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Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries

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Researching the Quality of Education in Low Income Countries: Issues of theory and method

Leon Tikly
University of Bristol

5 Large Scale Projects

- Implementing Curriculum Change
  South Africa, Rwanda, Pakistan
- Use of ICTs in Basic Education
  Rwanda, South Africa, Chile
- Language and Literacy Development
  Tanzania, Ghana
- Leadership & Management of Change
  Ghana, Tanzania, Pakistan
- School Effectiveness & Education Quality
  Bristol-led, Southern & Eastern Africa

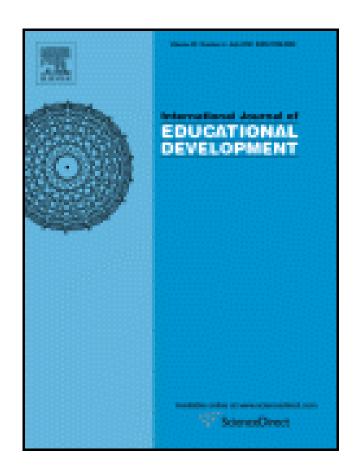# Small Scale Projects

- Index of Inclusion, Tanzania

- School Design, South Africa & Ghana

- NEPAD *e*schools, Rwanda & Kenya

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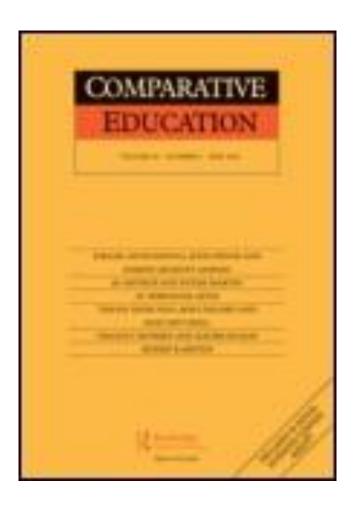http://www.edqual.org

Education Quality for Social Justice
Guest editors:
Angeline M. Barrett
& Leon Tikly

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Researching Education Quality in Low Income Countries: Politics, Processes and Practice
Special Issue Editors: Angeline M. Barrett & Leon Tikly

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COMPARATIVE EDUCATION

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Social justice, capabilities and the quality of education in low income countries

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Purpose

To trace the links between theory and practice in CIE research through a critical examination of three contrasting approaches to understanding the quality of education, namely the human capital, rights based and social justice approaches.

Elements of the postcolonial critique in CIE

- Continuing legacy of colonialism and of postcolonial elites
- Impact of economic, political and cultural globalisation on postcolonial societies
- Dominance of western *episteme*
- Recognition of the complexities of identity and of disadvantage based on 'race', class, gender, disability, rurality, sexual orientation etc.
- Attempt to access the views of the most marginalised – can the subaltern speak?
- Need to be self-reflexive and critical in the research process itself

Dominant approaches to conceptualising quality

- Two broad approaches towards understanding education quality
  - Human capital
  - Rights based approaches
- In reality there are overlaps between the two broad approaches and both often co-exist, e.g. Dakar Framework, UNESCO (2005) quality framework, DfID policy etc.

Human capital approaches

- Dominant discourse of the World Bank and other financial institutions
- Purpose of development is to achieve prosperity measured in terms of economic growth
- Human capital theory has evolved
  - Manpower planning
  - Human capital one
  - Human capital two

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Human capital approaches

- Implications for understanding of education quality
  - Quality defined in terms of narrow range of outcomes, mainly cognitive, that contribute to economic growth e.g. Hunushek and Wussmann (2007); Vegas and Petrow (2008)
  - It is argued that countries which have the highest levels of inequality in the education sector (of any kind) also have the slowest national growth rates (Wills, Carol and Barrow, 2007)

Human capital approaches

- Implications for methodology
  - Measured in terms of scores in standardised tests
  - Makes use of school effectiveness studies
  - Highly positivistic in orientation

Human capital approaches

- Implications for policy
  - Based on economically reductionist view of human agency, e.g. rational choice theory
  - Leads directly to the advocacy – (often on limited evidence) – of the use of market led approaches, including greater decentralisation, 'choice', and the use of financial incentives to motivate teachers etc.

Rights based approaches

- Dominant discourse amongst UN agencies and a range of multilateral and national NGOs

- Purpose of development is to realise fundamental human rights

- Interested in
  - rights to education, rights in education and rights through education (Subrahmanian, 2005; Unterhalter, 2007)
  - Recognition of positive and negative rights

Rights based approaches

- Implications for understanding education quality
  - Primarily defined in relation to the needs of individual learners
  - E.g. GCE/ UNICEF and Pigozzi frameworks
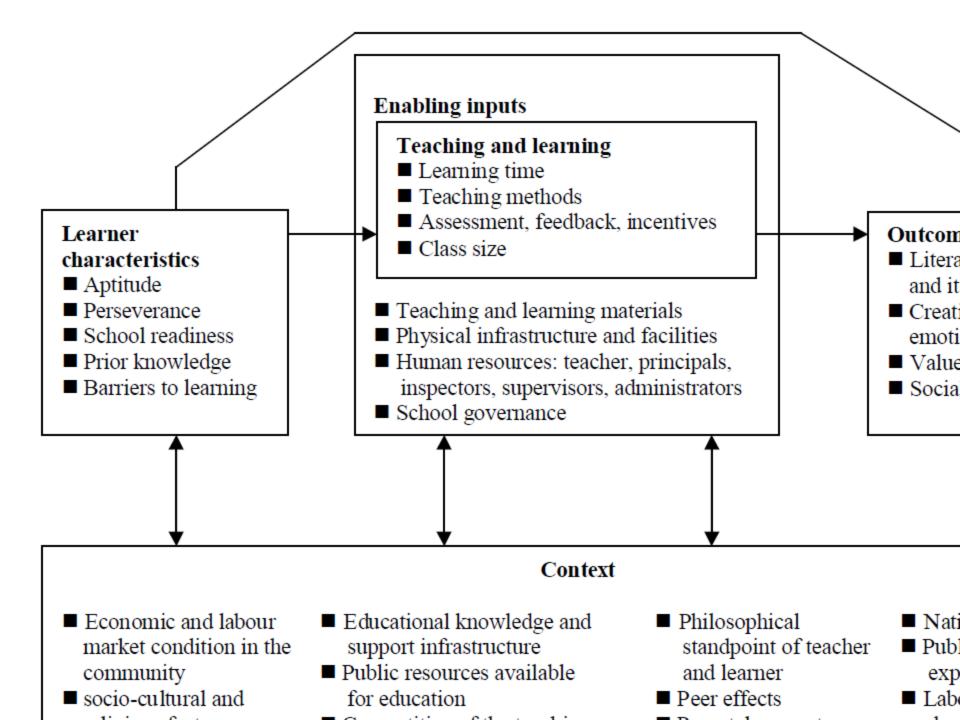
Rights based approaches

- Implications for policy
  - Mainly realised though legislation that emphasises negative rights, e.g. corporal punishment
  - UNICEF's model of child friendly and girl friendly schooling is an example of positive rights

Critique of existing approaches: Pros

- Both frameworks draw attention to key dimensions of education quality in terms of
  - Rationale for policy focus on quality
  - Understanding of quality
  - Methodologies for researching quality
- Brought together they provide quite powerful quality frameworks, e.g. UNESCO (2005)

Learner characteristics
- Aptitude
- Perseverance
- School readiness
- Prior knowledge
- Barriers to learning

Enabling inputs

Teaching and learning
- Learning time
- Teaching methods
- Assessment, feedback, incentives
- Class size

- Teaching and learning materials
- Physical infrastructure and facilities
- Human resources: teacher, principals, inspectors, supervisors, administrators
- School governance

Outcom
- Litera and it
- Creati emoti
- Value
- Socia

Context
- Economic and labour market condition in the community
- socio-cultural and

- Educational knowledge and support infrastructure
- Public resources available for education

- Philosophical standpoint of teacher and learner
- Peer effects

- Nati
- Publ exp
- Labo

Critique of existing approaches: Cons

- Pay insufficient attention to the global, national and local contexts that impact on quality for different groups

- Does not take account of the complexities of learner identity and of disadvantage

- HC neglects the cultural and affective dimensions of schooling

Critique of existing approaches: Cons

- Methodologically individualistic – underlying model of western humanism

- Human capital in particularly tends to treat schools as black box

- Tendency to focus on the state as the locus for change

- Rights based approaches often ignore the broader moral imperative underlying rights and the role of agency in civil society for realising rights

Towards a social justice approach

- 'According to this radical-democratic interpretation of the principle of equal moral worth, justice requires social arrangements that permit all to participate as peers in social life. Overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalized obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others as full partners in social interaction (Fraser, 2008: 16)'.

Understanding social justice

- Origins in European enlightenment but has been taken up by anti-colonial activists

- 'the acceleration of globalization has altered the scale of social interaction' and 'questions of social justice need to be reframed' (Fraser, 2006: 1)

- Need to relate understanding of globalisation to the economic, political and cultural realities and interests of the African continent.
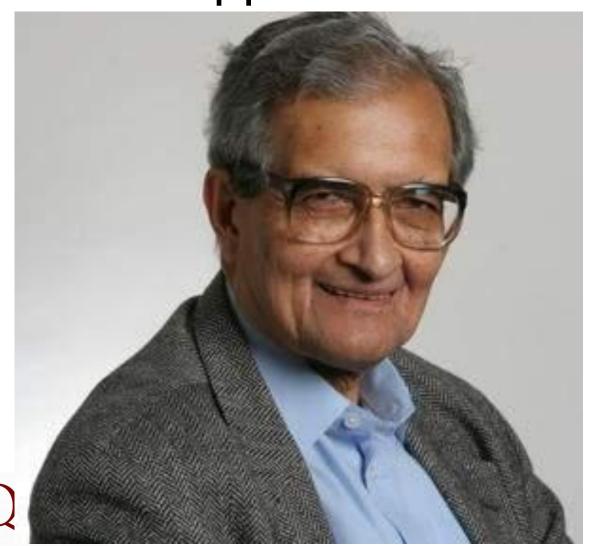
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Nancy Fraser

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Three dimensions of social justice

- – *Redistribution* of resources to support the development of capabilities and the benefits that accrue from these in terms of functionings;

- – *Recognition* of the rights of disadvantaged learners, the cultural barriers facing some groups and strategies to overcome these;

- – *Participation* of disadvantaged groups in public debate and decision-making about education quality at the local, national and global level

Amartya Sen and Capability Approach

Education Quality and Human Capabilities

- Freedom as the goal of development (underpins rights and provides rationale for prosperity)

- Purpose of education is to develop range of capabilities (freedoms) and functionings that contribute to overall wellbeing and that individuals, communities and nations have reason to value

- Education quality can be defined in terms of the opportunities available to develop capabilities and functionings relevant for individuals and groups

Why Education Quality?

- Improvements in quality have a positive impact on economic growth

- Can contribute:
  - democratic citizenship
  - Sustainable livelihoods
  - Wellbeing

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Social Justice and Education Quality

- Good quality education is education that provides all learners with the capabilities they require to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual and collective wellbeing. The learning outcomes that are required vary according to context but at the end of the basic education cycle must include threshold levels of literacy and numeracy and life skills including awareness and prevention of disease.

Principles of a good quality education

- **Inclusive:** All children achieve the specified learning outcomes.

- **Relevant:** Learning outcomes are meaningful for all learners, valued by their communities and consistent with national development priorities in a changing global context.

- **Democratic:** Learning outcomes are determined through public debate and ensured through processes of accountability.

Social justice and education quality

- Implications for methodology
  - Need to provide an informational basis for evaluating capabilities
  - Value of mixed methods to capture the multi-layered nature of capabilities
  - Draws attention to the value of participative methodologies
  - When using a capabilities approach one is inevitably constrained by the dominance of HC and RB approaches.

A Quality Framework Based on Social Justice

Enabling home/ community environment
- Parental/ carer education
- Parental support for learning
- 2-3 meals per day
- Space to do homework
- Access to books
- Access to ECD
- Community health programmes

Enabling school environment
- Parental and community engagement
- School accountable to parent & community
- Effective leadership and school self-evaluation
- Teacher motivation and incentives
- School focused professional development
- Structured pedagogy and formative assessment
- Focus on language and literacy in foundation years
- Inclusive teaching and learning processes
- Regular setting & monitoring of homework
- A safe and nurturing environment
- Locally relevant curriculum
- Relevant teaching and learning materials
  - Effective local/district management & support for schools

A good quality education enables all learners to become economically productive, develop sustainable livelihoods, contribute to peaceful and democratic societies and enhance individual wellbeing.

Enabling policy environment
- Public debate on quality
- Teacher salaries and incentives
- Qualifications, curriculum and assessment framework
- Textbook procurement & disbursement
- International benchmarking
- Teacher training
- Leadership development
- School inspectorate & inspection framework
- Language of instruction policy

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