

Editorial

The field of education and international development is experiencing a particularly vibrant time as we approach 2015 - the year in which the Education for All goals and the Millennium Development goals are supposed to have been reached. The task of setting the agenda for the post-2015 era has set in motion widespread discussions about what is of value in education, how that might be measured and the global obligations to support it. Centring on the educational challenges of the low and middle-income countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America, critical issues include how to ensure access for out-of-school populations, the role of the private sector, ensuring gender equality, use of technology, teacher education and learning metrics. Research in this area is crucial in order to inform these debates, and ensure a strong evidence base to underpin policy and practice.

This special issue brings together five articles emerging from the United Kingdom Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET) graduate student conference held at the Institute of Education, University of London in October 2012. The conference aimed to provide a forum for master's and doctoral students to share their ongoing and recent research on education and international development in a setting that supported growing researchers while also providing rigorous academic discussion and analysis. Delegates attended from a number of higher education institutions and represented a broad range of nationalities and professional backgrounds. Over 40 papers were presented on themes that are at the forefront of research on international education and development, including privatisation (low-fee private schools and public-private partnerships), gender and education, teacher training, education and conflict, and citizenship and rights.

This special issue brings together five authors carrying out postgraduate research studies at different universities in the UK, combining a diversity of national origins, personal experiences and research foci. The five articles address distinct and complimentary areas of the field, bound together by a common concern for the interactions of the global policyscape with local contexts. So, for example, Tanvir Ahmed analyses the uptake of constructivist theories of learning by secondary science teachers in Bangladesh, while Lung Li assesses the ways in which adoption of new information and communications technologies by university level teachers in China is embedded in cultural norms.

In Elizabeth Molloy's study of teacher education in the Gambia, the interaction between macro and micro levels manifests itself through the need for teachers to navigate the gap between public discourses of gender equality and the dynamics of family life. Gabriella Pinto, in turn, focuses on the problems in human rights education of not engaging sufficiently with local contexts, and the misconceptions of the daily lives and struggles of the Palestinian people. Finally, Romina de Angelis focuses on the interaction of the Indian national context with global neo-liberalism, and the problematic emergence of schools on a public-private partnership model.

Emerging from all of these studies is an overwhelming sense of the importance of in-depth research to underpin the task of expanding access to education of quality for all across the globe. The steamroller model of global education policy is problematic from multiple moral and political perspectives, but ultimately is highly unlikely to succeed, given the barriers, brakes and bottlenecks of local dynamics. A deep and nuanced understanding of these local contexts - as evidenced by the articles brought together in this special issue - is key to the practical task of ensuring educational justice for all.

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