Editorial (ERPP Issue 9.2)

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Welcome to ERPP issue 9.2. In this issue, we will present several pieces of research from the perspectives of policy and practice, and from Asia–Pacific countries/economies of Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and China.

In the paper by McConney and Perry, the authors systematically unpacked relationships among student socioeconomic status (SES), self-efficacy, and mathematics achievement in the context of varying school socioeconomic composition (school SES). Using a recent international dataset for Australia, they found that increases in school SES were consistently associated with substantial increases in achievement in mathematics. This phenomenon held for all groups regardless of their individual SES. Further, their findings showed that the association of school SES with maths achievement persisted even when subject specific self efficacy was taken into account. However, their findings also suggested modest differences among student groups disaggregated by these factors. In particular, the association between maths achievement and school SES appeared moderately stronger for students with higher levels of self efficacy compared to their peers with lower self efficacy. Further, among students with similar levels of self efficacy, the association between maths achievement and school SES tended to be stronger for lower SES students than for their more privileged peers. From these findings, the authors provided a discussion of policy implications and strategies for mitigating the influence of school socioeconomic composition on academic achievement.

In the next paper, according to the author Chan, Hong Kong teachers have been used to more directives and less professional approaches to curriculum implementation. Therefore, in recent curriculum reform efforts, “soft” policy was used by the policy makers to implement reform. With the provision of substantial resources, it was expected that schools and teachers would have a better chance to develop themselves professionally and manage the change effectively. However, this was an over optimistic view of the situation because the historical trend and present situation of teachers’ professional development were overlooked. This paper used case studies of schools and teachers involved in current reforms to show how

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they went about the reform process. The cases demonstrated how reforms were understood at the local level and the extent to which it could be claimed that implementation in Hong Kong had taken place.

In the third paper, Toi posited that decentralization in the education system has become a trend in many developing countries. However, one of the adverse effects of decentralization was the disparity between regions or schools in educational achievements. Yoi offered a justification for such a view by studying the case of the Indonesian education system. The data was collected from about 5,000 Sekolah Lanjutan Tingkat Pertama schools (SLTP: junior secondary school). The method of covariance structure analysis was used to find out the influences and effects of the factors related to educational environment upon educational outcome, and to make a comparison between before and after the introduction of decentralization in Indonesia. The main finding of this research was that the increase in the school budget improved the quality of educational environment, and led to higher test scores and lower dropout rates. Such positive results, however, turned out to be less significant, and the relationship between factors became weaker during the period after decentralization had started. This was particularly the case for the group of schools whose budget level was relatively small. Therefore, there was a need to consider the measures aimed at addressing the disparity between schools as well as regions.

The paper by Zhao and Huang investigated the modern evolution of Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) curriculum policy that has led to the current rapid growth of the Confucius Institute (CI) around the world. The study used media sources, including government policy, Confucius Institutes themselves, newspaper reports from the Internet and individual blogs posted by teachers of Chinese language, as well as university academics' observations. The paper discussed the implications of the development of China's CFL policy, particularly through the Confucius Institutes, in diversifying world's lingua franca and the education market in the coming era. The analysis indicated that it was unlikely that Chinese would displace English as the world's most widely used language in the foreseeable future. However, the Chinese language was believed to be an important element in the future unity of the world.

We hope that the papers will generate further discussions and collaborations among educators and researchers so that good educational philosophies and practices may be shared globally. We look forward to your valuable contributions to the ERPP.