

Education: Evaluation, Reform and Policy

**Edited by
John E. Kesner**

**Athens Institute for Education and Research
2012**

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1

Educational Evaluation, Reform and Policy in an Age of Internationalization

John E. Kesner, Georgia State University, USA

We are living in a world where international borders are becoming increasingly irrelevant as technology brings people together in ways that were unimaginable 20 years ago. The status of a country's educational system has long been inextricably linked to its national development. Many developed countries, no longer able to compete on a global scale in ways in which they have traditionally done, are instead choosing to develop human capital as their natural resource.

In his final report entitled *Prosperity for all in the Global Economy – World Class Skills*, Leitch writes “In the 21st Century, our natural resource is our people – and their potential is both untapped and vast. Skills will unlock that potential. The prize for our country will be enormous – higher productivity, the creation of wealth and social justice.” (Leitch, 2006. p. 1). Leitch was speaking in reference to the UK, but the notion of the development of knowledge and skills of people as a natural resource has far reaching implications for all developed and developing countries in the world

In developing countries, especially those experiencing rapid growth due to expanding production capabilities, the need for the development of their knowledge economy is especially important. It is in these countries best interest to develop the knowledge and skills of their populations along with their production capabilities. This dual focus will reduce the long-term problems many developed nations are experiencing in their transition from a production to a knowledge based economy. All nations must develop their capacity to produce and innovate. It is not enough to maintain our current level of understanding. In order to sustain growth of the world's economies, new knowledge and skills must be generated. Investing in human capital is required to achieve these goals

The key to developing this human capital is through a society's educational system. Many nations express a strong commitment to maintaining and improving their educational system, however educational funding often moves down the list of priorities in difficult economic times. The investment in education does not produce immediate tangible gains and thus it is possible to not fully recognize the value and importance of an effective educational system (OECD, 2010).

Educational evaluation, reform and policy are inextricably linked as a

nation strives to improve its educational programs. Everyone involved in education, from school administration to parents and teachers, as well as all other stakeholders want to ensure that the educational programs in which they are involved are achieving their stated goals. Assessment and evaluation ask questions about the changes that have occurred and have these changes accomplished desired results (French, Bell, & Zawacki, 2000). The chapters found in this volume represent a wide array of topics dealing with educational practice, evaluation, reform and policy, as well as the impact these topics have on society.

Part One explores the societal and political forces that push and pull at a nation's educational systems. Phillips article on the misconceptions and misinformation about education in Canada illustrate the importance of having a clear understanding, especially for institutions that exert a strong influence on its policy. Penketh's article discusses local politician's knowledge of citizenship education and their knowledge of the young people in their Wards. This is a particularly salient topic given the political uprisings happening in the world today are mostly fueled by young people.

Part Two gets to the heart of the issue, educational evaluation and reform. It is essential to systematically and effectively evaluate our educational systems and then use this information to enact reforms. This section contains three articles which deal with practice and evaluation issues at the school and system level. Olajide's article focuses on efforts to reform chronically low performing schools by providing a diagnostic framework for assessing low performing schools and then a conceptual model for improvement. A related article written by Setlaltoa, provides a concrete example of barriers to whole school evaluation of the Southern Free State in South Africa. This section concludes with Fazlagic's article on knowledge management practices in the Polish educational system. This article describes the results of a nation wide survey of over 1900 educators in Poland about their knowledge management practices.

Part Three's emphasis is on the recipients of educators' dedicated efforts, students. Studies on students in schools represent a critical part of the equation in determining how and when schools are effective. The article by Kilmen, Demirtasli, and Bilican examines the attitudes and opinions of students towards science. The attitudes and opinions of students towards a subject will have a great influence on how well they are able to learn the content. This article helps us understand the dynamics of attitude toward science and student learning in a sample of Turkish students. The second article, written by Monika Stachowicz-Piotrowska, in this section looks at aggression in junior high school students in Polish schools. Students social and emotional health is of utmost importance in considering educational effectiveness, yet this is an area that is often neglected in schools in favor of academics. It is important to understand that students are cognitive and social-emotional beings. One area must not be neglected; to do so is at the cost of the other.

Section Four examines another critical component in effective schooling, the curriculum. Curriculum is often at the heart of true educational reform. In his article on how globalization can cause fundamental curriculum change, Waks writes "globalization will cause fundamental rather than merely incremental change" (p. 384). He further states that "fundamental curriculum

change has implications not merely for subject matter selection, but also for instructional methods, technology utilization, organization and administration” (p. 384).

Kinta’s article begins this section with an analysis of how perception of vocational upper-secondary education influences the prestige of these programs. Specifically, she proposes that a shift to learning based outcomes would increase the prestige of these types of programs. King’s article on religion and citizenship explores the impact of a more religiously diverse UK society on religious education. She discusses the challenge to faith-based schools as they struggle to deal with a increasingly diverse society. Poonosamy’s article concludes this section with a discussion of the challenges facing speakers of languages other than English in Australia. This article highlights the struggles of elevating languages other than English to equal status given the dominance of English as lingua franca in the world.

Section Five focuses on the role of higher education in educational evaluation, reform and policy. This perspective is somewhat unique as higher education is often simultaneously the driving force behind and the subject of educational evaluation and reform. This section begins with an article by Yamin-Ali, which examines the development of a post-graduate teacher education program at the University of the West Indies. She describes the process as a metamorphic experience and one that will have long lasting impact on the status of education. Tarvid’s article deals with the unique topic of “over-education” and its impact on the economic well being of individuals in particular fields. This statistical analysis of European Social Survey data sheds light on this issue. Gender equality in higher educational leadership is the topic of the article by Ballenger. She examines the role of women in leadership positions in higher education and shows that despite some progress, women do not hold the expected number of leadership positions in higher education. Kiri’s article examines the political and economic changes occurring in the EU resulting from the signing of the Bologna Accord. Specifically, this article examines the market forces behind the dominance of public or private institutions of higher education in the EU. Based on economic modeling, Kiri draws some conclusions regarding the cost and quality of public vs., private higher education. The final article in this section by Aziz, Idris and Aziz looks at the tenuous link between university research and its potential commercial applications. They discuss how a case study of a Scottish university’s attempt at navigating the link between research and commercial development can provide lessons for Malaysian universities.

The final section of this volume focuses on the role of creativity and aesthetics in educational change. Bustamante and Elder describe several projects designed to bring a community together utilizing the tools in education, performance and technology. Concluding this section is a piece by Feeny explores the fascinating concept of risk taking and how society has changed its view of risk in the post 9/11 era. Specifically, he examines this idea from the perspective of visually impaired people. He argues that the very structures and other organizational frameworks that provide a safe environment for the visually impaired, while vital, can also have detrimental outcomes.

The articles in this volume represent a truly international group of authors

demonstrating the differences and commonalities inherent in educational systems worldwide. This volume approaches educational evaluation, reform and policy from some very diverse perspectives. This diversity while reflective of the broad scope and impact education has on a society, also shares the common thread of being a vital link in the continued economic and social development of a nation.

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