

**Fulbright New Century Scholars, 2007-2008**  
**Higher Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Issues of Access & Equity**

**Report of Group 1**

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**The Cultural and Societal Norms that Affect Access and Equity in Education**

The report is divided into three parts: the goals that the group set out for itself; individual projects; and group projects and collaborative work and outcomes.

**Group Goals**

Our group deals with the cultural and societal norms that affect access and equity in education. There are nine members from different parts of the world who are looking at issues of access and equity in education in Africa, Latin America, South Asia, China and USA in a comparative perspective. The work and the studies emerge from the underlying conviction that education is both a value in itself and a key to improving the lives of individuals. Hence an opportunity for quality education must be provided to all. The work is done in a comparative perspective with USA.

The group first met in Buffalo and set out some goals for itself towards which it has been working. The goals were to examine terms like Merit, Quality, Affirmative Action, Quotas, Equity, Discrimination and Exclusion both covert and overt and their nuances in terms of their cultural and historical articulations. There was a realization that

individuals or groups could be subjected marginalization in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, religion, region and language among other factors. There has been a further questioning in the group about access since access is not everything. There are concerns about access to what and to what end. What emerges is a commonality of problems in different contexts and different responses in dealing with them. Hence, it was essential to be conscious of what would be necessary to create enabling environments in various contexts that include family, social institutions, modes of government, legal frameworks and civil society as a whole. To do this it was necessary to constructively critique empirical and theoretical studies, examine targeted policies including their implementation and make policy recommendations for the future.

### **Individual Projects**

Since the meeting at Mexico, all of our members have completed their research visits which have enabled them to gain valuable experience and have first hand encounters with issues of ethnicity, race, religion, caste, language, poverty, classroom transactions and communications, diversity and minorities, all of which may work to deny access.

**Zhiyong Zhu** completed his research visit at Wright State University, He published the book “State Schooling and Ethnic Identity: The Politics of a *Neidi* Tibetan Secondary School in China” by Lexington Books in Lanham of Maryland in the United States in June 2007. The joint draft paper “Cultural or Political Considerations? Understanding the Educational Policy of Tibetan *Neidi* Class/School in China” was finished and is being revised further for submitting to the journal. He also published the paper “Ethnic Identity Construction in the Schooling Context: A Case Study of Tibetan *Neidi* Boarding School” on *Chinese Education and Society* (Vol. 40, No. 2, pp. 38-59) in 2007 and a joint paper “The Chinese ‘Learning in Regular Class’ and Western Inclusive Education: Comparison and Exploration” in *Chinese Education and Society* (Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 21-32) in 2007 as the second author. He will present his research papers “Higher Education Access and Equity among Ethnic Minorities in China” and “Reflections on Basic Education under the ‘Three Guarantee’ Policy in Tibet’s Pastoral Districts” in the CIES and AERA meetings in the late of March 2007. He will publish the book *Ethnic*

*Minority's Higher Education Access and Equity in China: Cultural and Societal Explorations in Chinese* in the early of 2009. He has completed Chinese translation of the book *The Sociology of Higher Education: Contributions and Contexts* by Patricia Gamport, which will be published by the end of 2008 by Peking University Press.

Zhiyong will cooperate with Laura Jenkins, Michele Moses, and Kavita Shama to organize a panel proposal on "Affirmative Action for Higher Education in Asia" in the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Education Research in Seoul, South Korea, Oct 24-5, 2008.

**Michele Moses** completed her international exchange in Porto Alegre, Brazil during Summer 2007 at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in Porto Alegre. While there she presented her analysis on "The Call for Diversity in Education," which leads into her overall analysis of the several different rationales for affirmative action that have emerged in Brazil and the US. She has written up her preliminary arguments and findings in a paper entitled, "Making the Case for Affirmative Action in Brazil and the United States: Moral and Instrumental Justifications." She will present this paper at the Annual Meetings of the Comparative and International Education Society and the American Educational Research Association this month. She is also in discussion with the editor of *Educational Researcher* to do a themed issue on the topic of Affirmative Action Across the World.

**Habtamu Wondimu's** research visit was at the George Washington University. His work is on "Access and Equity in Higher Education in Ethiopia: A Comparative Perspective on Cultural Issues." To that end, he has been looking at problems of access and equity including definitions, debates, the context in terms of socio-economic situation in Ethiopia, factors that contribute to low participation and strategies for better access. The methodology used is to examine the literature on these various aspects, both the national and international framework, together with field work involving interviews and surveys. Habtamu gave a talk on "Education and Development in Ethiopia" in September, 2007 at George Washington University. He also gave a talk at Chicago State University on the "Challenges and Prospects of Higher Education in Ethiopia in October, 2007. He has prepared a draft report that includes intervention strategies for improving the situation together with their pros and cons. The findings of this research will be

submitted to local academic journals for publication. He has a chapter entitled, “Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom in Gondar University” in *Situation of Autonomy, Academic Freedom and Teaching Personnel in Ethiopian Higher Education* (Forum For Social Studies, Addis Ababa, 2008).

**Yaw Oheneba-Sakyi** is working on the “Socio-Religious Context of Access and Equity in Higher Education in Ghana” and during his research visit he conducted interviews in eight institutions of higher education in Ghana, four public and four private-religious. He has researched the media, met academics and scholars, officials, students, alumni and others. He has also looked at new policy initiatives in Ghana driving reform, the initiatives taken by different religious groups of Islam, Christianity and African traditional religions and their linkages to educational systems together with educational initiatives in general. Yaw presented one paper titled, “Are Private Religious Universities and Colleges the Answer to Ghana’s Problems of Access and Equity in Tertiary Education,” at the 8th International Conference on Education Research in Seoul, South Korea in October, 2007; and another paper titled, “Religion and socioeconomic attainment in the context of development” (co-authors, Tim B. Heaton and Spencer James), to be presented at the Population Association of America Annual Meeting in New Orleans, LA in April, 2008.

**Carlos de la Torre**’s research project was on “Racism and Citizenship in Ecuador’s Educational System.” He completed his site visit at Johns Hopkins University. His paper will be presented at the Annual Meetings of the Comparative and International Education Society and the American Educational Research Association in March 2008. In addition, he will co-edit a book that will be published by FLACSO-Ecuador. He will also submit his research report to the Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic and Racial Studies. Carlos has been awarded a Woodrow Wilson Center Fellowship for the 2008-09 academic year in Washington, DC.

**Laura Dudley Jenkins** is researching affirmative action in higher education in comparative perspective, with a focus on India and the US. She carried out interviews in northern and western India with government leaders, administrators, professors, students, activists and NGO leaders and collected and analyzed organizational literature, court decisions and related reports. She visited a variety of types of educational institutions,

including large public universities and colleges anticipating a proposed expansion of quotas to 50% of seats for lower castes, a private university system engaging in voluntary affirmative action, small, historically “dalit” (formerly, untouchable) colleges, a rural polytechnic set up to increase access for rural students to the knowledge economy, and hostels and study centers for lower caste or tribal girls and boys to increase their ability to finish high school and continue on to higher education. Highlights of her time in India included interviews with a member of the National Planning Commission, a Vice Chancellor from a Dalit community, and the female head of a private university system that is voluntarily implementing affirmative action for lower castes.

She did preliminary work in Durban to expand her project on affirmative action to include South African higher education. Based on initial research in Durban on special “access” and “bridging” programs in engineering, music and the humanities, Laura plans to apply for a grant for further research on affirmative action efforts in higher education in Durban, especially the University of KwaZulu Natal. Her interest is in student admission and retention policies and recent efforts to move away from race or caste categories toward policies using multifaceted definitions of social and economic disadvantage. The politics of such a move, and the impact on access and equity, are the major points of comparison.

With her working group, Laura will be presenting her research at CIES and AERA in March 2008 and will revise this work for submission to an academic journal. She will also continue to work with Kavita Sharma on their work on affirmative action (see collaborative activities at the end of this report). She will offer a new Honors Seminar on "Education and Power" in the spring of 2009, using many publications of fellow NCS scholars on my syllabus. She will draw on the sources and contacts Michael Morris recommended in developing the service learning component to the course, in which the students will work with underprivileged students at a local public elementary school. After offering this course as an honors seminar, she will teach it as a part of the regular political science curriculum offered in our department.

**Kavita Sharma** has been working on “Affirmative Action in Higher Education: India and USA” and like Laura has been looking at issues of caste, class, religion, quotas and merit and have been trying to see how these play out in terms of race in USA.

During her research visit to the University of Chicago, she read and gathered material pertaining to both India and USA which was not easily available in India. She read material pertaining to both India and USA like Constituent Assembly debates in India, writings of nationalist leaders like Gandhi and Ambedkar, the various commissions and committees set up to look at the backward classes, the constitution itself and the long litigation that has taken place on the issue and is currently going on.

On the American side, it was an opportunity to read American history of slavery, civil rights movement, discrimination and segregation, the American constitution, in particular the fourteenth, fifteenth and the first amendments. Education, she found was as contentious and litigious in USA as in India and court decisions were by and large split. Oversimplifying but dividing it into two broad categories, it really boiled down to, are we trying to right historical wrongs or present inequities. It could of course be elements of both. The visit to USA was a transforming one. She made acquaintance with the American system of higher education and meeting with practitioners, scholars and members of civil society made her look for possible solutions for her country where poor access and long standing inequities have been long standing problems. This took her to explore the community college movement in South India adapted from USA, vocational education, skill development programs being run by NGOs, the initiatives by the industry including the Confederation of Indian Industry. Also she will study the expected court judgment on quotas this year and the setting up of the Equal Opportunities Commission due this year which might lead to a paradigm shift from caste to other factors leading to unequal access. During the year Kavita has presented a paper on Quotas and Affirmative Action in India at the University of Lethbridge, Canada and will be making presentations in the forthcoming CIES and AERA conferences in New York. She is currently working on a monograph on the same subject but focusing on possible solutions.

**Pervez Hoodbhoy** completed his research visit at Princeton University. He published an article titled, “World-Class Universities: A New Holy Grail” in *SciDev*, a magazine dedicated to science and education development, June 2007. As a keynote speaker he gave a presentation titled, “The Power Of Ideas And The Modern University,” at the NED Engineering University Alumni Convention in September, 2007, San Jose, California. He was awarded the Third World Academy of Sciences ROCASA prize for

the popularization of science, 2007 at a ceremony was held in Trieste, Italy in Nov. 2007. Pervez published an article *Pakistan's Universities – Problems and Solutions* in Pakistan's major Daily Newspaper, Dawn, Jan, 2008. He was twice featured in a nationally televised debate with Pakistan's higher education authorities on spending priorities, Nov. 2007 and Jan. 2008. He plans to publish the research carried out under the NCS program in the form of a book by the Oxford University Press of Pakistan.

A member of our group **Arjuna Parakrama** has also finished his research visit in the USA but was unable to be present because of health difficulties.

### **Group Projects and Collaborations**

Michele, Laura, Zhiyong, Kavita and Carlos are presenting papers together at the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) and the American Educational Research Association (AERA). A former NCS scholar, Micheal Bastedo, will be out discussant at the AERA. Michele organized these panels and the proposals.

At the invitation of Ki-Seok Kim, Yaw participated in the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Education Research in Seoul, South Korea, Oct 24-5, 2007. The keynote speaker was former NCS distinguished leader, Philip Altbach.

Michele, Laura, Kavita, and Zhiyong plan to present papers together on affirmative action at the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Education Research in October 2008 in South Korea.

Michele is involved in the planning stages of a themed issue on Affirmative Action across the world in *Educational Researcher*. Some NCS group members may be respondents.

Laura will organize a panel proposal for the Association for Asian Studies in Chicago, Spring 2009 on access and equity in higher education in Asia, including Kavita Sharma and, if they remain available to attend, Pervez, Zhiyong and David Post.

Kavita and Laura will work on article(s) on affirmative action in India and the US, including a comparison of the latest court decisions in each country. Kavita will visit Laura at the University of Cincinnati to give a lecture and complete a co-authored publication in spring 2009.

Yaw invited the group to Ghana for a 2009 Conference on “Higher Education Around the Globe: Lessons, Practices, and Challenges,” if funds are available.

## **Conclusion**