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### The role of education in development: an educationalist's response to some recent work in development economics

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## ESSAY REVIEW

### **The role of education in development: an educationalist's response to some recent work in development economics**

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This paper delves beneath the widespread belief that education (often repackaged as human capital) is important in development to consider the role that the discipline of education plays in shaping the wider discourses of development. In particular, it will explore recent texts by important figures in development economics (Collier, Easterly, Sachs and Stiglitz) to see what they say (and don't say) about education's role in development and to contrast this with educationalists' accounts. This will lead on to a consideration of what the implications of such a reading are for the field of international and comparative education. The paper concludes that the relative marginalisation of educational accounts in mainstream development thinking is a major challenge to which international and comparative education needs to respond.

#### **Introduction**

Those of us interested in the relationship between education and development know that a widespread belief that education is an important contributor to development is crucial to our professional careers. This belief helps us get research grants, recruit postgraduate students and earn consultancy income, even if we are sceptical or critical of the core assumption.

The belief that education is important in development is most visibly symbolised at present by the focus of two Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education. It is undergirded theoretically by the continued power of human capital theory and its adaptations to the era of the 'global knowledge economy'. Education (or often lifelong learning) has been ascribed policy importance north and south as a tool for promoting international competitiveness and social inclusion.

However, education is not the lead discipline when it comes to development. Economics still retains pre-eminence, not least because of its dominant place in the dominant development institution: the World Bank (King and McGrath 2004). Other disciplines (perhaps most notably anthropology) often also appear more significant in shaping development thinking than education.

Looking outwards at other cultures and nations in order to reflect on our own context has been at the core of comparative education's approach to research. A variation on this is to take some time to step out of our own disciplinary silo to consider what others can tell us. In this article, I do so in two ways: first, by considering what we can learn regarding current thinking about development in another field; and

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second, what we can learn about our own field, and its future prospects and role, through seeing how others appear to see us.

Such a task is a very large one and so I will delimit it radically in what follows by looking only at the field of development economics and, more narrowly still, by concentrating on four recent books. This, then, is clearly not an attempt to provide a general account of development economics, let alone development theory. Rather, it is an extended review of selected recent literature that is intended to have a didactic purpose in provoking fellow international and comparative educationalists to consider our own field in relation to others.

The four texts chosen are:

- Easterly (2006) *The white man's burden*
- Stiglitz (2006) *Making globalisation work*
- Collier (2007) *The bottom billion*
- Sachs (2008) *Common wealth*.

These are selected as the most recent works by major figures in development economics: all of whom straddle the worlds of academia and international development agencies. All four hold university chairs, but three (William Easterly, Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Collier) have also spent time employed by the World Bank, whilst the other, Jeffrey Sachs, is Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General and former Director of the United Nations Millennium Project.

Of course, this selection can be challenged. The cutting edge of disciplines is rarely limited to books. However, these books are of particular interest because they are 'crossovers', works that will be read by academics, but also by a wider public in agencies and in society at large (a point I will return to later in this article). Other authors could have been included. The influence of Amartya Sen, for instance, is perhaps not matched even by his fellow Nobel Laureate, Joseph Stiglitz. However, Sen's most influential work is of an older provenance (e.g., Sen 1999). Thus, whilst I will reflect briefly on his influence on our field towards the end of this paper, I will not explore his work in the same way as my four chosen authors. As I noted above, these authors are of particular significance because of their combined academic and applied standing. Finally, three of these authors have produced previous books of considerable significance (e.g., Easterly 2001; Stiglitz 2002; Sachs 2005) that also could have been considered. Nonetheless, the influence of these earlier texts is clearly to be seen in these authors' most recent work.

In what follows I will consider my four chosen texts in turn, providing a brief outline of their main arguments about the nature of development, and how they engage with the other texts. Then I will outline what they have to say about the role of education (and training) in development. I will conclude this paper with some reflections on what implications these accounts have for the study of education and development.

## The nature of development

### *Easterly: The white man's burden (2006)*

Both Collier (2007, 191) and Sachs (2008, 47) position Easterly as the standard-bearer for the American right in debates about development. Certainly, he is a strong advocate of markets and a consistent critic of big government. This leads him to be a strong

critic also of big development, which he sees as too bureaucratic in the north and too ineffective in the south.

At the heart of Easterly's account is the contrast between the huge amount of money spent on aid and the very limited impact it has had in terms of development. For Easterly, the evidence is clear that aid has not led to growth. He argues that this is because of fundamental problems with the aid business. There are several strands to this. First, he echoes the uncited Albert Hirschman's famous analysis of big push development as failing to take into account the low developmental capacity of the countries to which the big push is being applied (Hirschman 1958). To simplify Hirschman: if they could respond to a big push, then they wouldn't need one. Second, he argues that there is a principal-agent problem operating in aid (cf., Ellerman 2005). This is a well-established critique of aid: that there is an inherent problem in its operation because so many policies are owned by donors (the principals) who try, but cannot succeed, to impose their various plans on the recipient country government (the agent). Not only is this difficult enough when there is but one principal and one agent, but in aid the multiplicity of donors and their agendas means that southern governments are either pulled in conflicting directions or learn to play off donors against each other (cf. *Comparative Education's* 2007 special issue in this area – Vol. 43, No. 3). On the other side, Easterly argues that development agencies and their staff generally can escape the consequences of the failure of development as they will have moved on to another post in another country, leaving the recipients of aid to deal with any negative consequences.

Easterly argues that big development has always tended to be too statist and bureaucratic but suggests it is also neo-imperialist in its technical and moral certainty. This is a trend of which he sees Sachs as being the most visible current proponent. Moreover, Easterly argues that a major reason for aid's failure is bad governance in the south, something that conditionalities have done little to change. Big development has always failed, he argues, so why should the MDGs be any different?

What is needed, according to Easterly, is greater reliance on local solutions, institutions and markets. In conventional neoliberal style, he argues strongly for the innate superiority of the market over state intervention. Indeed, this produces his most overblown rhetoric: 'why would you trust a government official any more than you would choose a shoplifting serial killer?' (103). It leads him also to restate the World Bank's (1993) controversial thesis that the East Asian miracle was a triumph of markets, achieved, he argues, 'through the efforts of many decentralised agents participating in markets ..., with some efforts by their own governments' (23).

Even before the current financial crisis, Easterly appeared naively uncritical about markets, even financial ones (66). Strikingly, he is also critical of developmental attempts to promote markets: 'You can't plan a market' is the title of chapter three. He argues that neither structural adjustment programmes in Africa and Latin America nor post-communist shock therapy in the former Socialist countries has worked. As well as restating his belief that states cannot work in anyone's interest but their own, he suggests that institutions are spatially and temporally contextual and are not amenable to social engineering, a more palatable argument for most international and comparative educationalists.

None of Easterly's points are new. As I have noted above, academic critiques of big push development are at least half a century old (see also Leys 1996; Rist 1997), whilst exposés of the failings of aid have long been common in popular and academic literature from across the political spectrum (e.g., Hancock 1989; Mosley,

Harrigan and Toye 1991; Caufield 1996; Crewe and Harrison 1998). Calls for greater respect for local knowledge are also long established, for instance, in the participatory development (e.g., Chambers 1983) and indigenous knowledge (e.g., World Bank 1998) discourses. Many of these debates have been reflected in comparative educational circles (e.g., Smith 1999; Crossley and Watson 2003; King and McGrath 2004).

What is also striking in Easterly's account is the range of his sources, or rather, their narrowness. Almost all of the literature cited comes from Economics and most of that from North America. Southern voices are rare, apart from in his device (part of the World Bank's house style) of using text boxes to humanise his writing. In these, Africans and South Asians are particularly present. The archetype is of the successful individual who has emigrated to the United States but who is doing development at home as an entrepreneur and/or philanthropist.

### **Stiglitz: Making globalisation work (2006)**

Whereas Easterly displays the certainty that critics have long associated with neoclassical World Bank economists, Stiglitz shows his long-displayed tendency to be cautious about the power of Economics. His world is one in which trade-offs are all around us. These cannot be resolved through resort to economic theory alone, he argues. Rather, Economics needs to be employed as a tool of a democratic and ethical political practice. Indeed, he is clear that Economics can be as much belief system as science: a reflexivity that is absent from the other books reviewed here and which seems particularly pertinent in the light of the financial crisis of late 2008. Yet, of all the four authors, Stiglitz is also the most confident in taking his audience down some of the arcane by-ways of microeconomic theory.

His own Nobel Prize-winning research on information failures makes him highly sceptical of blind faith in markets:

My research on the economics of information showed that whenever information is imperfect, in particular where there are information asymmetries – where some individuals know something that others do not (in other words, *always*) – the reason that the invisible hand seems invisible is that it is not there. (xiv)

Whilst his earlier *Globalization and its discontents* developed this theme into a radical critique of the Washington Consensus, *Making globalization work* is more concerned with arguing for a new, better practice of managing globalisation:

While globalisation's critics are correct in saying it has been used to push a particular set of values, this need not be so. Globalisation does not have to be bad for the environment, increase inequality, weaken cultural diversity, and advance corporate interests at the expense of the well-being of ordinary citizens. (xv)

He sees five major problems with globalisation:

- (1) the rules are biased
- (2) material values are all that matter
- (3) democracy is undermined
- (4) there are many losers, north and south
- (5) decontextualised and inappropriate policy imposition is taking place. (9)

Clearly, these are themes that resonate with many international and comparative educationalists, with the fifth point being particularly attuned to the Sadlerian tradition.

He argues throughout that power (particularly of the USA and transnational corporations) has played a central role in the emergence of this negative form of development, but he is convinced that there is enough societal will globally to challenge this. For instance, he believes that it is politically untenable that a cow in the EU gets \$2 a day when two billion people globally don't. It is clear for Stiglitz that there is an ethical imperative to care for the losers in globalisation, both south and north.

He believes that aid can be made more effective and that it can be tied to more equitable trade policy. Conditionalities and the world trade regime may actually undermine the possibility of competitiveness. Indeed, trade liberalisation is most disadvantageous to those at the bottom (with the worst skills) in all countries. He argues that the neoliberal account of trade ignores monopolies, risks and shocks. This leads to reduced revenue for governments and, therefore, to less social spending.

He maintains that poor countries are often constrained by a lack of or poor infrastructure and relatively high interest rates. These make exporting very costly. Thus, infant industry approaches can work if they generate exports rather than simply protect domestic industries from competing with more efficient international producers. In so arguing, he is critiquing an important element of the neoliberal account of industrial and trade policy.

Instead, Stiglitz advocates a new, genuinely developmental World Trade Organisation round. He argues that the current approach to the liberalisation of services has been carefully controlled to work only at the top end and needs reorienting. Similarly, intellectual property rights should be limited and made more development-oriented. He argues too for a new response to the natural resource curse (an issue that is also of concern to Collier and Sachs – see below) and the need for a new, green accounting that would seek to calculate and reflect the full environmental cost of the production of goods and services.

Stiglitz accepts that there has been bad governance in the south but his response is to focus on the way that a new form of bad governance has been introduced north and south by neoliberalism. He argues that lobbying and party contributions are distortions of both the market and the democratic process. He suggests that making decisions such as those on interest rates 'politics free' simply shifts influence over them to vested interests and away from democratic fora.

Stiglitz also sees a moral imperative in debt relief. He stresses the utility in talking about overlending as opposed to overborrowing: making an important moral and political point. He also highlights how having to hold large foreign currency reserves tends to move money out of southern public systems and into the hands of northern and southern capitalists.

Stiglitz's belief that democratic politics and ethics need to take priority over economic theory is also reflected in his belief that 'development is about transforming the lives of people, not just transforming economies' (50). It is for people in their own local contexts to decide what policies should be followed for the betterment of all, rather than for the enrichment of the few.

Stiglitz has been criticised for being a utopian thinker. Certainly, like many social commentators, he is probably more convincing in his undermining of the way things are than he is in explaining how the *status quo* can be overturned.

**Collier: The bottom billion (2007)**

Paul Collier sets out to show how an economist can use statistics to answer important public policy questions about poverty and development. This approach, he argues, allows him to avoid the partisanship of Easterly and Sachs, whom he portrays as the poster boys of the right and left respectively (191).

As his title suggests, Collier is concerned with the very poorest in the world. He argues that the core problem of the MDGs is that they induce a drive towards their attainment that privileges targeting the less poor rather than the more poor. As it is easier to get those just below the poverty line above it, this is what planners will do.

Collier seeks to explain what keeps the poorest in poverty as a prelude to poverty eradication. For him, the roots of poverty lie in four traps, which he describes as:

- (1) conflict
- (2) natural resources
- (3) being landlocked with poor neighbours
- (4) bad governance in small countries.

However, he notes that escaping these traps has brought far fewer benefits in recent years than in the past. He claims that, statistically, trapped countries typically have small populations. Compared to other developing countries, they also have a statistically significant deficit in performance on growth, health, life expectancy, etc.

*The conflict trap*

Collier argues that civil wars are not necessarily traps, but 73% of those living in the 'countries of the bottom billion' have recently had them or are currently experiencing them (17). He shows statistically that civil war and low income are mutually reinforcing. Slow growth is often correlated with developments leading to civil war. Moreover, lower incomes tend to be associated with longer conflicts. Natural resource dependence makes countries more prone to civil war as wealth is easier to capture. One civil war leads to a doubled chance of another and also leads to a doubling of military budgets after conflict. Overall, Collier finds that civil war suppresses economic growth by 2.3% per annum (27).

*The natural resource trap*

Collier notes that the Gulf Arab states had so much natural resources revenue that it could catapult them to a level of wealth where they could live off the profits indefinitely. However, other natural resource rich countries are typically not so well endowed and have to invest their resources income for growth and development in the longer run. This has rarely happened. Rather, resource profits tend to encourage bad government. Many of the countries of the bottom billion are natural resources rich. They tend to suffer from Dutch Disease, where manufacturing is undermined by exchange rate appreciation. Moreover, as resource prices tend to be volatile, revenue streams tend to fluctuate wildly.

*Landlocked with bad neighbours*

Being landlocked is not necessarily bad according to Collier. Good neighbours can provide good markets, infrastructure and security. However, bad neighbours undermine



the prospects for growth, although the growth of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and air freight has shown that there are possibilities for overcoming these problems (see, for instance, Uganda).

### *Bad governance in a small country*

Collier maintains that bad governance isn't simply a matter of self-interest. It also comes about because of deficits in technical know-how. He argues that this is often particularly problematic for small states (an assertion that has been increasingly critiqued in comparative education circles – e.g., Crossley 2008). Failed states are most likely to turn around if they have large populations, higher levels of secondary education and have recently emerged from civil war. However, Collier does caution us that turnarounds are rare.

Collier's positioning of himself between Easterly and Sachs is most clearly seen in his attitude towards aid. He is clear that much of it has failed but he sees evidence for successes too. He calculates that aid on average has contributed 1% to annual growth of the poorest countries over the past 30 years (100). However, he believes that any further growth in aid is likely to be subject to the law of diminishing returns fairly quickly. It may be possible to double it at most. He notes that the current agency trends towards budget support and debt relief threaten similar effects to the Dutch Disease noted above by distorting national economies. He cautions that conditionalities can make aid less problematic than other flows but only when there is an existing level of good governance. However, there are disadvantages in both basic approaches to conditionality. Basing disbursements on promises of future compliance (ex ante) tends to lead to broken promises, whilst basing them on past compliance (ex post) tends to concentrate aid on those who need it less.

At present, Collier argues, too much aid goes to middle income countries. Moreover, he complains that the MDGs have led to a shift of aid resources to photogenic social projects (in which he includes schooling) rather than 'necessary' infrastructure. He believes that a big push can work to get exporting infrastructure up to scratch.

Collier's main idea involves a series of charters that will spread good practice in areas such as managing natural resources. He also stresses the need for trade liberalisation. However, he is cautious about fair trade, arguing that it encourages non-diversification and discourages individuals, enterprises and countries from seeking to move into higher value production and services. He is also sceptical about the benefits of regional economic integration. Whilst he accepts that it caused convergence in Europe, it appears to be encouraging divergence in Africa as the best economies take advantage of new opportunities.

Collier is concerned to eschew polemic and use his statistical skills to question conventional wisdoms from whatever source. However, his statistical approach leads him to simplify many things. He has a tendency to present correlations rather than to explore more substantially possible causal explanations. He chooses to concentrate his focus on the very poorest countries, leaving him less attentive to the persistence of absolute poverty in other, wealthier countries, or in small states (cf. the 2008a *Comparative Education* special issue on this theme – Vol. 44, No. 2). When he does draw in the work of non-economists, it is almost always limited to quantitative political science. This is even the case where there are rich literatures on elements of his storyline from such disciplines as anthropology and sociology, for instance on the subject of technical



assistance (111–115). More seriously, his resolute faith in statistics leaves little room for anything beyond the material domain.

### **Sachs: Common wealth (2008)**

As befits the Director of the Earth Institute, Jeffrey Sachs has a far stronger environmental strand to his work than the other authors. Indeed, he is the most transdisciplinary of the four. Equally, his former role as Director of the UN Millennium Project is reflected in an unswerving belief in the importance of the MDGs plus the Cairo (1994) and Rio (1992) targets.

His stress on the environmental dimension helps contribute to what at times is a millenarian discourse of risk and fear (cf. *Comparative Education's* 2008b special issue on insecurity and desire – Vol. 44, No. 3). We learn that the earth faces four crises:

- environmental
- population expansion
- poverty (and the risk this causes us)
- bad global governance.

However, he is also by far the most upbeat of the four authors about the prospects for change. He exudes a very strong faith in a combination of technological competence and political will, which, together, can ensure successful development. New technologies, driven by public–private partnerships, can bring about major progress in agriculture, education, health and infrastructural development.

He counters Easterly's claim that aid has cost US\$2.3 trillion but achieved little. He notes that this huge figure is nothing compared to US military spending of US\$17 trillion over the same 30-year period. Indeed, it sounds positively moderate when represented as US\$15 per poor person per year. Rather than being an expensive failure, aid has succeeded in the past and it will succeed in the future, notwithstanding the problem of vested interests, particularly in the USA.

For Sachs, the problem is a lack of aid, not one of poor governance. Aid leads to productivity increases, which lead to improved savings and investments, and in turn to sustainable growth. The MDGs are the best answer and a series of new global funds is required to ensure their achievement. He suggests that the MDG approach also needs to be extended to deal with environmental issues and to 'spur the demographic transition' to lower fertility levels (162).

Sachs appears to be a green Rostowian, believing that there are clear stages of economic development and that take-off (Rostow 1960) can be achieved if only savings and investment can be stimulated, trade openness encouraged, more private capital encouraged, and better local ecological adaptation of technologies facilitated.

Whilst Sachs usefully brings an environmental perspective to bear on the debate about economic development, he appears largely unaware of (or at least chooses to ignore) the long-standing critiques of big development. There is little sense in his accounts of the wealth of sociological and anthropological questioning of its operation. Even within Economics, he is guilty of a highly skewed presentation of Hirschman, invoking him as a critic of pessimism whilst ignoring that the core of his approach to development economics was an account of how big push development could not work.

### The state of development thinking

Clearly there is little consensus about the path to development. These four authors can agree that there is too much poverty in the world, but not much else.

There is radical disagreement on whether aid can work. Easterly stresses past failures; Sachs past successes. Sachs is convinced that we can and should spend far more, whilst Collier is concerned about diminishing returns. Stiglitz stresses the moral dimension of debt relief and past overlending and Sachs our duty to support sustainable development, whilst Collier and Easterly remain more pragmatically concerned about how conditionalities are probably necessary but rarely work. Bad governance is a problem that all acknowledge to some extent, although it is Easterly who is most exercised by it. Collier reframes it partly as a matter of insufficient technical capacity, whilst Stiglitz notes northern failures of governance too. Collier and Stiglitz, in different ways, believe that new international agreements are the core to resolving governance problems, whilst Sachs appears especially confident of the technological and moral superiority of his position. Easterly, in contrast, has a classically conservative suspicion of statist solutions and sees Sachs as an unrepentant neo-imperialist.

Inevitably, there are disagreements too about the relative roles of the market and state. Whilst none of the four is a powerful advocate of big government, Stiglitz does stress the risks of a democratic deficit when too much power is given to technocrats, corporations or markets. He is also in pointed contrast to Easterly when he notes that any consideration of the East Asian miracle needs to be updated to include the cases of China and Vietnam. This would inevitably further undermine the simple neoliberal version of the story that Easterly tells.

This debate about the state and the market connects to strong disagreement about big push development. Easterly is an outspoken critic; Sachs a powerful proponent. Stiglitz is supportive of comprehensive approaches but believes that they must be nationally determined, whilst Collier sees a case for a bigger push that is more focused and of relatively short duration. Sachs's particular version of the big push is the MDGs but Collier is concerned that these are poorly targeted with too little attention to necessary (but unglamorous) infrastructural development and to the very poorest.

There is some agreement that trade liberalisation is necessary, although Stiglitz again is notable for his concerns about the terms on which this is to be achieved. There are also shared concerns about the natural resource and conflict traps. Nonetheless, there is clear divergence over whether the latter can justify military intervention, with Collier standing out as the clearest proponent for such intervention (perhaps because he's not an American).

For Easterly and Collier, economic logic appears unquestionably pre-eminent; Stiglitz and Sachs both stress moral and political dimensions as well. Whilst Sachs is the only one to have a strongly environmental vision of sustainable development, Stiglitz is alone in wanting to go beyond materialistic accounts of development.

### The economists and education for development

It is clear that education is not particularly important as a theme to any of these authors. Across the four books, Donald Schön's (1983) *Reflective practitioner* and a paper by World Bank economists, Deon Filmer and Lant Pritchett (1997), are the only references to works primarily about education.

Rather, education typically appears in passing in their accounts. For Easterly, in particular, education occasionally appears as a good thing or as an indicator of

development. It looms large in his text boxes in which getting children to school is important to the poor, as having higher education is to those who have become part of the global elite.

Stiglitz claims that education was a major focus of the East Asian Miracle (Stiglitz 2006, 32), a point made specifically for Japan by Easterly (2006, 299–303). Strikingly, one of the few successes that Easterly allows to aid is the growth of education:

One success (in Africa) was the steady expansion of education, represented by the huge leap in adult literacy levels from 1970 to 2000. Another accomplishment has been in reaching girls for education, as the ratio of female-to-male literacy has climbed steadily over the last thirty years. The higher literacy of men and women has so far not translated into increases in earnings, but education is both a worthy end in itself and a contribution to many other good development outcomes. There are some quality problems, such as poorly motivated teachers and the absence of textbooks, not to mention inadequate utilisation of educated people because of other distortions in African economies – which may be why education has not translated into rising incomes. (Easterly 2006, 123–125)

Indeed, he follows this up with the rather misleading claim that ‘Kids enrolled in primary school in the typical poor country went from 65 percent of their age group in 1960 to 100 percent today’ (Easterly 2006, 155–156). This is justified by his claim that most poor countries have 100% enrolment but is a distortion of a less positive reality.

Stiglitz makes a similar point in noting that one of the few strengths of the Washington Consensus was that it went beyond normal human capital arguments to include a focus on girls’ education (Stiglitz 2006, 47). However, Collier is far more critical, arguing that the MDGs have led to an unwise shift in aid towards education and away from infrastructure, which he considers more fundamental to development (Collier 2007, 108).

Stiglitz also claims that education cannot be left to the market (Stiglitz 2006, 28) and both he and Sachs call for a global education fund. However, it should be noted that both see this as a relatively unproblematic way of ensuring that universal primary education will be achieved:

Of all of the MDGs, universal access to basic education is surely the easiest to achieve. The technology is the best understood and most straightforward. (Sachs 2008, 301–302)

That the former Director of the UN’s Millennium Project has such an apparently simplistic understanding of one of the MDGs is staggering. Sachs does dwell on education’s role in development for longer than any of my other authors but his understandings of the education and development debates are striking.

His first engagement with education is to present the standard knowledge for development account, as pioneered by the *World Development Report 1998–9* (World Bank 1998b; see King and McGrath 2004, for a critique of the conflation of knowledge with schooling and science and technology at different points in the report). He has a strong faith in the developmental potential of both high science and research and development. He sees a major role for universities in development, but it is the elite North American and European providers (Sachs 2008, 332), in what amounts mostly to a new colonialism.

The most important role for education for Sachs appears to be an instrumental and secondary role in population control. That education of girls reduces fertility is taken as a given (Sachs 2008, 187) and the black box of the school-as-contraceptive

relationship is not opened. A secondary effect that Sachs points to is that female education leads to labour market-related skills, thence to higher wages and to lower fertility. Women and girls are seen in their reproduction and production roles, rather than as individuals with any agency. There is no sense here of the large literature on gender and education that has long critiqued such simplistic formulations (e.g., Subrahmanian 2005; Unterhalter 2005).

The oft-cited link between education and agricultural productivity is also given a population twist when he argues that a secondary benefit of the Green Revolution is that it leads to reduced fertility by encouraging mothers to spend more time farming and girls more time in school (Sachs 2008, 189). Although the link between education and agricultural productivity has been shown to be far from simple or universal by recent comparative education work (e.g., King, Palmer and Hayman 2005), Sachs stretches it beyond breaking point by applying it to Africa.

Education also appears in his very stylised model of development, in which an appropriate education level is matched to each stage of economic and technological development (Sachs 2008, 210–12). Basic education is part of the take-off from subsistence; secondary and vocational education play a role in transition to middle-income status, which is where higher education first becomes important. Finally, higher education, science and technology are central to success in the technology-based economy – his version of the knowledge economy thesis. Of course, there is an element of correlation here, but the position of Sachs lacks nuancing: in his model, poor countries need primary education; rich ones require higher education (Sachs 2008, 221). Again, there is no sense of educationalists' views about the complexity of the globalisation, education and knowledge debate (e.g., King and McGrath 2002; Robertson et al. 2007; Green and Little 2009).

Sachs's faith in technology and apparent ignorance about its implementation leads to a further piece of utopianism, this time with respect to ICTs and education:

Distance learning is now ubiquitous in countless informal ways, and will become the standard for much formal education and training as well. Classrooms will go global, with lectures and student participation taking place in several countries simultaneously. (Sachs 2008, 308)

Finally, he envisages a role for development education in educating northern citizens about their developmental duty. They should learn about the environment, development economics, climate change and public health (Sachs 2008, 338), but it is clear that his model of development education is strongly directive and very far from the conscientisation traditions of conventional development education (e.g., is notable for his (albeit small) engagement with the importance of Osler 1994).

Easterly shares this narrow technocratic sense of education's role and potential. In the only page of dedicated consideration of education in his book, he identifies four interventions that he thinks can make a difference: supplementing feeding, materials, tuition and salaries (Easterly 2006, 326–327). These are salient themes of current work on education and development (e.g., Cueto and Chinen 2008 – feeding; Paviot, Heinsohn and Korkman 2008 – tuition) but clearly are located at the more positivistic end of the international education research spectrum.

Collier is notable for his (albeit small) engagement with the importance of post-primary education, which he argues is necessary for competing in e-services (Collier 2007, 61); for ensuring more positive outcomes from brain drain (also 61);

and for assisting in the turn-around of failed states (70). The closest he comes to a longer sojourn in educational territory is in his sub-section on 'Aid as skills' (Collier 2007, 111–115). However, this is really about the mechanics of capacity building for development. Here he shows little awareness of the sociological and anthropological critiques of technical assistance and it is unsurprising that he appears equally unaware of the educational contribution to this field (e.g., King and McGrath 2004; McGrath and Badroodien 2006).

Only in Stiglitz's book, and then very briefly, is there any awareness of the danger of the economists' tendency to treat education as a black box. He argues that curricular relevance matters to the effectiveness of human capital investment (Stiglitz 2006, 51). However, this point is not developed any further and remains a major concern about these accounts from a comparative educationalist's perspective.

### Lessons for education for development?

Back in *Comparative Education's* first volume, Edmund King (1965) counselled comparative educationalists regarding the danger of debates in their field being captured by others who lacked their concerns with context and complex understandings. In that spirit, I will now reflect on what these economists' accounts of education may imply for our field, given their higher profile than our own work. In this concluding section, I examine first what the above accounts of education's role in development might tell us about our state of knowledge regarding the field. Then I consider what these four books (and others like them) might challenge us to reflect upon regarding our approach to our work and its communication. Let me begin with a very brief synopsis of these four accounts of education for development.

There is some correspondence between levels of education and development. Education is a mark of progress at the individual and societal level and human capital theory is a reasonable account of the way that education contributes to income and productivity. In so far as population control is necessary to deal with environmental degradation and poverty reduction, then the education of women and girls has powerful instrumental effects and is a crucial investment. In so far as development in Africa is constrained by limited governmental capacity, education and training can improve the situation. Rather more implicitly, in so far as local ownership of development is important, education may have some role to play here. Finally, there is a clear role for development education in re-educating northern populations so that they change their own practices and put pressures on their governments to do likewise.

In this account, education is essentially a good thing but it is not that important for development, at least when compared with dealing with issues of trade, conflict, local and international investment and governance. In any case, the challenge of education in the south is very simple. More money and policy effort will get children into schools and education's effectiveness can be improved by scientifically tested investments in the 'right' instructional materials, teacher upgrading and supplementary feeding, where necessary.

Is there anything wrong with this as an account of education's role in development? Most educationalists would probably be fairly comfortable with the argument that there is a relationship between education and development, although they would disagree about its tightness and directionality. They would be far more nuanced in arguing that there is and/or should be a close relationship between levels of education and economic development. For instance, the critique of a focus on primary education

alone as appropriate for poorer countries has formed an important 'talking back' by comparative education to development policy since Jomtien (see King, McGrath and Rose 2007). Equally, Green and Little's (2009) contrasting of experiences in Kenya Sri Lanka, India and China reminds us powerfully that educational development (as in Sri Lanka) is no guarantor of economic development.

Undoubtedly, some educationalists would want to go much further than these economists in stressing the wider benefits of learning (e.g., Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning 2006). Many would have considerable sympathy with these authors' arguments in favour of improved female access to education, but would want to go far beyond the narrow, instrumentalist position of Sachs. That education is important to state capacity, to democracy and to changing northern policies on trade, development and the environment would not seem hugely controversial to many educationalists.

However, comparative educators would tend to want to stress that the role of education is far more complex and contradictory. For reasons of space, I will only briefly rehearse some of the concerns here.

For those of us working primarily in Africa, the theme of educated Africans uprooted from their community and culture is a familiar one of the past century. It can be found in the debates about adaptation of education in the 1920s and 1930s (Phelps Stokes Fund 1922 and 1925; King 1971) and also in the writings of Verwoerd, the architect of Apartheid (1954). However, it is also a recurrent theme in many African novels (e.g., Achebe 1958; Dangarembga 1988) in which authors explore the very real costs of this uprooting, including madness and suicide.

It can be seen from the previous point that education can be criticised for committing psychological violence to learners. However, a recent strand of research on education in Africa has pointed to the high levels of physical violence that occur in many school systems. This violence is both sanctioned (even if strictly illegal) and non-sanctioned, by teachers and by fellow pupils (Harber 2004). It is also highly gendered (Leach and Mitchell 2006). A series of studies in South Africa has shown sexual violence, including rape, to be endemic both societally and in educational institutions. Many of these attacks are on girls and one study found that 33% of perpetrators of child rapes were teachers (Jewkes et al. 2002).

Whilst social cohesion has been seen as an important goal of education for many, others have seen it as a form of indoctrination in which young people are taught to think in approved ways. This critique is offered in different forms: critiques of fascist and communist education systems; Marxist accounts of how schooling reproduces capitalism and class division; postcolonial accounts about race, gender and neocolonial effects; secular attacks on religious schooling; and neoconservative attacks on liberal-progressive education. Such debates have been a regular feature of *Comparative Education* (see, for instance, the 2004 special issue on postcolonialism – Vol. 40, No. 2).

One of the risks of a widespread belief in a human capital account of education is that it can generate educational inflation. As Dore (1976) powerfully argued through comparative work across rich and poor nations, the drive to succeed in the labour market leads to learners completing ever-higher levels of education to such an extent that the supply of labour at any one qualification level tends to outweigh demand. This deflates the price of that qualification, sparking off a further race to higher qualifications. This leads inevitably to unhappiness that education does not appear to be fulfilling its promise. Moreover, as Dore was particularly at pains to point out, it leads to the qualification being all that matters, with learning being too often sacrificed.



Equally, as educationalists we are well aware that the economists' faith in the unproblematic nature of expanding educational access and attainment is misplaced. It is evident that the two education MDGs will be missed and that this will not simply be because of lack of political will (as Sachs argues). We also know that improvements in educational quality and attainment are not simply about correct application of widely known and accepted technologies but are inherently more complex issues in which issues such as culture, teacher's status and authority, organisational cultures, etc., are of significance (e.g., Ramirez 2006; Chisholm and Leyendecker 2008; Hardman, Abd-Kadir and Smith 2008; Tikly 2008).

Finally, I would argue that their visions of development are typically too materialistic. Only Stiglitz points to a wider vision of development in which human development is stressed. Of course, this is a position that his fellow Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen, has done much to promote. Whilst it is not the mainstream position of development economics, it is an important strand of development studies (e.g., Gasper 2007). As expressed by Pope Paul VI more than 40 years ago, a human development perspective can radically displace the economic from the centre of a developmental perspective and place it at the service of the human:

Organised programmes designed to increase productivity should have but one aim: to serve human nature. They should reduce inequities, eliminate discrimination, free men [sic] from the bonds of servitude, and thus give them the capacity ... to improve their lot, to further their moral growth and to develop their spiritual endowments. When we speak of development, we should mean social progress as well as economic growth.

It is not enough to increase the general fund of wealth and then distribute it more fairly. It is not enough to develop technology so that the earth may become a more suitable living place for human beings. ... Economics and technology are meaningless if they do not benefit man, for it is he they are to serve. Man is truly human only if he is the master of his own actions and the judge of their worth, only if he is the architect of his own progress. (Paul VI 1967, art. 34)

We have recently seen the beginnings of educationalists' engagement with human development approaches, especially through adoption of a capabilities perspective (Walker and Unterhalter 2007). However, it is Sen's more philosophical work rather than his economics that appears to be influencing these new developments in education.

Nonetheless, these accounts by economists could prove a useful spur to us as educationalists to reconsider our positions on the importance of education for development. Do we need to make the case for education's contribution to economic development more forcefully? Should we turn our attention more systematically to human development alternatives? Or, should we resist the lure of big claims for education, preferring to focus on how education makes differences (both positive and negative) to people's lives without any real concern for bigger questions of development?

Would there be risks for the field of international and comparative education if we took the latter route and swam against the instrumentalist funding tide? Could such a position be morally defensible when there is so much poverty and undermining of human potential globally?

Should we perhaps rather seek to learn the secrets of these development economists who have been able to popularise their work and find markets for book length treatments of their scholarship that go beyond specialist readers? Are economists more skilled at communication than we are? Is this simply a reflection of the popular

ranking of disciplines in which Education lies far below Economics in importance? Is it because economists have an inherent belief in the beauty of simplicity, reflected in diagrams and equations, whilst international and comparative educationalists tend to be attracted towards qualitative accounts that stress complexity and contextuality? Can, and should, we do anything about this?

International and comparative education has seen a new wave of reflections on methodological and theoretical developments in the recent past (e.g., Crossley and Watson 2003; Phillips, Schweisfurth and Epstein 2007; Arnove and Torres 2007; Bray, Adamson, and Mason 2007; Crossley, Broadfoot, and Schweisfurth 2007). These, and a range of special issues in *Comparative Education*, have sought to learn from developments in other disciplines and to respond to changes in society, economics and politics. As a result, international and comparative education appears to have gained greater sophistication and self-confidence.

However, the discussion above suggests that this process of development for the field of international and comparative education still needs to go further. Here, I have sought to add to this continued development of the field by stressing more strongly Robert Burns's (1786) insights regarding the merits in seeing ourselves as others see us. Of course, this has been an important theme of the field of international and comparative education, but largely in terms of the value of cross-national studies (but cf. *Comparative Education's* 2006 special issue on comparative methodologies). In expanding such a vision, I have sought to show that it is of importance to us, as King (1965) argued back in *Comparative Education's* first volume, to be aware of how other disciplines represent knowledge in our field. I hope that this account serves to show that there may also be merits in seeing ourselves as others ignore us, for these texts from Development Economics demonstrate little interest in or awareness of our key debates. How we respond to such a negative positioning may help us in growing as a field.

### Notes on contributor

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