
Guest Editorial: Bridging theory and practices in educational development

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“Bridging Theory and Practices in Educational Development” is the theme around which the current issue is published, which includes three articles. Bridging theory and practices in educational development is an important mission of the Center for the Study of International Cooperation in Education (CICE), and the topic is considered a critical one by the *Journal of International Cooperation in Education (JICE)* as well.

To ensure that educational policies, programmes and initiatives are effective, relevant and responsive to the needs of students, teachers and communities, it is essential to bridge theory and practice in educational development. Connecting theoretical knowledge and academic research findings in the field of education with practical implementation in real-world settings, where teachers and students are the key players, is crucial.

The Education 2030 Framework for Action adopted by the UNESCO outlines approaches to translate the commitment made in Incheon into practice at the country/national, regional and global levels (UNESCO, 2015). The year 2023 is the mid-term point for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a critical time to reassess them since the COVID-19 pandemic has just been contained. It is the time to review the progress on Goal 4 of the SDGs, and at the same time conduct scientific analyses from diverse perspectives on how countries are recovering from the negative impact of COVID-19 with successful or failed practices in the field of education and link these findings to future policymaking and project formulation.

UNICEF mentions in its Education Strategy 2019–2030 that the implementation of the strategy will be strongly determined by country and regional contexts. It advocates policymakers, the international community, and political and social leaders to create an enabling policy and legislative environment for sustainable social transformation based on the practices and voices of students, teachers and guardians in the field of education (UNICEF, 2019).

In its Global Education Monitoring Report 2023, UNESCO suggests the adoption of digital technology in education and learning. However, the use of digital technology varies by community and socioeconomic level, teacher motivation and preparation level, educational development and country income level. To understand whether digital technology contributes to educational equity, quality and efficiency, one must identify the logical mechanisms driving the use of digital tools to improved learning and the method of collecting evidence to assess the impact of practice (UNESCO, 2023).

Some of the key strategies to bridge theory and practice in educational development include (1) fostering collaborative partnerships among researchers, teachers, policymakers and community stakeholders; (2) implementing action research projects in the education field; (3) encouraging teachers to apply research findings and theories directly to their teaching by

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using evidence-based strategies; (4) establishing evaluation and feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement; and (5) developing long-term research-practice partnerships between universities or research institutions and educational institutions to facilitate ongoing collaboration and co-creation of knowledge.

The article by Atuhurra, Kim-Hines and Nishimura, “How did local wisdom and practice make schools thrive during the COVID-19 pandemic? Evidence from a positive deviance study in rural Uganda”, clarifies the impact of a locally grown strategy implemented in schools in rural Uganda, wherein the positive deviance (PD) intervention was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, and a randomised control trial (RCT) was applied. Apart from the methods and findings of the study, its approach of developing rapport and a long-term research–practice partnership with the schools in the target area can be considered a good approach for linking theory and practice in the education field.

The article by Ishida, Shrestha, Subba and Thapa, “How did outcome of international cooperation in school-based management help schools respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal?”, adopts the approach of building collaborative partnerships with local officials, teachers and community members in rural areas of Nepal. Led by the Nepalese researchers, participatory evaluation workshops were conducted to obtain actual feedback from stakeholders. The focus was on qualitative findings, and the process they adopted in changing teachers’ attitudes through activities to overcome COVID-19 can be useful for future policy formulation.

The article by Tanaka, “Birth and evolution of ‘social studies’ in Myanmar: Dramatic changes in contests and approaches”, describes the differences in contents and approaches between “social studies” under the military administration and that under the recent democratic administration through a comparative analysis of the textbooks of both regimes. The author urges government officers and educators in other countries, by offering an evidence-based approach, to apply the research findings to curriculum development and teaching in their country for introducing child-centred education.

It is hoped that the articles in this special issue will lead to further academic discussions on bridging theory and practices in educational development in the *Journal of International Cooperation in Education*.

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