

Reforming Education and Challenging Inequalities in Southern Contexts

Research and policy in international
development

Edited by
**Pauline Rose, Madeleine Arnot,
Roger Jeffery and Nidhi Singal**

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Foreword

A tribute to Christopher Colclough

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A tribute to Christopher Colclough

Christopher Colclough was my first graduate student in 1967. He had come from Bristol with his first degree and the Powesland Memorial Prize in economics. We would have weekly supervisions in what was then the Department of Applied Economics – myself, Chris and Udi Gachaga from Kenya. I am not sure who learned the most and from whom, but it was always stimulating and enjoyable. Soon it became obvious that Chris had real talent for thoughtful economics and careful analysis, and he wanted to study further. It didn't take long before we had agreed that he would stay on for doctoral study.

At the time, manpower planning was a mainstream issue, designed to set an economic frame for expanding higher education in Africa. Chris decided to work on this, with Professor H.A. Turner as his formal supervisor and myself in the background as an informal one. By then, I had gone to the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Chris would often come down, contributing to a joint study we were by then undertaking, reviewing the manpower plans of some 40 African countries. It was not difficult to see Chris's growing talents and working together was always fun and rewarding.

By 1971, with his newly minted doctorate, Chris was off to Botswana to use these manpower planning skills for the recently independent government and form many of the close friendships and professional relationships which he retained over much of his life. These qualities gained for him much trust and respect from those in government. Chris went back many times to Botswana and wrote an early book about its economy. His professionalism and friendship were increasingly valued. Much later, someone remembers Chris saying that he thought he ought to leave Botswana at that time because he was becoming too powerful. What a beautiful and sensitive comment from someone who always was so modest. How many other expatriates have shown such awareness of the proper limits to their role in an independent country?

In 1975, Chris was back in the UK and to my delight, came to IDS as a Fellow, undertaking research, some consultancies and teaching. In 1982 he wrote what he later thought was probably his most important single paper, certainly one of the most quoted. Prepared for the World Bank, he reviewed a very wide range of sources – sociological, anthropological and medical as well as economic – about the wider impacts of primary education. He showed how primary education in

the developing world brought productivity benefits for work in the informal sector and for smallholder agricultural production. Through literacy and numeracy, primary education also contributed to social and economic life, especially through better health, nutrition, birth spacing and speeding the demographic transition (Colclough 1982).

One of the impressive features of this article to me is how it shows the openness and questing mind of Chris, shifting from his earlier economic focus on higher education and manpower planning to a broader and thoroughly documented rethinking of the place and benefits of primary education. The piece played a major role in helping the World Bank and many donors to start funding primary education, which until then they had treated as *consumption* and ineligible in their concentration on what they thought was investment. Chris's influence and reputation grew.

This paper played a key part in shifting aid-supported education programmes away from secondary and higher education, towards the primary level – a shift undertaken by the World Bank, by what became the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and by a number of other bilateral donors over the following years. The article also helped set the stage for the first global UN Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, at which 155 governments and supporting non-governmental organisations made commitments for expanding primary education, so that all girls and boys would have a place. For this, Chris co-authored a key strategy paper, later published in 1993 as *Educating All the Children: Strategies for Primary Schooling in the South* (Colclough & Lewin 1993). This became the first standard reference documenting the practical possibilities of achieving universal primary provision, even in poorer countries with severe budgetary constraints.

As an economist, Chris never allowed himself to be trapped within the limited confines of education, let alone of neoclassical orthodoxy. His writings and consultancy reports set education within the broader context of wages and employment, incomes policy, human resources planning, public sector pay and alternatives to structural economic adjustment (now called austerity). He critically examined economic and policy issues, often challenging orthodoxy and putting forward alternatives. *States or Markets* (Colclough & Manor 1991) attracted attention in the world of academia towards the end of the Thatcher era, arguing that (for practical policy) the choice should never be state *or* markets but a judicious balancing of each, requiring careful analysis in relation to country, time and context. It was typical of Chris that he never played to the gallery, whether of students, colleagues, political or international.

Although a strong academic, Chris was never an ivory tower economist. Between 1993 and 2000, Chris enjoyed a long-term policy advisory role in South Africa. Working initially with the African National Congress until transition, and then with the new ministry post-apartheid, he helped design a new legislative framework for education, securing structural change away from excessive expenditures allocated to the schooling of Whites, to a system of equal subsidies for the different racial groups. The essential features of this new school financing policy are retained to this day. During this time also, he led a multi-country research

programme on Gender and Primary Schooling in Africa in collaboration with the Forum for Women Educationalists (Colclough et al. 2003). The legacy of this programme is evident through some of the chapters included in this book.

His international work had helped set the Jomtien goals for Education for All and for UNESCO's annual monitoring of country progress towards them. He had been an adviser to the UK Parliamentary Committee on Overseas Aid and Development, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, Irish Aid, the World Bank, UNICEF and the Rockefeller Foundation. In the mid-2000s, he provided the technical analysis and the evidence base behind the UK making a ten-year pledge to provide £8.5 billion from its aid budget to support basic education.

The international highpoint of Chris's career came in 2002 when he was appointed by UNESCO as the founding director of the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report. This report has become the main instrument for holding governments and agencies to account for the commitments they have made on education. Education for All (EFA) was by then high on the agenda of international development and this authoritative, frank and well-presented report documented progress towards the EFA goals agreed at Jomtien. The 2002 *Education for All: Is the World on Track*, the first report, received front-page treatment in the press of some 160 countries. This outreach was in large part the result of Chris insisting that the report must be free of UN jargon and bureaucratic censorship, values easy to praise in a university, not so easy to achieve in the United Nations. Chris set the stage for these arrangements, unprecedented, I think, for UNESCO, by holding out for them right up to negotiations with UNESCO's Director-General. The result was that Chris alone, as director of the report, was responsible for the report's content and conclusions. The next two global reports were equally bold: *Gender and Education for All: The Leap to Equality* (2004) and *Education for All: The Quality Imperative* (2005). In short, by the time he came back to Cambridge as a professor, Chris had established himself as one of the world's leading economists specialising in education. His career was already well established but in fact it became the stepping stone for another burst of creativity and contribution.

In 2004, Chris was elected as Commonwealth Professor of Education and International Development and as Director of the newly established Centre for Commonwealth Education and subsequently Director of the Centre for Education and International Development. He remained in this position until his retirement in 2013. In 2004–05, he was President of the British Association for International and Comparative Education (BAICE). He won an Honorary Degree from the University of Katholieke University of Leuven. Chris was successively Fellow and Life Fellow of Corpus Christi College, where he had gained his doctorate many years earlier and a Fellow of the Academy for Social Sciences.

In Cambridge, Chris used his base and international contacts for establishing an international Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty (RECOUP), bringing together a multidisciplinary team of researchers from seven institutions in India, Pakistan, Ghana, Kenya and the UK. This led to an edited collection, *Education Outcomes and Poverty: A Reassessment* (2012) and

then to a Routledge book series on Education, Poverty and International Development, which Chris co-founded and co-edited with Madeleine Arnot. In this pinnacle of his academic career, the Faculty of Education in Cambridge benefited enormously from his leadership and teaching, in bringing together comparative education and international development. This work offered new insights on education access, quality and outcomes in the Global South. It is a fitting tribute that this edited collection is published in this series, written by authors many of whom worked with Chris during different stages of his career, including ones associated with RECOUP.

Chris died too young, from cancer at the age of 70. But he had already made important and lasting contributions to future generations through education and economic policy in many countries, especially but not only in Africa. His research and writings cover a wide field and were often pioneering. Chris was thoughtful, honest and careful as an economic analyst, a true professional. He was also a talented pianist and cello player, which helped shape his deep sense of humanity. His qualities, not always found in the academic world but treasured when they are, were those of scholarly rigour, calm rationality and high regard for intellectual debate combined with generosity of spirit, graceful leadership and his ability to make everyone feel their contribution was valued and should be heard – as well as good humour, a sense of fun.

Sir Richard Jolly
Honorary Professor and Research Associate
Institute of Development Studies

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