

Fulbright New Century Scholars Program, 2007-2008
Final Meeting, 12-17 March 2008
Group Report

Group 2

Theme:

Mechanisms Within and Beyond the Schools that Affect Access to Higher Education

Members:

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The group developed this theme as a reinterpretation of the original “role of K-16 in affecting access to higher education.” The rewording clarifies issues that the group thinks need to be addressed:

- “Mechanisms” reflects a concern with how the characteristics of systems, institutions, and individuals operate through years of schooling to steer some towards higher education and some away from it.
- “Schools” includes primary and secondary institutions as well as the transition to tertiary education. We think of it in terms of the metaphor a three-legged stool: the three legs, which are equally essential and which must all match if the stool is not to wobble, are curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- We added “beyond the schools” because we recognize the importance of factors—at individual, family, and community levels—outside the formal education system. In other words, the mechanisms we are considering are social and psychological as well as systemic.
- The term “access” reflects our concern with the fact that many people do not go to college/university who should, and that these people belong disproportionately to social groups that can be identified as marginalized or disadvantaged.

A model of how we think of the relationship among all the factors comprised in our theme is presented in the attached diagram, which was developed by Stuart Middleton. The model reflects two fundamental convictions that have informed the work of the entire group:

- Any attempt to make higher education more equitable must work from the point when children first enter the broader community by attending school.
- Any such attempt must take account of rapidly changing social and demographic circumstances.

The group’s participants adopted varied approaches to this theme, reflecting their different disciplines and the different parts of the world in which they work. Their specific research topics were:

- How socio-psychological factors impact on behaviors within the schools. Comparative study in United States, Israel, and other countries—particular interest in peer group influence (Richard Arum).
- Intersection between the systemic and institutional aspects of education as shown in the institutionalization and de-institutionalization of socialist policies for admission to university in Bulgaria (Pepka Boyadjieva).
- Studying the development of approaches to curriculum, instruction, and assessment in the UK, especially Scotland, with particular emphasis on new technologies (Milton Chen).
- Developing curriculum content that can answer the demands of every high school student, with concomitant work on methods of instruction and assessment (Irina Fishman).
- Analysis of OECD data to see how characteristics of secondary and tertiary education systems, e.g. degree of diversification or privatization, affect students' educational aspirations (Petr Matějů).
- How structures and practices within the New Zealand education system act to limit and depress access and equity in higher education, especially for the growing under-represented groups (Stuart Middleton).
- Establishment of community libraries especially in rural areas of Uganda and documenting ways in which they enable students' learning and thus give access to higher education (Kate Parry).
- Issues of preparation and access in East Asia, including Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan (Barbara Schneider).

Despite the diversity of their research, group members found various occasions for fruitful collaboration:

- Richard Arum and Barbara Schneider organized a meeting in Washington, D.C. entitled the "Social and Cultural Context for Micro Student Loans." Participants included nine members of this year's NCS Program, together with representatives of the International Finance Corporation, the World Bank, the Institut for Higher Education Policy, and the Fundacion Paraguaya.
- Milton Chen published a special issue of *Edutopia* magazine and website (Feb./March 2008) on international education. Contributors to this issue included Kate Parry on community libraries in Uganda, Irina Fishman on new approaches to teacher education in Russia, Stuart Middleton on intergenerational literacy in New Zealand, and Milton Chen on a Japanese child development website.
- Kate Parry, Irina Fishman, and Milton Chen attended a meeting with Vanessa Tobin and senior education staff at UNICEF headquarters in New York City. The meeting was organized by Milton Chen.
- Petr Matějů, at the invitation of Richard Arum, visited New York University to make a seminar presentation.
- Pepka Boyadjieva met with the editorial team at The George Lucas Educational Foundation, California at an occasion hosted by Milton Chen.

In addition, group members worked collaboratively with other participants in the NCS Program:

- Petr Matějů participated with Bruce Johnstone in the workshop on public/private balance in financing higher education in Europe (Berlin, March), presented the results of NCS project at School for Education at Penn State with David Post, and consulted with several NCS scholars to design questions for 2009 International Social Survey Programme on

- Kate Parry, on David Post's urging, organized a panel for the Comparative International Education Society's annual meeting in March 2008. Another NCS participant, Abdu Kasozi, is one of the speakers on this panel.
- Kate Parry attended a Higher Education Fair organized by Abdu Kasozi in Uganda and used the occasion to collect material on higher education institutions for use in the Kitengesha Community Library.

All members of the group have also made significant advances in their own research:

- Richard Arum is presenting with Yossi Shavit, Meir Yaish and Adam Gamoran an analysis of TIMMS data on the association between disciplinary climates and college expectations. Now he is conducting a pilot project with them that will interview 600 Israeli Arab and Jewish students on the effects on these expectations not only of school disciplinary climates but also social origins and other factors. They are also organizing a larger comparative study on this subject.
- Pepka Boyadjieva has done extensive archival research in Bulgaria, analyzed representative sociological empirical surveys from different periods, and examined laws and regulations for the development higher education in Bulgaria and a recent European documents concerning the Bologna process. She has published one article on the topic of her research, has another forthcoming, and is working on a monograph provisionally entitled "*Social Engineering in Higher Education.*" She presented a paper at the seminar "Higher Education and Science in Bulgarian – European Dimensions or Inertia from the Past," sponsored by the Hanns Seidel Foundation, December 16, 2007, and is to be a keynote speaker at the 8th Fulbright International Conference on "Education and Society: Problems, Prospects Prognoses", April 11, 2008.
- Milton Chen co-edited "Global Six" on educational innovators in K-12 settings in Egypt, Costa Rica, Scotland, etc. for *Edutopia* magazine/website (April-May 2008). He wrote "What I Learned as Principal for a Day," on the Chinese Education Center (newcomer school for Chinese immigrant students) for edutopia.org and KQED-FM radio spot and funded and wrote a foreword for "Powerful Learning: What We Know About Teaching for Meaningful Understanding," by Linda Darling-Hammond and Brigid Barron, Stanford and David Pearson, Elizabeth Stage, and Alan Schoenfeld, UC-Berkeley. He is also going to present a keynote session 21st century media literacy at the Dublin Youth Media Festival on April 19-20, 2008.
- Irina Fishman has been working on project development and consultation with such groups as the World Bank, the Finnish Neighboring Cooperation Area Trust Fund (FNCATF), the Government of Kazakhstan, and Russian Federal and Regional Ministries of Education. With the support of the World Bank and the Finnish Neighboring Cooperation Area Trust Fund (FNCATF), she and her colleagues in Samara have developed instruments to measure the level of key competencies' formation of initial vocational education schools' graduates. She has also worked with colleagues to develop competence-oriented education standards for general secondary schools in Kazakhstan and to share the resulting ideas with education officials at all levels in Russia. Her published work over the past year includes two co-authored articles in *Utchebnaya Literatura* and two workbooks for elementary school students.
- Petr Matějů presented the results of his NCS research at an international conference on financing higher education in Slovenia in November 2007, has published three papers in international journals, and in May 2008 will present a paper on access and equity based

on his NCS project at the meeting in Florence of the Research Committee in Social Stratification and Mobility of the International Sociological Association.

- While in the NCS Program, Stuart Middleton developed a proposal for a Career and Technical Education Tertiary High School which will be introduced in New Zealand in 2009. This program will place students from under-represented groups on a seamless pathway from secondary through to tertiary education. He has also made eight presentations in the course of the year, including four keynote addresses, and has signed a contract for a book on *Beating the filters of failure: Road maps to success in Higher Education*
- Working with Ugandan colleagues, Kate Parry launched the Uganda Community Libraries Association in August 2007 and established a relationship with the United States Embassy in Kampala; as a result, the Embassy is funding the Association's activities for the present year. She facilitated a workshop for the Association in January 2008 and is administering a competition among libraries for grants. She also made two keynote presentations in South Africa in August 2007 and has had two articles accepted for publication, one in *Teachers College Record*, the other in an edited collection to be published by Multilingual Matters.
- Barbara Schneider, with her Hong Kong colleague, Professor Lee, has submitted a proposal to the research committee in Hong Kong to undertake a study of their new college curricular change and is editing a book with him on *The Transition into College: An Asian Perspective*. She presented at the winter 2008 Forum on "The 3-3-4 Transition in Hong Kong Education in Comparative Asian Perspective," and with a post doctoral student she met in Korea she has written a paper and will be presenting at the International Sociological Association Research Committee 28 on Social Stratification and Mobility, comparing Korean and U.S. college drop out rates.

In short, it has been a highly productive year for everybody, and we fully expect that the relationships established in the course of it will result in further collaboration in future. For example:

- The meeting organized by Barbara Schneider and Richard Arum is to be followed up by a proposal for a fuller meeting on the same theme in Bellagio. Our Fulbright NCS colleague, Consuella Lewis, is developing this proposal, and all group members hope to be able to participate.
- Kate Parry is discussion with Milton Chen the possibility of a further article in *Edutopia*. The purpose of this article will be to propose and encourage links between schools and other institutions in the US on the one hand and community libraries in Uganda on the other.
- In May 2008, Petr Matějů, Barbara Schneider, and Richard Arum will be meeting in Florence at the Research Committee in Social Stratification and Mobility of the International Sociological Association. They will present their NCS results and discuss the significance of these results for comparative social stratification research.
- Petr Matějů is organizing a policy oriented workshop in Prague on financing higher education in Europe. Five members of the NCS Program will be invited to present their research and recommendations.
- Petr Matějů will also invite NCS colleagues to write a comparative paper on the results of the questions he is contributing to the 2009 ISSP.
- Stuart Middleton has agreed to edit a book, which has already been proposed to Palgrave publishers, on the development of curricula and instructional practice, with respect to various social contexts, to improve access to higher education for students to whom it is

ordinarily denied. Kate Parry, Irina Fishman, and Milton Chen all hope to contribute to this book.

Finally, our group discussions have enabled us to identify a research agenda, which we presented at the mid-term Fulbright NCS meeting in Mexico and have refined since. This agenda combines social, structural, financial, and instructional components:

- What are the different forms of marginalization? For example, to what extent are the concerns of minority immigrant and indigenous populations similar or different? And how do these concerns relate to those of majority populations in poor countries?
- What are the unchallenged assumptions we are making about the structure and financing of educational systems? Should we be thinking more radically about the nature of schools, the roles of teachers, students, and parents, and the relationships between schools and higher education institutions?
- Should we reconsider access, not as entry to higher education but as completion? Or as learning and, by implication, ability to learn?
- In discussions of higher education, what is the distinction between equity and equality? How is this distinction expressed in different educational systems and in the policies that shape them?
- What do we mean by quality and productivity and at all levels of education? Could we, for example, interpret them as added value in terms of the personal capacity of students? If so, how can we measure such added value?
- How are education systems responding, and how might they respond more productively, to changing global relationships and economic circumstances?

This agenda will be guiding our future research, and we have no doubt that it will lead to further collaborative projects over the coming years.

Kate Parry
Coordinator
16 March 2008