrastructure. Moreover, part-time faculty would be a more workable settlement in the occasion of a freeze on recruitment. For tougher options, there may be need to merge some programs and freeze non-essential ones altogether. Other mechanisms of adjustments have been suggested by the World Bank (2009) whereby institutions will engage in “outsourcing non-academic services...income generation and diversification” (p. 89) as methods of going beyond financial survivalism. Finances from these strategies could be utilized in beefing up distance learning and partial bursary allocation through scholarship and grants to students and research faculty.

The third hands-on policy intervention strategy is the structure and administration of the prevailing tax systems. Fiscal measures are required to boost revenues from taxes while at the same time mitigate economic damage to small and medium enterprises. Local tax mechanisms enable luxury and upper class consumptions to attract sufficient duty, while tax cuts are administered on imports, household incomes and monetary proceeds come from diaspora populations. Such inequitable fiscal measures, most probably, would revitalize the meager earnings of middle class and low class laborers who happen to house considerable constituents of the disenfranchised.

Finally, long-term strategies are needed by Sub-Saharan economies and institutions as ways of warding off future unpreparedness especially in terms of human resources development and in technological investments. The World Bank (2009) argues that massive responsibilities are required for nurturing human resource development in Sub-Saharan Africa and for “ensuring that investments in tertiary education make a strategic and durable contribution to the growth and competitiveness of Africa’s economies” (p.5). Quite in line with Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), countries such as Burkina Faso and Burundi have objectives to promote rural development and food security and enhance national capacities in information and communication technologies. This has broad human resource development implications in the form of investing in agricultural researchers, topographers, electrical engineers and telecommunications experts. In the same vein, sufficient investment is required in robust monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms plus staff with administrative and management capabilities required to play leadership/management roles at all levels.

Conclusion

The challenges posed by the global economic crisis demonstrate the fragility of educational agenda for the marginalized in Sub-Saharan Africa. Vulnerable groups have previously not enjoyed the full benefits of education programs due to socio-economic restrictions. This article has attempted to specify that educational dilemmas facing vulnerable groups can grow worse when the situations are linked to the global economic crisis. Exclusivities that threaten educational achievement among minorities need not broaden the existing knowledge disparities. Refugees, children in war zones, women from ethnic minorities and children in pastoral and nomadic communities face the risk of being excluded from the benefits that come with educational expansion. This is why, by all means, we cannot understate the role played by interventions such as distance education, loans and bursaries. These interventions mitigate the harsh realities of educational exclusivities in Sub-Saharan Africa.

From a much wider perspective, comparative standards linked to global economic crisis can be established between Sub-Saharan Africa and similar developing nations in Latin America and Asia. Baseline studies in these regions (mostly at risk of significantly missing out on EFA goals due to the global economic crisis) have the opportunity of informing policy and legislation on educational issues of the marginalized. Finally, and in connection to this research, ideas on disenfranchised groups should be reconstructed to invent new identities regarding the value of education to such groups.

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Under the Same Blue Sky? Inequity in Migrant Children's Education in China

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It is estimated that more than 10% of China's population has left their villages and hometowns as millions of farmers have descended upon cities and urban centers in response to a huge demand for labor since the economic reform launched in the late 1970s (Li, 2006). Approximately 19.8 million children are believed to have accompanied their parents in this mass internal migration, with the result that many lack adequate access to health care, education, and other basic services (Chan, 2009). This article discusses migrant children's schooling experiences in China in the context of massive migration from rural areas to the cities and trends toward reverse migration induced by the recent global economic crisis. It further explores the responses from the migrant communities to their children's educational needs in the face of financial cutbacks and economic insecurity.

Since the economic reforms initiated in the late 1970s, China has undergone rapid modernization, industrialization, and urbanization. As urbanization expanded, so did the discrepancy between urban and rural incomes and living standards (China Labour Bulletin [CLB], 2009). In 2009, the annual per capita income of urban households was 12,973 yuan¹ compared with only 4,307 yuan in rural households (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2009). Considering the fact that rural residents have no social security or welfare benefits, the urban-rural income gap in real terms was probably six-fold (Zhu, 2006). Living conditions in the rural areas are austere and poor. As recently as late 2006, more than half of rural households did not have tap water, 87% did not have flush toilets, and 60% were still using wood-burning stoves (Chan, 2009). As a result of the discrepancy in income and living conditions between urban and rural areas, millions of farmers have left their homes and migrated to the cities in search of work and a better life.

Large-scale internal migration has thus become one of the most prominent by-products of the socioeconomic development of China. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of China (2009), there are 225.42 million migrant workers in China—more than the populations of the United Kingdom, France, and Australia combined (Hamey, 2008). When deciding to move in search of a better life, migrant workers either leave their children behind in the countryside or take them to the city. An estimated 58 million children have been left behind, and another 19 million children have accompanied their migrant parents to the cities (Chan, 2009). Together, children of migrant workers account for about one quarter of all children in China (Chan, 2009).

It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the plight of both groups of children—the left-behind children and the migrant children. Therefore, the objective of this review is to describe and critically analyze the schooling experiences of migrant children in the context of massive migration from rural areas to the cities and the reverse migration caused by the recent global economic crisis. Furthermore, based on an analysis of media accounts, this article explores the responses from the migrant communities to their children's educational needs in the face of financial cutbacks and economic insecurity. The inequity in migrant children's education in China is an issue of social justice, and, therefore, the purpose of this article is to raise awareness of the issue, calling educators to pay special attention to the needs of migrant children and their families.

Social Context Of Migration

Before the implementation of China's economic reform initiated in the late 1970s, internal migration was strictly prohibited by the central government. The government instituted a permanent and rigorous system of household registration or *hu kou* in 1955 to control migration (Han, 2004). Each Chinese citizen was assigned to a rural or urban household based on his or her mother's residence. Local governments were responsible for providing the residents whose *hu kou* were registered in its jurisdiction with welfare and social services, including education, housing, and health care (CLB, 2009). Residents were not allowed to work or live outside the administrative boundaries of their *hu kou* without permission of the authorities. The household system became so rigid in the 1970s that any violation of the system could lead to imprisonment (Young, 2002). China's household registration system evolved out of unique historical conditions, and in its historical context, the system maintained social stability, balancing urban-rural development, controlling the population, and adjusting the distribution of social resources (Han, 2004, p. 30).

However, since the 1980s the increasing market-oriented structure of the economy has generated a need for cheap labor in the cities. The central government loosened its internal migration control regulations, and by 1989, there were about 30 million migrant workers in China. In 1993, the number doubled, and by 2009, the migrant population had increased to over 200 million (CLB, 2009; NBS, 2009). UNESCO and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences estimated that migrant workers have contributed 16% of gross domestic product (GDP) growth over the past two decades (Hamey, 2008). Because of their great contributions to China's economic development, the migrant workers are known as China's "factories without smoke" (Hamey, 2008).

Although migrant workers can move "freely" from city to city, the *hu kou* system continues to have a restrictive effect on their social status, employment opportunity, children's education, social welfare, and living conditions. Without an urban *hu kou*, migrant workers have no access to urban social services, and are subject to daily exploitation and institutional discrimination. Being on the lowest rung of the social ladder, migrant workers are usually given labor-intensive and low-skill jobs (CLB, 2009). According to Hamey (2008), migrant workers account for 68% of employees in the manufacturing sector, 70% in construction, and 80% of coal miners. Migrant workers are required to work long hours (11 hours per day on average, and 26 days per month); however, they are paid only half as much as urban residents. According to the China Labor Bulletin, in 2004 the average monthly income for migrant workers was 780 yuan, just over half the national urban average of 1,350 yuan (CLB, 2009). It is common that migrant workers do not get paid on time, and in some cases they are owed seven months or more in unpaid wages (State Council, 2006).

Migrant workers have faced a myriad of issues, including harsh working conditions, low wages, congested living conditions, and lack of access to social services. Nevertheless, the most pressing issue for migrant parents is their children's education (CLB, 2009). Many migrant parents move to the cities in search of a better life for their children. However, due to their low family income and the restrictive *hu kou* system, migrant children are marginalized and deprived of equal access to education, social and medical welfare, and the right to participate in urban life.

Migrant Children: The City's "Invisible Population"

When Premier Wen Jiabao visited a school for migrant children in Beijing in 2003, he wrote, "Under the Same Blue Sky, Grow Up and Progress Together" (Ren & Zhang, 2006). However, living under the same blue sky, migrant children do not have the same rights as urban children. Despite being long-term residents in the city, migrant children without an urban *hu kou* are marginalized and treated as "outsiders" or second-class citizens. Although the *Compulsory Education Law of*

the People's Republic of China mandates a free compulsory nine-year education for all children regardless of sex, nationality, or race, it delegates the responsibilities for compulsory education to local authorities (China Education and Research Network, 2005).

Furthermore, central government funding for education is based on the number of school age children with local *hu kuo*. Therefore, urban governments are only responsible for the education of children with an urban *hu kuo*, and they have no obligations to educate migrant children. In fact, prior to the mid-1990s, migrant children were not allowed to enroll in state-run schools in the city (Rural Education Action Project [REAP], 2009). As the governments of the host cities do not have a responsibility to provide social welfare and services to migrants and their children, migrant children's basic rights to health care, education, and socialization are denied, leading to a higher rate of emotional, behavioral, and psychological problems (Chan, 2009). Ignored, migrant children have become the city's "invisible population."

As migration became more and more an inescapable fact of China's economic life, the central government began to recognize the important contributions of migrant workers in boosting economic development and increasing productivity. The regulations on household systems gradually loosened. The most important policy shift came on March 2, 1998, when the Ministry of Education and the Public Security Bureau issued the "*Provisional Measures for the Schooling of Migrant Children and Youths*."² This regulation opened the door for migrant children to attend schools in their place of domicile, stating, "Municipalities should allow migrant children aged between 6 and 14 to study full time in the state-run and private schools with the status of temporary students" (CLB, 2009, p. 72).

Despite these policy changes, there are still many obstacles that impede the achievement of equity in migrant children's education in China today. First, there are many rules set up by the urban governments that make it difficult to establish and prove local domicile. Migrant parents are required to submit numerous documents, such as a temporary residence permit, a work permit, proof of residence (e.g. property deed or a rental agreement), household registration certificate from the place of origin, and vaccination certificates (REAP, 2009). Many migrant families are unable to obtain all of the required documentation because of the complicated procedure and high cost of the process (CLB, 2009).

Moreover, even when some migrant families manage to prove their local domicile, they still have to pay exorbitant fees for their children to go to a state-run school. The city of Beijing serves as a pertinent example. In 2008, in addition to the 500 yuan per semester in miscellaneous fees, migrant parents had to pay an average registration fee of 1,226 yuan (People's Daily Online, 2008), a 500 to 1,000 yuan temporary schooling fee, a 2,000 yuan education compensation payment, a one-off 1,000 yuan school selection fee, and a 1,000 to 30,000 yuan sponsorship fee or so-called donation (CLB, 2009; Human Rights in China [HRIC], 2002; REAP, 2009). Therefore, education in a state-run school is out of reach for many migrant families, considering the average monthly income of a migrant worker is 966 yuan ("Chinese migrant workers earn," 2006).

Finally, in addition to financial constraints, migrant children also face institutional discrimination in the state school system. Eckholm (1999) suggested, "One of the biggest obstacles of educational progress may be a less tangible one, resulting from the pervasive ostracism and ridicule of poor, rural migrants in the big city" (p. 2). Social and economic segregation have created and reinforced the stereotypes among urban and migrant children. There is a dividing line between "us" and "them" among the two groups of children. According to a study on migrant children in Beijing,

40% of the migrant children did not have local friends, and 33.7% did not want to make friends with urban children because urban children were believed to be arrogant, snobbish, spoiled, and wasteful (Lei, 2004). Migrant children often complain about being mocked and bullied by local peers in urban public schools (Lei, 2004). Migrant students are also perceived as academically inferior, and usually shunned by teachers and school administrators. A higher percentage of migrant children than non-migrant children feel that the teachers do not understand them nor care about them and are not satisfied with the teacher-student relationship (CLB, 2009). In schools, migrant children cannot afford to participate in extracurricular activities or to join social organizations. Nor can they be nominated for an “outstanding student award” (CLB, 2009, p. 42).

Although the *Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China* mandates a free, nine-year education for all children, migrant children do not have equal access to a high quality public education. Education is not free but incurs significant financial costs that are beyond the reach of many migrant families. Even when migrant children are enrolled in public schools, they are subject to institutional discrimination. Because of the barriers that migrant families have faced, many parents turn to private schools set up by migrants as an alternative for their children's education.

Migrant Schools: A Renewed Sense Of Hope

In the process of migration, the social networks and social relationships that were in place in the migrants' villages of origin are ripped apart. Migrant communities are trying to rebuild such social networks and renew the sense of hope among the children through migrant schools. Unlike public state-run schools, where students are predominantly from the same city, migrant schools bring together children from all over the country (Han, 2004). There is no institutional discrimination based on the household system in the migrant schools. Migrant schools provide a place where migrant children feel they belong. When asked about their relationship with other students both in a migrant school and in a public school, 62% of migrant children reported that they like to play with their peers in the migrant schools, whereas 53% dislike Beijing children because the latter bully and look down on them (Han, 2004).

Furthermore, the migrant schools are set up as a collective response by the community to the inability of the current educational system to adapt to the rapid social reconfigurations and changes in society. These schools have played a supplementary and self-help function in the present educational system (Han, 2004). Migrant schools were first started in the early to mid-1990s as self-help and “solve-it-yourself” endeavors. The first migrant school in Beijing was set up in 1993, and it was the only private school for migrant children at the time. However, migrant schools developed rapidly after 1998 due to the enactment of *Provisional Measures for the Schooling of Migrant Children and Youths*. By 2001, there were about 200 to 300 migrant schools in Beijing attended by about 30,000 children; in Shanghai, there were 250 migrant schools with a total of 41,274 students (HRIC, 2002).

The emergence and expansion of migrant schools has basically filled the gap in compulsory education for migrant children. In 1997, a survey conducted by the Beijing Municipal Office for Migrant Affairs indicated the drop-out rate among migrant children in Beijing was 13.9%. By 2004, based on a survey among 3,864 migrant children and 2,157 migrant families in Beijing, Han (2004) suggested that the nonattendance rate among migrant children had dropped to 2.8%. However, many of the migrant schools are still plagued by high mobility of students, high rates of teacher turnover, less qualified teachers, poor school conditions, and substandard curriculum. Migrant workers are constantly moving from place to place in search of jobs, and their children

have no choice but to transfer from school to school. Most migrant schools do not have databases of student registration and records, making it difficult to track students' displacement (Han, 2004).

In addition to high student mobility, migrant schools face the problem of recruiting and retaining qualified teachers. The teacher turnover rate is high due to low wages and heavy teaching loads. For example, according to a 2002 survey of 59 migrant schools in Shanghai, Ding (2004) reported that 78.3% of the teachers made a monthly income of 700 yuan or less. The average monthly income for local office workers, however, was 2,815 yuan in 2004 (City of Shanghai, 2005). Many teachers use migrant schools as a stepping stone. Once they find a better job, they quit teaching, leaving the migrant children behind. For those teachers who choose to stay, they may not have the necessary teaching experience or qualifications. Among those surveyed, 66% had a senior high school or a secondary normal school education, and 7% had only a middle school education. Only 30% had a two-year college or higher education (Ding, 2004).

Moreover, the operating conditions in migrant schools vary greatly because these schools are set up with private funds and rely mainly on student tuition as revenue. Many migrant schools have not been approved and thus not inspected by the local educational department. Without official approval and inspection, these schools are operating illegally, and subject to closure. Some better operated migrant schools lease empty public school buildings, whereas others have classes in civilian homes, dilapidated warehouses, or primitive jerrybuilt houses (Ding, 2004; Han, 2004). Classrooms are overcrowded with as many as 93 students (Ding, 2004). Lighting, heating, and ventilation are poor; some schools lack fire exits, drinking water, sanitary facilities, health clinics, and playgrounds. Among the 55 surveyed migrant schools in Beijing, 11 do not have bathrooms, so students have to use public toilets outside the schools (Han, 2004). Because most migrant schools do not have playgrounds, physical education classes are held either on the street or on the margins of farmland. Migrant children are found to play on vegetable patches, trash piles, or narrow alleys and lanes. Such operating conditions and lack of facilities seriously impact the physical, psychological, and academic development of migrant children (Han, 2004).

The inequity of migrant children's education is further exacerbated by the substandard curriculum in migrant schools. Due to a lack of funding, qualified teachers, and facilities, many migrant schools can only offer basic Chinese language and math classes, whereas urban students in public schools have an opportunity to learn English, computer skills, music, arts, social studies, science, and so forth. The discrepancies in curriculum and teaching materials result in difficulties for migrant children with adjusting when they transfer to different schools (Han, 2004).

Because the current public educational system is incapable of meeting the needs of schooling of migrant children in China, private schools set up by migrants have developed and expanded to fill the gap. However, due to their lack of funding, qualified teachers, facilities, and standardized curriculum, migrant schools are not the silver bullet to resolve the problem of compulsory education for migrant children. Most migrant parents consider such schools as "merely temporary venues for education, providing their children with a basic knowledge of mathematics, reading and writing" (Han, 2004, p. 44). Moreover, even this hope of a temporary education has been shattered by the recent global financial turmoil.

The Global Economic Crisis And A Trend Of Reverse Migration

The recent global financial and economic crisis has had a significant, negative impact on the Chinese economy. In 2008, China's fourth-quarter gross domestic product (GDP) growth reached a seven-year low of 6.8%, dragging the 2008 GDP growth rate down from 13% in 2007 to 9%

(Huang, 2009). Exports in November 2008 were down 2.2% year-on-year in the first monthly decline since June 2001; meanwhile, low-end commodity exports such as garment enterprises are seeing an export decline as much as 60% compared to 2007 ("China's RMB," 2009). The global recession is shuttering factories, halting construction projects, and even closing multinational companies, pushing millions out of their jobs or into salary cuts or freezes. China's official unemployment rate hit a 30-year high of 9% in 2008 (Tschang, 2009). Fast growing unemployment has ignited resentment from urban citizens toward migrant workers, who are being blamed for taking city jobs (Li, B., 2005). Urban residents abusing or mocking migrant workers in public is not uncommon (Li, Y., 2003). Migrant workers are not welcomed or even forbidden to be present in many public places or to use public services. For example, in the city of Qingdao, some citizens suggested having separate seats for migrant workers on buses, and in Beijing, some public toilets collected fines if migrant workers were found using them (Cai, 2002; Yang, 2002).

Under pressure from local constituents and residents, urban governments have passed legislation and regulations to discourage employment of migrant workers. For instance, the Shanghai Bureau of Labor and Social Security issued *The Regulation on Categorized Usage and Employment of Labor from Outside Shanghai by Local Employers*, which divides jobs into three categories: outside labor allowed; limited usage of outside labor; and outside labor forbidden (Li, B., 2005, p.60). Similarly, Beijing issued regulations that were guided by the principle of "Urban First, Rural Second; Beijingers First, Outsiders Second" (Jiang, 2002). Such regulations effectively prevent migrant workers from entering the desirable sections of the urban labor market (Chen & Qiao, 2002).

In the sector of heavy labor, including manufacturing, construction, and mining, migrant workers suffered the worst from layoffs due to the global economic downturn. As of February 2009, it is estimated that over 20 million migrant workers have lost their jobs (Macartney, 2009; Tschang, 2009). Urban employees are typically eligible for social insurance and protections covering pensions, unemployment, health, work injuries, and maternity leave. However, migrant workers are excluded from the social welfare system. Government policy, social exclusion, and the global economic crisis have put migrant workers in a vulnerable, powerless and voiceless position (Li, B., 2005), which makes it harder for migrant workers and their children to gain a permanent foothold in the city. Thus, many have had no choice but to return to their rural hometown, leading to a trend of reverse migration. According to Macartney (2009), 15.3% or about one in seven migrants have returned to their places of origins.

Migrant children are facing many challenges as they move back to their rural area of origin (CLB, 2009). First, many migrant children, who were born and raised in the city, must adjust to a new lifestyle and living conditions when they return to rural areas. As long-term city dwellers, migrant children have become used to the conveniences that city life offers, such as electricity, tap water, and flush toilets. In rural areas, however, these conveniences may not exist. Moreover, although the central government requires the rural schools to admit returned migrant children unconditionally, these schools are often unable to provide the resources needed to comply with this mandate. Even when migrant students are accepted in the local rural schools, they have difficulties in their studies due to the discrepancies in curriculum, textbooks, and teaching methods. These challenges put migrant children at higher risk for low school performance, high dropout rate, and serious psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, and lower self-esteem (Chan, 2009).

In response to the global financial turmoil and to put the tumbling economy back on track, in November of 2008 the Chinese central government announced a massive stimulus package of

4 trillion yuan³ (US \$586 billion; “China’s RMB,” 2009). However, no expenditure on migrant children’s education was specified in the stimulus package. Migrant children fall through the cracks once again, and they remain the “invisible” population in China’s society.

Conclusion

The right to education is a basic human right. As Human Rights in China (2002) stated, “education is recognized as a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realizing other human rights” (p. 32). However, this basic human right of migrant children in China has been constantly denied due to the rigid *hu kou* system. The global economic turmoil further strained government funding and provided a seemingly legitimate excuse for local government to shrug off their responsibility to educate migrant children. Even if their parents manage to send them to local public schools, migrant children still face institutional discrimination that diminishes their life quality and hinders their chances of success.

In response to the acute problem of limited access to urban public education, migrant communities set up schools in which migrant children have a sense of belonging and learn basic reading, writing, and mathematics. But these migrant schools are plagued with their own problems and can only temporarily relieve the problem of migrant children’s education. To ensure that education is available and accessible to all requires all levels of government to be involved in changing the policies and allocating more funding. As Chan (2009) suggested,

What is needed is a wide-ranging and systemic reform to the *hu kou* and social welfare system. . . . The ultimate solution is to reduce the disparity between urban and rural areas in terms of socio-economic development and welfare provisions, and to eventually abolish the *hu kou* system (p. 66).

To make education available to all children, including migrant children, the central government should first develop a comprehensive policy to give migrant children access to formal, state-run education at the place where they are currently residing regardless of their place of *hu kou* registration. In the meantime, human rights advocates recommend all levels of government take strong and enforceable measures to end the institutional discrimination, exclusion, and injustices suffered by migrant children. For example, they call for the discriminatory fees levied only on migrant families to be immediately abolished (HRIC, 2002, p. 39). Integration rather than segregation is encouraged to promote better understanding and communication between locals and migrants. Some grassroots integration initiatives have been promoted by international, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and research institutions, including UNICEF, Rural Women and Migrant Workers’ Home, Compassion for Migrant Children (CMC), and Beijing Academy of Social Sciences. But this article argues that governments should take the major responsibility for welfare provision and the social and economic integration of migrants and their children. Moreover, it suggests that central and local governments allocate substantially increased resources for the education of migrant children.

It is estimated that a total of 1.8 million migrant children between the ages of 6 and 14 do not receive any formal education in today’s China (HRIC, 2002). If the pressing issue of migrant children’s education is not resolved, a new wave of low-skilled workers will appear in the near future. As Han (2004) suggested, “These people will have lived on the margins of the cities since childhood and will grow up as ‘second-class citizens,’ discriminated against and rejected, and as such will constitute a new and serious latent danger in society” (p. 53). Social issues such as growing urban unemployment, mounting tension over the treatment of migrant workers and their

children, poverty, and inequality have become more acute in the global economic crisis. Without top-down social reforms that target the inequality and vulnerability of this disadvantaged group, economic recovery and sustained economic growth will unavoidably suffer, leading to high risk of social instability and crises (Li, B., 2005).

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Endnotes

1. The current exchange rate is one US dollar equals 6.8 yuan. The annual per capital income of urban households of 12,973 yuan is equivalent to 1,908 dollars; whereas the rural household income of 4,307 yuan is equivalent to 633 dollars.
2. Provisional Measures for the Schooling of Migrant Children and Young people was passed on March 2, 1998. The key points include: municipalities should allow migrant children aged between 6 and 14 to study in full-time state-run and privately run schools with the status of temporary students; and the main responsibility for education should remain in the out-flowing areas (CLB, 2009, p. 72).
3. The stimulus package includes 10 major steps over the next two years. It provides for RMB280 billion to be spent on housing projects for low-income urban residents; RMB370 billion on improvement of people's livelihood and infrastructure in rural areas; RMB40 billion on medical care, culture and education causes; RMB350 billion on ecological investment; and RMB1 trillion on disaster relief and reconstruction. In terms of spending on education, the stimulus package will accelerate the development of the cultural and education sectors, and constructing junior high schools in rural western and central areas (Retrieved from http://www.mwe.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/publications.nldetail/object_id/d528fcbb-3b1a-4c71-bc8f-ce5dacc20504.cfm).

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SPECIAL SECTION

Responses to Volume 12, Issue 1

Cosmopolitanism and our Descriptions of Ethics and Ontology: A Response to Dale Snauwaert's "The Ethics and Ontology of Cosmopolitanism"

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In recent years scholars across the humanities and social sciences have revitalized the ancient concept of cosmopolitanism. Dale Snauwaert illuminates why this is so in his thoughtful article on what it might mean to educate for a shared humanity. Snauwaert shows why many people find so-called "realism" an unsatisfactory political and moral orientation toward the world (also see Lu, 2000). States do have an obligation, if they are to be legitimate, to secure the safety of their citizens. But states have no privileged insight into how to develop such security. Indeed, history demonstrates time and again how benighted states have proven to be on this score. Moreover, a peaceful social and political order is not merely a matter of specific, state-based negotiations and treaties. It is as much a matter of carefully preparing the ground for a tolerant, pacific response to disagreement. Such ground-preparation is not undertaken by states as such but rather by a countless array of transnational institutions, communications, and exchanges between scientists, artists, educators, medical people, jurists, and more (cf. Waldron, 2006). If divorced from these long-standing and *real* processes, so-called realism becomes merely a mode of cynicism, a pinched and hopeless outlook on the human condition. It is emphatically not our destiny to see the world in this way. Rather it is a *choice* to do so, and it is a choice which (as history also shows) often has the nightmarish consequence of becoming self-fulfilling.

In contrast with so-called realism, Snauwaert argues for a universal cosmopolitanism. He highlights Gandhi's notion of the interconnectedness of all life, or what might be called a shared right to life on the part of all living beings including persons. No individual or community has a greater right to life than others. Thus to kill in violence destroys not only others (literally) but also the perpetrator's own humanity. All are reduced to mere things rather than beings with an inherent dignity. Snauwaert argues that these moral principles provide the ontological ground upon which to build a cosmopolitan ethics and politics. He contends that an awareness of and active respect for this ground emerges through self-transformation. Education becomes, at its center, the process of self-transformation on the part of people everywhere. In turn, that process presumably will lead people to demand that their states re-conceive the meaning of security and safety. Instead of envisioning the latter as requiring a bunkered, go-it-alone mentality, leaders of state and its various official institutions can themselves undergo modes of transformation in light of the principles of interconnectedness and of a shared, universal moral identity.

Snauwaert's discussion illuminates what has been called "strong" cosmopolitanism. This outlook spotlights universal values and norms. More than that, it suggests that such values and norms "*take precedence over local and national political and moral values and principles*" (Snauwaert, p. 1, italics added). Martha Nussbaum, a leading theorist of strong cosmopolitanism, argues:

...the accident of where one is born is just that, an accident; any human being might have been born in any nation... We may give what is near to us a special degree of attention and concern...[but] we should always remember that these features of placement are incidental and that our fundamental allegiance is to what is human (1997, pp. 31, 33).

This outlook can be contrasted with “weak,” “thin,” or what some have called “rooted” cosmopolitanism (Appiah 2005, 2006; Cohen, 1992; Hollinger 1995, 2002). Thinkers in this camp argue for what they regard as a more balanced and realistic picture in which moral obligations are in many cases properly rooted in local traditions and practices. Appiah and others suggest it is possible even if not always easy to enact local norms while also taking seriously universal notions of shared human dignity. They reject an *a priori* designation of the universal as morally trumping the local. For Appiah, “a cosmopolitanism with prospects must reconcile a kind of universalism with the legitimacy of at least some forms of [moral] partiality... [Cosmopolitanism is] a composite project, a negotiation between disparate tasks” (2005, pp. 223, 232).

Both thick and thin notions of cosmopolitanism acknowledge the complexity of human affairs and the permanent need for judgment. As Immanuel Kant once put it, “virtue” or a moral disposition is not a settled accomplishment. The reality is that virtue is the “moral disposition in conflict” (Kant, 1993, p. 88 [Academy 84]; also see p. 33 [Academy 33]). In this light it becomes significant to consider not just what values people endorse but also how they hold and enact them (cf. Hansen, et al., 2009). Human values differ widely, and these differences often necessitate difficult compromises and uneasy conciliations. It makes a difference whether persons are steely and defensive about their values, or supple and generous-minded in their expression.

The distinction between strong and rooted has helped scholars extract from the concept cosmopolitanism what it can contribute to contemporary concerns about justice and equity. One lesson to draw from the debate is that, in the very spirit of cosmopolitanism, we might look beyond what Snauwaert characterizes as ethics and ontology. This gaze is not easy to try out in the face of the weighty figure of Mohandas Gandhi and Snauwaert’s trenchant remarks about his universal outlook. But I am not convinced that what Snauwaert calls Gandhi’s “ontological grounding” is in fact “essential” for the project of world justice. I am not persuaded it is the only alternative to the sort of vulgar pragmatism Snauwaert is concerned to avoid, and rightly so since the other side of the reductionist coin of “realism” is the claim that human nature is “a complete social construction” (Snauwaert, p. 6). Indeed, perhaps the idea that everything human is socially constructed all the way down is the natural – or nihilistic, as Snauwaert suggests – consequence of so-called realism.

But must we assert that human beings “have” an inherent moral dignity that “must” be acknowledged in order for justice to prevail? Or might we assert that human beings are always on the way to dignity, and that we are always in search of better and better accounts of this quest for dignity, and better and better mechanisms for supporting it? Can we say that philosophy, poetry, literature, painting, friendship and conversation are not merely expressions of what “already is” but rather are, at least as often, striving to express what is not yet, and therefore cannot be contained by concepts such as “social construction” and “dignity” as typically construed? Do we need “awareness” of the interconnectedness of all life, and awareness of a supposed “essential unity” of humanity, in order to cultivate rich grounds for humane and just forms of relation? Or

do we need recognition of our shared creativity that can be seen in all that we dub “culture”?

Here I imagine culture at three levels: the familiar anthropological plane wherein communities reconfigure practices and ideals, the level of cultures of art (teaching, practicing science, musical traditions the world over, etc.) in which new forms and techniques emerge in often surprising ways, and the level of the individual person endeavoring to cultivate (“culturate”) her or his life as meaningfully and seriously as circumstances permit. The recognition of cultural creativity at these levels can generate a deep, robust sense of hope in what humans *can* accomplish if they give themselves over to the task, as many have done across the ages.¹ Moreover, in this task people do not need to “be” cosmopolitan, as if they must take on a new identity. It is more judicious to say they can be *cosmopolitan-minded* and *cosmopolitan-hearted* in various moments amidst the vicissitudes of their highly local, particularized lives.

As sympathetic as I am with just about everything Snauwaert has put forward in his article, I remain concerned that a fixed, *a priori* conception of human nature can inadvertently end up becoming state-like. It can argue for itself and for “the safety of humanity” against rival conceptions that would be cast out as anti-universal, anti-dignity, and anti-human. I believe we humans can afford a greater confidence than that, as unsettling, uncertain, and harrowing as such a posture will sometimes be. The truth is that there will be further injustices perpetuated in our time and in the human time ahead. But it is not clear that the road to taming them lies in finding a final, permanent conception of human nature, as much as it lies in learning to recognize and cultivate humane interactions in the here and now as well as the institutions that can support them. Perhaps a redeeming feature of human nature, whatever else it may be, is the capacity to re-imagine and redirect its nature in spontaneous, creative ways. Perhaps human dignity resides, at least in part, in the insight that we have no final characterization of that dignity. Call this the dignity of standing back from descriptions in order to act in ever-responsive ways in an unpredictable cosmos. Here the quotidian cosmopolitanism of the street, reported on in an increasing number of studies (cf. Cheah & Robbins, 1998), points the way as surely as does Gandhi, doubtless one of the most aware human beings who ever walked the planet.

Endnotes

1. Ruaridh MacLeod rightly pointed out that an analysis of Kant’s Critique of Judgment could shore up this perspective on cultural creativity, in part by clarifying why Kant’s overall orientation on the moral cannot be assimilated into a narrow, universalistic outlook. I hope to take up this suggestion on a larger canvas than this response article provides.

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Response to Noah Sobe's "Rethinking 'Cosmopolitanism' as an Analytic for the Comparative Study of Globalization and Education"

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The Fall 2009 edition of *Current Issues in Comparative Education* (CICE) (Volume 12, Issue 1) bridges the real and imagined distance between two all too often disparate fields within educational scholarship – philosophy and comparative education. The discipline of philosophy most fruitfully influences my own research pursuits in comparative education through its effects on my understanding of research and on my role as a researcher. Philosopher of education Robert Bullough (2006) lists educationalists who similarly have “turned toward the humanities for fresh questions and critical insights into established practices, trying to make better sense of what they were witnessing and experiencing as educators and scholars” (p. 5). Terrence McLaughlin suggests that “a comparative approach to education needs a philosophical dimension and that the concerns and techniques of philosophy have an important contributory role to play in the development and flourishing of comparative education” (Halstead & McLaughlin, 2004, p. 467). In re-reading the articles in this issue, I am reminded of the strengths and limits of philosophy in comparative education as well as some of the misconceptions that surround this intellectual discipline. An incredulity among some social scientists about philosophy’s relevance to global affairs and the human condition continues to marginalize philosophy in comparative education research. Thus, this issue contributes to philosophy being understood in Wittgensteinian fashion as an activity, rather than as a body of doctrine or ideology. In utilizing philosophy this way, the authors in this issue respond to Alasdair MacIntyre’s call to “confront questions that have so far gone unasked, just because they are not questions answerable from within any one discipline” (2006, p. 12).

The Fall 2009 issue of CICE shines a spotlight on the philosophy of cosmopolitanism and its relationship to education and comparative education. As contributor Noah Sobe concludes, “There is both danger and promise in cosmopolitanisms. And there is much more about cosmopolitanisms that comparative and international education research can tell us.” I would like to offer two possibilities for what cosmopolitanisms can tell us about comparative and international education research, as a springboard into my response inspired by Sobe’s article. First, from my perspective, rooted in justice and peace studies, I am intrigued by several authors’ assessments of cosmopolitanism as a cognitive or reason-based framework. In other words, the cosmopolitan person will use reason to be autonomous, have self-responsibility, procure agency, plan life rationally, while respecting diversity and difference. I am not convinced that it is predominantly reason that drives the embodiment and enactment of a cosmopolitan mode of living. I am less persuaded of reason’s impact by observations of my students, whether they are in the fifth grade, in their fifth semester of college, or departing on their fifth humanitarian or peace work assignment to a conflict zone. Does the cosmopolitan person use reason to organize difference, to self-actualize, and to grapple with human agency? It seems that in many cases morality, ethics, emotional dissonance, and religion trump the call of reason as the normative framework directing action and inaction on global issues of poverty, educational development, or human rights.

Second, and more directly in response to Sobe's article, I am confident that cosmopolitanisms will continue to affect traditional methodological models of comparative education and other educational research that uphold a static version of the field site, such as a school or nation-state, as the primary unit of analysis, while discounting the movement of knowledge, identities, and people over campus and country borders. McLaughlin (2004) notes that the idea and practice of comparison needs a philosophical dimension in order to develop rich theoretical frameworks and substantiate methodological choices. Seemingly on queue, Sobe offers a philosophical inquiry on how existent cosmopolitanisms can be utilized as analytic categories, a strategy for researchers to explore the ways that "solidarities are formed, identities are developed, and principles of inclusion and exclusion are elaborated amidst local and global assemblages" (p. 6).

Sobe's article offers a "who's who" of significant voices in the dialogue between cosmopolitanism and comparative education. His intention for citing such a cache of theorists and researchers is explicit – "to locate the present project in scholarly circles" (p. 7). More importantly, however, Sobe works to "loosen cosmopolitanism" from the possessive grip of Enlightenment philosophers and the underlying inference that cosmopolitanism is solely a Kantian project, when it can rather be understood and employed as a historical category across temporal and spatial perimeters. He then discusses the use of "vernacular cosmopolitanisms" for investigating two instances of the role of schooling in the production of the cosmopolitan child – the first in present day United States and the second in pre-World War II Yugoslavia.

Sobe marks a visionary signpost at the beginning of a path for considering alternatives to traditional paradigms of area studies in light of globalization's bestowments of "multi-layered geographies" that circumvent standard notions of territorial cartography. Heeding the arrows forward, I am inspired to balance Sobe's meta-relational view of cosmopolitanisms and comparative education with a more nuanced unpacking of two aspects of his article. Specifically, I extrapolate on how the work of Arjun Appadurai (2000), whom Sobe quotes briefly, can concretely influence the creation of a new "world-generating optic" in a comparative education research project (p. 8). I do this in light of my research in post-Yugoslav countries (Wisler, 2008), introducing readers to another "vernacular cosmopolitanism" from this region of the Balkans.

Cosmopolitanisms can work to re-guide attention from the debate of case studies versus cross-national studies to the need for a regionally historical and cosmopolitan research perspective. Citing Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo (2005), Sobe asserts that the term "transnationalism" is "inadequate" when deliberating one's identity and positions amidst local and global communities. Considering methodological analysis in cases of nation-state dissolution, and where ethnic and religious identities transcend nation-state lines, the unfitness of not only the term but also the physical scope of "transnationalism" persists. For example, the nation-state as the determined unit of analysis in both case studies and cross-national studies is deceptive when considering that Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was until recently part of a greater whole, namely the Yugoslavia that Sobe refers to, and strongly associated with a region, the Balkans. My own study of the Balkans – which included study of the region's languages – afforded me fluency in its issues, but admittedly from the perspective of how the region was perceived and taught in U.S. higher education. Appadurai (2000) expresses his concern with this phenomenon in relation to area studies:

much traditional thinking about "areas" has been driven by conceptions of geographical, civilisational, and cultural coherence that rely on some sort of trait list – of values, languages, material practices, ecological adaptations, marriage

patterns, and the like. However sophisticated these approaches, they all tend to see “areas” as relatively immobile aggregates of traits, with more or less durable historical boundaries and with a unity composed of more or less enduring properties. These assumptions have often been further telescoped backward through the lens of contemporary U.S. security-driven images of the world and, to a lesser extent, through colonial and postcolonial conceptions of national and regional identity. (p. 7)

He continues to comment on how the current construction of area studies conveys a false sense of permanence among spatial, topographic, and societies organizations, when they are merely fabrications of how “culture” is conceived by the West. These associational inventions stem from past geo-political fear and security manufactured during the Cold War (and now during the “War on Terror”); their temperance “was soon forgotten” and fixtures solidified without question or doubt (p. 7).

Appadurai’s (2000) scrutiny struck a chord, or perhaps discord, in me as I recognized the contradiction inherent in my research endeavors and language training. Both were, on the one hand, funded due to the prevailing “lens of contemporary U.S. security-driven images of the world” (p. 7). On the other hand, they were simultaneously attempts to problematize exactly the trait-based approach focusing on a predestined violence and ethnic politics that has dominated Balkans studies. Specifically for my research, I spent a semester as a participant observer in one interdisciplinary post-graduate higher education program (IP) in Sarajevo. I also visited several other programs and met with their students and professors, specifically in Ljubljana, Slovenia; Skopje, Macedonia; Zagreb, Croatia; and Belgrade, Serbia. Moreover, I interviewed and talked to professors and students from throughout the post-Yugoslav region, whom I met at conferences and events, including in Copenhagen, Denmark; Schlaining, Austria; Marburg, Germany; and Dubrovnik, Croatia. Thus, the IP in Sarajevo within which I spent the most time could be considered more traditionally as my “field site,” but because I only visited other universities and programs for brief periods, I do not conceptualize this research as “multi-sited.” I had intentionally chosen the entire region encompassing the former country of Yugoslavia as my geographical and geopolitical context because I thought that pre-selecting one or more of the now seven independent countries would discount the region’s very recent past as one country, the legacy of educational and intellectual roots of the now-dissolved Yugoslavia, and the intellectual cooperation that transcends the countries’ current borders. Despite that informed choice, I had failed to see what seemed like the necessary problematization of the field site concept. Many questions lingered: should I pursue this research to Albania, a close neighbor and long-time thorn on the Yugoslav rose? And to Denmark, Malaysia and the U.S., where so many of the individuals I got to know sought intellectual and physical refuge during the recent wars? Should I stray as far as headquarters of the piggybanks of many of the interdisciplinary higher education programs I was researching?

Three concerns enveloped these questions. First, the traditional delineation of the field site upholds the realist, static construction of the nation-state in a globalizing world, and does not account for Sobe’s “vernacular cosmopolitanisms.” (My preliminary use of the nation-state category was undoubtedly a residue from the criteria of my funding agencies, which set stipulations on my research expenses in particular countries.) Second, my original constitution of what was once Yugoslavia did not make sense as a region today on the ground, in light of the high-speed transference of knowledge, movement of peoples, Europeanization, and the political and economic power of the worldwide Yugoslav diaspora. Third, although I originally comforted

myself with an assurance that the universities and programs together structured my field site, my confidence waned when I realized that the idea of the “university” was a façade; in reality, the school is a construction that merely contained individuals, thoughts, images and desires all in trans-national, trans-cultural motion. It was only as I began on-site fieldwork that I also began to question my conceptualization of the field site, as it began to resist the geographical localization in which I conceived it – that is, the countries historically once part of the federation called Yugoslavia.

Although I had perceived illogicality in excluding any one of the former-Yugoslav countries from my research inquiry, I did not foresee the permeable borders over which my inquiry seeped. I had constructed my field site through cartographical referencing about which Sobe warns us; in short, this geographical lens had blinded my otherwise transdisciplinary vision. Although realistic, my field site was not as neat as writers of methodology textbooks make it out to be. Appadurai (1996) characterizes what I felt, saw, and experienced in post-Yugoslav higher education as “a world of flows.” He writes: “the various flows we see are not coeval, convergent, isomorphic, or spatially consistent. They are in...relations of disjuncture” (1996, p. 5). Elsewhere he explains these various flows within five “-scapes” – ethnoscapés, mediascapés, technoscapés, finanscapés, and ideoscapés:

The suffix *-scape* allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes....These terms with the common suffix *-scape* also indicate that these are not objectively given relations which look the same from every angle of vision but, rather, that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic, and political situated-ness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinationals, diasporic communities, as well as sub-national groupings and movements...and even intimate face-to-face groups, such as villages, neighborhoods and families. (p. 33)

The conceptualization of a *-scape* resonates with Sobe’s concern with “new, often non-territorial configurations [that] bring people, knowledge, institutions, and objects together in novel and sometimes surprising assemblages;” these configurations need to be accounted for in the comparative education researcher’s methodological choices and analytical categories.

It was certainly not my intention to be in the field scrutinizing what seemed to be one of the last remaining straightforward concepts of fieldwork, namely the field site. As a novice researcher, I clutched clarity and simplicity when it came my way, so I was concerned with how I would acknowledge the flows of knowledge and people over the site’s borders. However, I was able to creatively deal with this discord and in so doing am able to contribute the idea of *fieldscape* in lieu of field site to the dialogue between philosophy and comparative education, and a cosmopolitan-inspired comparative education methodology. Drawing on Appadurai’s (1996, 2000) work, I acknowledge my research in the post-Yugoslav states as emanating from what I call a *fieldscape*. Although easily critiqued as a mere semantic difference, the conceptual difference between a field site and a *fieldscape* is significant in response to Sobe’s call for use of “vernacular cosmopolitanisms.” “The academic imagination” and local epistemologies do not stop at a classroom door, a university gate, a country’s border crossing, or a continent’s shores (Appadurai, 2000, p. 6). Rather, the idea of the *fieldscape*, as the landscape of post-Yugoslav higher education, is more conducive to conceptualizing the cosmopolitan flow of knowledge, people, and ideas across the borders of academic disciplines, universities, and countries. Conceptualizing the field site as *fieldscape* allayed me of my aforementioned concerns and has allowed me to understand this

educational research as fluid as Appadurai suggests. Similar to a “vernacular cosmopolitanism,” it is something that will look differently dependent on the angle of historical, linguistic, political, or disciplinary vision and thus contributes one part to the imagined world of the Balkans.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Agarwal, P. (2009). *Indian Higher Education: Envisioning the Future*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications. 488 pp. ISBN 978-81-7829-941-9 (HB)

— Reviewed by Radhika Iyengar, Teachers College, Columbia University

Indian Higher Education: Envisioning the Future goes beyond explaining the traditional human capital theory which links education and skills to labor market outcomes. In addition to looking at the increase in enrollment in higher education across Indian states, the book investigates issues of equity and equality. Equity as it is better understood is the provision of equal opportunity and concerns with fairness in resource mobilization and allocation. Pawan Agarwal focuses on vertical equity issues in particular which relates to understanding how different treatment is provided to people with different characteristics so that the basic minimum threshold level can be reached by all. He looks at urban-rural disparities, inter-state variations, and gender differences against the backdrop of the national policy of providing quotas or reserving admission seats for the marginalized castes in the Indian higher education institutions. At the same time, he investigates the more mainstream demand and supply factors that have shaped higher education in India. The book presents trends and discussions on multiple dimensions such as privatization and regulatory mechanisms, financing and management as well as labor market links and their relation to the rest of the world.

In his forward note for this book, Phillip Altbach mentions that despite being such a big player in global higher education enrollments, no major research center for higher education, which limits our understanding of the “push” and “pull” factors that drive these trends. He notes that higher education as a subject is not taught in the Indian higher education system, unlike in China’s higher education system, which has an extensive network of higher education training and research institutions. Therefore, the book fills this existing gap by providing insights on higher education and its relation to the globalized world. There were over 160,000 Indian students studying abroad in 2005-06 with nearly half of them in the United States (Agarwal p.13). Countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and Ireland have also opened their higher education sector to the Indian students, and the author mentions that in the main destination countries from 1999-2000 to 2005-06, the number of Indian students has more than tripled. Additionally, non-English speaking countries like Germany, France and Holland have started educational courses in English to attract Indian students. Although scholars of comparative studies are cognizant of this wave, very few systematic studies have been done to understand economics of the Indian higher education and its global implications. This book brings to light the magnitude and urgent need to understand the reciprocities and the complexities of the Indian higher education system vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

India is one of the four fast growing developing countries commonly known as the BRIC economies. It is said to have the highest annual numbers of graduating engineers and doctors, yet it concurrently hosts the world’s largest population of adult illiterates. Agarwal explains this dichotomy by highlighting the role of the higher education in the development of the domestic and international workforce. Chapter 5 links the transition from higher education to the labor market in explaining skill shortages. Furthermore, he explains the coexistence of skill shortages alongside with rising graduate unemployment and underemployment. This is linked to the exponential rise in the private higher education sector that promises a “job guarantee” for recent graduates.

In comparative education studies, depending on the context and the level (higher education, primary education etc) the definition of what is considered “private” changes. The author’s careful articulation of public and private institutions based on ownership and financing abilities provides a framework to better understand the terminologies that are usually misunderstood in the comparative education field, like “public” versus “government” and “private” versus “non-government.” This section also includes the increasing spread of foreign education providers in India and their modes of delivery which ranges from having branch campuses, franchised programs, validated programs, distance or open learning etc.

With the number of small, private higher education institutions mushrooming in India, the next logical step is to look at the quality of higher education and the regulation of the sector. Pawan Agarwal explains the need to build new accountability systems using advancements in information and technology, for with the rise of the private institutions, “simply leaving the demand and supply factors to the market will not necessarily deliver outcomes for higher education that represent the best use of resources or that are just and socially optimal” (Agarwal p. 306). This section also provides a detailed regulatory framework based on the recommendations of the University Grants Commission, the apex national regulatory institution for higher education in India. The author includes a historical narrative of Indian Constitutional Acts and the Indian Supreme Court rulings that required establishment of regulatory bodies and defined their roles. Agarwal agrees that due to inadequacies in the legislative framework for private institutions, regulatory bodies more often adopted an ad hoc approach and acted as “controllers” rather than “facilitators”. But this did not prevent the private players from becoming an integral part of the Indian higher education system. The author manages to clear the myth that the policy and the regulatory framework have prevented private participation in higher education.

It is evident that the recent economic crises also adversely impacted the global higher education industry. The U.S. Council of Graduate Schools, basing its findings on a country-wide survey, reported that enrolment of first-time graduate students from India registered a massive 16-per cent decline in 2008-09 because of the financial meltdown. Therefore, given the current scenario, how much of a Keynesian approach should governments have towards high education? Can governments afford to fund higher education, especially in the developing world? Economists like Psacharopoulos estimated that across countries, the private returns on education are greater for primary education as compared to those for higher education. Therefore, the question still remains whether it is advisable for governments to invest in higher education. Although Agarwal does not incorporate these theoretical dimensions of education finance, he gets to the applied side by explaining the role of multiple stakeholders in the funding mechanisms and sustainability of Indian higher education system. He indicates that student loans are a fast expanding area in the Indian banking sector. However, Agarwal mentions that majority of the students who avail themselves of the loans are in professional degree programs (e.g. engineering, management etc.) and that the loans granted appear to be biased towards males. Since banks require security and charge a high risk premium, only few students can take advantage of such services. Student aid is another self-funding opportunity that is granted based either on merit or is targeted towards the marginalized. The author narrates that such scholarships are only a small amount and disbursement leakages prove to be a major hindrance in the system. The author is able to successfully highlight education financing issues, however, a comparative analysis with other countries may have helped to understand both the problems and the potentials solutions.

The book is helpful for scholars, practitioners and policy makers to comprehensively understand the current issues and trends of the Indian higher education systems. However, the arguments

of the book could be strengthened by the following. First, the author attempts to answer the question: is the Indian higher education reaching out to the marginal population? Besides presenting figures of the expanding numbers of higher education institutions and student enrollment, including relevant theoretical aspects would be helpful to augment the argument. For instance, explaining how some of the policy measures of the Government of India intend to put into practice Rawls Second Principle of Justice, which aims at providing the greatest benefit to the least advantaged. This utilitarian concept improves the community's social welfare and is the underlying principle of the reservation policy that is discussed in the book. In other words, it would be helpful to highlight the theoretical aspects of the trends and policy decisions that the book describes. Second, in a similar vein, the author notes that in relative terms, public spending on higher education is not low (estimated at 1% of GDP) considering that India is a developing country; however, in absolute terms it is far less than is necessary cover the existing needs. It would be helpful to link this resources-versus-needs dilemma to the classic debate in economics of resource allocation efficiency which is concerned with obtaining maximum performance of the educational system given the available resources. Lastly, the author makes the argument that Indian higher education has a world presence, especially in a globalized context. Therefore, I believe that in understanding problems of the Indian higher education system, we would gain a great deal more by comparing and understanding similar issues in other countries.

One of the main strengths of the book is that it situates the Indian higher education in the context of "vertical" and "horizontal" linkages both domestically and across the globe. In other words, we get a sense of the demand and supply factors that have shaped higher education from multiple perspectives such as from the socio-economic standpoint, the political aspects, demographic advantages, historical trends as well as from the governance policy formation and implementation aspects. The analysis could also have been strengthened by not only looking at mainstream courses like engineering and technology, architecture, pharmacy, business administration etc, but also incorporating recently established courses on Gandhian Studies, Human Rights and Peace Education. Nevertheless, the book gives a chance to the readers to understand why the Indian higher education is often referred to as "a sick child" or a "quiet crisis" (p. xxiv). In today's globalized world, the book showcases the Indian higher education system, subtly making us aware of its gigantic presence and its power to influence education systems elsewhere. The book highlights the need to learn about the reciprocal relationships between educational structures around the world using a comparative lens.

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