

Foreword

Equality and Equity in Education

This special issue of the *Journal of International Cooperation in Education* is a collection of papers on equality and equity in education that have been produced by various authors from different countries such as Malaysia, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Zambia and Twaweza in East Africa. Many countries aim to provide a system of education that builds democracy, dignity, equality and social justice worldwide. In practice the latter is complicated. The World Bank Monitoring Report 2010 maintains that even when enrolment disparities among students are eliminated, there remain major performance disparities among students from different socio-economic backgrounds. Although difficult, education is vital to society's movement forward. It was therefore necessary to select knowledgeable international authors in the field of equality and equity in education to ensure significant and useful contributions to the theme under study in this special issue. Possible views, solutions and recommendations to different issues on equality and equity in education according to individual countries' concerns are provided in the various papers in this journal.

The call for papers was firstly essentially inspired by the effect that equality and equity may have on education systems within and across countries and the potential opportunities, challenges and practices that could address the educational disparities that exist in societies. Arising from this, the call proposes to bring together a collection of research and critically reflective articles each engaging astutely in a variety of educational topics on the theme of the special journal issue. Secondly, in this special issue entitled *Equality and equity in education* the call for papers aims to dialogue the tensions between various current perspectives of education which reflect the social, political, educational, gender and economic contexts of particular countries, communities and organisations.

Through this special issue *Equality and equity in education*, seven peer reviewed papers have been presented with useful results that could influence educational policy development in the various countries. It brings together articles written by scholars from a number of different countries in order to show how concepts, practices, strategies and challenges surrounding the notion of equality and equity in education are understood differently and how it needs to be understood within its specific historical, educational and political context. There are nevertheless lessons, solutions and recommendations to be learnt from common educational challenges discussed from the perspectives and experiences in different countries. The research themes can roughly be classified into four areas of educational development: (1) equality and access to tertiary education, (2) equitable quality basic education (3) gender equity and equality; (4) equality and equity through teacher professional development; (5) social justice as an educational campaign.

The themes selected by the participating authors were selected by themselves considering their research interests, educational challenges and issues on the topic that their countries are facing on related international concerns. It seems that in many countries the universities and academics have limited influence in the development of policies and education in general.

The basic idea of this journal issue therefore was that being experienced researchers and knowledgeable on this topic, the authors should play a crucial role in influencing change and development in education through identifying the real and important issues of equality and equity in education and researching them, thus becoming able to suggest possible solutions and recommendations.

From the papers in this journal it seems that the educational legacy of the twentieth century is partly one of unfinished business, combined with a growing questioning of both the means and the purposes of educational provision. With this special journal issue the authors pursue the common task of setting and fulfilling the new educational agenda of the twenty-first century, while the former shows that our achievements to date, though far from negligible, are unevenly distributed, flawed with disparities and incomplete (Matsuura, 2001). It is therefore necessary that we must address the shortfalls of educational provision in terms of equality and equity. In this journal the latter refers to an education that responds effectively to the diverse aspirations and changing needs of individuals and societies so that all can participate and all can contribute to the best of their abilities.

We do trust that these papers reflect the real issues and challenges on equality and equity that education in various countries are facing and that they will make positive and significant contributions to educational development. We also anticipate that the papers will provide fruitful and enriching debates which will help us all to address the educational challenges in equality and equity with greater clarity and rigour. We would like to thank and express my appreciation to all the authors for their great academic contribution towards equality and equity in education.

References

Matsuura, K. 2001. Foreword. PROSPECTUS. XXXI(3): 257-258.

Cycil G. Hartell, *University of Pretoria*
Riho Sakurai, *CICE Hiroshima University*