Przegląd Krytyczny

The Politics of Education in Developing Countries: From Schooling to Learning, edited by Sam Hickey and Naomi Hossain, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 256.

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The issue of quality in education is still one of the key current debates within international education policy. There are comments that development education has a significant contribution to make to these debates. Skinner, Blum and Bourn (2013) suggested that greater collaboration between the field of development education and international education policy could facilitate the creation of an agenda that focuses on education quality and learning processes, as opposed to the current preoccupation with education access and outcomes.

"The Politics of Education in Developing Countries: From Schooling to Learning" edited by Sam Hickey and Naomi Hossain (with a total of 23 contributing authors) deploys a new conceptual framework – the domains of power approach – to analyse how the type of political settlement shapes the level of elite commitment and state capacity to improving learning outcomes. Therefore the question why many Global South countries that have succeeded in expanding access to education made such limited progress on these outcomes can be raised.

According to the 2017 Global Education Monitoring Report some 61 million children of primary school age do not have the chance to attend schools. More than 32 million of these children live in Sub-Saharan Africa and almost 11 million in South Asia (BMZ, 2019). By early in the 21 century, a large majority of developing countries achieved similarly significant results in providing universal access to education for children. The countries are being encouraged to improve the access also due to in-

ternational campaigns such as 'Education for All' and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) or later the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Also the countries which were the cases of the reviewed book managed to get an impressive proportion of its youngest population into primary schools and a significant number of students into secondary schools as well. Therefore there are many studies about the politics of the decisions which led the governments to expand schooling. It is worth to mention some data which shows the significant changes, from schooling to learning. In 1948 the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated: 'Everyone has the right to education'. In 1960 the person above the age of 15, who lived in developing country, had 2.1 years of schooling and 87 per cent of population had not finished the primary school. But 50 years later, in 2010, the same statistical person from the developing country, had more than 7 years of schooling and only 40 per cent of population did not complete the primary school (p. 198). Nowadays rapid expansion alongside poor quality are characteristics of most mass education systems in most Global South countries.

The book brings together the findings and analysis from a project entitled 'The Politics of Social Provisioning' and is an output from this project which was funded by UK Aid from the UK Government for the benefit of developing countries. The project was undertaken within Effective States and Inclusive Development Research Centre (ESID) between 2011 and 2016[1]. The project was presented and discussed at seminars, conferences and workshops e.g. at seminars at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, the World Bank in Washington D.C., and the German Development Institute in Bonn.

The problem of education quality might be seen as crucial across the Global South countries. A critical problem facing countries in the Global South which is expressed by "The Politics of Education in Developing Countries: From Schooling to Learning" refers mainly to the learning crisis. The 'learning crisis' became increasingly evident in many countries around the world. It constitutes a significant dimension of global inequalities as well educational outcomes in developing countries are shaped by political, socio-economic and other factors. Many reformers wish to see schooling enhanced by learning. The book focuses on how politics shapes the capacity and commitment of elites to tackle this crisis in such countries as: Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa, Ghana, Bangladesh and Cambodia.

All chapters were produced by the ESID-education research team apart from two last chapters which were written by leading authorities in the field, Marilee Grindle and Lant Pritchett, both of Harvard University. The book consists of eleven chapters and a list of contributors shows diversity of professional careers as there are sociologists, economists, researchers, government and program officers and PhD candidates as well.

In the first chapter on the problem of education quality ("The Problem of Education Quality in Developing Countries") written by the editors of the book a quote by

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[1] ESID is based at the Global Development Institute, The University of Manchester, and consists of researchers located across the global North and South. ESID has examined the politics of development across several different policy domains, including growth, urban governance, health, gender equity, natural resource governance, social protection and education (see more at: www.effective-states.org)

Pritchett was used to demonstrate what can be considered as learning. *There is more to learning than placing children to schools* (p.1). Hossain and Hickey explain that they wanted to examine less the broad question of 'how politics shapes educational outcomes', but the ways in which politics shapes the commitment and capacity of elites and governments in developing countries to promote reforms that were aimed at improving learning outcomes.

Following the introductory chapter, chapter 2, also prepared by the editors of the book ("Researching the Politics of Education Quality in Developing Countries: Towards a New Conceptual and Methodological Approach") deals with the intellectual rationale for a political settlement-based approach and the analysis of education quality reforms. This chapter establishes the theoretical framework and methodological approach used to research the politics in six developing countries which were the cases listed in the book. The political settlement is – in terms of the authors – influenced by three factors: (1) power relations and orderings that structure the ruling coalition, (2) material incentives, and (3) paradigmatic ideas. Hickey and Hossain indicate that paradigmatic ideas can *bind elites together, securing their commitment to upholding a certain set of institutions whilst also being deployed more instrumentally by elites to secure loyalty among followers* (p. 32).

The set of six country cases were presented as follow: Ghana ("Decentralization and Teacher Accountability: The Political Settlement and Sub-national Governance in Ghana's Education Sector"), Rwanda ("The Downsides of Dominance: Education Quality Reforms and Rwanda's Political Settlement"), South Africa ("Political Transformation and Education Sector Performance in South Africa"), Uganda ("The Political Economy of Education Quality Initiatives in Uganda"), Bangladesh ("The Politics of Learning Reforms in Bangladesh") and Cambodia ("The Political Economy of Primary Education Reform in Cambodia"). All these cases, grouped in the chapters 3 to 8, give an account of the quality of basic education and its development in the above-mentioned countries. The issues of the political settlement and its influences on education policy and the reform agenda are also discussed by the authors. The implementation of policies from the national level downwards through sub-national levels of governance through to schools themselves was also demonstrated in most cases. For some countries differences in political and governance arrangements at sub-national levels may lead to improvements in education at least in some regions or districts. The global learning crisis manifest itself in low learning attainments in all of them – in Ghana, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Bangladesh and Cambodia. With the exception of South Africa, these countries, like most Global South countries, have relatively insulated policymaking processes and weak institutions of governance. In all cases implementation is the most fragile part of the policy process in education reform. For example, in Rwanda, the rapid switch to English as a medium of instruction *can be tied to core concerns of the political elite about domestic peace and international alliances.* (p. 215)

Chapter 9, "Identifying the Political Drivers of Quality Education: A Comparative Analysis" draws together the theoretical, methodological, and empirical findings and points towards areas for further conceptual development. Implementing quality-en-

hancing reforms and sustaining these reforms might be seen as much more bigger challenge than simply getting more children in schools. Access and quality are two different measures of educational outputs and elites in all six countries began to acknowledge that something is needed to be done about the gap between these two measures. The case studies showed that the definition of the education problem, and the policy ideas needed to respond to it, were similar in all countries. Most new plans involved efforts to decentralize the management of education system and to improve teacher training (p.214).

The existing literature on the political economy of education remains underdeveloped in many aspects. "The Politics of Education in Developing Countries: From Schooling to Learning" *seeks to pick up the analysis at the point where the World Development Report (WDR) 2018 leaves off* (p. 4). Therefore the volume makes *a creditable and credible start down the path to identifying the political drivers of the learning crisis.* (p. 208). Future studies should be attentive to differences in the political settlement across specific regions and seek the interactions with the level of society as a whole.

REFERENCES

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