



Comparative and International Education: The Making of a Field and a Vision for the Future

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The International Efficiency of American Education: The Bad and the Not-So-Bad News
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(Originally published as “The International Efficiency of American Education: The Bad and the Not-so-Bad News,” (2013) pp. 279-302 in Heinz-Dieter Meyer and Aaron Benavot (eds.) *Pisa, Power and Policy: The Emergence of Global Educational Governance* Oxford (UK): *Oxford Studies in Comparative Education Symposium Books* and appears with permission.)

CURRENT ISSUES IN COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

Volume 16, Issue 1 (Winter 2013)

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Acknowledgments

The editors would like to thank all those who shared their timely insights and commentary in response to this issue's call for papers. The challenge of selecting which pieces to take forward for a full review was rewarded by the thoughtful, patient engagement of the authors we worked with, and we hope it was as valuable a learning experience for them as it was for us.

The managing editor would also like to thank the Teachers College students who volunteered their time and skills as senior editors and editors of this issue, both those who got to grips with this new task in a new learning environment, bringing welcome fresh eyes, and our more seasoned members whose experience was invaluable. On that note, special thanks go to our previous co-managing editors Samar Farah and Laura Evers who were exceptionally generous with their time and advice.

Editorial Introduction: Birthday “Bumps”

Emily S. Bishop
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With this issue, Comparative and International Education: The Making of a Field and a Vision for the Future, the CICE team is delighted to join in the yearlong celebration of a milestone for our institution and the field of education beyond, the 125th Anniversary of Teachers College. Appropriately, we are the proud home of the Happy Birthday song - but when I was a little girl in London, birthday parties came with a less harmonious tradition: the Birthday “Bumps”. These “bumps” are a (more or less gentle) shaking up and down of the lucky celebrant, once for each of their years. In that spirit, our birthday gift to Teachers College is a (more or less gentle) shaking up of our discipline of Comparative and International Education and its traditions, by a diverse range of voices in a new kind of harmony.

“The field of Comparative Education is a mature and important area of academic inquiry with a promising future”. This concluding passage of our opening article, **Noah Sobe** and **Jamie Kowalczyk’s** *Exploding The Cube*, reflects our editorial team’s thinking when they first crafted the call for papers for this issue, at the beginning of this anniversary year:

For over a century, the field of Comparative and International Education (CIE) has made valuable theoretical and practical contributions that address the pressing challenges that the education sector has faced globally. These theories have provided both practitioners and policymakers with a framework of reference not only for developing strategies and action plans, but also for implementing new programs and solutions for further advancement.

As we pursue a new development agenda, in line with the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the Education For All (EFA) movement, a collective vision for a post-2015 framework in education is needed. There is a growing understanding that globalization presents demands on education, whereby educational initiatives are increasingly expected to foster global competence and develop 21st century skills. In this changing environment, large-scale assessments provide additional mechanisms to track academic competences and, consequently, place further pressures to adapt existing educational models to the increasingly globalized achievement race.

In celebration of our community’s landmark milestone, we invited scholars of both Comparative and International Education and the broader field of related, relevant disciplines to submit articles that reflected on theories of CIE and discussed their applications in education, in the context of the current changing environment. Specifically, we posed the question:

How have CIE theories/theorists influenced institutions, policies, educational models, trends, and/or research agendas in local, regional, and international contexts?

We were delighted by the response, and excited by the critical, innovative thinking that inspired the “bumps” shaking up CIE traditions, from the principles of Education For All to the methods

that shape our research. In keeping with our tradition of accessibility to scholars and practitioners from beyond the field of CIE, our authors focus their attention on fundamental theories and concepts familiar to many outside our discipline, such as the capability approach, neoliberal frameworks or the pervasive influence of Foucault. However, as you will soon see for yourself, they put those fundamentals to good use in crafting arguments and analyses that thoroughly rattle concepts central to our discipline.

Global C(c)ontext(s)

In “Exploding the Cube: Revisioning “Context” in the Field of Comparative Education”, **Noah Sobe** and **Jamie Kowalczyk** challenge our understanding of what context is, and suggest a delineation between ‘big C’ Context and ‘little c’ contexts to more effectively and accurately identify power dynamics. The cube they are proposing to explode is Bray and Thomas’ (1995) familiar formulation: the first mainstay of CIE to take a “bump” in this issue.

In “Theorizing Privatization in Education: Comparing Conceptual Frameworks and the Value of the Capability Approach”, **Francine Menashy** tackles three more well-trodden conceptual frameworks – the neoclassical, social primary goods and rights-based approaches – with an argument for the application of the capability approach to an area it is seldom considered: the private sector.

In “Breaking Tradition: Taking Stock of Research on Global School Choice”, **Beth Wright** considers the concept school choice through the lens of prevalent research practices on the issue, and challenges CIE scholars to move beyond neoliberal conceptualisations and use new modes of analysis to tackle questions of choice and reform.

Local Contexts

In “Neoliberalism in Two Hong Kong School Categories”, **David Woo** stays with the issue of school choice but moves us into the country-level context section of the issue. He applies a neoliberal lens to discern the impact of a changing Hong Kong and the shifting demands of a growing and diversifying population on two schools with distinct features.

In “Canadian Youth Volunteering Abroad: Rethinking Issues of Power and Privilege”, **Mai Ngo** invites us to rethink our perspective on an aspect of development that resonates personally for many of us: youth volunteering. Using Institutional Ethnography (IE), she maps out power and privilege dynamics to advance the debate on the ethics of the practice.

In “Particularizing Universal Education in Postcolonial Sierra Leone”, **Grace Pai** uses a vertical case study to challenge the universality of universal education, by illustrating the fact and necessity of local incarnations of global ideals in pre-civil war Sierra Leone and demonstrating the relationship between the rural Bunumbu Project and the broader process of nation-building.

Our concluding guest article, “The International Efficiency of American Education: The Bad and the Not-So-Bad News” by **Stephen Heyneman** (with kind permission from the original publishers), ends with a positive challenge to a CIE trend, looking beyond PISA scores to rethink the habitual criticisms of US education.

Join us in exploring the highs, lows and “bumps” of applying Comparative and International Education theory to a variety of (C)ontexts. We hope you will, on the evidence of these new and established voices in our midst, agree with Sobe and Kowalczyk (and us) that our field has a promising future ahead.

Notes

My thanks to Adriana Lovera and Amlata Persaud for their help in revising an earlier draft of this article, and to Sandra Sirota for her feedback.

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Exploding the Cube: Revisioning “Context” in the Field of Comparative Education

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This article problematizes some of the ways that the issue of “context” has been treated in comparative education scholarship. We critique the cube approach recommended by Bray and Thomas (1995) as well as the common recirculations of Sadler’s (1900) garden metaphor. Borrowing a set of analytic concepts from Bruno Latour (2004), we suggest that too often in the field of comparative education the issue of context is treated as a “matter of fact” when instead context should be revisioned as a “matter of concern” and one of the central research concerns in our field. We propose the concept of ‘big C’ Context to link ‘little c’ contexts to power/knowledge concerns and the historical discourses that govern what it is possible to think and do.

Despite notable recent efforts to focus research attention on the importance of taking “context” into account (Cowen, 2006; Crossley, 2009; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2009), the field of comparative education still remains hobbled by unsophisticated and inadequately theorized notions of context. This article explores the ways that establishing the context of an education policy, practice, institution, or system is caught up in the mobilization of norms, power relations, regulative principles, technologies, and strategies. Ascriptions of context can operate as externally imposed categories that enclose, disable, and deny access to resources, opportunities, agency, and subject positions. In like measure, inscriptions of context can sometimes be enabling, increase access to resources and opportunities, and generally privilege particular cultural groups or particular social settings (Sobe & Kowalczyk, 2012). The ethical, social, cultural and political significance of context thus demands that researchers pay careful attention to ways they use the concept of context in their research.

In this piece, we problematize some of the ways that the issue of context has been treated in comparative education scholarship. In particular, we critique the “cube” approach recommended by Bray and Thomas (1995) as well as the feckless and regrettably common recirculations of Sadler’s (1900) garden metaphor. Rather than thinking of “contextualization” or “establishing the context” as activity that takes place at the front-end as part of a preliminary “setting the stage” for a research project, we propose—returning to the word’s etymological meaning of “inter-weaving”—that the problem of context be something that demands the researcher’s attention across the entirety of a research endeavor. Borrowing a set of analytic concepts from Bruno Latour (2004), we suggest that too often in the field of comparative education the issue of context is treated as a “matter of fact” when instead context should be revisioned as a “matter of concern” and one of the central research topics in our field. As part of revisioning context as a matter of concern we discuss big ‘C’ Context as a set of historical Discourses (Gee, 1990) that interweave actors and objects and govern what it is possible to think and do. By little ‘c’ context we refer to the set of named elements that are seen as comprising a given setting. Individual instances of context become intelligible because of Context with a “big C”—which is always much more than environment.

As noted above, honing in on the issue of Context is warranted because of the significance that Context plays in power/knowledge relations. Inasmuch as we can think of the field of comparative and international education as a mode of governance (Nóvoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003) it is also extremely important to think about the way that, in educational research, the comparative project sometimes seems to be caught between two radically different alternatives (see the discussion in Sobe & Kowalczyk, 2012). On the one hand, there is a certain tendency to universalize teaching, learning, and schooling and to assume that research findings from other places can smoothly be brought to bear on educational problems in any site. In this schema, the comparative method almost reduces to a science of *ceteris paribus*, i.e. a quest to “hold all other things equal,” and figure out how to control for and mitigate “contextual” factors. At an opposite extreme, are post-positivist claims about the “impossibility” of comparison due to the situational specificity of any educational interaction. From this second perspective the science of comparison more often than not is seen to be a modernist artifact that relies on Enlightenment notions of rationality and principally serves to discipline and govern individuals and societies. According to this binary, the field of comparative education either represents a salvational path to best-practices or is a dangerous neo-colonial imposition that imposes a disempowering, externally ordering logic. In our view, this austere scenario can be entirely avoided, and this dualism collapsed, if we revision the ways that comparative education researchers approach the issue of Context.

Context Problems

Michael Sadler’s early-twentieth century writings on educational transfer and borrowing offer an object lesson in the ways that reasoning about Context is implicated in power/knowledge relations. When referring to the importance of local conditions and recognizing complexity, it remains an unfortunate commonplace for comparative education scholars to recycle Sadler’s injunction that education reformers not:

...wander at pleasure among the educational systems of the world, like a child strolling through a garden, and pick off a flower ... and then expect that if we stick what we have gathered into the soil at home, we shall have a living plant. (Sadler, 1964, p. 310)

What is missed in the ad nauseam reiterations of this statement are its fundamental linkages with European colonialism on two levels. The first of these relates to the colonial science of “acclimatization,” a late-nineteenth century zoological, biological and medical field concerned with studying the ways that flora and fauna could be transported around the globe in the interests of optimizing animal husbandry and agricultural production. As Michael Osborne’s work (1994, 2000) shows, along with ethnography, the sciences of acclimatization were pivotal appendages of colonial and imperial projects, concerned, as they were, with how organisms could be successfully moved from one climate to another. Adaptation became an object of scientific study as part of the economic reorganization and administrative measures of the European colonial project. And in Sadler’s formulation we see a historical instance of acclimatization reasoning being applied to the social world with tremendous consequence for determining who was and who wasn’t suited for various educational initiatives (Sobe & Ortigón, 2009; Sobe, 2013)—with the schooling of indigenous and ethnic/racial minority populations being one of the most egregious historical examples of different methods and different standards being applied to particular “kinds” of people based on outsiders’ perceptions of worth, aptitude and potential.

A second level on which Sadler’s quote uncomfortably reinscribes a colonial logic relates to the tradition in academic knowledge production of viewing physical and social space as fundamentally interlinked. At issue here are the ways that the “texture” of space is modeled in relation to governance, control, and coordination. As Foucault (1971) has pointed out, when space is conceptualized as possessing thickness and depth, one often encounters a division

where human experiences are separated from supposed underlying laws and principles. As Sobe & Fischer (2009) have noted,

...when space is conceptualized not as a smooth plane but as non-regular, with varying, uneven depths, principles of differentiation ensue. For example, some areas emerge as sites suited for liberal, democratic participatory politics; others emerge as more appropriately governed through force, authority and the inculcation of habit. (p. 361)

Sadler's organicist argument about "native soil" is enmeshed in a colonialist logic of governance that makes it a highly inadequate model for addressing the issue of Context in conducting comparative education research today.

A more recent schema for approaching context in comparative education scholarship comes from Mark Bray and R. Murray Thomas (1995) who have proposed a three dimensional cube for thinking about the location or site of any comparative education study. One axis is geographical and proposes that research might focus on world regions, countries, provinces, districts, as well as the "locational" levels of schools, classrooms and individuals. A second axis identifies potential demographic factors such as ethnicity, age, religion, and gender as potential cross-cutting focal points for a comparative study. The third axis proposes a set of substantive issues that might be studied in reference to the previous two—anything from curriculum and teaching methods to school financing, political change, and labor markets. A comparative education study thus might focus on one or more "sub-cubes" within this larger three-dimensional cube. In this manner, one might design a comparative study that looks at girls' science education in two countries; or, for example, a study could look at the financing of schools attended by different religious groups in different regions of the same country. In recent work, Bray, Adamson & Mason (2007) have usefully reflected on limitations to the cube, particularly, for example, on the ways that the various filters could be reframed. The geographic filter could be expanded to allow a focus on countries affected by a particular colonial experience (Manzon, 2007) or on countries/regions with religious commonalities. Bray and his colleagues have even proposed that multiple cubes could be arrayed along a temporal axis to afford comparisons across time. While they do recognize significant limitations, including the definitional "slipperiness" (2007, p. 370) that emerges when the units of comparison delineated in the cube are actually deployed by researchers, they nonetheless note, "good comparative education researchers will necessarily consider factors along each of the axes [of the cube] before they isolate the variables pertinent to their hypotheses" (Bray, Adamson & Mason, 2007, p. 371).

We offer a two-fold critique of this methodological prescription and what it puts forward as strategies comparative education scholars should use to account for Context. First, we question the deployment of pre-existing context categories. Second we question, as indicated previously, whether it is adequate to do the work of isolating contextual factors and categories as a preliminary stage-setting component of the research process.

As regards the first critique, Bray, Adamson and Mason (2007) acknowledge that there are different social science paradigms and that scholars interact with and interpret their data differently. While they note that "researchers using a more hermeneutic or inductive approach would probably prefer the sub-categories to emerge from their data" (p. 369-70), we would frame this issue less as one of methodological preference and more worthy of research concern because of the ways that ascriptions and inscriptions of Context are implicated in power/knowledge relations.

One of the best illustrations of the way that Context can be prefigured as a category of analysis lies in its subdivision into various dimensions as in the commonplace usage of concepts like

“political context”, “economic context”, “social context”, “cultural context”, etc. To discuss Context in these terms is to create knowledge about characteristics over which rule can be exercised (Rose, 1999). This phenomenon is clearly illustrated by the “newly discovered island” heuristic employed by neoinstitutional sociologists of education (Meyer et al., 1997) to explain the ways that institutionalized world models define and de/legitimate local agendas. They predict that if a previously uncontacted island were discovered its inhabitants would be pressured to begin organizing themselves according to world models that have their origin in the North America and Europe but have since been spread widely around the globe. The island would be conceptualized as “a society” with “an economy” and “a government”. Meyer et al. note that:

...a few standardized data tables would be sufficient to empower policy proposals. Similarly, any sociologist comes equipped with the capability to propose measures, analyses, diagnoses, and policy prescriptions for the correction of gender inequalities on the island. On a broad range of economic and social indicators, the island would be categorized and compared with other nation states, in the same way that every newly independent geopolitical entity has been processed in the past several decades. (Meyer et al., 1997, p. 150)

In short, standardized categories would be applied and the hypothetical island’s historical, political, economic, and social “context” would enter a surprisingly standardizing machine of academic knowledge production. To splice out Context into different dimensions in this manner is to construct domains of action and surfaces of intervention.

Our central objection to requiring the specification of Context be done before the research actually begins is that this move relegates Context to the background role of simply stabilizing a research object. This approach, which might be called the context-as-container paradigm, fails to account for the relationality of contexts and objects (problems to be studied), and it can lead researchers to make rather dubious causal inferences. In the next section, as we present alternatives to approaching Context using a set of pre-existing analytic categories, we will also examine the relationality of objects and Contexts and how they come to be intelligible and conjoined, and to what effect(s). No less than an explosion of the cube and a reassembly of the pieces is necessary.

Revisioning Context

It seems intuitive or common sense to say that the daily practices of schooling around the globe take place within some context. Questions about the salience of educational contexts cut deeply across debates in the field on the global-local nexus. The material and discursive configuration of what is indexed by the concept of Context cannot be taken-for-granted nor treated as uncontestable. And, as we hope to have shown in the previous section, Context is also heavily—and irrevocably—linked to power/knowledge concerns. The contingent historical quality of the categories used to conduct comparison and to putatively separate objects from Contexts are themselves one of the things that requires attention. This is an undertaking that British philosopher Ian Hacking captures in the idea of locating “ideas in their matrices” (1999, p. 10) and it is this task that we direct attention to with the idea of ‘big C’ Context. Hacking describes this kind of analytic process as involving the paradox of examining how something has been constructed by others and simultaneously recognizing that the researcher’s own lenses and activities also construct, shape, pattern, *and govern* what is under examination.

Much comparative education research, as we have reviewed above, treats context as any number of neatly bound cubes to be arranged at the outset of a project. As convenient as this foundation-building might be, it fails to account for the mutable and entangled demarcations that distinguish context and object from one another. We borrow from a series of distinctions

Latour (2004) makes between *matters of fact* and *matters of concern* in sociological research. Latour conceptualizes matters of fact as “risk free objects” with “clear boundaries” and predictive value, while matters of concern are a risky, “tangled” business (Latour, 2004, p. 22-23) that engages the unexpected and the emerging. Too often Context has been treated as a matter of fact and invoked as a unity that is always already-there, waiting to be observed and described via stable categories.

Approaching Context as a matter of concern draws attention to the *practice* of identifying categories and analytic topics (spatial, temporal, institutional, discursive, theoretical) that intersect, overlap, and change over time. These categories, artifacts of epistemological structures, will inevitably be embroiled in power relations (Foucault, 1971 & 1980) as they produce the rules and standards that govern social practices, creating at once spaces for action, while marginalizing or rendering invisible others. Coming to grips with this should be an essential part of the research process. One step towards this end and towards exploding neatly packaged matter-of-fact cubes is to think of contexts as a confluence of practices and objects coming together and never permanently stabilizing. With other contemporary scholars, particularly a set of scholars working in the field of anthropology (Marcus & Saka 2006; Ong & Collier, 2005; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), we draw on the concept of the “assemblage” to conceptualize this.

Aihwa Ong (2006) tackles the challenge of doing an “ethnography of mutating spaces” by suggesting that we alter what we think of as “spaces”; instead, we might study “assemblages as sites where the dynamic play of strategies resolve challenges by constantly situating and resituating populations in particular scales of regulation” (p. 118). The assemblage then signifies a kind of non-place/non-structured structure that gives conceptual form to the confluence of practices and objects. In Saskia Sassen’s (2008) description, assemblage is theorized as “a contingent ensemble of practices and things that can be differentiated (that is, they are not collections of similar practices and things) and that can be aligned along the axes of territoriality and deterritorialization” (p. 76). The concept of the assemblage has been seen to capture the “heterogenous within the ephemeral” while preserving:

...some concept of the structural so embedded in the enterprise of social science research. Indeed, the term itself in its material referent invests easily in the image of structure, but is nonetheless elusive. The time-space in which assemblage is imagined is inherently unstable and infused with movement and change. Assemblage thus seems structural, an object with the materiality and stability of the classic metaphors of structure, but the intent in its aesthetic uses is precisely to undermine such ideas of structure. (Marcus & Saka 2006, p. 102)

The researcher who takes Context to be a matter of concern, then, is not interested in the traditional “object of study” contained within a context, but is interested in the relationality between objects and contexts: how they come to be intelligible and conjoined, and to what effect(s). In other words, the researcher is interested in the cohesion between objects and contexts, and in the epistemological structures that make it possible to see the objects as objects (problems to be studied) and Contexts as an assemblage of multiple, at times paradoxical, things and practices that come together in particular places at particular times.

In shifting to “contextualization” as the work of studying assemblages, the researcher is able to attend to “emergence, heterogeneity, the decentred and the ephemeral in social life and social interactions that are nonetheless ordered and coordinated” (Sobe, 2013, p. 101). Asking what is being “assembled together” in what I am examining is a question the researcher asks across the entirety of a research endeavor. Taking a cue from anthropologist Roy Dille (1999) we find it useful to return to the etymological roots of the word *context* as they help us see past the

accrued meanings of “background” and “place” and “dimension” that have been added over time. The Latin verb *texere* means “to weave” and *con* signifies “with.” Consequently, *contexere* is “to weave together” or “to interweave.” The notion of interweaving allows us to focus on Contexts as assemblages of multiple discourses, practices, techniques, objects, and propositions that come together in particular places at particular times. Whereas matters of fact depend on the invisibility and taken-for-grantedness of their production, shifting to matters of concern means putting these processes of production under the microscope—and realizing that the researcher herself plays a role and is not a distant, detached observer (Sobe & Kowalczyk, 2012).

In closing, we will note that despite our insistence above that objects and contexts are conjoined and entangled within specific assemblages and on the entanglement of the researcher, we do recognize the importance of probing the distinction between an activity, entity, actor and its environment (to use the term in a general manner). As noted above, it seems intuitive that educational undertakings take place within the context of some context. In part, this intuition is addressed by revising Context as assemblage. In another part, it also needs to be addressed by carefully studying the organizing principles and referentiality of social systems and the extent to which they define their own boundaries and represent themselves as operating in a particular environment (Luhmann, 1995). The production of a “background” or “container” that is enabling and/or disabling needs itself to become a topic of research; we need to interrogate the ways that schools and various educational apparatuses construct the contexts in which they operate.

The field of Comparative Education is a mature and important area of academic inquiry with a promising future. In this article, we have proposed a revised theory of Context that takes power/knowledge as both its starting and ending point. The act of contextualization is essential in the field of comparative education, and it means treating contexts as matters of concern while focusing our research attention on the educational assemblages that compose and govern our present and future worlds.

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Theorizing Privatization in Education: Comparing Conceptual Frameworks and the Value of the Capability Approach

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The past decade has witnessed a notable shift in the international education policy environment, characterized by a rapid growth in private educational provision. In the context of a divisive debate on the role of the non-state sector in primary and secondary education, this paper grapples with the theoretical underpinnings of both advocacy and critique of educational privatization, paying particular attention to a rise in low-fee private schools and public-private partnerships. It is argued that three of the most commonly adopted conceptual frameworks – the neoclassical, social primary goods and rights-based approaches – each have notable shortcomings when applied to an analysis of privatization. In light of this, the overarching aim of this paper is to offer the human capability approach and to argue that it is the strongest and most appropriate framework for understanding and analyzing the complex and multi-faceted issue of private sector engagement in education.

Introduction

The past decade has witnessed a notable shift in the education policy environment, characterized by a rapid growth in private educational provision. In the Global South in particular, two forms of privatization have risen dramatically: low-fee private schools that cater to low-income families, and public-private partnerships wherein governments are financing non-state school operators via vouchers or charters. Supporters promote private provision as a reform policy to increase access, competition and thereby quality, along with relieving public sector costs (Fielden and LaRocque, 2008; Patrinos et al, 2009). On the other hand, critics have drawn attention to equity-related impacts of privatization on marginalized students, as well as the potential weakening of public school systems (Plank, 2005; Robertson et al, 2012; Härmä, 2011). In the context of this debate, in this paper I grapple with the theoretical underpinnings of both advocacy and critique of educational privatization.

I suggest that policies concerning the issue of privatization are theoretically situated in very particular conceptual approaches or frameworks. Most notable is the single most predominant framework employed to support privatization in education, which is rooted in neoclassical economics and also commonly termed neoliberal. A wealth of literature from within the field of comparative and international education (CIE) has argued against the neoclassical framework, critiquing it as not adequately capturing the equity implications of associated policies, and as unethical by subjugating the end goal of equity to efficiency. Critics have demanded the adoption of an approach that can result in more socially just and equitable systems of education (Klees, 2008; 2012; Harvey, 2005; Olssen, et al, 2004; Saad-Filho and Johnson, 2005). However, I argue that the most commonly adopted alternative frameworks for social policy – namely the social primary goods and rights-based approaches – despite offering significant responses to neoclassicism, still have notable shortcomings. In light of this, the overarching aim of this paper is to offer the human capability approach and to argue that it is the strongest and most appropriate framework for an analysis of the complex and multi-faceted issue of private

sector engagement in education, able to rigorously counter the dominance of the neoclassical approach.

This paper structurally borrows in part from Robeyns (2006), who similarly applies conceptual approaches (or “models”) to education, but pays particular attention to issues concerning gender. In this article, I first provide a brief descriptive account of recent trends in privatization in education, focusing on the rise of public-private partnerships and low-fee private schools. This is followed by descriptions of the neoclassical, rights-based, social primary goods, and human capability approaches, and their applications to privatization policies. Comparisons are then drawn between the human capability approach and each of the other frameworks. By exposing contrasts with the capability framework, attention is drawn to the shortcomings of the other approaches. Given that privatization policies often rest on the value of parental choice, throughout the paper particular attention is paid to different conceptions of the notion of choice and to what degree individual choice ought to be given primacy in social policy.

The context of private sector engagement in education

Private actors are increasingly involved in various forms of K-12 school provision, financing, and policy-making. One of the most notable features of this shift is the rise in private school operators (OECD, 2010). Two forms of private sector engagement showing significant growth are public-private partnerships (PPPs) and low-fee private schools (LFPs). Although privatization happens in a multitude of other ways (including corporate and philanthropic activities, religious education, shadow schooling, etc), I focus on PPPs and LFPs in this paper due to their recent prominence in academic research (Belfield and Levin, 2005; Robertson et al., 2012; Srivastava and Walford, 2007) and in the policies of international organizations (IFC, 2010; UNICEF and ADB, 2011; World Bank, 2011; World Bank and IMF, 2011).

“PPPs” denotes a very broad category that covers any joining of the public and private sectors in education (Draxler, 2012). This paper focuses on PPPs in educational provision, including such mechanisms as voucher schemes, where parents receive a government-issued credit to pay for private school tuition, or fully publicly financed but privately administered schools, such as charter schools. Such PPP policies are argued to respond to low government capacity to deliver quality education by enabling a shift in the state’s function from a provider of schooling to that of a financier and regulator of private operators (Fielden and LaRoque, 2008; Patrinos et al., 2009; Roberston et al., 2012).

Similarly, over the past decade, there has been a rise in the establishment of low-fee private schools in the Global South. Such schools, which can be operated by either individuals or a larger entrepreneurial group, are fully-private (as in both privately financed and provided), and charge what is considered to be nominal fee to parents. While some low-fee schools are not-for-profit, the majority are for-profit establishments targeting low-income families (Rose, 2009; Srivastava and Walford, 2007; Tooley and Dixon, 2006). Supporters of LFPs argue that low-fee schools respond to the very low quality of public schools and can meet the demands of parents, including those living below poverty levels (see Dixon, 2013; Tooley, 2004; 2005; Tooley and Dixon, 2006). In the next section, I describe and map four theoretical frameworks onto an analysis of such forms of privatization as PPPs and LFPs.

The neoclassical approach

Scholars from a variety of disciplines, including CIE, have argued that for the past three decades public policies in the Global South have been overwhelmingly underpinned by a paradigm informed by neoclassical economic assumptions. Grounded in liberal principles of

individualism and freedom of choice, neoclassical economics assumes the primacy of free-market mechanisms such as competition in order to achieve optimal efficiency, quality and accountability within services. By critiquing government capacity whilst cautioning against state-run monopolies, a neoclassical approach proposes a decrease in the state's role in services (Arndt, 1989; Alkire and Deneulin, 2010a; Harvey, 2005; Olssen, et al, 2004).

Reducing the role of the state in educational financing and provision, spurring competition in order to increase accountability, efficiency and quality, and increasing the choices of individual parents are all justifications rooted in neoclassicism, which informs policies supporting, for instance, public-private partnerships and low-fee private schools (Chan, 2007; Ladd, 2003; Menashy, 2013; Olssen, 1996; Olssen et al., 2004; Plank and Sykes, 2003). For example, in terms of LFPs, supporters argue that it is significant when "parents send their children to private unaided schools when there are free government alternatives" and that the "main advantage" private schools have over government schools is accountability (Tooley, 2004, p. 5). Similarly, PPPs are advocated because "the private sector can compete for students with the public sector. In turn, the public sector has an incentive to react to this competition by increasing the quality of the education that it provides" and "it [a PPP] can increase efficiency and choice" (Patrinos et al., 2009, p. 4).

As mentioned, a neoclassical framework has been widely critiqued as narrow and minimizing the equity implications of its prescriptions, including educational privatization (Fine and Rose, 2001; Tomasevski, 2003; Klees, 2008). Such critiques will be examined in more detail later in this paper when the neoclassical and capability frameworks are compared.

The rights-based approach

A rights-based approach to education has a number of interrelated dimensions: the right of access to education, which includes free access to basic education; the right to quality education; the right to respect within education; accessible higher education; available education for those who have not completed schooling, amongst others (Grey, 2012; Jonsson, 2003; Manion and Menashy, 2013; Robeyns, 2006; UNICEF, 2008; UNESCO and UNICEF, 2007). Tomasevski restates these dimensions in the "4 As" of the right to education: available, accessible, acceptable and adaptable (2001; 2006). Education as a right has moreover been enshrined in a number of human rights treaties (UN, 1948; 1966; 1989).

Evaluating privately provided education under a rights-based approach is complex. Many proponents of education as a right consider the chief "duty bearer" of education – even over and above parents, guardians and teachers – to be the state (Tomasevski, 2003; UNICEF, 2008). Under a rights-based framework, governments are the optimal provider and financier of education. Therefore, significant inclusion of the private sector contrasts "the corresponding government responsibility" (Tomasevski, 2003, p. 69), and when education is characterized as a right, "it is clearly the responsibility of the state" (Archer, 2006, p. 7). Private participation can therefore be deemed problematic and/or arguably contradicts a rights-based approach (Manion and Menashy, 2013; Menashy, 2013).

However, according to international law, it is permissible for any private actor to establish and run a school. Although the state must still monitor and regulate such schools to ensure standards and rights within education are met (Grey, 2012; ICESCR, 1966). In light of this, private providers, including LFPs, are permitted to exist, so long as government deems so.

As well, under the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, parents ought to have the freedom to choose their child's school (UN, 1948, Article 26iii). Scholars have pointed to how this sub-article in the Declaration points to the support of a system inclusive of private providers, including both PPPs and LFPs, where choice is more readily available than in a homogeneous public system (Willmore, 2004). As a result of such diverse interpretations of rights doctrines, there are some critiques associated the rights-based approach in relation to the specific issue of privatization that will be explained more fully below.

The social primary goods approach

Another common framework for social policy is derived from John Rawls' theories concerning justice and social primary goods, rooted in philosophical liberalism. According to Rawls, social primary goods consist of those things all humans desire, irrespective of whatever else they desire. Such goods might be distributed or ensured by private or public institutions and reflect "what would be essential to serving our developmental and our agency interests as free and equal citizens" (Brighouse and Unterhalter, 2010, p.194). Social primary goods are deemed integral to human freedom and liberty, and Rawls gives primacy to "extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others" (Rawls, 1971). For Rawls, moreover, a just society requires a just distribution of social primary goods, where such distribution cannot harm the least-advantaged members (2001). Rawls' theories have widely underpinned social welfare policies, including those involving educational provision and financing.

Social primary goods are essentially resources, and so are means to the ends of liberty, freedom and equality. The focus is on the attainment and possession of these resources, and not on their use, nor on the characteristics of those who use them. Included amongst these social primary goods are such liberal ideals as basic freedom of thought, movement, income, self-respect, and others that act as essential resources (Rawls, 1971; Robeyns and Brighouse, 2010; Sen, 1992).

A key tenet of liberal philosophy hinges on the value of choice, and the primacy of liberty and individualism embedded in liberal theories – including those of Rawls – would dictate that choice is of a paramount concern. In terms of educational privatization, the core of many supporters' arguments centers upon the value of school choice. Under a social primary goods approach to education, it is arguable that equality of choice is a key element, so long as some sort of education is provided – irrespective of differences of outcomes. One can extrapolate from an application of Rawls' theory that private sector participation is unproblematic so long as there is equality of freedom to choose a school and therefore access to education. It can be argued, therefore, that under a Rawlsian framework, educational choice – which underpins many privatization policies including PPPs and LFPs – ought to be supported. Later in this paper I provide a comparison between the applications of the social primary goods and capability approaches to educational privatization, highlighting some major contrasts.

The human capability approach

A capability approach is explicitly normative and provides a framework for the analysis of policies based on implications for individuals' capabilities – what a person is able to do, who a person is able to be (Robeyns, 2005; 2011; Sen, 1992; 1999; 2005). A framework for capability does not focus on a person's happiness or income level. It evaluates whether or not an individual can achieve certain "functionings" that are enabled through capabilities. Capabilities are therefore opportunities, and functionings are what such opportunities allow a human being to concretely do. As an example, being literate is a functioning. The opportunity to be taught how to read is a capability. Being healthy is a functioning, whereas having access to health services is a capability. Through emphasizing our opportunities – which can also be conceived

of as freedoms – the capability approach broadly “covers all dimensions of human well-being” (Robeyns, 2005, p.96). A capability approach to development concentrates on removing obstacles to achieving those functionings an individual believes to be valuable, and so the concepts of capability, opportunity, freedom and agency are closely related. Resources, therefore, are not as important as an individual’s capability to convert these resources into functionings (Drèze and Sen, 1995; Sen, 1993; Walker, 2004).

The capability framework has been applied by scholars to education and educational policy in a number of areas, including gender equity, curriculum, disabilities and higher education (Nussbaum, 2000; Unterhalter, 2007; Robeyns, 2006; Manion, 2010; Terzi, 2008; Walker, 2006). Amartya Sen, who spearheaded the notion of human capability, has briefly examined educational provision (he discusses the characteristics of “basic educational opportunities,” arguing schooling to have a “public-good component” [1999, p. 128-129]); however, the capability approach has not been mapped onto the particular public policy debate of privatization in education. I argue that the framework would add significant value to the analysis of the divisive policy prescriptions associated with private schooling.

When applied to evaluate a policy, the capability approach focuses on the functionings that can be achieved. Therefore, a question posed when analyzing educational privatization policies through a capability lens would center on whether such policies impact an individual’s ability to achieve functionings, and this evaluation may be dependent on context. For instance, are the abilities of some students hindered by privatization; are they less able to learn, to read, to become educated well enough to in turn achieve more functionings such as getting a job, earning an income, independence? It is crucial as well to think broadly – how does private provision impact all students, in all schools? As explained above, private sector engagement in education takes on a variety of forms that, when evaluated, must be contextualized. An arguable strength of the capability approach is that contextualization is necessary before analysis.

When applying the capability approach to the particular context of policies that permit and/or promote LFPs, attention must be paid to school fees. Fees by their nature, regardless of how low, enact a barrier for some students. Inequitable access is therefore inevitable. For those lacking the resources to access these schools, their abilities to achieve the capability of being educated in an LFP, and in turn certain functionings, are inhibited. For instance, studies from India have shown that with the rise in low-fee private schools, government schools have become the “option of last resort for the poorest and most marginalized” (Härmä, 2011, p. 156; Härmä and Rose, 2012). As an example, a recent study of LFPs in India concluded that private schooling “is unlikely to be the best means of providing education for all children in the longer term in ways that respect equity principles” (Woodhead et al, 2013, p. 73). A variety of studies from Africa echo these findings (Barrera-Osorio, 2007; Härmä and Adefisayo, 2011; Rose, 2009). Even very low-fee private schools create an additional tier of education that exacerbates already inequitable education systems. If the goal is to allow all students the capability to attain a quality education, leading to a large set of functionings that will enormously improve their well-being, in many contexts, the low fees may act as an obstacle.

PPPs can be characterized quite differently than LFPs, as schools are publicly financed despite private provision. As mentioned, PPPs are widely advocated based on the appeal and value of choice. In PPP programs, such as those involving vouchers or stipends, an environment is created where schools compete for students, and it is argued by proponents that because parents will choose the better school, this competition will lead to increased quality. However,

when assessed under a capability framework, choice in education is only valuable if it can contribute to the expansion of a person's desired functionings. This is dependent on what Sen terms *conversion factors* (1992). Conversion factors are essentially "the degree in which a person can transform a resource into a functioning" (Robeyns, 2011). Such resources can include goods or services, such as an educational choice program. Social conversion factors are socially constituted and are dependent on the society in which an individual resides, including "public policies, social norms, practices that unfairly discriminate, societal hierarchies, or power relations related to class, gender, race, or caste" (Robeyns, 2011). I argue that, depending on the context, social conversion factors impact the ways in which school choice programs, as resources, can be converted into access to a higher quality education for an individual. Choice, particularly when it is operationalized, for example in a voucher program, is a resource that can enable students to gain a number of functionings via a high quality education. If a student (and family) has a high social conversion factor, it is likely that this student can capitalize on choice policies. High social conversion factors in this context can result from social capital or membership to a dominant group, which allows easier navigation of the system and increases access to schools with either official or unofficial admission screenings. On the other hand, if one has low conversion factors, for instance the family knows fewer people in the community, does not speak the dominant language, lives in a rural setting, or belongs to a marginalized population, the ability to convert a choice program into access to a high-quality private school is lower. Therefore, in the context of school choice, those with lower social conversion factors are less likely to attain the same functionings as those with high social conversion factors, which in turn means that one group of students remains at a disadvantage.

Privatization may enable choice, but this choice is unequally distributed, favoring students with higher conversion factors, and as argued by Alkire and Deneulin: "A test of inequality is whether people's capability sets are equal or unequal" (2010b, p.31). If in many cases students cannot convert "choice" into capabilities, and inequality is only perpetuated, then it is arguable under the capability framework that choice should not be the focus of public policies in education. The capability approach would stress that policies focus on the "ends" we hope to achieve, and that is quality education for all, not some. The avenue towards this end cannot be through choice programs, because of differences between conversion factors. I argue that a capability approach would likely dictate that policies in education ought to give primacy to the improvement of public systems, where the resources provided can be converted by all students (while not assuredly to the same degree) in a more equitable way than in the context of a privatized, marketized system. However, importantly, any policy developed under the capability framework would be dependent on context.

The Human Capability Approach in Comparison

Capability versus the neoclassical approach

As discussed, policies based on a neoclassical model support private sector engagement in part because of the elements of choice and competition. Such policies, however, focus on the means, and often engender outcomes, or ends, that are inequitable. While it is possible that low-fee private schools open doors to some poorer or marginalized students, it is unlikely that the poorest of the poor can gain access. As mentioned earlier, LFPs create an additional tier of schooling that puts the most marginalized students at a further disadvantage. For-profit schools that are both financed and administered privately can then be critiqued as exclusive and inequitable (Brighouse, 2004). Under a capability framework, a marketized system that focuses on individual choice and competition as a means to economic prosperity and development emphasize the wrong elements of education policy, where primacy should be given not to the

means, but the ends – equitable capabilities and thereby functionings that result from a given policy.

Privatization of education is moreover part of a bigger neoclassically-driven project to enhance economic growth through the development of human capital. As Unterhalter puts it: "...what is important for human capital theorists is to understand the economy as a system that will support growth... the human development and capability approach place the quality of human life – and not economic growth – at the centre of its concerns" (2010, p.213). An educational system that is marketized and allows for choice and privatization may contribute to economic growth whilst conceiving of students as key contributors to human capital. But the students within this system, particularly those with lower conversion factors, can still be capability deprived (Alkire and Deneulin, 2010a). Neoclassical approaches to education policy emphasize not the end result of human capability, equality and well-being, but instead focus on the means towards economic growth and in particular efficient human capital development. Privatization policies often exemplify this focus.

Capability versus the rights-based approach

Sen does not advocate that a definitive list of capabilities be developed, partly because of a "difficulty in seeing how the exact lists and weights would be chosen without appropriate specification of the context of their use" (2005, p.157). Sen's resistance to listing capabilities due to problems of contextualization is partially responsive to problematic features of the human rights framework. Critiques have been made concerning the human rights claim to universality (Brown 1999; Donnelly 2003; Freeman 2002; Sen 2005). Because human rights are essentially universalizing principles, critics have questioned the implications of asserting a list of decontextualized overarching values for all people. The capability approach does not fall prey to this critique, for the capabilities which individuals ought to be afforded are dependent upon the functionings he or she desires to achieve, not on some pre-designed set of rights. For instance, under a rights-based approach, those who interpret education as a government responsibility – and not that of the private sector – arguably do so universally. Universalized ideals around educational provision moreover tend to consider private actors as a single group. But the private sector is characterized by a multitude of providers, including for-profit, non-profit or religious schools, to name but a few. The right-based approach, as a universalizing legal doctrine, therefore is potentially too rigid a framework to apply to policies around privatization. A capability approach offers a framework for analysis of educational policies that allows contextualization before prescriptions are presented.

Somewhat paradoxically, along with the rigidity of rights-based approaches, scholars have drawn attention to the vagueness of human rights, and some of the contradictions and criticisms rights declarations engender. As Sen states: "despite the tremendous appeal of the idea of human rights, it is also seen by many as being intellectually frail – lacking in foundation and perhaps even in coherence and cogency. The remarkable co-existence of stirring appeal and deep conceptual skepticism" (2005, p.151). Sen proposes that the capability approach embraces much of the aspirational tone of human rights ("The concepts of human rights and human capabilities have something of a common motivation" 2005, p.152), but they differ because capability theory does not suffer from the same ambiguities and potential inconsistencies.

For instance, as described above, the rights-based framework prescribes two very different legal obligations concerning private engagement in education. Some interpret the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights to support public education, and forcefully critique private schools (see Tomasevski, 2003; 2006), while others interpret the Declaration to advocate strongly for school

choice and private providers. As Willmore states: “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also guarantees parents the ‘right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children’ [Article 26iii]. This right is violated in virtually every country on earth...” (Willmore, 2004, p.18). Therefore, the rights-based framework can be adopted to either support or reject privatization policies. This ambiguity unfortunately indicates that a rights-based approach has limited applicability to the evaluation of educational privatization policies. By allowing for contextualization and avoiding some of the contradictory legalistic language embedded in rights declarations, the capability approach does not suffer from the critiques levied against a rights-based approach.

Capability versus the social primary goods approach

As described, the social primary goods approach focuses upon means, or resources. Included amongst these social primary goods is the general concept of individual freedom and liberal notions of individual choice. From this, freedom of choice – as a resource with which one might attain an education – can be argued to be amongst the social primary goods. Rawls’ theory could therefore be easily adopted to advocate for private sector engagement, for private providers increase the scope and variety of school choices.

From the capability perspective, however, a Rawlsian-informed framework has some drawbacks. For instance, Sen argues that a person’s resources do not indicate whether or not he or she is able to capitalize on these resources and translate them into functionings, due to differences in conversion factors (Sen, 1997; 1999). Equality therefore cannot be adequately evaluated through the social primary goods approach. As Sen explains: “To judge equality... in the space of primary goods amounts to giving priority to the *means* of freedom over any assessment of the *extents* of freedom, and this can be a drawback in many contexts. The practical importance of the divergence can be very great indeed in dealing with inequalities related to gender, location, and class, and also to general variations in inherited characteristics” (1992, p.8-9). He furthermore states: “The capability perspective allows us to take into account the parametric variability in the relation between the means, on the one hand, and the actual opportunities, on the other” (Sen, 2005, p.153), showing the superiority of the capability approach over and above the social primary goods framework.

For example, a voucher can be defined as a means, a resource with which a parent can choose and pay private school tuition with public funds. But simply evaluating this single resource is not adequate for understanding whether or not this voucher can contribute to the student’s well-being. For instance, studies have shown that voucher systems can create enormous inequities within education systems, where parents with more social capital – higher conversion factors – can more readily navigate such systems and manage to gain access to better quality schools for their children (Carnoy and McEwan, 2003; Lara et al., 2009; Molnar, 2001). It can be argued that a social primary goods approach would give primacy to choice, and therefore PPPs. A capability approach, however, differs by emphasizing the equity implications of such programs.

Choice, moreover, is a concept that should not be confused with agency, or opportunity. In a variety of policies advocating private provision, individual choice is presented as a good in itself. The capability framework, however, “recognizes that the goal is not to expand the number of choices – it is to expand the quality of human life” (Alkire and Deneulin, 2010b, p.34). The capability approach furthermore evaluates equality based on people’s capability sets (Alkire and Deneulin, 2010b; Sen, 1980; 1992; 1999; 2005). If human well-being were to be assessed based on a person’s choices, then all must have equality of choice. However, in the

case of, for instance, low-fee private schools, only those families with means to pay the fees are able to enjoy this choice.

It is of course plausible that freedom of choice in education might not be readily defined as a social primary good, but as shown, this conceptualization is certainly plausible and therefore up for debate. The ambiguity would then be problematic in attempting to apply this framework, indicating another shortcoming of a social primary goods approach to assessing privatization.

Conclusion

The rise in private provision of education, in such forms as PPPs and LFPs, has engendered a concurrent rise in criticisms. Such critiques oftentimes concentrate on the dominant neoclassical theoretical underpinnings to education policies which support privatization, calling for a more socially just framework. I propose, however, that the alternative approaches that are most commonly employed to counter the neoclassical framework are each limited and inadequate. In light of this argument, in this paper I have endeavored to demonstrate that the human capability approach ought to be embraced and adopted more readily when examining issues and policies concerning educational privatization. A capability framework allows for greater contextualization and avoids major ambiguities that characterize the rights-based approach. As well, unlike the social primary goods approach, under a capability framing the notion of choice within education is less important than the outcomes that education policies engender. I argue that the capability approach offers a more refined critique of the neoclassical framework than other theories commonly invoked by scholars and policy-makers within CIE, one that can be contextually applied and lead towards greater equity.

As a new development agenda is determined within the post-2015 context, it is imperative to be cognizant of the new and significant rise in private educational providers throughout the Global South. Moreover, international education policies – including those either advocating or disputing increased privatization – are inevitably informed by theoretical frameworks which, as I have argued, can have critical implications for equity. A better understanding of such frameworks, including both their strengths and shortcomings, is therefore timely and crucial.

Notes

I thank Dr. Caroline Manion for reviewing an earlier version of this manuscript. Any errors are of course my own.

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Breaking Tradition: Taking Stock of Research on Global School Choice

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School choice policies, as neoliberal reforms, have often been analyzed using the very discourse embedded in neoliberal mentalities. By reviewing the way scholars have conceptualized school choice as a transnational phenomenon, this paper evaluates the extent to which scholarship has attempted to, or succeeded in, overcoming traditional, neoliberal analyses of school choice. First, the paper attempts to define and problematize neoliberalism and market-based reforms. Then, it describes the various ways in which scholars have conceptualized school choice policies as global. Finally, the paper uses Robertson and Dale's (2008) key assumptions to evaluate the extent to which research on global school choice has broken free from traditional modes of research. By interrogating traditional modes of scholarly inquiry, it becomes possible for scholars in Comparative and International Education to approach better understandings of the way complex global policies play out.

Introduction

School choice policies, with roots in neoliberal mentalities, have gained an increasingly prominent voice among policymakers and educational researchers in recent years. Not only are market-based policies gaining popularity, but the ideas and language behind such policies have permeated educational discourse. However, diverse actors across different local contexts interpret and experience neoliberal policies in specific and variegated ways. Even though the policies themselves grow out of a coherent set of neoliberal ideas, they play out in a complex way across the globe.

According to Apple (1999), neoliberal dominance in policy creation across the globe has been critiqued within the academy, but those critiques often utilize the very categories created by neoliberal ideology (p. 16). In the time since Apple's assertion, some scholars in Comparative and International Education (Stambach, 2003; Carney, 2009) have sought alternative ways of conceptualizing school choice as a global reform. It is important to seek new methods and concepts that facilitate an understanding of this neoliberal reform outside the confines of neoliberal language and traditional social-scientific constructs. Doing so would allow for a more complex understanding of the ways in which school choice policies play out and influence various actors across global spaces. This paper seeks to evaluate the extent to which current literature in the field of Comparative Education has fulfilled Apple's (1999) call to analyze a neoliberal policy, school choice, using new methods and categories that reflect the complex nature of globalization.

School choice policies, as neoliberal reforms, have often been analyzed using the very discourse embedded in neoliberal mentalities. By reviewing the way scholars have conceptualized school choice as a transnational phenomenon, this paper evaluates the extent to which scholarship has attempted to, or succeeded in, overcoming traditional, neoliberal analyses of school choice. First, the paper attempts to define and problematize neoliberalism and market-based reforms. Then, it describes the various ways in which scholars have conceptualized school choice policies as

global. Finally, the paper uses Robertson and Dale's (2008) key assumptions to evaluate the extent to which research on global school choice has broken free from traditional modes of research.

Neoliberalism and its Discontents

School choice policies, as market-based reforms, can be characterized as neoliberal reforms. However, neoliberalism has itself become a "rascal concept—promiscuously pervasive, yet inconsistently defined, empirically imprecise and frequently contested" (Brenner, Peck, & Theodore, 2009, p. 184). Beginning with the abstract ideological proposals of Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, neoliberalism would initially be enacted under Augusto Pinochet, Margaret Thatcher, and Ronald Reagan. Reacting against Keynesian economic policies, neoliberals created state policies that would guarantee a smoothly functioning, preeminent market (England & Ward, 2007; Brenner et al., 2009; Dean, 2010).

Even though many see neoliberalism as an economic mentality, it must also be seen as a mentality of governance (Rose, 1999; Dean, 2010). Hindess (2004) argues that the crux of neoliberalism "lies in the attempt to introduce not only market and quasi-market arrangements but also empowerment, self-government and responsibility into areas of social life which had hitherto been organized in other ways" (p. 35). For instance, introducing individual choice into the realm of public education promotes individual responsibility and self-government by forcing actors to choose. Implementing neoliberal reforms creates a system that governs indirectly.

Rather than government-dictated control of citizens, which Hayek warned against, neoliberalism governs through "the calculative choice of formally free actors" (Collier & Ong, 2005). In this way, Rose (1996) and others (see Peters, 2005; Dean, 2010; Suspitsyna, 2010) argue in the tradition of Foucault that power and control exist in mechanisms like choice. Under market systems that empower individuals, self-government and individual entrepreneurship become increasingly important. Individual decisions are dictated not simply through "free choice," but are mediated by the range of choices available, the way in which information about choices is presented, and prevailing notions of what constitutes a "good" choice. While neoliberal policies provide actors with the freedom to choose, individuals have no choice but to choose, and to regulate their actions in accordance with available and desirable choices.

More concretely, Bartlett, Frederick, Gulbrandsen, and Murillo (2002) argue that neoliberal reforms in education pose problems specifically because they are rooted in economic ideas. Using market ideology to structure public schooling is necessarily based on costs and benefits as understood in economic terms. Neoliberal discourse around schooling not only surrounds policies like school choice, but also narrows the range of education's goals. In order to survive in the educational market, individuals, schools, and policies must rely on measurable statistics. Educational goals that are not readily quantified often get left behind.

Theorists have also noted that neoliberalism is "oft-invoked but ill-defined" (Mudge, 2008), perhaps because conceptualizing neoliberalism as a monolithic governmental state or a global hegemonic force cannot encompass its complexity. Rather than thinking of it as static, England and Ward (2007), as well as Brenner, Peck, and Theodore (2009), have focused on neoliberalization. As a process, neoliberalization is variegated, unfinished, and contingent. It is a slippery concept to theorize, let alone study empirically. School choice, as a neoliberal policy, embodies these conceptual challenges.

Conceptualizing Transnational School Choice

Several scholars in the field of Comparative and International Education have studied school choice as a global phenomenon, given the policy's increasing popularity transnationally. Scholars conceptualize globalization in varying and diverse ways, so it is unsurprising that they also present varying interpretations of school choice policies. However, across conceptual and methodological differences, scholars of school choice have collectively issued a warning against placing too much faith in market-based reforms by painting a nuanced picture of the way school choice policies work.

A Symptom of Economic Globalization

When describing school choice policies, many scholars focus on neoliberalism and, more specifically, on economic globalization. The connection between school choice and global capitalism runs across the literature. Astiz, Wiseman, and Baker (2002) refer to economic globalization as the "intensification of a global market operating across and among a system of national labor markets through international competition" (p. 67). This definition provides a fairly concrete description of economic globalization, describing global capitalism as increased international connection through economic transactions. Davies and Guppy (1997) similarly argue that economic globalization has caused the global marketplace to shape educational reform (p. 438).

Carney (2009) takes this concept further, first describing the predominant role market capitalism has played in Comparative Education literature, and then arguing that "economic values and systems" have changed the way people and states relate to one another (p. 64). It has further changed the "very understandings that we have of what it means to be educated" (Carney, 2009, p. 64). Education is framed as necessary for accessing global markets and the key to alleviating economic hardship (Davies & Guppy, 1997; Stambach, 2003). It is also often blamed for economic decline (Davies & Guppy, 1997). In this way, scholars conceptualize school choice as part of economic globalization, but also problematize global capitalism (Apple, 1999; McLaren, 1999). Within economic globalization, school choice is both a result of market-based educational goals and a vehicle for promoting economic values through education. As neoliberal policies like school choice persist and grow, people will increasingly think about education in the context of the economy.

More specifically, James et al. (2010) describe the way that neoliberal policies like school choice assume that markets allocate resources effectively and efficiently. Because educational markets deal with schooling, they inherently commodify education (James et al., 2010, p. 629). School choice policies create competition between schools, and assume that individuals select schools using rational cost-benefit analyses. Through these assumptions, and accompanying practices, they encourage people to behave as consumers when they choose a school. According to Forsey, Davies, and Walford (2008), such processes encourage a "consumerist ethic that is difficult to resist" (p. 9). The idea of choice "reflects and evokes deep desires for autonomy, control and self-expression" (Forsey et al., 2008, p. 10). However, choice's promise masks the way choice is confined by its commodification. Consumers of education begin to think of schooling as a product to be valued for its economic worth, and regulate their decisions accordingly.

At the same time, James et al. (2010) and Forsey et al. (2008) also argue that neoliberalism assumes an understanding of human decision-making that is limited and problematic. According to Forsey et al. (2008), viewing people as motivated solely by "maximizing economic benefits" is a deeply flawed and inadequate way to understand human behavior (p. 12). This provides some insight into the complex and contradictory nature of neoliberal reforms. Even as school choice policies encourage "consumers" to value education for its economic worth, the

policies fail to recognize that humans rarely make purely economic decisions. Under such conditions, it would seem that non-economic educational priorities are not eliminated, but become increasingly invisible.

An Indicator of Institutional Globalization?

Comparativists studying school choice also test the transnational spread of school choice policies against World Polity Theory. Astiz (2002) defines institutional globalization as “convergence toward a uniform model of polity and rationalization... [which] tends to create isomorphic polities, reinforcing uniform patterns among organizational structures in these sectors” (p. 67). This idea fits with neoinstitutionalist understandings of globalization, which highlight similarities across national policies. Indeed, the way that school choice has been adopted across the globe can be seen as evidence supporting notions of educational policy convergence (Forsey, Davies, & Walford, 2008). According to Gulson and Fataar (2011), “neoliberalism has become the dominant characterization and form of education, in which international, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations are important policy players” (p. 269). While some scholars (e.g., St. Clair & Belzer, 2007) see institutionalism as an adequate framework for understanding neoliberal reforms as a global phenomenon, most view the institutional perspective as, at best, partially useful. Even as scholars see educational policies converging, they see this characterization as insufficient for understanding the way school choice works.

For instance, Davies and Guppy (1997) describe institutional globalization as inherently tied to the bureaucratic form of the modern nation-state (p. 440). From this perspective, bureaucrats and educational professionals would be important actors, creating policies that make a given nation-state’s educational system appear legitimate. However, momentum for school choice initiatives has come from local, grassroots actors as well as powerful neoconservative advocates (Davies & Guppy, 1997). This results in what Davies and Guppy (1997) call “*squeezing power from the middle*” (p. 459, emphasis in original). Through choice policies advocated both at the grassroots and the policy level, they argue, “power is being wrested from educational professionals, teacher unions, and ministry officials” and is being “redistributed upward to more senior state officials *and* downward to local groups” (p. 459, emphasis in original). As such neoinstitutional descriptions of neoliberal educational policies insufficiently describes the power dynamics in transnational market-based reforms.

A Reproducer of Inequality

In seeking to look beyond the policy level of analysis, Comparative and International Education scholars have looked to the ways in which neoliberal policies affect the populations where they are implemented. The literature comes to consensus around the idea that neoliberal reforms like school choice reproduce “a social system that exacerbates social inequality” (Forsey et al., 2008, p. 9; see also Apple, 1999). Even though choice policies often claim to provide increased access to quality education for the poor, that promise has failed to materialize. Indeed, market-based reforms have shown to disproportionately benefit economically privileged classes (Ball, 1993; James et al., 2010; Sung, 2011). However, these benefits occur in less obvious ways under neoliberal policies.

According to James et al. (2010), middle- and upper-class families bring social and cultural capital to the realm of educational choice, placing them in an advantaged position for choosing the “best” schools. Privileged families have the cultural knowledge and connections to effectively navigate the system in order to select high performing schools. However, James et al. (2010) also find that white middle-class families in Britain benefit more than poor and working

class families, regardless of which schools they choose (i.e., choose schools that do not align with norms of what constitutes a “good” school). Even when privileged children do not attend the “best” schools, they succeed more often than their less privileged peers (James et al., 2010, p. 637). By focusing on singular measures of school quality, choice mechanisms distract from the fact that—regardless of which school they attend—children from different economic backgrounds achieve at different levels. However, by placing such instances in the context of neoliberal school choice, the embedded nature of inequality is masked by individual choice.

Moreover, Gulson & Fataar (2011) argue that school choice, as an aspect of neoliberal globalization, must be seen in terms of unequal allocation of power. This unequal power distribution must also be understood with regard to colonial histories. In South Africa, for example, “while choice has been posited as a possible way for Black parents to obtain a better education for their children, it has also reinforced historically White privilege in post-apartheid South Africa” (Gulson & Fataar, 2011, p. 274). Even though school choice policies can be seen as tools for the poor and working classes to access quality education, scholars agree that it actually reproduces existing inequality in various forms.

The most problematic aspect of the way neoliberal policies reproduce inequality, however, is the way they justify that inequality. According to Gulson and Fataar (2011), achievement is directly associated with aspirations. As they argue, “responsibility for not achieving high academic results, and for not raising the educational standards of the entire system, lies with families and students who have low or no aspirations” (p. 279). In this way, neoliberal policies and their accompanying discourse encourage placing responsibility for inequality upon the individual. People begin to understand low achievement as correlated not with disadvantage or with poverty, but with low aspirations. The logic of neoliberal reform, therefore, masks inequality and needs to be resisted, whether through measured reforms or more revolutionary transformations (Apple, 1999; McLaren, 1999).

The inequality resulting from school choice policies brings another contradiction to bear. Choice policies have been promoted as populist, grass-roots reform efforts, often led by parent groups (Davies & Guppy, 1997). Such movements claim that choice policies are responsive to community needs, empowering teachers and parents (Astiz et al., 2002). Yet Davies and Guppy (1997) argue that teachers actually lose power under choice policies, and others show that empowered parents generally come from the middle- and upper-classes (Ball, 1993; James et al., 2010; Sung, 2011).

According to Ball (1993), middle-class parents felt their social positions were threatened by “the increasing social democratic de-differentiation of schools, the cultural reform of the curriculum... and the diversion of resources to those with greatest learning needs and difficulties” (p. 16). In this way, Ball (1993) argues that middle class parents fear losing positions of comfort, particularly in the context of progressive reforms intended to equalize educational opportunity. By advocating for choice policies, middle class parents (whether unwittingly or intentionally) support policies that secure their own positions while preventing others from accessing the same privileges. This position, coupled with the neoliberal logic of aspiration (Gulson & Fataar, 2011) allows middle class families “the supreme privilege of not seeing themselves as privileged” (Bourdieu & Passeron, as cited in Ball, 1993).

A Locally Global Phenomenon

The extent to which school choice policies have been adopted transnationally is mediated by the way local contexts shape and adapt neoliberal policies (Astiz, 2002). Even as policies look

increasingly similar across nation-states, those policies become “globalized messages projected across educational spaces and translated in ways that resonate in particular contexts” (Carney, 2009, p. 69). In this way, neoliberal policies are not only “borrowed” across policy contexts, but are re-created and modified to fit local needs. As school choice policies operate transnationally, then, they play out in ways that reflect both local specificity and global universality.

Borrowed and Adapted

While scholars recognize that school choice policies have, to some extent, been borrowed across policy contexts, they also emphasize the ways in which localities interpret and modify policies to fit historical understandings and cultural needs. According to Stambach’s (2003) study of missionary-supported choice policies in Tanzania, the idea of choice had “been layered onto historically and culturally non-Western understandings of transaction and personhood and imbued with alternative registers of meaning” (p. 155). In this way, Stambach (2003) shows that “choices are not the same everywhere” (p. 157). Forsey et al. (2008) similarly argue that neoliberal constructs must be understood by focusing on the way school choice policies “assume a wide variety of incarnations” across different nation-states (p. 22).

Universal and Specific

Further, scholars propose that globalization can be understood by looking at the way local actors adapt neoliberal policies to fit specific contexts. School choice policies can bridge the local and global because they engage language flexible enough to incorporate diverse interests (Forsey et al., 2008). Even though neoliberal choice policies naturally fit with conservative economic thinkers, the policies have attracted religious, ethnic, and linguistic minorities who co-opt school choice vocabularies to fit their specific interests (Forsey et al., 2008, p. 22; see also Stambach, 2003). In this way, school choice can be understood as serving local needs through the language of neoliberal policies. However, school choice policies are often applied as if they have “no geographic and historic specificities” (Gulson & Fataar, 2011, p. 270). While neoliberal reforms are transnational in nature and take on a global mystique, it is imperative to consider them through the lens of locality and specificity.

It is also important to recognize, as Stambach (2003) highlights, the fact that those with a certain amount of transnational power—like the American missionaries who promoted choice policies in Tanzania—are not simply purveyors of universal ideas while Tanzanian actors represent the local. As she states, the Tanzanian parents “are not any more ‘particularistic’ in their cultural views than the missionaries are ‘universalistic.’ That is, even though the missionaries’ views are more likely to be taken up in the institutionalized forms of schooling, both missionaries and Tanzanians have localized visions of universal forms of schooling” (Stambach, 2003, p. 158). The American missionaries brought specific localized visions of school choice policies, while Tanzanian parent had different ways of understanding school choice from their specific local context. Even as choice policies represent transnational neoliberal policies, they must be reconstituted and interpreted by local actors in unique contexts.

From another angle, however, “Choice in theory, should make schooling more responsive to regional concerns... Yet paradoxically these measures also strengthen various universalist creeds and give central administrative bodies some added authority” (Davies & Guppy, 1997, p. 456). Just as hegemonic, universalizing notions of neoliberal reforms appear to spread across the globe, local contexts interpret and reconstruct meaning around those policies. In many instances, they use such dominant policy discourses to further their own interests. At the same time that they use school choice to promote specific local interests, they encourage the spread of neoliberal discourse.

A Ubiquitous Discourse

Not only have neoliberal policies themselves been borrowed and adapted across nation-states, but neoliberal discourses have undergone the same processes. According to Sung (2011), in Korea, “loanwords” have been borrowed from English-language rhetoric, creating local policy reforms. In this way, loanwords (particularly those transferred from a developed country) carry symbolic power over policy creation, while also allowing the receiving language to adapt the loanwords to create new meaning (Sung, 2011). This works particularly well for neoliberal constructs like choice because its loose framework allows people to incorporate their own priorities within market-based language (Forsey, 2008). However, the ways in which local actors make sense of those meanings are simultaneously shaped by a discourse that permeates across contexts.

Even as local actors ascribe meaning to neoliberal discourse, people conceive of education within the framework of those ideals. According to Apple (1999), educational issues have increasingly been framed in terms of a neoliberal agenda. As the discourse of markets, choice, and economic competitiveness frame policies, conversations, and thoughts about education, the logic of neoliberalism gains a “common-sense” quality. It becomes natural to think about education in terms of its economic utility, or to associate positive notions of liberty and autonomy with conceptions of individual choice. However, it is important to interrogate neoliberal “common-sense” ideology to reveal its “hidden effects” (Apple, 1999, p. 8).

A Technology for Global Governance

Similarly hidden are neoliberalism’s methods for governance. According to Carney (2009), rather than governing through direct state control, neoliberalism implements “invisible or embedded processes of power” (p. 65). In this way, neoliberal governmentality uses notions of autonomy, personal responsibility, and choice to govern through flat, dispersed loci of control (Gulson & Fataar, 2011). Choice, then, can be seen as a technology that uses decentralization to implement new forms of control (Carney, 2009). Most concretely, the choices available to people under neoliberal policies have often been more limited than opportunities available before choice policies were implemented. Not only are people presented with a limited range of choices, but they also have “no choice but to choose” under such policies (Forsey et al., 2008). In this way, people are disciplined to think in accordance with market principles and to discipline their choices to fit expectations.

Evaluating School Choice Scholarship

The literature on globalization and school choice from the field of Comparative and International Education provides a complex and nuanced understanding of the way choice policies work across transnational contexts. However, it is also important to evaluate scholarship for its methodology. The scholars referenced above have shown that neoliberal reforms like school choice policies must be interrogated for their negative implications. However, neoliberal constructs are not simply manifested at the policy level and, as such, cannot simply be eliminated by advocating for policy changes. Neoliberal reforms present a much slipperier problem. Neoliberal discourse and governance influence the way people think about education, its role in their lives, and its role in various contexts across the globe. For this reason, it is necessary to re-think the way scholars research neoliberal policies.

A possibility for interrogating the way scholars evaluate school choice policies can be found in the work of Robertson and Dale (2008). In order to move beyond traditional modes of contemporary transnational research, they propose four key assumptions that must be overcome. Recognizing and breaking free of these assumptions is necessary in order to understand global phenomena outside the confines of outmoded methodological categories and static spaces. Using these assumptions, “methodological nationalism,” “methodological statism,” “methodological educationism,” and “spatial fetishism,” (Robertson & Dale, 2008) this section analyzes transnational school choice research to ascertain whether the existing literature has succeeded in moving past static categories to interrogate school choice reforms.

Methodological Nationalism

According to Robertson and Dale (2008), educational research has traditionally focused on the nation-state as its unit of analysis. Yet that habit has restricted the possibilities for how scholars do comparative research. As educational policies become transnational, it is necessary to explore them without seeing the nation-state as a fixed entity, and the only available unit of analysis.

Many Comparative and International Education scholars studying school choice policies use nation-states as their primary units of analysis (James et al., 2010; Sung, 2011; Davies & Guppy, 1997). However, they do so while describing the ways in which policy discourse and practice has permeated national boundaries. Stambach (2003) uses Tanzania as her study’s context, but her ethnography focuses on the interactions between Tanzanian families and American missionaries. The ethnography takes place within the Tanzanian policy context, but also focuses on powerful transnational actors. Stambach (2003) accounts for differences between the families she studies and the national-level policymakers, even though they are both Tanzanian. Acknowledging the unique backgrounds of various actors, she moves beyond simply focusing on the nation-state to understand the issue with local interest. In this way, it is important for scholars to move past the local-global binary to analyze connections and flows across borders and across units of analysis.

Carney (2009) intentionally attempts to analyze school choice by “working across different levels of the education systems” in the three countries he studies (p. 63). In doing so, he follows Appadurai (1996; 2000) by creating a policyscape as his unit of analysis. That policyscape, he argues, crosses national boundaries but embodies neoliberal ideologies. He explores transnational relations by exploring practices in both government policy and grassroots organizations. Interestingly, he chooses three countries in which to construct a policyscape. Even as he seeks to break free from traditional units of analysis, he uses nation-states to construct his policyscape. While his exercise was useful in pushing the field to think about the way it analyzes policy, it did not entirely move past a focus on the nation-state. His ideas are helpful for understanding the ways in which neoliberal policies can exist across spaces. By looking at both Carney (2009) and Stambach (2003), comparativists move closer to understanding how written school choice policies and enacted school choice practices play out in both universal and specific ways across contexts.

Methodological Statism

Methodological statism assumes that each nation-state is organized and managed in the same way. Under this assumption, the state is represented “as a universal form rather than a particular representation that has been universalized” (Robertson & Dale, 2008, p. 23). Further, Robertson and Dale (2008) encourage researchers to interrogate the state as a locus of power.

They suggest studying educational governance by looking at the way different actors coordinate activity to construct and deliver education (Robertson & Dale, 2008, p. 24).

Scholars of school choice have begun to interrogate methodological statism in some of the ways they conceive of global governmentality. Forsey et al. (2008), Carney (2009), and Gulson and Fataar (2011) describe the ways in which neoliberalism governs in new ways, outside the realm of state control. In this respect, research on school choice has particularly lent itself to overcoming methodological statism. A prime example of power located outside the realm of traditional state organization, neoliberal governmentality must continue to serve as a lens through which scholars understand school choice reforms.

However, scholars have not necessarily interrogated the extent to which different nation-states operate with different organization and administration. St. Clair and Belzer (2007) explore educational systems according to their relative centralization or decentralization. However, more research questioning the way choice policies play out among governments with varying structures is necessary in order to better understand school choice as a transnational policy phenomenon. Particularly with regard to neoliberal policies and implementation, studies of school choice in nation-states that proclaim Keynesian or Socialist economic policies (e.g., Finland), as compared to firmly neoliberal countries (e.g., the United States).

Methodological Educationism

Assumptions behind methodological educationism see education as something “fixed, abstract and absolute” (Robertson & Dale, 2008, p. 25). The norms and assumptions behind what education should be and do are not questioned. According to Robertson and Dale (2008), “It also usefully disguises the role of education in capitalist systems, as a tool for social stratification” (p. 25). They propose that researchers question assumed educational practice, politics, and outcomes.

As shown above, many scholars of school choice have highlighted the extent to which neoliberal education reforms have reproduced inequitable social structures (Ball, 1993; Davies & Guppy, 1997; Astiz et al., 2002; Forsey, 2008; James et al., 2010; Gulson & Fataar, 2011; Sung, 2011). Particularly, scholars have focused on the role school choice policies play in global capitalism, suggesting that neoliberal reforms should be seen as culpable for sustaining unjust economic structures (Davies & Guppy, 1997; Astiz, et al., 2002; Carney, 2009). Neoliberalism in general has been interrogated across various disciplines as a hegemonic force to be resisted. However, it is also important for comparativists to consider the boundaries of education with relation to other sectors, as well as public and community outcomes of education. Under neoliberal policies, it is particularly important to question the extent to which choice promotes schooling’s commodification.

Spatial Fetishism

Robertson and Dale (2008) emphasize the importance of questioning the influence of space on educational phenomena. Spatial fetishism involves viewing space as “timeless and static” rather than historical and in flux (Brenner, cited in Robertson & Dale, 2008, p. 28). They further challenge researchers to move beyond simply describing issues as “global.” Rather, a deeper exploration of context, at multiple levels, must be explored.

The research reviewed in this paper has described transnational school choice as global, and has sought to explicate the implications of school choice as a global phenomenon. In this way, they do not treat “the global” as a static and self-evident concept, but rather as one that must be

explored and questioned. However, fewer researchers have specifically sought to explore a multi-layered context that is situated in dynamic time and space. Robertson and Dale (2008) suggest moving beyond the local-global binary to describe a phenomena across multiple scales. Carney (2009) and Stambach (2003), in particular, analyze school choice policies with specific regard to spatial locality. They both orient their studies to specific times and places, but also acknowledge the multiple levels on which their subjects interact. Given the way neoliberalization has been theorized as multiple, contingent, and on-going, empirical studies must avoid designing studies that position school choice policies and practices as monolithic or static. Even as school choice is enacted, shifts, and responds to critique, researchers must interrogate its nuances and processes, even as they unfold.

Conclusions

As a greater number of nations across the globe have adopted choice policies, scholars have increasingly described the policies as part of a global school reform model. Scholars who seek to understand school choice as a global phenomenon have conceptualized globalization in varying, but complementary ways. Scholars have critiqued school choice as a neoliberal construct, which has reproduced existing forms of inequality through its seemingly inescapable discourse and governmentality. As part of these critiques, some scholars have ventured toward new methods of researching and analyzing school choice policies. Scholars should follow the lead of scholars like Stambach and Carney in order to not only forge new methods of scholarly investigation, but also to problematize existing neoliberal constructs. By seeking to break down traditional categories and modes of analysis, they have begun to open opportunities to imagine alternative modes of education and governance.

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Neoliberalism in Two Hong Kong School Categories

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This article examines the link between the governance of Hong Kong's international school and Direct Subsidy Scheme school categories and changes in the broader Hong Kong society through a neoliberal framework. As Hong Kong's economy has grown since the 1997 handover to the People's Republic of China, an increasing number of people have come to Hong Kong. These people bring increased income, they have fewer children and they bring new expectations and practices for education. The government has responded to differentiated demand by developing the international school and Direct Subsidy Scheme school categories. Each has distinctive privatization features to increase inter- and intra-category competition and choice. Greater privatization has raised fears that social mobility for the poor is being stifled and school inequality and malfeasance will grow. It also places new burdens on parents and signals the continued changing relationship between school and society.

Government policy plays a significant role in mediating how education and society shape one another. In the case of Hong Kong, little attention has been paid to how the government mediates this tension between society and the education system. Yet there is a need to explore this mediation through policy because changes in Hong Kong's education system reflect developments in its broader society.

I examine the link between the governance of two school categories in Hong Kong's education system and changes in the broader Hong Kong society. I adopt a neoliberal framework for understanding changes to the Hong Kong socio-economic context and the governance of two Hong Kong school categories. I examine government policy because "the rise of neoliberalism is seemingly rooted in certain governments' policies" (Huang, 2012, p. 40). In the Asia-Pacific region, education systems in Australia and New Zealand have received attention in the literature as targets of neoliberal government reform. Exploring neoliberalism in the Hong Kong education system may yield unique insights because "in different socio-cultural contexts, neoliberalism may have different influences on educational practices" (Huang, 2012, p. 39). This article expands the understanding of neoliberalism in education and schools at societal, institutional and individual levels.

In this article, I first construct an understanding of neoliberalism in education. I then apply a neoliberal framework to a changing Hong Kong socio-economic context and the governance of two categories of Hong Kong schools: international schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools. I conclude with implications of these categorical changes on the Hong Kong education system and society.

Neoliberalism in Education

Neoliberalism is a generic term that assembles economic, social and philosophy theory. It encompasses state minimalism through deregulation and privatization of social services (Lee & Lee, 2013). Its adherents presuppose individuals and organizations act because of their rational self-interest. While marketplace principles such as competition best promote rational self-

interest in political, economic and social decisions (Huang, 2012), state welfare and intervention do not.

Neoliberalism is a phenomenon with practical origins as a governmental response to the 1970s economic climate in the United Kingdom (UK) and in the United States of America (USA). It transcends geographic boundaries, having influenced both northern and southern hemispheres, and western and eastern states. It is a dimension of globalization as it structures local and global relations through economy, comparison and competition.

This belief system leads to a form of state governance. A government aims to extend rational economic thought and systemic competitiveness to all areas of life in a market state, or a competition state, and imagined economy. The state divests responsibility for society's needs and unleashes "the techniques of rationality of business, the commercial, the private, into the public services and operations of the state" (Doherty, 2007, p. 273). In other words, the state enables individuals and organizations to care for themselves through privatization, by granting power to compete and freedom of choice. These affordances change traditional understandings of organizations because "important distinctions between state and market, public and private, government and business, left and right are attenuated" (Ball, 2007, p.8). And these organizations with greater operational freedom in a more competitive, entrepreneurial environment may produce more entrepreneurial, rationally self-interested people who perpetuate neoliberalism.

Neoliberalism creates a specific understanding of education in a state. The state facilitates its education system's transformation into an education services industry. Education and all its aspects become a matter of consumer choice and efficient commodification. Education, its schools and individuals, become products that "can be bought and sold like anything else" (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 254). Therefore, valuation and value creation become paramount at several levels. The education industry must create value for the state economy. Schools as businesses must add value to students. Self-interested individuals must create value for themselves within this context by making rational economic choices. The market, and not the state, improves the education system because competition rewards excellent, efficient and productive individuals and organizations, and not mediocre individuals and organizations.

A particular discourse relating government, society and the individual operationalizes neoliberalism. Doherty (2007) has characterized it as consumerist and commercial. In the education discourse, key words include "freedom, choice, standards, excellence, tradition and parents' rights" (Doherty, p. 276). Ball (2007) has added that this discourse is framed by "an over-bearing, economic and political context of international competitiveness" (p. 2). Ultimately, this discourse perpetuates a belief that neoliberalism is naturally inevitable, morally absolute and desirable (Davies & Bansel, 2007). As these beliefs become more pervasive, so does the perpetuation of this discourse in society.

Criticism of neoliberalism in education stems from what neoliberalism excludes. Huang (2012) has argued that "neoliberalism wages an incessant war on democracy, public goods, and non-commodified values" (p. 40). This withdrawing of values or virtue from the social good can be troubling because education aspires no longer to values but to measurable value, for instance, performativity through standardized assessments and qualifications. The immeasurable has no place in a neoliberal education. Huang (2012) has supported this argument by the changing significance of public examinations, which have a long history in Chinese society. The legacy of social prestige from competitive examinations in Chinese society is being replaced by a social

mobility meaning, because “the national examinations are now a critically selective mechanism in the labour market” (Huang, 2012, p. 43). Utility has replaced virtue in scholarship not only in China but in many nations where neoliberalism is pervasive.

In addition, Ball (1990) has argued that neoliberalism is “strongly counterposed to the worth or possibility of equality” (p. 34). Song (2013) has implicated this inequality by neoliberalism in arguing that English-language international schools in South Korea have become institutions to perpetuate social stratification and the elite class. Yet Ball (1990) has also provided a response to such criticism by saying that “inequalities are fair because the market is unprincipled, its effects are unintentional, there is no deliberate bias,” and that ultimately the market “produces a natural economic order and the poorer, the losers in the market, will benefit from the progress of the society as a whole” (p. 39, 37). A danger of such response is the construction of an anthropomorphic *market* by which people can divest themselves of individual responsibility for inequality, bias and principles that impact all. People do not have to be counter-posed to the worth or possibility of equality.

Neoliberalism in the Hong Kong Socio-economic Context

Neoliberalism has long influenced the Hong Kong socio-economic context. Hong Kong’s foundation as an entrepot for the British Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries set a precedent for economic competition and free, globalized flows of goods, services and people in the territory. In more recent years an economic boom in the early 1990s drew more foreigners to Hong Kong. This included Chinese, non-Chinese and pseudo-foreign people who, originally from Hong Kong, had secured foreign passports to hedge themselves from the risk emerging from Hong Kong’s handover to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (Bray & Jeong, 1996).

Hong Kong underwent a major political change in 1997 marked by its handover to the PRC. It had been a colony of the British Empire and has become a Special Administration Region (SAR) of the PRC. Hong Kong’s constitutional document has granted the Hong Kong government a high degree of autonomy from the PRC political system. An electoral college selects the head of the Hong Kong government.

Hong Kong has experienced much political stability since the handover and this has led to further socio-economic change. The number of returnees to Hong Kong increased and new global migration patterns emerged. For the past decade, people in Hong Kong have experienced the tension of a steadily growing population and a precipitously declining birth rate. In 2001, the Hong Kong population was 6.7 million, and by mid-2011, the population of Hong Kong was approximately 7.1 million people (Census and Statistics Department, 2012). This steady growth, contrasted with the decreasing percentage of population aged 0-14, implies that adult immigration, as a result of rising economic prosperity in Hong Kong and political reintegration with the PRC, is increasing Hong Kong’s population.

In recent years, neoliberalism may be even more pervasive in Hong Kong society. Hong Kong has become “virtually an open society, exhibiting various religious beliefs, life styles, languages and political ideologies” (Yang, 2012, p. 393). Yang (2012) adds that materialism is pervasive in Hong Kong culture, and per rational-self interest, “people only become interested in things when they can see clearly their benefits from them” (p. 395). Furthermore, institutions and individuals are increasingly subjected to marketplace forces by a prevailing neoliberal discourse of meeting market demand. Employers have made demands over Hong Kong’s various industrial sectors, including housing and education. For instance, Hong Kong companies have expressed dissatisfaction over the quality of Hong Kong university graduates (Yang, 2012). These conditions perpetuate even greater individual and organizational entrepreneurialism, but

at the cost of social cohesion. Following what Davies & Bansel (2007) and Ball (1990) have observed in other socio-cultural contexts, increasingly, individuals and organizations in Hong Kong may only know how to relate to each other through economics.

These socio-economic changes and climate have significant implications for Hong Kong's education system. As foreigners and returnees come to Hong Kong, they bring higher education and income levels, and new expectations and practices for education (Yamato & Bray, 2002). For example, demand for English-language instruction has increased because children of returnees and new immigrants have come from countries where Cantonese, a language commonly spoken in Hong Kong, is neither a medium of instruction in school nor a primary language at home. People have also recognized that employers not only in Hong Kong but around the world seek employees with English language proficiency. Curriculum change has also been warranted because of the global knowledge economy and because children of returnees and new immigrants could likely not cope with the rigors of the mainstream education system (Microsoft Partners in Learning, 2011). Yamato and Bray (2002) and Yung (2006) have observed that a declining group of school-age children has placed both greater competitive pressure on all Hong Kong schools and, in the hands of richer parents who have fewer school age children, even more disposable income for education.

As Hong Kong schools traditionally "are remarkably homogeneous and cannot meet the increasingly diversified needs of parents and their children," and are "highly centralized and controlled," the government has a role in meeting differentiated demand and expanding choice for education (Yung, 2006, p. 96). The government has responded to socio-economic changes by emphasizing diversity in its education policies, creating school places to meet demand, and designating the education sector as an economic growth area for Hong Kong (Education Bureau, 2009). It remains optimistic about operationally privatized school categories not only as an indicator of economic growth but as a driver of it. The government forecasts continuing growth of school places in these categories from 2011 to 2016 (HKSAR Government, 2011). Its actions suggest that neoliberalism in education is being increasingly normalized. The following sections explore this neoliberal normalization in two school categories.

International Schools

The creation of the international school category illustrates well how the Hong Kong government extends market rationality, privatization and the competition state to the education system. An international school is "not easily defined and is subject to much academic debate" not least because it is characterized by heterogeneity, differentiation, and accounting for revenues and costs (MacDonald, 2007, p. 152). Nonetheless, the Hong Kong government has commodified international schools in the Hong Kong system by developing a discrete category for them. The Hong Kong government also admitted the difficulty in categorizing the schools because they are not homogeneous (Education Department, 1995). The government has developed a degree of cohesiveness for the category by differentiating this category from other school categories by, for example, phasing out international schools from the DSS because at one time international schools could join the DSS to receive recurring government subsidies.

The government has largely privatized operations in international schools and this hastens commodification and competition within the category and for the Hong Kong education system. International schools are self-financing and receive government assistance only in the form of land grants. They have full discretion to determine their student admission requirements. The government has also decreed that people can distinguish international schools from other types of schools by international schools' employment of non-local

curriculum and their students not sitting for local examinations (Education Bureau, 2004, p. 3). Yamato (2003) and Yamato and Bray (2006) have identified types of Hong Kong international schools which market themselves by language of instruction, targeted pupils, structure and governance, school foundation year, curriculum, examinations and higher education prepared for, religious or philosophical orientation, location, market specialization, age range, school year, private expenditure and range of school fees. These types can be often recognized from the names of Hong Kong's international schools and are ways by which international schools differentiate themselves in consideration of parents' needs.

The neoliberal governance of the international school category has reflected Hong Kong's changing socio-economic climate. It has been perpetuated by the discourse of subjecting education to global market forces to benefit the state economy. The government has given such reasons as China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), the post-1997 economic recovery and the rapid economic growth in the early 21st century or its supporting and expanding the international school category (Education Bureau, 2004). This is because all that stimulates an inflow of foreign professionals, expatriates, and temporary Hong Kong residents in the state for either work or investment (Education Bureau, 2009). Besides, the government has recommended international schools for non-Chinese speaking Hong Kong students and for non-permanent Hong Kong residents (Education Bureau, 2010).

Competition for places in international schools is keen. The government has said this demand from overseas families, coupled with demand from local families, will create an imbalance in demand for and supply of student places in international schools for at least five years (Luk, 2013). The Hong Kong government has problematized student capacity in the category as a shortage. The Education Secretary, Eddie Ng Hak-kim, predicted that international primary schools would fall short of meeting market demand by at least 4,200 student places in the 2016-2017 academic year (Luk, 2013).

The privatization within the category limits how the government can address this shortage. For instance, as the government has privatized control over class sizes, international schools have been unenthusiastic to the government's plea to increase class size (Luk, 2013). Similarly, the government has privatized control over student-intake so international schools can largely determine their student body demographics in terms of overseas students and local students. As the government has said that local students fill only 14 percent of international school student places, international schools have catered to non-local students in the main (Luk, 2013). The government can no more than plead with international schools to place even greater priority on admitting overseas students (Luk, 2013).

However, the government has acted as a broker and facilitator in the education system and in that way has addressed this international school student place shortage. It has increased the supply of classes indirectly by granting schools more land, perhaps the scarcest of all material resources in Hong Kong. It has increased the number of international schools by granting vacant school premises or greenfield sites to international school operators for the building of new schools. For instance, the government recently has increased international school student capacity by 1,700 places by awarding three vacant school premises to international school operators (Luk, 2013). Furthermore, the government has facilitated increased competition and choice for international schools by expanding the geographic distribution of these international schools, which makes them more geographically accessible to Hong Kong society. The government hopes this would further globalization and facilitate, "interaction and collaboration

between teachers and students of international and local schools in the region" (Education Bureau, 2006, p. 1).

The Case of the English Schools' Foundation

Recent changes to the English Schools Foundation (ESF), a sub-category of international schools in Hong Kong, exemplify how the governance of the international school category extends the competition state. Founded in 1967 and enduring as the largest and longest running operator of international schools in Hong Kong, the ESF originally followed an English curriculum and was purposed with relieving the government from operating English schools for English-speaking children. The ESF was tasked with meeting the educational needs of the entire foreign community at that time because of a lack of development in international education services in Hong Kong (Education Bureau, 2004). In return, the ESF received recurrent government subsidies in addition to being able to charge school fees. This subvention helped the ESF to position its schools as some of the least expensive in the international school category. Officially, the only substantive difference between ESF schools and other international schools is in the area of funding (Education Bureau, 2004 p. 2).

As the number of Hong Kong international schools has grown in response to the changing socio-economic context, so has the criticism of the ESF by international schools. The schools have complained about the uneven playing field in the category because of the ESF's recurring government subsidies. These schools and their supporters have exerted mounting pressure on the government to place the ESF in a more transparent and fair category rather than leave it in the limbo of an international school sub-category. The government acknowledged that the ESF schools' unique position in Hong Kong's education system was a result of historical legacy and that this unique position was untenable in the long-run as greater public accountability over its subvention was needed (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2011). As a result, the government has drastically reduced the government-subvention advantage that ESF schools have enjoyed since 1979. ESF recurrent subsidies were frozen in 1999 as an interim measure while the government investigated possibilities for making the ESF more self-financing. From 2003 to 2005, the government further reduced subsidies. While the ESF management had argued for a restoration of funding, it ultimately agreed to a government plan to eliminate the recurring subsidies over 13 years from 2016 (Siu, 2013). The ESF management anticipates school fees to increase by 23 percent.

DSS Schools

The DSS scheme illustrates well how the Hong Kong government extends market rationality, privatization and the competition state to the education system. The Hong Kong government created the DSS in 1991. As the name suggests, the distinguishing feature of this category of Hong Kong schools is a direct government subsidy. The DSS system in Hong Kong and school voucher schemes in other states are similar insofar as the government bears a part of the cost of schooling and parents the other. However, the difference in schemes is that in Hong Kong the voucher or subsidy is given to the schools instead of the parents. DSS schools receive a recurrent government subsidy comparable to what a baseline school would receive from the government per student.

Like with international schools, the government has privatized many DSS school operations thereby injecting competition and differentiation into the category. However, DSS school operations have been privatized to a lesser degree than international school operations to maintain differentiation between the two categories. DSS schools are less self-financing. The government's recurrent subsidy mechanism influences how a school will charge parents

because a school will lose its recurrent subsidy if it charges a school fee above a certain level. In addition, a DSS school must set aside money for student financial assistance if it charges between a fee band. With this type of financial constraint, a DSS school can move either towards high school fees and a smaller government subsidy or more towards low school fees and a more generous government subsidy. The DSS subsidy mechanism was designed to be administered simply and to discourage excessive profiteering (Education Commission, 1988).

The government created the DSS scheme with Hong Kong students in mind (Audit Commission, 2010). Therefore, while international schools and ESF schools have full discretion to determine their student admission requirements, DSS schools require a degree of government oversight over their student admission requirements, specifically in gearing admission more toward Hong Kong permanent residents. These constraints ultimately preserve the distinctiveness of the DSS category and extend the competition state and commodification pressure not only to schools in the category but also to the education system.

The neoliberal governance of the DSS category has reflected Hong Kong's changing socio-economic climate. The government has said the category was introduced to directly grow and strengthen an independent, operationally privatized education sector for Hong Kong's pluralistic society (Education Commission, 1988). The government has expanded the sector by both creating more schools and envisioning a "full-scale transformation of all government schools into DSS in the future" (Yung, 2006, p. 96). At present, nine percent of all schools belong to the category and that number is growing. Specifically, long-standing and highly-respected schools, or prestigious schools, have joined the scheme in growing numbers.

That increase, and that prestigious schools are opting-in, have provoked public controversy which reflects the traditional criticisms of neoliberalism and fears of the neoliberal climate in Hong Kong. Recently, St. Stephen's Girls College, one of the most prestigious schools in Hong Kong, decided to join the DSS scheme and soon after St. Paul's Secondary School, another prestigious school, decided to join the DSS scheme. In keeping with other prestigious Hong Kong schools that have joined the DSS scheme, these schools will charge some of the highest fees for schools in the scheme. Chiu and Walker (2007) have argued that this is because DSS school fees are often based on a school's reputation, which outstanding academic results influence. Yung (2006) has also noted that more resourceful schools, particularly those prestigious schools with long histories and a strong alumni bodies, charge more than other DSS schools not least because they have a more expansive funding network.

Parents and alumni are worried that these schools will exclude people with limited financial means from attending them because these schools no longer offer free education (Siu, 2013; St. Paul's Secondary, 2013). Parents and alumni wonder to what extent privileged classes are pressuring the schools to change school categories. They worry that poorer students may feel shame when finances factor into participation in school-based activities (Siu, 2013). These worries and fears reflect the association of neoliberalism with "private education for the rich and public education for the poor" (Song, 2013, p. 139). They also assume that an education from a prestigious school is a good, or proper, education and that a prestigious education should not be limited to the rich (Siu, 2013). Protesters have not explicitly acknowledged how a prestigious education is tied to further ambitions to wealth, social mobility and the imagined possibility of individual entrepreneurial success in a neoliberal economy (Davies & Barnsel, 2007).

The government has addressed the controversy with its prevailing neoliberal discourse, reiterating and extolling school diversity and choice, and the amoral, unintentional market bias. The government has maintained that the scheme attracts and benefits schools because it grants greater control over management and finances to member schools (St. Paul's Secondary, 2013). Furthermore, it has declared that there is neither need to regulate the number of DSS schools nor need to call DSS schools prestigious (Siu, 2013). It has also emphasized that not all schools have been accepted into the scheme, that the percentage of all schools in the scheme remains small and that most DSS schools do not charge high tuition fees (Siu, 2013). It has reiterated that the government's recurrent subsidy mechanism inhibits most DSS schools from charging high fees, and that the government continues to guarantee free education for all, without a compulsion to pay fees (Education Commission, 1988). However, more schools charge fees and the number of free schools diminish. While the government has extolled increasing parental choice, presumably within the DSS category and between school categories, it has not put to rest any fears about parental choice within the decreasing number of free schools, particularly free, prestigious schools.

The Neoliberalism in Two Hong Kong School Categories

The government has developed two distinct school categories in the Hong Kong education system and primary school student enrolment in these categories is growing year on year while it is eroding in non-international, non-DSS education categories (Census and Statistics Department, 2012). Each category has a set of operational constraints yet with privatization within each school category, competition and differentiation ultimately exist within and between these school categories. This section first explores the government's explanation that the DSS and international school categories are complementary (Education Bureau, 2010). It then examines some of the broader societal implications for neoliberalism in two Hong Kong school categories.

The government has privatized school fees in such a way that schools in these categories can compete and differentiate themselves, leading to a wide range of education offerings on the price spectrum. Table 1 lists select international and DSS schools and their primary school fees to illustrate competition and differentiation within and between these two school categories. In the main, those groups that receive recurrent government subsidies are able to charge less than what other schools charge. The Kennedy School, an ESF school, is able to charge less than what two other international school competitors charge, and generally DSS schools charge less than what international schools charge. In that way, even the DSS schools with the highest school fees are more affordable than many international schools, although more prestigious DSS schools may charge more than less prestigious DSS schools. Since international schools do not receive recurrent government subsidies, they must raise revenue through their school fees.

School Name	Tuition Fee (HK\$)	School Type
Hong Kong International School	\$155,700	International
Kellett School	\$123,500	International
German Swiss International School	\$120,900	International

Kennedy School	\$66,100	International (ESF)
Diocesan Boys' School	\$40,000	DSS ¹
St. Paul's College	\$30,000	DSS ¹
Po Leung Kuk Camoes Tan Siu Lin Primary School	\$14,800	DSS
WF Joseph Lee Primary School	\$12,000	DSS

¹Recognized, prestigious Hong Kong schools
 Source: Individual school websites

Table 1 does not dispel arguments about neoliberalism advancing socio-economic inequality. As the Hong Kong education system can be divided between school categories, those that charge school fees and those that do not, this creates a division between families that can pay school fees and families that cannot. Not only that, but since there is a wide range of education offerings along the price spectrum, families are further divided into those that can pay hefty school fees and those that cannot. Likewise, schools' finances vary greatly. Ultimately, people and schools with greater financial means have greater educational choice. This can create a clustering inequality whereby students and schools of greater economic social and cultural influence cluster together and students and schools without these privileges are clustered together (Chiu & Walker 2007). In addition, with the increase in schools that charge fees, parents increasingly shoulder the financial burden for schooling in Hong Kong society. This reflects a socio-economic context where parents can increasingly shoulder this burden. Besides, increasing parents' financial stake in schools can possibly motivate parents to become more active, demanding school stakeholders. Ball (2007) has described this as a second-order privatization whereby neoliberalism changes social relations between schools and parents, and changes parents' responsibilities and participation in education.

This second-order privatization may be warranted because school administrators can more freely use funds to increase marketplace competitiveness. However, as in the case of higher education institutions, this may increase rent-seeking behavior in Hong Kong schools and these practices may counterpose teacher professionalism. Additionally, within the past decade, ESF and DSS managers have been rebuked for financial malpractice (Audit Commission, 2004). In light of financial mismanagement and malfeasance by these school administrators, parents may need to demand greater accountability for school operations so that their interests are protected. The government may need to broker this transparency as DSS schools have launched recriminations, arguing that the government has not provided clear accounting and financing guidelines (Yau, 2010).

The government's commodification of the education marketplace within and between these two Hong Kong school categories has placed significant, new demands on parents. As standardization between schools break down as the government increasingly privatizes school operations, parents bear the burden of becoming responsible, informed consumers who exercise rational economic thought in selecting schools. This second-order privatization further changes relationships between schools and parents, and changes the meaning of citizenship and responsibility.

Conclusion

In this paper I examined recent policy developments in Hong Kong's education system by linking changes to two Hong Kong school categories to changes in the broader Hong Kong society. Hong Kong's socio-cultural context is unique not least because Hong Kong is an economically prosperous SAR. The Hong Kong government has sought complete integration of Hong Kong into the global knowledge economy, beginning with the liberalization of its financial markets and continuing with the liberalization of its education system.

The government has applied neoliberalism to Hong Kong education by creating two school categories and increasing the number of schools in them. Although there may be fundamental differences between business organizations and schools, the Hong Kong government has increasingly treated these institutions in similar ways by surrendering education within and between these two school categories to market forces. While neoliberalism in these two school categories increases choice at societal, institutional and individual levels, Lee and Lee (2013) note that these choices are, ultimately, materially unequal. Individual, rationally self-interested choice may be no more than an illusion. Neoliberalism in education can exacerbate existing inequality between individuals and between schools, and correlated with employment relations and income distribution, these inequalities can exacerbate labor market inequality and social polarization. By increasingly surrendering Hong Kong education to market despotism, the government expands institutional discrimination in Hong Kong society.

The Hong Kong government's aim for education and the Hong Kong people's aim for education may differ greatly. Insofar as the Hong Kong government has created two Hong Kong school categories and has expanded them indicates the success of its neoliberal education reform. However, the public controversy from the increase in DSS schools demonstrates that social discontent against neoliberalism exists in Hong Kong and may increase. In view of this, Shin (2011) notes that "sustainable neo-liberal reform requires a social safety net to reduce social conflicts and political instability due to social discontents and social unrests" (p. 72). On the other hand, I also aim to encourage readers to scrutinize the education system and recognize the contrast in perceived choice versus real choice in a neoliberal society. The social discontent against neoliberalism in Hong Kong also demonstrates the existing space for the contestation over neoliberalism practices and the education value system. People do not need to divest themselves of individual responsibility for inequality, bias and principles that impact society. They do not have to be counter-posed to the worth or possibility of social equality.

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Canadian Youth Volunteering Abroad: Rethinking Issues of Power and Privilege

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This paper discusses the role of institutions in the ethical engagement of Canadian youth volunteers abroad. In recent years, researchers and practitioners in the international field have questioned the ethics of volunteering as part of development, with scrutiny on who actually benefits from volunteering initiatives. Since the 1960s, over 65,000 young Canadians have participated in volunteer abroad programs (Tiessen, 2008), and criticism has increased towards youth volunteers going overseas to fulfill their aspirations to “change the world”. This study considered how complex social relations and institutional structures in international development have shaped the issues of power and privilege of the young person’s experience in volunteering. The research used Institutional Ethnography (IE) as a method of inquiry, and mapped out the social relations between the experiences of seven former youth volunteers and field staff, and their organizations. Westheimer and Kahne’s Active Citizenship and Dei’s Anti-Racism theories were proposed as frameworks to examine the presence of equity in youth volunteer programs.

The Individual and the Institution

Since the 1960s, over 65,000 young Canadians have participated in volunteer abroad programs; this number continues to expand each year as young people travel to developing countries for a variety of reasons that range from self-discovery and adventure to the desire to make a difference (Tiessen, 2008). As the number of young volunteers going abroad grows, so does their impact on the communities that they visit. International development critics have resurfaced terms such as ‘Western imperialism’ in the debate concerning volunteering overseas. The question ‘is volunteering another form of colonization?’ permeates voluntourism or ‘backpactivism’.

The research on international voluntary service (IVS) indicates that volunteers contribute to issues of power and privilege in international volunteering. The nebulous meanings of power and privilege can be put into context using Peggy McIntosh’s work *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (1988). Her essay serves as an entry point into power and privilege while acknowledging that the definition of these two words are evolving and complex. McIntosh describes a political system that works “systematically to empower certain groups” (1988, p. 5), and privilege can be seen as dominance in a system due to one’s race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, class, physical or mental ability, and so on. Volunteers can exert power on the community in forms that include economic, racial, heterosexual, gender and political privilege (Lewis, 2006).

Yet there has been less focus on Canadian youth volunteers who make a conscious effort to counter the harmful actions that youth volunteers have the reputation for bringing with them. The comparison between these experiences leaves a gap in the depiction of international volunteering as either positive or negative. The focus on the institutional structures of volunteerism has been neglected, while the onus has been put on the individual. As long as individuals have the desire to go overseas, and governments are investing in youth as global citizens for social and economic capital, the solution of eradicating youth volunteerism overseas remains unrealistic.

This paper considers the network of relations and institutional structures in IVS so that practitioners and organizations can rethink and restructure issues of power and privilege by focusing on institutional pedagogy rather than framing problems abroad solely as a result of individual power; it also uses Institutional Ethnography to explore the challenges faced by Canadian youth volunteers trying to engage as “global citizens” in international development and cross-cultural exchanges, and examines seven case studies to highlight the relation between a youth volunteers’ challenges and their relation to the institutional structures in the international voluntary services sector. The research also commits to a vision of sustainable and equitable community partnerships.

A Brief History of Canadian Volunteer Sending Organizations

At the end of World War II, the United Nations (UN) officially came into existence as the first internationally governed organization that aimed to promote international cooperation and peace. In the post-war era, the late 1950s and 1960s, as volunteering became recognized as a form of international development (Lewis, 2006), Canadian NGOs in Canada flourished and began to send adult volunteers overseas. The message to promote peace spread, and the movement influenced people such as Dr. James Robinson, an American preacher, to start international NGOs such Canadian Crossroads International (CCI). In the early 1960s, organizations such as CCI, CUSO-VSO and World University Service of Canada (WUSC) spread the new volunteer movement to Canadian universities (CUSO-VSO, 2009), and going overseas in order to obtain cross-cultural understanding gained momentum as Canadian politics became synonymous with the term “international peacekeeper”.

The Government of Canada established CIDA in 1968 in conjunction with Canada’s increasing role in geopolitics. One of their tasks was to administer Canada’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) program. Today, CIDA also has a focus on Canadian youth to “be more active global citizens” and to “make a difference in Canada and abroad” (CIDA, 2009); CIDA currently funds two of the largest Canadian organizations that send youth abroad.

In the 1970s, as the diversity of the Canadian population grew from immigration, multiculturalism became a popular focus for the Canadian government. Pierre Elliott Trudeau established the multiculturalism policy in 1971, which became highly criticized by anti-racism activists for its originations in a bilingual framework that excluded pluralism (McCaskell, 2005). By the 1980s, Canadian activists were advocating for change in how students learned about multiculturalism. They wanted a shift from an educational approach that recognized diversity as a melting pot to an anti-racism approach that analyzed the institutional powers and their effects on race, class and gender. This pedagogy would later become influential in the Canadian debates that currently surround international youth volunteering and the political use of global citizenship.

Significantly, the 1971 policy also set the stage for an increase in funding to programs that encouraged citizen participation and cross-cultural exchange. Organizations that focused on youth volunteers originated in 1971 when Jacques Hebert, a close friend of Trudeau, founded Canada World Youth (CWY). Another youth-sending organization had its birth in the 1970s, when former Canadian and Australian participants, who had taken part in the initiated Royal British Canadian Operation Drake in 1978, founded Youth Challenge International (YCI). Today, there are more than 20 Canadian organizations sending youth abroad, such as Uniterra, Engineers Without Borders, Global Youth Action Network, Students for Development Program, YMCA and Free the

Children that promote volunteering abroad as a way to develop global citizenship.

A Method of Inquiry: Institutional Ethnography

Institutional Ethnography (IE) starts from the standpoint of everyday experiences. The institutional ethnographer “works from the social in people’s experience to discover its presence and organization in their lives and to explicate or map that organization beyond the local to the everyday” (Smith, 2005, p. 11). The analysis also begins with social experience and returns to it to explain how the experience came into being (Campbell, 2006). IE draws upon people’s experience as data to help anchor the research in the actualities of people’s lives and connect it more to the real world (Campbell, 2006). This paper will therefore start from the standpoint of the author’s story as an entry point into exploring issues of power and privilege in international volunteering.

Aspects of IE were used as a method of inquiry to understand how Canadian youth volunteers engage as active, global citizens and attempt to address issues of power and privilege in their international volunteering work. In the classical sense, IE has always been a radical sociology because it gets to the roots of matters (Carroll, 2006). It is a social justice based, activist-oriented research method. George Smith describes IE as a reflexive materialist approach that “provides a ground work for grassroots political action ... and begins from the standpoint of those outside ruling regimes ... [and] its analysis is directed at empirically determining how such [politico-administrative] regimes work” (Smith, 2006, p. 48). IE is inspired by Marx’s method of unmasking capitalism through action and reflection and the “fundamental assumption ... that reality is an internally related whole” (Carroll, 2006, p. 235); in order to change the world one must understand it first. IE specifically uses a social analysis that requires an ontological shift that the social is the ground for analysis (Smith, 2005).

IE is also shaped from positivism and feminist movements that give it the “potential for marriage of scholarly research and political motivation” (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 14). IE takes the standpoint of those on the outside of the ruling regimes (Campbell & Gregor, 2002); in other words, the people it is doing research for, as it should “help to form a subject’s political consciousness related to equitable decision making” (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 128). IE can be used as a method to uncover the ruling relations in international volunteering.

Author’s Standpoint

The author’s standpoint is that of a person of color, female, middle-class, able-bodied perspective. As Smith (2005) states, standpoint should be viewed “not [as] a given and finalized form of knowledge but as a ground in experience from which discoveries are to be made” (p. 8). Standpoint can locate the lens that guides someone in an institutional order (Smith, 2005). Overall, the author’s personal experience as a first generation Vietnamese-Canadian shapes her into a researcher politically committed to encouraging more equitable partnerships and interactions between volunteers and the locals in developing countries. The author’s ability to have a political stance on volunteerism is a way of grounding herself and ensuring her responsibility to her research (Smith, 2005). As a woman of color, the author recognizes the effects of power and privilege acutely because she is both implicated in the process of exercising it, and in the process where it is exercised upon her.

The Problematic: Establishing an Anchor

The problematic is served as a point of entry that leads to exploring how the lives and experiences of Canadian youth volunteers are put together and relate to each other through power relations (DeVault, 2008). The nature of this research followed IE’s open-ended process of discovery (Smith, 2005), and discovered the complexity of social

relations that interplay in a volunteer's experience, which include government funding, international relations, volunteer services and agencies, and South-North partnerships among others. The problematic began in the everyday experiences of young Canadian volunteers who go overseas on short and long-term development projects organized by secular not-for-profit organizations.

In 2007, a youth organization hosted a popular one-day youth-run conference that used the terms 'global' or 'active citizen' frequently to entice individuals or groups to contribute to their international projects. The youth organization promoted "international development" to thousands of Canadian students, and while it had celebrities and multi-million dollar corporations as their spokespeople and sponsors, it never actually engaged volunteers in a complex dialogue of what it meant to be a citizen of the world. This organization also had a program for young Canadians to fundraise and go on two-month-long trips to build schools in Africa. A former participant of the program, who had spent two months in Kenya building a school, shared that she spent most of her time with the large group of volunteers and left with unanswered questions as to how the school would be sustained or followed up once the volunteers left (Ngo, personal communication, 2007). International volunteering placements have the capacity to instill generosity and giving in the individual. However, if youth-sending organizations do not address issues of power and privilege such as classism, racism, and sexism, then volunteers who come with good intentions of charity are simply repeating cycles of imperialism and colonialism on local communities.

The Disjuncture: A Set of Larger Relations

Dorothy Smith brought up how people in the same situation can experience different realities, otherwise known as disjuncture, which can often be part of the problematic (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). An intern who went on a long-term, 6-month placement in Bangladesh shared that she no longer felt comfortable with international community development, as she believed effective community development depended on a sense of familiarity with the people, their language and their surroundings (Ngo, personal communication, 2007). She wondered how she would feel if foreigners came into her community without knowing the language or history, and began to implement recommendations and changes. Her reality on international development did not mimic the missionary complex. Her perspective on building local capacity for sustainable development was more critical than some of the youth who had participated in the short-term volunteering projects; her awareness around issues of power and privilege were more critical and developed.

Initially, it seemed that short and long-term volunteer placements developed different levels of critical analysis among youth volunteers. However, the analysis from the case studies shows a more complex explanation, as there is a larger set of relations that influence their experiences. Smith (2005) explained that disjuncture occurs between "the artificial realities of institutions and the actualities that people live" (p. 187). In other words, disjunctures serve as crucial points of entry to examine how institutional processes are at play in people's everyday experiences. Smith continues to write that disjuncture can be explored through regulatory frames, as they are imposed onto people's actualities. Regulatory frames can include theories, policies, laws, and plans that guide institutional power (Smith, 2005).

Regulatory Frames

The participants in this study were subject to regulatory frames, and the wide varieties of conceptualizations, theories, policies, laws, plans, and so on ... Indeed, "they control and are specified as the categories and concepts that come into play at the front line of

building institutional realities" (Smith, 2005, p. 191). The organizations' promotional materials are examples of regulatory frames, or coordinating texts that affected the participants. Most of the participants relied on researching their organization through word-of-mouth or the website.

Research Methodology

Seven individuals from the Canadian youth volunteering sector participated in semi-structured interviews conducted from March to June 2010. Using IE, I analyzed ruling relations between individuals and institutions on two levels: the first level of information provided local accounts of experiences, and the second set of data pertained to explaining these experiences in a broader setting (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). The individuals were a point of investigation of the institutional process, rather than a sample of a population of Canadian youth volunteers sent abroad. The interviewees included a mix of individuals who had never volunteered or been overseas before, as well as individuals who had experience in development projects or working internationally as interns. The IE approach allowed an assessment of a participant's knowledge and the presence of power and privilege in their volunteer placement, while simultaneously examining where and how institutional processes influenced their outlook on the experience.

International Development or Cross-Cultural Exchange?

Volunteering has been seen as a form of international development work since the United Nations emerged as an organization post-World War II (Lewis, 2006). However, IVS in Europe can be located back to the changing role of church and state and the activities of charitable societies; notably, IVS was a part of missionary service during the colonial period (Lewis, 2006). The term "development" appeared only after World War II and since then has taken on several meanings that remain debated today (Lewis, 2006). Part of international development means building capacity for vulnerable populations. For Eade (2007), building capacity means enabling the marginalized to represent and defend themselves. Eade (2007) argues, however, that NGOs are about retaining their own power and that capacity building has become a buzzword in the development field, claiming that the words 'building capacity' are now used for a "neo-liberal ... kind of economic and political agenda" (2007, p. 632). While partnership refers to building opportunity between local organizations and communities, encouraging co-development is often more difficult because of the multiple actors in the international arena that include governments and funders. As a result, partnerships can sometimes be based on one-way transfers and have only one-way accountability (Eade, 2007), as NGOs struggle to stay afloat and become more knowledgeable about business-rights than human-rights.

Positively, international volunteering can promote international understanding, solidarity, and global responsibility and can promote "an arena of development activity ... because it potentially humanizes what is often left as a technical or managerial process" (Lewis, 2006, p. 3). Moreover, volunteers can potentially "bridge the gap between the professionalized world of development experts and organizations and the 'non-specialized publics' who engage with the ideas and practices of development" (Lewis, 2006, p. 3). However, in conjunction with the complexity and debate that surrounds the term development, international volunteering as a definition also varies and becomes privy to the same scrutiny as the term development.

As more stakeholders become involved in the international volunteering business, IVS veers away from its "good Samaritan" intentions, and becomes more politicized and imbued with expectations from the private and public sectors. The United States

currently uses the term international service or international development education, while the United Kingdom uses international voluntary services (IVS). Volunteering has changed drastically over the last few decades. Volunteers were once mostly fresh out of school; today volunteering also attracts highly professionalized, older volunteers (VSO, 2009) in short-term and long-term volunteer placements.

As volunteerism becomes a more recognized institution (Simpson, 2004), a new form of voluntourism programs (VTP) has emerged that combines volunteering with tourism (Lewis, 2006, Raymond & Hall, 2008; Simpson, 2004). Voluntourism is figuratively the fast-food version of more traditional long-term volunteering. The rise of voluntourism aimed at young volunteers means organizations engage in a selection process with lowered required criteria as they try to reach a higher number of volunteers; this can also imply the recruitment of more inexperienced and ignorant participants.

Experience as Data: The Social Analysis

This sub-section uses the interview data from five Canadian youth volunteers in their international volunteering experiences and highlights the tensions between volunteers and their projects.

The increase of youth volunteer-sending organizations and voluntourism means more competition for youth and volunteers who ineffectively contribute to development projects, as young people do not have the skills, knowledge or experience necessary to work internationally (Lewis, 2006). For example, Youth Challenge International's programs approach to development involves youth volunteering in the livelihood, leadership, health, and environment sectors. The age requirement for volunteers would be 18 years and older and they are not expected to have prior international or work experience. Youth volunteers have been arguably seen as individually gaining, as opposed to contributing to the collective. For example, one of the volunteers interviewed for this study explained how her former group members participated in a volunteer program for personal purposes:

I think it was the second group I went there with, there was less of people assuming they were on vacation ... People sign up and, oh it's a vacation and whatever project people want to do is secondary, to just being there and experiencing Ghana ... (Ngo, personal communication, 2010).

Even if youth had a positive experience, there are questions about whether the structure of a volunteer project allows effective results for the host community. One experienced volunteer shared her realizations about the design of her 'development' project being more like a volunteer experience than a work experience:

I was going to say that I think in terms of the organization, um granted the workshops were held very close to one another, they were sort of back-to-back and there wasn't enough time to go back to them and debrief, and figure them out ... I mean the biggest problem was that the program was ill conceived on a number of different levels that made it difficult ... I think the partner's engagement was predominantly for financial benefit ... there was no needs assessment at all ... (Ngo, Personal communication, 2010)

There were also challenges on executing a development project in a country where the volunteers had no prior knowledge or very little experience:

I think trying to teach students about their own ... elements of their own country

– when I had only been there for a week and a half. That was a huge challenge. Um, that challenge of, I don't know if this would be a philosophical challenge – sort of, acknowledging that the work we were doing was meaningful in the present sense. We're giving the students an experience they will benefit from – at least I hope they did – but concerns about the sustainability of the project. That made it a challenge to find meaning in what we were doing because why weren't we working with teachers or helping to build capacity ... I also think that coming to terms that being in Ghana for a month, you do what you can and it's just the way the project is. You have to come to terms with that and I think that was a challenge. (Ngo, Personal communication, 2010).

Moreover, even if the organization had the intention to prepare the volunteer for international development, budget and time constraints did not allow for the individual to gain adequate knowledge. This appears in the participants' responses on how they were prepared for their international placements:

I was sent a lot of friggin' material from the organization. To be honest a lot of the information I did not go through and I know that like, we were supposed to go through it but at least for me I was working a full time job ... But it was a lot of stuff to go through ... I mean we were sent this cross-cultural learning module thing that you completed and got stamped on this electronic passport ... I think there was sort of an online community that was set up that I didn't use because it was another thing that I had to go online and check. (Ngo, Personal communication, 2010)

In general, volunteers shared that benefits of the program revolved around individual growth, as well as cross-cultural exchange. Those who did mention their development projects were critical about the gains for local people. As youth volunteer-sending organizations increasingly move towards a development framework, while still working in a youth volunteering model, researchers and practitioners must assess which practices could be the most effective in contributing to the overseas and community partners, while being conscious of the growing competition for projects and funding for Canadian youth volunteer-sending organizations.

The pedagogical approach used by both organizations was influenced by a multicultural, rather than an anti-racism education. Multicultural education approaches represent racism issues in a way that are non-threatening to dominant Canadian groups (McCaskell, 2005), and focus on appreciating differences without critical analysis on institutional systems.

To Volunteer or Not to Volunteer

The origins of international volunteering in Canada highlight the peace spreading intentions of Canadians who wish to offer their services overseas to less privileged countries, or to promote cross-cultural exchange that strengthens understanding in a diverse multicultural Canadian society. However little is known about the actual impacts of volunteering on Canadians and the communities who host volunteers, as research struggles to catch up with the rapid expansion of diverse programs and organizations (Grusky, 2000; Lewis, 2006; Lough, McBride, & Sherraden, 2009; Raymond & Hall, 2008). This section will allow the reader to contextualize the youth volunteers and field staff's experiences with the institutional relations that pervade international volunteering.

Consistent with existing literature, Grusky (2000), Lewis (2006), Lewis and Niesenbaum

(2005), Lough et al. (2009), and Raymond and Hall (2008) have found the overall outcomes for volunteers have the potential to contain many teachable moments, and have benefits that include language enhancement, transformative learning, building contacts between individuals and communities, developing cross-cultural understanding and working across difference. Other pro arguments for volunteering overseas include travel opportunities, being able to reduce conflict and 'reconciliation tourism', which gives an opportunity to former colonizing country participants to rectify damage (Raymond & Hall, 2008). A survey conducted by Lough, et al. (2009) with 680 randomly selected alumni from two volunteer sending organizations with different IVS models found that, even though the organizations had different goals, the outcomes for volunteers were similar. Outcomes for volunteers included a positive effect on the volunteers' cross-cultural understanding and career direction, and the volunteers' belief that they had brought a good impact on the host organization and communities (Lough et al., 2009). Seventy-five percent of the study's respondents "claimed that their cross-cultural encounter was a transformational experience" (Lough et al., 2009, p. 33).

Although there is research that provides an optimistic view of voluntourism programs (VTPs), more specifically that these programs assist in developing cross-cultural understanding, VTPs can lead to misunderstandings and reinforcement of stereotypes. Research indicates that cross-cultural understanding is not always a natural consequence of VTPs, but needs to be a purposeful pedagogy (Raymond & Hall, 2008). For example, though some volunteers in Lough et al.'s (2009) research reported on language as a barrier, cultural misunderstandings and power differences between volunteers and local staff, most of the volunteers surveyed believed their services were desired and that their presence did not cause problems in the communities.

The goal of international service learning is an important component of programs (Grusky 2000; Raymond & Hall, 2008), as it sets the backdrop for the organizational pedagogy and the practices used to recruit volunteers. Without an appropriate goal to reduce power and privilege, inequities remain very pronounced (Lewis, 2006). International development education programs can easily "become small theatres that recreate historic cultural misunderstandings and simplistic stereotypes" (Grusky, 2000, p. 858), or "privilege the needs and desires of the server over the served, and act as a powerful and influential framing mechanism for the social construction of ideas about development, poverty and the 'third world'" (Lewis, 2006, p. 8), as well as exacerbate already existing North – South economic disparities. Simpson argues that gap year, a period taken by the student between high school and post-secondary education, produces one face of public development and reproduces notions of other and third world, as well as "perpetuates a simplistic ideal of development" (Simpson, 2004, p. 682). She continues to determine that the gap year reinforces the 'mythology' of development, and encourages travel that enhances individual and not collective advancement.

Within the context of volunteerism, colonialism can manifest itself in different ways. The partnership between North and South organizations can reproduce systems of dependence through funding and structural expertise, and this can trickle down to the work of the volunteers. For example, Canadian volunteers will assume that they will be able to contribute to a community without knowing the language or culture because the recruitment process has painted them as the experts going to "help". In addition, since volunteers have to fundraise to become a volunteer, there is a sense of entitlement that accompanies volunteers when they arrive to their host country. At times, in short-term projects, there is no needs assessment done by volunteers, as they only have a limited time to meet deliverables, or groups may duplicate each other's work if there is no

knowledge or proper orientation on the history of the organization in the area where volunteers work.

The incongruity around the positives and negatives around international volunteering leads to open questions around the impact on host communities and practices of organizations. There are currently less research findings available on outcomes for organizations and host communities, sustainable development and equitable partnerships (Grusky, 2000; Lough et al., 2009). According to Grusky (2004), the potential of IVS is precisely at this juncture “where experience meets study, critical analysis, and reflection” (p. 861). The transformational impacts on a young person due to these programs cannot be denied, and their desire to serve and change society should not be dismissed. If organizations could harness a volunteer’s discomfort and help “bring them to a clearer understanding of the fundamental necessity for profound social change” (Grusky, 2004, p. 866), then IVS could be a powerful tool for cross-cultural understanding and reduction in North-South disparities. Overall, organizations have been found to rely heavily on chance to produce citizens who can critically assess institutional structures (Grusky, 2000), and therefore organizations lack a commitment to integrating anti-racist methods into their development work.

Assessing Program Structure

Academia and media recognize that “certain types of VTPs may represent a form of neo-colonialism or imperialism, in which volunteer tourists inadvertently reinforce the power inequalities between developed and developing countries” (Raymond & Hall, 2008, p. 531). Since one of the issues for conflict in IVS includes multiple and conflicting goals of the actors involved (e.g., sponsors and community partners) (Grusky, 2000), research could focus more on the best practices that accommodate the competing factors involved in volunteer sending organizations, aid recipients and host communities. As agencies set roles for successful partnerships between host communities (Roberts, 2004), a social-justice pedagogy becomes important to consider for organizations since they play a role in facilitating preparation and analysis for volunteers prior, during and post program (Raymond & Hall, 2008).

Research conducted by Raymond and Hall (2008) sought to look at the roles organizations play in developing international understanding through VTPs. Volunteer-sending organizations should: be conscious of the skill sets of their volunteers and the type of work volunteers would be doing; include local people in developing programs; create opportunities for volunteers and community members to interact; and have volunteers work alongside locals. Organizations could also be more deliberate in the contact with “the Other,” as it should not be assumed that interaction means development of cross-cultural understanding; in some cases, interaction without proper analysis could reinforce volunteers’ stereotypes as they could mistake their experience as authority. Organizational pedagogy is not a simple task; criticisms include the organizations’ “proximity to wider political and policy processes” (Lewis, 2006, p. 7). Specifically, an organization seldom remains free from political influences because they receive funding from government donors. They have also been criticized for their reliance on the production of *Othering* to appeal to young volunteers (Simpson 2004).

Language as Coordinating

Kate Simpson (2004), a researcher on the impacts of international volunteering, believes that by avoiding the language of “development,” many organizations may be trying to avoid the questioning of such an agenda. However, whether the language of development is used or not, the agenda is there, thinly disguised in notions of “disadvantaged communities” (p. 684). Without using the term development,

organizations are able to attract a variety of young people to their programs. This also has negative effects on the host communities when volunteers perpetuate power and privilege dynamics or are ill prepared to engage in a project.

Simpson (2004) writes that the notion of the 'third world' is highly important. Indeed, the very legitimacy of such programs is rooted in a concept of a 'third world', where there is 'need', and where European young people have the ability, and right, to meet this need. (p. 682) Whereas there is no actual language pertaining to development, the discourse is there; organizations speak of *making a difference, doing something worthwhile or contributing to the future of others* (Simpson 2004). This use of (or absence of) language indicates the presence of complex ruling relations in the international volunteering field. Parallel to the equity issues of power and privilege that pervade international development, the concept of poverty becomes marketable and something adventurous for the volunteers to encounter. Poverty is 'out there' and there is emphasis on the differences instead of the commonalities between developed and developing countries (Simpson 2004). Change is seen as based outside of local communities (volunteers are the change). In other words, the volunteers are perceived as the only agents of development and the community becomes excluded as active participants. Organizations have the multi-purpose objectives of championing the needs of the communities as well as the usefulness of volunteers (Simpson 2004). The contributions of unskilled volunteers remains debatable when there are levels of skills required for the usefulness of international service. How organizations present their message portray their approach to development, which remains rooted in colonialism when only the volunteer benefits and gains status, authority and social/professional standing (Lewis 2006).

Proposing Theoretical Frameworks: Justice Oriented and Anti-Racist Citizens

Canadian institutions including schools, not-for-profit organizations, and government bodies have borrowed the idiom "active citizen" into their institutional languages. Active citizenship focuses on the "individual and collective capacity to influence change" (Schugurensky, 2003, p.78). Schugurensky proposes that citizenship education should move from passive to active citizenship in order to revitalize democratic, public life (2003, 2006). However, active citizenship and participation is susceptible to being influenced by a normative, predominantly white, middle-class stance, and active citizen is loosely used without definition. Active citizens are still defined by the hegemonic majority, and participation continues to be controlled by the middle class. As new social movements in Canada that include women's movements, gay rights movements, and Indigenous movements diverge from the normalized version of citizen (Pashby, 2008), there is an increasing need to critically analyze programs which promote "active, global citizenship".

Westheimer and Kahne's framework on citizenship has the potential to address the complex interplay of power relations that puts into question what kind of citizen is being promoted in organizations that send Canadian youth volunteers abroad. Westheimer and Kahne (2003) believe that citizenship produced by education can fall into three (though not mutually exclusive) categories: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. The personally responsible citizen focuses on good, moral character and works to improve social problems and society. The participatory citizen encompasses the personally responsible citizen, but also actively participates in leadership positions within established systems and community structures. The justice-oriented citizen critically assesses social, political, and economic structures to see beyond surface causes. The ideal citizen for promoting effective democracies and active citizenship according to Schugurensky's definition would be the justice-oriented citizen,

as they can “critically assess social, political, and economic structures and consider collective strategies for change that challenge injustice and, when possible, address root causes of problems” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2003, p. 54).

Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) active citizenship framework describes three types of citizens, with a focus on the kind of citizen who advances democratic societies and analyzes social injustices. Dei’s (1996) anti-racism practice and theory complements the justice-oriented citizens by providing a lens that active citizens can use to critically assess institutional injustices. The antiracist framework reveals embedded racism, classism, homophobia, and sexism (Dei, 2009). If justice-oriented citizens believe that patterns of injustice occur in a society, and healthy democracies entail the full participation of active citizens to question and change established structures, anti-racism praxis is a tool that can be used by justice-oriented citizens to deconstruct institutional systems and ensure action against the patterns of injustice that reoccur in society.

Theory around racism and education exploded in the 1980s as a response to multicultural education (McCaskell, 2005). Multicultural education skips over racism issues in a way that could be digested in a non-threatening way to dominant Canadian groups (McCaskell, 2005), whereas anti-racist education, conceptualizes the issue of racism not as a human failing, a misunderstanding, or a lack of awareness, but as a problem of ideology, of a worldview that categorizes people on the basis of ‘race’ and justifies and reinforces power imbalances between groups. (McCaskell, 2005, p. 74) Anti-racist education emerged as a new critical lens for viewing and questioning traditional methods of academia (Dei, 2009). In conjunction with IE, an antiracist framework sees institutional structures as vehicles for dominating values, principles, and traditions localized in everyday experience, and treats texts as a “complex narrative that relates how researcher and subject are socially and politically located, situated and positioned” (Dei, 2009, p. 249) as opposed to mirroring what is real.

Dei (2009) defines anti-racism as an action-oriented strategy to implement institutional change. It treats differences as socially constructed; this is compatible with IE since the method of inquiry and its way to perceive and deconstruct institutional relations. Moreover, if active citizenship theory is the framework for citizen action, then antiracism is the framework to design strategic action. Anti-racist framework is “an interrogation of both structural barriers to, and social practices for, systemic change” (Dei, 2009, p.254); it acknowledges the reality of racism, questions the marginalization of groups and challenges “valid knowledge”, as well as societal institutions. According to Dei (2009), anti-racism also has an academic and political agenda “to problematize and deal with how schools function to reproduce white (patriarchal) dominance” (p. 250). This aspect is particularly useful because it could be used to analyze organizations that send Canadian youth abroad, we all as how power and privilege might be reproduced in community development through their organizational structure. This paper’s commitment to equitable community partnerships also aligns with anti-racism’s political agenda of social transformation and challenge of the status quo through political activism (Dei, 2009).

Re-imagining the Global Citizen: A Process Towards Transformation

Lewis (2006) asked the question: “Can international volunteering produce ‘win-win’ outcomes in which both the sender and the receiver can benefit, and if so, in what measure?” (p. 9). Because stopping overseas volunteering is not a realistic solution, it may be more useful to ask how to work and improve organizational practices. The traditional volunteering model has become imbued with complications that pervade international development, as volunteer organizations are under greater pressure to

produce development results in their programs. Organizational practices, therefore, are crucial to the ability of IVS to carry out effective partnership and community-based results that benefit the people. The term 'global citizen' has also become a buzzword and privileged objective within citizenship education discourses (Robins et al., 2008). The inclusion within citizenship becomes complicated when those excluded of its definition begin to struggle against traditional norms. The win-win situation can only occur when transformation takes into account the needs of the individual, and ultimately the needs of the local community those volunteers serve.

Old ways of educating people on power and privilege can dangerously reinforce "the Other" as a victim. If programs adopt an understanding of anti-oppression into their educational approach, there needs to be sensitivity around the delivery and divulgence of how people are educated on power and privilege. One recommendation for practitioners would be to examine power as non-linear, multi-faceted, and involving multiple actors. At present, the onus is placed directly on the individual to recognize their own privilege, while systems of colonization and oppression are left out.

Canadian youth volunteers have a lot to offer and can strengthen their own education to ensure they are engaging in ethical volunteering before embarking on their adventures. Young people can help to promote equitable partnerships. While we learn to live with others in a cross-cultural context, there remains a need to build cross-cultural peace within Canada. As researchers, practitioners, organizations, and young volunteers embark on the process to improve international voluntary services, we remember there is no set formula, and "the only big answer is that there is no Big Answer" (Easterly, 2006, p. 382). The goal for ethical volunteering can only be reached if we maintain our vision for equitable partnerships, so that the local people hold the baton to their own emancipation.

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Particularizing Universal Education in Postcolonial Sierra Leone

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This paper presents a vertical case study of the history of universalizing education in postcolonial Sierra Leone from the early 1950s to 1990 to highlight how there has never been a universal conception of universal education. In order to unite a nation behind a universal ideal of schooling, education needed to be adapted to different subpopulations, as the Bunumbu Project did for rural Sierra Leoneans in the 1970s to 1980s. While the idea of "localizing" education was sound, early program success was undermined by a lack of clarity behind terms like "rural" or "community." This was exacerbated by a change in the scope of the project beyond its original objectives. Only by well defining the specific constituents of a target group and fulfilling their precise needs can myriad small-scale programs ultimately aggregate to meet the diverse demands and desires of society writ large.

Many contemporary reports and articles wrongfully attribute the birth of the notion of "Education for All" to the Jomtien World Conference in 1990 (World Bank, 2007; Nishimuko, 2007), when in fact, free, compulsory education was argued for as early as 1948 in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1949). Through a historical analysis of education in Sierra Leone from the years leading up to independence in 1961 to the years prior to the civil war in 1991, this paper rectifies that temporal inaccuracy, and revisits past efforts so as to better inform current debates and policies on universal education.

Specifically, this study examines the following questions: *Who wanted universal education, for what purposes and to what effects? Why was universal education not achieved after decades of pursuing such a goal?*

Government documents, organizational reports, newspaper articles, dissertations, journal articles, and oral interviews will be used to "portray the complex interplay of different social forces" (Arnové, 2003, p. 13) that underlie the concept of universalizing education. The article begins with a description of education in Sierra Leone in the 1960s and 1970s as illustrated by policies and reports created by international agencies and the Ministry of Education. This history from "above" is then paired with a history from "below" by shifting the focus to a rural education program called the Bunumbu Project. In this fashion, a micro project is placed in the context of the macro influences of "development" to form a vertical case study of one country's efforts to expand education after independence (Vavrus & Bartlett, 2006). The main argument of this paper is that a concept of mass schooling founded on equality increasingly needed to entail a discriminatory method of local adaptation to reach universality. In the case of postcolonial Sierra Leone, it was rural communities to which education policies had to adapt. However, words like "rural" and "local" were often assumed to have one *absolute* meaning, even though their usage refers to entirely different localities and target populations that are actually *relative* in nature. Hence, the goal of attaining universal education should not only be reframed as a myriad of "localized" "community" projects, but to maximize effectiveness, such attempts must also be specific in defining precisely which "local" actors in what "rural" areas are to be the intended targets of a given project.

Education in Sierra Leone (1960s – 1970s)

In 1958, three years before the country gained the status of being an independent nation-state, the first major White Paper on Education in Sierra Leone was published, declaring, “the ultimate goal must, of course, be the establishment of fee-free universal compulsory education” (Sierra Leone Government, 1958, p. 1). At that early stage, the long-term aim was not “merely to produce literates but to enable pupils to make a beginning in obtaining the necessary mental equipment to enjoy a fuller, happier life and thereby to make a greater contribution to the welfare and development of the community as a whole” (Sierra Leone Government, 1958, p. 1-2). In the short run, goals were made to double the number of children in school, concomitant with remedying the disparity between educational facilities in the Colony (where it was estimated that 80% of children had access to schooling) and the Protectorate hinterland (where only 6% had access).

Besides laying the groundwork for the same themes of equity and access that persist to the present-day, education bureaucrats also foresaw the potential discord that a universal primary system could create if it was not linked with post-graduation opportunities. The Government thus proposed to supplant junior secondary schools with three-year Secondary Modern Schools that would offer a “general education closely related to the interests and environment of the pupils and with a wide range covering the literary as well as the practical aspects of life” (Sierra Leone Government, 1958, p. 12). These proposals reflected a desire to balance the philosophy of the Phelps Stokes Commission of the 1920s – which advocated a utilitarian, agriculturally-biased education for the African masses akin to “Negro education” in the Southern United States (Berman, 1971) – with an increasing resistance against the approach on the grounds that it was an inferior type of education rooted in denigrating manual labor (Foster, 1965; Zimmerman, 2008). By diversifying secondary education beyond just the academic and technical tracks, it was hoped that all children would “receive the type of education best suited to their abilities and aptitudes” (Sierra Leone Government, 1958, p. 12).

The 1960s

During the wave of decolonization in Africa in the 1960s, the rise of human capital theory and the principle of education as a universal human right merged to influence newly independent countries to institute mass education policies for social and economic development (Chabbott & Ramirez, 2000). Despite the widespread consensus that schools should be a core component in “manpower planning” the growth of national economies (Psacharopoulos, 1991), there were also those who were wary of the potentially negative effects of such a rapid expansion of education. These uncertainties surfaced in 1961 at the “Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa” held in Addis Ababa. The goal of achieving universal primary education within two decades was formally established at the meeting, but anxiety about an overproduction of educated people in excess of what “development” could accommodate also lay at the heart of conference discussions:

The real problem is that any good primary school will widen children’s horizons beyond what can be satisfied by the economy of three-acres-and-a-hoe. The school leaver expects a higher standard of living than his farmer father, a better house, pure water and easy access to medical and other public services. He is willing to drive a tractor or a lathe, but can hardly be expected to respect the back-breaking energies with meagre output yields, which are forced upon his father through lack of modern equipment (...) So, when the primary schools turn out large numbers who are expected to accommodate themselves to a three-acres-and-a-hoe civilization, what can be expected but frustration and exasperation? (UNESCO, 1961, p. 6-11)

To mitigate a potential mismatch between education output and labor market demand, conference attendees argued that agricultural productivity and rural employment must be increased. This would “diminish the number of school leavers who flock to the towns and cities for employment,” but are left “suspended between two worlds” when there are insufficient jobs

to meet the labor supply. "Adapting educational programmes to rural conditions" was consequently highlighted as the means to stimulate such rural development. (UNESCO, 1961, p. 6).

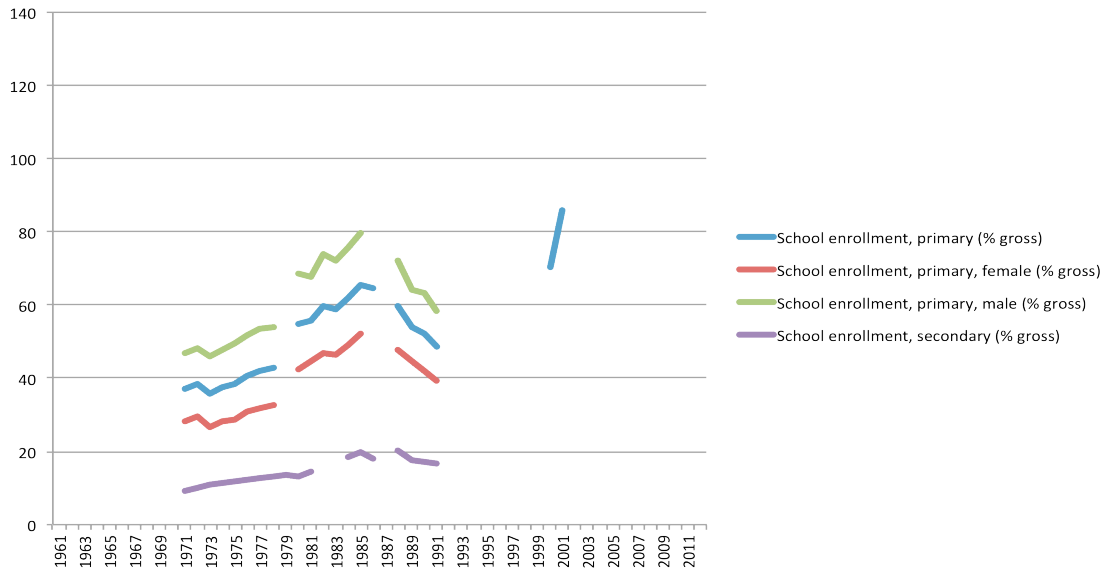
Three years later, global discourse percolated to Sierra Leone, as themes similar to those discussed at the international conference became instituted in the national *Development Programme in Education for Sierra Leone 1964-1970*. In addition to recommending a postponement of the deadline for universal education to 1990 instead of 1980, the Programme recommended the establishment of farm schools offering two years of practical training, since "anything less usually proves to be ineffective; anything more surely leads the farmer's son to seek urban, or at least salaried employment" (Sleight, 1964, p. 30). In part to stem the rural to urban migration, justifications for education expansion subsequently evolved from fostering national development to fostering rural and "local" development. Accordingly, a new national trial syllabus, that was to be "more relevant to local and national needs," was issued in 1969 (Hawes, 1976, p. 11). Class 3 students, for instance, were to learn about the "local community as part of a larger unit" (Hawes, 1976, p. 32). In this way, education would no longer be, as the then Director-General of UNESCO put it, "isolated as a whole from life and society ... cut off from the rest of human activity" (Maheu, 1970, p. 2).

The 1970s

By the 1970s, as Western academics grew critical of whether universal education was in reality a sensible aim, the elevated optimism of the previous decade became increasingly muted. Abernethy (1969) questioned whether mass education was an unaffordable welfare; Coleman (1965) argued that an overly aggressive imposition of equality would scatter the resources and weaken the capacity of a political system; Foster (1965) demonstrated how the disparity between a rising number of school-leavers in Ghana and the low rate of economic expansion led to mass unemployment among the educated. Furthermore, while the 1960s emphasized the development of secondary and postsecondary education to meet the shortage of skilled manpower, the modern industrial sector began to stagnate in the 1970s. The worldwide economic recession and shortage of crude oil had rippling effects across the country and continent that contributed to a contraction of the diamond-mining sector and declining per capita income (Government of Sierra Leone, 1981).

The unevenness of development was also raised in the *National Development Plan 1974/5 – 1978/9*. There were "marked disparities in the levels of economic social and political-administrative development between Freetown and its environs...on the one hand and the rest of the country...on the other" (Hawes, 1976, p. 2). School enrollment was "higher in the towns than in the countryside and highest in the Western Area" near Freetown, as was the quality of school conditions (Hawes, 1976, p. 3). After a decade of "development", the long-standing gap between the former Protectorate and the Colony was growing wider instead of narrower.

To address these disparities, as well as the slow increase in enrollment rates (see Figure 1), President Siaka Stevens called for the *Sierra Leone Education Review* – a comprehensive survey of the education system that brought together staff at the University of Sierra Leone, government administrators, and international consultants for a series of meetings in 1973. The review, which was seen to be "locally inspired [and] locally directed" (Hawes, 1976, p. 6), scaled the overly ambitious goal of universal education down to the more achievable target of having 78% of seven year olds enter primary schools by 1990 (University of Sierra Leone, 1976). Additionally, the report highlighted five themes, two of which were *relevance* "to our actual life and work" and *self-reliance* to become "planners and implementers of our own future" (University of Sierra Leone, 1976, p. 2).

Figure 1. National school enrollment rates in Sierra Leone

Source: Authors' representation based on World Bank microdata (World Bank, 2013). Gaps indicate years of missing data.

The strategy to achieve these twin goals hinged on the idea of instituting a national network of "community education centers" (CECs) that would serve 58,000 youths aged 12-17 and 78,000 adults. [1] Primary schools would then merge with CECs to bring "schooling and traditional life into a co-operative, mutually beneficial relationship" (University of Sierra Leone, 1976, p. 9). This grand vision was first piloted in the rurality of Bunumbu, a chiefdom of less than 1,000 people located about 268 kilometers east of Freetown in the eastern district of Kailahun (see Figure 2). [2]

Figure 2. Map of Kailahun

Source: <http://www.globalmidwives.org>

The Bunumbu Project (1974 – late 1980s)

In 1974, the Government of Sierra Leone called upon the United Nations Special Fund and UNESCO to assist in implementing the Bunumbu Project – a program designed to make schools more relevant and central to rural communities. Specifically, the project translated the National Development Plan of accelerating primary school expansion into the following strategic objectives:

i) development of a new primary curriculum with a rural bias; ii) expansion of existing functions of the teacher training colleges ... and iii) development of a country-wide network of community educational centres providing both formal and non-formal education and training for young people and adults in the rural areas. (UNESCO, 1983, p. 2)

To achieve the larger goal of rural development, the Bunumbu Project attempted to redesign curricula and integrate schools into the “community.” In this way, the pilot program brought to life the values of relevance and self-reliance that would reduce educational inequalities and obviate the need for urban migration. However, as argued in the following section, the absence of a clear definition of program targets, compounded by project goals growing more grandiose, later undermined the project’s initial success.

Project rationale and implementation

One might wonder why Bunumbu was selected as the project site in the first place. Although Bunumbu was exceptional in that the Methodist Missionary had introduced Western education to the region as early as 1924 (Eastern Polytechnic Administration, 2013), it became the center of national and international attention through the vision and determination of one man in particular. In 1971, Francis B. S. Ngegba became the first African principal of Bunumbu Teachers College after a series of British headmasters had led the school for almost fifty years during the colonial period. Ngegba did not originate from the immediate area but was an alumnus of the College.

Despite the rhetorical emphasis on the “community” orientation of the Bunumbu project, the project seemed to mostly originate from Principal Ngegba’s individual ideas and efforts. Earl Welker, a former geography lecturer and later acting Principal who first arrived at the College in 1971 months before Ngegba’s arrival, recalled the first time he learned of the project (Personal communication, April 5, 2013):

[Ngegba] called me into his office one day and said, ‘Can you bring me a map of this area and locate twenty primary schools within a twenty mile radius of Bunumbu? I looked at him and said: “Yeah, I think I can but just give me a few minutes.” So, I went back to my geography lab...took a compass, went back to his office, sat down, and we located twenty primary schools that already existed. Those twenty schools became the pilot schools... This was the first inkling I had of anything called the Bunumbu project. I didn’t know what we were doing, why he was doing it, and what he was doing it for. He didn’t tell me. Within months, there was a team of UN people who came and asked questions (...) Then we all realized that there was something that was in the works about a project for Bunumbu, we didn’t know what. And slowly the idea was filtered down.

What was lauded as a community-based project was really the brainchild of one man; and what was meant to be a “community” rural development project was neither initiated, nor afterwards implemented, by the “community” of Bunumbu. Instead, it was the combination of a politically adept and ambitious principal not from the local area, UNESCO “experts” sent in from as far as Nepal and Haiti, international volunteers from Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) and the U.S. Peace Corps, and Sierra Leonean teacher candidates from elsewhere in the country, who together became the key executors of the roughly ten-year project (see Figure 3).

Nevertheless, Ngegba deserved credit for recognizing the importance of engaging different players from the “community” to implement the project. Since schools were to be “the hub around which integrated rural development activities radiate[d],” multi-disciplinary teams were formed with primary school teachers at its core serving as the “animateur, leader, co-ordinator and stabilizer” (UNESCO, 1977, p. 5). These teams brought members from each “local community” (UNESCO, 1977, p. 7) together to form self-help groups that contributed building materials and assistance in renovating the selected pilot schools. Ngegba also appreciated the need to involve village elders and the Paramount Chief of Bunumbu: “The conversion of the

chiefs and local elders to rural development needs, could lead to total community involvement” (UNESCO, 1977, p. 8).

Figure 3. Independence day at Bunumbu Teachers College (1971/72)



Source: John Wolfer

On top of training teachers to teach new curricular units, a year-long in-service training was conducted “to sensitize the head teachers [of the pilot schools] to the needs of the rural environment in which their schools are located” (UNESCO, 1977, p. 18). Workshops on nutrition, blacksmithing and weaving were offered as non-formal education programs. Bunumbu teachers and students even made periodic visits to family farms to discuss new ideas about farming. Ngegba’s vision was therefore for the Bunumbu Project to “to break the age old tradition of the school being an instrument of alienation” (UNESCO, 1977, p. 18). It was only through such alternative educational structures that schools could “introduce new knowledge and skills to the rural peoples” (UNESCO, 1977, p. 4) and “becom[e] a functional part of the community” (UNESCO, 1977, p. 23).

This seemingly banal notion of integrating the school into the community could not have been more germane to the later success of the project. Whether or not Ngegba was aware of it, the relationship between schools and “locals” was still a very tenuous one. Even after twenty years of independence, many “locals” regarded Western schools with a dose of skepticism because of its foreign nature and its uncertain value. Moreover, the history of slavery and colonialism had still not completely faded from popular memory. Braima Molwai, a Sierra Leonean who now lives in Durham, North Carolina but grew up in Bunumbu as the only one out of eight siblings to attend school, recalls his early experiences at Bunumbu Primary School in the years prior to the beginning of the Bunumbu Project (Personal communication, April 1, 2013):

I was taught by two English women who only spoke English. They didn’t even care to learn Mende. They just told me things like, “Don’t sit on this.’ ‘Stop talking.’ (...) Western education came in with their churches and all their establishments, and also to teach us about the Bible. But they didn’t care to speak our language (...) And so that communication if you’re talking about Western education was just one-sided.

For subsistence farmers like the Molwais, changing the curricular content and role of a school signified a significant shift in making the communication and transmission of Western education “two-sided.” This marked a vast improvement from the colonial era when most education in Africa sought either to instill Christian virtues, or to create local bureaucrats who could contract with the British colonial system (Sifuna & Sawamura, 2010; Peterson, 2004; Sumner, 1963).

Project Outcomes

By the mid 1980s, the Bunumbu Project had become a nationally and internationally acclaimed program. Markers of success included: the building of twenty pilot schools with the aid of

Catholic Relief Services; a 65% increase in primary enrollment at the pilot schools; an increase from a 68% to 78% pass rate on the national common entrance examination; and the creation of over 300 new curricular units that integrated education with the “local” environment of Bunumbu (Banya, 1989). Teachers, for example, were trained to blend national exam standards into units on creating maps of Sierra Leone and Bunumbu, recording rainfall and examining nearby water sources, and constructing poultry farms and vegetable gardens (Bunumbu Teachers College, 1981). As one headmaster said in an interview: “ ‘The Bunumbu materials have definitely helped improve our common entrance results...More of my pupils are now going to various secondary schools all over the country’ - (Headmaster) Ngolahun Methodist” (Banya, 1986, p. 183). Braima, who also taught for a year at one of the pilot schools, further explains the impact the new curricula had on students (Personal communication, April 23, 2013):

When they made it into that, what we can swallow, it was much easier for these people. You were not going to teach, you know, what you teach in Cambridge to the children. Adapting it to what was already going on, the agricultural part, was what made the program work...You have most of the students coming from villages, and you’re going to tell them about atoms...and this chemistry and all this stuff? No! No, I’m not going to read about snow. Hell no...But to read about our own elders who wrote poems that we can relate to...that worked.

What was striking about the Bunumbu Project was its ability to adopt a Deweyan approach of integrating schools into the society by reaching out to those who had previously expressed no interest in education (Dewey, 1899). By successfully making education more “relevant,” the project engaged more families in both the formal and non-formal programs that were offered at the school.

Perhaps because of the initial praise it received, the project grew in scope and grandiosity, and soon became magnified and mythologized both in development discourse and in the minds of an increasing number of Bunumbu residents. The mantra became that “Bunumbu is no longer a project – it is now a spirit” (UNESCO, 1983). This aggrandizement, however, later undermined the project’s early success. Although initial project objectives centered on making education more relevant by restructuring the teacher’s certificate program, expectations grew to encompass all aspects of rural development. According to one village elder: “ ‘We gave our land and labor freely to the project, with the understanding that we will get some amenities, such as pipe-born water, better roads and dispensary facilities. We are still waiting for the promises to come through’ (Elder 503)” (UNESCO, 1983, p. 121). The conflation of education and development led to disenchantment and frustration, which was then aggravated by the departure of expatriates and decreased visits from the Ministry of Education and UNESCO as the project neared its termination date. Community Development Councils began to hold fewer meetings, and participation in community work projects decreased.

Furthermore, not all members of the community approved of the changes to the curricula. Some parents objected to the notion of their children perpetuating their own agricultural livelihood: “ ‘I want them [my children] to be better than me in terms of employment, to become doctors, engineers, and top civil servants’ (Parent 702)” (Banya, 1986, p. 97). Not surprisingly, these parents saw Western education as a means towards social ascension: “ ‘If my children are to look after me during my old age, they should be successful in acquiring the white man’s knowledge, so that they can have key positions in many fields’ (Parent 703)” (Banya, 1986, p. 97). Some families may therefore have wanted an academically oriented grammar education rather than the “rurally biased” curricula that was the product of the Bunumbu Project. This sentiment of the state not being able to change the preferences of the people from an academic to vocational orientation echoes the findings of Foster in Ghana twenty years earlier.

The contradiction of both positive and negative feedback shows the importance of precisely clarifying the target population. For farming families like Braima's who had little interest in obtaining Western education, the Bunumbu Project was a huge step forward in adapting the curriculum to meet their way of life and traditional customs – just as Ngegba envisioned when he wished to uproot the belief of schools being a source of alienation. But for families of merchants and professionals whose parents may have gone to school themselves, Braima explains that the Bunumbu Project may have been seen as a step back in their goal of having the next generation break out of an agricultural existence (Personal communication, April 23, 2013). What comes to light is the inherent diversity within a "local community." One goal of CECs was to bring together people from across the chiefdom of Bunumbu – which was divided into the Manowa junction, the Old Town, and the "road." However "community" members could have referred to anyone from Paramount Chiefs, to skilled craftsmen, to subsistence farmers, to the Syrian and Lebanese business owners that comprised a sizable portion of the Bunumbu population. Ultimately, discerning the effects of the Bunumbu Project depends on which "local" one asks. It could not be assumed that just because Bunumbu was "rural," that the entire chiefdom was just one "community" of "locals."

Discussion

This paper began by asking the questions of who wanted universal education and for what purpose. The analysis highlighted the multiplicity of actors – from the international to the national to the local – along with the multiplicity of intentions. For instance, many international expatriates and volunteers supported mass schooling because it was seen as "a fundamental ingredient for the nation's social and economic development" (Sierra Leone Ministry of Education, 1977, p. 1). National bureaucrats reasoned that expanding education would bring about geographic equity while balancing migration patterns. Some "local" families in the "community" of Bunumbu sought education to build social cachet in a modern world that was rapidly subsuming traditional ways of life. Most important though were the children and families who had little interest in education – a group who often gets lost in debates about Western modernization and universal schooling. When one becomes so focused on the end goal of education for *all*, one risks forgetting what the experience means to those who are not as quick to comply. These overlooked constituents, some of whom the Bunumbu Project successfully managed to engage, attest to Grubb and Lazerson's (2004) warning of an "overblown" faith in the "gospel" of education in that a homogenous approach to education is not a uniform good, either in the past or present.

Partly due to these complex and often conflicting desires and intentions, the quest for universal education failed even after three decades of independence. While the Bunumbu Project was a step forward in changing education to make schools more accessible to some, the indiscriminate use of certain words served as a setback. Specifically, relative terms like "local," "community" and "rural" were used as absolute expressions, when in fact the true meaning of these words hinged on *who* was saying it in regards to *whom*. For instance, who really is a "local"? To foreign expatriates, "local" might have meant a Sierra Leonean bureaucrat working at the Ministry of Education. To an official based in Freetown, "local" might have meant anyone living in a "rural" "community" like Bunumbu. [3] To an educated professional living in the "community" of Bunumbu, "rural" might have meant the traditional farming families who had never attended school.

The impulse to aggregate a country as one people is perhaps what led Foster to his finding that an academic education was preferable to a vocational one. Surely his observation rang (and still rings) true, but only to the extent of the subpopulation he was describing; his work may therefore be eliding large subsamples of the population. Similarly, Carnoy and Samoff's affirmation that "given a choice between popular education and formal, traditional bureaucratic schools, the public appears to opt for the latter," is a misleading one (1990, p. 89). Who, in this

case, is the “public”? Without explicitly defining such expressions in specific terms, one runs the risk of falsely generalizing the experience and preferences of a small group as the aggregate – thereby completely distorting the representation of an entire country, or even continent.

Beyond semantics, recognizing diverse intentions and meanings of a simple word like “rural”, “local”, “community” or “public” has great implications, particularly for decentralization schemes that have gained in popularity in the last few decades. Development solutions often advocate engaging “local Searchers” (Easterly, 2006) or increasing “localism” through empowerment (Carothers, 1999) – as if the “local” is one concretely bound, homogeneous unit. Even James Scott’s (1998) often-cited work oversimplifies the “local” as much as it does the state; Scott criticizes bureaucratic rationality for displacing “local” knowledge, or what he calls *metis*. However, simply venerating the “local” does not sufficiently show the heterogeneity of practices, actors, and needs in any particular locality. Anderson-Levitt’s (2003) call for balancing World Culture theory (Meyer et al., 1997) with local variability, likewise does not clarify exactly how “local” is defined. Within the work of those who argue that global discourse converges more than local action (Schriewer, 2000; Steiner Khamsi, 2002; Burde, 2004), it is also often unclear precisely who the “local actors” are in a “local community.” Without careful specification, these terms, which are intended to be more specific in identifying micro-level targets, end up conjuring the same generalities as macro, national-level rhetoric.

Conclusion

Overall, a central theme in universalizing education in post-independence Sierra Leone was thus: to increase development and school enrollment in the hinterland so as to close the urban-rural gap, the state progressed in making education more relevant to “local” conditions. As argued by James Ferguson, there is no substitute to “answering specific, localized, tactical questions” (Ferguson, 1994, p. 181). That said, how one defines “local” is something that should be questioned. A question like “Was the project a success?” should also be appended by “for whom?”, before being followed by an analysis that is “based not on the generic or local, macro or micro ... but on the changing relationships between them” (Ball, 2005, p. 76).

A final contradiction that may have arisen had the Bunumbu project not been interrupted by the civil war is the competing way in which the project simultaneously attempted to “localize” the content of education while “developing” rural regions. For example, a new curriculum with a “rural bias” was to be created alongside the goal of transforming “rural areas to develop into towns that feed the villages with services like transportation, water supply, power, health care...” (“The Bunumbu Experience”, 1977, p. viv). On the one hand, the project sought to make education “relevant” to the current “traditional” conditions of rural areas, but on the other hand, the project sought to use education to launch Bunumbu towards a hypothetical “developed” state. Hence, while the latter objective demanded a step forward towards future modernity, the former objective demanded a step back towards past systems and traditions. The vying forces of planning for the future while adapting to the present resulted in a development gridlock, where pockets of “progress” may have been achieved, but much less predictably and systematically than what was envisioned for the country.

In sum, this case study reveals that while “localizing” education is a positive step in achieving universal schooling, failing to explicitly define popularly used terms like “local” and “community” can undermine program success. Once identified, the state must also take a dialectic approach to alternate between fulfilling the particular needs of individual subgroups through well-specified projects, and connecting these projects to bridge social schisms such as the rural-urban divide. As Clifford Geertz would be inclined to agree: the path towards the general is through the particular (1973), as the initial success of the Bunumbu Project well exemplified. Rather than expanding and overextending the success of one project though, the later struggles faced by the project show that states might be better off modifying and

replicating small-scale efforts, in tandem with building the “bridging social capital” that then unites the distinct particulars (Putnam, 2000). [4] Ultimately, the path towards universalizing schooling should begin with particularizing and diversifying education to meet the needs of well-defined subpopulations, followed by a balancing act of connecting the pluralistic pieces.

Notes

- [1] This represented about 5% of the total population of 2.8 million people (Hawes, 1976).
[2] This region was coincidentally where the Revolutionary United Front soldiers later first entered the country from Liberia (Richards, 1996).
[3] Among Sierra Leoneans, the term “bush” was used more often than “rural.” As explained by Earl Welker: “When I arrived in Freetown and told people I was going to teach in Bunumbu, the almost universal comment was: ‘Oh you are headed for the real bush’ – meaning I was not only NOT going to be in Freetown ... but I was going to a VILLAGE. In addition to geographical meaning, it also had cultural meaning. ‘Bush’ meant not sophisticated, not fashionable, not up-to-date, not cognizant of what was really going on in” (Personal communication, April 5, 2013).
[4] The Bunumbu Project was never replicated elsewhere due to the start of the civil war in 1991.

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The International Efficiency of American Education: The Bad and the Not-So-Bad News

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There is ample evidence to suggest that American schools perform worse than schools in many other countries. The U.S. ranks toward the bottom of the industrialized nations on international tests of academic achievement in science and mathematics. Not only may American schools perform worse but they may do so at the same time as they use more resources than other schools systems. In essence, American schools may not only be poor in quality but less efficient. This paper will explore some of the evidence on education efficiency. It will suggest that in many ways the assumption is correct, American schools are less efficient. It will suggest that the reason for the inefficiency of American schools is the difference in the 'demand to learn' between American and other school children. But the paper will also explore evidence that suggests that American schools are not less efficient and in one new way of looking at the problem, this paper will argue that American schools are more efficient than the schools in the Republic of Korea, one of the world's leading school systems. The paper will conclude with some advice on the proper role which international comparisons may play in the design of domestic education policy.

Background

Bad news about American education is a tradition. Often the news emerges from national commissions (Higher Education for Democracy, 1947; Committee on Education Beyond High School, 1956; Task Force on Education, 1960; Nation at Risk, 1983; The Future of Higher Education, 2006; State Scholars Initiative, 2008; Wolk, 2009). In many instances the bad news includes statements that American schools have declined in quality or have been bested by school systems in other countries. International tests of academic achievement have been used to suggest that American school children do not learn as much as do children in many other school systems, including the school systems of America's most important trading partners (Lemke, Sen, Pahlke, Partelow, Miller, Kastberg and Jocelyn, 2004; Baldi, Jin, Skemer, Green, Herget, 2007; Herget, 2007; Heyneman and Lee, 2012).

Sometimes, the school systems which attain first place in the ranking of achievement become a subject of headline news. This was the case for instance of the scores of Shanghai on PISA 2009 (New York Times, 2010). Attention has turned not only to the rankings of other countries on achievement tests, but on the comparative efficiency of one system versus another in those rankings (New York Times, 2007). [1]

Efficiency: The Bad News

The bad news is not new. Two decades ago the U.S. spent more money on education yet performed worse on tests of 8th grade mathematics (Table one). Table one displays the results of the international test designed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) used in 1991 prior to PISA. Norway, for instance, spent \$1,111 for each adult citizen in the population. Forty-six percent of the Norwegian students performed over the international median in 8th grade mathematics. This would imply that it would cost an additional \$ US 24/ adult citizen for an additional one percent of the students to achieve over the international mathematics median. The U.S. spent \$ US 1040/ adult citizen and 45% of the American students performed over the

Originally published as "The International Efficiency of American Education: The Bad and the Not-so-Bad News," (2013) pp. 279-302 in Heinz-Dieter Meyer and Aaron Benavot (eds.) *Pisa, Power and Policy: The Emergence of Global Educational Governance* Oxford (UK): Oxford Studies in Comparative Education Symposium Books. Appears with permission in *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 16(1): 74-89.

international median. To get an additional percent over the international median, the U.S. would need to spend an additional \$23/ citizen.

In other countries, however, the cost would be less. In Singapore and Japan it would only cost \$US 7 to have an additional one percent of their students perform over international median; in Korea, Hong Kong, the Czech Republic, and Thailand it would only cost \$US 4. Arguably the most efficient education systems in 1991 were located in Latvia, Lithuania and Romania, where only \$US 2 or \$US 3 would be required to have an additional one percent of their students over the international median. And the least efficient school system was that of Kuwait which would require \$US 287 for an additional percentage of its students to perform over the international median.

Table 1. International Education Efficiency (1991).

Country	Public expenditure on education/capita (A) in dollars	Proportion of students over the international median in 8 th grade mathematics (B) as a percentage	Ratio A/B
Norway	1111	46	24
United States	1040	45	23
Kuwait	848	3	287
Singapore	724	94	7
United Kingdom	649	48	14
Japan	602	83	7
Israel	584	56	10
Republic of Korea	362	82	4
Hong Kong	309	80	4
Czech Republic	297	70	4
Hungary	272	60	4
Thailand	206	54	4
Iran	183	9	20
Latvia	147	40	3
Lithuania	71	34	2
Romania	55	36	2

Sources: *Second International Assessment of Educational Progress IAEP II, Math and Science in 20 Countries ETS 1991*; and *Heyneman, 2004*.

Using PISA results from 2009, it appears that the U.S. has not improved on its level of education efficiency by comparison to other countries (Table 2).[2] If one takes the total PISA test score (reading, mathematics and science taken together), the U.S. ranks eighth out of 17 countries. However, if one incorporates education spending, the U.S. ranking drops from 8th to 16th, next to last. The countries with the highest efficiency ranking included Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary.

Table 3 illustrates monetary efficiency in a slightly different way. As one can see the U.S. is among the countries which had the highest secondary student expenditures but is positioned lower than many other countries in terms of PISA mathematics performance.

Table 4 illustrates this same issue using cumulative spending for ages 6 – 15 rather than spending on secondary school students alone. In this case the U.S. is the highest spending country in the sample and yet in middle of the sample in terms of total PISA test score performance.

Efficiency can be calculated in many ways, achievement on the basis of pupil expenditure is one. Another is achievement in conjunction with school time. Table 5 illustrates this principle. American schools devote almost 19 hours/ week to core subjects, equivalent to Latvia and

Poland and far more than Sweden, Finland, Belgium and Switzerland. Yet Finland, Switzerland and Australia devote less time to core subject but have higher PISA achievement scores.

Table 2. Student performance in PISA 2009 and cumulative education spending per student

Country	Total test score	Score ranking	Spending (US\$)	Ratio of scores to expenditures	Ratio ranking	Average expenditure for one score point
Finland	1,631	1	71,385	0.023	7	43.77
Australia	1,589	2	72,386	0.022	8	45.55
Switzerland	1,552	3	104,352	0.015	14	67.23
Belgium	1,528	4	80,145	0.019	10	52.45
Poland	1,503	5	39,964	0.037	2	26.59
Norway	1,501	5	101,265	0.015	14	67.47
Denmark	1,497	7	87,642	0.017	12	58.55
United States	1,496	8	105,752	0.014	16	70.69
Sweden	1,486	9	82,753	0.017	12	55.69
Czech Republic	1,471	10	44,761	0.033	3	30.42
Portugal	1,469	11	56,803	0.026	6	38.67
Hungary	1,464	12	44,342	0.033	3	30.29
Germany	1,461	13	63,296	0.023	7	43.32
Latvia	1,460	14
Italy	1,458	15	77,310	0.019	10	53.02
Greece	1,419	16	48,422	0.029	5	34.12
Russia Federation	1,405	17	17,499	0.080	1	12.45
OECD average	1,500		69,135	0.021		46.09

Source: OECD (2010, 2011)

Note:

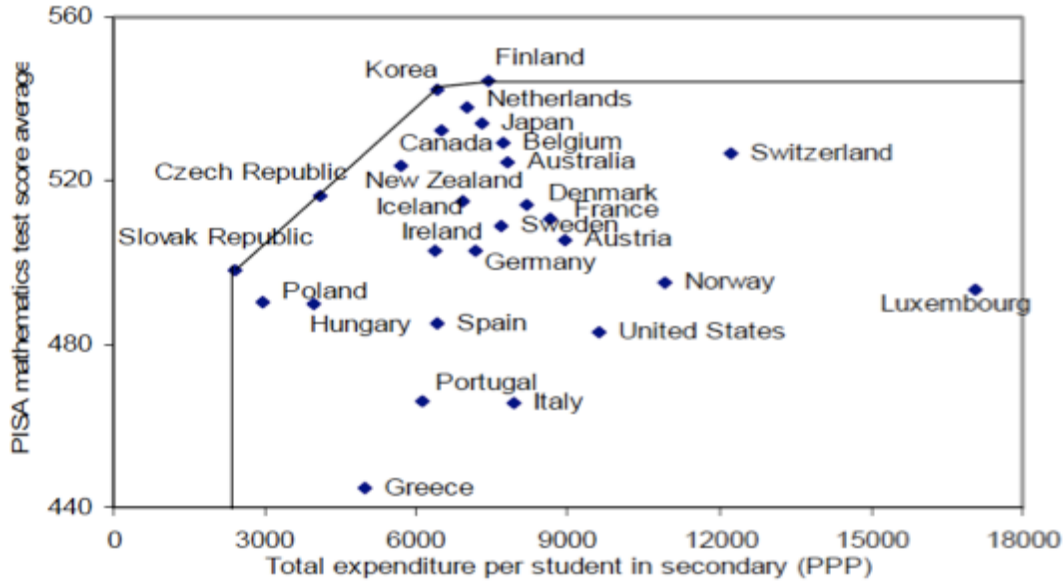
1. Total test score is the sum of three core subjects, reading, mathematical and scientific literacy.
2. Rankings are based on sample countries this paper examines only.
3. Cumulative education spending is in equivalent US dollars converted using PPPs.
4. "Ratio of scores to expenditure", i.e., test scores achieved when \$1 is spent and "Average expenditure for one score point" is an average expenditure to get one test score point. Both of them are calculated by the author.

Efficiency can also be calculated in terms of an output indicator, such as the rate at which enrolled students actually graduate. Table 6 illustrates the connection between secondary school graduation rate and total expenditures per secondary school student. The U.S. spends more than any other country with the exception of Switzerland, yet the rate of secondary school graduation is lower than any other country save Spain and New Zealand. The sum of this evidence would suggest that by many different measures the U.S. is less efficient than other countries and that the record of inefficiency is consistent over at least two decades.

There are many hypotheses as to why American schools are less efficient than those of many other countries. One hypothesis is that American school children express a lower 'demand to learn' than do school children in countries with high efficiency in their school systems (Heyneman, 1999). This is sometimes noted as whether 100 percent of the children want to come to school each day and to try hard each day. In essence the 'demand to learn' is a culturally-shaped attitude or disposition that places the value of education higher or lower on a scale of socially desirable activities. There is, moreover, a gap in the 'demand to learn' between children of different backgrounds in the United States whereas in high efficiency school systems there is less of a gap between children of different backgrounds. This suggests that the barrier to student achievement in American schools is not poverty or race but the lack of the demand to learn and the difference in the demand to learn from one social group to another (Heyneman, 2005). This also suggests that better teacher training, a different curriculum or a longer school

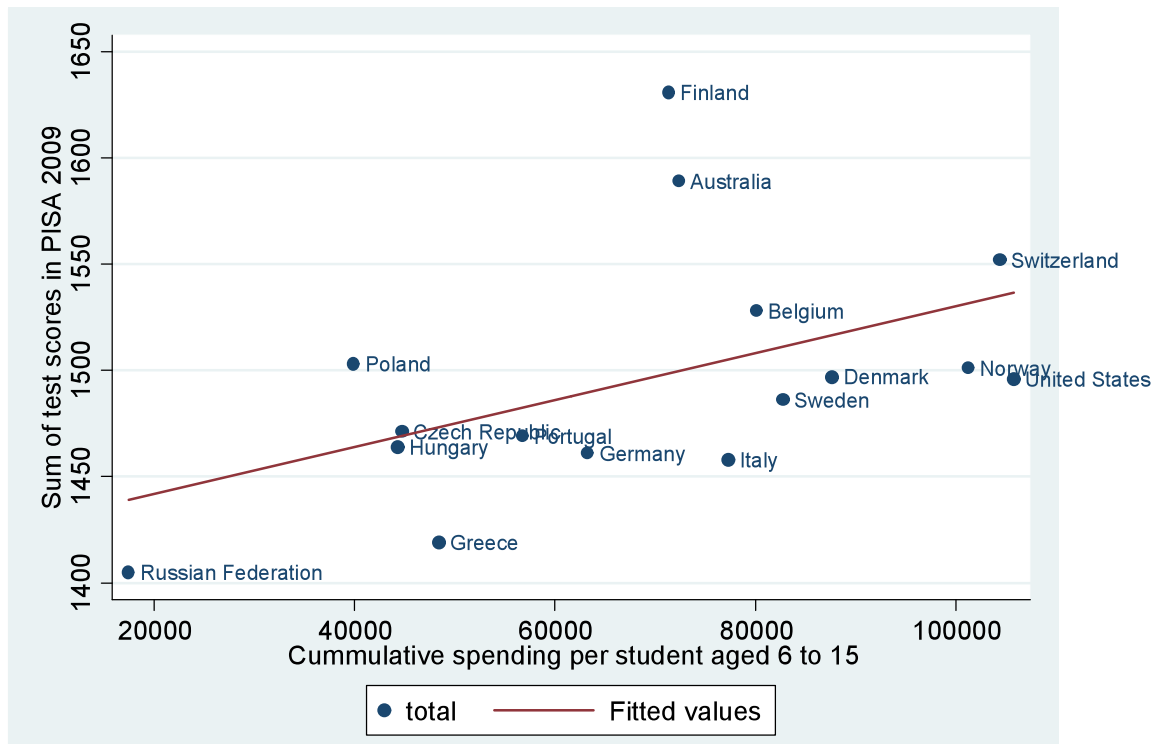
day will not have the intended effect until the demand to learn is generally augmented and until a high demand to learn is characteristic of all social groups.

Table 3. Secondary education spending and average PISA mathematics scores



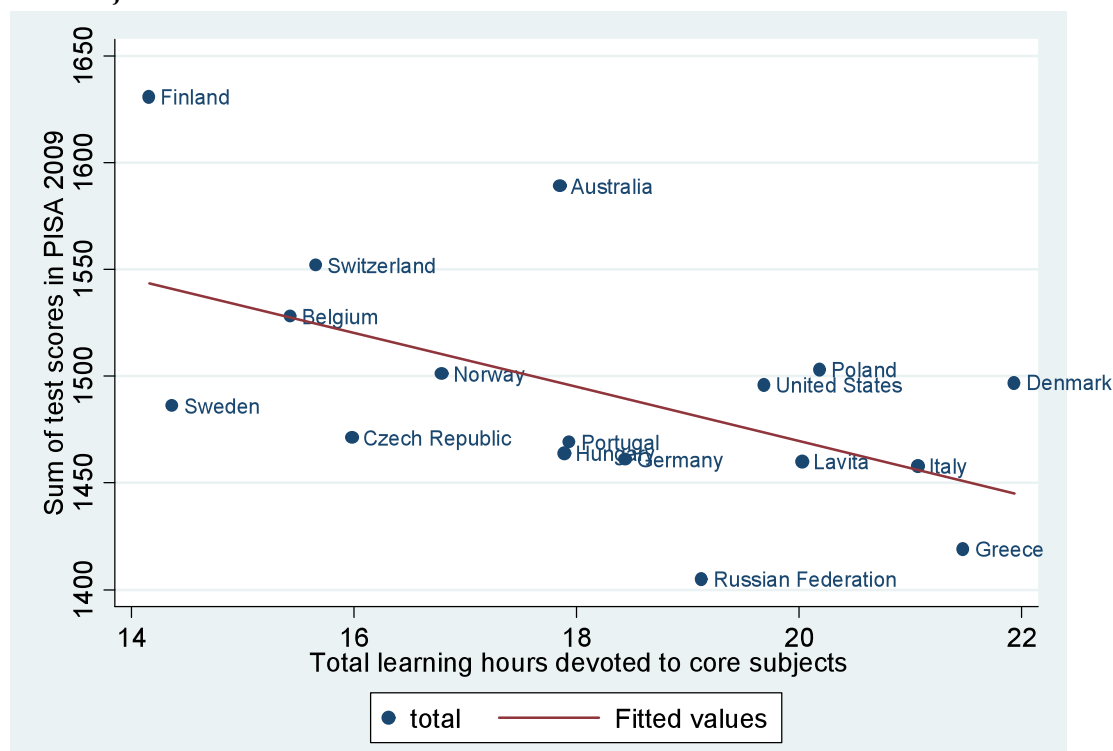
Sources: OECD Education at Glance 2006, www.oecd.org/edu/leg2006; OECD PISA. IMF staff calculations. The line connects countries with the highest observed efficiency and depicts the best practice frontier unadjusted for estimation bias (Verhoeven et al., 2007)

Table 4. Relationship between student achievement in PISA 2009 and cumulative spending



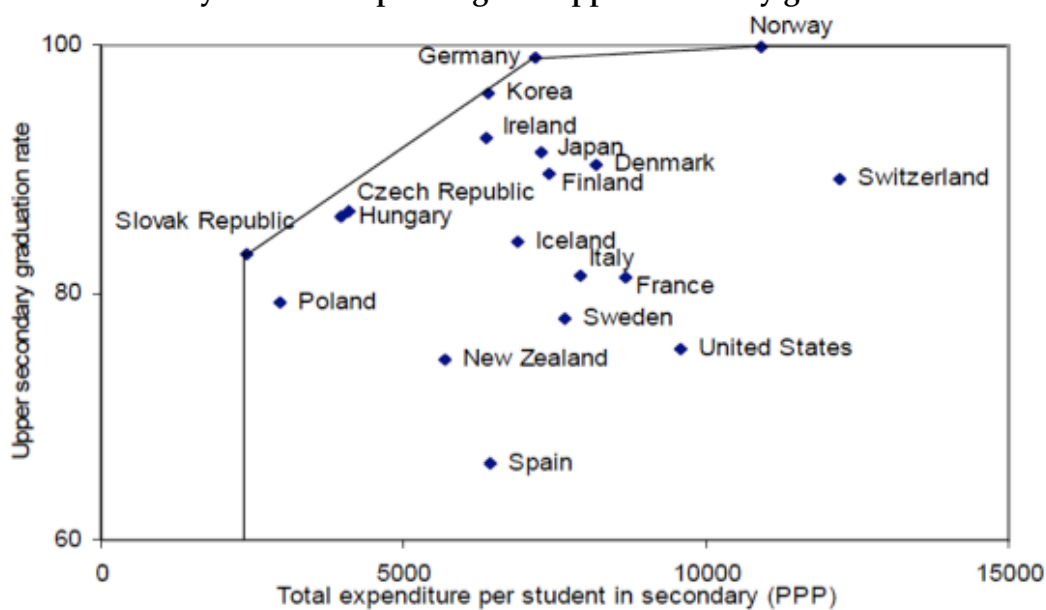
Source: OECD (2010, 2011)

Table 5. Relationship between student achievement in PISA 2009 and total hours devoted to core subjects



Source: OECD (2010, 2011)

Table 6. Secondary education spending and upper secondary graduation rates.



Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2006, www.oecd.org/edu/eag2006; OECD PISA and IMF staff calculations. The line connects countries with the highest observed efficiency and depicts the best practice frontier unadjusted for estimation bias (Verhoeven et al., 2007).

Table 7. Student achievement in PISA 2000 and scores from the Civic Education Study (CIVED) 1999 (rankings in parentheses).

Country	Reading literacy	Mathematical literacy	Scientific literacy	Total test score	Civic knowledge
Finland	546 (1)	536 (4)	538 (3)	1620 (3)	109.3 (2)
Australia	528 (4)	533 (5)	528 (7)	1589 (6)	101.7 (11)
Sweden	516 (9)	516 (15)	512 (10)	1544 (10)	99.1 (18)
Belgium	507 (10)	520 (9)	496 (17)	1523 (11)	94.7 (22)
Norway	505 (13)	499 (17)	500 (13)	1504 (15)	102.9 (9)
United States	504 (15)	493 (19)	499 (14)	1496 (17)	106.5 (6)
Denmark	497 (16)	514 (12)	481 (22)	1492 (18)	100.4 (14)
Switzerland	494 (17)	529 (14)	496 (17)	1519 (13)	98.3 (19)
Czech Republic	492 (19)	498 (18)	511 (11)	1501 (16)	102.6 (10)
Italy	487 (20)	457 (26)	478 (23)	1422 (24)	105.4 (7)
Germany	474 (21)	490 (20)	487 (20)	1451 (21)	99.8 (15)
Hungary	480 (23)	488 (21)	296 (15)	1464 (20)	101.6 (12)
Poland	479 (24)	470 (24)	483 (21)	1432 (23)	110.6 (1)
Greece	474 (25)	447 (28)	461 (25)	1382 (27)	107.9 (4)
Portugal	470 (26)	470 (24)	459 (28)	1399 (26)	96.2 (21)
Russia Federation	462 (27)	478 (22)	460 (26)	1400 (25)	99.6 (16)
Latvia	458 (28)	462 (25)	460 (27)	1380 (28)	91.5 (26)
OECD average	500	500	500	1500	100

Source: OECD (2001) and Schulz and Sibberns (2004)

Note:

1. Numbers in parentheses are rankings among all participating countries in PISA and CIVED respectively.
2. Average of civic knowledge is international average, not OECD.

Efficiency: the not-so-bad news

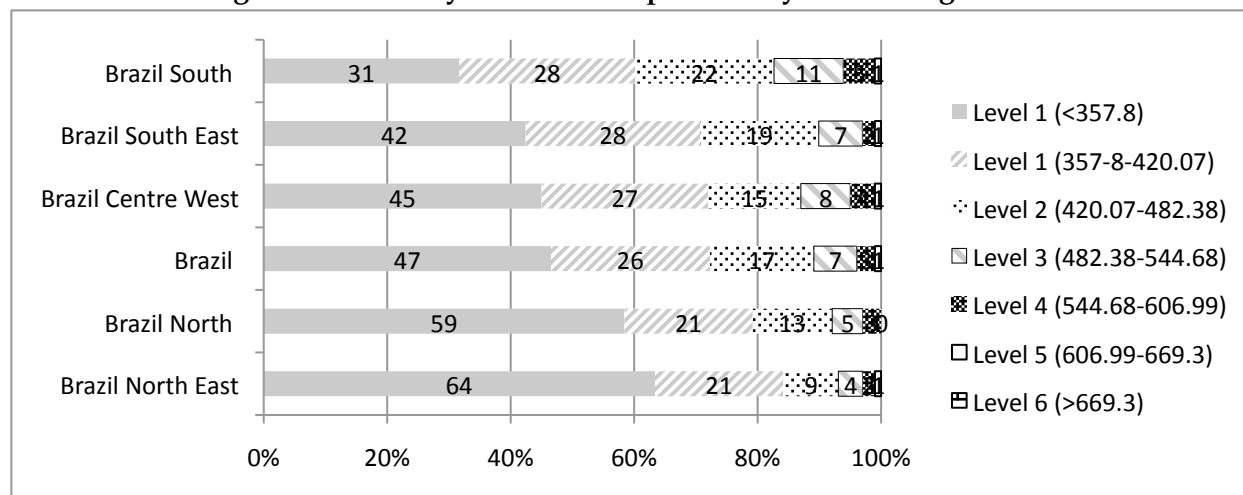
Achievement in subjects other than math and science. Most discussions of achievement concentrate on math and science; some on reading. But the purpose of public schooling and the reason nations invest in public schooling are broader than skills, jobs and productivity. They include the degree to which schools are able to influence citizenship behavior. On this dimension, American schools may do rather well. Table 7 illustrates the differences in international ranking using different achievement measures on PISA 2000 and CIVED 1999. The U.S. was ranked 15th out of 28 countries in reading literacy, 19th in mathematical literacy, and 14th in scientific literacy. However the U.S. was ranked 6th in the field of Civics Education. This could be rather important. Nations which struggle for social cohesion are nations which also struggle economically (Heyneman, 2000). Civil tension reduces trust and a reduction in trust reduces internal cooperation and trade (Heyneman, 2002/3). One reason why the U.S. economy continues to perform in spite of the low ranking in science and mathematics performance may be associated with the rather good job of the American schools in influencing citizenship.

Internal variation in performance.

The U.S. is typical of all large and diverse nations in that academic performance is significantly divergent from one region to another. Table 8 illustrates this divergence in Brazil. 16% of the students achieved the top levels of mathematics achievement in the south and only 7% in the North east. Table 9 illustrates this divergence in the Russian Federation. The Russian average for PISA 2009 was 475; but this varied from Yakutia at 419 to Moscow at 546. Tables 10 and 11 illustrate this principle in the US and compares the scores of various states in Mathematics (Table 10) and Science (Table 11) against the scores of various nations. On both measures the top performing 'nations' in the world --- Singapore, Hong Kong and Taipei, also includes

Minnesota and Massachusetts. This suggests that parts of the U.S. school system is as competitive as the best in the world.

Table 8. Percentage of students by mathematics proficiency level in regions of Brazil



Source: OECD (2010).

Table 12 illustrates this principle in all the American states. This table shows the state proficiency in mathematics and a comparison of the nations with the same or similar proficiency levels. For instance, Vermont had a proficiency level similar to Australia, Denmark, Estonia, France and Germany. On the other hand, Tennessee, my own state had proficiency levels comparable to Croatia, Greece, Israel, Russia and Turkey. The most inefficient school system in the U.S., according to this criteria is the District of Columbia. Washington DC level of proficiency was the equivalent to that of Mexico, Thailand, and Kazakhstan.

Time devoted to studying using private tutors.

Most studies of education efficiency include time on task within the classroom, hours in the school day, scheduled school days/year. These are important indicators of effort, but are increasingly inadequate. Their inadequacy is particularly relevant when considering comparisons with countries in South and East Asia.

The typical student in Asia attends several types of schools simultaneously. They attend government run public schools from which the data pertaining to time on task usually derive. But they also attend 'cram schools' on a regular basis. These cram schools are referred to as 'shadow education'. In Japan the cram schools are called Juku; in Korea they are called 'Hogwans'. In general these schools are not managed according to modern styles of teaching but the opposite; they are there to reinforce rules, principles, formulae, and information. They are cram schools in the literal sense. In Korea for instance, 88% of the elementary students and 61% of the students in general high schools receive private tutoring in cram schools (Kim, 2010, p. 302). A Korean family which earns between \$US 6,000 and 7,000/month typically allocates 6.3% (\$US 440/high school student/month) on private tutoring (Korean Statistical Information Service, 2011). The financial burden on households, the stress on children, the implications for social inequality have long been recognized and have been subject to considerable research (Lee and Jang, 2010, Heyneman, 2010). In India, approximately 72% of the older primary school students and 52% of the secondary school students receive private tutoring (Ngai and Chung, 2010). Although it is difficult to research effectively, the portion of students in China who receive private tutoring in math was 28.8% and in English, 29.3% (Zhang, 2011). Other estimates have been made for South America (Mattos, 2007), Europe (Ireson, 2004, Bray, 2011) and the U.S. (Mattos, 2007). Private tutoring is so common that economists have begun to estimate its

fiscal impact. By one estimate for instance, private tutoring in South Korea increased from 0.34% of GDP in 1977 to 2.3% of GDP in 2003, an amount equivalent to 50% of the public expenditure on education (Kim, 2007). The Korean Education Development Institute reports that 84% of the

Table 9. Results by Region in Russia (PISA 2009)

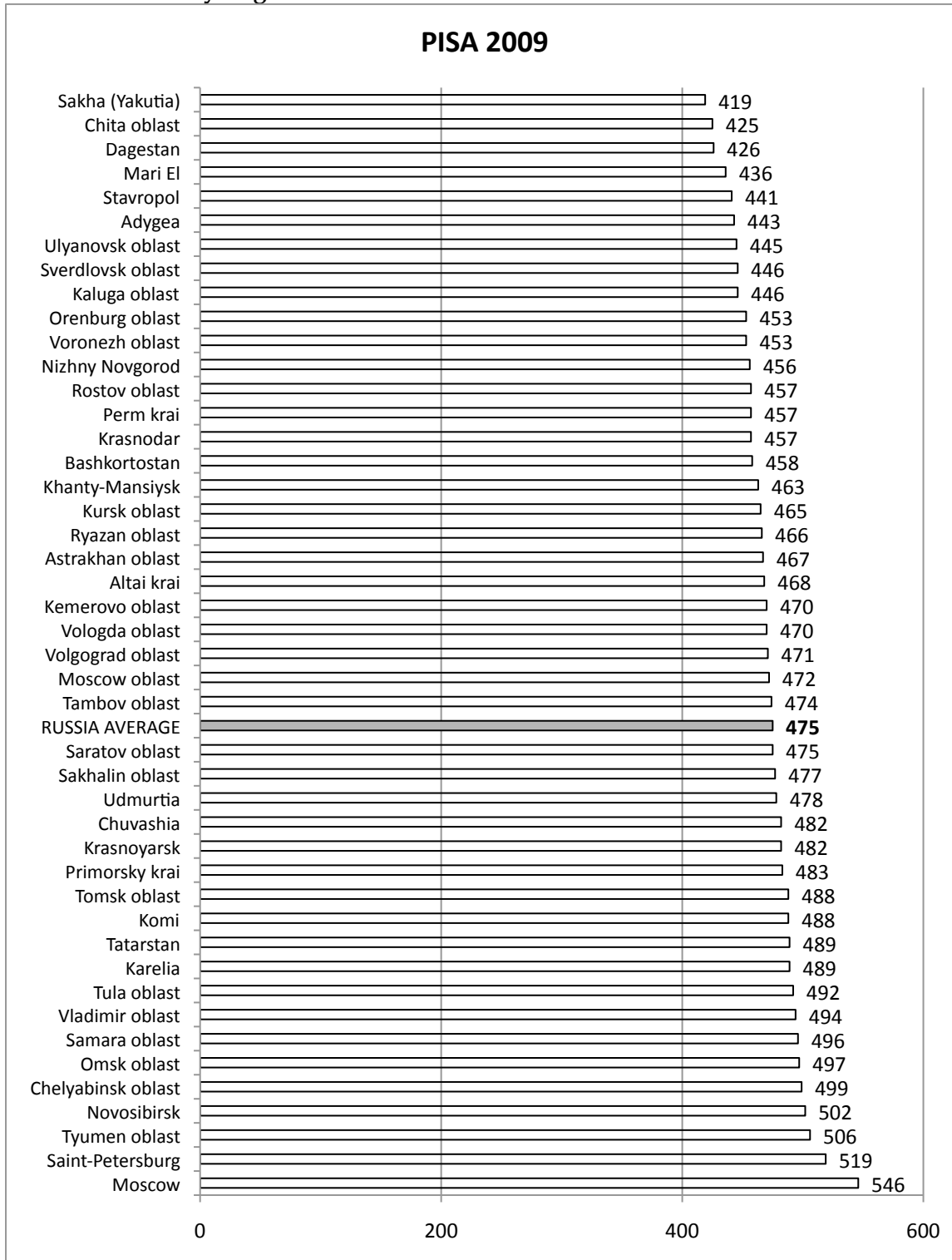


Table 10. Mathematics results by country and U.S. State (TIMSS 2007)

Scale score	Grade 4	Grade 8
	Hong Kong-Ch. (607)	
600	Singapore (599)	Ch. Taipei (598), Rep. of Korea (597) Singapore (593)
590		
580	Ch. Taipei (576) MA-USA (572)	Hong Kong-Ch. (572)
570	Japan (568)	Japan (570)
560	MN-USA (554)	
550	Kazakhstan (549) Russian Fed. (544) England-UK (541)	MA-USA (547)
540	Latvia (537) Netherlands (535)	MN-USA (532)
530	Lithuania (530), USA (529) Germany (525) Denmark (523)	Quebec-Ca. (528)
520	Quebec-Ca. (519) Australia (516) Ontario-Ca. (512)	Ontario-Ca., Hungary (517) England-UK (513), Russian Fed. (512)
510	Hungary (510), Italy (507) Br. Columbia-Ca., Alberta-Ca., Austria (505) Sweden (503), Slovenia (502)	Br. Columbia-Ca. (509), USA (508) Lithuania (506), Czech Rep. (504) Slovenia (501)
500	Armenia, TIMSS Scale Avg. (500) Slovak Rep. (496) Scotland-UK (494), New Zealand (492)	TIMSS Scale Avg. (500) , Armenia (499) Basque Country-Sp. (499), Australia (496) Sweden (491)
490		Malta (488), Scotland-UK (487) Serbia (486)
480		Italy (480) Malaysia (474)
	Norway (473)	
470	Ukraine (469), Dubai-UAE(444), Georgia (438), Islamic Rep. of Iran (402), Algeria (378), Colombia (355), Morocco (341), El Salvador (330), Tunisia (327), Kuwait (316), Qatar (296), Yemen (224)	Norway (469), Cyprus (465), Bulgaria (464), Israel (463), Ukraine (462), Romania, Dubai-UAE (461), Bosnia and Herzegovina (456), Lebanon (449), Thailand (441), Turkey (432), Jordan (427), Tunisia (420), Georgia (410), Islamic Rep. of Iran (403), Bahrain (398), Indonesia (397), Syrian Arab Rep. (395), Egypt (391), Algeria (387), Morocco (381), Colombia (380), Oman (372), Palestinian Nat'l Auth. (367), Botswana (364), Kuwait (354), El Salvador (340), Saudi Arabia (329), Ghana (309), Qatar (307)

□ = Above the international average

■ = Not measurably different from the international average

□ = Below the international average

NOTE: Countries are listed by estimated average scores. Figure is not a scaled representation of countries' scores. International/OECD average scores and U.S. scores are presented in bold font. While the formulation and construction of assessment scales are the same across the TIMSS, PIRLS, and PISA, the content represented by the scale scores is not the same across different ages within a subject domain.

Source: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/international/reports/2011-mrs.asp#mathematics>

Table 11. Science results by country and U.S. State (TIMSS 2007)

Scale score	Grade 4	Grade 8
600		
590	Singapore (587)	
580	MA-USA (571)	
570		Singapore (567) Ch. Taipei (561)
560	Ch. Taipei (557) Hong Kong-Ch. (554) MN-USA (551)	MA-USA (556) Japan (554), Rep. of Korea (553)
550	Japan (548) Russian Fed. (546), Alberta-Ca. (543) Latvia, England-UK (542)	England-UK (542)
540	USA (539) , Br. Columbia-Ca. (537) Hungary, Ontario-Ca. (536), Italy (535) Kazakhstan (533)	Hungary, Czech Rep. (539) MN-USA (539) , Slovenia (538)
530	Germany (528), Australia (527) Slovak Rep., Austria (526), Sweden (525) Netherlands (523)	Hong Kong-Ch., Russian Fed. (530) Ontario-Ca., Br. Columbia-Ca. (526)
520	Slovenia (518), Denmark, Quebec-Ca. (517) Czech Rep. (515), Lithuania (514)	USA (520) , Lithuania (519) Australia (515) Sweden (511)
510	New Zealand (504)	Quebec-Ca. (507)
500	Scotland-UK, TIMSS Scale Avg. (500)	TIMSS Scale Avg. (500) Basque Country-Sp. (498) Scotland-UK (496), Italy (495)
490	Armenia (484)	Dubai-UAE (489), Armenia (488) Norway (487), Ukraine (485) Jordan (482)
480	Norway (477) Ukraine (474)	Malaysia, Thailand (471)
470 and below	Dubai-UAE (460), Islamic Rep. of Iran (436), Georgia (418), Colombia (400), El Salvador (390), Algeria (354), Kuwait (348), Tunisia (318), Morocco (297), Qatar (294), Yemen (197)	Serbia, Bulgaria (470), Israel (468), Bahrain (467), Bosnia and Herz. (466), Romania (462), Islamic Rep. of Iran (459), Malta (457), Turkey (454), Syrian Arab Rep., Cyprus (452), Tunisia (445), Indonesia (427), Oman (423), Georgia (421), Kuwait (418), Columbia (417), Lebanon (414), Egypt, Algeria (408), Palestinian Nat'l Auth. (404), Saudia Arabia (403), Morocco (402), El Salvador (387), Botswana (355), Qatar (319), Ghana (303)

- ☐ = Above the international average
- = Not measurably different from the international average
- = Below the international average

NOTE: Countries are listed by estimated average scores. Figure is not a scaled representation of countries' scores. International/OECD average scores and U.S. scores are presented in bold font. While the formulation and construction of assessment scales are the same across the TIMSS, PIRLS, and PISA, the content represented by the scale scores is not the same across different ages within a subject domain.

Source: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/international/reports/2011-mrs.asp#mathematics>

parents in Korea state that private tutoring is a significant economic burden (KEDI, 2003). Some have commented that private tutoring relates South Korea, among other countries, to a low level of efficiency within the OECD member states (Grundlach and Wobmann, 2001; Kim, 2002). Others have commented on the distortions to higher education selection (Park, 1996), and the fact that memorization of material has a low impact on productivity (Paik, 2000).

Table 12. Percentage of students proficient in math by state and countries with similar proficiency levels

State	Percent proficient	Significantly outperformed by*	Countries with similar percentages of proficient students
1 Massachusetts	50.7	6	Canada • Japan • Netherlands • New Zealand • Switzerland
2 Minnesota	43.1	11	Australia • Belgium • France • Germany • Netherlands
3 Vermont	41.4	14	Australia • Denmark • Estonia • France • Germany
4 North Dakota	41.0	16	Denmark • Estonia • France • Iceland
5 New Jersey	40.4	14	Australia • Austria • Denmark • France • Germany
6 Kansas	40.2	16	Austria • Denmark • Estonia • France • Slovenia
7 South Dakota	39.1	16	Austria • Denmark • France • Hungary • Sweden
8 Pennsylvania	38.3	16	Austria • Denmark • France • Hungary • Sweden
9 New Hampshire	37.9	18	Austria • Denmark • France • Hungary • Sweden
10 Montana	37.6	18	Austria • France • Hungary • Poland • Sweden
11 Virginia	37.5	17	Czech Rep • France • Hungary • Poland • Sweden
12 Colorado	37.4	18	Czech Rep • France • Hungary • Poland • U.K.
13 Wisconsin	37.0	18	Czech Rep • France • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
14 Maryland	36.5	18	Czech Rep • France • Hungary • Poland • U.K.
15 Wyoming	36.0	18	Czech Rep • France • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
16 Washington	35.9	19	Czech Rep • France • Hungary • Poland • U.K.
17 Ohio	35.4	18	Czech Rep • France • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
18 Iowa	35.2	19	Czech Rep • France • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
19 Indiana	35.1	19	Czech Rep • France • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
20 Oregon	34.8	20	Czech Rep • Hungary • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
21 Connecticut	34.7	19	France • Poland • Portugal • Spain • U.K.
22 Texas	34.7	21	Czech Rep • Hungary • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
23 Nebraska	34.6	20	Czech Rep • Hungary • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
24 North Carolina	34.5	21	Czech Rep • Hungary • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
25 Maine	34.1	22	Czech Rep • Hungary • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
26 Idaho	34.1	22	Czech Rep • Hungary • Poland • Portugal • U.K.
27 Utah	32.4	26	Italy • Poland • Portugal • Spain • U.K.
28 Alaska	32.2	26	Italy • Poland • Portugal • Spain • U.K.
United States	32.2	22	Italy • Latvia • Poland • Spain • U.K.
29 South Carolina	31.9	26	Italy • Poland • Portugal • Spain • U.K.
30 Delaware	31.3	28	Hungary • Italy • Portugal • Spain • U.K.
31 Illinois	30.8	27	Czech Rep • Italy • Portugal • Spain • U.K.
32 New York	30.2	28	Hungary • Italy • Portugal • Spain • U.K.
33 Missouri	29.9	28	Hungary • Italy • Portugal • Spain • U.K.
34 Michigan	28.9	30	Ireland • Italy • Lithuania • Portugal • Spain
35 Rhode Island	27.7	34	Latvia • Lithuania
36 Florida	27.4	34	Greece • Latvia • Lithuania
37 Kentucky	27.3	34	Latvia • Lithuania
38 Arizona	26.3	34	Greece • Latvia • Lithuania
39 Georgia	24.7	35	Greece • Latvia • Russia
40 Arkansas	24.4	35	Croatia • Greece • Israel • Latvia • Russia
41 California	23.9	36	Greece • Russia
42 Tennessee	23.1	36	Croatia • Greece • Israel • Russia • Turkey
43 Nevada	23.0	36	Croatia • Greece • Israel • Russia
44 Oklahoma	21.3	36	Croatia • Greece • Israel • Russia • Turkey

45 Hawaii	21.2	38	Croatia • Israel • Russia • Turkey
46 Louisiana	19.0	39	Bulgaria • Croatia • Israel • Serbia • Turkey
47 West Virginia	18.5	41	Bulgaria • Turkey
48 Alabama	18.2	39	Bulgaria • Croatia • Israel • Serbia • Turkey
49 New Mexico	17.4	41	Bulgaria • Serbia • Turkey
50 Mississippi	13.6	43	Bulgaria • Trinidad and Tobago • Uruguay
51 District of Columbia	8.0	48	Kazakhstan • Mexico • Thailand

Source: Peterson et al. (2011)

* Number of countries whose percent proficient was statistically significantly higher

Note: List of countries performing at a level that cannot be distinguished statistically are limited to those 5 with the largest population.

We were interested in the degree to which private tutoring might affect Korea’s PISA efficiency. The PISA questionnaire asked students about time/week spent in private tutoring. We have added this time to the amount of time in formal school and have compared Korea to the U.S.

Table 13 illustrates this comparison in the learning time devoted to studying math in both the U.S. and Korea. Korean students report spending 86% more time studying math out of school than American students (2.1 hours/ week as opposed to 0.3 hours/week). While the ratio of time in formal schooling to PISA score is very close between the two countries (3.54 vs. 3.78), when one adds the time spent studying mathematics outside of formal schooling the differences are pronounced. The ratio of time/ PISA score is 2.46 for Korean vs. 3.27 for American students. In essence, the American school system is one third more efficient than the Korean school system.

Table 13. Mathematical literacy and time studying math

	Math	In-school Instructional time for math (hours per week)	Instructional weeks in years	Total hours	Ratio of score to time
Korea	552	4.1	35.6	145.9	3.78
United States	472	3.7	36	133.2	3.54
	Math	Out-of-school instruction time for math (hours per week)	In-school + out of school instructions	Total hours	Ratio of score to time
Korea	552	2.1	6.3	224.3	2.46
United States	472	0.3	4.0	144	3.27

Source: PISA (2004) *Learning for Tomorrow’s World* . Table 5.14.

Note: Math scores are from PISA 2003. Out-of-school activities include working with a tutor and attending out-of-school classes.

Table 14 continues this same illustration using the total time studying across all subjects not only studying on mathematics. The total time Korean students spend studying is about one third more than in the U.S.. The level of their PISA scores is indeed higher, but the ratio of time/ PISA score is considerably different. The ratio for Korea is 0.44, and for the U.S. 0.57. By this account, that is by comparison to the total time spent studying in private tutoring as well as in school, the American system is about 30% more efficient than the Korean system.

Table 14. Mathematical literacy and total time studying

	Math	In-school Instructional time for all subjects (hours per week)	Instructional weeks in years	Total hours	Ratio of score to time
Korea	552	30.3	35.6	1078.7	0.51
United States	472	22.2	36	799.2	0.59
	Math	Out-of-school instruction time for all subjects (hours per week)	In-school + out of school instructions	Total hours	Ratio of score to time
Korea	552	5.1	35.4	1260.4	0.44
United States	472	0.7	22.9	824.4	0.57

Source: PISA (2004) *Learning for Tomorrow's World* . Table 5.14.

Note: Math scores are from PISA 2003. Out-of-school activities include working with a tutor and attending out-of-school classes.

Implications

For twenty years a common refrain about American education is that it is inferior to the public school systems in Asia (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992; Stigler and Hiebert, 1999). The problem is that it has ignored the fact that the typical youth in Asia receives only a portion of his achievement from the public school system and that test scores in particular are influenced by the quality and intensity of the cram schools. But the refrain of inferiority to school systems in Asia is not only inaccurate scientifically but is pernicious in another way. It ignores the fact that the image of school systems in Japan, Korea and parts of China, by local citizens, is that of low quality, not high quality. Instead of crowing about international superiority on international tests of academic achievement, local authorities, parents, the academic community adamantly condemn the quality of their systems.

Typical adolescence in Asia involves cramming scientific and mathematical facts. Studying is treated as a full time profession in which students are asked to study 80 – 100 hours/week at home, in school, with tutors and in cram schools. The process has generated problems of depression, suicide, bullying and personality disorder (Kong, 2011; Lee and Larsen, 2000, Stankov, 2010). High exposure to private tutoring is associated with lower confidence and a dislike of academic work (Kong, 2011). Choi suggests that there “is a negative influence of shadow education on the way of learning and creativity among high school students,” (Choi, date?). Yun suggests that in Korea “overheated shadow education drops the interests of learners and therefore decreases learners self learning ability” (Yun, 2006 p. 198). Yang agrees and points out that “as stress from shadow education increases academic motivation decreases. And as the burden on time and mentality among factors of stress from shadow education increases, internal satisfaction decreases ... and problem behavior increases.” Yang 2011,p. 2). An article in Yonhapnews reports on a study in which students depend on what and how to learn in cram schools or private tutors and cannot plan their own study in detail. They accept learning contents meaninglessly and passively and become other-person-led learners without explicit learning goals (Yonhapnews, 2007)

Even for those who successfully pass their examinations and enter a university, depression and meaninglessness continue. Unlike the U.S., Britain or Canada, scores on university selection examinations in Asia not only determine which university they are allowed to enter, but which

program of study. The result is detrimental to their higher education experience. Cho points out that

Most of the (students) are dissatisfied with their universities or departments since they have not chosen them according to their desires but according to their scores... the years of preparing for the examination under extreme tension and stress also make the winners extremely passive and dull. Many of them have difficulties adjusting to university life... Courses in liberal arts and social sciences that require analytical and critical thinking confuse and frustrate them endlessly. They are particularly annoyed by questions which do not have definite answers (Cho, 1995, p. 155).

As Tucker (2011, 2012) has explained, performance among Asian school children stems from a culturally narrow concentration on simplistic indicators of math and science as indicators of success. So damaging has this process become that the publics are searching for a way to escape and often look to the U.S. as having a more balanced way to raise children and adolescents. They are probably right. While Asians look longingly at the educational and personal effects of a typical American adolescence, Americans are rarely aware of the negative effects on personality development of an adolescence narrowly devoted to math and science scores. Were Americans more aware of these effects they might look with less jealousy at the success of Asia PISA scores.

While it is true that many American school systems are in desperate need of repair, it is also true that some school systems in the U.S are superb. Furthermore many Americans emerge from the process of adolescence with deep labor market experience, a sense of autonomy and personal independence which the typical youth in Asian countries do not have.

Summary.

In comparing ourselves with other countries, we must keep in mind that the indicators of our envy – high scores in math and science -- were not acquired in a vacuum, but rather through a different culture with many faults obvious to local populations but not to outsiders. American schools systems are not uniformly poor or inefficient. American students tend to perform better on some types of tests than others; some American states perform well on all tests; and in terms of time spent studying school systems in the U.S. may be considerably more efficient. Americans need to be more careful to not import the ‘terror’ of a shadow education adolescence typical of Asia. Americans need to be more circumspect when criticizing their own education policies as if the deficits were so uniform and the virtues so insignificant.

Notes

[1] Efficiency of a school system is defined here in a straightforward way, as output (e.g. test scores) per unit of input (e.g. per pupil expenditure). While such indicators do not tell the whole story of the quality of a nation’s school system, they can highlight discrepancies and problems in need of attention.

[2] Data and tables have drawn on unpublished papers from three graduate students: Bommi Lee 2012 “Efficiency and effectiveness in education across countries: what should be measured?”; Yunkuyung Min 2012 “States’ Variation in international students’ assessment: Case of the U. S. and Brazil,” and Jeongwoo Lee 2012 “An Attempt to reinterpret student learning outcomes: a cross-national comparison”.

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