# Education and learning for inclusive development

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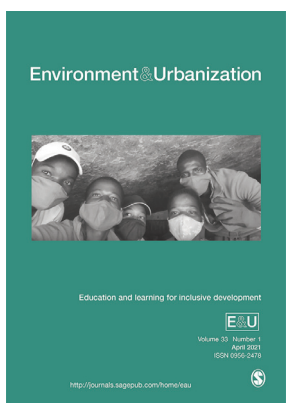
**SUMMARY:** In urban areas, where both disparities and diversity can present particular challenges, education is a primary means for promoting inclusive development, and one of the more effective mechanisms by which social exclusion and growing gaps in equity can be addressed. Yet there has been a general failure to realize the promise of inclusive education for those in urban poverty. This Brief addresses a few of the many concerns raised by this very broad theme. With regard to the central issue of basic primary and secondary schooling, it touches chiefly on problems with access and inclusion, but points also to advances in the area of public–private cooperation. The Brief also touches on the state of early childhood provision in the context of urban poverty, and on some examples of professional training that hold promise in addressing the circumstances of urban poverty.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Brief opens with reflections on a paper that was not actually submitted for this special issue on education. It was sent to us as a feedback paper and it brings a new perspective on the topic of social capital in an Ecuadorian community that has been followed by the author, Caroline Moser, for over 40 years, as will be further discussed below. Although Moser's paper is not on the face of it about education, it is no coincidence that in each of the three case studies she presents, education emerges as a key driver, enabling families to progress from precarious informality to more secure positions within the dynamic urban milieu. The pace of their progress is not uniform and challenges certainly remain. But despite the extremes of deprivation and disparity in this settlement, typical of so many urban areas, these three stories bear witness to both the faith that families place in education as the investment that will serve them best over the long haul, and the processes of social mobility potentially catalysed by education. Emma, a dedicated community leader, herself a school dropout, struggled to send her daughters to a private church school and on to the state university. The daughters in turn made sacrifices for their own children to gain professional degrees – in one case camping out for three days and nights at the entrance to a highly competitive medical school to ensure a daughter's place in the entry examination. Carmelina, a single mother, struggled for years to support her nine children as a washerwoman. One daughter, the only one to finish high school, had to cope with drug addiction in her family, but managed to help her eldest son to complete police training school and become active in policing drug trafficking in the city. Julian, father of the third family, had always aspired to be a professional dentist and went to great lengths to attend night school. Unable to achieve his dreams, he transferred them to his son, who did in fact qualify as a dentist and orthodontist, and who then turned around when he was established and sent his father to university to qualify as a dentist at the age of 60.

## II. URBAN ADVANTAGE OR URBAN EXCLUSION?

While families are well aware of the potential for education to be a pathway out of exclusion, the discouraging reality is that in most urban areas there has been a signal failure to capitalize on the promise that schooling should realize for those who are marginalized in various ways. There is a general assumption that urban children benefit from provision that is superior to that in rural areas. But as in so many aspects of the "urban advantage", these benefits tend not to accrue to more disadvantaged groups, whose children can face even more significant hurdles than children in rural areas. Even where governments are formally committed to promoting equity through the equality of opportunity represented by education, they often end up failing to provide the necessary resources at the local level, excluding those most in need by virtue of their lack of citizenship or of a formal address, or implementing their

1. The term "slum" usually has derogatory connotations and can suggest that a settlement needs replacement or can legitimate the eviction of its residents. However, it is a difficult term to avoid for at least three reasons. First, some networks of neighbourhood organizations choose to identify themselves with a positive use of the term, partly to neutralize these negative connotations; one of the most successful is the National Slum Dwellers Federation in India. Second, the only global estimates for housing deficiencies, collected by the United Nations, are for what they term "slums". And third, in some nations, there are advantages for residents of informal settlements if their settlement is recognized officially as a "slum"; indeed, the residents may lobby to get their settlement classified as a "notified slum". Where the term is used in this journal, it refers to settlements characterized by at least some of the following features: a lack of formal recognition on the part of local government of the settlement and its residents; the absence of secure tenure for residents; inadequacies in provision for infrastructure and services; overcrowded and substandard dwellings; and location on land less than suitable for occupation. For a discussion of more precise ways to classify the range of housing sub-markets through which those with limited incomes buy, rent or build accommodation, see *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 1, No 2 (1989), available at http://journals.sagepub.com/toc/eau/1/2.

2. UNICEF Bangladesh (2010), *Understanding Urban Inequalities in Bangladesh: A Prerequisite for Achieving Vision* 2021.

3. Cameron, S J (2017), "Urban inequality, social exclusion and schooling in Dhaka, Bangladesh", *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* Vol 47, No 4, pages 580–597.

4. A few recent examples: Mishra, V K and A Banerjee (2020), "Socio-economic deprivation among slum dwellers: a case study of migrants in slums of Allahabad", in A Banerjee, N C Jana and V Mishra (editors), *Population Dynamics in Contemporary South Asia*, Springer, Singapore, pages 179–195; Sultana, I (2019), "Social factors causing low motivation for primary education among girls in the slums of Karachi", *Bulletin of Education and Research* Vol 41, No 3, pages 61–72; and Härmä, J (2019), "Ensuring quality education? Low-fee private schools and government regulation in three sub-Saharan African capitals", *International Journal of Educational Development* Vol 66, pages 139–146.

5. Tooley, J (2013), "Challenging educational injustice: 'grassroots' privatisation in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa", *Oxford Review of Education* Vol 39, No 4, pages 446–463.

commitment in ways that reinforce ethnic and class differences. There is little available in the way of large-scale surveys that specifies these intra-urban disparities, or that compares the opportunities of rural children to those in urban poverty. A rare exception was a 2010 UNICEF study from Bangladesh that was groundbreaking in its disaggregation of routinely collected urban figures, making it possible to compare slum[1] households to those in rural districts and in other parts of towns and cities. This study found more extreme child deprivation in Bangladesh's urban slums than in any rural district in the country.[2] On the education front, preschool attendance was found to be 41 per cent worse, literacy was 27 per cent lower, and dropout rates from primary school were seven times higher. In part this was a function of far higher rates of child labour. But it was also related to the dearth of provision and to low birth registration rates.

In a more recent paper from Dhaka, Stuart Cameron draws on qualitative data to assess the ongoing school situation. He notes that many children in the city's informal settlements are still completely excluded from schooling. Those who have made it into the system face three particular hurdles that hinder their progress: the schools available to them may be of very poor quality; those in school may face persistent bias in terms of their assessment and placement; and they may be prevented by various other obstacles from moving smoothly through the system.[3] One such constraint that operates widely is the extent of the expenses associated with supposedly free public schools. There may not be school fees as such, but the cost of uniforms, books, registration fees and other "incidentals" can be prohibitive for families in poverty. Despite dramatic gains in school enrolment globally, with most countries reaching almost universal primary enrolment, studies from around the world continue to show significant deficits with regard to quality, and point to high numbers of urban poor children lagging behind.[4]

Where access to state schools is the issue, an all-too-common scenario is the emergence of a grassroots private sector response to education, with low-cost private schools (LFPS) in many places serving a majority of the urban poor.[5] Those who cannot afford sufficiently high-quality private schools are left behind, or settle for informal solutions that are under-resourced and unable to ensure a transition into higher levels of schooling. The proliferation of these alternative schools in many informal settlements, although it is also a demonstration of vitality and choice, is most often a manifestation of the sheer lack of choice for excluded children.

This is vividly depicted in two papers from China. The paper by Xinyi Zhang, Fei Yan and Yulin Chen on migrant families and their children in Beijing details the way conflicting policies in China play out as urban authorities implement them at the local level. On the one hand, there is the promise of equal access to education; on the other are policies that seek to limit the presence of migrant families in cities. One of the urban population control measures recently exercised in Beijing was the closure of many large market areas that provided livelihoods for migrants. Zhang, Yan and Chen's paper takes an up-close look at the impact of one such closure on the children of the workers in question. Despite the pressure applied by this loss of livelihood, almost all of these families decided to remain in Beijing, turning instead to more insecure livelihoods. In large part this was for the sake of their children's education and their futures. Yet in order to manage on their reduced incomes, many families had to move their children away from the superior government-supported public schools to the under-resourced informal schools set up by migrants – an alternative that in effect violates the state directive to provide equal access to schooling for migrant children. Three years later, none of these children remained in a government school. The constraints are not purely financial. There are demands for five separate certificates (including, for instance, residence cards and proof of formal employment) in order for migrant families to enter their children into government schools. Even for those who manage to secure the documentation, there are quotas imposed on migrant children and long waiting lists.

Also from China is the paper by Wei Zhang and Mark Bray, which takes a broad country-wide perspective on the phenomenon of "shadow education", familiar in so many parts of the global South. This is the widely accepted practice by which children are expected to attend tutoring sessions outside of school hours in order to supplement classroom learning and ensure their academic success. A few decades ago, it was often the teachers themselves who provided this supplementary after-school instruction, sometimes at the schools, sometimes in their homes. But increasingly, as Zhang and Bray explain, this has involved a burgeoning formalized shadow education industry in China, now the largest in the world, with costs that can be prohibitive for lower-income families. Those who fail to avail themselves of these services face the risk of poor school results and compromised opportunities. As in the case of education for migrant children, this trend has had unintended consequences in the face of government policies to promote educational equity. The state's prohibition of paid tutoring by teachers and within school premises, in the interests of equity and to counter potential corruption, pushed anxious families to rely increasingly on the private sector, with obvious benefits for students from better-off families. It also resulted in many cases in teachers working for tutoring companies outside of school hours and prem-

ises, often with the quiet collaboration of schools, which have relied increasingly on the extra tutoring for their students' successful examination results, sometimes even outsourcing examination preparation to these companies. The growing reliance on external tutoring has resulted in an increasingly complex, profitable industry with companies that have gone public on the New York and Chinese stock exchanges. Ironically, the size and reach of the industry have also increasingly called for government regulation, thereby actually legitimizing the shadow education sector. In effect, the government's efforts to achieve educational equity have actually contributed to educational disparities, as both income and location play into the competitive edge provided by tutoring. Urban areas in general, and especially large cities, are far better served with tutoring services, which can more easily secure competent trained tutors and managers there. The outcomes are predictable, with theoretically equal access to the promise of education being a reality for some more than others.

While the urban areas of other countries have perhaps not seen the extent of China's growth in this shadow education industry, it is a well-known phenomenon in countries throughout the global South.[6]

## III. THE PROMISE OF PARTNERSHIP IN PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE PROVISION

This particular intertwining of the private and the public in the delivery of urban education is just one in an increasingly complex mosaic of arrangements worldwide. The value of partnerships between government and a range of other actors has long been acknowledged in the effort to achieve the Education for All goals (adopted at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000, and further building on commitments made 10 years earlier in Jomtien). But the range of manifestations and the role of government on this front have continued to evolve. As on many other fronts, there are numerous arrangements that blur the boundaries between state and non-state provision, often with mixed results. Increasingly, for instance, governments do not just regulate private schools; they may also contribute significant resources to them, especially in the low-fee private school sector that serves many families for whom public schools fail to deliver.[7]

The Jamaican case study in this issue by Jane Dodman considers one such response. While the solution described here is not a familiar model, it is one expression of the changing parameters of the public/private distinction in the world of education globally. Dodman describes a hybrid institution, the merger of two schools in the low-income Hannah Town neighbourhood in inner-city Kingston. One of the original two schools was a state school, declining in enrolment and delivering poor test results. The other was a private church school that for many years had provided low-cost education to children in this neighbourhood with an emphasis on both academic quality and an ethos of discipline and moral values. Increasingly, however, the private school was failing to generate an income sufficient to sustain it. The merger of the two schools depended on negotiations with and commitment from the wider community. It is still early days, and the COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge, but Dodman's research suggests that the new hybrid school has been able to retain an emphasis on quality and values, while building on the strengths of the state system, with its greater resources and range of programmes for underprivileged students in an especially violent urban neighbourhood.

While none of these papers details the problems of school-based violence that have been well documented in urban areas around the world, Dodman's paper certainly points to the burden of community violence for children and the capacity of school-based programmes to help them cope.

## IV. EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT

Some of the challenges resulting in children's educational exclusion relate to their capacity to make optimal use of what is available. The early years are a critical period in a child's life, the time when their development is most rapid and far-reaching. A now classic pair of papers in *The Lancet* in 2007 documented the developmental potential of children under five, the multiple risks (including poverty, malnutrition, violence, environmental contamination and a lack of stimulation) that sabotage this potential for hundreds of millions of children in the global South,[8] and strategies for avoiding this tragic loss.[9] High on the list of these strategies are strong ECCD (early childhood care and development) programmes, ideally addressing health, cognition and social-emotional needs in an integrated way, responding to the fact that these preschool years are the period when inequities in opportunity are best addressed. The payback for investments in early childhood, whether on the part of households or the larger society, is well established. Innumerable studies have demonstrated the far-reaching impacts. Aside from the indisputable developmental benefits for children, both short and long term, there is the economic argument. Economist James Heckman has famously argued, based on empirical evidence, that investments made in children's early years show the highest returns when compared to investment in later stages of schooling

6. Byun, S Y, H J Chung and D P Baker (2018), "Global patterns of the use of shadow education: student, family, and national influences", in G Kao and H J Park (editors), *Research in the Sociology of Education*, Emerald Publishing Limited.

7. Moschetti, M C and A Verger (2020), "Opting for private education: public subsidy programs and school choice in disadvantaged contexts", *Educational Policy* Vol 34, No 1, pages 65–90; also Espindola, J (2020), "Low-fee private schools in developing nations: some cautionary remarks", *Global Justice: Theory Practice Rhetoric* Vol 12, No 1, pages 55–77.

8. Grantham McGregor, S et al. (2007), "Developmental potential in the first 5 years for children in developing countries", *The Lancet* Vol 369, No 9555, pages 60–70.

9. Engle, Patrice L et al. (2007), "Strategies to avoid the loss of developmental potential in more than 200 million children in the developing world", *The Lancet* Vol 369, No 9557, pages 229–242.

10. Heckman, J J (2008), "The case for investing in young children", *CESifo DICE Report* Vol 6, No 2, pages 3–8.

11. https://heckmanequation.org/resource/invest-in-early-childhood-development-reduce-deficits-strengthen-the-economy.

or job training.[10] Heckman also calculated the cost–benefit ratio of investments in early childhood, demonstrating based on longitudinal studies that every dollar invested could see as much as a seven-fold return in terms of increased individual and state revenue over the years, as well as potential savings in health costs and social assistance.[11] (These studies have been primarily from the global North. There has been a dearth of longitudinal assessment in the South, although there is ample evidence of the shorter-term benefits of ECCD.) Yet in most countries, the commitment to early childhood programming lags way behind investment in primary school and higher levels of education, paltry as that often is.

ECCD is especially critical to the survival strategies of urban households given changes in family structure and women's work patterns. The paper by Rachel Moussié in this volume reviews the impact on this front, exploring what early childhood provision means in households where mothers are part of the informal workforce, the case for so many in urban areas. She explains the immediate impact for individual children, but her paper places most emphasis on the critical importance of these services for women in informal work. She describes the key challenges these women face, and the way responsibility for young children compounds the many disadvantages and vulnerabilities inherent in informal work. Many of these women are forced to take their children along with them while they work as street vendors, waste pickers and market traders, finding ways to change diapers and feed children as they work. Even when they are home-based workers, this can mean keeping children safe from hazardous materials and procedures. Either way, combining work and childcare greatly reduces their productivity, especially since it often means cutting the workday short. Moussié explores the limitations in the services that tend to be available, citing cost, accessibility, and issues of quality and trust. Based on discussions with women in five countries, she lists the characteristics that they feel make for a good childcare centre, stressing the responsibility of municipal authorities on this front and the need for them to collaborate with childcare providers and informal workers and their organizations.

## V. PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

At the other end of the spectrum are opportunities for professional training and development, and some of the ways these too can address exclusion. Neither of these papers describes livelihood training specifically for excluded urban residents. Both, however, examine the potential of good programmes to serve the needs of marginalized groups through the skills and attitudes they impart to budding professionals. Huraera Jabeen, Khondaker Hasibul Kabir and Tasfin Aziz discuss a design studio for fourth-year architecture students at Brac University, Bangladesh, which has departed from more traditional approaches in the country's architecture programmes to stress the importance of social equity and engagement with local communities. Although a participatory focus on social justice has been one important trend within architecture for many years, in Bangladesh the focus has remained more on the delivery of architecture for the elite, and training has tended towards the theoretical. Brac's programmes, however, have generally been informed by an ethos of equity and sustainability, and its architecture department sought to take a more responsive orientation, introducing students to hands-on work in real-world urban contexts. For the Fall 2018 studio, this involved field trips to the city of Jhenaidah and an evolving relationship with various stakeholders in the city to develop proposals for interventions that responded to local priorities. The proposed projects included plans to address the workday concerns of informal vendors, a skill development centre for young married women, and the conservation and re-use of valued colonial structures to provide cultural activities for local residents.

The other higher education paper, by Fabian Suter and Christoph Lüthi, considers the critical role that is increasingly being played by massive open online courses, or MOOCs, in addressing the shortage of trained professionals in the global South in the water and sanitation sector. This shortfall, according to the authors, is as serious a deficit as the lack of financial resources in meeting the burgeoning need in rapidly growing and underserved urban areas. The paper considers a particular MOOC series developed by Eawag-Sandec, the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology, with separate courses on water treatment, sanitation planning, solid waste management and faecal sludge management, all in several languages. These courses have enrolled over 120,000 students in six years, the great majority of them from LMICs. Of these, only 12 per cent have actually completed their course, a reflection in large part of the fact that the programmes are free and easily accessed, and that not all learners are equally committed. There have also been problems for some learners in accessing reliable and affordable broadband internet. Others would like more language options, and increased collaboration with local partners for more contextualized content. Nonetheless, more than half of those who completed their course have been able to make use of the training, and most of the remainder expect to do so within five years. More systematic follow up is needed, say the authors, to determine the extent to which WASH MOOCs are actually contributing to filling the professional shortfall.

## VI. COVID-19 AND EDUCATION

Several of these papers explore the implications of COVID-19 for their target groups' access to education. Moussié describes how COVID-19 presents a new risk for working women to navigate, further undermining their access to adequate childcare, and hence their capacity to return to work once it is again permitted. Even where childcare centres have managed to remain open despite difficulties in generating income, new health guidelines have radically increased their running costs, forcing some to close. Moussié points to a survey of 3,925 childcare providers in South Africa, both registered and unregistered; in April 2020, 96 per cent reported that their reduced incomes were insufficient to cover their expanded basic expenses.

Dodman describes how intra-community disparities play out within children's schooling in the context of COVID-19, with some children at significantly greater disadvantage in coping with virtual learning. Many of the children at this inner-city school lack not only computers and internet connections, but also the level of support at home that depends on computer literacy within the household. Even the capacity of teachers to provide adequate help from a distance varies considerably. Some teachers, Dodman points out, also lack strong internet connections, and even the teacher who was most successful in managing online instruction was responsible for a group of children, almost half of whom were unable to get online. While many children are left behind, Dodman points out that at the same time the pandemic has in fact hastened the lagging introduction of technology into the Kingston school system.

Suter and Lüthi also point to benefits. UNESCO, they note, estimates that 90 per cent of all learners globally have been affected by school closures. The resulting shift in favour of digital learning has meant greatly increased enrolment for MOOCs – in the months following March 2020, enrolment numbers increased fourfold. Bray and Zhang also point to the dramatic increase in the scale of China's online tutoring.

The most detailed attention to the impact of the pandemic for urban learning is the field note from Harare by Janine Hunter, Shaibu Chitsiku, Wayne Shand and Lorraine van Blerk, which describes the experiences of a group of young people living rough in the city's back alleys and lots. Together with UK researchers, these young people constructed a multi-media "story map" detailing their experiences of lockdown as they avoided being rounded up and detained by authorities, and as their already precarious access to shelter and livelihoods rapidly evaporated under the new constraints. The young participants, based on their own experiences and on their interviews with many of their peers, developed a list of 10 "capabilities" that were undermined by the situation, including not only their ability to find food and shelter and to stay healthy, but also any potential to plan for the future. Although making the story map was clearly a learning experience for the young people involved, it is primarily the learning for researchers, practitioners and policymakers that is emphasized here. As the authors point out, innovative methods of capturing and representing the experiences and views of marginalized and unrepresented groups are not a novel resource for informing policy and practice. Yet there is a continuing need to address the discourse around children and young people who live on the street, so that it reflects their actual strategies, priorities and aspirations, never more so than during this extreme time.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

We close, as we began, with the paper by Caroline Moser. Although this paper has clear relevance to the urban education focus of this Brief, Moser herself is primarily interested in highlighting new insights with regard to addressing poverty and inequality. She records the declining importance of community social capital in the settlement she has documented over 40 years, as community mobilization processes have become less central to survival, and the increasing reliance on household social capital. But she also draws an important distinction between household and family assets. Household social capital, as she points out, based in a certain spatial relationship, turns out to be a less useful concept in accounting for longer-term processes. As households have expanded, contracted, formed and reformed over time, intergenerational reciprocity has become increasingly important as family members have pooled resources and coordinated strategies in order to cope and get ahead in the face of volatile economic realities. Family social capital, says Moser, has been *"the necessary precondition for second- and third-generation family members to accumulate other capital assets, simultaneously revealing the strengthening, rather than weakening, of ties between mothers, daughters, fathers and sons"* (page 198).

It is instructive to note, once again, the role that education has played here, despite the significant constraints that can accompany its realization. Moser's paper brings a critical longitudinal perspective to concerns that are mostly dealt with here through shorter-term investigations. Social mobility is in fact possible for Moser's once-marginalized urban residents, but it has required the commitment of their families to unlock the potential repre-

sented by education. As in so many other areas of urban development and poverty reduction, it is the actions of people on the ground that repeatedly compensate for inadequacies in formal provision. Beyond the efforts of families, low-cost private schools proliferate, often with grassroots support. There is yet to emerge, however, the level and extent of grassroots cooperation in improving educational opportunity that is evident on other urban development fronts. Public–private partnerships hold promise, but to date there is scant evidence of them being driven by communities and networks of the urban poor.

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## Contents list of *Environment&Urbanization* Vol 33, No 1, April 2021