

PROSPECTS

quarterly review of
comparative education

ISSUE NUMBER ONE HUNDRED AND TWELVE

OPEN FILE

EDUCATION, AND INEQUALITY

POVERTY

GUEST EDITOR:
FERNANDO REIMERS



INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

Vol. XXIX, no. 4, December 1999

INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION
PROSPECTS
quarterly review of comparative education

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(See order form at the end of this volume.)

Published in 1999 by the
United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization,
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP,
France.

Printed by SADAG, Bellegarde, France.

ISSN : 0033-1538

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VIEWPOINTS/CONTROVERSIES

TEXT AND CONTEXT

IN THE THEMATIZATION

ON DEVELOPMENT

Louis Baeck

Introduction

In the recent revival of interest in the history of economic and social theories, few opportunities have been seized to mention post-war development studies. And yet the historical unfolding of development theorizing is a fascinating story that merits more attention. In the historiography of development theorizing that follows, we will focus on the dialectic interplay between the thematization on development and the geopolitical context; and place it in the context of the ideological overtones of the time and its leading or sanctified canons in economics, sociology and geopolitics. Our analysis reflects on the complex dynamics arising from external pressures towards the modernization of non-Western societies and their reaction to it. In the course of our story we will demonstrate how thinking on development is coloured, in one way or another, by the power relations between the centre and the periphery, as well as by the intense rivalry between the superpowers at the time. More specifically, it is our aim to illustrate how shifts in thinking on development were related to ruptures in historical awareness, concomitant with changes in the real world. In our synthetic bird's-eye view, we intend to map out the post-war saga of development thought.

Original language: English

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In his celebrated study on scientific revolutions, Thomas Kuhn illustrated some epochal paradigm changes in the development of physics. Kuhn's approach fits better to the development pattern of mature (or so-called normal) sciences. For the social sciences, where the systems of knowledge and the discursive practices are more dependent on historical contingencies as well as on the multiple, external influences of the real world and *Zeitgeist*, the dynamic processes of change are more complex. As I see it, the approach of Michel Foucault, the French historian of the human sciences, offers a richer source.¹ His methodology not only provides a key to uncover the ruptures and discontinuities in the knowledge systems and discursive practices of the social sciences, but also explains the coexistence of rival schools of thought. In his extensive studies on the genesis of the social sciences, with his characteristic emphasis on *la naissance du discours*, he launches his famous genealogies. His well-documented studies on the archaeological roots of nascent thematizations open new horizons which reach beyond the conventional histories of ideas. He is not interested in a mere sequence of ideas and of *epistemes*. He focuses on the contextual synergies leading to the *mise en discours* or on the historical contingencies in the novel problematization of an issue. He relishes revealing the contingent forces that, at a given moment, throw up the possibility for the appearance of innovative trends of thought and new styles of thematization. Foucault's approach highlights the specific circumstances in which the basic categories and concepts emerge at a specific time in history. He further demonstrates how the various *disciplines* of the social sciences shape and in fact *discipline* our thought and behaviour. Their concepts of man and society, their professional and at times metaphorical vocabularies, their epistemic culture and their ideological overtones influence the problematization of upcoming issues and the policies to cope with them.

In our essay we follow this approach in order to illustrate the contingencies that affect the genesis of new interpretations and canons in this emergent field of study in the post-war period. We highlight the rise and decline of the thematizations and the development strategies engendered by the leading modes of thought. The complexity of the subject matter invites us to straddle the fields of economics, sociology and political science. Moreover, we constantly cross borders between theory and practice, between text and context—all this in order to elucidate their dialectical interferences. After a series of breakdowns in modernization the—at times—naive optimism of early developmentalism changed into a more critical, post-modern mood. In the view of nationalist elites, development was a mere synonym for Westernization. And when in the 1980s the neo-liberal wave and the globalization of the Western culture industry spread to the most remote corners of the earth, the most alert cultures reacted with endogenous responses of identity politics. The recent trend of critical thought tends to make us more aware of modernity's ambivalence. We are, to a greater extent than previous generations, conscious of the positive aspects of modernization but also of its darker sides. And indeed, the lofty ideals of emancipation, progress, freedom and also of authentic development remain unfulfilled promises for too many people.

With the unfolding of development studies, the perspectivation of the state's role in the functioning of society and the economy was totally reversed. In the early post-war period ideological and intellectual support for active, socio-political interventionism had pride of place. Since the 1980s this canon and its electoral support have weakened considerably. Today, the neo-liberal creed has eager adepts in the former Soviet empire and even in China. The early post-war modernization theorists were militants for a speedy transformation of *Gemeinschaft* into *Gesellschaft*. Since the Iranian revolution, the emphasis has shifted. Today the geopolitical context and its problematization are framed by the all-encompassing process of globalization, not only of the economy but also of Western culture. In reaction to this globalizing trend, part of the ongoing thematization refers increasingly to the politics of identity. With the decline of Marxist alternatives and in the absence of credible challengers, an unintended danger may be that neo-liberal thought becomes increasingly dogmatic. Against this dogmatic globalization we experience an assertive quest for ethnic and cultural identity. In several parts of the world novel forms and expressions of modernity emerge. These new forms of modernity, like Asiatic modernity, Islamic resurgence and the post-colonial indigenization of Africa, are products of cultural assertivity. The claims of Western rationality to universal legitimacy are gradually being undermined by its incapacity to cope with other cultures and their forms of social rationality.

Our essay is a tale of paradigm shifts and the flourishing of new canons on development generated by contextual changes in the real world. The history of ideas illustrates that canons are not timeless universals. Like all human artefacts, even the most promising and flourishing of canons perish at one time or another. Like all products of the human mind, they are—up to a certain point—context-dependent and thus coded by the values, norms, epistemic modes of thought and historical consciousness prevalent in the society from which they spring. Canons live a cycle of birth, growth and flourishing, followed by re-interpretation and decline. In the course of time, even the most cherished interpretative schemes and canons are like rivers flowing into separate beds.

The rise of developmentism

The domain of development studies, as a branch independent of sociology, economics and political science, is a theoretical product of the early post-war period. The Second World War transformed the geopolitical scene and international power relations. During the war, European nations had dealt themselves a severe blow and the dwarfing of Europe resulted in a power vacuum on the world scene. A new era started wherein two non-European *colossi*, inspired by conflicting ideologies, profiled themselves as superpowers. Both the United States and the Soviet Union developed their respective spheres of influence according to the sixteenth-century principle applied during the wars of religion : *cujus regio ejus religio* (the ruler of a territory chooses its religion). In the second half of our century then, a power which conquered and occupied a territory or wielded hegemonic leadership in an area also imposed its own political and economic system.

The development model presented by the United States to its allies was an amalgam of Rooseveltian idealism, Protestant messianism, socio-political liberalism and economic pragmatism. This was tempered by the righteous self-interest of a victorious hegemon. Classical Marxism had no specific strategies for development as it proclaimed that Communism would spring from the exhausted well of mature capitalism. In 1945, Stalin's revisionism came to serve as an adequate model for the new nations. The Soviet Union itself had been a 'latecomer' to modernization and industrialization; hence, Stalin's model could pose as a success story of development. Indeed, at the end of the 1940s the model showed fantastic results, achieved in the time-span of only one generation. Consequently, in the early post-war period the socio-political steering, the planning and the administrative ordering of the economic system of the Soviet Union impressed a great number of social(ist) minded intellectuals world-wide. They perceived the Soviet model as a better embodiment of modernization than capitalism. After the death of Stalin, the epigones began reviling the red tsar and Maoism came to represent a rival Marxist model for the developing countries.

In the Western part of the world, groups of reform-minded social scientists sensed the urgent needs of the time and initiated a series of thematizations on the problems of development. In a minimum amount of time, these thematizations matured into a novel tradition of theory-building, namely development studies. Intellectual history indicates that the growth of a theoretical tradition follows a sequence which consists of *thematization*, followed by *institutionalization*, and concludes with the phase of *canonization*.²

Thematization is a condensation of elite communication aroused by changes in the historical perspective or by a rupture in collective experience. In the social sciences new thematizations are elicited by, and become manifest in the wake of, a crisis-mood generated by shocks in historical consciousness. New thematizations produce a quantum leap in elite communication by which the harbingers of novelty and change are identified and cast in a theoretical mould. According to an observable pattern of intellectual history, the issue-focusing of new thematizations is related to radical changes in the real world which may cause ripples, and eventually shocks, in historical awareness. The geopolitical transformations that occurred in the wake of the Second World War, the conflicting ideologies of the two superpowers and the ensuing wave of decolonization set the stage for a novel focus of thematizations. In a few short years, these thematizations matured into the new tradition of development studies.

In the ideological climate and the political mood of the early post-war period, the market mechanism stood at a low ebb in public professional opinion as it had so miserably failed during the Depression of the 1930s. Government was called in to master the situation by a deliberate steering of social and economic development. In the Western industrialized countries, governments, in line with organized interest-groups, pressed for active and interventionist policies to push economic growth and spread social welfare. The market economy was supplanted by a mixed economic system, in which socio-political elites were supposed to correct and redress

the shortcomings of the market mechanism. The urge for an active engineering of the rise in living standards spread to the most remote corners of the globe. The latecomers became test cases wherein nation-building, economic growth and modernization were deemed to be achievable in the time-span of one generation. Modernization and development became the rallying cries of the decolonized peoples, and their rising expectations for a higher standard of living received a favourable response from the power elite in the West. In due course the new focus of thought, called developmentism, gained recognition. The new creed spread to various constituencies and institutions, including social democratic and Christian democratic parties, the United Nations, churches and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In some cases, the dialectics of developmentism caused a political stir and interfered with the course of world affairs.

New problems challenge the legitimacy of conventional wisdom, and the ambition to modernize and develop large numbers of backward nations had no precedent in history. Challenges to this dimension elicit novel thematizations and require new solutions. The sociology of modernization and development economics were the twin births which responded to the theoretical challenge of the time. But the unfamiliarity of most social scientists with the concrete situation of the new nations led them to posit the historical trajectory of the West as a model. This resulted in sociologists refurbishing classical modernization theories, whereas economists opted for a Keynesian growth model in tropical dress.

Since the time of the Enlightenment one of the basic tenets of Western philosophy on progress and its liberal theory is that, by human effort alone, man can alter existing institutions, ways of thinking, degrees of freedom, organizational capacity and the basis of material production. In order to come to an autonomous self, individuals, peoples and nations have to be liberated from historical shackles such as tradition, ethnic bonds, past beliefs and the heritage of meaning offered by religion in which they were ensnared. The new term 'development' expressed this idea unambiguously; after all, development implied stepping out of the envelope and being freed of historical shackles. The modernizers of the early post-war years were looking for scientific evidence to demonstrate to the newcomers how the West had done it.

The new nations, so it was thought, were spared the trouble of choosing their own path to development since the historical model already existed. The basic pattern for these latecomers to development was assumed to be the same as that of their Western forerunners, and concerned economists, sociologists and political scientists went on to form a set of central concepts: rapid industrialization in the economic field, secularization of ideologies and religions, modernization of behaviour patterns, urbanization, and adoption of cosmopolitan (i.e. Western) attitudes to facilitate integration into the world culture. Western sociology and economics, themselves offspring of the Enlightenment and its rationalistic premise, held that modernization in the form of industrialization, secularization of values and growing urbanization of lifestyles would transform the traditional cultural mosaic of the heterogeneous societies of the Third World into integrated national communities. Modernization would change the primordial loyalties, the values, the ethnic and lin-

guistic particularities and other such 'anachronistic' features of the historical latecomers into the basic ingredients necessary for the creation of a civil society. But this promising prophecy did not seduce everyone. There were also the recalcitrant who rejected this path of development as Westernization, or worse still, as neo-colonialism in a new guise. In two large countries, China and India, a more nationalistic and ideologically self-reliant line was followed.

In the mainstream version of modernization, traditional societies and their religious and cultural roots were appraised negatively, whereas modernity was praised as a heavenly kingdom on earth. According to the most narrow view, economic growth and societal modernization posed only a series of technical problems. One school of thought argued that a more ample supply of investment capital would automatically generate growth, others emphasized the crucial role of infrastructure, and others still proclaimed that with the development of education, the shortage in professional skills could be met. Following the brief heyday of confidence in this single-topic approach, horizons broadened and it soon became clear that development is a complex project in which political, social, ethical and cultural factors play a major role. Given the multi-faceted nature of the problem, the single-topic approach of the early days was challenged and was met by opposing views.³

During the period from 1945 to approximately the mid-1960s, an abundance of development theories were produced. In the 1960s, the first wave of theorizing, propagated by the modernization and economic growth theories, was met by an intellectual counter-revolution instituted by Latin American structuralists, otherwise known as *dependencia* thematizers, and by partisans of neo-Marxist schools.⁴ While founded on conflicting ideological bases, these latter two schools nevertheless shared some basic similarities and shortcomings with their predecessors. The modernization theorists, who proclaimed the instrumental rationality of the West as a universal model, attempted to silence all other cultures and societies by labelling them as non-rational and particularistic latecomers. The asymmetric power relations and the intellectual colonization inherent to the modernization discourse were cautiously wrapped in abstract jargon. On the other side, the *dependencia* and neo-Marxist schools were not able to overcome their dogmatic concentration on the structural links inherent in the growing integration of the periphery in the capitalist centre. Their myopia had, like the short-sightedness of their opponents, ideological roots. The neo-Marxists chose not to see the mis-development of Central Europe, nor the quagmire of the underdeveloped satellites resulting from 'their' integration into the Soviet empire. However, the two opposing sets of views had one common focus, namely that external factors largely determine the context of development. In the modernization school the positive effect of Westernization was emphasized to the detriment of tradition, whereas the structuralists focused on the negative effects of the dependency relationship which, in their view, functioned solely to the advantage of the centre.

In the new nations, the first generation after independence was generally guided by charismatic leaders. These helmsmen were adept in the art of bolstering the imagery of the population in States with different ethnic groups, religions, cultures

and languages by masterfully designed campaigns for nation-building. These campaigns awakened slumbering energies and heightened the historical awareness of a growing number of people. In this process, new elites took over the lead from the traditional authorities. The power base of these charismatic populists rested on broader constituencies than political parties or national bureaucracies; their constituency was the people. During a highly publicized conference in Bandung (1955), a handful of well-known African and Asian leaders such as Sukarno, Nehru, Nasser and Nkrumah proclaimed that together they formed a Third World. They flamboyantly declared that the capitalism of the First World and the communism of the Second World did not qualify as models and opted for a strategy of their own design to respond to their needs. The principles of political non-alignment and of national(ist) self-reliance formed the geopolitical guidelines of Third Worldism.

The 1950s and 1960s marked a high point for development studies. Different schools of thought flowered and produced a series of grand theories. Most of these thematizations were elegant but highly abstract models of thought.⁵ The shortcomings of the early development theories resulted from their outspoken economic reductionism and their very schematic, ideal-type methodology. Indeed, a great many of these thematizers were armchair theorists without any fieldwork experience. Consequently, their abstract and dogmatic stances ignored the great diversity in the historical, cultural, social and economic context of the developing countries. Their approach failed to produce a grand narrative, enriched by historico-cultural orientations rooted in a moral base. Some colonial administrators, missionaries and researchers, more attentive to indigenous history and culture, had greater success in formulating a more balanced view.

The turn of the tide

By the mid-1970s, the international context had changed dramatically. The exuberant economic growth cycle of the core countries in the West had slowed down and spiralling inflation plagued most of them. In this context of 'stagflation' a new model of growth was initiated and driven by multinational firms. A cycle of external growth was launched with the relocation of manufacturing industries in the most promising lands of the periphery. The new strategy of the multinational firms entailed a departure from the classic international division of labour, i.e. from a world composed of nation States specializing in activities in which they had a comparative advantage. An interdependent, interacting, global network of manufacturing superseded the older type of economy, marked by the international exchange of raw materials (from the periphery) for manufactured goods (from the centre). A whole spate of newly industrializing countries (NICs) broke with the conventional division of labour between primary commodity producers and industrialized economies and opened their borders in order to integrate their sectors of manufacturing industries within the Western industrial system. The multinational corporations, which were working towards creating global networks, stimulated this integration. In the widely different development situations and trajectories that followed, it became all the

more clear that the earlier concept of the 'Third World' had been a 'universalist' label for many different histories and destinies. The nationalist development strategy espoused by adherents of Third Worldism proved to be unproductive. The new overarching theme was that of globalization and against the backdrop of this global vision, policies oriented towards national coherence and self-reliance were losing their political constituencies.

The decentralization of industrial production and its distribution to different parts of the world opened new opportunities for those developing countries willing to play according to the rules of the game. This unfolding of a transnational and decentralized market economy was ideologically nurtured, and politically legitimated, by the renaissance of liberalism and guided by its technical handmaidens in the form of neo-classical economics, monetarism and the theory of public choice. In the 1980s this amalgam matured into a new canon of development. The Soviet empire was unable to resist this global pressure and engineered an eleventh-hour restructuring which, in turn, led to the collapse of the system. In the new geopolitical context, the canon of market democracy embarked on a triumphal march across the world. The most enthusiastic thematizers launched a new rhetoric on the 'end of history'. The simple typologies, such as First, Second and Third World, became inadequate. In an increasingly integrated Western world, domestic economies became part of a complex network, and in this differentiated context the ideology of Third Worldism declined.⁶

The new course, consisting of the deregulation of financial markets and the departure from international Keynesianism, challenged the socio-political coalitions that supported the welfare State in core countries and placed a bridle of drastic structural adjustment on developing countries. In those countries, where easy credit lines had caused a lax public policy course, enforced programmes of structural adjustment brought a salutary re-orientation. At this juncture of theoretical counter-revolution, the World Bank entered the arena of development thought and started a teach-in on 'good governance'. However, the neo-conservative policy re-orientation also had negative effects, one of these being that the lower-income classes had to shoulder a relatively heavy burden. Social hardships and a deep sense of frustration with the social injustice that became manifest in some countries caused an upsurge of moral indignation in the deepest layers of society. With the intention of reducing the social costs of structural adjustment the World Bank launched the so-called safety nets, a new set of compensatory programmes to alleviate poverty.⁷

The first culture bomb exploded in Iran, where the Shah had followed a megalomaniac course of Westernization. The Shi'ite clergy and the traditional lay elite perceived Westernization as a sort of disease, which was called *Westoxication*.⁸ In some of the leading countries of Latin America, a grassroots movement amongst some Christian communities took a militant stand against social injustice and the excessive economization of society. The rebirth of religion as an agent of societal change stood in open contradiction to the mindset of secularization prevailing in Western social science. Looked at from the Islamic perspective, mainstream studies on development are legitimating devices for the imposition of Western values in

the guise of a scientific discipline.⁹ Since this time, the voices of the non-Western 'others' have been heard, loudly and clearly. The culture-conscious elites of the developing world became more than ever conscious that alternative historical models of development existed. This growing awareness gave rise to an increasing indigenization of the social sciences in developing countries. Theoretical indigenization springs from a new consciousness by which native social scientists are driven to construct distinctive conceptual frameworks that reflect their own world views, respond to their own historical and cultural experiences and are oriented towards their own societal goals. The dynamics of indigenization have manifestly influenced the development theorizing of the last decade. Since this time, non-Western elites have been engaged in a search for a new identity and difference.

Thus, in response to the ongoing process of globalization oriented towards a uniformization and convergence of lifestyles, a counter-movement of identity-reassertion has been ushered in. This is based on primordial loyalties such as cultural roots, ethnicity and bonding within local communities. The ensuing ethno-cultural assertiveness has become a world-wide process in the past two decades.¹⁰ However, for a clear understanding of the ethno-cultural upsurge, it should be emphasized that its dynamics cannot be reduced alone to a form of cultural resistance against Westernization. With the collapse of the last colonial empire of this century, the USSR, the brooding ethno-cultural storm broke. The same type of tension arising from diversity is at work in the multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural States of Asia (Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh) and Europe (Spain, Italy and Belgium). It is worth noting that for the people of Timor, *Indonesianization* may be more worrisome than Americanization, as *Japanization* may be for the Koreans, *Indianization* for the Sri Lankans and *Vietnamization* for the Cambodians.¹¹ And even in the United States the melting pot has recently proved unable to contain the outburst of ethnicity and multi-culturalism. In former Yugoslavia, Somalia and Rwanda, the ensuing ethnic strife has led to genocide.

The development of development studies

The stream of events has always influenced development theorizing. Moreover, it is always coloured and put into perspective by the ideological spectrum and theoretical orientations of the time. Amongst the most salient markers are: unexpected changes in the geopolitical context; a new focus in the strategy deployed by the major actors on the world scene; paradigm shifts in the mother disciplines (economics, sociology and political science); and last but not least, the breakthrough of a novel historical awareness. The canons of the different schools of thought were successively redefined, either to suit the changing needs of world governance or in response to the critiques of opposing views. The agendas for thematization originated not only in academic institutions but also increasingly in political cabinets, national and international agencies, round tables of executives involved in global management, church organizations and other non-governmental organizations. In some instances a new topic was added to the agenda, at times in response to a resounding slogan

launched by a muscular revolutionary movement. Moreover, apart from the mainstream agenda, a number of scholars followed a path that is free of the distorting effect of ideologies and short-term fashions. However, the practical significance of these independent scholars, or their impact on policy-making, has been limited as they were, in many cases, marginalized by the conventional wisdom of the mainstreamers. In the critical mood of the 1980s, a number of analysts carried out a methodological evaluation of the different schools of thought and emphasized the circumstance-specific nature and the problem-centred focus of development studies.¹² Viewed from this perspective, the area of study has been a follower rather than a leader.

1. An outspoken industry-centrism and urban bias characterized the early post-war fashion in development thinking and practice. Under the shock of the Cuban revolution and Mao Zedong's thesis that well-organized peasant movements are able to ignite a revolution, a paradigm shift occurred and more emphasis was placed on a basic needs approach and on policies that addressed land reform and rural development. The spectacular oil-shocks orchestrated by OPEC spurred the Group of 77 to launch a Third World initiative carrying the promise of a 'new international economic order'. By the middle of the 1960s, the 'New Left' had espoused the cause of liberation movements in the Third World and had spawned an abundant body of reactive—as opposed to innovative—Marxist literature that had almost no practical effect. One of the most influential changes in the canon was reflected in the political questioning of interventionist macro-economics, in favour of ideological support for the introduction of the market mechanism on a world scale. Whereas the nationalist models of development prevailing in the 1960s had been informing the dependency and Marxist schools, both of whom argued in favour of delinking and self-reliance, the free market system of today works as a powerful force of global integration. This is reflected in the fact that not only the former Soviet Union, but also China, are in a process of 'relinking'.

The collapse of Comecon and the revelation of the actual weaknesses of centralized planning and its ideology have discredited the socialist strategies of development. Liberalization has unleashed tremendous forces in markets all over the world, particularly in East Asia. Faith in the grand transformative visions and in government-led development has waned. The concern of policy-makers and theoreticians has shifted to ways and means to improve the effectiveness of governments and their political institutions.

The neo-liberal resurgence of the 1980s brought the debate on the role of the state back to the fore. After more than a quarter of a century of active state intervention and planning, neo-liberalism rediscovered the ideas formulated in the late eighteenth century, of a liberal civil society as an autonomous reality that has its own laws and mechanisms of disturbance. But informed by the mood of the time it also introduced some ideological novelties, trends of thought and practice resulting from the breakthrough of the Chicago and Public Choice schools, the triumph of the *Ordo-liberalen* in Germany and the rise of the New

Right in several Western democracies. These strands of neo-liberalism, in their own manner, seek a form of politics 'beyond the State' by the introduction of techniques that can produce, for civil society and for the economy, a greater degree of autonomization, responsabilization and empowerment, more particularly for people and agencies distant from the centre. They advocate the channels and instruments to achieve competitive, optimizing market relations and behaviour that will lead not only to less governmental action, but also to a more rationalized form of government itself. In this view the market can function well only under certain political, legal and institutional conditions that must be constructed by responsible government. Some Chicago economic liberals went so far as to advocate an extension of economic rationality to all the institutions of society and to human behaviour in general. The neo-liberal U-turn of the centre came as a shock to the periphery. The Bretton Woods institutions, namely the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, adopted the lessons and began their now famous programmes of structural adjustment and good governance.

The miracles of East Asia gave rise to a new wave of thematization on the respective merits of the free play of markets versus state intervention. In the course of these intellectual controversies over the most promising policy, political scientists formulated a new conceptual construct, 'the developmental State'. But the Asian crisis of 1997 initiated a new theme, 'crony capitalism', or the mismatch between the state bureaucracy and the private sector in Asia.¹³ In sub-Saharan Africa economic decline, more particularly since the 1980s, elicited a flood of studies on the negative role of the State. In these analyses the African post-colonial state was given various 'disquality' labels: predatory State, prebendal State, patrimonial State, clientilistic clique State, etc. In the early 1990s the impulse of *Afrostroika* initiated new themes like democratization, good governance and civil society. The thematization on 'good governance' and the newly formulated canon of market democracy are markers of this post-Cold-War trend. This new agenda has been eagerly espoused by the Western donors of aid, by multilateral creditors, more particularly the World Bank, and by the NGOs.¹⁴

Looking back over the last fifty years of development studies, we can see that new dimensions were successively added to the narrow starting blocks of the early models, namely the religious, ethical, cultural and ethnic dimensions.¹⁵ With a growing awareness of ecological problems, the notion of 'sustainable' development adds yet another new dimension as well. Thus the subject matter and the structuring of perception that inspires development studies are themselves in permanent development.

2. Initially, thematization was restricted to development theories oriented towards the Third World. The early post-war period had created a particular historical juncture (geopolitical bipolarity, ideological conflict, and the disintegrating impact of the Second World War on the colonial system) which brought about an autonomous field of development studies. A group of academic theorists and technical experts of various national and international agencies were convinced that a concerted effort of inquiry and policy formulation, embodied in a spe-

cialized discipline, was indispensable in the light of the urgency of development problems. Now that there is no longer a 'Second World', and the neo-liberal paradigm has replaced the interventionist mood of the early post-war period, the need for an autonomous discipline is questioned. From the standpoint of methodology, as well as of theoretical orientation, development studies have tended to be reintegrated into the mother disciplines of economics and sociology. With the revival of neo-classical economics and political conservatism, and the consequent reassertion of their universalist claims, the thematization on 'the special case' has lost its appeal.

As a result of the geopolitical changes (the end of bipolarity, the global spread of the market economy and the growing diversity between Third World countries), development theorizing risks losing its original anchorage in the study of developing countries. Indeed, some of today's development theorists are attempting to adopt a global perspective. Novel problematizations, such as the problems of transition in the former Communist bloc, the migration of economic opportunity to the growth poles of Asia and, last but not least, the growing pains of the Western core countries, enrich the subject matter with new avenues of inquiry that tend towards a promising study of world society or of globalization. The now fashionable term *globalization* stands for the world-wide networking of industrial production firms, of financial intermediaries and markets and, last but not least, of the Western media and culture industries. Its driving force is the neo-liberal ideology that since the 1980s seems to have conquered the world. Neo-liberalism stands for cheap or minimal government and government geared to securing the conditions for optimum economic performance. In this entrepreneurial strategy, the market is the central institution. Today, the new rhetoric of *globalization* poses as a substitute for development. However, in my view, development studies or the analysis of special and regional cases will continue to be valuable. In order to meet the challenge, this approach ought to be infused with a new spirit. The new accents in institutional economics and the studies of comparative economic systems may be helpful companions on the road to the renewal of development theorizing.

3. With the exception of a few historians, the development theorists of the early period were not interested in the stories of the two non-Western latecomers, Russia and Japan.¹⁶ From the second half of the 1980s, when the failure of the Soviet Union and of Central Europe became manifest, the state-planned, socialist development strategy could hardly be of interest, except as a negative model. Conversely, the development of Japan offers a more interesting story. Due to the industrial success of Japan, managers and scholars from developing countries and from the core Western economies could learn from the Japanese example. In the 1980s the 'learn from Japan' idea became a fashion. Before the financial crisis that struck the region, the strategy of the so-called dragons and tigers of East Asia was presented as the most promising recipe for development.

Economic development, and more particularly industrial development, is in essence a process of flexible restructuring and upgrading of activities towards

higher added value. The general model of transformation entails restructuring sectors, e.g. the primary sector (primarily agriculture) gives way to manufacturing and in a later phase becomes a service economy. Once the latecomers enter the industrialization phase, the optimal strategy consists in a permanent restructuring of the industrial sector itself: from low-productivity, labour-intensive, low-technology and light industries towards high-productivity, high-technology and knowledge-based industries. In short, successful industrial restructuring consists of flexible upgrading: from low-value-added to high-value-added activities. Japan was the first latecomer that achieved this upgrading process and was the most successful.¹⁷ Restructuring and upgrading can be accelerated by adequate policy guidelines or, conversely, may go astray due to faulty ones. Policy-makers necessarily have to make choices between the following options: State versus market, outward-oriented versus inward-oriented strategies and investment-led versus export-led growth. The early post-war climate of opinion favoured State-propelled, inward and investment-led strategies. The neo-liberal creed, emerging in the early 1980s, favours the market mechanism coupled with outward-oriented and export-led growth. From the mid-1980s, a significant migration of economic accumulation has taken place. The economic and cultural successes of East Asia have challenged the West's monopoly of modernity. A non-Western modernity, namely Asian modernity, imposed itself as a promising alternative. The recent Asian crisis stimulated by financial speculation tarnished the model, but the fundamentals are still there. We are living at a new historical juncture: the ideological bipolarity has vanished and new 'cultural divides' are emerging.

4. Now that we have witnessed the geopolitical changes and ideological transition of the 1990s, we are in a better position to evaluate the development thinking and practice of the last half century. In the 1950s, the modernization school enthusiastically subscribed to Weber's thesis on the uniqueness of Western rationality. As such, and with Weber, they minimized the import of the social, cultural and economic dynamics in non-Western civilizations. The modernizers claimed that Western rationality was a universal model. This affirmation marginalized all other cultures and identities as non-rational, particularistic and backward 'others'. In order to secure the power relations hidden within the modernist discourse, modernization theorists invested a great deal of energy in encouraging post-colonial and 'underdeveloped others' to internalize these projections. However, by the end of the 1970s the geopolitical situation and the value-judgements concerning that situation ushered in a change. In the earlier models, modernization was conceived of as a deliberate displacement of an indigenous system with an imported Western system. In some cases Westernization was implemented at great social and cultural costs. However, by the end of the 1970s the structures of perception started to change. The West's loss of prestige as a result of the Viet Nam debacle, the 'showdown' in Iran and the spectacular breakthrough of Japan were followed by an assertive drive towards new thematizations. Development came to be perceived from a broader perspective and scholars from non-Western cultures joined in the chorus. Since then a growing number

of social scientists have directed greater attention to both the cultural, ethical and religious values affecting development and to methodological issues.¹⁸ The geopolitical upheavals of the 1990s wrought change in the distribution of power in the world and accentuated the already ongoing structural shifts from governments to markets, giving a further impetus to globalization. The rise of East Asia and the growing significance of its economies in world markets, in international organizations and in world politics have diminished the relative economic importance of the transatlantic links. This spells the demise of the familiar Atlantic predominance. In the future the Atlantic-centred world view will be challenged by a new geopolitical reality. Giants such as China and India are in a dynamic process of economic emergence and in Latin America a colossus like Brazil is growing more economic muscle.

We live in the midst of momentous change. In today's world, the objectives of development and the means to achieve them are increasingly redefined and co-determined by actors and groups from cultures outside the Western world. The revival of Islamic culture, the grassroots movement of the Christian communities in Latin America, the resurgence of the cultural conflict between anti-Western Slavophiles (*narodniki*) and Westernizers (*zapadniki*) in Russia, the messianic movements in Africa, as well as the flamboyant theses on 'Asian modernity' loudly proclaimed in Japan, Singapore and Malaysia, are all clear indications of the growing disenchantment with the secularizing and materialistic ideologies of development. A renewed sense of basic loyalties is nurturing an intensification of cultural and ethnic demands. However, the cosmopolitan imagery of late-modern globalization and secularization appears to be incapable of satisfying such needs, and new developments are in the offing.¹⁹

Post-modern identity politics

Two decades ago when the term 'post-modernism' emerged, it was initially associated with developments in the arts. Gradually the term spread to other cultural spheres, with spin-offs in ideology, philosophy, sociology, economics and political science. Modernism had postulated that science and reason could solve all our problems. It suggested that reason, scientific knowledge and technology were able to ensure harmony amongst the diversity of mankind. According to the paradigm of modernity, the social, political and economic spheres of life could be almost completely rationalized and managed. As a consequence, our lives were being engineered, planned, steered and administered by 'globalizing systems'. Post-modernism is a cultural rejection of this paradigm.

The post-modernist mindset is propagated by an eclectic group of philosophers and essayists. The most influential authors are Umberto Eco, David Harvey, Thomas Kuhn, Larry Laudan, Jean-François Lyotard, Edgar Morin, Richard Rorty, Stephen Toulmin and Wolfgang Iser.²⁰ Lyotard became one of the best-known proponents with his stance that late modernity engenders a generalized distrust of the grand narratives of reason and progress; but this is only the negative side of it. Keywords in the post-modern agenda are identity, difference, basic loyalties and

multiplicity of perspectives. Post-modernism conveys a deep aversion to any global project or cosmopolitan claim on the sole basis of technology, science and reason. Its critics describe post-modernists as cultural relativists, whereas the latter perceive themselves as searching for new sources and bearers of meaning. New adepts from the Left who voiced a radical critique, or deconstruction as they called it, of the celebrated grand narratives of the Enlightenment, including Marxism, boosted the original movement. As opposed to these grand explanatory theories, 'post-modern' social scientists explore and explain the dynamics of development in terms of history, institutions and culture.

In the pluri-cultural nation States of the world, the tide of intense nation-building has passed its peak. It is increasingly challenged by ethno-cultural assertiveness. In countries where Marxist ideology prevailed, the theory of class-conflict succumbed to the onslaught of cultural politics. The rediscovered impact of cultural and religious spheres stands in sharp contradiction to the convergence thesis. The convergers and their globalization rhetoric proclaim the complete assimilation of the sphere of values to the requirements of the market. The post-modern stance, on the other hand, elicited a deconstruction of this Western version of economic determinism, as well as of the class ideology of Marxism. Development thinking is now undergoing a renewal that is leading to enlarged horizons and has been invited to respond to the paradoxical co-existence of two contradictory trends of globalization and heterogeneity. Post-modernism recognizes and respects the authenticity and particularity represented by non-Western 'others'; it follows that the proposed cultural decolonization should have an impact on the methodology of development studies.

In order to recognize that we are drifting into a new era, one need not become a disciple of the post-modernist 'spring'. The peoples of the earth were not waiting for the inspiration of post-modernism to get on the move. At all times, human beings are value-bestowing agents of history. Their innate strength and their inherent dialectics of flourishing drive the assertiveness of religions and cultures. In a great part of the developing world their value appeal has grown stronger.

In a great number of developing countries churches and religious movements entered the field of development work by means of an impressive network of NGOs that in turn brings them a new associational style characteristic of grassroots movements. In Christian as much as in Islamic countries, religiously inspired movements are fighting against the baleful effects of modernization and its failed promise of human emancipation and liberation. According to Gilles Kepel, who studied the Islamic resurgence, this has come to be seen as the revenge of God.²¹ The dynamism of culture and religion unexpectedly broke open the 'iron cage' of modernity and activated indigenization. Historical forces that had been marginalized or kept within bounds by the dead weight of modernity are coming to the fore.

The brave new world of cultural assertiveness

Since the end of the 1980s, a great number of people have sensed that we are undergoing a period of epochal change. This is perceived to be a rupture of the collective

experience in several parts of the world. The change is less manifest in the material sphere; rather, it has more to do with a novel historical perspective and a new collective awareness. It is a result of a 'new way of seeing' the world and a new interpretation of social reality. A significant shift in today's historical awareness is the revival, and in many cases the reassertion, of ethno-cultural and local bonds. Grand ideological narratives are paling and globalization poses new challenges. Radical socialism was the first victim of this ideological transition in the deepest layers of world society. Today we are witnessing a novel paradox, whereby economic globalization and the world-wide spread of uniformity and convergence are being countered by a wave of ethno-cultural assertiveness. It has long been my thesis that cultures and their social constructs, as much as technological and economic determinism, have a substantial historical impact on the dynamics of development. Nowadays cultures inspire and direct the flow of events in an unforeseen way.²² Standing against the cosmopolitan claims initially professed by the superpowers and economic globalization, an intensive wave of cultural indigenization, of ethnic assertiveness and of regionalism is becoming manifest.

In a series of provocative essays, the American political scientist Samuel Huntington foresaw a coming global confrontation between the West and the non-West in a clash of civilizations.²³ In his geopolitical view of the world, he predicts the formation of 'a Confucian-Islamic connection that emerged to challenge Western interests, values and power'. The replacement of an ideologically motivated Cold War mentality by one marked by cultural antagonism, by a notable Cold War veteran (hawk) in political science, translates the basic need of the American elite and its informed public for an external enemy-fixation. In a certain way, his perception of a transition of an ideological antagonism with the Soviet Union towards a clash of civilizations, is a rallying cry alerting the American elite to the new problems presented by the rising assertiveness of non-Western 'others'. His thesis serves as a subterfuge to keep the latent conflicts that spring from the multicultural and multi-ethnic context in the United States within bounds.²⁴

The world-wide expansion of production structures and of markets creates new opportunities. But on account of its competitive drive, economic globalization also paralyzes peoples and localities that cannot compete, leaving structural unemployment in its wake. Thus, the ethno-cultural and regional assertiveness to be seen in several parts of the world is a reaction against the hardships of global competition. It is a cultural reaction against the claim of the global system that it is able to engineer, guide and administer our lives. In a certain way, the new assertiveness of ethnicity and of cultures offers a new clout and a possibility to meet the identity crisis generated by globalization. The different peoples of the world are making more manifest their cultural identity and their socio-political aspirations for future development. As a consequence, the new world order will be more pluralistic and this trend will pose new challenges. In a world in which nations and peoples become increasingly interdependent, a higher degree of solidarity, respectful of cultural differences, seems to be the surest way towards harmonious and peaceful development.

There is no end to history

In the 1990s the ideological triumph of the Western market democracies became a dominant theme. In the new geopolitical context the abuse of power and economic mismanagement in the post-colonial States in Africa have come to be seen in a new light. Western constituencies which are influential in the aid business (American and European civil society and its NGOs) attribute the generalized decline to the misgovernment of these authoritarian regimes. To turn the tide of the prebendal clientelism and the predatory practices of their rulers, they called for democratization and economic reform. This change of the political paradigm unleashed a flood of studies on the role of the State and on political pluralism as a prerequisite for sustained growth.

Against the bleak picture of the African quagmire stood the East Asian dragons and tigers. These were hailed as the most successful development champions and the dynamic restructuring and upgrading of their industries towards higher added-value activities was proclaimed to be a model for the rest of the developing world. Moreover, the thematization on the record performance of the East Asian economies produced a new paradigm in the guise of a novel metaphor, namely *the flying geese paradigm*.²⁵ But in the autumn of 1997 it seemed that the Asian geese had been doped with speculative bubbles and their flight path was affected. It is to be expected that the rise and fall of Asian geese will generate a new cycle of thematizations. Since the dialectics of development produce perpetual dynamics, there is no end to history, or to intellectual history. Both enjoy eternal youth.

Notes

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OPEN FILE

EDUCATION, POVERTY
AND INEQUALITY

EDUCATIONAL CHANCES OF THE POOR AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Fernando Reimers

That all persons are created equal is an old idea in the history of human thought.¹ Religious movements, social movements and revolutions have been inspired by this idea as people tried to organize themselves in ways that maximized the possibility that most could live lives consistent with equal human dignity for all. Different societies have responded over time to this old idea of basic equality in different ways. A fundamental issue is how much disparity is acceptable in the resources available to different individuals in society and how such differences in social status, wealth, power and prestige should be redressed. That no person should live in conditions that impede the development of their full human potential is a relatively recent idea in the history of Western civilization. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, marked an important milestone in the formation of a global consensus on the basic conditions each person has a right to in order to preserve their basic humanity. The Universal Declaration includes the right to education.

Great progress has been made throughout the world in the struggle for human rights since 1948. Important gains in expanding education as a basic human right are among the social achievements of the twentieth century.² The idea that all people should be educated is not new; it can be traced at least to the establishment of

Original language: English

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the Prussian State in the mid-eighteenth century.³ In the nineteenth century, several modern States adopted legislation that embraced compulsory primary education. Horace Mann, the proponent of the 'common school', argued in the nineteenth century in the United States that education could be the 'great equalizer [...] the balance wheel of the social machinery'.⁴

The most significant expansion in access to education around the world at all levels has taken place during the last 100 years. Educational opportunity thus came to be perceived, in the collective consciousness of many in the middle of this century, both as a fundamental human right and as a gateway to social opportunity. Meritocratic societies increasingly allocate social status on the basis of educational attainment. The relationship between earnings and educational levels is well documented globally. Education is the single greatest predictor of life chances.⁵

Several processes explain why education matters for the reduction of inequality and poverty. First, the cognitive skills, social skills and credentials that can be gained in school expand the choices available to people. These skills and credentials increase the probability that people can become more productive and obtain better-paid jobs, they increase the likelihood that they will adopt practices that lead to better health, and they increase the possibility of effectively influencing the number of children in the family.

Obviously, poverty and inequality cannot be improved by intervening only in education. Higher levels of education in themselves will not generate more jobs with decent pay. Those are a product of the choices countries make about how to respond to the opportunities and constraints posed by participation in the international economy. The 'quality' of growth is key, as not all growth has the same impact on employment and wages. There are, however, interactive processes in how these choices on matters of economic policy influence poverty where the educational level of the labour force intervenes.

Reducing poverty and improving income distribution is the result of multifaceted economic and social processes, not just of improving educational conditions. An important factor in the reduction of poverty incidence is an increase in economic productivity so that average per capita income can increase and so that the living conditions of all people, including the poor, improve. From this perspective, an avenue to reduce poverty is to foster economic growth. Growth and other processes associated with increases in national income, such as urbanization, expansion of basic infrastructure and reduction in fertility rates, will increase the incomes of many families so that the percentage living in poverty declines.

During the 1980s the debt crisis and world recession stalled economic growth in many countries. This deteriorated the living conditions of many among the poor, and in some countries and regions increased the percentage of the population living in poverty. In Latin America, for example, poverty incidence increased from 35% of households in 1980 to 41% in 1990. As countries have restructured their economies during the 1990s, they have integrated more into global economic processes. Globalization poses special challenges for poverty and inequality because it disproportionately favours those with higher levels of education, hence further-

ing inequalities stemming from unequal educational endowments. As a result, it is increasingly clear that growth alone may do little to reduce poverty. For example, Argentina experienced remarkable rates of economic growth between 1990 and 1997 (4.6% in real per capita terms per annum), yet poverty incidence declined by only 3% (from 16% to 13%) and open unemployment more than doubled (from 7.4% to 14.9%) in spite of the fact that economic growth was accompanied by the creation of hundreds of thousands of jobs and increases in salaries in real terms. Brazil, on the other hand, with rates of growth half those of Argentina (2% per year) diminished poverty incidence by 6%.⁶

How to explain the paradox that economic growth alone has been insufficient during the last ten years to significantly reduce poverty and that in countries such as Argentina unemployment can increase even as new jobs are being created as a result of growth? One explanation is that as a result of the changes implemented in the last wave of economic reforms in many of the countries where growth has resumed, growth is highly related to participation in the world economy. Much of this growth creates opportunities for high-productivity occupations. For example, in Latin America, integration into the world economy is increasing the returns to the quality of labour—i.e. to education. Private rates of return to higher education, for example, increased in Argentina from 16.5% in 1986 to 26% in 1994, in Brazil from 19% in 1979 to 23% in 1995, and in Mexico from 10% in 1984 to 20% in 1994. For those who have lower levels of education, there are few prospects of entering high-productivity employment and therefore benefiting significantly from knowledge-based economic growth. Furthermore, those with higher levels of education fare better during periods of economic restructuring, elimination of industries and job dislocations.⁷

If access to education is what allows each person the opportunity to gain an understanding of the world and of the self, and if educational attainment is one of the few accepted means of bestowing social privileges and resources, it follows that all children should have the same opportunities to be educated, regardless of the child's gender, religious affiliation, nationality or social class of origin. This also suggests that achieving equality of educational opportunity for all children is the single greatest priority of our times.

The struggle to achieve equality of educational opportunity since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed, however, has a mixed record. Obviously, the expansion of access to different levels of education allowed the incorporation of new social groups into the system. Where access to a particular level of education is universal, that level of educational attainment can no longer be used to reproduce social stratification. But societies around the world are far from having achieved universal access to all levels of education. The key question then becomes who moves on through the system. Since the education system selects some students to move on to higher levels that will then form the basis of further social stratification, to what extent is this selection a function of merit and student effort or of social inequality of origin?

These questions are not new. They were central concerns in education policy reform initiatives during the 1950s and 1960s in several countries. These questions were also central to educational research and theory in different traditions, includ-

ing structural functionalism, conflict theory and the new sociology of education.⁸ These interpretative approaches try to explain the degree of schools' autonomy from society, their reproductive functions, and their potential to change social inequality and structure. All of these frameworks were developed to explain the relationship between education and social structure in societies where universalization of primary education and significant expansion of secondary education had been consolidated many decades prior to these writings. Thus, while the authors' interest was in explaining the relationship between two dynamic social processes (education and social stratification), they studied education systems that exhibited at the time of the writings considerably less dynamism—in terms of expansion—than that experienced by education systems in developing countries during this century.

It has been hard to make progress in answering these questions about how educational and social change relate because they are complex. It has been even harder to make education systems more equitable because education is contested terrain. Education policies reflect different views of what is desirable in life as well as competition of interests among different groups. After the push for educational equity that characterized the 1950s and 1960s, beginning in the mid-1970s a new set of priorities began to influence education policy discourse around the world. The new priorities valued the development of individual, national and global competitiveness more than the achievement of equal opportunity. In education this translated into greater priority accorded to quality than to access and equity. It is possible that this shift in priorities parallels the new global political equilibrium following the political and economic decline of the socialist countries; the loss of power of the socialist and liberal parties and movements in Europe, Japan and the United States; and more recently the new political orientation of China.

As a result of these priorities, reforms have been initiated during the last twenty years that aim to achieve a better link between the products of the education system and the needs of the economy, and which aim at achieving efficiency gains in the management and delivery of education. The twentieth century concludes with much of the educational debate occupied by questions about minimum standards, testing, decentralization and management, vouchers and privatization, and discussions about what kind of education for what kind of economy. Of course, the questions about the extent to which education systems around the world are providing equal educational opportunity to all children also occupy a place in the debate. These are questions to which many different groups in different societies, and several of the United Nations organizations, particularly the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and UNESCO, keep coming back. The World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, was largely about achieving equal educational opportunity at the basic level. The two influential education policy frameworks produced by UNESCO over the last twenty years, the Faure Report and the Delors Report, are also fundamentally about equality of educational opportunity.

But reports, conferences and policy frameworks are only part of the educational landscape. We need to take stock of where we are in terms of what happens as poor children enrol in school, or fail to do so, as they try to learn, as some of

them drop out and as some proceed to the next levels. The purpose of this Open File is to portray the relationships between education, poverty and inequality at the end of the century. Poverty and inequality are not the same thing; it is possible to reduce inequality without influencing poverty and it is possible to reduce poverty without influencing inequality. It is important to advance in the study of these concepts and their dynamic relationships. How does poverty relate to educational poverty? How do both of them relate to educational and social inequality? How is this relationship influenced by the degree of educational expansion, by the rate of growth of access to the education system and by other social and economic forces at work in different societies? How does the relationship between educational inequality and poverty and between social class of origin and educational attainment change over time?

The portrait presented by the articles in this file is, like any of its kind, limited. It is limited first in that not all countries of the world are represented, and in that the unit of analysis chosen by the different authors varies from more emphasis on a specific country to a more regional perspective. Most of the articles focus on the meso level, discussing the institutional dynamics of education and inequality, with some in-roads to the micro level, examining the role of school- and household-level influences and interactions. A few have references to macro-level influences in the form of competing forces in shaping States' performance. The articles in the file focus on China, the United States, Latin America, South Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Western Europe. Some of the articles focusing on regions emphasize particular countries and ignore others. This collection is limited, like any exercise in social analysis, by the particular perspectives adopted by the authors to analyse the subject. There is no 'grand theory' guiding or emerging from the Open File—instead the articles offer descriptive/analytical accounts, with mid-range propositions to explain and organize the observations that are presented. Despite all these limitations I hope this Open File will contribute to the much-needed debate on educational opportunity, poverty and inequality at the end of the twentieth century. The portrait that emerges from the pages that follow suggests by what it includes as much as with what it omits. It informs our perspective with facts and explanations as well as with unanswered questions.

The article by Charles Willie, 'Excellence, equity and diversity in education', shows both that change is possible in expanding educational opportunity, and also that much remains to be done. In the United States, significant gains have been achieved in diminishing the large inequalities in high school completion rates for students from different races since 1950, yet important gaps remain. This article discusses the concept of and controversy surrounding 'affirmative action' (a set of policies designed to overcome racial inequality). It sets the discussion of affirmative action policies in a broader conceptual and philosophical discussion of educational goals. Willie explains the difference between remedial and preventive approaches, and how the former are necessary to undo past harm while the latter are called for in constructing equality for all.

The article by Claudia Buchmann, 'Poverty and educational inequality in sub-Saharan Africa', discusses the high levels of absolute poverty and decline in primary

enrolment rates in the region as a result of the debt crisis of the 1980s. Buchmann cites evidence demonstrating that even modest levels of education significantly improve the life chances of the poor and discusses how school enrolment and attainment rates are the lowest among African children living in poverty. The paper discusses the setbacks in enrolments that took place during the 1980s and explains how these resulted from an unsustainable debt burden that impacted educational opportunity directly through reducing the standard of living of families, and indirectly through cuts in educational expenditures. The article concludes by reviewing some promising initiatives sustained by local organizations and community groups to offer educational opportunities to low-income, street and working children.

The article by Jandhyala Tilak, 'Education and poverty in South Asia', discusses how education relates to poverty and inequality and the fact that deprivation of education itself represents a form of poverty. He argues that while education is a component of anti-poverty programmes in South Asia, it is not at the top of the social, political or economic agenda of the governments of the region. The paper analyses the relationship between educational attainment and poverty at the country level for the region and at the household level for India, and concludes that there is ample evidence that the children of the poor have lower educational opportunities to participate in school and progress through the education system. Using data from household surveys the article examines the reasons why children are not enrolled in school, concluding that lack of interest of parents and financial constraints are the main barriers, with opportunity costs playing a significantly lesser role as a barrier than much of the literature on educational participation had previously suggested. Tilak concludes that 'exaggerated emphasis has been placed on opportunity costs of schooling (or simply child labour) as a factor of the non-enrolment of poor children in schools'. At the same time, the article demonstrates that there are significant direct costs of school participation, including tuition fees paid in public 'free' primary schools, school supplies and transportation costs, which are more important barriers than the labour income families forgo when children attend school.

My article about Latin America, 'Educational opportunities for low-income families in Latin America', reviews the educational opportunities available to the children of the poor in the region. After discussing the high levels of poverty and inequality in Latin America, the article compares the educational profiles of the poor and the non-poor that define essentially two populations within each country, with 25% of those living in urban areas having twice as many years of schooling as the poorest 25%. In this article I propose a five-step ladder of educational opportunity, progressing from the opportunity to enrol in first grade to the opportunity that the skills learned in school afford graduates the same life chances. Most of the emphasis of education policy in the region concentrates on the first level of opportunity. The information analysed in the article shows that social inequality of origin significantly influences the probability of grade repetition and of primary school completion, as well as transition rates to secondary school and participation at the high school and university levels. I develop a framework to explain how poverty influ-

ences educational chances, which integrates four sets of related factors: poverty itself, disproportionate pre-school education for the poor, inequality of educational inputs received by poor children and lack of compensatory policies.

The article by Joanna McPake and Ghazala Bhatti, 'Education and poverty in Western Europe', discusses the increase in the number of people living in poverty in this region, and the appearance of new forms of social exclusion. This article proposes a causal, bi-directional connection between unemployment and social exclusion, which ties in with educational chances. 'The children of the socially excluded are less likely to achieve sufficiently high educational qualifications to enable them to find work, while adults who are socially excluded will find it increasingly difficult to return to work, because they are unable to upgrade existing qualifications or acquire new ones'. An interesting finding of their review is that the term 'poverty' itself is rarely used as an analytical category in the research they review and in research circulated through the Social Justice and Intercultural Education Network of the European Educational Research Association (which the authors co-ordinate). A dominant theme in the studies is the failure of the education system to recognize and respond to cultural differences. The authors argue that the European Union is now placing greater emphasis on education and training to combat poverty, through the support of special initiatives such as 'second chance' schools to attract high school dropouts. The article states that the most relevant questions about equality of opportunity relate to who succeeds in completing secondary education and why. Research that examines the barriers to equality at this level, the sources of discrimination, has emphasized the role of ethnicity rather than social class.

The article by Emily Hannum, 'Poverty and basic-level schooling in China: equity issues in the 1990s', discusses how the economic and education reforms implemented in China have worsened equality of educational opportunity. It discusses how inter-provincial inequality increased between 1988 and 1995, and rising inequality is shown to be associated with rising disparities in educational opportunity and economic growth. While the most recent data about China suggest that exclusion is declining, disparities are increasing because there is more wealth disparity and wealth is more strongly associated with the educational chances of children than in the past. Hannum identifies the following mechanisms linking these global changes to changed educational chances: incentives faced by parents, as economic reforms increase the opportunity cost of attending school, and the ability of parents, as those living in poorer areas were more dependent on contributions from their children. The article documents a shift in education policy emphasis 'away from a focus on egalitarianism and class struggle, instead emphasizing quality, competition, individual talents and the mastery of concepts and skills important in the development of science and technology'. Key policy reforms were the introduction of fees and decentralization. This theme, the replacement of equity concerns by concerns about the quality of education from the education policy agenda, echoes a theme in the articles about South Asia and the United States, and is also consistent with the apparent decline of research and debate on these questions as suggested in the article about Western Europe.

The article by Gary Orfield, 'Policy and equity: a third of a century of educational reforms in the United States', reviews two distinct policy eras in educational policy since mid-century. Between 1960 and 1980 an era focused on equity issues, and since 1980s there has been an emphasis on competition and standards. This article takes issue with misguided efforts to export policy prescriptions from the United States to other countries, such as vouchers and standards—areas on which there is ample controversy in the United States. Orfield argues that most of the gains in educational equity were the result of policy reforms implemented during the 1960s and 1970s and that the study of those reforms has more relevance for those interested in questions of equality of educational opportunity. During this period the federal government played a growing role in education policy, enacting and supporting policies aimed at universalizing high school completion and at significantly increasing participation in higher education for low-income groups and racial minorities. Funding of special initiatives, such as Title I, legislative initiatives and the work of the courts achieved significant gains in access for socially disadvantaged groups, but not in achievement outcomes. The article documents how the twelve-year Reagan-Bush era implemented the most conservative policy shifts in education. Discussing existing evidence to document the impact of reforms during the most recent policy era, Orfield explains that there is excessive stress on test results that emphasize short-term gains. These have limited links to the outcomes of greatest importance for social mobility—progressing to further education and obtaining good jobs. This article also explains how reforms intended to improve quality may exacerbate educational inequality rather than diminish it. The article proposes the need to think more broadly about the goals of schools, including preparing people for participation and leadership in a democratic society, learning understanding and tolerance of other points of view, developing the capacity to learn throughout life, making friends, and understanding how civic institutions work.

To sum up, the seven articles discussing the relationship between education, poverty and inequality in this issue support some broad, world-wide trends: that unequal social structures reproduce inequality of origin in unequal educational opportunities but also that education systems exhibit a fair degree of autonomy from larger social structures. It is thus that education systems can at the same time contribute to the reproduction of inequality and give educational opportunities to the children of the poor. For it is only if education can give opportunity that it can also constrain it, i.e. if schooling were irrelevant for social mobility, educational stratification would also be irrelevant for social stratification. These articles tell us more about why the odds are stacked against the educational success of the poor than about why some poor children succeed in school and about how that helps them have greater choices in life later on—a subject of great practical and theoretical significance.

These articles also suggest that the concern for equality of opportunity has been abandoned during the last decade or two as a central item in the policy agenda of many governments around the world. This implies that groups less interested in equity and more interested in competitiveness have captured the agenda. It suggests that the subdominant groups have been further disempowered in their ability to influence States' choices.

This Open File shows that while some of the mechanisms of the reproduction of inequality operate outside the education system—through poverty affecting families and children directly—important mechanisms of reproduction are the result of education policy choices, leading to insufficient schools, high direct costs of participating in schools, inadequate schools and poor schools for poor children. More importantly, a third set of mechanisms of reproduction of social inequality are the result of the interaction between education policy and family circumstances. These policies may have different effects in different income groups, which increase the gaps between rich and poor, as discussed by Orfield and Willie; policies that place disproportionately greater burdens on poor families, as discussed by Buchmann, Hannum and Tilak; or policies that fail to serve the specific needs of children raised in poor families, as discussed by McPake, Bhatti and Reimers. These articles also suggest that income-based inequality and racially based inequality are intertwined in many parts of the world: from Latin America to China, from Western Europe to the United States. The articles suggest that in some regions gender-based inequality also interacts with income- and racially based inequality.

The articles in this issue of *Prospects* also suggest that while much is known about how education, poverty and inequality relate in different parts of the world, we do not fully know how to achieve greater equality of educational opportunity. In some cases it is difficult to find information about the educational chances of the children of the poor. For example, none of the educational statistics published by UNESCO or the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) list data for different income or ethnic groups.⁹ The latest international study of educational achievement, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, collected no information about the ethnicity of respondents and very limited information on the socio-economic background of students, making analysis of the relationship between poverty and achievement difficult. In some countries with fairly blatant racial discrimination, national censuses and school statistics collect no information on ethnicity. Few national educational statistics and monitoring systems collect information that allows the analysis of educational performance (access, progression, completion and achievement) of children from different income groups. Less common are longitudinal studies of the impact of policies aimed at enhancing these chances. The scarcity of data on educational poverty and of research that helps us better understand ways to improve equity reflects not the intractability of the subject matter, but the low priority assigned to generating such knowledge by societies, governments and other institutions—including research institutions and international agencies.

But the articles in this issue also support the view that change is possible. Education systems can expand (and have expanded, at different times and in different places) educational opportunities for the children of the poor. Educational inequality is thus not a pervasive inevitable result of contemporary civilization, but a human choice, the result of collective choices made about who should be educated, how and at what cost. Educational poverty is thus the result of a choice, not just of the poor, but also, perhaps primarily, of the non-poor. It is the result of how the

non-poor define their interests and responsibilities and about how they influence priorities for public action. It is also the result of how much voice the poor have in influencing policy. Central to studying how to change educational chances for the poor is focusing on the right outcomes—life chances, progression in school, not necessarily mastery of subject matter in tests emphasizing short-term gains—and studying longitudinal data over extended periods of time. Of fundamental importance in the study of educational opportunity is the study of implementation of education policies. Different groups in society advance at different paces in their understandings of whether and how the education system should foster equality. In loosely coupled organizations there is much room for policy formulation at the implementation stage. Getting national or federal governments to launch initiatives to foster equal educational opportunity is far from changing the social context of schools. Local administrators and leaders, teachers, principals, students and communities recreate policy in ways that may be counter to intended policy objectives. Perhaps like no other area of public action, poverty programmes and policies are contested terrain, and they are therefore a prime territory for de-construction, re-construction and destruction. It is perhaps no accident that the study of implementation in the United States began with the study of federal programmes for poverty alleviation.¹⁰ Education systems are arenas for political conflict among opposing interests. Unequal societies have forces that support reproduction of inequality and they will resist reformed schools that seek greater equality. Where more financial resources are required to fund schools attended by the children of the poor, sustaining progressive reforms will require effective demand from the beneficiaries of these reforms (students or their parents)—precisely the groups in society with less political voice and who, as discussed later, have been disempowered during the last two decades in influencing the education policy agenda. These efforts might be resisted by those who lose out from the reallocations of public expenditures, or those which will have to pay higher taxes to fund these initiatives. This will make change difficult and slow and its outcomes uncertain.

Expanding educational opportunity to the poor will require not just understanding which are the right policies for each specific context, but what are the conditions that make it possible to translate these policies into changed conditions in classrooms and schools. Policy reform in this area requires that we learn more about alignment and complementarity of different policies, sequencing and the politics of education reform.

In trying to find out what policies make sense, we need to study not just what educational interventions and innovations help poor students learn, but also to what extent do they close the gap between poor and non-poor in a broad range of outcomes. We need to better understand not just how poor and non-poor students compare in access, promotion and examination scores, but also what are the outcomes of schools that matter the most not only in order to foster individual social mobility of some students, but also to create greater solidarity and equality. These outcomes must include both the poor and the non-poor.

As education has become more important for social stratification, it is crucial to ensure equal opportunity. To ignore this is to allow education systems to act as

the key mechanism for the reproduction and increase of social inequality. That change in expanding educational opportunity to the children of the poor is possible reminds us of how far humankind has come in understanding that all persons are created equal and have a right to expect from others fair and equal chances, and also of how much there is still left to know and do in this long quest for equality.

Notes

1. I understand this basic equality among all persons as *the equal capacity to live lives consistent with their freely made choices*. Obviously people differ in many ways, including the specific talents they have and their predisposition to react differently to social influences. My assumption of basic equality is not antithetical to such differences and diversity since equality implies the same capacity of individuals to exercise free will. It is possible to recognize the value of a plurality of abilities or talents, preferences or worldviews while upholding the basic equality among all people. In fact, diversity and equality of human rights are mutually interdependent concepts. There are, however, some differences between individuals that constrain their ability to exercise free will, for example different degrees of health and nutrition, resources, and educational and social opportunities—these are antithetical to equality. For a discussion of the tensions between equality and diversity, see A. Sen, *Inequality reexamined*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1992.
2. This is true even for the countries that abstained when the Declaration was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in Paris in June 1948, namely the six countries of the Soviet bloc, Saudi Arabia and South Africa.
3. A. Green, *Education and State formation*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1990. I am grateful to my colleagues Patricia Graham and Julie Reuben for their advice regarding the history of universal education.
4. H. Mann, *The twelfth annual report*, New York, Dillingham, 1891.
5. Boti, Ramirez and Meyer have shown education to be, aside from nationality, the main determinant of people's life chances around the world. See J. Boti, F. Ramirez and J. Meyer, Explaining the origins and expansion of mass education, *Comparative education review* (Chicago, IL), vol. 29, no. 2, 1985, p. 145–64.
6. Comisión Económica para América Latina, *Panorama social* [Social overview], Santiago, Chile, CEPAL, 1999.
7. For a discussion of how productivity growth is necessary, though not sufficient, to increase real incomes in the economy of the United States, F. Levy, *The new dollars and dreams*, New York, Russell Sage, 1999.
8. For some of the major works in these traditions see S. Bowles and H. Gintis, *Schooling in capitalist America: education and the contradictions of economic life*, New York, Basic Books, 1976; M. Carnoy and H. Levin, Educational reform and class conflict, *Journal of education* (Boston, MA), vol. 168, no. 1, 1986, p. 35–46; E. Durkheim, *Education and sociology*, Glencoe, IL, Free Press, 1956; M. Weber, *The theory of social and economic organization*, Glencoe, IL, Free Press, 1947.
9. A very promising sign in this respect is the ongoing discussions within the OECD to incorporate into its system of educational indicators some indicators capturing equity dimensions.
10. J. Pressman and A. Wildavsky, *Implementation*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 1973.

EXCELLENCE, EQUITY AND DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

Charles V. Willie¹

The United States has come close to achieving universal education at elementary- and secondary-school levels. 'In [...] 1997, over four-fifths (82.1 percent) of all adults age 25 or older reported completing at least high school, a record high' (US Census Bureau, 1997, p. 1). By racial and ethnic groups, however, there is substantial inequality in the attainment of this level of education. A total of 83% of white adults aged 25 and over have a high-school diploma, whereas only 54.7% of adults of a similar age of Hispanic origin have graduated from high school. Among black adults, the proportion of 74.9% is high but less than that for whites. However, among United States residents who identify as Asian or as Pacific Islanders, the proportion of adults who have graduated from high school is 84.9%, the highest in the nation (US Census Bureau, 1997, p. 3).

The discrepancy in educational attainment by racial and ethnic groups was greater in the United States in years gone by. Back in 1950, before the Supreme Court ruled that segregated education in the United States was illegal, about one-third (33.4%) of the adult population over 25 years of age had graduated from high school, the proportion being 35.5% for whites and only 13.2% for blacks and other non-white races of a similar age group. Note that the proportional racial difference in high-school graduates for whites was 2.7 times greater than the proportion for

Original language: English

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blacks and other racial groups combined a half century ago (US Census Bureau, 1960, p. 108). Today, after a remarkable increase in the proportion of all racial groups that have completed high school the proportional difference in educational attainment for whites at this level of education is only 1.2 times greater than the proportion for blacks and other racial groups combined.

A half century ago, less than a majority of adults in all racial groups in the United States had graduated from high school. At the close of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, a majority of adults in all racial groups are high-school graduates. Two things may be said about education during the last half century: (i) when the level of attainment was low for all population groups in the United States, the discrepancy between racial groups in educational attainment was greater than it is today when all racial groups have a higher level of educational attainment (one could say that a rising tide raises all ships); and (ii) despite the remarkable increase in education for all population groups, there is still inequality between whites and people of colour in the United States (which is to say that some things change and yet remain the same). Recognizing that inequality by race remains and that the overcoming of inequality helps all and harms none as indicated in the above analysis, the United States has struggled with several ways of dealing with the persisting problem of inequality.

Affirmative action

The popular label for the effort made so far is 'affirmative action'. It is a necessary and essential effort, but one that is quite controversial because of the misguided belief on the part of some whites that affirmative action which may help people of colour is harmful to their racial group. Affirmative action is based on the assumption that 'if all artificial barriers to access to education were lifted and the effects of past discrimination overcome, blacks [and other non-white racial populations] would gain qualifications for positions in [education] that would approximate their position in the population at large (Fleming, Gill & Swinton, 1978, p. 7). Fleming, Gill and Swinton call affirmative action 'a peaceful strategy for making the transition to a fair and equitable society' (p. 4).

From the executive branch of the federal government in the United States orders have been issued regarding efforts that should be made to end racial discrimination. Fleming, Gill and Swinton state that government had to take affirmative action and order other institutions in the United States to do the same because past federal, state and local official policies were designed 'to keep blacks in a state of ignorance during slavery and then ensure that the education finally extended would be of an inferior quality' (p. xxi). Oliver and Shapiro (1995, p. 95) state that 'practically every circumstance of bias and discrimination against blacks [in the United States] has produced a circumstance and opportunity of positive gain for whites'.

Remedy and prevention

We are tending towards a society in which the winner takes all and in which only our similarities are recognized as valid because of the developing 'culture of intolerance' (Cohen, 1998) in the United States. Mark Cohen, an anthropologist, states that 'many Americans seem to be moving toward increasing indifference to others. Intolerance, even outright hatred, of people who are "different" is on the rise. This attitude [...] divides people who ought to be united and supports a variety of political agendas that do not address our real needs' (Cohen, 1998, p. ix).

One political agenda which cultural intolerance does not support is knowing the difference between remedy and prevention:

Remedy is a form of redress. Philosopher John Rawls states that the principle of redress is an important element in a theory of justice. It requires compensation for those who have lost out. The principle of redress [...] mitigates the effects of natural accidents and contingencies of history in awarding opportunities [...] the principle of redress is implemented by activating the principle of difference [...] that acknowledges the uniqueness of each unit of society [...] and attests to its validity (Willie, 1994, p. 91).

Rawls states that 'those who have been favored by nature, whoever they are, may gain from their good fortune only in terms that improve the situation of those who lost out' (Rawls, 1971, p. 101–2). We improve the situation of those who did not 'luck out' by way of remedy. In other words, our natural and cultivated talents should result in the well-being of others because, according to Rawls, 'no one deserves his [or her] greater natural capacity nor merits a more favorable starting place in society' (p. 100).

Remedies require person-specific or group-specific approaches that place individuals in the position they would have occupied if they had not experienced discrimination in gaining access to opportunities. Prevention, however, requires a universal approach that distributes common resources in ways that benefit all.

To prevent future harm, one focuses not on the myriad patterns of behavior of persons or groups at risk. Instead, prevention is perfected by focusing on the disorders and their sources, isolating or containing these so that they do not reach any individuals and groups (Willie, 1994, p. 95).

It is important for experts in social organization to determine whether their efforts are designed to prevent or to remedy. Prevention is preparation to ward off harm. Remedy is preparation to overcome harm. Social action designed to remedy past wrongs is not effective when it uses universal methods. And social action designed to prevent wrongs in the future is not effective when it focuses on specific individuals or groups. In summary, to prevent, one uses a universal approach; to remedy, one uses a particularistic approach. For example, contemporary proposals about how to deal effectively with poverty are inappropriate when they recommend universal action as opposed to person-specific or group-specific action.

Wilson (1987, p. 5) has stated his belief that the life chances of poor individuals, such as those found in inner-city, underclass populations, can be improved 'by emphasizing programs to which the more advantaged groups of all race and class backgrounds can positively relate'. In this statement, Wilson rejects population-specific remedies. I have been critical of his recommendation because it seems not to distinguish between prevention and remedy. Prevention is fine and beautiful for the future. But for individuals who suffer because they are poor, remedy is necessary and essential now.

It is not our privilege to pick and choose whether to use universal, preventive means or particularistic, remedial means. The action strategy used ought to be dictated by the requirements of the situation and not by the preferences of the action agents. It is incumbent upon education professionals to share this insight with society at large. Without such understanding, our action strategies are likely to be arbitrary and capricious, not flexible enough to deal with the variety of needs that are presented in a society of pluralistic populations.

Equity and excellence

School reform efforts tend to be inadequate and insufficient when they attempt to achieve excellent or equitable outcomes—one or the other, but not both. Nearly two decades ago, the National Commission on Excellence in Education in the United States warned that the nation should not permit equity to yield to excellence or excellence to yield to equity. To favour either goal alone, according to the National Commission's report, could lead to mediocrity in American society on the one hand, or the creation of an undemocratic elitism on the other hand (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983, p. 13). The present discussion declares that there is a link between excellence and equity in education.

Academic attainment, of course, is an educational outcome that is associated with the presence or absence of excellence. And schools may be analysed as opportunity systems that provide equitable or inequitable educational experiences for student groups. Equity is a property of the group, and excellence is a property of the individual. Individuals aspire to achieve excellence while groups strive to attain equity. These phenomena complement each other in educational planning. Schorr (1997, p. 258) agrees that school systems can and should be equitable in the distribution of educational opportunities. When these opportunities are available to all according to their needs, equity is present. A school system that is equitable is truly unitary and fair.

The contextual effects of schools

It is important to view schools as the context within which education takes place. This discussion of contextual effects is based on my study of a county school system in Charleston, South Carolina, from 1997 to 1998 (Willie et al., 1998), and professional literature such as Rutter et al. (1979) and Stern (1970). According to Stern, schools

are 'systems of pressures, practices and policies intended to influence the development of students toward the attainment of institutional objectives' (Stern, 1970, p. 4). Rutter and associates found a 'causal relationship between school process and children's progress' (Rutter et al., 1979, p. 180). Noting that children are quick to pick up other people's expectations about both their academic competence and their behaviour, they stated that the school process may foster enthusiasm and interest in learning, the ability to take responsibility and the adaptability to cope with changes (p. 187).

In June 1997, the Charleston Planning Project in Charleston, South Carolina, retained a team of educational planners, including Jose Alicea, Craig Mitchell, Michael Alves and the author to conduct a study on educational services in the Charleston County public schools and to prepare a plan that, when implemented, would improve educational opportunities for all children. We were asked to identify and analyse barriers to quality education for students in all racial and ethnic groups at all socio-economic levels.

Among goals which gave direction to the planning team were the following: (i) the school reform plan should seek to achieve both excellence and equity; (ii) the plan should be comprehensive and achieve systematic change; and (iii) each school should be recognized as a basic unit of the education system.

These goals caused the planners to address culture-based structural problems such as racial isolation and integration and to pay attention to development and achievement outcomes. To do these things, we focused on the school as a 'holistic, complex, contextual description [...] of reality' (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983, p. 13) that mediates the achievement behaviour of individuals.

Our study of Charleston County schools is limited to elementary and middle schools largely because we wanted to analyse achievement scores of students in relation to the racial and socio-economic characteristics of schools. Elementary schools include grades 1 to 5 and middle schools include grades 6, 7 and 8. The only socio-economic indicator readily available was the eligibility or ineligibility of students to participate in the free and reduced-cost lunch programme. Children who participated in this programme were classified as low-income or poor. Because the reporting of these data on socio-economic status is unreliable for secondary students, high schools were eliminated from this phase of the analysis.

Scores received by students in the Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT7) were used as an indicator of individual achievement. For the student body as a whole, the proportion of students scoring above the national norm in the United States in the MAT7 in each Charleston County school is reported. The MAT7 score used in this study is a composite that reflects achievement in reading, mathematics, language, science and social studies.

Of the forty-four elementary schools in Charleston County, two-thirds had student bodies in which a majority of students scored *below* the national norm in MAT7. Also, two-thirds of sixteen middle schools in Charleston County had student bodies in which a majority of students scored *below* the national norm. MAT7 data were disaggregated and reported separately by schools for students in low-income and in non-low-income families and for students in black and in white fam-

ilies. In the analysis of student achievement by schools, therefore, we were able to hold race and socio-economic status constant.

Identifying each school as the contextual community for teaching and learning in public education, the data analysed will show that variations in student achievement are substantially affected by variations in the characteristics of school communities.

The current distribution of students in Charleston County's sixty elementary and middle schools reveals substantial racial imbalance in the school system. By race, nearly half of the elementary and middle schools (47%) are imbalanced. Schools in which eight out of every ten students are members of a single racial group are classified as racially isolated or imbalanced schools. When the members of a single racial group in a school range from three to seven out of every ten students, such a school is classified as racially mixed.

Of the twenty-eight racially imbalanced schools in Charleston County, twenty-three are black-isolated schools and only five are white-isolated schools. Thus, black students tend to experience the effects of racial isolation more frequently than white students; slightly more than half of the black students (52%) attend such schools, but only one out of ten white students attends a racially isolated school. The racial imbalance is extensive in black-isolated schools: nine out of every ten students (94%) are members of the same race. Blacks in these schools have little, if any, interaction with students in other racial groups.

It is fair to conclude that in Charleston County public schools white students tend to experience racial integration more frequently than black students do. A total of 84% of white students in this school system are enrolled in racially mixed schools, but only 47% of black students are so enrolled. Thus, a higher proportion of white students than black students enjoy the benefits of desegregated schools.

Schools in which 80% of the students receive free or reduced-cost lunches are classified as low-income schools. Schools in which less than one-fifth of the students are eligible for free or reduced-cost lunches are classified as high-income schools. Finally, schools in which low-income students range from three to seven students are classified as middle-income (or socio-economically mixed) schools. The classification of schools by socio-economic status is flawed because information available for income gradations is dichotomous, not trichotomous; data are recorded for low-income and non-low-income status only. Thus, high-income schools are so designated because of the presence of few low-income students—less than 20%. Most students who attend schools that are isolated from low-income children may come from high-income as well as middle-income families, although the probability is that most have parents with high incomes.

Taking into consideration this benign flaw, an analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of Charleston County schools follows. Nearly half of the public schools (45%) may be classified as schools in which low-income students are concentrated. Slightly more than one-third (36%) of all elementary- and middle-school students attend these schools. Nine out of every ten students in low-income-concentrated schools are poor.

In Charleston County public schools, 62% of all students attend racially mixed schools in which black and white students are almost equally balanced (10,339 blacks to 9,058 whites), and nearly half of all students (49%) attend middle-income (or socio-economically mixed) schools that are more or less equally balanced between low-income and non-low-income students (7,417 low-income students to 6,265 middle- and high-income students).

Because a fairly large proportion of low-income students and black students attend schools that are not racially or socio-economically isolated, an opportunity is available to determine the contextual effects of these schools on student outcomes compared with student outcomes in segregated schools. The achievement of students is analysed for students who attend schools in and outside black ghettos and low-income ghettos. The MAT7 is used in this analysis. The Charleston County school system collects data on the proportion of students in each school scoring above the national norm in this achievement test. These were the only data readily available for determining the association, if any, between school contextual characteristics and student achievement.

The varying proportions of Charleston County students scoring above the national norm in the achievement test are 26%, 43% and 82% in black-isolated schools, racially mixed schools and white-isolated schools, respectively. The extreme ends of the distribution are interesting, since 80% or more of the students in schools at each end of the distribution are members of the same race. An overwhelming majority of students *do not score* above the national norm in the achievement test in black-isolated schools, but a majority of students *do score* above the national norm in white-isolated schools. These facts mean that black students and white students who experience segregated education have radically different achievement experiences.

The proportion of students scoring above the national norm ranges from 26% to 44% to 79% in low-income, middle-income and high-income schools, respectively. The proportion of students scoring above the national norm in both distributions was lowest in black-isolated or low-income schools and highest in white-isolated or high-income schools.

In schools of varying racial composition (ranging from black-isolated to white-isolated) achievement scores have a different pattern from that mentioned above when the analysis is reported for black students and white students separately. White students perform best in white-isolated schools; in these schools, 91% score above the national norm. This proportion is the highest for white students scoring above the national average in any of the three race-contextual school types. However, the highest proportion of black students scoring above the national norm is found in racially mixed schools, not in black-isolated schools. About one-third of black students (34%) in these kinds of schools score above the national norm.

Thus, among black students in Charleston County schools, the lowest proportion scoring above the national norm is found in black-isolated schools. This is a radical contrast with the achievement experience of the small proportion of white students who attend white-isolated schools in this county school system. Clearly,

the white experience in Charleston County schools differs from the black experience.

These findings of different achievement patterns in different racial groups within a common school system indicate why equity and excellence must complement each other in systemic reform. While white students manifest their most excellent academic achievement in white racially isolated schools, black students manifest their worst academic achievement in black racially isolated schools. Racially mixed schools in which blacks have their best academic achievement are second-best for whites. Nevertheless, the proportion of white students whose achievement is above average in their second-best schools is substantially higher at 67% than the 34% of black students whose achievement is above average in these racially mixed schools.

We know, on the basis of the Charleston County experience, that a school system that maintains racially isolated schools tends to harm the achievement of power by its subdominant students and help the achievement of power by its dominant students. One may recall that black students had their lowest score in nearly all-black schools, and white students had their highest score in nearly all-white schools. While it is good public policy to help all students, it is bad public policy to harm any student. To deal with these matters appropriately one must implement policies that promote both equity and excellence at the same time.

It is fine and beautiful to strive for excellence. However, the data indicate that excellence associated with schooling in white racially isolated schools is experienced by only 4% of all Charleston County students. By race, only 10% of white students and 1% of black students attend white racially isolated schools.

Also, data show that the highest proportion of all students in Charleston County attends racially mixed schools. Racially mixed schools not only accommodate the largest proportion of students in the school system but also minimize the discrepancy in achievement between black and white students. The difference in achievement proportions between black students and white students is 33 percentage points in racially mixed schools, and 61 percentage points in white racially isolated schools. Thus, the search for excellence and equity requires that a school system such as that of Charleston County increase the number of racially mixed schools that seem to help the system and not harm any group, since two-thirds of the white students who attend these schools have achievement scores that are above the national norm and this proportion is higher than that for any other racial group in the school system.

While it might seem that the white students (91% of whom score above the national norm in nearly all-white schools) are asked to sacrifice their excellent performance by enrolling in racially mixed schools, this phenomenon should be placed in context; only one out of every ten white students attends schools that have the high achievement rates in Charleston. Thus, a school system that is urged to create more racially mixed schools is urged to expand an educational opportunity that will do the greatest good for the greatest number of students. To increase the number of racially mixed schools is to increase opportunities that are helpful to students in all racial groups.

The purpose of affirmative action

In his report to the annual meeting of the Harvard Alumni on Commencement Day in 1975, President Derek Bok set forth the case for affirmative action in the United States. He stated that 'universities [and presumably other schools] will not meet their obligations to society if they are left entirely to their own devices'. For example, he said, 'universities did not provide adequate opportunities for women or minority groups until the [United States] Congress required them to do so'.

A year earlier (in 1974) at a conference on affirmative action at Harvard, Derek Bok said, '[affirmative action] is important [...] because we know as educators that you cannot expect to impart values and ethical principles to your students in the classroom unless the institution itself is making a serious effort to abide by those ideals and those ethical principles in its everyday operation'. He added, 'we must always remember that a properly administered program of affirmative action is not merely a concession to particular groups, but a means of improving the quality of the personnel within the university'.

Kingman Brewster, president of Yale University in the 1970s, made a similar point in response to a reporter who asked if universities would have hired and admitted more women and minorities if the government had not pushed for this. His reply was succinct and straightforward: 'No, not as effectively'. Then he said, 'In terms of getting cracking with adequate search procedures and adequate administrative surveillance [...] the affirmative action has not been a wasted effort' (*Boston globe*, 20 March 1977, p. 2).

Clearly, affirmative action has an educational goal. Educational institutions are truth-seeking agencies. And the truth is possible only in a diversified setting. Thus, affirmative action is essential for the purpose of recruiting diverse voices and experiences that are essential in the self-correction that a truth-seeking institution requires.

Recently, the current president of Harvard University, Neil Rudenstine, said in the president's report (1996) that 'diversity is not an end in itself or a pleasant but dispensable accessory. It is the substance from which much human learning, understanding, and wisdom derive. It offers one of the most powerful ways of creating the intellectual energy and robustness that lead to greater knowledge, as well as tolerance and mutual respect that are so essential to the maintenance of our civil society' (Rudenstine, 1996, p. 53).

Note

1. Acknowledgement and appreciation is due to Dr José Alicea who assisted with the statistical analysis of Charleston County Public Schools data.

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POVERTY AND EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Claudia Buchmann

Today, a child born in sub-Saharan Africa is more likely to be malnourished than go to primary school and is as likely to die before the age of 5 as to enter secondary school (United Nations 1996, p. 25). These grim facts remind us of the intertwined nature of poverty and education in relation to a child's life chances. In comparison to all other world regions, sub-Saharan Africa is striking in two respects: its high level of absolute poverty and the recent decline in primary enrolment rates across the region to their lowest point in fifteen years. No other region in the world has experienced such a setback. This paper examines each of these realities and explores the relationships between them. After a discussion of the state of poverty and the state of education in Africa, it examines the reasons for persisting poverty and declining enrolment on the continent. The situation is bleak in both respects, but there are also some indications that international donors, African governments and community groups are renewing their efforts to address these problems. For example, there are signs of a growing awareness by international and donor agencies of the importance of supporting basic education in Africa. On the local level, innovative programmes to provide education to children in the most impoverished environments and living in difficult circumstances are improving the lives of many African children. Such programmes demonstrate the resourcefulness and determination of

Original language: English

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African communities and non-governmental agencies to provide educational opportunities to even the poorest Africans.

Poverty and education in sub-Saharan Africa: current indicators

Of the forty-eight countries in the world that rank lowest in terms of human development, thirty-seven are in sub-Saharan Africa. On average, 40 to 50% of sub-Saharan Africans live below the poverty line. This is a much higher proportion than in any other region except South Asia (World Bank, 1996a). Table 1 presents country-specific data on poverty and income inequality for seventeen sub-Saharan countries for which data are available. In all of these countries at least 25% of the population lives below the poverty line. In seven countries, more than half of the population lives in poverty. The distribution of income varies greatly in sub-Saharan Africa and, as Table 1 suggests, the income gap between the poorest and wealthiest groups is extreme in most African nations. In Sierra Leone, one country that ranks very high in income inequality, it is estimated that the poorest 20% of the population survives on only 1% of the country's income.

Who are the poor in Africa? They live in both rural and urban areas. The rural poor are often subsistence farmers who cultivate small plots of land and derive their earnings from the informal sector. In urban areas, the poor are most likely to be unemployed or working informally as petty traders, domestic servants or casual labourers. The incidence of poverty is also higher among the estimated one-third of rural African households that are headed by women. In Africa, as in much of the world, women have lower rates of labour-force participation and, if employed, generally earn less than men. Women may face other barriers, such as limited access to land and credit, their frequent need to balance child care and employment, and a high rate of illiteracy (53% among African women compared to 33% for men (UNESCO, 1995, p. 19)). For these reasons, female-headed households are at greater risk of poverty than male-headed households. Poverty rates are lowest among workers in the formal sector and export farmers (World Bank, 1995), but these groups are not immune from poverty. During the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of economic recession and structural adjustment, real wages for many civil servants stagnated or declined while the prices of basic goods increased. For example, teachers' salaries in many African countries fell by 30 to 40% in real terms during the 1980s. As a result, many teachers have had to devise alternative strategies, such as taking second jobs to avoid falling into poverty (Reimers & Tiburcio, 1993, p. 45-46).

Clearly, Africans living in poverty comprise a diverse group. Not surprisingly, however, it is among this poorest segment of society that school enrolment and attainment rates are the lowest. Frequently, poor families cannot afford the costs of schooling. Even where schooling is free, the poor may not be able to pay for the uniforms, books, shoes and other school supplies that their children must have in order to take advantage of 'free' education. Finally, even the opportunity cost of children's

TABLE 1. Poverty rates in selected sub-Saharan African countries

	% below poverty line*	% share of income or consumption	
		Lowest 20%	Highest 20%
Benin	33	—	—
Burundi	36	—	—
Cameroon	40	—	—
Ghana	31	7.9	42.2
Guinea-Bissau	49	2.1	58.9
Kenya	42	6.7	62.1
Lesotho	49	2.8	60.1
Malawi	54	—	—
Mauritania	57	3.6	46.5
Nigeria	43	4.0	49.4
Rwanda	51	9.7	39.1
Sierra Leone	68	1.1	63.4
Togo	32	—	—
Uganda	55	6.8	48.1
United Rep. of Tanzania	51	6.9	45.4
Zambia	68	3.9	50.4
Zimbabwe	26	4.0	62.3

* Percentage of the population living below the national poverty line is a national estimate based on population-weighted sub-group estimates from household surveys.

Source: World Bank, 1998. Data for various years, 1984–93.

schooling may be too great for some families, since the time that children spend in school or travelling to and from school cannot be used for other productive or income-generating activities. If poverty-stricken families can afford education, it is frequently of low quality. Non-poor families have greater educational options for their children; if the public education on offer is of low quality, they may choose to send their children to private schools that are better endowed with educational resources. In most African countries, where the progression to secondary and higher levels of education is determined by national examinations at the end of primary school, the lack of options for quality education for the poor may serve to perpetuate the low educational attainment rates of poor children.

Low educational enrolment and attainment rates among the poorest Africans are more disturbing in the light of substantial evidence that even relatively small amounts of education can contribute significantly to improving the life chances of the poor. Education is strongly correlated with improved health and reduced fertility, and the positive correlation between education and earnings is 'indisputable and universal' (Psacharopoulos, 1994). As Table 2 shows, among the three main levels of education, primary schooling reaps the highest returns, both to individuals and societies, across all world regions. Moreover, the rate of return to primary education

is highest in poor countries with a dearth of educated individuals. Therefore, it is not surprising that investments in primary education are more profitable in sub-Saharan Africa than other world regions. Increasing the rate of primary school completion on the continent would be a significant step towards breaking a cycle in which the poor have no chance to improve their quality of life and thus remain in poverty.

TABLE 2. Returns to investment in education by level (percentage) and world region

Region	Private returns			Social returns		
	Primary	Secondary	Higher	Primary	Secondary	Higher
Sub-Saharan Africa	41.3	26.6	27.8	24.3	18.2	11.2
Asia	39.0	18.9	19.9	19.9	13.3	11.7
Latin America/Caribbean	26.2	16.8	19.7	17.9	12.8	12.3
Europe/Middle East/N. Africa	17.4	15.9	21.7	15.5	11.2	10.6
OECD	21.7	12.4	12.3	14.4	10.2	8.7
World	29.1	18.1	20.3	18.4	13.1	10.9

Source: Psacharopoulos, 1994.

Among all world regions, sub-Saharan Africa ranks lowest in terms of most educational indicators, including the adult literacy rate (57%), gross primary enrolment (74%) and secondary enrolment (24%) (UNICEF, 1997). While some African countries have made progress in narrowing gender disparities, girls continue to be under-represented in African schools. In the region, 81% of boys enrol in primary school compared to only 67% of girls (see Table 3). Of course, such aggregate statistics mask the significant variations that exist between countries in terms of these indicators (see Table 4). Nonetheless, they serve to indicate the great educational challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa.

TABLE 3. Primary and secondary gross enrolment ratios (%) in sub-Saharan Africa, 1980–95

	1980	1985	1990	1995
Primary				
Total	78	76	72	74
Male	87	84	79	81
Female	69	68	66	67
Secondary				
Total	17	22	22	24
Male	22	26	25	27
Female	12	18	19	22

Source: UNESCO, 1998.

TABLE 4. Economic and educational indicators for sub-Saharan African countries

	GNPC 1995	GDP growth >91->95	Adult literacy 1995	Primary enrolment				Total secondary enrolment 1995	Educ. exp. 1995
				Total 1985	LYA* LYA *	Male LYA *	Female LYA *		
Angola	831	-2.2	42	106	88			14	
Benin	441	3.5	37	68	72	92	52	16	3.1
Botswana	2,965	3.5	70	105	111	114	117	56	9.6
Burkina Faso	325	4.0	19	27	38	46	30	8	3.6
Burundi	228	3.2	35	52	70	77	63	7	2.8
Cameroon	813	-2.2	63	103	88	93	84	27	
Central Afr. Rep.	463	0.6	60	75	58	71	46	10	
Chad	237	1.8	48	43	55	74	36	9	2.2
Congo	1,113	-0.1	75	86	72	119	109	53	5.9
Côte d'Ivoire	734	1.5	40	72	69	79	58	23	
Dem. Rep. Congo	152	-3.8	77		68	78	58	24	
Eritrea				47	57	63	51	19	
Ethiopia	101	-0.4	38	37	31	39	24	11	4.7
Gabon	4,400	0.6	63						
Gambia	360	2.0	39	68	73	78	67	22	5.5
Ghana	464	4.3	65	76	76	84	70	37	
Guinea	515	3.7	36	34	48	63	34	12	
Guinea-Bissau	272	2.3	55	62	64	81	47	6	
Kenya	349	1.9	78	99	85	85	85	24	7.4
Lesotho	344	2.9	71	110	99	92	105	28	5.9
Liberia	390	-8.0	38	37	33	51	28	21	
Madagascar	229	2.0	80	109	72	73	70	14	
Malawi	174	-0.4	56	60	135	142	128	6	3.8
Mali	260	2.3	31	23	34	41	27	9	2.2
Mauritania	530	3.1	38	48	78	85	72	15	5.0
Mauritius	2,887	4.2	83	110	107	107	106	62	4.3
Mozambique	93	3.1	40	87	60	70	50	7	
Namibia	1,449	1.3		135	133	132	134	62	9.4
Niger	281	0.2	14	26	29	36	22	7	
Nigeria	306	2.2	57	96	89	100	79	30	
Rwanda	163	-11.4	61	63	82	83	81	11	
Senegal	726	1.2	33	56	65	72	57	16	3.6
Sierra Leone	176	-0.8	31	63	50	59	41	17	
Somalia	42	-7.1	24		11			7	
South Africa	2,581	0.9	82	103	117	118	116	84	6.8
Togo	363	-0.3	52	93	133	147	118	27	5.6
Uganda	234	4.3	62	73	73	79	67	12	
U. Rep. Tanzania	92	1.2	68	75	67	68	66	5	
Zambia	432	0.6	78	104	89	92	86	28	1.8
Zimbabwe	638	0.7	85	136	116	117	114	47	8.5

* = Latest year available, 1991-95.

Sources: GNP per capita, average annual growth in gross domestic product, total primary enrolment 1985, current (United Nations, 1996); adult literacy (UNICEF, 1997); male and female primary enrolment, 1995, secondary enrolment, 1995, and educational expenditure as percentage of total government expenditure, 1995 (UNESCO, 1998).

Especially disturbing is the realization that, after a long period of enrolment growth from the 1960s to 1980, primary school enrolment rates declined between 1980 and 1990 in many sub-Saharan African countries. In the early 1990s, ratios began to grow again but by 1995 enrolment ratios were still lower than they had been in 1980 (see Table 3). No other region in the world has experienced such a setback (United Nations, 1996). What factors are responsible for these educational declines? First, rapid population growth has continually exceeded educational expansion, making it especially challenging for African countries to provide sufficient educational resources for the growing population of school-age children. Second, low rates of economic growth due to the global recession in the 1980s and economic problems internal to African countries have caused great economic hardship for families and governments. The result has been a reduced ability on the part of families to pay for education and reduced public expenditures for education at the national level. These factors are the focus of the following section.

Reasons for persistent poverty and educational declines

A range of factors, from the global- and national-level to the local- and family-level, are responsible for sub-Saharan Africa's high rates of poverty and generally low educational indicators. For most African countries, monetary-based economic institutions and formal education systems are relatively recent developments that, in most cases, began only with their independence from colonialism during the 1960s and 1970s. We must consider this history when evaluating sub-Saharan Africa in terms of its progress on both fronts. Nonetheless, more recent factors are primarily responsible for the persistence of poverty and recent educational declines in the region.

As with most other developing regions, the global economic recession and debt crisis of the 1980s hit Africa hard. Sub-Saharan Africa's total debt of US\$223.2 billion in 1995 is equivalent to 270% of its export earnings for the same year. Multilateral debt accounts for about half of this figure (United Nations, 1996, p. 14). The region manages to service its debt at an average of US\$12 billion per year, but owes an additional US\$8 billion annually that it cannot pay (UNICEF, 1997, p. 53). These debt payments claim nearly 4% of the region's gross domestic product and comprise a burden that clearly is not sustainable.

In order to facilitate debt repayment and remain eligible for future loans, African governments must adhere to structural adjustment policies (SAPs), which are negotiated between each indebted country and international financial institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These programmes, generally based on neo-liberal economic theory, emphasize reducing public expenditures and decentralizing and privatizing state sectors in order to devote more capital to debt servicing. As a result, structural adjustment has frequently resulted in reduced spending on national education as well as reduced household resources for school expenses (Reimers & Tiburcio, 1993).

There is debate over how to analyse the impact of SAPs on the education sector, given the difficulty of isolating the effect of these policies from other influences (Noss, 1991). These difficulties notwithstanding, evidence suggests that debt servicing during the 1980s led to reductions in public expenditures on education (Psacharopoulos & Steier, 1987; Hinchliffe, 1989). For example, one study of the African region found that, as a result of adjustment and economic restructuring, 1983 figures for educational expenditures as a percentage of government expenditures had declined to 1970 levels (Tilak, 1990). Other studies have examined the impact of adjustment on educational decisions within households. As indebted governments must reduce social spending on food subsidies, health clinics, subsidized medicine, primary schools and teachers' salaries, the costs of these basic necessities have been shifted to families and communities. Thus, economic restructuring exacts a heavy toll on the poorest groups who can ill afford these additional costs. As the living conditions of the poor deteriorate further, they have fewer resources to devote to educating their children and, simultaneously, may need to rely on children's economic and household contributions to survive (Buchmann, 1996). The result is reduced school enrolment rates across the continent. International organizations, notably UNICEF, as well as Third World leaders, have led a call for 'adjustment with a human face' and programmes that protect those most likely to be harmed by structural adjustment policies (Cornia, Jolly & Stewart, 1987).

Perhaps in response to these critiques, by 1990 the World Bank's approach to adjustment incorporated social sector adjustment loans (SECALs), which are meant to alleviate some of the potentially detrimental effects of structural adjustment on social sectors. According to one World Bank report:

Adjustment programs should provide measures to reduce the potential short-run burden on the poor of external shocks or adjustment policies. SECALs should complement adjustment policy reforms by supporting measures to achieve fundamental social objectives, such as improving education for the poor (Noss, 1991, p. 7).

More recently, recognizing both the detrimental impact of SAPs on Africa's social sectors and the fact that much of the continent's debt will likely never be repaid, international agencies have tried to organize programmes for debt forgiveness. The 'Naples terms' established in 1994 were designed to enable forgiveness of some bilateral debt, but many indebted nations argued that the terms were far too limited to have any real effect in alleviating their debt burden. In 1996, the World Bank and the IMF proposed the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative to ease the debt burden of the poorest countries. This new plan would permit greater relief of bilateral debt and set up a trust fund to assist in servicing multilateral debt for the world's twenty poorest and most-heavily indebted countries (United Nations, 1996, p. 14). Uganda was the first country to receive a HIPC debt relief package, followed by Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mozambique. As of March 1998, Mali, Senegal, and Togo were to be reviewed as candidates for similar relief (United Nations, 1998, p. 7).

Despite the establishment of much-needed debt relief programmes, Africa's debt will continue to limit the continent's ability to address its serious educational problems. Moreover, declining enrolment and other setbacks in social development that occurred in the early decades of structural adjustment will not be easily undone in the future. Finally, as governments pass the costs of maintaining the educational infrastructure on to parents and localities, educational disparities between rich and poor families and communities may grow. Wealthy families and communities will be able to afford more and higher-quality educational facilities and materials than their poorer counterparts, while a growing contingent of the poorest Africans may not be able to provide even the most basic levels of schooling to their children.

In addition to its debt problems, in the 1990s sub-Saharan Africa witnessed declining foreign aid, in terms of its share of overseas development assistance as well as total net overseas development assistance receipts. For example, bilateral development assistance from the twenty-one member States of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD fell from US\$11.1 billion in 1991 to US\$10.4 billion in 1994 (United Nations, 1996, p. 15). These and other declines in foreign aid, combined with the high rates of debt servicing, mean that, in most years, there is a net outflow of capital from Africa as debt repayment generally exceeds total receipts from foreign assistance. The result is that most African countries have fewer resources to devote to financing schools, training teachers or subsidizing the costs of educational supplies for poor families. This, in turn, leads to insufficient supply, declining school quality and increased educational costs for households. In many countries, the educational expenditures of the central government have been reduced to such an extent that they barely cover primary teachers' salaries—and nothing else. UNICEF estimates that if just one of every five dollars Africa pays for servicing its debt went instead to primary education, there would be a place in primary school for every African child (UNICEF, 1996, p. 3).

This is not to imply that the debt crisis alone is responsible for Africa's educational problems. African countries also have a role in the deplorable educational situation within their borders. Economic mismanagement, lack of good governance and civil strife have served to squander the already limited resources for educational development in many countries. Civil wars in countries such as Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and Sudan have reduced once healthy educational infrastructures to a shambles that will require enormous effort to rebuild. Similarly, many Africa governments allocate a substantially larger share of government expenditure to defence than to education. This is true of Angola, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Somalia, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania, and was also the case of Zaire (UNESCO, 1998).

Even among African countries that have been relatively politically stable, many are too weak to control or direct the expansion of their education systems in ways that correspond to development goals. One example relates to the problem of grade repetition. In most sub-Saharan African countries, more than 10% of secondary school students repeat grades at least once and many repeat grades twice or more

(UNESCO, 1998). Students may repeat grades in order to improve their academic performance and prepare for national examinations at the end of secondary school. Other students may repeat grades because of sporadic attendance or illness, with subsequent poor academic performance. Regardless of the reasons for such high rates of repetition, most governments recognize that repeating is a waste of resources since the secondary school places used by repeating students could otherwise be allocated to children not enrolled in school. Despite acknowledging repetition as a serious problem, most African governments have not been able to curb the practice. They simply lack the resources and staff to monitor the schools and enforce regulations designed to eliminate repetition.

Finally, some African countries have not managed to stem high population growth rates that continue to outstrip educational expansion. Currently, sub-Saharan Africa's total fertility rate remains at 6.1, compared to 3.9 for South Asia, 2.3 for East Asia and 3.0 in Latin America (UNICEF, 1997). As a result, the primary school-age population is increasing at an average annual rate of 3.3%, while enrolment is rising by only 2.2% per annum (United Nations, 1998).

At the local level, low rates of educational participation and attainment are frequently attributed to culture and tradition, or failure on the part of parents to understand the value of schooling. Assumptions about why families do not send their children to school are numerous, but much more empirical research is necessary to establish the accuracy of these assumptions. Some parents may fail to grasp the value of schooling because they never attended school themselves. But in other cases high costs, poor school quality or the sense that what is being taught is not relevant to children's lives may be the primary causes for non-enrolment or low attendance. The high cost of schooling and an irrelevant curriculum were two of the most common reasons given by parents for children's non-enrolment during surveys conducted in Kenya (Buchmann, 1999), the United Republic of Tanzania (TADREG, 1993) and Madagascar (World Bank, 1996*b*). In such instances, parents correctly determine that costly investments in education yield few benefits; and educational institutions, not parents' attitudes, need to be changed. The following section explains how some educational programmes in sub-Saharan Africa are striving to change in order to become more affordable to African families and more relevant to national objectives.

Challenges and prospects in the educational sector

As the above discussion makes clear, Africa faces numerous challenges in attempting to improve the educational situation over the course of the next decade. There are some suggestions that international and local organizations are redoubling their efforts to address the losses of the past two decades. At the local level, these efforts frequently involve targeting poverty-stricken children who traditionally have been poorly served by formal education. Additionally, recent improvements in the economies of many African countries offer hope that governments can increase edu-

cational expenditures in the coming years. These factors are a few of the positive prospects for change in African education systems and deserve emphasis here.

INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

Numerous initiatives reflect the growing awareness on the part of international and donor organizations of the need to target basic education in Africa as a top priority. The best-known of these, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, called for universal quality education and urged particular focus on the world's poorest citizens. Since that conference, international agencies have developed initiatives with either a specific emphasis on education or an emphasis on programmes for the poor. For example, throughout the 1990s, the World Bank, now the largest single provider of funds to the educational sector, has significantly increased its spending for education. Between 1989 and 1994, the proportion of World Bank lending allocated to education increased from 4.5% to 10.4%. After dropping to 4.8% in 1997, current estimates suggest that, in 1998, 8.6% of the Bank's total allocation will have gone to educational programmes (UNICEF, 1999). UNICEF has also launched what it calls the 20/20 initiative in order to set development goals and encourage collaboration between donor governments and the governments of developing countries. The initiative recommends that donor countries allot 20% of their official development assistance and developing countries allot 20% of their national budgets to basic social services. This recommendation encourages leaders in all countries to reconsider the allocation of their resources and increase the portion used to support basic human needs. Such initiatives and changes in the international community provide a sense of hope that poverty and low levels of educational participation in Africa will receive greater attention on a global level. In the words of UNICEF,

After almost two decades in which human development has taken a back seat to globalization and structural adjustment, we may be entering an era of investment in 'human and social capital' that will make the task of spreading the education revolution world-wide much easier (1999, p. 14).

VIBRANT AFRICAN INITIATIVES

Even in the light of the international community's renewed interest in basic education, Africans have come to realize that, ultimately, the solutions to educational problems must originate within their countries' borders. Innovations in the educational sector can come from national governments, but they are just as likely to spring from the abundant networks of African organizations that are usually small in scale and local in orientation. Indeed, the emergence of national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local community groups and grassroots organizations as providers of educational services may be the most promising route to extending basic education to Africa's poorest children.

A random survey of local-level educational initiatives across the sub-continent indicates that local organizations and community groups are centrally involved in educational provision. A thorough overview of all of these programmes would fill many pages; the focus here is on those that are finding innovative ways to impart skills and knowledge to poor children for whom formal schooling is not a viable option. One group of children especially hard to reach with education is child domestic workers who, because their families are too poor to support them, leave their rural villages to work in households in urban areas. Some NGOs strive to meet the educational needs of these children by devising training programmes that mesh with the realities of their lives. Sinaga is one such NGO that offers basic education and training courses to young domestic workers. Formally called the Women and Child Resource Centre and based in Nairobi, Kenya, this organization offers a six-month training course for 100 girls who work as domestic servants in Nairobi households (UNICEF, 1997, p. 35). Sinaga negotiates with the girls' employers to allow them to attend courses in basic literacy and mathematics, as well as skills related to their jobs, for half of the day. As the only programme for child domestic workers in Kenya, Sinaga offers a unique chance for many children to become literate and numerate, and gain skills that can help them find better employment in the future.

The *Undugu* ('brotherhood' in Swahili) Society, also in Kenya, offers a similar programme for street children. For example, children who earn their living on the streets by collecting scrap metal can attend classes in the morning and work during the afternoon. *Undugu's* classes accommodate work schedules and emphasize mathematical skills so that children can avoid being exploited by scrap dealers.

In Senegal, the ENDA-*Tiers Monde* organization and the Ministry of Social Development run a similar programme that, in addition to basic literacy and vocational training, provides AIDS awareness and health education courses for street children (UNICEF, 1997, p. 50).

These important, innovative programmes may be indicative of a trend towards more realistic and appropriate educational programmes for poor children in Africa. By offering work-related training and recognizing the need to be flexible and practical, such informal educational programmes may offer the best chances for very poor children to gain the life skills they need to improve their lives. But the trend towards informal and targeted community-based educational provision also has potential drawbacks. Since these initiatives generally depend on material and organizational resources within the community, the provision of such programmes can be very uneven within a nation. Wealthy or well-organized communities may have greater success with such initiatives than their poorer counterparts. Moreover, NGOs and community groups alone cannot tackle the pressing issue of raising primary school enrolment rates and providing basic education for all children nationwide. These programmes cannot replace a strong public education system, but should be viewed as supplements to it.

The goal of providing universal public primary education to an expanding population of children has been and continues to be a challenge for most African nations. Even on this front, however, there are encouraging signs of improvement. First, there

is recent and clear evidence of improved economic performance for many African countries. As Table 4 reports, between 1991 and 1995, ten countries reported an average annual real growth in gross domestic product of between 3% and 5.9%. Eighteen countries reported a growth rate of between 1 and 2.9%. If African nations allocate the surplus from these economic gains properly, they may begin to break the vicious cycle where poor health and lack of education among the population make rapid economic growth impossible and the lack of economic growth, in turn, impedes improvements in their health and education. It is too soon to know whether economic growth will continue or whether African countries will utilize it to improve basic education and reduce poverty. Nonetheless, such growth marks a significant turnaround from the economic stagnation and declines of the previous decade.

Similarly, African countries are finding innovative ways to allocate educational expenditures more efficiently while maintaining, and even improving, the quality of their educational systems. Zimbabwe recently was able to redress its severe shortage of trained teachers and, in the process, achieve universal primary enrolment, through a programme called the Zimbabwean Integrated Teacher's Education Course (ZINTEC). The Ministry of Education hired untrained teachers and provided them with four years of teacher training of which only two terms, the first and last, involved college attendance (UNICEF, 1997, p. 53). Most of the time teachers were trained in the schools where they were teaching. In addition to greatly reducing training costs, this programme ensures a consistent level of training for all teachers in Zimbabwe and enables the country to use the skills of the teachers-in-training to the country's benefit.

Conclusion

In the last two decades of the twentieth century, many Africans have experienced decline or stagnation in the quality of their lives. The continued high rates of poverty and declining educational enrolments in the region are outcomes of multiple factors, including escalating debt and declining development assistance on the global level and fiscal mismanagement, weak governance and continued population growth within African countries. One realization that has come from the experiences of recent decades is that poverty is both a cause and an outcome of low educational enrolments. Breaking the cycle requires great effort on two fronts simultaneously: (a) a targeted attack on poverty through policies that promote sustainable and equitable development; and (b) an unwavering long-term investment in basic education (Psacharopoulos, 1995). The question remains whether international organizations, African governments and local communities will heed the lessons learned from past missteps and apply them to future educational initiatives. Both the international community's renewed awareness of the importance of basic education and the recent educational efforts of African-based NGOs suggest that the answer to this question is a tentative 'yes'. Perhaps the first decade of the new millennium will bring a more definitive answer.

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EDUCATION AND POVERTY

IN SOUTH ASIA¹

Jandhyala B.G. Tilak

Education pays significant dividends in reducing poverty. Good education pays high returns in the contributions to economic growth [...] . Educating the poor, women, and the disadvantaged is as good an investment as any India can make. India faces many educational challenges and particularly those of narrowing or closing the gaps between rich and poor, boys and girls, privileged groups and undercastes (World Bank, 1998, p. 25–26).

Introduction

Although poverty is conventionally defined in terms of income poverty, and quite a few indices are developed in the literature that broadly relate to this phenomenon, many scholars have highlighted its limitations as a measure of the complex phenomenon of poverty. The World Summit for Social Development (1995) opted for a broader definition of poverty and correspondingly for a broader integrated strategy for its eradication (see Drèze & Sen, 1989). As the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) observed, ‘human poverty is more than income poverty: it is a denial of choices and opportunities for living a tolerable life’ (1997, p. 2). Education is one such important opportunity, deprivation of which in itself represents poverty—

Original language: English

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poverty of education. In this sense, educational deprivation or poverty of education becomes an integral part of human poverty, in a cyclical relationship. Economic poverty does not allow one to make adequate investments in education; and a low or zero level of investment in education accentuates poverty.

It is now widely realized that investment in human capital is one of the important keys to break this cycle. Education is related to poverty² at both the micro and macro levels. At the micro level, illiterate individuals or households are less productive, join less-paying occupations, and remain at very low levels of living, mostly below poverty. At the macro level, nations with illiterate or less-educated masses cannot progress well, nor increase their output substantially, and as a result remain at low standards of living. The available research (e.g. World Bank, 1980; Fields, 1980*a*, 1980*b*; Tilak, 1986, 1989*b*, 1994) clearly shows that education and poverty are inversely related: the higher the population's education level, the lower the proportion of poor people in the total population, as education imparts knowledge and skills that are associated with higher wages. In addition to education's direct effect, there are indirect effects through its fulfilment of basic needs like better utilization of health facilities, shelter, water and sanitation, and its effects on women's behaviour in decisions relating to fertility, family welfare and health (Jeffery & Basu, 1996). These in turn enhance the productivity of people and yield higher wages.³ The relationship between poverty and education is further strengthened as education and other basic needs reinforce each other (Noor, 1980; Tilak, 1989*a*; UNESCO-PROAP, 1997). Poor households and nations are also characterized by high mortality rates, poor health conditions, etc. The role of education in reducing relative income inequalities is also significant. Thanks to education, including specifically that of women, a society can move out of poverty and progress into prosperity. By strengthening democratic forces, education helps to promote sustainable human development, thereby ensuring rapid social progress, including abolition or containment of the elite's discretionary power (see Cohen, 1998).

Micro-level investigations further highlight the role of education in reducing poverty. In developing countries the incidence of poverty is greatest among illiterate households, and it declines consistently by increasing levels of education (Tilak, 1994). For example, nearly all of the poor in Pakistan are illiterate; and in Thailand, almost 99% of the poor have no education or less than middle/secondary education (Fields, 1980*b*, p. 158–60). Poverty varies inversely with education/training and household income in India (Harris, Kannan & Rodgers, 1990, p. 102). In short, poverty is predominant among the illiterate and it is almost non-existent among educated households. As Galbraith (1994) observed, there is 'no well-educated literate population that is poor, there is no illiterate population that is other than poor'. Education and incidence of poverty are inversely related, with a large drop in poverty occurring between illiterates and primary-/secondary-school graduates.

This paper presents a brief analysis of the interactions between education and poverty in South Asia. The education–poverty profile of the South Asian countries is briefly described in the following section. The author then attempts to unravel several dimensions of educational deprivation in India; this is followed by a short

summary with a few concluding observations. Though a large part of the study focuses on India, its results and implications are applicable, given the common cultural, socio-political and economic features, to other countries of South Asia—particularly Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka.

Education and poverty in South Asia

South Asia is the poorest region of the world, with more than 500 million people below the poverty line (US\$1 per day in 1985 PPP—purchasing power parity dollars), and accounts for the largest proportion (40%) of the world's poor. South Asia also accounts for nearly 400 million illiterate adults, 46% of the world's total. Further, nearly 40% of the population in South Asia are poor and a little more than half the adult population is illiterate.⁴

Several countries have adopted diverse development strategies to reduce poverty and inequalities, with varying degrees of success. For example, Sri Lanka first tried export-oriented policies during the 1940s and 1950s, but they led to economic crises. Today's decline in poverty, reduction in inequalities and increase in quality of living in Sri Lanka are largely attributable to welfare state policies. In fact, Sri Lanka is regarded as belonging to a unique category of 'welfare-statism' (Perris, 1978, p. 22) with extensive public subsidies and investment in education and health. Even under severe economic conditions, the investment priority for these two sectors remained intact (Gunatilleke & Kurukulasuriya, 1984). This paid rich dividends, making the country singularly distinct in terms of physical quality-of-life indicators, including poverty and income distribution—not only in South Asia, but also among many developed countries of the world (Tilak, 1996a).

India's concentration on measures like nationalization, rural employment programmes and land reforms ensured relatively equal distribution of land. But it invested less in the human capital of the poor and had a stronger bias against labour in industry. As a result, no pronounced decline can be noted in poverty and inequalities during the last four decades (see Krishnaswamy, 1990; Sundrum, 1987).

There are several factors that explain poverty. Research on inequality has found that education is either the most or the second most important determinant (Fields, 1980b, p. 116–17), thereby stressing the need to make expansion of education an integral part of future anti-poverty policies. Nowadays education is an important component of a broad spectrum of anti-poverty programmes in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal, though it is not at the top of the social, political or economic agenda of the governments. The focus has been on primary education, including non-formal and adult education in the region.

Table 1 presents a poverty profile of South Asian countries.⁵ One finds a close correspondence between income poverty and poverty of education. Sri Lanka has the highest rate of literacy and the lowest poverty ratio in the region. Its primary education is universal and the enrolment ratio in secondary education is as high as 74%. On the other hand, Bangladesh has the highest incidence of poverty and around two-thirds of the adult population is illiterate. Very few children drop out of school

or repeat levels in Sri Lanka as compared to other countries. In contrast, more than half the children in primary education in Bangladesh drop out and about one-fourth of the eligible age group are outside the school system. South Asia has also the highest pupil/teacher ratio, reflecting the poor quality of education.

TABLE 1. Poverty profile of South Asia, 1995

	Income poverty (%)	Education poverty				Enrolment ratio (%) in			Public expenditure as % of GNP
		Adult illiteracy	Out-of- school children	Dropout (%)	Repeaters (%)	Primary (net)	Secondary (gross)	Tertiary	
Bangladesh	46	62	26.7	55	7	84	19	4.0	2.3
Nepal	45	72	32.3	48	27	63	36	5.6	2.9
India	35	48	32.1	37	4	87	49	6.0	3.8
Pakistan	29	62	47.8	52	7	31	21	2.6	2.7
Sri Lanka	22	10	..	8	19	100	74	5.0	3.2
Bhutan		58	59.1	27	18	53	5		
Maldives		7	..	7	5	100	49		8.1
South Asia*	35	51	33.3	41	3.5	79	43	5.4	3.5

Notes: Income poverty: % of population below poverty line; adult illiteracy: adult illiteracy rate; out-of-school children: % children out of primary schools; dropout and repetition rates refer to primary education.

* = weighted average.

Source: Haq & Haq, 1998.

Beyond this, no highly systematic pattern can be derived from such a small set of data. While it may not be statistically meaningful to examine the relationship between literacy and poverty, as we have poverty data on only five countries in the region, we find nevertheless a strong correlation between poverty and education. The coefficients of correlation are, as one can expect, negative and are also reasonably high, except in the case of primary education. The coefficient of correlation of poverty with adult literacy is -0.79 ; with the net enrolment ratio in primary education it is -0.07 ; with the gross enrolment ratio in secondary education it is -0.64 ; and with public expenditure on education as a proportion of national income it is -0.41 . To the extent these coefficients indicate, adult literacy and secondary education are very important in influencing poverty. Primary education has a very small and rather insignificant effect.⁶

Analysis of household-level data further confirms the strong relationship between poverty and educational attainment in South Asian countries. Filmer and Pritchett

(1998, p. 38) have documented that in all the South Asian countries for which such data are available (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal), there has been a consistent pattern: the rates of educational attainment (at each grade/level of education) are consistently at the bottom among the poorest 40% of the population, and at the top among the richest 20% of the population. Correspondingly, it was shown that the deficit in reaching the goal of universal basic education is the highest in the case of the poor and the lowest in the case of the rich. The wealth gap (rich minus poor) in completion rates is the highest in Pakistan, followed by India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Enrolment rates are low, dropout rates are high and completion rates are the lowest among the poor income groups compared to middle- and high-income groups. In this sense, the effects of poverty on education in South Asian countries seem to be very strong and systematic.

Education and poverty in India

A deeper analysis of the relationship between education and poverty in a larger sample of countries or within a single country may provide more meaningful insights into the problem than the simple analysis in the previous section. Such an analysis is attempted in the remainder of the paper, concentrating on India.

Research focused on the education–poverty relationship in India is not abundant. But a few scholars have focused on analysis of educational attainment by broad income groups. Such research includes Visaria, Gumber and Visaria (1993), Majumdar and Vaidyanathan (1994), Majumdar (1996) and Tilak (1996c). Most of them used data of the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO).⁷ Another data set was recently generated by the National Family and Health Survey, which formed the basis for analysis by Filmer and Pritchett (1999). All of these studies concentrated on enrolment/dropout rates. The research has shown a clear pattern of low levels of educational attainment among poor sections of the population and higher levels among the rich.

The present study is in addition to this limited literature. The evidence on India is largely drawn from one of the most recent household surveys, conducted in 1995–96 across the nation (India, NSSO, 1998). We refer here to educational levels of the adult population, in addition to enrolment and dropout rates by household economic level. The distribution of public subsidies and the pattern of household expenditure by household economic level are also briefly examined.

The 1995–96 NSSO survey covered 73,000 households in 12,650 villages and urban blocks. The NSSO is believed to be the most reliable Indian database. In fact, it is the only database used for estimating poverty and income inequalities in India. Several household characteristics are available in this survey by household expenditure⁸ groups categorized into five quintiles. The bottom quintile can be treated as the poorest group; the bottom along with the second quintile can be termed as poor; the third and the fourth quintiles can be called middle-income groups; and the top quintile refers to the rich.

Before the household survey data are examined, we may briefly look at the macro-level relationships between education and poverty in India. According to the Planning Commission's estimates, 36% of the population in India in 1993–94 were poor. Among the twenty-four states on which such data are available, there seems to be a strong correlation between poverty and education.⁹ There are eleven educationally advanced states, which are also the states where the poverty ratio is less than the national average. Conversely, there are seven states where the poverty ratio is high and educational index is low. Only five states are exceptions to this phenomenon (Tilak, 1999a). All this indicates a close relationship between poverty and education in Indian states. The coefficient of correlation (-0.4975), though not high, is negative in value and statistically significant. Even though correlations do not necessarily imply causal relationships, it is widely held that 'the role of education in removing poverty is decisive' (Haq & Haq, 1998, p. 29).

Household-level data provide more systematic evidence on the positive relationship between education and economic levels. The evidence provided by the NSSO clearly shows that educational levels of the population are closely related to their income levels. As shown in Table 2, the mean years of schooling¹⁰ systematically increase with greater levels of household income.¹¹ The mean years of schooling increase from 2.3 for the poorest group to 6.4 for the richest group. This systematic positive relationship between mean years of schooling and household economic levels holds true for all subgroups of population as well—rural male, rural female, urban male and urban female. However, the variation between males and females is very high. The poorest among the rural females have 0.9 mean years of schooling, while the mean for the top quintile of urban males is as high as 10.8—a difference of twelve times!

TABLE 2. Mean years of schooling of population (15+), 1995–96 (%)

Household expenditure quintiles	Rural				Urban		
	All	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
0–20	2.30	2.75	0.86	1.79	4.78	2.75	3.77
20–40	3.19	3.49	1.31	2.40	6.47	4.19	5.37
40–60	3.81	4.04	1.76	2.92	7.51	5.14	6.39
60–80	4.77	4.82	2.41	3.65	8.91	6.92	7.96
80–100	6.42	6.31	3.84	5.14	10.84	9.47	10.21
All	4.26	4.43	2.13	3.29	7.98	5.85	6.97

Source: Based on India, NSSO, 1998.

That education reduces poverty is well recognized in India. Accordingly, education, specifically elementary education (comprising primary and upper primary

levels—in all, eight years of schooling), is regarded as a minimum need. Although education forms part of the five-year plans, these plans have not effected any specific education priority of the government.

Educational deprivation

However, despite massive expansion of the education system and a corresponding quantitative explosion in enrolment during the last half century (see Tilak, 1996*b*), a large number of poor are still outside the formal school system. As seen in Table 3, only 66% of the children of the relevant age group attend primary schools; 42% middle or upper primary schools; only one-fourth of children attend secondary schools; and only 15% of the children are enrolled at the higher secondary level. Enrolment rates by quintile groups clearly show that in all cases enrolment rates increase as one moves to higher economic groups. As one moves from the bottom quintile to the next quintile, the probability of enrolment in schools increases by 8% from 37% to 45%; it further increases by another 5% if one moves from the second quintile to the third quintile (lower half of the middle-income group). In all, only 37% of the children in the bottom quintile go to school, while more than 60% of the richest quintile do so; in urban areas the latter ratio increases to above 75% (India, NSSO, 1998). In every economic group, the enrolment rate in rural areas is less than that of the urban population; and in every economic group and also in rural and urban areas, the enrolment rate of girls is less than that of boys.¹² In all cases, the enrolment rate of the poor is less than that of the middle-income groups and the rich. In short, enrolment or participation rates are an increasing function of household income (or expenditure) levels (see Figure 1).

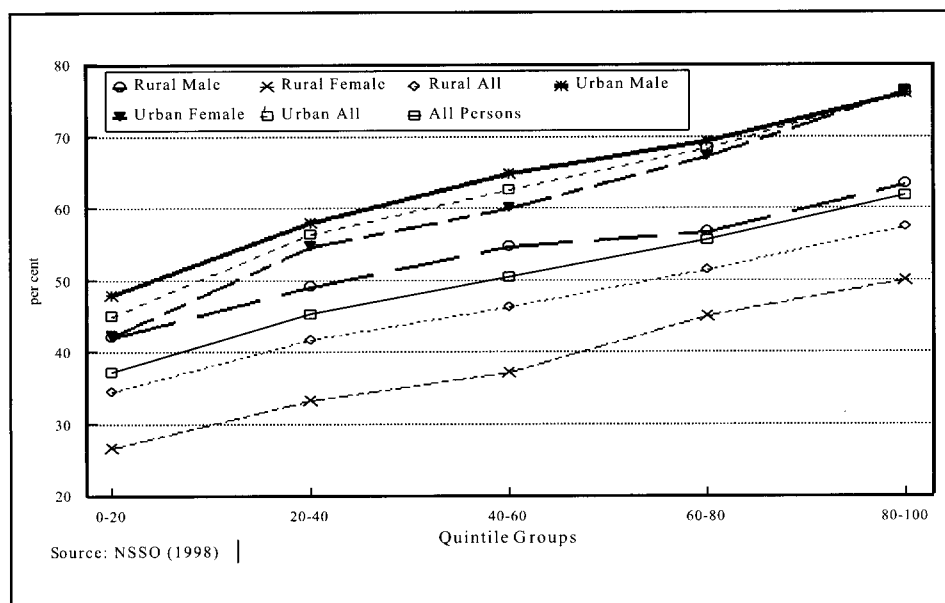
TABLE 3. Net attendance rate in school education in India, 1995/96 (%)

		Primary	Middle	Secondary	Higher secondary
<i>Rural</i>	Male	68	44	26	13
	Female	56	32	17	8
	All	63	39	22	11
<i>Urban</i>	Male	80	60	41	25
	Female	77	57	40	28
	All	78	58	40	26
<i>All</i>		66	43	26	15

Source: NSSO, 1998.

The poor have a disadvantage whether they are in rural or urban areas, or whether they are boys or girls. The degree of disadvantage of the poor in enrolment (measured as the enrolment rate of the richest quintile minus the enrolment rate of the poorest quintile) is 23.5%. Not very surprisingly, such a disadvantage is higher

FIGURE 1. Percentage of children (age group 5–24) attending schools in India, by household expenditure quintiles, 1995–96



in urban areas (31%) than in rural areas (23.2%), and the highest disadvantage is among women in urban areas (34%).

The non-attendance rates highlight more explicitly the extent of the poor's educational disadvantage. As many as 63% of the children in the 5–24 age group of the lowest quintile were not attending schools in 1995–96. In fact, nearly half the children in the bottom income group have never been enrolled ('never-enrolment') in any formal school and most of them live in rural areas. Non-attendance or never-enrolment rates systematically decline as household economic levels increase. That is, while 45% of the children of the bottom quintile were never enrolled, only 11.3% among the top quintile belong to this category. Rural female children constitute the most deprived group. While both the poor and the rich have been educationally deprived, the poor are subject to severe deprivation. One may understand the existence of deprivation of some poor people in rich states, but not among rich households in poor states.

Unfortunately, educational deprivation does not end with enrolment in school. The poor are more likely to drop out of the system, often relapsing into illiteracy and ignorance. According to the latest available statistics, out of every 100 children enrolled in Grade 1, about forty drop out before completing primary education, fifty-four before completing the elementary level of education (Grade VIII) and seventy before completing secondary level (Grade X) (India, MHRD, 1998). The dropout rates are closely related to the economic levels of the population (see Table 4). Rates of dropout are the highest among the poorest households and the lowest in the richest households. As Naik (1975, p. 39) observed, 'a large proportion of

children from poorer segments of the society do drop into the system, no doubt, but they also drop out'. Rates of dropout systematically decline as one moves up the economic ladder.

TABLE 4. Rates of dropout in formal education in India, 1995/96, by household expenditure quintiles (%), cumulative by levels of education

Quintiles	Primary	Middle	Secondary
0-20	44.0	70.2	89.3
20-40	36.2	62.1	89.0
40-60	30.3	57.4	85.6
60-80	26.1	52.5	84.1
80-100	17.4	42.8	79.0
All	30.4	56.6	85.3

Source: NSSO (1998).

Reasons for non-enrolment and dropout

Why do children not go to school and why do they drop out after enrolling in school? Generally it is felt that poverty in developing countries in South Asia prevents families from sending their children to school. It has already been noted that both non-enrolment and dropout rates are higher among the poorer sections of the population than among the middle-income section and the rich.

It would be useful to examine the response of the parents about why their children do not go to school or drop out. Is there any pattern in the responses of the poor and the rich? The NSSO survey has identified a dozen factors, though some of them cannot be described as mutually independent. The factors can be grouped into three categories: lack of interest, direct school-related factors and direct economic factors. The most important reason reported for non-enrolment (more correctly never-enrolment) of children is lack of interest on the part of the children and more importantly of their parents. Nearly 50% of the children were never enrolled in schools mainly because they or their parents have no interest in studies. This is more or less true for all income groups and also in the case of girls and boys, though there are some marginal variations. It would be useful to probe into the aspects relating to lack of interest in education on the part of the children and/or parents. It could be due to absence of knowledge of the potential benefits of education, absence of good facilities for schooling, absence of a tradition of going to school, economic difficulties or other factors.¹³ But such information is not available from the survey. Subject to this limitation and setting aside the factor of lack of interest in studies for a moment, one might say that financial constraints form the most important factor that keeps children away from school. This is found true, rather surprisingly, not only for the poor, but also for the rich, though there is some difference since finan-

cial constraints and other economic factors are more important for the poor than for the rich. Of the bottom quintile, 18% report never-enrolment due to financial constraints, while the corresponding proportion is about half (9%) for the richest quintile.

Secondly, it is stated very often that children of the poor are not enrolled because they have higher opportunity costs of schooling. But wage work or participation in other economic activities¹⁴ has not been cited as a major reason for the non-enrolment or dropout of children. However, participation in other economic activities and in domestic work is cited as more important than participation in wage work, though the three factors together equal only 7–8%. Further, the responses do not show any difference between the poor, the middle-income and the rich households in the participation of their children in wage work, in other economic activities, and in other domestic activities (except looking after younger siblings). It appears that there is no conclusive evidence on the role of opportunity costs of schooling in children's participation in education. On the whole, economic factors, including financial constraints and opportunity costs, are an important reason for the non-enrolment of the poor in schools. This accounts for more than one-fourth in the responses of the poor.

Thirdly, school-related factors—availability of schooling facilities or perceptions about the value of schooling—no longer figure as an important reason for never-enrolment. On the whole, there is a difference of 2% between the responses of the poorest and the richest quintiles on the role of school-related factors, with the rich more likely to feel that education is not useful and that there are not adequate schooling facilities.

In the case of never-enrolment of girls in rural areas, the differences in the relative roles of various factors widely vary between the rich and the poor. A larger proportion of girls belonging to the poor- and middle-income groups is not interested in studies. On the other hand, parents in the richer households are less interested in their girls' schooling than the parents of the poor. Girl children of the rich and the poor are equally likely to participate in economic activities other than wage work. They have to participate in domestic work more often than boys do. Of course, financial constraints are more important for the poorer households than in the case of the richest quintile.

Why do children drop out of school? The factors identified for the phenomenon of dropout are same as the factors responsible for never-enrolment, though the relative emphasis of various factors varies. Lack of interest is the most important reason for the poor; it is the second most important factor for the rich. Lack of interest on the part of the children is more important than lack of interest of the parents, while it is the lack of interest of parents that is more responsible for the non-enrolment of children. Economic factors are the second most important reason for the poor not being able to continue their studies. In the poorest quintile, 33% of children drop out for economic reasons, while at the same time the corresponding proportion is also high for the rich—28%. Surprisingly, inability to cope with studies is a more important factor for the rich than for the poor.

The dropout pattern is more or less the same for girls in rural areas. One particular point is clear: for girls, a larger number of parents report their lack of interest in studies as responsible for the dropout (or withdrawal) of girls than in the case of boys. Girls are also withdrawn from schools in larger numbers as they have to attend to domestic activities more often than boys do; and boys (or all on average) are withdrawn more for wage work and for participation in other economic activities. There is not much difference among the quintiles in their response relating to their children's participation in wage and other economic activities. In sum, it appears that in the literature and in popular perceptions (e.g. Weiner, 1991), exaggerated emphasis has been placed on the opportunity costs of schooling (or simply child labour) as a factor in the non- or never-enrolment of poor children.

Having a tradition of sending children to school is yet another factor that is important in this context. On the whole, 4% of never-enrolment is accounted for by this factor. This is above 5% among girls. Interestingly there is not much difference between the rich and the poor. However, once children are in school, they do not drop out due to this factor.

To attract children to school, it is necessary to create interest in education in the minds of the children and more particularly their parents. Secondly, efforts must be made to mitigate the financial constraints of the households. In addition to ensuring that the children who are already enrolled in school do not drop out, it is important to improve the schooling environment. As mentioned earlier, all these factors are interrelated. For instance, interest in education can be created by providing a good schooling facility and/or by enabling the children or parents to demand education by improving their economic conditions and by reducing household expenditures on schooling.

State efforts and 'free' elementary education

Recent government policies and efforts in India have aimed at reducing the household costs of schooling and improving the school environment. How successful are they? We concentrate here on the first factor.¹⁵

To reduce the direct costs of schooling, India, like many other countries, resolved long ago to provide free elementary education—specifically tuition fee free. While official claims reiterate that it is being provided free, the available evidence shows that it is not (see Table 5). It has been found that only about 75% of children receive free primary and upper-primary education. The remaining children pay tuition fees.¹⁶ In all probability, this is in addition to other fees. Though a large majority of the children in government schools receive free education, 8% of the children in government primary schools and 13% in government upper-primary schools pay fees. Schools run by local administration bodies such as *Zilla Parishads*, *Panchayats* and *Mandals* receive grants from the state governments to meet their full expenditure and are governed by most of the rules of the government in providing free education. Yet about 15% of the children in elementary schools run by local bodies have to pay fees. Similarly, private schools, called 'private aided schools',

receive aid from the government to meet their recurring expenditures and are expected to provide free education. But nearly half the children in private aided schools are charged fees. Private schools that do not receive any state aid are, however, free to charge fees, and most of the children in these schools pay fees—rather hefty amounts.

TABLE 5. How many children get 'free' education in India (%)

	Primary	Middle	Secondary*	Higher
<i>By type of schools</i>				
Government	92.3	87.2	70.5	22.8
Local body	86.7	83.6	73.2	24.9
Private aided	45.7	60.6	59.6	15.0
Private unaided	5.8	6.4	11.2	4.3
Others	93.4	..	78.6	89.1
All	76.5	74.4	62.7	19.7
<i>By household expenditure quintiles</i>				
0–20	85.1	82.2	77.9	25.4
20–40	81.3	79.5	71.4	24.4
40–60	77.8	77.8	67.8	21.8
60–80	73.2	74.2	62.8	21.4
80–100	60.9	64.6	53.8	17.6
All	76.5	74.4	62.7	19.7

Note: 'Free' means tuition fee free only; the number of students fully exempted from tuition fees is also included; 'Others' refer to 'not recorded'.

* = includes higher secondary.

Source: India, NSSO, 1998.

The children who do not receive free primary education are not confined to the high-income families; they are distributed across all income groups. While 40% of the children from rich families do not receive free education, the corresponding proportions are 15 and 20% in the bottom income quintiles. In all, 25% of children do not receive free primary or upper-primary education. Thus, despite the acceptance of the rationale and the need to provide free elementary education, the universally accepted, constitutionally guaranteed principle is not being strictly adhered to in India.¹⁷

Students also incur expenditures on other important items related to schooling such as books, stationery, uniforms, transport and private tutoring. The need for such expenditure is high as public expenditure on these items is very low. On average, households spend Rs. 500 per student in primary education and Rs. 915 in upper-primary education. Household expenditure on education increases in the

higher household economic levels. The poorest households spend Rs. 197 per child on primary education and the richest Rs. 1,150—a massive six fold difference between the rich and poor. In a sense, primary education also tends to become a ‘luxury good’, the rich spending more than the poor on acquiring it.

To reduce the household costs of schooling, the government provides scholarships to poor children, as well as free textbooks and stationery to all children. A noon meal programme was recently launched, which enables all children in primary school to have a free meal at school. All of the programmes (except monetary scholarships) are universal in coverage, while scholarships are only for socially and economically weaker sections of the population. But the universal programmes are also restricted. Only 35% of the children in primary school receive free/subsidized textbooks, 5% receive free/subsidized stationery and 27% receive meals (India, NSSO, 1998). The corresponding proportions are much less at other levels of education. When compared to private schools, government schools fare better in the provision of these subsidies, yet the latter are severely restricted to a small fraction of students, necessitating huge household expenditures even by poor households.

Summary and conclusions

Education can be a life-empowering experience for all and what the poor need most is empowerment. Education empowers the poor by attacking ignorance, building skills and changing outdated attitudes and values (UNESCO-PROAP, 1997). By imparting skills, education enhances the productivity of the people in the labour market and thereby enhances their earnings. In the wider human development framework (Sen, 1998), it enhances the quality of life—much more for the poor than for the rich. Despite awareness of education’s contribution to empowering the poor, education has been neglected in South Asia for the last several decades. This neglect has been conspicuous. This could be due to the conservative, upper-class notion that education is not important for the poor and/or due to the belief that it would indeed be against the interests of the rich and powerful to empower the poor through education (see Drèze & Sen, 1995, p. 111).

This paper has presented a brief account of the relationship between education and poverty in South Asia. The overall country-level data in the region, the evidence from Indian states and also micro-level information on Indian households by expenditure group all confirm a significant, strong and inverse correlation between levels of educational attainment and levels of poverty. Although many of the findings here are not new, the empirical evidence discussed here provides fresh insights into some of the widely held perceptions of the extent and causes of educational deprivation of the poor.

Participation in education is a consistently increasing function of household economic levels. The conformity of such a systematic pattern for all population groups—rural and urban, male and female—is rather appalling. On the whole, the results suggest that a child in the richest quintile is about 25% more likely to be enrolled in school than a child from the poorest quintile. Further, once enrolled in

school, the former is also 27% more likely to complete elementary education than a child in the poorest quintile. Thus poverty effects seem to be very important in school participation. Economic factors are significant for enrolment; and these factors are even more important for the retention of those who are already enrolled.

One of the most widely held beliefs regarding the educational status of the poor in developing countries relates to lack of awareness of the value of education and motivation on the part of the parents and other members of the household, and correspondingly their lack of demand for education. Recent studies (e.g. PROBE, 1999; see also Bhatta, 1998) have shown that there has been a tremendous increase in awareness of the value of education and that a huge demand for education exists. According to PROBE (1999), more than 80% of the parents in poor states in India feel that education of both boys and girls is important. Yet people, particularly parents, are not interested in sending their children to school. What could be the reason? As argued earlier, 'lack of interest' could be due to a variety of factors, including poverty conditions, costs of schooling and the poor quality of available schooling facilities—dilapidated buildings, absentee teachers, etc. A reasonably good-quality school—with good-quality infrastructure, facilities and teachers—may be able to attract more children. As 'inability to cope with studies and/or failure' is also found to be a very important reason for dropout—surprisingly, even for higher-income groups—it is necessary that reforms in the quantity and quality of curriculum, the methodology of instruction and other pedagogic aspects are paid serious attention (see, for example, India, MHRD, 1993). It is important to note that improvement in the school environment not only benefits those who are already in school, but also helps to attract the non- (and never-) enrolled children to school.

While child labour and wage work are not significant factors, financial factors are an important constraint for households in enrolling and retaining children in school. This requires public programmes that can ease the financial constraints of the poor. The effect of economic factors can be mitigated by: providing truly free education; providing financial scholarships, noon meals, uniforms, etc.; and overall improvement of household economic conditions through increasing employment opportunities for adults, facilities for health care, improvement in the system of public distribution of food grains, etc. Since economic factors are found to be relevant for all economic groups, the first two—free education and incentives—have to be provided to all children.

Notes

1. This paper partly draws from a monograph on 'Education and poverty in India,' prepared for a background study on poverty in India, which is being prepared as an input into the World Bank's *World Development Report 2000*.
2. Unless otherwise mentioned, 'poverty' refers specifically to income poverty.
3. The effects of education are more pronounced if some time lag is allowed for education to influence poverty (see Tilak, 1989b).
4. These figures are from Haq and Haq, 1998.

5. Of the seven countries in the region, data on poverty are available for only five. Bhutan and the Maldives, for which data are not available, are very small countries, together comprising 1.8 million people.
6. That secondary education has a greater effect than primary education was found to be true in larger studies as well (Tilak, 1986).
7. See Bhatti (1998) for a review of some of these studies.
8. The effects of education are more pronounced if some time lag is allowed for education to influence poverty (see Tilak, 1989b).
9. In the case of education, an index of education (Tilak, 1999a) that is based on literacy (1991) and mean years of schooling (1992–93) has been used. Data on poverty ratio (1993–94), i.e. the proportion of the population living below the poverty line, are available from the Planning Commission, India, 1999.
10. Mean years of schooling are estimated by assigning different weights to different levels of education (higher weights to higher levels of education). Mean years of schooling are regarded as a valuable summary statistic of stock of human capital in a society and is being used extensively (e.g. UNDP, 1992). It is estimated as a weighted sum of the population with different levels of education. Algebraically,

$$SCH_i = (\sum_j POP_{ij} * YRS_{ij}) / 100$$

where SCH_i refers to mean years of schooling of the population of the i -th quintile, POP_{ij} refers to the proportion of the population with j -th level of education in the i -th quintile, and YRS_{ij} to duration (years) of j -th level of education in the i -th quintile. See Psacharopoulos and Arriagada (1986) and Tilak (1999a) for more details.

11. Household income levels are measured in terms of household expenditure quintiles, as defined by the NSSO (India, NSSO, 1998).
12. The only exception is the top quintile in urban areas, where females are in a slightly better position.
13. Although many of these factors are independently listed in the survey questionnaire (India, NSSO, 1998), it does not mean that lack of interest could be treated as an independent factor.
14. While no details are available on 'other economic activities', they may refer to non-wage/salary work.
15. See Tilak (1999b) for an analysis of improvement of school facilities.
16. The corresponding proportions of fee-paying children are higher in secondary and higher education levels.
17. See also Tilak (1996c) for more details based on an earlier NSSO survey (1986–87).

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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

FOR LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

IN LATIN AMERICA

*Fernando Reimers*¹

Latin America has the highest levels of income inequality in the world: 36% of households and two in five persons live below the poverty line.² Poverty is more acute for indigenous people in the region. Given the prospects for low economic growth in the coming years, it is unlikely that these poverty levels will diminish significantly (CEPAL, 1999). Projecting the trends in the rates of poverty reduction of the last nine years for the region, it would take more than twenty years to halve the proportion of households that are extremely poor and more than thirty years to halve the proportion of poor households. Since it is likely that these groups experience more severe forms of social exclusion than those who have been able to get out of poverty in recent years, these are optimistic estimates. This suggests that the 'easy' phase of social integration has been exhausted and that deliberate and affirmative actions will be necessary in order to deepen social inclusion.

The challenge of fostering social inclusion stems from the high degree of social inequality in Latin America. A quarter of national income is received by the top 5% of the population, while the poorest 30% of the population—those living below the poverty line—receive only 7.5% of all national income. By comparison the corresponding figures for developed countries are 13% of income for the wealthiest 5% and 13% of income for the poorest 30%, for countries in South-East Asia 16% of income for the wealthiest 5% versus 12% for the poorest 30%, for the rest of Asia 18% versus 12.5%, and for Africa 24% versus 10%, respectively (IDB, 1998, p. 11).

Education and poverty are related in multiple ways. In some respects the poverty of the households in which children are raised with low levels of nutrition, health and cultural capital 'causes' children to have low educational opportunities. In turn, as the children of the poor develop insufficient skills and knowledge to gain access to high productivity jobs and to transfer cultural capital directly to their children, their low education levels 'cause' poverty to be reproduced between generations. The focus of this article will be on the first of these two processes: the ways in which

Original language: English

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poverty constrains educational opportunities. It may be argued³ that equalizing educational opportunities is insufficient to reduce social stratification as the wealthy would find some other mechanism to pass on advantages to their children if the education system were reformed in ways that did not allow it to reproduce social inequalities. In the absence of equality of educational opportunity, however, this argument is not a testable proposition.

To advance our understanding of the relationship between educational and social stratification, the first step is to establish how poverty influences educational opportunity. The second step is to identify which options are more cost-effective in giving low-income children greater educational opportunities and to understand the dynamics of changing schools to make them equitable institutions. The third step is to determine whether equal educational opportunity yields in fact greater social equity. This paper is concerned with the first step in this sequence.

There are very significant differences in the educational profile of the poor and the non-poor. On average, heads of household of the top decile have completed 11.3 years of schooling, the equivalent of a high school degree. This is seven years more than the heads of household of the poorest 30% of the population, who on average have not even completed primary education (IDB, 1998, p. 17). The education gaps between rich and poor are higher in the countries with the highest income inequality (more than eight years in Brazil, Mexico, El Salvador and Panama) and lowest in the countries with the lowest income inequality in the region (Uruguay, Venezuela and Peru) (*ibid.*). Because the rates of return to higher education are rising as the Latin American economies integrate into the world economy, this will lead to greater increases in inequality. From the perspective of reducing inequality it is necessary to reduce the education gaps between the poor and the non-poor.

The gaps observed in the educational profile of different income groups define essentially two different populations in each country—25% of the people living in urban areas have twice as much education as the poorest 25% in the same cities. These differences define not just two different competency levels in basic reading and numeracy skills, but two different world views. For instance, in general there is no serious emphasis on science education in the primary education in Latin America—most science teaching occurs at the secondary level. Therefore, the understandings of how we explain social and physical phenomena change significantly as primary school graduates proceed through secondary school. The organization of the primary and secondary curriculum also differs, with most primary instruction being the responsibility of a single teacher per grade and secondary instruction being the responsibility of subject specialists. The experience of completing a secondary education allows the development of more modern views about social and natural processes, about understanding cause and effect relations, and about negotiating autonomy in large bureaucratic organizations. These two sub-populations with distinctly different educational profiles, produced by an education system that mirrors an unequal social structure, will eventually face the daunting challenge of having to learn to speak a common language and to collectively construct a shared future.

The main educational dividers for the younger groups are in the completion of secondary and with access to higher education. The lower-income groups are less

likely to have completed primary and secondary education than their upper-income counterparts. Because the gaps between rich and poor are greater for secondary education,⁴ and even greater for higher education, these levels represent the educational key to the social reproduction of inequality. However, our understanding of the social consequences of educational inequality should include both the factors that relate to social mobility and those that relate to social exclusion—two different but mutually reinforcing social processes. The greatest social mobility for an individual is associated with completing the highest levels of education. Because so many people have already completed primary education, there is very little social mobility associated with completing this level. In many countries having completed primary education makes no difference to the likelihood of being employed. However, those who have not completed this level are likely to be excluded from opportunities to participate in any meaningful way in labour markets, and social or political organizations.

Educational opportunities of the children of the poor

The education systems of all countries in Latin America have expanded significantly over the last fifty years. Many new schools have been opened and many new teachers have been hired. The constitutions of all countries in the region state that education is a right of every citizen. Most children, including the children of the poor, enrol in first grade. Where then is the problem? How to explain the paradox that in spite of equal opportunities there are unequal results in the educational profiles of different income groups? If all children have the same opportunities to be educated, why is it that the education of the parents is still a significant predictor of final educational attainment?⁵

We can think of educational opportunity as the ascent between five different levels of opportunity.⁶ The most basic level is the opportunity to enrol in first grade in school. The second level is the opportunity to learn sufficiently in that first grade to complete it with enough command of basic pre-academic skills to continue learning in school. The third level is the opportunity to complete each additional education cycle. The fourth level is the opportunity that, having completed the cycle, graduates have skills and knowledge comparable to those of other graduates of the same cycle. Lastly, the fifth level of opportunity is that what was learned in the cycle allows the graduate to have other types of social and economic opportunities, so as to expand his/her life chances.

The first level of opportunity demands three conditions: a child that is sufficiently healthy to be enrolled in school, a school with space available within reasonable distance of the child's home, and the willingness of the child's guardians to enrol him/her in school. This level of equality has been achieved in most of Latin America.

The second level of educational opportunity, to learn during first grade, requires several conditions: to be enrolled in school, to attend school regularly, to be ready to learn at the time the child enrolls in school, to have good health to learn, and that

teachers have the skills, time and resources to engage the child in activities that allow gradual mastery of the intended curriculum and to accurately assess learning and provide feedback as children's understandings evolve.

This second level of opportunity has not yet been achieved in Latin America. Children enrol in school in different conditions of health and nutrition. Only some children, typically not the children of the poor, have attended pre-school. There are also quality differences between different first grades, stemming in part from different levels of resources going to each school. These inequalities explain the different rates at which children learn in different schools. They are responsible for school failure and the high levels of repetition among first graders. School failure when children are just beginning school is a process that begins to segment children socio-economically at the very foundation of the education edifice.

The third level of educational opportunity, the possibility of completing the cycle, is a function of the preceding two levels and also of regular enrolment and attendance by the child. Early school failure increases the likelihood that children will drop out of school in part because as they get older they can contribute more to the sustenance of their families, and in part because families respond to signals they receive from schools regarding the academic potential of their children to complete the cycle. Several studies in Latin America show that early school failure leads to dropping out of school before completing the primary cycle (Muñoz-Izquierdo et al., 1979; McGinn et al., 1991).

The fourth level of educational opportunity, the possibility that having completed the cycle, graduates have developed equal skills and knowledge, depends on the three previous levels and also on the fact that the quality of schools is not just equal, but that schools can add value to the development of each child in an equal proportion to the child's needs. The competence level of each basic education graduate, for example, is only in part a reflection of the work of schools. It also reflects the socio-cultural environment in which the child was raised. For graduates of different income groups to have the same level of command of the language, for instance, it is necessary that schools have provided them with opportunities to overcome the unequal socio-cultural environments in which some children live. The skills graduates master are the result of the sum of the contributions of schools and home environments, and of how these two contexts interact. If schools did exactly the same for all children, graduates' skills would still be unequal, and they would reflect the differences between the socio-cultural environments in which children are raised. Achieving this fourth level of educational opportunity requires compensatory policies, policies of positive discrimination in favour of the lower-income groups.

The fifth level of educational opportunity, the possibility that having the same skills and competencies gives graduates the same life chances, depends on the existence of labour markets and societies that are meritocratic and democratic, in which access to any kind of occupation or to any social position is not blocked on the basis of skin colour, ethnicity, gender, social origin, group of reference or political affiliation or on the basis of other characteristics unrelated to merit or ability. This level of educational opportunity can be influenced by schools in the long term by devel-

oping attitudes and values that foster inclusion, value diversity, effort and merit, and recognize and counter all forms of discrimination, particularly those based on race, gender or social class.

To achieve equality of educational opportunity for children born in low-income families, Latin America needs to advance in the five levels of opportunity described here. This requires generating systematic evidence on the role of different interventions to help low-income children learn in, progress in and complete school. Much has been achieved in the first level during the last several decades. The greatest challenges are in the remaining four levels. The simplification of reducing educational opportunity just to the first level is at the root of the paradox of almost universal enrolment in first grade but significant differences in educational attainment for different income groups.

Most children enrol in first grade and spend several years in primary education. Because of high rates of grade retention (repetition), which disproportionately affect children living in rural areas and the urban poor, only the children of the higher-income groups complete primary education in a timely manner and proceed to secondary education.

Understanding why poor children drop out of school at such high rates in Latin America is crucial to expanding equality of educational opportunity in the region. We know that most children do not drop out of school after completing just a year—most drop out after spending several years in school, especially if they repeat the same grade during those years (OAS, 1997). Table 1 shows that there is almost universal access to first grade for all income groups in urban areas, but in some countries rural areas are lagging behind.

In spite of the fact that most children enrol in school at the expected age, the disproportionately higher grade retention rates for poor children leads them either to drop out of primary school before completing it, or to enter secondary school at a much older age than their non-poor counterparts—when competing demands for their time will make success at this level less likely. Table 2 shows how rural and poor children in urban areas are significantly more likely to be ‘overage’—that is, to exceed the expected age for the level they are studying by one or two years. In Brazil, for example, half of the children in rural areas and one in five in urban areas (most of them in the poorest 50% of homes) are repeating a grade. Two in five of those in the poorest 25% in urban areas are repeaters.

As a result of the different rates at which children from different socio-economic backgrounds climb the education ladder, by the age of 14 or 15 (eight years after the age of enrolment in primary school) the basic contours of the educational profiles that characterize different income groups as discussed earlier are already defined, as seen in Table 3. A Brazilian child in an urban area is twice as likely to have completed primary education at this age than a child in a rural area. A child living in one of the households with the highest level of income is two and a half times as likely to have completed sixth grade than a child in the poorest 25% of households. In all countries there are biases against lower-income children. They are greater in Brazil and Honduras in urban areas, and between urban and rural

TABLE 1. Children enrolled in school at the ages of 8 or 9 (two years after the official entry age to primary education) in urban and rural areas and by quartile of income in urban areas

Country	Year	Urban	Rural	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Argentina	1997	98.9	...	98.2	100	100	100
Brazil	1996	95.5	88.5	92.2	96.8	98.6	99.4
Chile	1996	99.7	99.5	99.6	99.7	99.8	100
Colombia	1997	95.1	91.1	91.6	97.3	97.6	97.8
Costa Rica	1997	97.8	96.8	96.9	97.8	100	100
Ecuador	1997	98.5	...	98.8	99.3	96.7	98
Honduras	1997	94	89.6	90.4	95.3	95.2	95.9
Mexico	1994	98.3	97.1	95.9	99.7	100	100
Panama	1997	99.3	98.8	99.3	98.5	100	100
Paraguay	1995	98	...	93.3	100	100	100
Uruguay	1997	98.8	...	98.8	98.3	100	100
Venezuela	1995	97.1	95.9	95.5	96.5	99.8	99.4

Source: CEPAL, 1999, p. 174–75.

TABLE 2. Estimated percentage of grade repetition in urban and rural areas and by quartiles of income in urban areas (children enrolled in school at the age of 9 or 10 who have not completed at least two grades)

Country	Year	Urban	Rural	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Brazil	1996	25.6	52.9	43.5	20.5	9.4	4.7
Chile	1996	10.1	19.5	13.8	8.7	9.7	4.2
Colombia	1997	14.3	40.5	21.2	14.1	4.1	6.8
Costa Rica	1997	20.1	20.6	29.6	19.8	12.2	3
Ecuador	1997	7.2	...	12.7	4.9	4.1	0.3
Honduras	1997	10.9	24.8	19	8.3	6.9	3.4
Panama	1997	6.9	18.3	11.5	3.2	2.4	1.3
Paraguay	1995	10.2	16.9	17.1	7.5	7.4	3.1
Uruguay	1997	8.4	...	14.8	5.5	0.7	0
Venezuela	1995	11	20.9	15.9	8.3	9.1	2.2

Source: CEPAL, 1999, p. 176–77.

areas in Mexico and Venezuela. Studying the factors that explain the variation among countries will permit formulation of policy interventions more attuned to the mediating role of context in determining educational outcomes.

TABLE 3. Percentage of children who have completed six grades of primary education at the age of 14 or 15

Country	Year	Urban	Rural	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Argentina	1997	92.3	...	82.1	94.7	95.5	100
Brazil	1996	55.9	23.7	32.6	53.8	73.2	87.4
Chile	1996	92.1	78.8	85.6	95.1	97.1	98
Colombia	1997	75.8	41	65.3	75.8	85.5	87.8
Costa Rica	1997	85.9	70.8	76.9	86.0	95.4	95.7
Ecuador	1997	89	...	84.2	90	92.6	95.8
Honduras	1997	77.4	54.6	66.6	77.4	79.8	91
Mexico	1994	90.1	67.5	83.7	93	94.3	99.6
Panama	1997	92	82.6	87.8	94	95	97.7
Paraguay	1995	82.3	...	76.7	80.7	88.4	90.2
Uruguay	1997	92.3	...	87.3	94.5	95.7	100
Venezuela	1995	84.9	58.4	75.5	88.1	91	92.3

Source: CEPAL, 1999, p. 180–81.

The differences in educational opportunities among income groups are greater the lower the overall level of enrolments at the particular grade or level. Enrolment rates are lower at the secondary and tertiary levels. At the secondary level, 36% of those between 12 and 17-years old are enrolled. Because of high repetition rates, however, an additional 27% of those in this age group are still enrolled in primary education (OAS, 1997, p. 15). One in three children in this age group is not enrolled. Most of the children in the poorest 30% of the population do not have access to secondary education.

The social inequalities in educational participation, and consequently attainment, are compounded for higher levels of the education system. At age 21 there is a significant difference in how many young people in different income groups are still in school. For the poorest 30% of the population less than one in five is still studying, for the wealthiest 10% more than one in two is still enrolled in school. At this age the education gap between these two income groups is between four and five years in Mexico, Panama, Chile and Costa Rica and more than six years in Brazil, Paraguay and El Salvador. In Peru and Venezuela the gap is the smallest, about two years (IDB, 1998). As noted earlier, it is the possibility to complete secondary and tertiary education that offers higher chances of social mobility, even if not completing primary education leads to the greatest social exclusion.

Understanding how to advance educational opportunity for the poorest groups requires answering three questions. Why do some children never enrol? Why do some of those who enrol attain fewer grades than the number of years they spend in school? And why do some children drop out before completing the cycle?

One reason why there are still some children for whom there is not even the most basic level of educational opportunity (those who never enrol) is because the development of the education system has been primarily responsive to the degree of political power of the groups demanding education. This explains why the annual enrolment growth rate for higher education since 1960 has averaged 9%, for secondary education 6% and for primary education 3.4% (Schiefelbein & Tedesco, 1995). This also reflects the fact that it is easier to expand opportunities to enrol the first 50% of children. It gets harder to enrol the last 10%, especially by simple expansion of the same model of schooling, which is largely unresponsive to the particular conditions that define the multiple dimensions of exclusion facing the last children to be enrolled. While this issue affects disproportionately students in poorer homes, it affects a very small percentage of students at the primary level, but more at the secondary and tertiary levels.

Education policies in the region have expanded existing education models, basically building more schools, and hiring and training more teachers, rather than designing specific interventions responsive to the conditions of marginalized children. Many children have not been reached by this 'one size fits all' strategy. For instance, children who live in small, rural communities, which do not have the minimum number of children of primary-school age required by Ministries of Education to open up a school, as well as children of migrant farmers, go largely without schooling in parts of Mexico and Central America.

While it might be argued that the few remaining children not enrolled in first grade reflect low appreciation of the value of schooling by their families (low social demand), there is no empirical support for this proposition until there are enough schools available in the communities where these children live.

Why do some of the children who enrol attain fewer grades than the number of years they spend in school and why do they drop out of school before completing primary education? For the region as a whole, most children enrol in first grade and spend on average seven years in school, though they only attain a fourth grade education (Schiefelbein & Tedesco, 1995). One in four 20–25-year olds, most of them poor, has not completed primary education. The answer to this paradox is complex and multifaceted. There are four sets of conditions that explain the disproportionately large early school failure and lack of access to secondary and higher education for the children of the poor in Latin America. Each of these conditions contributes to explain part of this failure; they also have interactive effects. This explanatory framework is proposed here as a system of hypotheses to integrate and interpret existing evidence, and also to guide future efforts to systematically advance knowledge in this area.⁷ These conditions are:

1. Poverty itself, which leads to poor health and nutrition of children and which makes the product of their in-kind or for-cash work very valuable to their families, particularly as children grow older.
2. Disproportionate lack of pre-school education and low cognitive stimulation for the poor, which permits preparation for school. While access to pre-school

education has expanded significantly during the last thirty years in Latin America, it has done so primarily for the middle- and upper-income groups.

3. Inequality in the educational inputs received by poor children. Another way in which educational opportunity is stratified is that the resources necessary to support learning are also stratified in ways that reflect the social class of origin of the students. As a result, those who have more get more resources for learning. This stratification of resources begins with public financial resources for education, is aggravated by further stratification of private resources for education, and is finally reflected in the quality of schools attended by children from different income groups.
4. Lack of compensatory policies that effectively educate teachers and provide them with the resources to address the needs and conditions in which poor children live and learn.

There are three processes inside the school system that contribute to unequal learning opportunities. One is the result of private financing of part of children's education, giving those children whose parents can best afford it: (a) a greater likelihood of attending quality pre-schools, and therefore a better chance of beginning the primary school ready to learn; (b) a greater likelihood of attending quality primary and secondary schools; and (c) a greater likelihood of attending institutes of higher education.

In addition, because educational institutions are highly stratified, another social process that leads to unequal opportunities is the peer effect. Children in schools where their peers receive more parental support and stimulation at home are more likely to learn from them and will probably have teachers with greater expectations about their academic potential. Children attending schools where most of their peers have similar low educational backgrounds in the home will miss out on this stimulation and will reinforce low academic aspirations. Social and racial segregation in schools is therefore another important process that is furthering educational inequality.

A third and more blatant process furthering inequality results from the disparities in how public educational resources are used, the most obvious manifestations of this inequality being different levels of public expenditures for children attending different types of public schools, or for schools in different geographical areas.

Outside the school system the processes that aggravate inequality in educational opportunities stem from the living conditions of poor children, which debilitate their health and make them more vulnerable to physical and psychological hazards. A child whose parents have no steady source of income is at an educational disadvantage relative to a child who does not know what it is like to go without food. The stresses caused in children by the devastating impact of events outside the control of the heads of household—loss of crops or jobs, abuses of power by local figures of authority, satisfying the demands of many siblings with insufficient resources—influence how children can focus on their academic activities. A poor child and his/her family have an acute sense of the potential alternative uses of the time spent attending school. Even if they value the potential long-term benefits asso-

ciated with regular attendance at school, the short-term demands may make regular attendance a luxury rather than a fact of life. Poor children and their families are also very sensitive to all direct costs associated with attending schools: the costs of uniforms and clothing, fees, notebooks, pencils and textbooks. These expenses represent a disproportionately larger share of the smaller family budget of low-income children. For all these reasons, there are social processes that seek to reproduce inequality, even if all other things were equal for all children.

The third and last set of social processes that contribute to the reproduction of inequality in the school concerns the interaction between social and educational influences. Direct poverty of the family, particularly as expressed in low levels of education in the household—a direct social influence on educational opportunity—acquires a different meaning as it shapes the ecology of classrooms and schools. The aggregate level of poverty of families then influences teacher expectations and practices. Different aggregates, and different constellations of levels of education among the parents, lead to different responses on the part of teachers and schools. Teachers are more likely to have high expectations for the academic potential of children when they believe that the parents will be able to support the education of the children for many years—a function of the socio-economic level of the parents. The interaction of an outside factor—aggregate characteristics of the parents—and an inside factor—teacher expectations—constitutes a different educational climate for different children.

Another way in which these two sets of influences interact to shape a distinct process influencing equality of educational opportunity concerns the type of pedagogy employed. Force-feeding a unique approach in the teaching of all children, irrespective of their circumstances, results in some groups of children learning more than others. For example, a single school calendar, designed for children in urban areas, and employing a single mode of delivery—all children learning the same thing at the same time in a rigid schedule—places those children who have to work occasionally or seasonally at a disadvantage because missing some classes may have a cumulative effect on their ability to master the curriculum.⁸

Similarly, a curriculum delivered in a single 'national' language places the children who do not speak that language at home at a disadvantage relative to the children for whom this national language is the mother-tongue.

There are more subtle ways in which educational processes can take into account—or fail to do so—the social context of children's origin. For instance, teachers can teach to the fastest children—or to those who have already been to pre-school before the first grade—placing the rest of the children at a disadvantage. Curricula and textbooks can rely on examples and concrete situations that are more familiar to certain groups of children than to others.

Given that the benefits students can derive from school reflect the influences of schools as well as the influences of families, in societies characterized by high initial social inequality even if schools were equal we could expect unequal results reflecting differences in socio-economic backgrounds. This principle underlies the reproduction of inequalities between the wealthiest 10% of children and the rest,

as well as between the most excluded 30% and the rest. One way to close the gap in educational opportunities is to implement compensatory policies that give children proportionately more resources to overcome the multifaceted forms of social disadvantage they face. This would mean: providing opportunities for low-cost or free quality pre-school education, which would enable children to enter school ready to learn; providing opportunities for health and nutrition in early childhood intervention programmes; providing additional learning materials; providing specialized training to teachers; and supporting the development of teaching approaches specifically tailored to their unique circumstances, for example developing methodologies to teach effectively in multigrade settings or in classrooms with greater age heterogeneity because of high repetition rates. In order to develop effective compensatory policies, however, we need systematic knowledge about the relative costs and effects of different interventions in boosting student achievement and in influencing other important outcomes such as school completion, social participation and leadership skills.

The concept of affirmative action, of positive discrimination, is relatively recent in Latin American education policy discourse. It appears for the first time in education policy enacted by the newly democratic government in Chile in 1990 and in education policy documents in Mexico in 1993—although the Mexican Secretary of Education established a unit of compensatory programmes in 1986. The Summit of Heads of State of the Americas, which took place in Santiago in 1998, proposed education as a key to reducing poverty, and focused on compensatory policies as the first item in its action plan.

There have been several efforts to implement compensatory policies, including: efforts to expand early childhood care and pre-school education targeted to disadvantaged children in Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Venezuela; to improve the quality of rural multigrade schools in Colombia and Chile; to develop models to deliver education in small, rural communities in Mexico; and to provide resources for improvement of schools attended by disadvantaged children in Argentina and Mexico. There have also been efforts to develop partnerships between the public sector and non-governmental organizations to deliver quality education to disadvantaged children. Most of these have been developed in a context of financial scarcity, with greater sensitivity to their overall costs than to their cost-effectiveness. The aim has been to provide positive discrimination at low cost. There are few evaluations of these programmes: most of the evaluations focus on whether student achievement improves rather than to what extent they close the educational achievement gap between low-income children and their more fortunate counterparts. There is some evidence that these programmes can indeed increase student achievement, which should not be surprising since the initial levels of achievement for the children of the excluded are relatively low (Garcia-Huidobro, 1999; Muñoz-Izquierdo et al., 1997; Schiefelbein & Schiefelbein, 1999; Sarmiento, 1999, Aguerrondo, 1999, Winkler, 1999).

Conclusions

Countries in Latin America have very unequal structures of income distribution and as a result one in five persons in the region, 90 million people, does not have enough income to buy food that meets minimum caloric requirements to stay alive and healthy. More than twice that number (204 million people, 44% of the population) are poor. Because of these high figures alone it would make sense to set the elimination of poverty as one of the objectives of social policy. Even if the recent trends of decline in poverty incidence continued, they are so modest that it would take 20–30 years to halve current poverty rates.

Poverty and education are related in multifaceted ways. For any given generation the levels of education are related to levels of income. Low levels of education block access to the social and economic opportunities that would allow people to get out of poverty. Poverty in turn blocks the opportunities of the children of the poor to attain sufficiently higher levels of education than their parents to move out of poverty. There are several processes that account for the low educational opportunity of the children of the poor. Some stem directly from poverty, such as inferior sanitation and living conditions, which lead to poor health and put children at a disadvantage as regards learning and progressing in school. Greater economic needs put more pressure on the children of the poor to work at an early age, particularly children in rural areas. Greater pressures and a need for the unpaid work at home of adolescent girls put them at an additional disadvantage to pursue schooling. Greater rates of teenage pregnancies for the urban and rural poor create another obstacle on the path to completing secondary education.

Aside from the direct links between household poverty and educational opportunity there are major obstacles to the opportunities to learn and succeed in school which stem from the poverty of the education system. Insufficient opportunities in pre-school education and low-quality education account for the significantly high rates of grade retention for the poor. As students get older and lose pace with their cohorts of origin, factors directly related to poverty and related to the interaction between poverty and school factors further reduce the chances that the children of the poor will complete high school. The result is an imperfect reproduction of the social structure through the education system. It is a reproduction because the odds are that the education gaps between the children of the poor and the non-poor will remain, even if schooling attainment increases on average for the population. It is imperfect because there are students who beat the odds, showing that the mechanisms discussed here are probabilistic and not deterministic, and also demonstrating that the education system has some autonomy from the reproductive dynamics of the larger social structure.

It is necessary to reform education policy in ways that minimize social exclusion, by making sure all children complete basic education, and that foster social mobility, by designing mechanisms to significantly increase the proportion of the children of the poor who complete secondary and higher education. Completing

primary education is already not sufficient to attain significantly higher incomes in the region.

While the basic patterns of reproduction of the social structure through the education system are illustrated in all countries of the region, there are important differences between countries in the degree of educational inequality. The countries with the greatest educational equality also have the greatest social equality. The systematic study of this variation, as well as the careful study of the impact of recent education reforms in many countries of the region, provide a potentially rich source of knowledge to inform policies to improve conditions in all countries and to answer basic questions about the two keys to understanding educational opportunity: how opportunity differs among income and social groups, and which factors explain the educational success of members of the most disadvantaged groups.

There could be no greater priority for education policy reform consistent with protecting the basic human rights of all Latin American citizens and consistent with promoting social inclusion than implementing policies that counter the current reproductive processes in education. Reform could change the odds so that all children have the same opportunities to learn and succeed in completing enough education to attain significant social mobility in their respective societies. This will require investing in understanding why the children who currently succeed do so, and what are the relative contributions of the different factors identified in this paper in the educational opportunity structure, as well as studying what are the results of the incipient efforts to implement policies of positive discrimination. Beyond this it will require political will and policy entrepreneurship to articulate what are currently dispersed, fragile and voiceless interest groups, even if they account for as many as 204 million people, who stand to benefit more directly from policy reforms aimed at making Latin American societies more inclusive.

Notes

1. I am grateful to my colleagues Noel McGinn, Richard Murnane and Gary Orfield, who provided comments and suggestions on a draft of this paper.
2. There are several dimensions of poverty, of which insufficient access to income is only one (UNDP, 1997). In this paper poverty is understood as income poverty. Two alternative definitions of poverty are used. One is poverty incidence, the number of people living below a country-specific poverty line, defined as the amount in local currency necessary to purchase a basic basket of goods to meet the minimum nutritional requirements to survive. Unless otherwise stated, this will be the principal definition of poverty used in this paper. Using this definition, the 'extreme poor' will be defined as those with an income below the poverty line, and the 'poor' will be defined as those with income below twice the poverty line (CEPAL, 1999). The unit of analysis will at times be households, and at other times it will be individuals. Because poverty is to a great extent relative to total distribution of societal resources, another definition of poverty used will be the total income distribution in each country; it refers to a percentage of the population in the lower extreme of the income distribution. At times the emphasis will be on the poorest 10% (first decile), at others in the poorest 20% (first quintile) or poor-

est 25% (first quartile). 'Inequality' in this paper is also understood as disparities in access to income by different people or households in each country.

3. I thank Richard Murnane for bringing this point to my attention.
4. For a detailed discussion of the gaps in the educational profiles for different income groups, see Reimers, 1999.
5. One of the best predictors of educational attainment in Latin America is the level of education of the parents (IDB, 1998).
6. This model is an elaboration of a concept of educational inequality, which suggests that equality can be distinguished on the basis of access, survival (completion), output (learning) and outcome (Schiefelbein & Farrell, 1982). I have modified these levels and formulated the factors that account for equality at each level.
7. For a detailed description of this framework, see Reimers, 1999.
8. Note that an alternative way to organize the curriculum is through individualized or flexible forms of instruction, where it is possible for children to advance at their own pace or to catch up with their peers, which reduces the negative consequences of missing school days or entire school terms. This is what was done with the Escuela Nueva programme in Colombia as discussed in the paper by Sarmiento (forthcoming).

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EDUCATION AND POVERTY

IN WESTERN EUROPE

Joanna McPake and Ghazala Bhatti¹

Poverty in Europe

Poverty affects the lives of many Europeans. It is currently estimated that some 15% of the population of the European Union (52 million people) live below the poverty line (European Commission, 1994a). This figure represents a substantial rise from the 1975 estimate of 38 million.

These statistics represent people who live in areas that industry has left behind, people living in decaying 'inner cities' in some countries and 'suburbs' in others. These areas are characterized by escalating multiple deprivation, in terms of poor housing and health facilities, rundown and underachieving schools, an influx of people in need of assistance, the long-term and short-term unemployed, and recent

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refugees and migrant workers with or without their families and support systems (Joly, 1996).

Such living conditions lead to other social problems: for example, the easy availability of drugs or the scapegoating of certain sections of the population—such as refugees or the ‘visible minorities’—for society’s ills. As a result of overt or institutional racism, refugees and others from linguistic or visible minority groups find it more difficult to have access to resources. There are others whose needs and rights are marginalized, such as people with disabilities as well as those who experience learning difficulties. We do not live in a homogeneous Western Europe.

Gender is a factor that cuts across all categories. Many Western European women are highly educated, active in the employment market and high earners. Education statistics from the United Kingdom now show girls doing as well as boys or surpassing them on almost every educational measure of attainment (Arnot et al., 1998). However, high educational attainment has not necessarily corrected historical imbalances in women’s earnings compared with men’s. Across Europe, women’s earnings are, on average, 60%–70% of what men earn for similar work (European Commission, 1994b). In some parts of Europe, women find it particularly difficult to obtain either relevant vocational training or paid work that would place them in a strong position to become economically independent. The contribution that able and well-qualified women could make to the public sector, to economic growth and welfare in some European countries, is thus curtailed.

Also cutting across the categories of the poor and disadvantaged are the young people of Europe whose future is still uncertain. They might be at school today, but unless their educational and vocational needs are met adequately, they may become the underprivileged in the ‘futures market’ (Ball, Macrae & Maguire, 1998). We cannot afford to ignore the challenges facing these young people because their future is inextricably bound up with the future of Europe.

Social exclusion: the European Union perspective

A significant development in recent European Union (EU) economic policy has been the emphasis on *social exclusion*—‘a multi-deprivational model of inequality and disadvantage’ (Brine, 1998, p. 144). Whereas earlier policy relating to equality of opportunity in the EU had focused on discrete categories of those likely to experience discrimination in the workplace (mainly women), the shift to the use of the term ‘social’ exclusion has arisen because of rising unemployment figures not only among groups that traditionally experienced discrimination but also among those whose position had hitherto seemed relatively secure (notably white, working-class men who traditionally found employment as labourers in heavy industry).

A causal connection between unemployment and social exclusion is posited (i.e. the unemployed have limited access to social goods such as education or health, and are less likely to participate actively in political and social life because they lack the financial opportunity to do so). It is also argued that social exclusion produces or prolongs unemployment. Thus the children of the socially excluded are less likely

to obtain sufficiently high educational qualifications to enable them to find work, while adults who are socially excluded will find it increasingly difficult to return to work because they are unable to upgrade existing qualifications or acquire new ones.

Therefore, EU policy now places greater emphasis than before on the role of education and training in combating poverty by supporting a variety of initiatives in member States, such as 'Second Chance' schools across Europe, which aim to develop a new approach to attracting 16–25-year-olds of low educational attainment. Member States have also developed their own initiatives reflecting the European focus: for example, 'New Community' schools in Scotland, which will host a range of social services apart from education within the school building, with the aim of drawing adults into an educational environment and facilitating their return to education. However, many of these initiatives are too recent for their impact to have been evaluated.

Not all member States have accepted the link between unemployment and social exclusion. Brine's article (1998) notes the pathologizing of the unemployed under the former Conservative government in the United Kingdom. This led to a reduction in financial benefits and in opportunities to study for those out of work, and to the introduction of measures to 'encourage' the unemployed to take low-paid work. Gillborn has similarly argued that while the current Labour government has shown 'a greater willingness to accept that poverty presents real and substantial barriers to access and participation [in the social and economic life of the United Kingdom]' (Gillborn, 1998, p. 724), its education policy continues the approach adopted by the Conservatives, implying that the 'disadvantaged' are responsible for their own problems:

In education, the language is frequently welcoming, even egalitarian, but the consequences are a construction of working-class and minority parents as deficit—as a drag on the achievements and aspirations of their children. The proffered solution is to get them to be more like the (white) middle-class model of the ideal parent enshrined in policy folklore (*ibid.*, p. 729).

Thus, it seems inevitable that the intentions of policy-makers at the centre are re-interpreted and re-negotiated in the political context, structures and experiences of different States.

Social exclusion and social justice

Policy-makers' and educationalists' analyses of the causes of poverty and potential solutions are not always in harmony. Educational researchers working in the field of social justice have welcomed the policy shift from discrete areas of attention to the more complex, multi-deprivational model. They are also enthusiastic about some of the more imaginative political responses. For example, the plan to develop New Community schools in Scotland has—so far—been well received by the educational community in Scotland, although it is currently only in the very early stages of development.

However, there are suspicions that the policy perspective fails to take into account long-standing inequities at the core of the various European educational structures. Thus while Europe-wide unemployment figures may rise or fall over time, primarily as a consequence of world markets rather than of social policy within Europe, certain groups—the white upper and middle classes in each country—will be relatively immune. Others—lower social classes, groups perceived to be ‘different’ for a variety of reasons (e.g. ethnic origin, linguistic profile, religion, cultural behaviour) and those experiencing multiple deprivation—will continue to be more or less vulnerable, depending on economic circumstances. Educationalists with a concern for ‘social justice’ have focused on the need to understand the ways in which educational structures themselves promote inequities and how this can be challenged.

European research: seeking to share perspectives

To date, most of the work of educationalists concerned with social justice has taken place at the local or national level, and there appear to have been few opportunities to take a Europe-wide view. In our experience, researchers in this field have tended to be under-funded: this limits the possibility of working exclusively or mainly on social justice issues and also the ability to travel to conferences, to develop links between institutions, or even to have time to follow developments beyond the researcher’s immediate (and usually local) concerns.

The Social Justice and Intercultural Education (SJIE) network of the European Educational Research Association (EERA) was set up to enable European researchers in this field to share findings from their research, to develop common understandings and to make links. It is still in the early stages of development. The network was set up in 1996 and has organized sections of two EERA conferences, in 1997 and 1998.

What has become clear at this early stage is the isolation in which researchers in different countries have been working. This is manifested by the fact that the assumptions on which presenters have based their work, the terminology they use and the implications they read into the developments they have studied are not always shared. Furthermore, at the outset there was little recognition that perspectives would inevitably differ from one country to another as a result of different histories, different educational structures, different political positions and, as a consequence, different research foci in which the implicit meanings were ‘taken for granted’.

The variation of the terminology in use reflects the complexity of the European situation. The term ‘poverty’ itself rarely appears explicitly as a term of analysis: for example, none of the papers presented at the European Conference on Educational Research in 1998 mentioned poverty specifically in its title or abstract, even though poverty was implicit in the issues discussed. Instead, authors variously dealt with social justice, exclusion (and inclusion), multicultural and intercultural education, racism and anti-racism, gender, class and disability issues, marginalized communities, and educational disadvantage in relation both to inner-city and to rural areas.

All of these could be interpreted as having some bearing on the relationship between education and poverty.

The range of terms and perspectives represents both a weakness and a strength in the European situation. The fact that we do not speak each other's languages (literally and figuratively) limits possibilities for shared views and joint action. But there is clearly widespread concern and commitment to tackling social injustice through education, and the goal of SJIE is to help bring the perspectives of researchers in different countries closer together.

Some early trends in European research

In another article in this issue of *Prospects*, Reimers has developed a structural model of educational inequality that helps to clarify the focus of European work. He points to five levels of opportunity, each of which is dependent on achievement of the preceding level:

1. the opportunity to enrol in the first grade of school;
2. the opportunity to learn sufficiently in that first grade to complete it, with sufficient command to continue learning;
3. the opportunity to complete each educational cycle;
4. the opportunity to complete the cycle with the same level of knowledge and skills as other graduates who have completed the same cycle; and
5. the opportunity to use what has been learned to gain other social and economic opportunities (Reimers, 1999).

We conclude this article by summarizing some of the research presented at last year's EERA conference, in relation to this model, which is helpful in identifying both where the major focus of SJIE research has been to date (around the third level of opportunity) and where there are notable gaps (at the fourth and fifth levels).

Level 3: The opportunity to complete the secondary cycle

Much of the research presented at SJIE symposia relates to the third level of opportunity, focusing on the completion of secondary education (i.e. graduation from high school) and continuation to tertiary level, suggesting that issues about initial access to primary education are not a major concern in Europe.² For most European countries, the completion of secondary education is the defining educational outcome because compulsory schooling ends at 15 or 16, *before* the age at which students complete their secondary studies. Thus the key question for researchers is: who succeeds in completing secondary education and why? Students who complete secondary education have educational qualifications that support entry into certain types of employment and higher education. Those who do not can look only for unskilled employment, which is not only badly paid, but also increasingly scarce.

It is clear that opportunities to graduate from secondary education are not equitable. Researchers in Finland (Vuorio-Lehti, 1998) and in Greece (Gouvias, 1998) have focused on the results of the final matriculation examinations in their

respective countries, demonstrating in both cases that graduates are predominantly from the middle classes. In France, Duru-Bellat (1999) shows that educational reforms have succeeded in shifting the point at which educational disadvantage becomes apparent: whereas previously, relatively few lower-class or minority students succeeded in entering the *lycée* (the elite form of secondary education in France which provides the most academic preparation for entry into tertiary education), the number of entrants from these groups has risen considerably in recent years. However, fewer students from these groups complete the *lycée* stage and proceed to university.

The mechanisms of discrimination have been studied in some detail by researchers from various countries. However, most have focused on discrimination against students from minority ethnic groups rather than on class issues, and so there are few opportunities to establish the relationship between inequalities in outcome according to class and the practices that lead to this. A dominant theme in these studies is the failure of the education system to recognize and respond to cultural difference. Thus, for example, in Finnish schools in which there are significant numbers of Russian immigrant students, the need for Finnish teachers to understand the differences in Russian pedagogical practices and the educational expectations and aspirations of Russian students has been identified as a prerequisite for equity in educational outcomes for Russian and Finnish students (Laihiala-Kankainen, 1998). Similar arguments have been put forward in relation to students of Greek origin in Germany (Goudiras, 1998) and students of Chinese origin in the United Kingdom (Woodrow, 1998).

Other researchers have focused more generally on the role of teachers in promoting or challenging discrimination. For example, in relation to the Netherlands (van der Leer, 1998) and to Portugal (Trigo-Santos, 1998) researchers have commented on the lack of intercultural awareness among teachers in their countries and on the effects of programmes designed to change this. Shah (1998) has studied programmes in England aimed at recruiting larger numbers of teachers of minority ethnic origin in the expectation that this will have positive effects on educational outcomes for minority ethnic pupils. Her findings—that more programmes for training teachers from minority ethnic groups have been instituted in England, but that few newly qualified teachers from these programmes succeeded in gaining their first teaching post—suggest that the desired effects will be slow to be achieved.

For some researchers, educational outcomes are the product not simply of school structures but of the interaction between these structures and wider social forces. Thus Bhatti (1998), in a study of the choices made by white and Asian 15-year olds as they approached the end of compulsory schooling in England, focused not only on school factors, but also on parental expectations and the messages about the adult world—particularly the world of work—which students had internalized.

It should be noted that all the studies discussed here were small in scale, and conducted with little or no funding. The opportunities for educational researchers to make links between the particular issues they have studied at the local level and the wider national or Europe-wide picture seem to be limited.

Level 4: The opportunity to complete primary education with the same level of skills as other graduates

In relation to the fourth level, we are not aware of any social justice research which takes as its starting point the notion that what has been achieved by students graduating from the same cycle of education may be qualitatively different from—say—one school to another. However, there is clearly potential for problems in this area in school systems where promotion to the next system is automatic or dependent entirely on internal assessment.

For example, in the United Kingdom, promotion from primary to secondary education is determined by age: students are not required to have passed an examination in order to enter secondary education, but simply to have reached the required age (11 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; 12 in Scotland). That there are disparities in the achievements of pupils in the United Kingdom leaving primary school is clear, both from the responses of secondary schools (streaming by ability is widespread) and from the results of national tests. However, policy-makers tend to explain these differences in outcome not in terms of the social demographics of some schools' populations but rather in terms of the managerial efficiency of the staff, particularly head teachers.

In the United Kingdom, this concern has given rise to extensive policy activity centred on school effectiveness and related research. Recently, this field has become concerned with the notion of 'value added', implying a degree of recognition that schools' intakes differ along socio-cultural lines and that 'outputs' (in the form of suitably qualified primary school graduates) should be measured in terms of the degree of progress made from the original 'raw material'. This approach may go some way to helping to quantify the extent of educational disadvantage at the outset of schooling, and to identifying successful ways of challenging this. However, as the terminology suggests, there may be insufficient attention to cultural concerns and the development of a dominant paradigm in which middle-class educational 'products' are assumed to be the goal for all (as is implied in the previously mentioned quotation from Gillborn).

Level 5: Links between educational achievement and social and economic opportunities

The assumption that formal educational achievements (graduation from high school, a university degree) equate with enhanced social and economic opportunities underlies most of the research presented in the SJIE network, although it is rarely the overt focus. Few—Shah's study being the exception—focus on further hurdles for those with the relevant qualifications. However, the point made earlier in this paper—that despite high educational achievement, European women still fail to earn as much as their male counterparts—suggests that this would be a fruitful area for cross-European research, particularly in view of the promotion of labour mobility across Europe.

Conclusions

Educationists in Europe have an established tradition of exploring educational disadvantage from a socio-cultural perspective, as indicated by the focus on social justice in education. Their concerns have been with relatively small-scale phenomena: the context in which particular disadvantaged groups are educated, leading to specific recommendations for local areas. Policy-makers, in contrast, are concerned with combating social exclusion at the national or Europe-wide level, primarily as a means of reducing unemployment and social unrest. The initiatives they set in motion necessarily take a wider perspective and pay little heed to diverse needs, aspirations and goals among the socially excluded. There is a need for European educationalists to increase their own awareness of the European context—not simply the national context—in which they work. They need also to develop perspectives on major European initiatives to combat social exclusion, the effects of which will remain otherwise unexplored by a community of educationalists with a history of interest in and commitment to challenging educational disadvantage.

Notes

1. This article consists of reflections on recent research presented at the European Conference on Educational Research by the joint co-ordinators of the Social Justice and Intercultural Education network of the European Educational Research Association.
2. A slightly different question concerns the opportunity to continue one's education in a coherent form: this is a problem experienced by the children of travellers, who may spend short periods of time in a series of schools, and by the children of refugees who find themselves having to adapt to different education systems (often in different languages).

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POVERTY AND BASIC-LEVEL SCHOOLING IN CHINA: EQUITY ISSUES IN THE 1990s

Emily Hannum

Introduction

In China, economic reforms dating from the late 1970s have brought dramatic improvements in the average standard of living but have also raised concerns among policy-makers and researchers about growing economic disparities. Education policy changes associated with the market reform period have raised a parallel set of concerns. Policies implemented in the reform period have sought to improve educational quality and to strengthen the link between education and the needs of the economy. These policies have included diversification of school content, privatization of some of the burden of school costs and decentralization of responsibility for administration and finance of schools. While serving intended purposes, these changes have also had the effect of strengthening the relationship between a child's social origins and his or her educational opportunities. For example, rising educational fees have particularly affected children in poor communities least able to subsidize schools. Minority nationalities concentrated in remote rural areas have been placed

Original language: English

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at a relative disadvantage by growing regional and urban/rural economic and educational disparities. Rural girls in poor families have been placed at high risk by rising school fees, as families facing resource constraints tend to educate boys first. These increasingly unequal structures of opportunity for children in the reform period have led concerned policy-makers to devise strategies designed to improve access to schooling for poor rural children, children from disadvantaged minority nationalities, and girls.

This paper reviews equity concerns that have emerged in Chinese education since the beginning of the market reform period. It examines issues stemming from changes in the socio-economic context of schooling and from reforms to the education system itself. It begins with a discussion of the impact of the reform period on poverty and social inequality in China. With the changing social context of schooling in perspective, it next considers equity-related education policy changes in the 1980s and 1990s. Finally, the paper discusses recent empirical evidence revealing disparities in school participation by socio-economic status, location of residence, ethnicity and gender. The paper closes with a summary of progress and persisting equity issues.

Market reforms and poverty

Market reforms dating from the late 1970s brought rapid economic growth in China. Between 1978 and the mid-1990s, the rising quality of life in China could be traced in dramatic improvements in per capita incomes and savings deposits in urban and rural areas, increases in consumption among agricultural and non-agricultural residents, and improvements along various other socio-economic development indicators (China, State Statistical Bureau, 1998, Table 10-1). World Bank estimates indicate that the number of people living in poverty¹ declined from 398.3 million in 1985 to 269.3 million in 1995; the head-count index for the same period fell from 37.9 to 22.2%, and the poverty gap ratio fell from 10.9 to 7% (World Bank, 1997, Table 2).

While absolute poverty declined in the 1980s and 1990s, disparities across regions persisted and income inequality rose. Absolute poverty in China remains concentrated in resource-constrained remote northern, north-western and south-western provinces (Piazza & Liang, 1998; see also World Bank, 1992). Per capita provincial incomes, rural poverty rates, illiteracy rates and college education rates all attest to the higher quality of life of residents of eastern provinces compared to residents of interior regions (Hannum, 1998). By many estimates, policies dating from the 1980s that prioritized investment in the more established coastal regions over growth subsidies for the interior widened existing regional development gaps (Aguignier, 1988; Linge & Forbes, 1990). Comparisons of recent household income surveys indicate that inter-provincial income inequality increased markedly between 1988 and 1995 (Khan & Riskin, 1998).

A related geographic issue is economic differentials across urban/rural lines. The introduction of the household responsibility system, a method of agricultural organization in which farmland and resources are contracted to individual house-

holds whose earnings are linked to output, had a dramatic impact on rural development.² Popularization of the household responsibility system, together with growth in township and village enterprises, brought a dramatic reduction of rural poverty in the early 1980s; strenuous anti-poverty efforts implemented in the late 1980s brought further declines (Piazza & Liang, 1998). For example, Park, Wang and Wu (1998, p. 4) report that the number of rural residents officially classified as poor fell from 131 million in 1986 to 50 million in 1997. However, the urban/rural gap in income and living standards remains large, and by some estimates is wider than anywhere in the developing world (Carter, 1997; Khan & Riskin, 1998).

For educational participation, economic changes associated with market reforms carried a mixed set of implications. Rising incomes allowed families to devote more resources to the education of children. However, in rural areas, implementation of the rural responsibility system increased the opportunity cost associated with educating children (World Bank, 1992, p. 85; Summerfield, 1994). Reportedly, the remunerative employment opportunities associated with the responsibility system led to greater withdrawal rates among rural school-aged children (Lo, 1984; Lin, 1993). Numerous studies during the reform period have indicated the important role played by rural poverty in the decision to drop out of school (for reviews, see Zhang, 1998; Hannum, forthcoming).

The geographic dimensions of poverty in China carry implications for ethnic differences in education, as many minority nationalities reside in sparsely populated, relatively poor rural interior regions. The most recent population census, conducted in 1990, showed that 54% of China's 91.3 million people belonging to ethnic minorities, but only 7% of the ethnic Chinese population, lived in the four interior provinces of Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou and Xinjiang (China, State Council Population Census Office and State Statistical Bureau, 1993, p. 300). The relationship between geographic differentiation and minority poverty is well established: nationalities residing in the more developed north and north-eastern regions of China exhibit socio-economic development indicators comparable to or better than those observed among the ethnic Chinese population, but the majority of nationalities residing in the interior west exhibit much poorer indicators (see Poston & Shu, 1992; Yuan, Zhang & Wu, 1993).

Concentration in the poorer interior regions of China means that many members of minority ethnic groups face the barriers of minimal infrastructure associated with remote areas, including poorer educational and transportation facilities. Ethnic differences in urban/rural residence compound the disparity, as members of minority nationalities are more likely than their ethnic Chinese counterparts to reside in rural areas within regions. Educational facilities tend to be better in urban settings, and thus, independent of regional effects, urban/rural differentiation tends to reinforce ethnic differences in access to schooling. Finally, barriers to schooling associated with residence in remote rural areas are made worse by high rates of household poverty. Minority populations residing in interior regions represent a highly disproportionate share of China's rural poor (World Bank, 1992). The combination of regional and household poverty means that many minority children face a dual disadvantage: poorer educational infrastructure and greater vulnerability to the costs of schooling.

Further, the link between poverty and access to schooling carries implications for gender inequality. Studies of poverty and girls' access to schooling have focused on rural areas where incomes and school participation rates are lower, and family conditions are less conducive to equitable treatment of daughters and sons. The commonly-cited explanation for son preference among poor rural families is that families depend on sons for long-term support. Patrilocal marriage in rural China means that a son can be expected to co-reside with parents after marriage, and thus to provide long-term security to his parents, while a daughter can be expected to marry out of the family (Lin, 1993). Thus, the education of a son is more likely to be perceived as a necessary investment. Conversely, the expected lack of access to the earnings of adult daughters provides a clear financial incentive, especially to poorer families, to avoid the direct and opportunity costs associated with educating daughters, and instead to allow them to contribute to the household economy until departure to married life. Popularization of the rural responsibility system increased incomes in rural areas, and thus exerted a positive influence on families' ability to afford education for girls. However, this policy also raised the opportunity costs associated with educating children and heightened the long-term economic uncertainty faced by individual families, increasing their potential dependence on the earning capacity of sons.

In sum, market reforms in China brought dramatic increases in income that improved average living circumstances but also brought rising disparities and increased economic uncertainty. Children were and are differently affected by market reforms depending on their location of residence, ethnicity and gender: children in the rural interior, children from certain minority nationalities and poor girls are at relatively high risk. For children in the interior and minority nationalities, the disadvantage is associated with household poverty and with residence in regions where resources are limited. For girls, the disadvantage stems from the combination of economic uncertainty, rising costs associated with educating children and a persisting incentive for son preference in the educational choices of poor rural families.

Market reforms and education policy

Education policy in China has been closely linked to larger political goals (Hannum & Xie, 1994; Hannum, 1999). The political focus on economic modernization that emerged in the late 1970s was clearly reflected in educational reforms aimed at efficiently producing an appropriately skilled labour force. Policy reforms revolved around perceptions that educational quality was a serious problem at all levels, vocational and technical training were insufficient, and central administration of education was too rigid (Lewin et al., 1994, p. 19). A complex hierarchy of programmes varying in length, quality, curriculum and financial base supplanted the simple structure of the Cultural Revolution education system. Decentralization of the administration and finance of primary and secondary education occurred, and educational costs incurred by individuals increased (Lofstedt, 1990; Lewin et al., 1994, p. 22–24).³

The emphasis on quality, efficiency and the strategic role of education for economic growth continued through the 1980s and 1990s. Education laws focused on improving the quality of education and strengthening the link between education and labour force skills. For example, the Teacher's Law of 1993 promoted legal measures for the improvement of teacher qualifications and the Regulation on the Qualifications of Teachers of 1995 aimed to improve the quality of teachers by designating the credentials needed for teaching at various levels (China, Ministry of Education, 1993; International Bureau of Education, 1998). In 1996, acceleration of the already rapid development of vocational education was reinforced by the Law on Vocational Education (China, Ministry of Education, 1996; International Bureau of Education, 1998). Finally, the Education Law of 1995 and the Education Plan for the Twenty-first Century of 1999 confirmed the priority attached to education as a strategic area for social and economic development (International Bureau of Education, 1998; China, Ministry of Education, 1999).

Concerns about educational disparities related to poverty, geographic location of residence, ethnicity and gender emerge directly from reform-era policies. First, increasing school fees combined with rising opportunity costs disproportionately affect the educational decisions of poor families. Second, educational decentralization in the 1980s led to rising regional and urban/rural disparities in educational access as devolution in funding responsibilities tightened the link between school resources and local economic conditions (Cheng, 1996). While the central government provides financial transfers to poor regions, the financing of education is mainly the responsibility of local governments and communities; thus, poor areas without the resources to finance education have increasingly covered costs by charging fees to families (Davis, 1989; Lewin & Wang, 1994; Piazza & Liang, 1998). Third, the disproportionate representation of ethnic minorities in poor, rural, interior areas means that rising regional disparities in the resources available for schooling place them at a disadvantage (Mackerras, 1994, p. 228). Finally, because of the imperative for investing in the long-term economic viability of sons, under circumstances of rural poverty, daughters' schooling tends to be relatively susceptible to rising fees.

Policy-makers have sought to address equity issues raised by socio-economic and educational changes in the reform period. Although implementation was tied to regional economic development levels, the Law on Compulsory Education of 1986 designated nine years of education—six years of primary and three years of lower secondary—as compulsory for all children (China, Ministry of Education, 1986; Lewin et al., 1994, p. 20; China, 1988; Li, 1992). This document, and government regulations in the 1980s, specified that subsidies and stipends should be made available to assist poor students in obtaining basic education (Guo, 1995, p. 35–36). Government educational expenditures supporting underdeveloped areas increased steadily over the 1980s and 1990s from a total of 17 million Yuan for the years 1976–80 to a high of 607 million Yuan for the years 1990–95; government data on extra expenditures for rural education for the late 1980s and early 1990s show a similar upward trajectory (China, State Statistical Bureau, 1998, Table 8-9). Large-scale interventions emerged, targeted toward improving education of

impoverished children, particularly girls (for example, see Xiao, 1997, and Chen, 1997 on Project Hope).⁴ The 1999 Action Plan for Revitalizing Education in the Twenty-first Century confirmed a commitment to implementing compulsory education across the country, targeting the year 2000 (China, Ministry of Education, 1999).

Central government strategies designed to stimulate educational development in minority areas also intensified in the reform period. Policies included financial aid to minority-area education budgets, increased publication of minority language versions of standard textbooks, and targeted recruitment and preparation of students for tertiary education (see Postiglione, 1992; Mackerras, 1994). The Education Law of 1995 affirmed a government commitment to equality of educational opportunity regardless of nationality, race, sex, occupation, property conditions or religious belief (International Bureau of Education, 1998). The 1999 Action Plan for Revitalizing Education in the Twenty-first Century specifically refers to the improvement of education in interior minority regions as a priority area (China, Ministry of Education, 1999).

In sum, the turnaround from an explicitly egalitarian education system to a system designed to serve the needs of the economy brought a renewed focus on quality, but in concert with other social and economic changes raised specific concerns about access to schooling along lines of socio-economic status, geography, gender and ethnicity. Recognizing these concerns, the Chinese Government has implemented policies aimed at promoting education among the poor, girls and minority nationalities. Educational equity in the wake of these countervailing changes is considered in the next section.

Educational equity in the reform period

This section provides an overview of recent literature and indicators related to basic-level educational access. National trends in basic-level education are described first. Next, indicators of socio-economic, regional, urban/rural, ethnic and gender disparities are presented. Each sub-section begins with a review of equity issues in the early reform years and follows with a discussion of evidence from the 1990s.

NATIONAL TRENDS

Expansion of the overall level of access to primary and secondary schooling constitutes one indication of progress towards equity. Figures 1 and 2 contain national-level indicators of primary and secondary schooling trends. Figure 1 shows gross first- and second-level enrolment ratios for the years 1970–97. Looking first at the lines representing first-level enrolment ratios, we observe that these ratios reached 100% in 1970 for boys, and reached that level by the mid-1970s for girls. At the second level, ratios are considerably lower and more variable. Dramatic increases occurred from the early to the late 1970s. A drop-off occurred coincident with the onset of market reforms and the associated shutdowns of schools in the early 1980s. Since the mid-1980s, the second-level enrolment ratios have exhibited an upward trend.

FIGURE 1. Gross enrolment ratios by year and level of education, males and females.

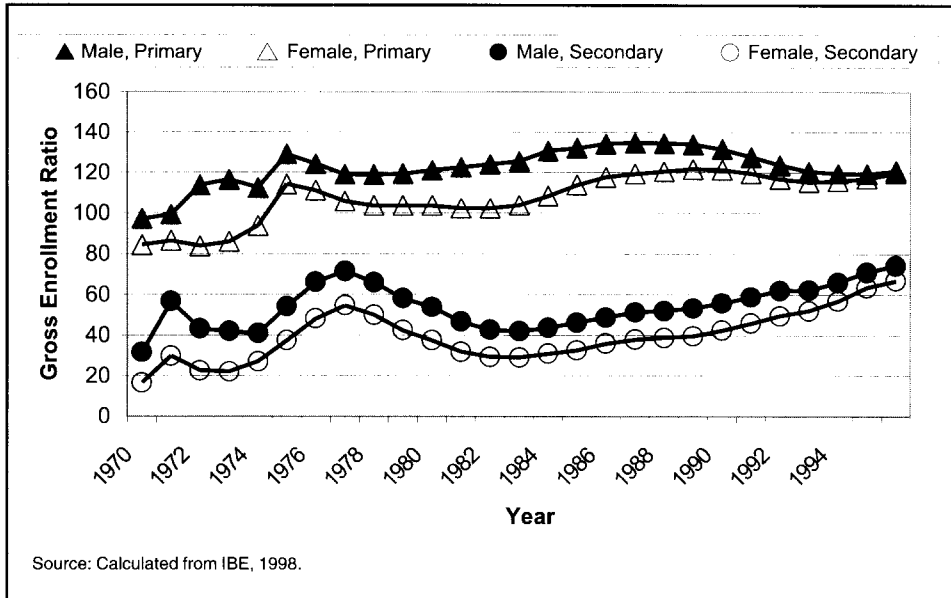
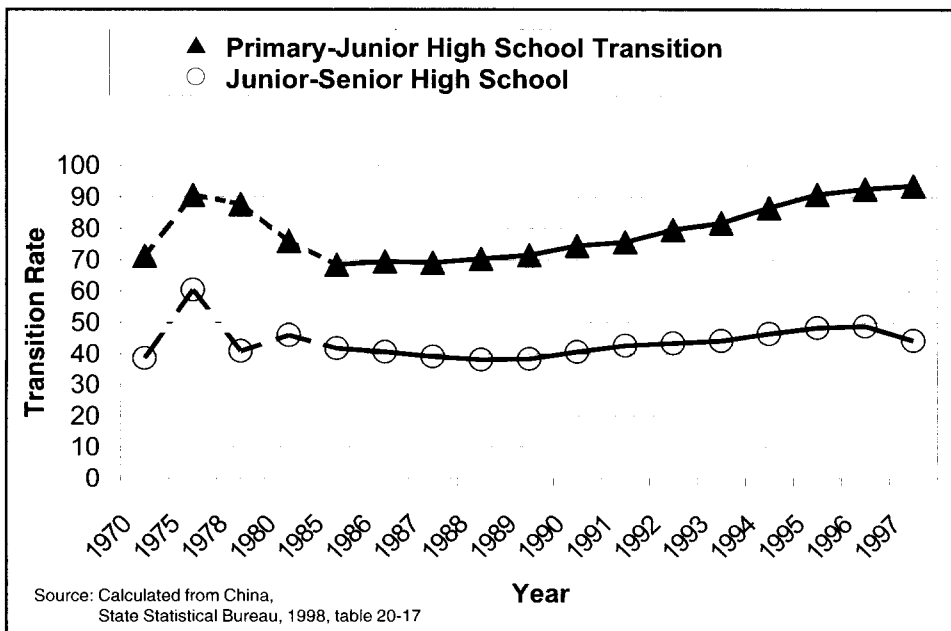


FIGURE 2. Transition rates by year and level of education.



Gross enrolment ratios are inflated to the extent that over-aged children are present in the school system. Figure 2 presents a different set of information pertaining to expansion of primary and secondary education. The lines in Figure 2 represent transition rates: the percentage of primary graduates who subsequently entered junior high school and the percentage of junior high school graduates who subsequently entered senior high school for the same years. The temporal trend of dramatic drop-offs in the early 1980s is apparent for both transitions. The primary-to-junior high transition shows steady improvements thereafter, reaching levels above 90% by the mid-1990s. The rate of junior-to-senior high transition remained at a stable level after the initial drop in the late 1970s. Junior-to-senior high transitions did not decline in compensation for improved transitions from primary to secondary school. The notable expansions in the education system that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s represent a favourable change from the contracting tendency associated with the earlier years of reforms. Expansions at the secondary level indicate considerable progress towards implementing the nine-year plan for compulsory education.

POVERTY AND ENROLMENT

While expansions occurred nationally, disparities associated with poverty and, for related reasons, with location of residence, ethnicity and gender persisted at least in the early 1990s. Table 1 shows sample enrolment rates among 7–14-year-old girls and boys tabulated by father's education, location of residence and ethnicity, calculated from a nationally representative survey of children conducted in 1992. Father's education serves as a proxy for long-term socio-economic status of the household. A clear positive association is evident, with high levels of enrolment occurring among the children of better-educated fathers and low levels of enrolment among the children, particularly daughters, of poorly educated fathers. Among children of illiterate and semi-literate fathers, likely to be the poorest of households, 84% of boys and 71% of girls were enrolled, compared to full enrolment among girls and boys of better-educated fathers. The effects of poverty appear more directly in Table 2, calculated from the same 1992 survey. Table 2 contains numbers of children currently not in school and the percentage of them reporting that they left school for economic reasons, specifically either for lack of money or to work on the family farm. In this sample, 33% of male non-enrolled children and 46% of female non-enrolled children left school for economic reasons.

REGIONAL DISPARITIES

Beyond the issue of household socio-economic status, children in rural areas and in remote regions remain disadvantaged in terms of participation, particularly at the secondary level. By all available indicators, the urban/rural gap widened in the early reform period (Hannum, 1999). Table 1 makes clear the point that children, and particularly girls, in the poor western regions are disadvantaged. In the north-west, for example, 89% of boys and 81% of girls were enrolled, compared to 97% of boys and 96% of girls in the wealthier north and north-east regions. The same pat-

TABLE 1. Sample enrolment rates by selected characteristics, 7-14-year-olds, 1992

	Male		Female	
	(N)	Enrolled (%)	(N)	Enrolled (%)
Total	156 643	94.10	142 415	89.30
<i>Father's education</i>				
General tertiary	1,465	99.45	1,382	99.20
Specialized tertiary	3,649	99.34	3,352	99.40
Specialized secondary	3,729	98.85	3,419	98.33
General senior secondary	18,790	96.88	17,075	95.48
Lower secondary	50,633	96.39	45,123	93.61
Primary	52,667	92.94	47,838	87.05
Illiterate/semi-literate	15,970	84.43	14,754	70.69
<i>Region of residence</i>				
North	24,968	96.85	22,803	95.80
North-east	19,465	96.67	18,060	95.87
East	38,542	95.48	34,626	89.79
Central-South	30,054	94.23	26,403	90.13
South-west	15,506	91.55	14,373	84.14
North-west	28,108	89.19	26,150	80.57
<i>Residence status</i>				
Urban	35,419	98.89	32,556	99.01
Rural	121,224	92.68	109,859	86.45
Flat	45,406	94.21	40,822	90.84
Hilly	31,849	93.84	28,557	89.48
Mountainous	43,969	90.27	40,480	79.90
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
Ethnic Chinese	134,771	95.42	121,776	91.39
Ethnic minority	21,872	85.90	20,639	77.15
Mongol	1,508	92.64	1,487	91.12
Hui	4,293	78.76	4,139	56.61
Tibetan	869	74.11	893	52.30
Uygur	4,150	80.70	3,816	81.81
Miao	955	84.61	821	70.77
Yi	765	86.93	716	72.63
Zhuang	2,556	90.53	2,356	84.04
Bouyei	307	92.18	290	80.00
Korean	661	99.24	571	99.12
Manchu	2,172	96.73	2,066	95.50
Dong	211	97.63	141	87.23
Yao	215	80.00	179	70.39
Bai	320	94.06	315	89.52
Tujia	606	92.57	614	84.69
Hani	135	82.22	130	70.77
Kazak	258	94.19	216	86.57
Dai	172	81.40	191	84.29
Other	1,719	84.76	1,698	76.09

Source : China, State Statistical Bureau, 1992.

TABLE 2. Sample percent left school for economic reasons among 7-14 year-olds not currently enrolled, 1992

	Male		Female	
	(N)	Economic reasons (%)	(N)	Economic reasons (%)
Total	8,792	33.00	14,280	46.30
<i>Father's education</i>				
General tertiary	20	10.00	16	18.75
Specialized tertiary	38	10.53	32	12.50
Specialized secondary	54	9.26	63	33.33
General senior secondary	521	19.00	676	32.69
Lower secondary	1,638	22.59	2,628	35.08
Primary	3,571	30.24	5,857	45.01
Illiterate/semi-literate	2,353	46.28	4,112	56.96
<i>Region of residence</i>				
North	708	15.68	861	22.76
North-east	646	12.38	788	20.30
East	1,692	26.89	3,271	44.33
Central-South	1,702	30.85	2,504	44.53
South-west	1,420	32.39	2,310	48.05
North-west	2,624	48.44	4,546	56.91
<i>Residence status</i>				
Urban	558	11.11	438	17.58
Rural	8,234	34.49	13,842	47.25
<i>Flat</i>	2,209	27.89	3,237	40.47
<i>Hilly</i>	1,891	27.45	2,932	37.24
<i>Mountainous</i>	4,134	41.24	7,673	53.94
<i>Ethnicity</i>				
Ethnic Chinese	6,076	27.80	10,002	43.51
Ethnic minority	2,716	44.66	4,278	52.97

Note: A t-test of the gender difference in percent leaving for economic reasons and chi-squared tests of independence for enrolment and father's education, region of residence, urban/rural residence, and minority status calculated separately for each gender were all statistically significant at the .01 level.

Source: Calculated from China, State Statistical Bureau, 1992.

tern emerges by residence status: in urban areas, virtually full enrolment is the norm, whereas in rural areas, enrolment rates are substantially lower. Among children in mountainous rural regions, enrolment rates drop to 90% among boys and 80% among

girls. Further, dropouts in rural areas and outside the north and north-east regions were substantially more likely to attribute school-leaving to economic causes (see Table 2).

ETHNIC DISPARITIES

Analysis of data from the 1982 and 1990 censuses indicates that the early reform era was a period of increased entry to primary school, but heightened selectivity at the junior high school transition. Nationalities advantaged by residence in wealthier regions were least hard hit by the drop-off in transitions to junior high school, while those nationalities residing in poorer regions were more disadvantaged (Hannum, forthcoming). Table 3 shows aggregate changes in enrolment in the 1980s and 1990s among ethnic Chinese and among all minority nationalities. The figures in Table 3 reveal an upward trend in the proportion of minorities among all primary students, from 5% in 1978 to about 9% in 1997. At the secondary level, corresponding figures were 3.8% and 6.6%, and at the tertiary level, 4.2% and 6.8%. Minorities constituted about 6% of the total population according to the 1982 census and about 8% according to the 1990 census. With the population figures in mind, minorities' representation at the primary level appears roughly commensurate with their population proportion; representation appears somewhat lower at higher educational levels. However, varying age structures across the populations of different ethnic groups complicate the interpretation of aggregate enrolment figures.

TABLE 3. Minority and total enrolment by level and year

Year	1978	1985	1990	1996	1997
<i>Minority nationalities enrolled (10 000 persons)</i>					
Institutions of higher education	3.6	9.4	13.7	19.7	21.7
Secondary schools	252.6	236.1	312.8	424.8	459.7
Primary schools	768.6	954.8	1,069.5	1,251.1	1,248.3
<i>Total enrolled (10 000 persons)</i>					
Institutions of higher education	85.6	170.3	206.3	302.1	317.4
Secondary schools	6,637.2	5,092.6	5,105.4	6,635.7	6,995.2
Primary schools	14,624.0	13,370.2	12,241.4	13,615.0	13,995.4
<i>Minority nationalities enrolled/total enrolled (percentage)</i>					
Institutions of higher education	4.21	5.52	6.64	6.52	6.84
Secondary schools	3.81	4.64	6.13	6.40	6.57
Primary schools	5.26	7.14	8.74	9.19	8.92

Source: Calculated from China, State Statistical Bureau, 1998, Tables 02-14 and 20-05

Enrolment rates among 7–14-year olds provide a picture of ethnic differences in participation less susceptible to age structure effects. Data from 1992 suggest persisting ethnic differences in educational participation (see Table 1). Among the ethnic Chinese in the sample, 95% of boys and 91% of girls aged 7 to 14 were currently

enrolled in 1992; among non-ethnic Chinese nationalities taken together, 86% of boys and 77% of girls were enrolled. Enrolment rates ranged from 99% among Korean children to 52% among Tibetan girls and 57% among Hui girls. The variation across ethnic groups and the lower overall enrolment among minority nationalities can be linked to regional and household poverty. For example, 54% of all minority children in this sample resided in mountainous areas, compared to only 24% of ethnic Chinese children (China, State Statistical Bureau, 1992). Among minority nationality children, 44% lived in the north-west, compared to 14% among the ethnic Chinese; comparable figures for the south-west were 18% and 9%. Finally, indicating differences in household poverty levels, 22% of minorities came from households with an illiterate or semi-literate father, compared to 8% of ethnic Chinese children. In Table 2, the stronger impact of poverty is suggested by the higher percentage of dropouts reporting economic reasons for leaving school. For example, among boys, 28% of ethnic Chinese non-enrolled children cited economic reasons for leaving school, compared to 45% among ethnic minorities.

In sum, national-level evidence indicates that the minority proportions in primary, secondary and tertiary level schools have increased in the twenty years since economic reforms. While the most recent aggregate evidence indicates high rates of participation among ethnic minority children, particularly at the primary stage, evidence from the early 1990s suggests substantial variation across individual ethnic groups in educational participation. The pattern of participation clearly reflects the impact of poverty, at the regional and household levels.

GENDER DISPARITIES

Paralleling the discussion in the previous section, evidence has emerged that progress towards gender equity in basic education slowed in the early 1980s and that the rural educational and economic reforms described here have disproportionately affected the educational participation of rural girls (Hannum & Xie, 1994; Summerfield, 1994). An analysis of data from the 1982 and 1990 censuses indicates that female entry into primary school increased steadily in rural areas after 1949 and remained at high levels in the 1980s. At the secondary stage, relative declines occurred in female primary-to-junior high school transition rates among cohorts reaching the transition age in the reform period, particularly in the rural population (Hannum, forthcoming). The second-level gross enrolment ratios presented in Figure 1 similarly show a drop-off in enrolment and a sizeable gender gap in the 1980s.

However, rising female enrolments at the second level and a narrowing gender gap are evident in national data from the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Figure 1). The gender composition of the student population by level of schooling is shown in Table 4. At the primary level, girls constituted about 45% of all students in 1980 and about 48% in 1997. At the regular secondary level (junior and senior combined), the change was from about 40 to about 46%. Considerable change occurred in the vocational and specialized secondary schools, where girls constituted about one-third of enrolment in 1980 and 40–50% by the mid-1990s. At the tertiary level, the percentage of females increased from under 25% in 1980 to 37% in 1997. These

figures confirm evidence displayed in Figure 1 that girls' educational participation improved after a brief period of decline in the early 1980s.

TABLE 4. Girls enrolment and total enrolment by level and year

Year	1980	1985	1990	1995	1996	1997
<i>Girls enrolled (10 000 persons)</i>						
Institutions of higher education	26.8	51.1	69.5	102.9	110.1	118.5
Specialized secondary schools	39.2	60.7	102.0	187.1	217.0	176.8
Regular secondary schools	2 180.1	1 893.1	1 920.1	2 407.5	2 599.7	2 735.6
Vocational secondary schools	14.8	95.4	133.7	218.2	229.4	248.4
Primary schools	6 517.4	5 986.2	5 655.5	6 241.1	6 467.0	6 666.0
<i>Total enrolled (10 000 persons)</i>						
Institutions of higher education	114.4	170.3	206.3	290.6	302.1	317.4
Specialized secondary schools	124.3	157.1	224.4	372.2	422.8	465.4
Regular secondary schools	5 508.1	4 706.0	4 586.0	5 371.0	5 739.7	6 017.9
Vocational secondary schools	45.4	229.5	295.0	448.3	473.3	511.9
Primary schools	14 627.0	13 370.2	12 241.4	13 195.0	13 615.0	13 995.4
<i>Girls enrolled/total enrolled (percentage)</i>						
Institutions of higher education	23.40	30.00	33.70	35.40	36.40	37.30
Specialized secondary schools	31.50	38.60	45.40	50.30	51.30	38.00
Regular secondary schools	39.60	40.20	41.90	44.80	45.30	45.50
Vocational secondary schools	32.60	41.60	45.30	48.70	48.50	48.50
Primary schools	44.60	44.80	46.20	47.30	47.50	47.60

Source: Calculated from China, State Statistical Bureau, 1998, Tables 20-05 and 20-20.

In sum, at the national level, there is much evidence to suggest that the problems with girls' access to schooling that emerged in the early 1980s have since improved. However, at least as late as the early 1990s, the schooling of rural girls remained relatively susceptible to poverty. In rural areas, multivariate analyses of nationally representative survey data from the late 1980s and early 1990s indicate that household income is significantly more strongly associated with girls' enrolment than with boys (Hannum, forthcoming). Enrolment rates in Table 1 support this claim. Girls with highly educated fathers, who live in the industrial north and north-east, and who live in urban areas are virtually all enrolled at ages 7–14. In contrast, about 30% of daughters of illiterate or semi-literate fathers, 20% of girls in the north-west, and about 15% of girls in the south-west and in all rural settings were not currently enrolled. Enrolment rates among girls were particularly low for the Hui and Tibetan populations, groups also characterized by very low rates of enrolment among boys. Generally speaking, a gender gap coincides with conditions associated with poverty: poorly educated families and families living in rural and remote areas. Parental reports of reasons that children are not in school, shown in Table 2, support this conclusion: girls were substantially more likely than boys to cite economic reasons for school-leaving.

Discussion

In China, concerns about rising inequality have emerged in the context of policies that have focused successfully on promoting economic development. Reform-era economic policies have increased the range of socio-economic circumstances experienced by children in their families and communities. Education policies have strengthened the association between parental economic resources, geographic location of residence and the quality of children's educational experiences.⁵ Empirical studies focusing on the early reform years indicate rising educational access disparities associated with poverty, urban/rural residence, gender and ethnicity. National evidence on more recent changes indicates a turnaround along certain of these dimensions: enrolments and transitions to secondary school improved in the later 1980s and early 1990s. The gender gap appears to be narrowing, and minorities appear to be present in the education system at rates similar to their proportion in the population.

Despite these favourable developments, as recently as the early 1990s, evidence showed substantial variation in enrolment by socio-economic status, urban/rural residence and region of residence, and ethnicity. Among rural children and particularly among rural children residing in poor conditions, girls were less likely to be in school. These results indicate that while progress has been substantial in improving access in the later 1980s and early 1990s, poverty at regional and household levels continues to constrain children's access to compulsory schooling. The economic hardships faced by poor parents in poor regions are mirrored in the educational credentials available to their children, and particularly their daughters, who will be least well positioned to take advantage of opportunities associated with the developing economy. In China as in other industrial nations, education is 'the engine of social mobility': those who get ahead are those who receive education (Deng & Treiman, 1997, p. 1). Whether the relationship between educational attainment and occupational outcomes exists because education improves the skills of individuals or because educational credentials serve as convenient sorting criteria for employers, differences across class, ethnicity or gender in access to schooling virtually ensure the same cross-group differences in access to occupations and income. A prerequisite to education serving as a social equalizer is the equitable provision of access across historical lines of stratification. The commitment to providing equal access to education regardless of childrens' socio-economic background, gender or ethnicity is made explicit in recent policy documents. Evidence presented here indicates the continued need for strategies extending educational opportunities and reducing educational costs for populations disadvantaged by regional and household poverty, namely poor rural children and particularly poor rural girls, and children from socio-economically disadvantaged minority nationalities.

Notes

1. In these estimates, the World Bank defines the impoverished population as those falling below an international poverty line of US\$1 per person per day at 1985 prices. The head-count index is defined as the percentage of the population living below the poverty line. The poverty gap ratio incorporates both incidence and depth of poverty by multiplying the head-count index by the difference between the poverty line and the average income of the population living under the poverty line expressed as a fraction of the poverty line (OECD, 1998).
2. Experiments with such contracting began in 1978, and by 1983 the responsibility system had been adopted by nearly all of China's farmers (Powell, 1992).
3. For an overview of administration and management, see International Bureau of Education, 1998.
4. On recent World Bank initiatives in China, see *China—fourth basic education project*, Washington, DC, World Bank, 1997 (Staff Appraisal Report No. 16367); *China—basic education in poor and minority areas project*, Washington, DC, World Bank, 1994 (Staff Appraisal Report No. 13026).
5. The discussion here has emphasized access disparities but only alluded to quality disparities associated with poverty. As progress is made toward guaranteeing a basic level of access, the discussion must shift to consider the relationship between poverty and the quality of schooling available to children. In China, available evidence suggests that school quality and the qualifications of teachers vary greatly across the urban/rural divide and with the regional level of development (Lewin & Wang, 1994; Lin, 1993; Lo, 1984; World Bank, 1992). Policy priorities in the reform period have exacerbated qualitative disparities by explicitly favouring wealthier schools and urban areas for investment (Cheng, 1996 p. 24-29).

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POLICY AND EQUITY:

A THIRD OF A CENTURY

OF EDUCATIONAL REFORMS

IN THE UNITED STATES

Gary Orfield

Nations exercising great political, military or economic power are always looked to in educational discussions, as if their power derives from their school system. German schools and universities had great influence early in the century. The former USSR's technology education was admired after 'Sputnik' in the 1950s. There was intense interest in the schools of Japan and the 'Asian tigers' when it seemed likely that their economies would overtake that of the United States.

Because of the position of the United States as the world's only superpower in this era, ideas based on its educational policy are being disseminated across the world, often through international organizations that are heavily financed by the United States. Sometimes current ideas are presented as the latest scientific discovery about educational efficiency and the dominant American¹ reform ideas are presented as the culmination of knowledge about schooling efficiency. It is very important that policy-makers and citizens in other countries realize that there is no consensus about many of these issues within the United States and very limited evidence that some of today's popular policies actually work.

The currently dominant ideas tend to reflect the conservative side of a long and continuing ideological and political debate within the United States. The policies

Original language: English

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during conservative and progressive eras in American politics tend to set very different goals and have differing consequences. Educational research suggests that the reforms enacted during earlier periods were actually more effective in terms of extending access and reducing gaps in academic achievement within society. Most of the policies of the post-1980 period have had a different impact and sometimes opposite impacts on those goals.

Why is the American experience important?

The American experience may not be relevant to educational policy-makers in different countries and it would be presumptuous to assume that research findings could be easily transplanted. Yet the United States has characteristics of both the most advanced industrial democracies and the least-developed countries. With the most unequal income distribution of any industrialized society, the United States has about one-fourth of its children growing up in poverty and many of its city school systems dominated by children living in social crisis. It has many schools overwhelmingly occupied with residents who are economically marginal and experiencing the kinds of problems of health, joblessness, family crisis, community decay and powerlessness that are supposedly characteristics of the Third World.

Many methods for providing equal educational opportunity for poor children, minority children and children speaking languages other than English have been tried in the United States. Important lessons have been learned about the impacts and practicality of a variety of approaches. The United States has tried a very broad range of policies and has launched widely divergent experiments because of deep ideological divisions and extensive decentralization. Courts also play an unusually important role and have ordered a variety of remedies for violations of the rights of groups of students.

There is a vast amount of data about educational trends and outcomes.² Since the initiation of a massive increase in testing and reporting systems in the mid-1980s, a great deal of data about school districts and individual schools is available. The existence of many research centres, the publication of almost all data submitted to Congress, laws requiring the release of information, and the widespread practice of posting data on the Web provide rich resources for analysis.

Educational priorities and policy trends

Schools occupy a central position in the American dream of social and economic mobility. There is a deep consensus that government should support education with substantial resources, though there is an active debate about how to do it and what role different levels of government should play.³

The United States is a society with a great deal of educational research but also a society in which educational policies are often much more driven by ideological assumptions than by analysis of impacts. The research topics funded and publicized tend to reflect the political climate of the time. During the last several decades there

have been ongoing battles in the United States over the role of schools in social reform, particularly in opening opportunities for racial minorities, the poor, girls, students not speaking English, and the handicapped.

There have been two basic eras in American educational policy since mid-century—a struggle for access and equity that dominated the period from 1960 to 1980, and a focus on competition and standards that has prevailed since 1980. The former took the public school as a given and attempted to redefine its role to make it a more powerful instrument of opportunity. It was part of a broader movement against poverty and racial discrimination. The latter period has rejected a social role for the school and has redefined the crisis as one of international economic competition driven by technology and the need for more skilled workers.

The first period was basically about access to secondary and higher education for steadily larger portions of the population, inclusion of historically excluded groups in better schools though civil rights laws and special programmes, and a variety of strategies to help lower-income people participate fully in education while upgrading educational offerings in low-income communities and addressing other problems related to family poverty.

Until the 1960s, the federal government played a very small role in education. A massive change occurred under the most activist administration and congress of the century, which focused primarily on the goal of equity. In the 1960s there were huge reforms, largely at the federal level, in both education and social policy. The 'War on Poverty' of President Lyndon Johnson led to a series of educational interventions, including pre-school education and health programmes for poor children, and a large programme of federal aid known as 'Title I' that provided additional educational resources to schools with high concentrations of low-income children. For the first time there were programmes that tended to embrace the idea that a powerful intervention on behalf of pre-school and early elementary children could produce a substantial convergence of educational outcomes.

In addition, the federal government created the first large programme of scholarships, campus jobs and loans to enable poor children to go to college. It also initiated a set of programmes to recruit and help prepare such children for college. The result was a surge of college going, particularly for previously excluded groups.

The trend during the late 1960s was towards a social-democratic policy, with a special emphasis on minority rights growing out of the civil rights movement. Faced with the incentive of massive new federal funds, and the threat of lawsuits and fund cut-offs if they broke the law, school districts in seventeen states that had historically practised educational apartheid began to rapidly change their policies and by 1970 this region had the most integrated schools in the nation (see Table 1). Though federal funds peaked at about one-tenth of public school spending, they were heavily leveraged on equity issues and backed up by the regulatory powers of government. During this period, strong sanctions were adopted by the government and the courts against racial discrimination, as well as against discrimination due to language, gender or disability. Large sums were invested in training new types of educational experts to deal with these problems and to help local school districts

adapt successfully. In addition, the federal government adopted a programme of free health care for the poor, the largest subsidized housing programme in American history, election of local advisory groups from various poor communities, protection of voting rights for minorities and many other broad reforms.

TABLE 1. Desegregation of Southern schools: percentage of Black students in majority White schools

Year	% of Black students	Year	% of Black students
1954	0.001	1976	37.6
1960	0.1	1980	37.1
1964	2.3	1986	42.9
1967	13.9	1988	43.5
1968	23.4	1991	39.2
1970	33.1	1994	36.6
1972	36.4	1996	34.7

Source: DBS Corp., 1982 and 1987; 1991–92 NCES Common Core of Data, Public Education Agency Universe; 1994–95 NCES Common Core of Data, School Universe; 1996–97 NCES Common Core of Data, Public School Universe.

This period of social change gave way to a conservative political movement which won control of the presidency in 1968 and has dominated it ever since—with the exception of two Southern governors, Carter and Clinton, who were from the more conservative, business-oriented sector of the Democratic party.

The election of Richard Nixon and the creation of a powerful new coalition of White Southerners and suburban and small town residents opposed to further social change reshaped national policy. Nixon reduced federal regulation of civil rights and worked to turn more authority for federal education funds over to state and local authorities.

The Supreme Court expanded educational rights in decisions between 1954 and the early 1970s. President Nixon was then able to appoint four of the nine Supreme Court Justices. By the late 1980s, conservative control had been consolidated over the Supreme Court and educational rights were narrowed significantly over the next decade.

In their twelve years in office, the Reagan-Bush team implemented the most conservative policy shifts in more than half a century. This period produced an extraordinarily different educational agenda and a decline in the federal role to about one-sixteenth of the education budget. Since the early 1980s the basic goals have been about improving the 'quality' of American education and the competitiveness of American workers in the post-industrial global economy. A 1983 Reagan Administration report, *A nation at risk*, changed the focus of federal education policy from that of increasing access to one of reaching a higher level of performance.

Ideas from the Reagan Administration have dominated policy during the 1980s and 1990s. These included sharp cuts in social programmes, including welfare payments, housing and public jobs for the poor, and ending enforcement of many civil rights laws. The 'Excellence Movement' has had consistent national leadership for longer than any other American educational movement and its essential aspects were adopted by almost all fifty states.⁴ President George Bush and then-Governor Bill Clinton negotiated an accord around these ideas between the federal and state governments and Clinton continues to press many of the same basic ideas today.⁵

This movement, which became known in the 1990s as 'standards-based reform', was based almost entirely on the reassertion of tradition. The need for an urgent change, as outlined in *A nation at risk*, was based on what turned out to be an inaccurate conclusion that academic achievement had deteriorated seriously in the United States. The solutions adopted, largely more course requirements, more tests and, in many cases, holding students back on the basis of test results, were asserted in spite of extensive research over time indicating that such tests tended to drive up dropout rates, not increase achievement.

American goals for schools vary according to social and political conditions. A very important goal in the 1960s and 1970s was to use schools to repair historical forms of discrimination. These broader goals, however, have played virtually no role in the American policy discussion of the past two decades. During this business-dominated period, preparation of more capable and productive workers has been the central goal. One reason that tests on a few subjects have assumed such great importance in the last generation is that the goals of education have narrowed. Traditionally, American schools had many goals in addition to teaching the curriculum. Creating a sense of nationhood and community as well as preparing people for participation and leadership in a democratic society were primary goals. Working out a philosophy of life, learning understanding and tolerance of other points of view, developing the capacity for teaching oneself new things, making friends who enrich life and learning, networking opportunities, and understanding how civic institutions work are among the basic goals of college education.

Reform results

It is extremely interesting to examine the difference in levels of educational gains, particularly for poor and minority students, between the current period and that of the earlier reforms.

None of the reforms in either period fundamentally changed achievement outcomes. Test scores are much more strongly linked to family background than to differences in school programmes.⁶ There are, of course, other highly important outcomes of education—such as level of attainment of key credentials and the networking opportunities that shape life chances in many ways. Some reforms do, however, make a significant difference on measured achievement and they appear to make the largest difference for the most disadvantaged students. Following the equity reforms of the 1960s, there were large gains for the most disadvantaged students

and the educational achievement gaps by race declined for a generation. The Black-White test score gap decreased most substantially in the South.⁷

The biggest differences were in level of enrolment and high school and college graduation rates. The liberal reforms came during a period of increasing enrolment and graduation and that pattern continued through the 1970s. There was a particularly sharp upward trend in high school graduation for Black students and for Black enrolment in college, particularly in states that had traditionally excluded Black students.

It is, of course, an oversimplification to attribute the positive outcomes to education policies alone. Related policies against job discrimination and increased public programmes, for example, expanded the Black middle class by opening up many job categories. There was a huge migration of Blacks from areas with very weak schools in the rural South to areas with better schools. The South was also experiencing rapid development and increasing investments in education.

Nothing like the gains of the 1960s and 1970s emerged from the next wave of reforms. The conservative reforms attempted to raise standards through requirements and testing. In recent years there is evidence of modest overall gains in science and mathematics, the areas thought to be most critical to international competition. On the other hand, reading and writing achievements are flat and, at the highest grade tested (age 17), reading shows a decline.⁸

The trend of completion of high school and college by a growing share of students has ended. High school graduation rates are dropping and more students are obtaining credentials through less adequate alternatives.⁹ The inequality of access to college based on income has grown. Wealthier families now are even more likely to send their children to college and the income gaps have been growing. In contrast to the peak of access when the top quartile of families (in terms of income) were six times more likely than the bottom group to have their children graduate from college, the ratio is now ten to one.¹⁰ Post-secondary education has become much more important since the 1960s as income growth has focused overwhelmingly on workers with post-high school education, but access to college has declined significantly for lower-income families. The maximum federal aid for poor students in 1996 had only 43% of the buying power it had in 1980.¹¹

Some of the reforms, particularly those that mandate passing particular tests for high school completion and college entry, may be causing unanticipated damage. A substantial body of research suggests that such tests lower the graduation rate of lower-income and minority students without a compensating increase in achievement scores.¹² In spite of clear evidence that such policies in the late 1970s and early 1980s increased dropout rates in New York and Chicago, there was another strong push for them in the late 1990s led by President Clinton and governors in both parties.

Some Americans worry about the failure of the education system in the nation's big city schools—mostly schools for minority children. There is a widespread belief that schools are failing in concentrated poverty schools, serving the isolated 'Third World' pockets in impoverished city communities.¹³ Almost nine-tenths of schools that are 90–100% Black or Latino have concentrated poverty.¹⁴

TABLE 2. The relationship between race and poverty in schools, 1996–97¹

% poor in schools	The percentage of students represented by Black and Latino enrolments ²									
	0-10%	10-20%	20-30%	30-40%	40-50%	50-60%	60-70%	70-80%	80-90%	90-100%
0-10%	31.0	21.2	10.2	6.1	5.9	4.7	5.6	4.7	4.5	3.2
20-25%	35.1	37.1	31.1	20.7	11.7	7.1	5.2	3.7	3.2	1.8
25-50%	26.2	32.5	43.8	49.0	45.4	38.2	26.3	15.7	11.4	8.3
50-100%	7.7	9.1	14.9	24.2	37.0	50.0	62.9	75.8	80.8	86.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
% of US schools	47.1	10.8	7.7	6.4	5.6	4.5	3.7	3.2	3.2	7.7

1. The correlation between the percentage of Black and Latino enrolments and the percentage of those eligible for a free lunch is .66. The actual percentages of poverty are typically underestimated in urban high schools since many eligible children in these schools refuse to sign up for free lunches.

2. The exact percentage categories are 0–10, 10.1–20, 20.1–30, etc.

Source: 1996–97 NCES Common Core of Data; Harvard Projection on Desegregation.

In summary, when American educational policy targeted poor children and their schools, major progress was made in high school and college enrolment and completion, and in lowering gaps in achievement between various groups in society. Those successes lost ground and policies were radically altered after a conservative, business-dominated coalition took power in the 1980s. Beginning with the Reagan Administration and extending through the Clinton Administration, the dominant agenda has emphasized more tests, more course requirements and the introduction of market mechanisms. Market and testing reform themes being promoted around the world show little evidence of success in the United States. Apart from small gains in science and mathematics test scores, it has been a period of stagnation. The long-term trend of increasing high school graduation has ended and racial gaps in test scores are no longer diminishing. Attainment of college degrees has become very strongly linked to family economic status. In the following sections, we present a closer examination of three specific American educational reforms: early intervention, testing and school choice.

EARLY INTERVENTION

In contrast to its low social policy expenditures, the United States is internationally competitive in supporting public schools and generous in supporting higher education.¹⁵ Clearly there is a desire to invest in education, though there is no consensus about what to invest in—a considerable handicap considering that getting results requires clear goals, the best evidence about how to achieve them and measurement of results.

The basic conservative policy about American schools argues that schools can make a very large difference if only the right accountability or organizational change is imposed, but that resources do not matter. Most of the research about 'education production functions' for decades came to the conclusion that there is almost nothing that money spent on schools can do to improve outcomes.¹⁶ Therefore, there is no reason to spend more or to equalize resources since neither will make significant differences. The United States Supreme Court actually cited some research of this type in its 1973 decision against ordering equal funding of public schools.¹⁷

The principal counter-theory for most of the last thirty years has been that there is a known and critical period for intervention early in educational development that decisively changes the results—in pre-school or the earliest grades. This was the main argument for early interventions designed to increase school readiness and acquisition of basic skills, and was the central theory embodied in Head Start and Title I. This theory had enough appeal and enough educational leadership behind it that it has been strong enough to preserve these two programmes for more than thirty years, though Title I is now facing what may be its most serious congressional challenge. Unfortunately, the evidence for the permanent cognitive impacts of these early interventions has never been strong.

Title I's first major longitudinal study found little evidence of any general benefits and the study has led to a deepening attack on Title I.¹⁸ Among other findings was the conclusion that students attending concentrated poverty schools receiving this extra aid performed less well than similar students receiving no special programmes but attending less-isolated schools.

The latest version of the early intervention theory comes in the finding that substantially lowering class size in early grades produces sizeable benefits. For years, researchers held that, except at the extremes, class size was not significantly related to outcomes. New statistical techniques as well as a massive scientific experiment in the state of Tennessee have reversed these conclusions. During the 1990s there have been a series of studies by University of Chicago statistician Larry Hedges and his associates and an important 1996 study of class size issues by F. Mosteller, R.J. Light and J.A. Sachs.¹⁹ Hedges' studies concluded that there were effects of expenditures and that a number of variables—including total expenditure, student/teacher ratio, teacher experience and teacher education—were significantly related to test score outcomes.²⁰

The new class size research had an almost immediate impact on policy, for example triggering a massive reduction in early grades in California. This reform was supported by candidates running for governor in at least twelve states in 1998 and by President Clinton.²¹ It has considerable impetus because, although it is still controversial in the research community,²² it has overwhelming support among the public and among educational organizations and does not raise difficult ideological issues.

TEST SCORES

The policy debate of the 1980s and 1990s has focused attention on the relatively low average scores of American students in international tests as a threat to long-term economic success. On closer examination, however, much of that problem reflects the poor performance of low-income and minority students who make up a growing share of young Americans. In close proximity there are school districts preparing students for the world's most competitive universities and which have very strong records by international standards,²³ and those preparing students for nothing.

The gains in test scores have, in general, been small in mathematics and science and virtually non-existent in other subjects, particularly at the secondary level. This has led both to increasingly stringent forms of emphasis on testing and an increasing rejection of public schools altogether. This is based on a diagnosis of the problem and a motivational theory that may both be wrong in many circumstances. It assumes that poor performance is caused by ineffective educational techniques and inadequate challenges to students and that public pressure will force schools to improve. Publication of test scores may have perversely negative consequences. Test scores from state testing systems are widely used, for example, in marketing real estate. Announcing these as proof of low-quality schools encourages families and teachers with choices to go elsewhere—further weakening schools and districts.

The testing and accountability reforms of the 1980s have produced comparable data on achievement among schools and school districts, in the hope that such data would generate school improvements. (The conservative movement assumes that the failure has not been one of capacity or resources but of laxness, bad values and poor organization.) The data show, however, that high-poverty and minority schools overwhelmingly experience serious educational difficulties in all parts of the country under many kinds of policies and organizations. Increasingly these schools and their teachers, teachers' unions and local administrators are blamed in angry and disparaging terms for the failure. There is virtually no discussion of the possibility that the failure may be rooted in income distribution or poverty concentrations.

In state after state, the schools at the bottom of the achievement list for the entire state tend to be located in high-poverty, minority areas in big cities. A detailed analysis of test scores in Michigan found, for example, that about 60% of the variance in test scores could be explained by family social and economic status.²⁴ Some states actually report achievement by poverty levels because of the power of the relationship and the fact that schools are otherwise being rewarded or criticized primarily because of community wealth. Studies of all schools in metropolitan Chicago and metropolitan Los Angeles showed a correlation of 0.8–0.9 between the percentage of poor students in a school and the school's test scores and a similar correlation with the percentage of minority students.²⁵ Very strong relationships between poverty and test scores were reported state-wide in Georgia and South Carolina.²⁶

Since the early 1980s, the policy of placing great pressure on testing has been widely accepted as a powerful lever for educational change, but its acceptance has been based far more on ideology than on research evidence.²⁷ There is significant proof that reliance on testing reinforces the advantages of family background since there is a very strong relationship connecting income, parents' education and test scores. When tests determine access to further education or flunking, these policies tend to intensify differences.²⁸

The outcomes of educational interventions and the efficacy of schools are commonly measured with short-term changes in test scores or the absolute value of test scores. Since scores are strongly linked to non-school characteristics and instructional or programme changes often take years to be reflected in test scores, this biases the process towards rewarding schools with children from more privileged families and rewarding superficial test preparation over deep reforms. Placing excessive weight on testing tends to narrow the discussion, reward elite communities and drive schools, particularly those with low-achieving students, towards whatever is measured on the tests.

In recent decades there has been a tendency to assume that increased test scores are the best, or even the only, way to find out that schools are better. Important goals for schools, however, include a number of factors beyond cognitive development, such as: creating skills for life-long learning; social development, including learning skills about functioning successfully with students from many backgrounds (important for future work, communities and democratic processes); networking for opportunities during and after school; contact with a positive peer group; acquiring credentials for future education and jobs; and preparation for college success.

Though much can be learned from test scores, particularly when students are followed over time, they are seriously limited measures of policy impacts. They are used so much because they are cheap, readily measurable and easy to reify into an apparently valid measure of school accomplishment since there is considerable public confidence in tests. For example, polls show that from 1978 to 1995 65–75% of Americans had enough confidence in testing to favour flunking students who could not pass achievement tests.²⁹ In 1998, 71% favoured a national testing programme advocated by President Clinton.³⁰

If tests are imposed as absolute requirements and the preparation of students is not equalized (as it almost never is in the United States) those children and schools in the most disadvantaged communities will be punished for what they failed to learn in their inferior schools and the punishment will further demoralize the children and those who are working with them. Use of tests without consideration of educational inequalities also tends to reinforce stereotypes about groups of children. A 1999 study by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences concluded that such tests were related to a higher dropout rate among minority students and that they should never be used as the sole factor in deciding on graduation or admission.³¹

None of this implies that good standardized tests are not an appropriate tool. It is very important to know what skills students are acquiring. Test data should be used to identify problems, reward progress, and trigger interventions and tutoring.

CHOICE DEBATE

Another theory that has been explored during the past half century suggests that the best way to improve educational opportunity for students in isolated, inferior, high-poverty schools is to find a way to transfer them to better schools. This was a central justification for desegregation, choice programmes, the creation of magnet and charter schools, and vouchers for private schools.

There has been great enthusiasm in the past fifteen years supporting theories about the impact of choice and market mechanisms to change the offerings of schools and improve educational outcomes. There has been a fierce debate over the significance of very limited data on the achievement test results of voucher experiments, with studies of a small number of children in three schools in Milwaukee being injected into the last presidential election campaign. Choice mechanisms, if not limited by other policies, seem to have a clear tendency towards stratification according to socio-economic status. Schools are often popular and sometimes report relatively high test scores. The degree to which this represents selection bias of students and teachers or a net enhancement of educational quality is very difficult to determine since choosing and non-choosing families may differ in very important ways. Most of the debate has been about issues of comparisons, analytic procedures and assumptions that have not led to any convergence of findings.³²

The most research has been conducted on desegregation and shows that minority students do commonly obtain access to more competitive schools and do experience small but significant test score gains. The larger effects of desegregation are on success in college and in linkage to networks that lead into society's mainstream.³³

Magnet schools grew out of desegregation efforts and offer specialized curricular opportunities for students who choose to enrol. Their faculties are often there by choice and receive special training and equipment for the specialized curriculum. Magnet schools are available to children from many neighbourhoods, often without special admissions requirements, and most are operated under policies that require racial integration. They usually provide free transportation for all interested children and they are part of the regular public school system. Some studies report gains in magnet school programmes.³⁴

During the past decade a number of additional forms of choice and of creating new schools where the old schools have been unsuccessful have been implemented. *Charter schools* are a rapidly expanding innovation under which a private or non-profit group receives public funds to run a privately controlled school that provides free education, but under different rules and with a different educational programme than normal public schools. Early findings on charter school academic performance show little difference. *Small schools* are schools that are created by starting up several small schools, often within a building that housed one unsuccessful school. *Reconstitution* is a policy of removing the entire school staff and creating a new one with the total staff removed and replaced with the old school building to break patterns and expectations of failure. *Vouchers* are public subsidies paid to individuals choosing to send their children to non-public, tuition-charging, pri-

vate schools. Since the 1980s these innovations have spread broadly but there is very little serious research to date on their impacts.³⁵

The forms of choice that are now being pursued most actively, charter schools and vouchers, are those most in conflict with traditional public schools and those with the fewest protections for equity. They reflect a strong ideological preference for markets and individual choice and a reluctance to consider the way markets work for people with very unequal information, skills and resources. At this point there is no convincing evidence of net academic benefits of either charter or voucher schools, but many hundreds of charter schools are being rapidly formed and the Supreme Court has permitted a voucher plan that includes religious schools to go into operation in the state of Wisconsin. These are very significant changes in American educational policy but it is too soon to speak with any confidence about the long-term consequences.

The only parts of the American choice experiments that may be far enough along to reach reasonably clear conclusions are the policies of open enrolment, under which students have the right to choose among schools that do not offer specialized curricula, and the policy of magnet schools, under which families may choose very distinctive curricula in particular school sites. The first policy was tried in thousands of school districts in the 1960s and in a number of states in the recent past. Generally speaking, the transfers are inconsequential, 1 or 2% of the students. Magnet school programmes, on the other hand, are often quite successful in convincing families to choose other schools, though they usually serve a relatively modest share of the school population. They clearly draw above-average students but they also serve a substantial number of non-White students because of their desegregation requirements and the provision of free transportation. They contribute at least modestly to socio-economic stratification but they also enhance racial integration and may help retain middle-class families. Some significant research suggests that they have a positive achievement effect that goes beyond the selection effect, perhaps from the combined impact of a new school, a faculty united around a distinctive educational mission, and parents who want that kind of an educational programme. Ironically, these schools are now under attack in federal courts by conservatives who object to the desegregation requirements.

The results to date, however, clearly show that simple choice mechanisms maximize options for those who get information about complex choices and often leave behind those at the other end of the spectrum. Choice that is equitable, or even increases opportunities for those most in need, requires a variety of mechanisms to provide information and to encourage choices by those in the bottom stratum.

Many of the key questions are about the capacity to increase the supply of strong school options without causing serious, additional damage to the existing troubled schools by recruiting their better students and teachers. Small-scale experiments are unlikely to provide answers to the question of the impact of large-scale implementation. Public school systems have found a critical shortage of the kinds of principals and teachers who can sustain a quality educational programme serving a highly disadvantaged community. Whether or not there is a supply adequate

to support large numbers of new or deeply reorganized schools with more autonomy is a very important question. Is there a built-in tendency towards increased stratification with almost any kind of selection and choice mechanism, given the inequality of parental knowledge and connections, or are there workable ways to offset those advantages? What happens to the students and teachers who remain in weak schools after the better students and teachers have left?

A faculty seminar at Harvard University commissioned a number of studies on choice and produced a book, *Who chooses? Who loses?*, which concluded that choice almost always led to stratification of schools but that there was considerable uncertainty about its net benefits.

Observers in other countries trying to sort out sweeping claims about markets and privatization in American schools should exercise great caution because of the toxic combination of intense ideological division, very limited experiments that are being given far more attention than they deserve, and no experience at all in the long-term, systemic effects of full-blown implementation. There is virtually no discussion in the American voucher debate of the experience of societies that are much further along this path. We could consider the experience of other nations with fragmented social, religious and linguistic groups that subsidize private and denominational schools, and examine recent experiences in the United Kingdom, Chile, New Zealand and elsewhere. The results in those settings suggest that the creation of such mechanisms on a large scale will increase educational stratification.

Conclusions

Although there have been some improvements in science and mathematics scores, recent reforms have not met their goals. In fact, not only is the Goals 2000 agreement between President Bush and the nation's governors falling short of realization but a number of inequalities are actually becoming worse. The voices of the dominant conservative and centrist American political ideologies are echoing around the world primarily because of the political and economic position now occupied by the United States, not because there is serious evidence that they work.

I believe that those interested in narrowing educational gaps in their societies and increasing educational attainment levels would better focus on an earlier set of reforms, which began from a very different diagnosis. Nothing in the American research suggests that education can actually resolve very deep inequalities without changes in other sectors of society. If high-poverty schools are almost always performing poorly, if students attending them have much more limited chances, and if the record of hundreds of billions of dollars of special aid has been profoundly disappointing, it is important to understand that the basic problems are rooted outside the schools. Additionally, schools serving primarily low-income children appear to be systematically unequal in many ways (even when they get additional money)—including the level of competition, teachers' skills, the involvement and resources of the parents, and the curriculum.

The absence of a serious level of academic training in too many schools has helped to spur demands for changes, often taking the form of more requirements and more testing. We need a serious and challenging curriculum. We need to select varieties of choice systems which produce school-level change and include key equity measures of parent information, fair selection mechanisms, civil rights requirements to ensure access for minorities, free transportation and authentic educational alternatives. Compensatory education programmes should be based on genuinely successful models and held accountable for actual educational gains in achievement, graduation, college going and other critical outcomes. We must acknowledge the challenge of linguistic, ethnic and racial diversity and that we have done very little in either research or policy to address a critical set of needs. We need experiments to test strong incentives for groups of talented teachers to move into inner-city schools and to keep them there for the years needed to implement deep reforms. We need to figure out what is good assessment and use testing for diagnosis, and to trigger tutoring and other supports, not sanctions against students.

Post-secondary education is as common and as important as secondary education was in the early post-Second World War period, but we have almost no serious policy initiatives to increase the success of students from high-poverty schools and communities in the transition to college. Colleges are busily trying to upgrade their performance by raising their standards and expectations and ending remediation. There is very little co-ordination with high schools. Since post-secondary training is becoming a necessity for middle-class status, it is important to understand that public schools and colleges are part of a continuum that shapes the future stratification of society. Universities must not pursue quality through exclusion in ways that reinforce social divisions.

Educators in other nations interested in the possible lessons of the American experience will often find, if they examine the best evidence, that the United States has far to go and that American research yields no simple model for greater school success. Within the extraordinarily varied experience of American educational reforms and the massive research on their impacts, however, there are lessons that may be of great interest to educators who wish to expand educational opportunity in their societies.

In a world where many countries are trying to create viable modern democracies, and which has witnessed the tragic failure of many multi-ethnic societies, the goals from an earlier period in the United States may be more relevant than the present ones. A society that produces slightly higher test scores but does nothing about deepening social cleavages does not have a model education system.

Notes

1. To avoid repetition, in this article the term 'American' refers to 'of the United States'.
2. Among the many web sites that could lead interested readers to American statistical reports are nces.ed.gov, census.gov and www.ccsso.org.

3. Mark Pitsch, Polls confirm the political role for education, *Education week* (Washington, DC), 19 June 1996, p. 1, 30–31; L.C. Rose and A.M. Gallup, The 30th annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools, *Phi Delta Kappan* (Bloomington, IN), September 1998.
4. G. Sunderman, *The politics of school reform: the educational excellence movement and state policy making*, Department of Political Science, University of Chicago, 1995, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation.
5. The basic approach was called 'America 2000' under President Bush and 'Goals 2000' under the Clinton Administration.
6. J.S. Coleman, *Equality of educational opportunity*, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1966.
7. D. Grissmer, A. Flanagan and S. Williamson, Why did the Black-White score gap narrow in the 1970s and 1980s?, in: C. Jencks and M. Phillips, eds., *The Black-White score gap*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, 1998.
8. United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *NAEP 1996 trends in academic progress*, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1996, figure 2.
9. United States Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *Dropout rates in the United States: 1997*, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1999, p. 20, table 6.
10. T. Mortenson, *Post-secondary opportunity*, Oskaloosa, IA, 1998.
11. Educational Testing Service, The steeper stairs of higher education, ETS research, *ETS Net* (Princeton, NJ), 1997, p. 1.
12. R. Hauser, paper presented at the Conference on High Stakes Testing, Columbia Teachers College, 4 December 1998; see also J.P. Heubert and R.M. Hauser, eds., *High stakes testing for tracking, promotion, and graduation*, Washington, DC, National Academy Press, 1999; L.A. Shepard and M.L. Smith, eds., *Flunking grades: research and policies on retention*, London, Falmer Press, 1989.
13. When American data are compared with national data for the major industrial countries, individual states often rank over an extremely wide spectrum, from the very highest levels to among the lowest levels of national performance. See United States, National Center for Education Statistics, *Education in states and nations: U.S. states with the OECD countries in 1988*, Washington, DC, Government Printing Office, 1988.
14. G. Orfield et al., Deepening segregation in American public schools, *Equity and excellence in education* (Westport, CT), vol. 30, no. 2 (September 1997).
15. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *Education at a glance: OECD indicators*, Paris, OECD, 1995, p. 77.
16. E. Hanusheck, *Making schools work: improving performance and controlling costs*, Washington, DC, Brookings Institution, 1994.
17. *Rodriguez v. San Antonio Independent School District*, 411 U.S. 1 (1973).
18. *Prospects: the congressionally mandated study of educational growth and opportunity: the interim report*, Washington, DC, Department of Education, 1993.
19. L. Hedges, R.D. Laine and R. Greenwald, Does money matter? A meta-analysis of studies of the effects of differential school inputs on student outcomes, *Educational researcher* (Washington, DC), vol. 23, no. 3, p. 5–14; F. Mosteller, The Tennessee study of class size in the early school grades, *The future of children* (Los Altos, CA), vol. 5, no. 2 (Summer–Fall 1995), p. 113–27; R. Greenwald, R.D. Laine and L. Hedges, The school

- funding controversy: reality bites, *Educational leadership* (Alexandria, VA), 1996, p. 78–79.
20. L. Hedges, R.D. Laine and R. Greenwald, op. cit., tables 2 and 3.
 21. Summary of gubernatorial candidates' positions on education, *Education week* (Washington, DC), 7 October 1998, p. 20–21.
 22. C. Shea, Do smaller classes mean better schools? Economists aren't so sure, *Chronicle of higher education* (Washington, DC), 3 April 1998, p. A18.
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 26. National Center for Education Statistics data show that schools that are 90–100% Black and/or Latino in the 1994–95 school year were sixteen times more likely to have a majority of poor children than schools with 90–100% White students.
 27. G. Orfield and E. Debray, eds., *Hard work for good schools: facts not fads in Title I reform*, Cambridge, Harvard Civil Rights Project, 1999.
 28. J. Heubert and R. Hauser, eds., *High stakes*, Washington, DC, National Academy Press, 1998.
 29. S.M. Elam and L.C. Rose, The 27th annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the public's attitudes toward the public schools, *Phi Delta Kappan* (Bloomington, IN), September 1995, p. 47.
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 31. J. Heubert and R.M. Hauser, eds., 1999, op. cit.
 32. B. Fuller and R. Elmore, *Who chooses? Who loses?* New York, Teachers College Press, 1996.
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TRENDS / CASES

AN ECONOMY IN TRANSITION:

THE EFFECT ON

HIGHER EDUCATION

IN VIET NAM

Jill Lammert

To succeed, you must learn to bend with the wind.

VIETNAMESE PROVERB

Introduction

The move from a centrally planned or command economy to a market economy has proved difficult for a number of countries, often bringing about a fall in real wages, industrial output and gross national product. Understandably, the economic effects of what will hereafter be referred to as 'economic transition' have repercussions in all parts of society. This paper will explore the experience of economic transition in Viet Nam, with a particular focus on how the higher education system is coping with the changes taking place in society.

Command economies are characterized by the following features: central planning; a lack of private enterprise or profit; total government control of prices, wages, money, interest and exchange rates; collectivization of agriculture; trade mainly with

Original language: English

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other communist or socialist countries; and a belief that 'all work is for the good of the state and the shared needs of the people' (Sweeney & Foster, 1995, p. 35). A market economy, on the other hand, has relaxed government controls; few trade restrictions; an absence of price, wage, money, interest and exchange rate controls; free flow of goods and services within the economy and between other countries; private enterprise and profit; and an ability of all people to 'act voluntarily and primarily for financial gain or personal satisfaction' (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 1995, p. 712).

Eforde and de Vylder (1996, p. 39–40) point out that, normally, economies in transition must pass through four stages:

Pre-stage: Autonomous economic transactions are not yet officially accepted, though there may already be a significant expansion of unplanned activities.

Fence-breaking: Accelerated expansion of autonomous transactions launches the process of transition. Direct relations of a new kind evolve between customers and suppliers.

Formal transition: Market-oriented activities develop and expand in an institutionalized, and to a certain extent legally sanctioned, framework.

Post-stage: Potential market distortions recognizable already in the previous two stages reach a crisis point and become a major issue within the economic and social system. In particular, delayed development of capital markets characteristically results in (i) truly autonomous capital accumulation being largely confined to individual producers and traders; and (ii) intermediating mechanisms for shifting capital to successful producers being ineffective, restricted or non-existent.

The economic problems resulting from economic transition can be exacerbated by simultaneous transformations of the political system. This was the case in the former Soviet Union. After the collapse of Gorbachev's *perestroika*, Boris Yeltsin's policies led to grave changes in the constitutional system of the country. Yeltsin secured vast power potential for the Presidency, but even so was 'unable to mobilize sufficient resources or the political will to counteract Duma [Lower House] attempts to block major economic and political decisions' (Williams, Chuprov & Staroverov, 1996, p. 16). As a result,

the Russian state has effectively withdrawn from the policy and decision making arena. This has produced a stalemate in which the creation of essential legal and institutional frameworks in population policy, education, health care, employment and so forth has been a slow, painful and complex process (Williams, Chuprov & Staroverov, 1996, p. 2).

The transition process in China has been different from that in Russia in that the Chinese leaders at the very beginning made a conscious decision to maintain the governing socialist apparatus. To encourage growth, the Chinese Government established 'special economic zones' and began allowing different types of ownership (Samuelson & Nordhaus, 1995) as well as foreign investment ('Deng's China', 1997). These economic measures have been immensely successful. At the same time, the

political power of the Communist Party has remained intact throughout the entire process of transition. This, in fact, has served as a stabilizing factor in the transition (Pepper, 1990).

Economic transition in Viet Nam

The neo-Stalinist policies implemented in North Viet Nam in the 1950s functioned as follows:

Capital resources were supplied to state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in order to produce a certain product. These resources were essentially supplied free. Each unit was managed by a level of the state bureaucracy that allocated labor to it. The unit was then given a regular production target. [...] These inputs were supplied directly to the unit by the state, and its output was also supplied directly to the state [...] [W]ith almost no freedom to choose either what it produced or who it produced for, the unit had little interest in either the value of what it produced or the real costs involved in doing so (Fforde & de Vylder, 1996, p. 58).

This model encouraged managers to stockpile resources in order to maximize outputs without considering cost. The industrial sector was virtually absent and the government's attempts to develop it failed to bring about the desired results. In addition, collectivized agriculture proved to be inefficient. All of this led to shortages and consequently to private stockpiling and the emergence of a large black market. In response to the sudden rise of similar activities in the private sector, the government eventually decided to re-examine its economic policies. The economic transition in Viet Nam, unlike in China, began as a widespread modification of governmental policies at the local level in reaction to state sector inefficiencies (Fforde & de Vylder, 1996).

In 1986, the Sixth Party Congress approved the abandonment of neo-Stalinist policies. The resulting reforms, which came to be known as *doi moi*, meant increased support for private enterprise and opened the country to foreign investment and influence (Berlie, 1995; Berman, 1990; Duiker, 1995; Fforde & de Vylder, 1996). The reforms have included a move to privatize some state enterprises, thus creating numerous new positions, which, it is widely believed, will more than compensate for the loss of public employment opportunities.

But there are also several key problems. First, increased opportunities for private enterprise have developed in parallel with a widening of the gap between the rich and the poor. Second, the infrastructure in Viet Nam is insufficient to handle the recent economic changes. And finally, there is a relative lack of skilled labour in Viet Nam with the percentages of people who have completed secondary school or higher extremely low (Fforde & de Vylder, 1996; Sloper & Can, 1995).

Historical overview of Vietnamese higher education

Education has traditionally been highly valued in Viet Nam. This stems from a long history of Chinese, and by extension Confucian, influence on education. During the Ly dynasty, the first Vietnamese university, the Temple of Literature, was established in Hanoi 'to provide training in Confucian doctrine for candidates to high office' (Duiker, 1995, p. 170). Knowledge and literacy were attributed essential significance in personal self-improvement and in moral and political spheres. The goal of Vietnamese formal education during this time was the spiritual growth of the individual, rather than the transmission of information. This growth was founded on moral and ethical principles such as proper behaviour, discipline and respect for others, particularly the teacher (Ich, 1959).

When the French colonized Viet Nam in the late 1860s, they used the education system to erode the traditional Vietnamese ways of life. They created a new University in Hanoi for the Vietnamese elite, who were to be trained as administrators to serve as intermediaries between the colonists and the Vietnamese people. They also established a number of schools patterned after their own model, particularly in South Viet Nam. Attention focused on French language, curricula and teaching styles. In addition, the administration of schools was markedly French in nature. Unfortunately, during this time the French officials began limiting the educational opportunities available to the Vietnamese people and literacy declined dramatically (Duiker, 1995; Ich, 1959; Vasavakul, 1994). The most important consequence of the French colonization was the adoption of the *quoc ngu* (national language), the Romanized script of the spoken Vietnamese language. After its development in the seventeenth century, *quoc ngu* soon replaced the cumbersome Chinese characters in the education system, marking yet another break with Confucian education.

Increasing resistance to the colonial regime resulted in the declaration of independence in 1945, the defeat of the French armed forces in 1954 and the division of the country in 1957. A key figure in all these events was Ho Chi Minh, a former schoolteacher. From the beginning, he strongly advocated education as a means of helping free the Vietnamese people from their oppressors. Throughout his career as a military and political leader, he pushed to eradicate illiteracy through means such as the establishment of an extensive teacher-training programme in Vietnamese and basic education, which eventually became compulsory in the whole region. Education was given such great importance that there came a time when 'in many areas no one was allowed to enter a marketplace or cross a bridge without proof that he could read and write. Illiterate persons were usually ordered to go home and learn the first five or ten letters of the alphabet' (Ich, 1959, p. 106).

In the years after 1945, the southern part of the country adopted an anti-communist stance and received strong support from the United States. The relative economic prosperity thus achieved and the resulting feeling of independence brought with it the recognition 'that education must respect the freedom and rights of

children and that each must be helped develop to maximum capacity in keeping with his native ability' (Lavergne & Adams, as cited in Ich, 1959, p. 120). The role of the teacher as a Confucian-style master of the classroom was changed to that of a guide and an adviser. Children were encouraged to be active participants in the educational process.

The higher education system in South Viet Nam was not established until 1955 when a mass migration of professors and students from the north led to the creation of the National University of Viet Nam, which included faculties of Education, Law, Sciences, Vietnamese Literature and Medicine–Pharmacy–Odontology. At the same time, vocational and technical education also began to increase in importance. The government opened a number of technical schools and organized training courses. Moreover, it established the National Institute of Public Administration, which was responsible for training future public officials in principles of government, economics and finance (Ich, 1959).

The relative prosperity in South Viet Nam ended with the beginning of the 'American War' in Viet Nam. During the war, education in Viet Nam—particularly in Hanoi—obviously suffered. Nevertheless, the governments in both North and South Viet Nam were able to expand educational opportunities throughout the years following independence from France up until the end of the war with the United States. (See Table 1 for information about when particular Vietnamese higher education institutions were established.)

In April 1975 the North Vietnamese Army invaded and captured Saigon and the Communist Party of Viet Nam began to implement its policies throughout the country.

[...] in the years after 1975, all public and private schools in the South were taken over by the state as a first step toward integration into a unified socialist school system. Thousands of teachers were sent from the North to direct and supervise the process of [political] transition, and former teachers under the Saigon regime were allowed to continue their work only after they had completed 'special courses' designed to expose 'the ideological and cultural poisoning of which they had been victims for twenty years' (Library of Congress, 1998, p. 1).

In the early years of communist rule in Viet Nam, anyone who had served under the Saigon regime, who held Western degrees or who advocated Western ideology was likely to be sent to a re-education camp. The government would not recognize Western degrees during this time, nor would it permit exchange of ideas with Western countries. Any student wishing to pursue a higher degree either stayed in Viet Nam or was sent to the Soviet Union or another East European country. The Soviet model of higher education based on discipline, technological development and productivity replaced the French one in Vietnamese schools (Berlie, 1995). This consisted of a number of 'small mono-disciplinary institutions with limited linkage between teaching and research' (Kelly, 1998, p. 5). The goal of this system was 'to train and foster on an ever-larger scale a new contingent of workers in accordance with the need for division of labour in a large-scale socialist production' (Ho, 1992, p. 2).

Beginning some time in the mid-1980s, however, the Party began to realize that the strict socialist economy was not able 'to meet the requirements for modern socio-economic development' (Sloper & Can, 1995, p. 33). This resulted in the move away from Soviet central planning and the introduction of *doi moi* in 1986 as an attempt to stimulate the growth and development of the Vietnamese economy.

Vietnamese higher education today

Currently there are 157 civic institutions of higher education in Viet Nam (Kelly, 1998; Hac, 1993). (See Table 1 for a list of the universities.) Education policy is determined at the national level but implementation and administration are the responsibility of the provincial level and below (Kelly, 1998). The responsibilities of the national government include the funding for most salaries and scholarships, while the provinces, districts and communes provide most other expenditures. Supervision and inspection are also performed at both national and local levels, but as of May 1998 there was still no system of evaluating institutions for the purpose of accreditation (Kelly, 1998).

Broadly, there are three types of higher education institutions in Viet Nam. The first type is the 'specialized universities' (including junior colleges and polytechnic universities), which focus on one particular area of study such as law, agriculture or economics. Besides the standard long-term programmes, the system also offers short-term programmes. These are more concise and practically oriented as well as more readily available to ethnic minorities in disadvantaged or remote regions (Do, 1995; Hac, 1991). The second type is the 'multidisciplinary universities'. This group consists of the five newly established national and regional universities in five major cities, which have been created by a fundamental reorganization of smaller and more specialized institutions into larger and more comprehensive ones. They are the Viet Nam National University at Hanoi, the Viet Nam National University at Ho Chi Minh City, Danang University, Hue University and Thai Nguyen University. The third type, the 'open university', is the most recent addition to the Vietnamese education system (Kelly, 1998). It provides specific training to workers and public employees. The areas of study include basic science, foreign languages, law, economics and others. These programmes are financed almost entirely by tuition and student fees—a phenomenon unknown before the *doi moi* reforms (Hac, 1991).

Effects of economic transition on higher education

While education has always been valued in Viet Nam, as explained above, for a long period formal educational opportunities were very limited and only available to a small portion of Vietnamese. Following in Ho Chi Minh's footsteps, with the advent of *doi moi* came a concerted effort to reform the educational system towards improved efficiency and increased opportunities.

As private sector jobs become available, and more importantly, as government no longer has total control over job regulation and placement, educational institutions are being forced to restructure. But, as has been seen in the current educational crises in Russia and China, the Soviet model is simply not appropriate for higher education systems operating within a market economy (Chuprov & Zubok, 1996; Pepper, 1990; World Bank, 1997).

Sloper and Can (1995, p. 12) outline ten principal aims of higher education reforms that have been proposed by the Vietnamese government. Clear progress is being made towards reaching many of these goals. We shall deal with them one at a time.

1. *Improvement of the structure of the national education system.* The educational structure is slowly beginning to change for the better. Of particular note is the government's willingness to cede power through decentralization—although whether it ever really had complete power is another matter (Berlie, 1995; Duiker, 1995; Fforde & de Vylder, 1996; Ho, 1992; Sloper & Can, 1995; Walker, Tao & Bao, 1996). In higher education today, the provincial governments have a role in running educational institutions (excluding universities) at least as large as that of the central government (Kelly, 1998); the establishment of private and community institutions is permitted; vocational and continuing education programmes are becoming more accessible to the general population; and innovative self-instruction methods are being introduced for those with less access to formal education (Hac, 1993, 1995; Kelly, 1998).
2. *Reorganization of the schools, colleges and universities.* Because the system was based on the Soviet model of specialized mono-disciplinary institutes, 'many colleges and universities are too small, academically dispersed, and unarticulated to make the most efficient use of resources' (Dao, Thiep & Sloper, 1995, p. 77). Moreover, universities are striving to make the collection and dissemination of information more effective, especially with regard to the needs of the job market and the private sector. And the government is making an effort to create more linkages between the various types of institutions, such as the teacher training colleges, the multidisciplinary universities and provincial colleges. This is still very much work in progress, but advances are definitely being made (Dao, Thiep & Sloper, 1995; Hac, 1993; Kelly, 1998; Sloper & Can, 1995).
3. *Eradication of illiteracy.* The government's plans in this regard are proving to be efficient. Outside estimates of the literacy rate for Viet Nam in the 1980s and 1990s range from 88% (Ho, 1992; Kelly, 1998; Sloper & Can, 1995) to 95% (Storey & Robinson, 1997). Officially, the Embassy of Viet Nam in Washington DC (1997) reports 91% for the given year and states that the government anticipates that 95% of the population will be literate by the year 2000.
4. *Rational increases in higher education enrolments.* According to Hac (1993) and Kelly (1998) higher education enrolments have been increasing dramati-

cally. In 1991, there were roughly 100,000 students enrolled in higher education institutions. By 1996, that figure had jumped to almost 300,000, which represents twenty students per 10,000 inhabitants. While this is low in comparison with other Asian nations, it is nonetheless an encouraging trend, given that enrolments had decreased by almost 40,000 students during the period between 1981 and 1986 (Postlethwaite, 1995).

- 5a. *Redefinition of objectives for education and training.* Instead of training a given number of students for jobs regulated by a central planner, the universities now offer a wider range of programmes and give students the opportunity to choose their area of study (Hac, 1995; Kelly, 1998; Sloper & Can, 1995). Education goals have evolved towards the preparation of students to perform in a market-oriented economy. 'An immediate need is to train businessmen, financial and other managers, lawyers, and various technologists and qualified experts in many other areas who are capable of undertaking leadership tasks and preparing the country and a new generation of workers and citizens' (Hac, 1995, p. 69).
- 5b. *Redesigning of curricula.* For help in redesigning curricula to meet the needs of the market-oriented economy, the government has turned to universities world-wide. In 1994, for example, through co-operation with Boise State University, the Vietnamese government established a Master's of Business Administration programme at the National Economics University in Hanoi. This was the first programme of its kind in Viet Nam, but it has been quickly followed by a number of others ('An invitation', 1994; Gillotte, 1994; Ohio Supercomputer Center, 1995; 'Portland State University', 1995). The project was designed as a 'train-the-trainer' programme—eventually the Vietnamese would be able to maintain their own independent business school in Hanoi. Faculty have been brought to Viet Nam from all over the world and students are required to go to Boise State University to study for several months. So far the programme has been quite successful (Boise State University, 1998; Napier, 1997).
- 5c. *Improvement of methods at every level of education and training.* The change from a planned to a market economy also necessitates a change in deeply entrenched ideologies and traditional practices. This is a profound issue and its solution is a slow process. Ho (1992) states that in Viet Nam, '[t]he concept has been changed, the training objective modified, but the current training content used in the [. . .] schools over the past 11 years of educational reforms is, on the whole, a curriculum and content in service of the old concepts, the old objectives' (p. 3). As a perfect illustration of this, '[Vietnamese] commerce students in 1993 were still being lectured in theory of planned economies because of the absence of appropriate curriculum, textbooks, and experienced academic staff' (Sloper & Can, 1995, p. 10). According to Hac (1995), 'a [. . .] task for higher education is to retrain previously qualified manpower for new fields including areas being modernized such as agriculture, basic industries, transportation, marketing, and services, as well as those areas

based on the application of advanced technology' (p. 69). Quan, Tao and Sloper (1995) continue along those lines by pointing out the decision of the Central Committee of the Party that 'education and training should meet the demands of national development and follow progressive trends of life-long continuing education in contemporary times' (p. 71).

6. *Promotion of research and extension activities in universities and colleges.* The difficulty here is the large number of small institutions that have been highly specialized and segregated throughout the years and the formal separation of research from teaching (Lam, Nung & Sloper, 1995). Higher education planners are working with government policy makers to investigate the feasibility of integration of a number of smaller institutions into larger, multidisciplinary universities. It is believed that this will help improve co-ordination between teaching, research and postgraduate study. Research expansion faces several key challenges. The teaching academic staff are often unqualified or unable to participate in research programmes and quality researchers are difficult to find. The laboratory technology is out of date, faulty or in disrepair, which leads to elimination of basic research activities and pushes the institutions to follow applied research, thus creating revenue and enlarging their funds (Ho, 1992; Fforde & de Vylder, 1996; Lam, Nung & Sloper, 1995; Sloper & Can, 1995).
7. *Consolidation and development of education and training activities in ethnic minority regions and areas with economic difficulties.* Minority groups have traditionally had difficulty with access to education in Viet Nam, as in other parts of the world. In 1998, ethnic minorities represented only 4% of the student population, while accounting for 13% of the actual Vietnamese population (Kelly, 1998). The government has been paying more attention to this in recent years and steps are being taken to improve the access to education in these areas, including incentives for teachers to work in regions with disadvantaged populations, improvement of resource allocation in those regions, and attempts to find a way to bring more students from those areas to the universities through specialized recruitment efforts.
8. *Strengthening of educational management by the government and Party organizations.* This goal is related to the redefinition of objectives for education and training. The government is taking a much more active role in the development of a new and improved education system ready to deal with the challenges of the market economy. The system is being restructured after the pattern of Western countries, particularly the United States. Notwithstanding, the socialist apparatus keeps its directive role—education of each person is still supposed to benefit society as a whole (Fforde & de Vylder, 1996; Hac, 1991, 1993; Sloper & Can, 1995).
9. *Upgrading of the teaching and managerial staff.* 'Based on evidence from survey research the majority of academic staff at present lack the knowledge, appropriate experience, and institutional resources to train professionals and other skilled labour relevant to the needs of the emerging market-oriented economy' (Nghi & Sloper, 1995, p. 114). Furthermore, a majority of instructors

are not comfortable with their abilities as teachers, they lack the resources to make their lectures interesting and they are not engaged in research activities that may broaden their knowledge base. On the other hand, those with sufficient abilities and knowledge, although enjoying the traditional Confucian respect for the teacher, have to face extreme financial hardship. Consequently, faced with an array of new opportunities in the private sector, teachers and prospective teachers alike are moving away from the teaching profession (Chuprov & Zubok, 1996; Fforde & de Vylder, 1996; Sloper & Can, 1995; World Bank, 1997). This issue, if not resolved, could easily threaten the success of the reforms (Walker, Tao & Bao, 1996).

10. *Renovation of educational administration.* The issue is a serious one and covers a wide range of problems, including the disproportionate ratios of academic staff to students and the relatively small numbers of managerial staff available to supervise the administration of the programmes (Kelly, 1998; Nghi & Sloper, 1995; Postlethwaite, 1995; Sloper & Can, 1995; Walker, Tao & Bao, 1996). A problematic area in itself is funding. First, there is the issue of the budgetary priorities of the State. Interestingly, a recent study by Moock, Patrinos and Venkataraman (1998) states that 'secondary academic and secondary vocational education are consistently poor investments' in Viet Nam (p. 17). This raises the question, however, of how students are going to be able to enter higher education unless the government commits itself actively to the development of the lower levels of the education system as a sphere of priority. Another important aspect is the amount of the public budget allocated to higher education, which is in general quite low. Out of the 11% allotted to education in a given year, only 2% was designated for the higher education system (Sang & Sloper, 1995). A second issue related to funding is the amount of money spent on salaries versus the amount spent on other non-salary items such as infrastructure, textbooks and supplies. As a general rule, the greatest portion of educational expenditure goes to salaries, leaving relatively little for such necessities as textbooks and other teaching materials (Fforde & de Vylder, 1996; Hac, 1991). Other issues related to funding are the need for Vietnamese educational institutions to charge tuition and student fees and the provision of loans, grants and other types of financial aid to students in need (Fforde & de Vylder, 1996; Ho, 1992; Sloper & Can, 1995). Previously, the centralized state paid for all aspects of education, while now the students and the institutions themselves are being forced to seek funding in other arenas. The Ministry of Education and Training determines the educational cost per student, but the actual amount paid varies from region to region, thus setting the stage for inequalities within the system. In some cases, students fail to find funds which would allow them to attend school. Thus, they end up entering the job market and forgoing their education (Fforde & de Vylder, 1996; Ho, 1992; Sloper & Can, 1995; World Bank, 1997).

Conclusion

In any country, economic transition is a process that cannot be undertaken without a clear commitment by the government. In Viet Nam, the government really had no choice but to make the move to a market economy, given the pressure from all parts of the economy. Looking again at the examples of Russia and China, their governments realized that they must be able to compete in the international economic marketplace in order to ensure the well-being of their countries and citizens (Chuprov & Zubok, 1996; 'Deng's China', 1997; Pepper, 1990; World Bank, 1997).

For Russia, that meant abandoning the communist system entirely, both politically and economically. In China, changes were made only in the economic area. Of course, each country is taking its own approach to dealing with the problems it encounters as it continues on the path towards a market economy.

A fascinating point that Sloper and Can (1995) make with regard to the situation in Viet Nam is that the higher education system is simply having to deal with many of the issues that Western universities have encountered in previous years. These include issues of democratization, participation, accountability, rationalization, quality and performance. Thus, they suggest that it may not be the transition from a planned to a market economy that is creating all of the problems, but rather the problems may just be a function of the evolving system of education in general. This is a topic that requires further investigation.

Whether the problems facing the education system are a result of economic transition or not, it will be interesting to see how Viet Nam fares as it continues on its path towards reformation. A fundamental question is exactly what role the socialist government will play as the transition continues. Some potential problem areas related to higher education are the role foreign universities will play in the development of new curricula relevant to a market economy; the exchange of scholars with other countries, particularly Western ones; the need for the creation of new textbooks that reflect the changes in the economic system and society as a whole; the welfare role of the universities under the socialist state versus the need for income generation; and the possible cultural and ideological repercussions of greater participation in the global economy.

Finally, one of the main goals of the socialist government is to preserve the Vietnamese culture. This is something I feel will be very controversial in the upcoming years. During my visit to Viet Nam in August 1998, the Vice-Rector of Hanoi University of Science indicated that this was a major concern among educators and policy-makers alike. The Vietnamese are very proud of their culture and history, and as Ministry of Education and Training official Pham Minh Hac (1995) asserts, 'in the bustle of social, political, and economic changes, there is an equal need for artists, musicians, and historians to help preserve and transmit the richness of the nation's heritage. Progress must take up this heritage and not sweep it aside' (p. 69). It is not likely that the government is going to stand idly by and watch those things deteriorate. The same holds true for China.

The situation in Russia has made it clear that abandoning the current system of government (whatever it may be) at the same time as embarking on the process of economic transition can have disastrous results (Williams, Chuprov & Staroverov, 1996). In Russia, the question is whether democracy will last long in the face of such economic hardship and social and political turmoil.

Accordingly, the Vietnamese and Chinese governments may be actually helping their countries by maintaining the socialist system intact, at least while they go through this difficult period of change. What remains to be seen is how well the socialist State will hold up against the inevitable influence of democratic ideology as the market economy begins to flourish. In China that still remains to be seen, but in Viet Nam the situation appears to be clearer. According to Goodman (1995), 'the main concern among Vietnamese leaders today is not whether, but *when* economic change will begin to have measurable political consequences' (p. 3).

TABLE 1. Higher education institutions in Viet Nam, 1991

Institution	Established	Location	Total academic staff/doctors	Students: full/part time
UNIVERSITIES				
Hanoi University	1956	Hanoi	853/333	2,930
HCM City University	1976	HCM City	677/79	2,148
Hue University	1976	Hue	228/18	836
Dalat University	1976	Dalat	138/8	619/953
Tay Nguyen University	1977	Ban Me Thuoc	222/1	1,027
Can Tho University	1977	Can Tho	603/22	3,136/397
College of Foreign Languages	1976	Hanoi	236/16	512
College of Law	1979	Hanoi	154/5	1,134
INSTITUTES AND COLLEGES				
<i>Engineering</i>				
Hanoi Polytechnic	1956	Hanoi	908/386	2,993/36
HCM City Polytechnic	1976	HCM City	622/100	4,942
Danang Polytechnic	1976	Danang	283/30	2,328/687
Institute of Civic Engineering	1966	Hanoi	499/131	1,909/655
Institute of Geology/ Mining Engineering	1966	Hanoi	427/117	1,058
Institute of Transport Engineering	1968	Hanoi	344/69	1,677/662
Institute of Marine Engineering	1966	Haiphong	448/23	1,289/395
Institute of Water Resources	1959	Hanoi	241/73	1,020/43
Hanoi Architecture Institute	1969	Hanoi	170/16	827
HCM City Architecture Institute	1976	HCM City	57/8	612/67
Thai Nguyen Institute of Engineering	1976	Thai Nguyen	176/10	923
College of Code Technology	1988	Hanoi	106/1	119
Haiphong College of In-Service Training	1966	Haiphong	No information	No information

Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery

Hanoi Institute of Agriculture	1956	Hanoi	492/102	1,626/991
Hue Institute of Agriculture	1976	Hue	178/11	960
Thai Nguyen Institute of Agriculture	1971	Thai Nguyen	176/10	923
HCM City Institute of Agriculture/Forestry	1976	HCM City	302/26	1,470/469
Institute of Forestry	1964	Ha Son Binh	189/24	648/358
Institute of Fishery	1966	Nha Trang	163/9	975

Economy

Hanoi Institute of Economy	1956	Hanoi	462/91	1,996/4,012
HCM City Institute of Economy	1976	HCM City	299/38	2,617
Hanoi Trade College	1979	Hanoi	280/28	1,221
Hanoi College of Foreign Trade	1965	Hanoi	100/7	449/20
Hanoi College of Finance & Commerce	1976	Hanoi	232/8	1,455
HCM City College of Finance	1977	HCM City	141/5	1,025/3,059

Medical Science and Health Related

Hanoi Institute of Medicine	1955	Hanoi	496/91	2,037
HCM City Institute of Medicine	1964	HCM City	562/11	3,461/540
Hanoi Institute of Pharmacy	No info.	Hanoi	132/4	632
Thai Nguyen Institute of Medicine	1979	Thai Nguyen	221/10	1,437/224
Hue Institute of Medicine	1976	Hue	221/4	1,231/136
Thai Binh Institute of Medicine	1979	Thai Binh	352/8	1,113
Haiphong Branch of Medicine Institute	No info.	Haiphong	114/1	653
HCM City Centre of Training Medicine	1990	HCM City	No information	166
College of Sport No. 1	1964	Ha Bac	124/11	No information
College of Sport No. 2	1985	HCM City	94/6	220

Culture and Fine Arts

Hanoi Institute of Music	1965	Hanoi	116/8	177
HCM City Institute of Music	1976	HCM City	124/3	168
Hanoi College of Fine Arts	1955	Hanoi	44	122
HCM City College of Fine Arts	1976	HCM City	50	126
College of Culture	1977	Hanoi	120/8	665
College of Industry & Applied Arts	1965	Hanoi	82	213
College of Theatre/Cinematography	1980	Hanoi	62/2	194

National Teachers College

Hanoi Pedagogical University	1955	Hanoi	758/201	2,017/180
Hanoi Teachers College No. 2	1967	Xuan Hoa	217/15	1,013/153
Foreign Language Teachers College	1967	Hanoi	441/21	2,485/223
Thai Nguyen Teachers College	1970	Thai Nguyen	262/25	1,254
Vinh Teachers College	1959	Vinh	376/55	1,095
Hue Teachers College	1979	Hue	269/13	1,258/275
Qui Nhon Teachers College	1981	Qui Nhon	197/7	1,023/194
HCM City Teachers College	1976	HCM City	469/33	2,211
HCM City Technical College	1976	HCM City	232/17	1,598/110

National Junior Teachers Colleges

Viet Bac J.T.C.	1970	Thai Nguyen	129/1	341
Tay Bac J.T.C.	1981	Son La	104	403
Sport No. 1 J.T.C.	1980	Hanoi	61/1	246
Music and Painting J.T.C.	1985	Hanoi	87	385
Technical J.T.C.	No info.	Hai Hung	67	385
Sport No. 2 J.T.C.	1984	HCM City	41	229
Kindergarten No. 1 J.T.C.	1983	Hanoi	64/1	168/43
Kindergarten No. 2 J.T.C.	1987	HCM City	38	240

Provincial Junior Teachers Colleges

Hanoi J.T.C.	1978	Hanoi	179	961
Haiphong J.T.C.	1978	Haiphong	74/2	302
Vinh Phu J.T.C. Engineer	1973	Phu Tho	82/1	429
Bac Ninh J.T.C.	1981	Bac Ninh	97	351
Quang Ninh J.T.C.	1980	Quang Ninh	56/1	255
Ha Son Binh	1978	Ha Son Binh	136	741
Hai Hung J.T.C.	1978	Hai Hung	107	612/205
Thai Binh J.T.C.	1978	Thai Binh	89	652
Ha Nam Ninh J.T.C.	1978	Nam Dinh	93	622
Thanh Hoa J.T.C.	1978	Thanh Hoa	173/2	782
Nghe Tinh J.T.C.	1978	Vinh	150	816
Hue J.T.C.	No info.	Hue	83	123
Danang J.T.C.	No info.	Danang	200	550
Binh Dinh J.T.C.	1978	Binh Dinh	133	913/134
Khanh Hoa J.T.C.	1978	Nha Trang	132/1	460
Lam Dong J.T.C.	1980	Dalat	92	422
Dong Nai J.T.C.	1987	Dong Nai	117/1	674
Long An J.T.C.	1988	Long An	81	459/247
Dong Thap J.T.C.	1984	Dong Thap	90	503
Song Be J.T.C.	1988	Song Be	72	623
Tay Ninh J.T.C.	1988	Tay Ninh	105	678
Dac Lac J.T.C.	1978	Ban Me Thuoc	105	373
Tien Giang J.T.C.	1987	Tien Giang	104	563
Ben Tre J.T.C.	1987	Ben Tre	102	511/135
Hau Giang J.T.C.	1986	Hau Giang	114	571
HCM City J.T.C.	1978	HCM City	319/1	1,009
Hoang Lien Son J.T.C.	No info.	No info.	72	623
Gia Lai Kontum J.T.C.	No info.	Plei Ku	76	239
Cuu Long J.T.C.	1980	Cuu Long	69	674

Other Provincial Colleges

Thanh Hoa J.T.C. of Agriculture	1980	Thanh Hoa	88/2	247/560
Hue Jr. College of Fine Arts	1967	Hue	43	68
Thanh Hoa J.T.C. of Medicine	1981	Thanh Hoa	82	155
Junior College of Police	1975	Ha Dong	61	578/347
Junior College of Banking	1961	Hanoi	144/3	459
Branch of Jr. College of Banking	No info.	HCM City	83	640

Source: Dao, Thiep & Sloper, 1995, p. 92-94.

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**PROFILES OF
FAMOUS EDUCATORS**

JOSEPH KI-ZERBO
(1922–)

JOSEPH KI-ZERBO

(1922–)

Amadé Badini

Self-made development¹

Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo is undeniably one of the contemporary African thinkers who have marked their epoch.

He is a classical intellectual moulded by the French school and university system during the colonial period who experienced in mind, body and intellect the agonies of the various abuses that colonization—its rationale, objectives and methods—inflicted upon the African, especially Black African, peoples after the turn of the century and even before. His keen awareness of his origins, his commitment to his country and people, his gratitude to his continent and the strong, healthy spirit of revolt smouldering within him combined to make him a leading activist in the early days of the national and African liberation struggles—though this constant activism was nurtured by the knowledge he had acquired in the colonial education system.

Ki-Zerbo is a true scholar indeed. He holds an *agrégation* in history and graduated from the Institute of Political Studies in Paris. Already at the time of his studies he personified the transdisciplinarity or ‘indisciplinarity’ (Edgar Morin) that later became the epistemological backdrop of the approach to African development issues that he was to advocate. ‘Knowledge of only one science amounts to possessing none’, as Descartes wrote in *Rules for the direction of the mind*. Ki-Zerbo has always

Original language: French

Amadé Badini (Burkina Faso)

Holder of a state doctorate in the arts and humanities. Senior lecturer at the University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Currently Director-General of the Higher Teacher-Training College of Koudougou (ENSK). Specializing in educational sciences, he has worked mainly on traditional African education, the pedagogies of oral expression and basic education in its qualitative aspects, lifelong education and adult literacy, the evaluation of education systems, non-formal education and early childhood education. He has participated in several UNESCO and UNICEF studies on Africa, Europe and Asia.

understood this and made it a way of life. He is a passionate reader and has shown a sustained intellectual curiosity about traditional African, Burkinabé and Samo life and wisdom; these have been for him an inexhaustible, stimulating source of knowledge and inspiration for current emancipation struggles and for further development.

After finishing his studies Ki-Zerbo remained true to the spirit of his generation of intellectuals and did not fall into the role of one who sits back, affectionately but passively extolling the folksy virtues of Africa, while self-importantly resting on the laurels bestowed by the former colonial rulers. On the contrary, he understood very quickly that, far from being an end in itself, the knowledge he had acquired was in fact a weapon, a means of participating alongside the African peoples in their struggle for development. Indeed, it placed an additional responsibility on his shoulders and though he had learnt 'at the White Man's school' to 'win without being right' (Cheikh Hamadou Kane), it stirred his conscience. As someone who had been lucky enough to go to school, he felt a moral, almost sacred duty to repay the debt he owed to his country. Ki-Zerbo is an African scholar and activist *par excellence*.

It would be tedious in a text such as this to take full stock Ki-Zerbo's life's works and thinking, especially as he is still alive and has many more strings to his bow. Rather, we shall attempt, at least initially, to describe his role as one of the outstanding educational theoreticians and practitioners of contemporary Africa.

As if to bear out the saying that 'no one is a prophet in his own land', Professor Ki-Zerbo is better known and appreciated abroad as an eminent, highly cultivated scientist and specialist in African history, on which he is an authority, than in his native Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta). Yet he stands as a symbolic figure of contemporary Black African struggles and in his own country has almost legendary status, casting his aura, omnipresent if sometimes discreet, over all the great events of Burkina Faso public life.

Ki-Zerbo has always been present in the national political arena, in particular through the National Liberation Movement, the party he set up in 1958. He has directly or indirectly influenced the course of events, either quietly, masterminding developments from behind the scenes, or taking a bold public stance as a convinced (if not always convincing) political player during the infrequent periods of various length when, thanks to democratic trends, political struggles and debates took place in the open.

Like most of the intellectuals of his generation, Ki-Zerbo is a politician but he is also and primarily a theoretician, a player in and fervent advocate of African history, about which he has worked hard to enlighten major intellectual circles, especially in Europe. History as an academic discipline has served as a constant paradigm in his extraordinarily full intellectual life and in the invariably bold positions he has taken on all the fundamental issues of the day concerning his continent and his country. These include political and development matters but, above all, education, to which he has made important theoretical and practical contributions.

The full and impressive variety of his work as an African historian and activist during the years of decolonization helps to provide a deeper insight into the theoretical and practical contribution that Ki-Zerbo has made to education in Africa.

Intellectual hallmarks of his thought

From the outset, one question about Ki-Zerbo's intellectual life and, more specifically, his thinking on education persists: what are the origins of his insistence on the idea of 'thinking for oneself' that he argues is the prime basis for all authentic human action and has special validity for Africa? The answer can be found in his personal history, the education he received from his traditional society, his clear preference for the classic authors of Western literature (ancient Greek philosophy and Enlightenment thought), the great pride he takes in belonging to the continent that was once the cradle of humanity and the impact of the historical process of decolonization. These seem to be the main determinants of his intellectual and social position, which may be summed up as a plea for Black Africa's identity, independence and freedom.

Ki-Zerbo can be said to have internalized early—perhaps in reaction to the dominant ideology with its particular perception and treatment of Africa and Africans—Kant's Enlightenment maxim: '*Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use your own understanding!' (*What is enlightenment?*). The maxim that one must always think for oneself, in other words refuse the irresponsibility of servile acquiescence and, instead, assume the responsibility of reasoning independently, finds expression in the constant drive to seek within oneself and by oneself the touchstone of truth and the pathways to emancipation.

Hence Ki-Zerbo's aversion to emulation and to 'turnkey' or 'ready-made' development and his advocacy of the spirit of creativity, imagination and 'self-made' development, that is endogenous development. Hence, too, his apparently contradictory position, which some find hard to explain, in seeking both to respect and to call upon tradition (the past, customs or received wisdom) and to make the necessary leap into the unknown. It is true that he regularly stresses the importance of viewing the past as a mere frame of reference to be taken into consideration only insofar as it places individuals in relation to their 'roots' and encourages them to realize 'from whence they come' in order to know 'where they are going' and 'how to get there'.

Depending on the political, historical and cultural context of people's lives and the extent to which they are driven by the need to wage an ongoing fight for emancipation, the issue at stake is to make individual African pupils or researchers aware that they are capable of thinking and that 'thought can only develop by itself'. All development is from the self to the self: this is the essence of the Socratic spirit engaged in making each person discover his or her power and wealth before seeking it in others, whether they be professors or foreign powers.

Ki-Zerbo's insistence on this approach as a necessary starting point for any reflection or useful action should not obscure the fact that the above-mentioned con-

tradition is only apparent. Ki-Zerbo is well aware that people, as he stresses, must avoid locking themselves into the straitjacket of Kant's 'logical egoism' that he asserts encourages them to 'think alone', to turn inwards, be blind to all else and isolate themselves in solitary subjectivism—even though the author of *Anthropology* does recognize that 'thinking under the iron rule of a foreign power amounts to not thinking at all'. The current historical situation rules out this kind of extreme, and so does objective thought, i.e. truth: those who do not verify their opinions and who do not come into contact with others and compare their views are unable to arrive at truth and thus to contribute to their own critical reflection and their own development or that of their country. The exercise of freedom of thought is indeed *a personal matter* but even so it is not *a private matter*. It is *a public matter*.

The contradiction nevertheless persists, above all in cultural and psychological terms: today's African intellectual is, deep down, a person of contradiction, lost between traditional roots that are slipping out of reach and a future that is both filled with uncertainty and slow to arrive because the present itself is a problem. At least Ki-Zerbo has had the merit of acknowledging this and experiencing it, not merely in a sentimental way but in practice and in his thinking on politics and education, as his academic training as a historian predisposed him to do.

Ki-Zerbo's direct involvement in the field of education began with his professional career as a history teacher. After passing the *agrégation* in 1956, he taught at the Lycée Buffon in Paris, the Lycée Pothier in Orléans and the Lycée Van Vollenhoven in Dakar (Senegal) before going on to the Lycée Donka in Conakry (Guinea) (1958–59) and finally, the Lycée Philippe Zinda Kaboré in Ouagadougou (then Upper Volta).

Of these milestones in his career, his short stay in Conakry, the capital of Sékou Touré's Guinea, merits some attention for obvious reasons. He was one of the intellectual patriots who, in a surge of militant pan-Africanism, rallied to the banner of Guinea as it rejected the French constitution on 28 September 1958. France immediately subjected Guinea to reprisals for having said 'No' to the referendum proposed by General de Gaulle. All French key personnel, many of whom were teachers, were subsequently recalled. For these young revolutionary intellectuals it was a question of asserting their solidarity with the Guinean Democratic Party and the people of Guinea, their anti-imperialist outlook and their determination to work to achieve genuine African independence.

But very soon President Sékou Touré (Tenaille, 1979, p. 193–95) made life difficult for them. He was terrified of intellectuals, whom he rightly or wrongly considered 'counter-revolutionaries', 'agents of the Fifth Column armed by international imperialism', who were there to destabilize his government and subvert his revolution. He may not have been altogether wrong, even though there were instances of clear over-reaction and misjudgement. As a result, foreign key personnel very soon returned to their countries while some Guinean intellectuals chose to go into exile.

Ki-Zerbo spent only one year in Guinea and eventually, in 1960, returned home to newly 'independent' Upper Volta, a country that certainly needed him just as

much. The school enrolment rate in Upper Volta was barely 4% and there was a critical shortage of key personnel at all levels of national life. Everything still had to be done for this ill-treated former colony that at best had been used for the development of neighbouring colonies in a way, of course, that suited the interests of the colonial power.

In the field of education in particular, two main challenges urgently needed to be resolved: the need to increase educational provision (by building children's school structures and by setting up teacher-training colleges) and to improve the quality and efficiency of an education system that was a faithful replica of the colonial school system. To break with this model was difficult for both objective and subjective reasons, even though such a break was—and, alas, still is—necessary.

After the unhappy experience in Guinea, Ki-Zerbo—at the time the only holder of an *agrégation* in Upper Volta and for this respected in his country—committed himself fully to the renewal of education in Africa. The aim to which he was to dedicate his entire life was to promote genuine and harmonious development for the benefit of the peoples of Africa and his country. To this end, he has participated in the training of the future cadres that the country has needed and will need, contributed to the definition and later to the provision of democratic education, which he sees as the driving force of the development and emancipation of peoples, and played a key role in inter-African institutions and international forums for which education and culture are crucial concerns (OAU, UNESCO and UNICEF).

In Upper Volta he became successively, and often cumulatively with his teaching duties (at the secondary school and later at the Higher Education Centre of Ouagadougou), Chairperson of the National Commission for UNESCO, Schools Inspector and finally Director-General of National Education. At the African and global levels, he was Chairperson of the History and Archaeology Committee of the First Congress of Africanists in Accra in 1962, a member of the bureau of the Congress of Africanists (1962–69), Chairperson of the Symposium on the African Encyclopaedia (1962) and Chairperson of the Advisory Commission for the Reform of University Curricula in French-speaking Africa. Later, he was one of the originators and the first Secretary-General of the African and Malagasy Council on Higher Education (CAMES) (Ki-Zerbo, 1978, back cover). Through the standardization of higher education curricula and the common definition of career promotion conditions for university teachers, this inter-African institution contributes to the achievement of African unity through education. The present list of Ki-Zerbo's responsibilities is far from exhaustive: he is a man who knows education in Africa 'inside out', with its problems and their causes, and has not finished putting forward proposals to resolve these issues.

As we can see, the epistemological benchmarks of Professor Ki-Zerbo's thought are self-confidence based on 'self-knowledge', 'thinking by oneself for oneself', a sound understanding of otherness, critical reference to the past and the irreplaceable importance of research based on popular African wisdom. It is, therefore, not difficult to see why he ascribes so much importance to education, in the full sense of the term, armed as he is with his conviction that 'the key factors of African

promotion' are 'education and training' and 'African unity' (Ki-Zerbo, 1978, p. 632).

Education theory and practice according to Ki-Zerbo

Ki-Zerbo seems to have adopted a systemic approach in both his thinking and his proposed action: regular linkage between theory and practice; interdependence between the past, the present and the future; a global and integrative perception of man and development; and the adoption of a unitary approach by the African continent to its holistic and harmonious development.

His concern with transdisciplinarity reflects this very principle. In Africa, perhaps more than elsewhere, there are no disciplines, there are only problems!

Professor Ki-Zerbo has produced many specialized documents systematically devoted to education, such as *Educate or perish* (1990), but his thoughts on education are to be seen in all his works, if not always explicitly, always aptly. He thus reveals his strongly single-minded representation of education, a transverse 'phenomenon' par excellence. For a deeper insight into his thinking, it is worth taking a closer look at some of his more influential works, such as *History of Black Africa* (1978) and *Other people's mats (for an endogenous development in Africa)* (1992).

For example, it is in his famous book on the history of the Black continent that we can grasp the significance and importance of education as a means, a working tool (both theoretical and practical), rather than as an end. It is the vital link in the long process that should provide the answer to the question that he certainly considers most crucial: 'How can one be born again?' The question may sound absurd, and yet it betrays a certain nostalgia for the past; it is an existential question about the causes of the present situation of the continent that was once the cradle of humanity² but is now lagging behind for want of science, technology and knowledge.

Although Ki-Zerbo believes that African unity is paramount in relation to education and training, he looks more readily to intellectuals than to politicians to establish an 'autonomous, creative and progressive African neo-civilization', the only one capable of building a momentum for development. He has faithfully held to this conviction in addition to the other conditions for development, derived primarily from the vast field of knowledge. Of the three types of 'diversion' which he denounces as impediments to African renewal and which must be avoided—'sterile diversion towards the past', 'economic diversion' and 'technocratic diversion'—the first is the one to be avoided as a matter of priority.

Each of these 'diversions' should elicit a specific intellectual reaction: combating and overcoming 'the museographical complex' about the past (which consists in physically recording the past instead of communing with it as a source of inspiration and possibly seeing it as a problem to be understood and solved); remaining attentive to 'the non-aligned' people, the custodians of 'genuine culture', a culture which ought not be piously admired, but, on the contrary, should be thought out, rationally analysed, even criticized before it becomes the generator of the new African

culture. The latter will be neither the 'culture of our ancestors' nor the one that is attempting to impose itself on us without our consent and sometimes against our will.³ This shows just how significant a role, indeed how heavy an historical responsibility, Ki-Zerbo expects the African intelligentsia to have in education in Africa.

By 'education', Ki-Zerbo does not mean only Western-style school education, but also traditional education that has produced so many intellectuals, scholars and scientists (Ki-Zerbo, 1978, p. 642). Schooling, on its own, does not meet all of a person's educational needs, indeed far from it! It is merely one of several opportunities; while being certainly the best organized, it does not follow that it is the best opportunity—this is especially true for Africa. He nonetheless often refers to school and university education and scientific research in his ongoing reflections on the conditions of development in Africa. In this regard, on good argumentative and moral grounds he attacks certain non-African schools of thought and intellectuals that, still today, persist in denying the urgent need for or the merits of developing African university education. Instead they place emphasis on basic education and elementary technical (especially agricultural) education, on the debatable pretext that Africa is too poor to sustain universities and that it is basically agricultural.⁴

Effective universal basic education is still a priority for a number of African States, given the low school enrolment rate. And literacy instruction is still a pressing development issue, considering the state of illiteracy affecting so many adults, especially in the countryside. But, left to themselves, without the stimulating contribution of the universities and scientific research that would ensure the necessary shifts in emphasis and adjustments, basic education and literacy instruction will reach an impasse and be discredited, eventually causing the disaffection and turning away of learners and their families. To be effective and efficient, they must undergo the necessary changes in structure, functioning, content and aims in order to achieve the cultural and psychological emancipation of their beneficiaries and meet their social expectations. As we shall later show in more detail, Ki-Zerbo has done a great deal in this field as well, especially in Burkina Faso.

In the meantime, we shall merely point out that he entrusts to the intellectuals, i.e. academics and researchers, a special task, the task of being leaders 'of a spiritual migration without uprooting', to be accomplished through the medium of education that they have received and impart. It will be achieved first of all through 'Africanization' of curricula and the implementation of a method of teaching that will focus primarily on cultivating a 'new spirit', a spirit of observation conducive to creation by unleashing the imagination and the healthy curiosity of children. Such a method perforce involves the introduction of African languages.⁵

The allusion to the limits of traditional African education, including the veneration of memory and excessive introversion, is obvious here, as is the denunciation of contemporary education, which is provided almost exclusively in French and strongly resists the use of national languages. In fact, it is now recognized that, although having had its virtues, pre-colonial education is inadequate to cope with the sheer range and astonishing mobility of the knowledge and references that must

be assimilated and the requirements of contemporary science and culture. The oral mode of communication (the only one used in traditional education) cultivates memorization, but it is less effective than the written word in fostering intelligence and sustained reflection.

Here again, universities must play the 'leading role': through science and technology they must, among other things, strive to link classical education to popular education on the basis of systematic acknowledgement of the real needs and aspirations of the masses and the requirements of the contemporary world. It is also their responsibility to usher in the new culture that Africa now needs, one that demands sublimation of the past.

On account of all these theoretical principles, we feel that Ki-Zerbo's contribution to the theoretical and practical emancipation of education can be aptly summed up by the following two equivalent bywords: 'self-made', as opposed to 'turnkey', development and 'endogenous development'.

Practical significance and implications of Ki-Zerbo's standpoint

In terms of meaning, these bywords are expressions that encapsulate what has become a real obsession for Ki-Zerbo, namely the absolute primacy of education and the equally imperative need for self-reliance. They recur like a leitmotif in the work of this African intellectual who, proud of his origins and aware of the mission to be accomplished for his country, is deeply concerned about the careful handling needed for the present to 'process' the past in order to prepare for the future.

While, as we believe, the first byword has been sufficiently explained, some attention must be given to the second, if only to remove a measure of ambiguity owing partly to the way in which the epithet 'endogenous' could be interpreted. First, 'endogenous' does not mean 'autarky' or turning inward, or unilateral and obsessive reference to the past or to the 'traditional' way of life. Rather, it implies self-assertion as a preliminary to any dealings with others.

The limitations of the 'hand-out' or 'turnkey factory' policy and its harmfulness to Africa's development are sufficiently obvious. For a long time and all too often, others have thought for Africa and in its stead, confining it to a position of being perpetually 'under age'; sometimes it has been even considered incapable of knowing what it wants. The assumption is that people can be made happy 'behind their backs', without their participation or even having their views listened to. Ki-Zerbo refuses to accept for Africa and the Africans 'the artificial limbs that make it unnecessary for us to use our own legs' (Ki-Zerbo, 1992, p. iv). Of course he does not object to international aid and co-operation among peoples; 'contemporary civilization' is also the civilization of a world seen as a global village with its necessary and ever-growing interdependence. Nonetheless everyone must add their stone to the edifice and have their say without risk of being over-ridden and subjected to the dictates of a few.

The kind of 'endogenous development' referred to here means self-develop-

ment achieved through research, training and practical action and a rejection of childlike imitation, misplaced nostalgia and isolationism. All these are the pitfalls of tendencies still to be found among many African leaders (politicians or decision-makers and intellectuals alike): the easy but deceptive tendency to copy or mimic what happens elsewhere; the tendency to lament the past, those misnamed 'good old days'; the tendency to seek in vain 'the African path to development' by isolating Africa ideologically from the general movement of an epoch to which by necessity it belongs; and, lastly, the tendency to expect benefit from the fruits of human labour that are in fact the accomplishments of some more than others. A common African saying quoted by Ki-Zerbo tells us that 'to sleep on other people's mats is like sleeping on the ground'. Even if, as Saint-Exupéry would say, being human entails being proud of the victories of other people, still, one must be aware of having taken part in the struggle. And this is exactly what Ki-Zerbo recommends for Africa: 'endogenous development' implies and requires that it should shoulder its responsibilities and bear them freely, while making its contribution to the construction of humanity.

The fact is that on many battlefronts Africa has been conspicuous by its absence, or has only appeared under cover, preferring to be under the wing of a foreign country. The excuses given in the past to justify this shortcoming are hardly admissible today. In principle Africa now has the indispensable prerequisites needed for responsible, specific participation in development: international sovereignty and the technical and intellectual skills. We say 'in principle', however, because our potential still remains all too often in the virtual realm of possibilities without managing to take hold in reality. Here again, research and development and university education will certainly be necessary. 'The mere fact that 85% of research on Africa is conducted outside Africa shows that this continent is cut off from itself and above all from its grey matter' (Ki-Zerbo, 1992).

The African brain-drain, the extraneousness of research in relation to the realities and concerns of the continent, and the paucity of the resources allocated to science are clearly among the structural causes of the tardy and flawed development of African countries. The Balkanization of African universities, a regrettable manifestation of the Balkanization of the entire continent, further compounds the situation. It is urgently necessary, if not vital, to include universities among the preserves of national sovereignty. Unfortunately, most higher education establishments and scientific research centres are still financially dependent. Worse still, their policies are out of alignment with their priorities. No one has had the courage to assert this and denounce the present system better than Ki-Zerbo. Even more importantly, he is one of the few African intellectuals who have not only noted this painful fact but have also thrown themselves into action. In addition to the part he played in founding CAMES, several other facts attest to this commitment: first, at the conceptual level, through his constant references to 'self-made development', 'research-development', 'endogenous development', 'a learning society' and other such concepts, and then through his establishment and leadership of various educational and research centres.

Ki-Zerbo has not been content to criticize and indulge in intellectual speculation and facile theorizing; he has also taken practical action on the ground.

Ki-Zerbo, an educational practitioner in Africa

One may wonder whether in Ki-Zerbo's case educational practice preceded educational theory or the latter inspired the former. The question is far from gratuitous and the answer is by no means obvious. He was a teacher in one form or another at various levels throughout his working career, but all teachers do not become educational theoreticians or philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Abdou Moumouni, Pierre Erny, Guy Belloncle or others. On the other hand, many educational 'theoreticians' have never been famous teachers or educators, for example Rousseau; others again, like Kane, confined themselves to just a few thoughts on the problem in their novels. As far as the African continent is concerned, Ki-Zerbo is one of those intellectuals who have successfully combined theory and practice and have been committed to putting their philosophical and political ideas and convictions into practice rigorously and consistently.

Although Ki-Zerbo has never been Burkina Faso's minister of education, his presence, implicit in some instances and explicit in others, in the determination of education policy has been constant. For example, we strongly suspect that he was the author of, and most importantly the brain behind, the first genuine reform of the country's education system in 1970, after the inconclusive experiment with rural education (1962–75); in fact, the general lines of emphasis of the 1979 reform reappeared nearly verbatim in the famous study that he directed for UNESCO–UNICEF entitled *Educate or perish*. The key ideas are the same: integral and comprehensive education encompassing all levels (basic, secondary and university education); democratization of education; linkage between education and training; narrowing the gaps between rural and urban dwellers through and in education; establishment and leadership of a 'learning society' and social integration of the school; enhancement of African culture and action to overcome an inferiority complex through the adoption of national languages and a positive interpretation of African history; education for democracy and for the defence of human rights; development of technical education, vocational training and scientific research; and unity of the continent, the main gateway being education against African disintegration.

Ki-Zerbo has remained faithful to his convictions regarding education and puts them into practice. His most fundamental credo seems to be that 'we do not develop, we develop ourselves'. His training as a historian as much as the history of his race, his continent, his country, and indeed his own personal history have all played a part in this. That same conviction led him to found the *Centre d'études pour le développement Africain* (CEDA—Centre for African Development Studies) in Ouagadougou in 1980. CEDA, run by Burkinabé and African intellectuals, was set up as a forum for debate on a number of themes linked to development issues. This body, which he leads with young researchers in various disciplines, aims to become, through its research-action approach, a focus for cultural renewal in Burkina Faso.

In addition to his work with this centre, Professor Ki-Zerbo continues to play a leading role in national intellectual life by giving numerous lectures at various venues, whenever his wisdom and competence are required. A pilgrim to the end, he attends most African meetings, where he is graced, to his legitimate pride, with the honorific title of 'doyen', a symbol of recognition rich with connotations in Africa.

At the continental level, he helped to found the *Centre de recherche pour le développement endogène* (CRDE—Research Centre for Endogenous Development), which is based in Dakar and significantly has as its motto 'we do not develop, we develop ourselves'. Looking beyond this motto, which in itself embodies a whole philosophy of struggle and life, this NGO, established on an inter-African and interdisciplinary basis, could stand as the tangible expression of Ki-Zerbo's high level of commitment and his life long search for meaning. This is revealed in the founding principles of CRDE: 'Research is an integral part of development, as one of the components of the right to development and also as a structural stage in all positive change. Without endogenous research, there is no endogenous development. There is no progress, even material progress, without theoretical reflection, without science and awareness of practice.'⁶ CRDE's mission is to break with a practice, a pattern that has unfortunately become the norm for African organizations, in which speeches, declarations of intent and easy accusations occupy the centre. The aim here is to apprehend the contradictions, issues, risks and present likelihood of non-development in all fields; to bring up to date, by means of practical studies, the dynamics of the internal and external reasons why Africa is ailing, in particular by analysing the linkages between them. The Centre's statutes proclaim that it is necessary to contribute to the building of a society that is both a positive contemporary version of Africanness and a positive African version of 'contemporary civilization'. And Ki-Zerbo adds: 'We thereby wish to participate in self-development through research, training and practical action' (Ki-Zerbo, 1992).

What words could sum up better the intellectual approach and devoted commitment of a man whose profound optimism is equalled only by his faith in the future of the African continent? The future will either require education or it will not exist.

Conclusion

Professor Ki-Zerbo's philosophy of education is, by its nature, a set of principles and professions of faith. Although his bold analyses specify conditions that are certainly realistic and achievable, they still come within the province of theory—a practical theory, but a theory nonetheless. What will be its fate? Now that the necessary components of education in Africa have been defined, we ask about its future. When it comes to actual implementation, one vital factor has yet to come into play. It should have been confronted once the debates and research by intellectuals such as those called upon by CRDE and CEDA had been completed. It is the political factor. The time has not yet come when, short of having 'philosophers' in power, the people in power are 'philosophers'.

The difficulties that the philosopher Ki-Zerbo has encountered and still encounters on the national political scene seem to give cause for some pessimism. His party (successively called the National Liberation Movement, the Progressive Union of Upper Volta and finally the Party for Democracy and Progress), with its heartland in the small intellectual bourgeoisie, is obviously finding it difficult to elicit a response among the people at large, even though, under the banner of his principle of 'critical realism', Ki-Zerbo has never been totally absent from the national political scene (Tenaille, 1970, p. 203).

Furthermore, the continent's political independence—one of the necessary conditions for thoroughgoing reforms in all fields, especially that of human resources training and the free definition of options for endogenous development—is still an unresolved issue, as is democracy.

But 'the struggle goes on', as Ki-Zerbo likes to repeat at the end of each of his political statements. With constantly renewed strength, we must persist in repeating the truth. Imperceptibly it makes headway, irrespective of obstacles. It will gradually make its mark on education in Africa. Undeniable achievements have been made here and there and there is a growing awareness, even among political decision-makers, of the inescapable need for 'new African education'. The road ahead will certainly be a long one but there is room for hope: one day, 'Utopia' might become reality.

Notes

1. 'Le développement clés en tête' ('self-made development', literally 'the keys to development are in our head') is the title given by Professor Ki-Zerbo to the paper submitted to the symposium organized by the Centre for Research on Endogenous Development (CRDE) in Bamako in 1989 and published in *Other people's mats* (Ki-Zerbo, 1992, p. 3–67).
2. Ki-Zerbo, 1992, p. 22–24. In particular p. 23: 'The fact is that the first scientific techniques were brought to the world from the African cradle, and continued to be until the millennia during which Egypt was the teacher of Greece and the entire Mediterranean Basin.'
3. 'It is no longer so much a question of extolling negritude but of acting. It is not a question of bemoaning a lost paradise because there is no lost paradise. It is not a question of crooning about our pain or of celebrating our past values, but of transforming our own collective self in order to there find reasons for hope.' (Ki-Zerbo, 1978, p. 643.)
4. Ki-Zerbo alludes directly to certain international institutions (World Bank and IMF) and certain authors like Guy Belloncle, the author of *Education in Black Africa* (Belloncle, 1984).
5. According to Ki-Zerbo, French should increasingly be learnt 'as a modern foreign language taking the substratum of the African languages into account' (1978, p. 642).
6. Principles of CRDE, referred to by Ki-Zerbo in *Other people's mats* (Ki-Zerbo, 1992).

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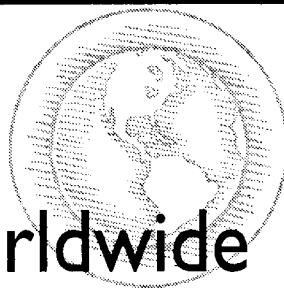
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