

2010

Foreword [to Volume 6 of SIE Student Journal]

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Recommended Citation

Bajaj, M. (2010). Foreword, SIE Student Journal. Volume 6 (Global Discourse, Local Practice: The Global Development of Access, Equity and Quality in Education in the 21st Century), Fall 2010.

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Foreword

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Education is a fundamental human right. It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century, which are affected by rapid globalization.

Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All, (UNESCO, 2000).

The pendulum has swung in global discourse from education as a means of cultivating “human capital” inherently linked to perceived economic growth (Schultz, 1980) to education as a fundamental “human right” (UNESCO, 2004). Global discourse increasingly reflects the way that exclusion from schooling reflects social exclusion and unequal citizenship based on race, ethnicity, caste, religion, gender, and ability, among others. Human rights compacts offer a guarantee between the state and the citizen, and in education, this entails the provision of free and compulsory schooling (of some relative quality) for all children. Recent trends in international education and development indicate, however, that the realm of schooling has substantially widened to include many more actors than just the state and its citizens and residents. From non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to celebrities (e.g. Madonna and Oprah Winfrey) to mountaineers (e.g. Greg Mortenson) to corporations to religious organizations of every stripe, everyone has their hands in education across the globe.

This timely and relevant issue of the Society of International Education’s Journal interrogates issues of educational access, quality, and equity in light of the widening field of participants in education globally. The articles in this issue are situated within many larger questions about the role and nature of education, including:

- How has globalization and unequal development affected the ability of states to provide national education?
- What role do democratic processes play in policy reform from ‘below,’ when mandates are imposed from the ‘top-down’ by international organizations?
- What mechanisms of accountability exist for students and parents

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- involved in NGO or private educational initiatives?**
- To what extent are the human rights guarantees enshrined in international documents, such as, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) eroded by the presence of non-state actors as guarantors of fundamental rights?**

**Society for International Education Journal, vol. 6, no. 1.
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It is amidst this context that the authors in this issue offer fresh and insightful perspectives into the relationships among international organizations, national and state governments, civil society, private universities, market forces (broadly conceived), and students and their families.

Rattana Lao provides us with an in-depth glimpse into the World Bank and the shifts in funding priorities over the past five decades. She analyzes five documents that offer evidence of tensions, contestations, and a multiplicity of perspectives within an institution that is, arguably, the most influential in international education today. Lao notes the rise in the Bank's significance as an educational policy-maker, that is of late, has sought to dominate national reforms and, in many instances, bypass national governments in order to work directly with civil society. Lao reminds us that the Bank is not a monolithic structure and that it has to attend to its roles as a lending bank, a multilateral organization, and a bureaucratic organization.

Donna Tonini takes Lao's perspectives and applies them to a single country, Tanzania, to explore how short-sighted policies, dictated from above, result in unsustainable educational reform. Examining the role of the World Bank as a stakeholder in domestic education policy related to secondary school fees, Tonini argues that policy-makers ultimately sacrificed educational quality for increased enrollment. The consequence of this decision was a heightened burden for students and families who then shouldered the costs of secondary schooling in Tanzania.

Radhika Iyengar complicates our understanding of global mandates on national policy by utilizing 'backward mapping' to analyze Education for All initiatives in four states in India. Rather than the imposition of a one-size-fits-all approach critiqued by Lao and Tonini, Iyengar demonstrates the indigenization of global discourse through India's 1992 National Educational Policy and the subsequent decentralization of reforms to state governments, some of who partnered with NGOs and foreign donors to achieve the desired outcomes. Her article argues that a multi-strategy policy that involves multiple stakeholders has considerable benefits.

Stephen Tippett and Dennis Yang present two very different educational interventions, driven by the market, but with diametrically opposed interactions with the state. In the English Opens Doors (EOD) program in Chile, Tippett notes that an initiative of a national Ministry of Education is implemented by the United Nations and implemented by volunteer teachers from overseas. The nation-state mandates—but outsources implementation—of a reform intended, presumably, to improve the marketability of Chilean students through the learning of the English language. Tippett takes us deep into the hearts and minds of English language volunteers for an insightful glimpse into their motivations.

While Chilean policy-makers rely on English language teachers to actualize their broader state goals, the Japanese response to American universities in the 1980s and 1990s presents a very different case. Driven by market forces to expand their operations in order to generate new revenue, American universities found a lukewarm reception in Japan, as highlighted by Yang. He notes that, despite then-Prime Minister Nakasone’s desire to “internationalize Japanese society,” Japanese students in American universities faced considerable challenges as compared to their counterparts in Japanese universities (e.g. ineligibility for grants and transportation stipends, etc.). Ultimately, Yang notes the decline of most all American university campuses in Japan, offering a timely historical case as many universities are looking to the Middle East and Asia for expansion.

The relationships and tensions among the widening field of stakeholders in international education merits further consideration, critical analysis, and empiricism. This volume of the SIE graduate student research Journal is a welcome step in the direction of identifying and elucidating the ways in which these stakeholders interact—sometimes to the benefit and other times to the detriment—of the ‘rights-bearers,’ namely: students and families across the globe. Research in the field of International and Comparative Education importantly exposes the dynamic relationship between schools and societies. Ultimately, such research should inform new directions and possibilities for the expanded access, enhanced quality, and greater equity of educational systems globally.

Reference

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