



Joyce Cain Award March 2013 Comparative and International Education Society of the United States of America

Each year since 2000 the Joyce Cain Award has been made annually by the North American Comparative and International Education Society (CIES). It is presented to an individual(s) to recognize an outstanding scholar(s) whose article explores themes related to people of Africa published by any recognised peer reviewed international journal. The award celebrates the work of Joyce Cain who worked at Michigan State University undertaking comparative educational research on minorities in Africa and the USA

This year the manuscript of a paper by Professor Keith Lewin and Dr Ricardo Sabates, both members of the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, was selected by the Joyce Cain Committee of the CIES and awarded the prize. The paper is entitled: *“Who gets what? Is improved access to basic education pro-poor in Sub-Saharan Africa?”* in the International Journal of Educational Development in 2012 (Vol 32:4 517-528). The article is available as a free download from the IJED – Elsevier website at <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/international-journal-of-educational-development/awards/2012-2013-cies-joyce-cain-award/>

An extended study on *Changing Patterns of Access to Education in Anglophone and Francophone Countries in Sub Saharan Africa: Is Education for All Pro-Poor?* by Keith Lewin & Ricardo Sabates is available free at http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/PTA52.pdf

The award winning paper was first presented at the UK Forum for International Education and Training conference in Oxford at New College. It uses an analysis of household data across a cluster of countries to show that though educational participation has been increasing in Sub Saharan Africa in many cases this has been accompanied by increasing inequalities related to household wealth, over age entry, gender and location. The paper identifies a series of policy directly related to the redefinition of the Millennium Development Goals post 2015 which is currently under discussion across UN agencies. Keith received the award on behalf of both authors at the CIES annual meeting in New Orleans in early March.



Keith Lewin Aaron Benavot, Secretary of the CIES and Clancie Wilson from the Joyce Cain Committee



Keith Lewin with N'Dri Therese Assie-Lumumba, former holder of the Joyce Cain Award and President elect of the CIES, and Val Rust who received a Lifetime Award for his contributions to the CIES



**Acceptance speech - Joyce Cain Award;
comparative and international education
Society of the United States of America**

New Orleans, March 13th, 2013

Ladies and gentlemen colleagues and friends,

it is a great honour to be invited to receive the Joyce Cain award for the best article written on an African theme in 2012. Before making a few remarks of substance I must thank a number of people. First, I bring greetings from my co-author Ricardo Sabates, who cannot be with us today as he is working in Rwanda. Ricardo and I collaborated closely on the award winning paper as part of our work with the Consortium for Research on Educational Access Transitions and Equity (CREATE). Second, both he and I are grateful to the selection committee for the time they spent reviewing papers and identifying our work as worthy of this award. Third, I would like to thank all those African colleagues who have worked with us and the Centre for International Education at Sussex over the years and made possible the accumulation of work which underpins the award-winning article. Lastly, though I never met Joyce Cain, from talking to those who knew her I feel confident she would have enjoyed our paper on *“Who gets what? Is improved access to basic education pro-poor in Sub-Saharan Africa?”* He I think she would have agreed with its overriding conclusion which is that growth in participation without improved equity falls short of something that can be called development. I am therefore more than happy to accept this award on our behalf in her memory.

African educational development is a success story. We have much to celebrate in education and development over the last three decades in Africa. I first travelled to Ghana in 1976 during the period of the military government and the National Redemption Council. It was a time of food and fuel shortages with a broken economy in recession and democracy a receding dream. Since then Ghana has

transformed itself to being on the verge of becoming a middle income sub Saharan African country. Across the continent the achievements have been extraordinary. Over the last decade the number of children in primary school has increased by more than 60%. The numbers enrolled in higher education have doubled over the last 10 years, an unprecedented rate of growth creating opportunity for those who previously had little. And the number of girls attending basic education has risen impressively to the point where on average across the continent girls now constitute 47% of all enrolments. This of course does not mean the job of universalising participation and eliminating inequalities has been done. It does mean that in more places than not educationally speaking Africa is in a much better condition than it was.

Despite these gains we must remember some of the challenges that remain.

First our paper draws attention to some uncomfortable facts. These include evidence which indicates that most children still do not complete lower secondary schooling successfully. Enrolment rates suggest that perhaps 40% are enrolled of whom not much more than half successfully complete and transit to high school. Those who drop out into one of the zones of exclusion (www.create-rpc.org) are disproportionately poor, female, rural and from peri-urban informal settlements, and migrants of uncertain civil status.

Second, Africa is a young continent with more than half its population below the age of 20. The enduring tragedy is that its school systems are old, too old to ensure all children complete a full cycle of basic education. Our research shows clearly that the large proportions of children are seriously overage. They may enter two or more years late into grade 1 and subsequently repeat or miss a grade, especially where seasonal migrations take place. No country with full participation through to grade 9 has a significant variation of age in grade. All countries in Africa which fall short of universal participation have a significant age in grade slippage. Too many children in Africa are in the wrong grade for their age, it's not that difficult to make sure “every child has a birthday”, and that all children even if they are stunted enrol at an appropriate age no later than six years.

Third, in some but not all countries in sub-Saharan Africa educational provision is increasingly becoming a fee paying and privately provided by individuals and

companies who operate for profit. There are claims that low price private schools reach the poorest people. But there is no evidence that they do so on scale in a sustainable way. Where states fail to reach the poorest the solution remains the one that all rich and middle income countries adopt – to improve public services which are means blind to those who cannot afford to opt out. Privatisation has clear benefits for the elites and those in middle income households who can afford to buy preferential access. If private sector providers are subsidised with public money this diminishes the resources available to provide free, universal, and quality schooling which is available to all independent of their means. Privatisation is also likely to lead to neocolonial re-stratification which marginalises the poorest and reinforces the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

Whilst I've been in New Orleans I had the opportunity to visit the municipal museum. I learnt that in 1865 the Abraham Lincoln school was opened at the end of the Civil War for "freedmen". Its purpose was designed to offer free schooling in a non-discriminatory way to the children of New Orleans. When it opened it had an enrolment of 750 children, 75% of whom were non white, and 14 teachers and it was the largest school in the USA for "freedmen". The following year the municipal authority fell on hard times. As a result of the school decided to introduce a fee of \$1.50. Not surprisingly enrolments in the second year fell to 400 with eight teachers. The 1868 Constitution provided for at least one free public school in each parish with open admissions regardless of race. As a result the number of public schools rose from 100 to over 1,100 in 1874.

Sub Saharan Africa has seen the effect of school fees on enrolments in the past. The School Fee Abolition Initiative of UNICEF and UNESCO replaced earlier advocacy by the World Bank in the 1980s that fees were necessary to assure quality and would not suppress enrolments. Where school fees were abolished enrolments grew rapidly. Fee free schooling also changed "Who Gets What". Charging for access to school has no place in a development strategy that invests in education as a public good and wishes to make full use of the talents of all of its population.

In conclusion let me use this opportunity to applaud with you the contribution Joyce Cain made to the field of Comparative and International Education. Her legacy extends beyond this ceremony and both Ricardo and I

are honoured to contribute in a modest way to the cause of African educational development that this award celebrates.

<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/international-journal-of-educational-development/awards/2012-2013-cies-joyce-cain-award/>

http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/PTA52.pdf