

We are pleased to be able to introduce the *International Journal of Educational Development in Africa* (IJEDA), a new journal focusing on the role of education in the social, economic and political development of African societies. Here we want to thank the national and international editors as well as the authors who have contributed for helping to produce the first edition of the journal and Unisa Press for agreeing to publish the journal.

In the second edition of the journal we shall be publishing an editorial essay, which discusses in more detail how we understand ‘development’ and its relationships with education. Here we want to state briefly what the journal means by ‘Africa’. Defining ‘Africa’ is always difficult and fraught with controversy given that it is a huge and diverse continent. However, as Ferguson (2006: Introduction) argues, in terms of both international discourses and perceptions discourses and perception within Africa itself, Africa as an entity has a meaningful existence and that even though this may be artificial in many ways, it is nevertheless ‘powerfully real’ (2006: 6). In terms of the geographical scope of the journal, Africa is seen in terms of the entire continent from north to south, including attendant islands such as Madagascar and Mauritius. Undoubtedly there have been certain continent-wide, though not necessarily universal, patterns such as colonialism, independence, the influence of world religions such as Christianity and Islam, authoritarian governments and transitions to democracy and the economic issues of structural adjustment. But perhaps the main coherent feature of Africa of relevance here is that (with the possible exception of Libya), all African countries are seen by the United Nations as ‘developing’ in some way. In the 2013 Human Development Index all sub-Saharan African countries were in the medium and low human development category with Botswana the highest at 119 out of 186, and 18 of the bottom twenty being in sub-Saharan Africa. In terms of north Africa, Libya was 64th, Algeria was 93rd, Tunisia 94th, Egypt 112th and Morocco 130th out of 186 (UNDP 2013).

The journal wishes to encourage submissions of articles on education in Africa. These could be on education in individual African countries or articles that compare across African countries. We especially encourage authors to write articles on individual African countries, giving a wider African context in the introduction or literature review where possible. As South Africa already has a thriving culture of journals that focuses specifically on education in South Africa, we would strongly encourage writers on education in South Africa either to set their articles firmly in a wider African context or to compare education locally with another African country or countries. While preference will be given to such articles, we will also publish articles purely on South Africa, not exceeding two per edition.

The journal consists of articles that have been peer reviewed, amended where necessary and published.

Major themes to emerge from this first volume of the journal are those of the quality, culture and context of education in Africa.

Brock-Utne in her article makes the salient point that quality in classrooms depends very much on the language of instruction – if children cannot understand, or can only partially understand, the medium of instruction then learning quality will be low. All too often in African education systems, she argues, the language of instruction from quite an early age is the ex-colonial language rather than the indigenous languages. Many children have difficulty with this, which harms classroom teaching and learning.

Stephens emphasises the need to foreground the importance of culture and context in studying education in Africa. He says in his article on using narrative and life histories to help to understand education in Ghana and South Africa that ‘If education research is about “what” happens to people it is also concerned with “where” that happens in terms of place, setting and context’.

Samuel is concerned with the theme of quality in examining how educational leadership styles that could enhance school quality are often ignored in practice by educationalists in South Africa and Mauritius in favour of hegemonic styles based on more narrow concerns of performativity and measurable outcomes.

Harber and Oryema in their study of the ‘prismatic’ cultural context of educational decentralisation in Uganda provide further evidence of the barriers that national and international educational policy initiatives can face at the local level in Africa.

In recent years many educational practitioners have become increasingly concerned with democracy as an important goal for education. Mncube, Davies and Naidoo examine both the positive role of school governing bodies as a tool for promoting democracy in two schools in South Africa and their current limitations.

Schweisfurth examines the difficulty of implementing good quality, learner-centred education in African schools given that such ‘travelling policies’ face a range of traditional, colonial and contemporary (contextual and resource) factors that are resistant to them. She calls for more realistic, culturally contextual approaches to learner-centred pedagogy in Africa in order to increase the chances of success.

Nienaber examines the role of educational institutions in relation to quality, focusing on school leadership in South Africa in particular. She raises issues of whether the school governance structures in South Africa are too complex and whether training for them could be improved to put more emphasis on ‘servant leadership’ to greater empower those involved in school governance.

Oketch examines the history of human capital theory and its different manifestations from the 1960s to the present day, focusing on its influence on education policy in Africa and its gradual movement away from purely economic or labour market concerns.

Ultimately, quality has to be judged on what education is trying to achieve. A good quality education is one that achieves what it sets out to do. Despite the many different possible goals for education, in the eyes of many parents and learners the definition of a quality education is whether or not it leads to employment.

Vusi Mncube and Clive Harber

REFERENCES

Ferguson, J. 2006. *Global shadows: Africa in the neoliberal world order*. Durham: Duke University Press.

UNDP. 2013. *Human development report*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.