**A Tribute to Chris Colclough**

**Excerpt highlighting joint research with Chris Colclough on Education for All**

This chapter[[1]](#footnote-1) is part of a collection dedicated to Chris Colclough with whom I have shared the journey of education and development since the 1970s. We first worked together in the Human Resource Problem Area Group at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex in the 1970s. Our first joint paper was for the Bellagio Group Conference of donors in the early 1980s (Lewin, Little and Colclough 1982, 1983, Lewin, Little and Colclough 1983a and 1983b, Colough, Lewin and Oxenham 1995) and contributed to a major shift in emphasis in aid to education to basic education and away from higher levels. At the invitation of Richard Jolly we worked together on educational financing for UNICEF in the run up to the World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) (UNESCO 1990a). Our analysis provided the first global estimates of the costs of Education for All and the reform package that would be necessary to make it affordable (UNESCO 1990b). Fifteen years later Chris and I found ourselves directing sister Research Consortia on Education for the Department for International Development (DFID) exploring access and outcomes related to education and development. WCEFA and the World Education Forum (WEF) (UNESCO 2000) in Dakar in 2000 reaffirmed that knowledge and skill translate into capabilities that underpin development. It is the distribution of access to opportunities to learn that shapes “who gets what?” in the competition for valued lifestyles, jobs, livelihoods and wellbeing (CREATE, 2006) and it is the utility of educational outcomes that determines whether those who acquire knowledge and skill translate these into development (RECOUP, 2006).

Chris and I shared beliefs that education was an investment in human capitals without which development would not take place (Colclough and Manor 1993, Lewin 2000); that greater equity and enhanced learning outcomes were part of any useful definition of educational development (Colclough 1977, Lewin 1985) ; and that investment in mass education systems was an essential public good and that the neo-liberal prescription of privatisation failed the test of equity (Colclough (ed) 1997, Lewin 1994).

In the run up to the Jomtien WCEFA in 1990 Chris and I undertook an analytic study which set the tone for as series of subsequent studies of financing education in low income countries including most recently that undertaken by IFFEd (2106). Our policy paper on financing for UNICEF for WCEFA (Colclough and Lewin, UNESCO 1990) mapped out the costs of EFA for the first time and identified what would be necessary in terms of international assistance to achieve the goals that were set in the World Declaration on Education for All. This led to agreement in the *Framework for Action to Meet Basic Learning Needs* (UNESCO 1990b). This was a clear commitment to enhanced learning that has recently been rediscovered by those arguing that what is needed now is *access plus learning* as if learning was not always a priority (LMTF 2015). Heyneman and Loxley (1983) had pointed out well before WCEFA that access and completion of school was likely to be more important in low income countries than rich countries – the Heyneman-Loxley effect. Schools provide the gateway to learning where other opportunities to learn in households with limited cultural capital are scarce. The final report from WCEFA stressed the importance learning. It even anticipated what would now be called social networks and demand led peer to peer learning in its discussion of the “third way” of delivering education through new kinds of mass media and the information technology driven informal sector.

WCEFA committed the international community to mobilise up to $2 billion a year over and above existing levels of expenditure to meet the financial challenges of Education for All (Usher, 1990:8). The amount would have been higher without the kinds of reforms that we suggested to control costs, improve quality, and generate enough finance to support Schooling for All (SFA). Cost saving and quality enhancing reforms would be needed to make the cost equations affordable with imaginable levels of domestic revenue and external assistance. A package was needed to reduce costs per student and simultaneously find ways of improving learning.

The first set of reforms we identified were *cost saving* and included double shifting, class size and teaching load management, and community based classroom assistants to extend the reach of qualified teachers. The second group of reforms were *cost shifting* reforms included the dividend for the public budget that comes from being permissive of self financed private schools, community contributions to the costs of school building, and a freezing of higher education subsidies unless or until tertiary education became more cost efficient and equitably accessed. The third set of reforms were *quality enhancing*. These included higher levels of investment in learning materials, increases in teacher’s salaries where these were below levels sufficient to ensure recruitment and motivation, and measures to increase internal efficiency through reducing repetition and drop out as a result of improved management of learning, limits to the costs to household of attendance, and more supportive circles of support around children.

Our analysis concluded that an additional $2 billion a year of external assistance would be sufficient to realise Schooling for All - defined as having all eligible children in primary schools of minimal acceptable quality - in all countries committed to the goal (Colclough with Lewin 1993:239). This assumed they embraced the necessary reforms and were able to increase the share of revenues given to education to approach 6% of GDP. This volume of aid needed represented a 40% increase in the level of aid to education in 1990. It was a very affordable amount equivalent to two Aircraft carriers at a time when defence spending was averaging about 5% of GDP. A small peace dividend would have paid the bills.

The proposals we made were designed to balance competing ambitions.

* Remain within plausible increases in aid needed
* Focus on universal basic education and restrain growth at higher levels
* Assume assistance would largely take the form of grants not loans
* Anticipate that economic growth and increased government allocations to education would close financing gaps after 2005
* Limit aid to levels that did not create long term dependence
* Allocate most aid to countries where the needs were greatest
* Gain political and professional commitment to the proposed reform agenda

Fast forward to 2019 and the financing dilemma facing LICs and LMICs echoes the analysis Chris and I did in 1990. Despite the changing context the dimensions remain the same. However, the level of ambition has changed beyond recognition, as have the magnitudes of external assistance that might be required. The Sustainable Development Goals, and in particular the education specific SDG 4, anticipate universal enrolment to grade 12 and substantially expanded pre-school, higher education and Technical and Vocational Education (United Nations 2015). This generates very large gaps between the resources currently allocated to education by governments in LICs and LMICs and the funding necessary to achieve the SDGs (UNESCO 2016). The external aid needed as identified by the IFFEd (2016: 105) is about $ 50 billion a year. This is at least at least ten times the projected amount that was needed for SFA in 1990. These new estimates seem to be the result of ambition untempered by credible planning and available financing. They also seem untroubled by what can be learned from the experience of Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) post 1996, and the 2008 financial crisis and sub-prime lending.

When Chris and I started working together in the 1970s the belief we shared was that development was increasingly something that could be accelerated by aid but not caused by it. Dependency theory reminded us “to develop” should be an intransitive rather than transitive verb with the onus on countries to develop themselves albeit with judicious assistance to accelerate progress. This fundamental truth remains the case.

The purpose of counting the costs of unequal access to education is to find a solution to how to pay costs not once, but once and forever, through fiscal reforms rather than the well intentioned but volatile benevolence of aid. Dudley Seers, the founding Director of the Institute of Development Studies, would have agreed (Seers 1969). There is no solution to closing educational financing gaps that does not depend on the development of fiscal states that can fund public goods from domestic revenue. There is no solution that does not also work to promote efficiency and effectiveness and mobilise resources to best effect and minimise negative effects on the physical and social environment. Enduring solutions are endogenous.

Chris and I were proud of the contributions we were able to make to WCEFA with many others that were precursors of the “Education for All” decades. More aid was mobilised, the focus shifted to basic education, and many millions of children experienced expanded school systems and learned much more than they did before. It is now clearer than ever that purpose of external assistance to education in the future can no longer be to provide finance to fill gaps in recurrent expenditure. It is to accelerate progress towards educational reforms that promote efficiency, effectiveness and equity, that are inextricably linked to well founded fiscal reforms that reduce the need for “gap filling” aid to education in future.

**Newspaper Headlines from the World Conference on Education for All at Jomtien, Thailand, Friday, March 9th, 1990**

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**Selected Publications with Chris Colclough**

1. 1982 Lewin K M, Little A W, and Colclough C L "Adjusting to 1980s; Taking Stock of Educational Expenditure" in **Financing Educational Development,** International Development Research Centre, (IDRC-205E), Ottawa. 13-39.
2. 1983a Lewin K M Little A W and Colclough C L "Effects of Education on Development Objectives (2)". **Prospects**, Vol 13, No 4, UNESCO, Paris. 413-425
3. 1983b Lewin K M Little A W and Colclough C L "Effects of Education on Development Objectives (1)". **Prospects,** Vol 13, No 3, UNESCO, Paris. 299-311
4. 1985 Colclough C L, Lewin K M, and Oxenham J C P "Donor Agency Support for Primary Education". **International Journal of Educational Development**, Vol 3 No 1. 1-11.
5. 1990 Colclough C L and Lewin K M **"Educating All the Children: The Economic Challenge for the 1990's"**. UNICEF, New York. Presented as a Round Table Paper at the **World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien, Thailand** March 1990 160pp. Summary of the Paper (20pp).
6. 1993 Colclough C. with Lewin K M, **Educating All the Children; Strategies for Primary Education in Developing Countries.** Oxford University Press. 328pp.
7. 1994 Colclough C and Lewin K M, **Alternatives in Resourcing Education for All** in Windham D (ed) Education for All: The Requirements. UNESCO, Paris.
8. 1994 Colclough C and Lewin K M, **Estimating the Costs of education for All** in Windham D (ed) Education for All: The Requirements. UNESCO, Paris.

1. Abridged version of paper published in Rose P, S Arnot M, Jeffrey R, Singal N (2021) Reforming education and challenging inequalities in southern contexts: research and policy in international development. Routledge, London. 37-59. References in full paper at www.keithlewin.net/downloads [↑](#footnote-ref-1)