

Achieving Quality Education for All

EDUCATION IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: ISSUES, CONCERNS AND PROSPECTS

Volume 20

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Phillip Hughes

Editor

Achieving Quality Education for All

Perspectives from the Asia-Pacific
Region and Beyond

 Springer

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Foreword: Let a Hundred Flowers Blossom

The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.– Dietrich Bonhoeffer

It is hard to remember a time when education was not really important to me. I have written elsewhere in detail about the three teachers who inspired me and significantly shaped the course of my life. Alison Smith taught me for six years of primary school, in a model small school where she taught 36 pupils – six in each of six years. She knew me intimately; she knew exactly what I was capable of and never accepted anything but my best. Her words to me as a 10-year-old “*Is that your best, Phil?*” still ring in my ears and motivate me.

Doris Brown, my high school English teacher, brought the classics alive for me and related their themes to contemporary life in the lead up to and during the Second World War. Finally, when I went as a Rhodes Scholar to Oxford, CS Lewis was the academic, prolific author and Christian apologist whose classes altered my direction in life. I audited his lectures on Milton, for one term. His capacity to communicate with his listeners and bring major issues to life convinced me that I should become a teacher rather than the nuclear physicist I had intended to be.

I later came to realise that not everyone enjoyed the same opportunities to access quality education that I had. A broadening sequence opened my eyes to the inequities of education provision:

- Being part of a three-government Mission on Higher Education to find ways to provide higher education to 12 island countries of the South Pacific – countries scattered across 33 million square kilometres of ocean, an area more than three times the size of Europe with a total land mass equal to Denmark, no large islands and a total population of 1.3 million varying from Tokelau with 1600 to Fiji with 800,000. Isolation and lack of resources meant that few students were able to progress past secondary school, impacting on the countries’ ability to train their own professionals and affecting the capacity of their schools to provide the educated people needed. The final solution was to establish the University of the South Pacific located in Fiji to serve all 12 countries.

- In the early 1970s at the University of Canberra, realising that many mature women of substantial ability lacked the formal entry requirements for our teacher education course. They were in competition with bright young candidates from schools who had high entrance scores but lacked experience. I had to advocate strongly to the Academic Board for a quota of entry for them. Many of them went on to have highly successful careers in education not only as classroom teachers but leaders in the profession.
- During the 1970s, spending time in Papua New Guinea to understand better the needs of the schools and their teachers and education leaders, in preparation for bringing some to train with us in Australia. The issues confronting them were not only the physical problems of a developing society but the myriad language groups.
- Around the same time, preparing teachers for indigenous students in remote communities in the Northern Territory of Australia. The small number of students in isolated locations combined with the indigenous people's itinerant lifestyle and lack of a written form of their language all posed enormous challenges for educators – and still do.
- Befriending refugees from Kosovo and hearing their stories of how civil war disrupted their schooling and how lack of formal qualifications limits their employment opportunities.
- In 2001, working in the Middle East and dealing with the fact that more than half the students' time in school was taken up by Islamic studies and the implications of that for time spent on the rest of the curriculum. The girls, even in relatively enlightened Islamic countries, were taught apart from the boys with an even more reduced curriculum, preparing them to be wives and mothers and little else. Interestingly, the elite in those countries, even the education leaders, often sent their children, including their daughters, abroad to Western countries for a broad, balanced education.
- When the OECD published the results of its first PISA study in 2000, realising that while Australia's best students were performing as well as the best in the world, a long tail of underachieving students indicated that equity was a big issue for Australian educators.
- Reading a report from the Business Council of Australia which said that around 35,000 students leave Australian schools every year without the education foundation for employment, further education or skills and knowledge to fully engage in our society. We know that such students are overrepresented in jail, on the dole and in personal and domestic crises of various kinds.

Over the years, I have done what I could to bring these issues and possible remediation to the attention of anyone who would listen. Now that my time is limited, I want one last shot at pleading the case for all those young people across the world who deserve the chance of a high-quality education that will give them the best chance of reaching their full potential. My voice will soon be silent, but I hope all who read this book will be inspired to take up the challenge of doing whatever they can to make sure every child and young person has the chance to learn and take their

place in civil society. Thank you to all who have contributed to this book – I could never have done this without you. If Michael Jones, at 24 years of age, the youngest contributor to this book, is representative of his generation, I am very hopeful for the future.

21st June 2012

Phillip Hughes

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Introduction: Kelli Hughes

On February 26, 2011, I sent this email to about 50 colleagues with whom my husband, Phillip Hughes, had worked in a whole range of education-related activities during a lifetime in the field of education.

On January 28, after a couple of weeks of feeling unwell, my husband, Phil, was diagnosed with cancer of the bile duct. Just 2 weeks later we were told that it was malignant. Phil along with his family has considered the full range of possible interventions and he has decided only to accept palliative care. We are currently in St George Private Hospital, Sydney and Phil wants to publish a book in the months he has left – he is keen to make a final contribution towards what he sees as a major issue in education. I am contacting you as one of a number of people he would like to contribute to that book.

This is the idea. As the seventh child of a working class family from a tiny town in Tasmania, Australia, an effective education in Tasmania and later Oxford, provided opportunities for Phil that most children from his background would never dream of. You will know that he has been passionate about an effective education for all, for the whole of his adult life. So Phil is inviting you to write a concise paper, up to around 2,000 words, expressing your own views as to what you think is necessary to provide an effective, relevant, high quality education for all children. What, for example, should be the priorities and best approaches to adopt to achieve such an education. Alternatively, you might want to write about valuable ways that already exist to provide high quality and effective education for all but are not being fully utilised; or else your ideas about future directions and activities to reach that goal.

The next step is for you to tell me whether or not you will be able to write a piece along the lines suggested and confirm the date when it would be available.

Within an hour or two, emails, phone calls and text messages came bouncing back – the first from Paris. Phil was elated. Not only were people responding to his request but they were also reminiscing about their experiences with Phil and encouraging him during a really tough time of life. Here are just a few.

Having known what these times are like, my thoughts and best wishes go out to you both. Yes, I would be touched and honoured to make a contribution. Please let Phil know of my admiration for his never failing advocacy for education. He will be living the profession's moral purpose for as long as he draws breath, I know.

It goes without saying that I would be honoured and delighted to contribute to Phil's last project. He is an educator and academic I have always admired and a person of great

goodness and grace. I am not surprised that he and the family have decided to approach his final journey as one of palliative treatment, and I'm not surprised that he wishes to be productive to the end!

I would be very pleased to write something for inclusion in the book. In fact, there's something I've been meaning to write for a while, but haven't had a reason to start. I would also like to do this for Phil whom I admire so very much. Thanks for inviting me to be part of the project and give Phil my best wishes. You are both in my thoughts and prayers.

Phil has been very kind to me and my career was very much shaped by his vision and philosophy when he supervised my doctoral thesis at the University of Tasmania. He always had time for me to guide me in the right direction.

Around 40 colleagues agreed to write a paper for this book, and most of them were able to deliver, often in spite of the heavy workloads they were already carrying.

Just a couple of weeks after inviting colleagues to contribute to Phil's book, he had his 85th birthday. Not only colleagues but many family members, friends and former students sent him greetings.

Under your leadership of the School of Teacher Education at that dynamic time the course of my professional life was forever changed for which I am most thankful and deeply appreciative. (A student from the University of Canberra in the 1970s while Phil was the head of School of Education)

If there is one impression that stands out in my experience it has been your general acceptance of people irrespective of race, achievement or status. You fostered the development of persons who wanted to serve their community with their particular gifts within a variety of equally important roles. (A staff member from the University of Tasmania where Phil was head of the School of Education during the 1980s)

I love his passion for education. But even more I love the fact that he truly values and respects the experiences of the children being educated. As a child, it is incredibly empowering to have someone truly value your perspective and to view you as the central agent in your own education. It certainly helped me to take control of my education and for that I will always be grateful. (A granddaughter who is about to submit her PhD)

It was typical of Phil that at a time when many others would have coiled up and shut the world out, he was eager to make one final contribution to the passion that absorbed much of the 85 years of his life – making quality education accessible to all. At the core of Phil's passion was the One whom he regarded as the greatest teacher of all, Jesus Christ, whose life and spirit were the example Phil sought to follow and who continued to sustain him during difficult days and nights.

My thanks go to all of those who have contributed to this book, but especially to Phil's colleague of many years and close friend Rupert Maclean who has made the publication of this possible. I must also thank family, friends and the host of doctors and nurses who made Phil's days enjoyable and as comfortable as possible.

Achieving Quality Education for All: Perspectives from the Asia-Pacific Region and Beyond

Phillip Hughes (Editor)

Series Editors Introduction

This is an important book on an important subject. It is edited by one of Australia's most eminent and widely respected and influential educators, Professor Phillip Hughes. In editing this volume, Professor Hughes draws on his extensive experience, both within Australia and worldwide, with government education authorities, particularly in the Australian Capital Territory and in Tasmania, and with education for development agencies such as AusAID, UNESCO and UNICEF. I have written elsewhere in detail about the important contributions of Phil Hughes to education and schooling in Australia and internationally and refer interested readers to a book devoted to celebrating the work of Phil Hughes: Rupert Maclean. (Ed.), (2007), *Learning and Teaching for the Twenty-first Century*, Springer, Netherlands.

In essence, this book addresses the question: what role can education and schooling play in contributing to a more just, equitable and peaceful world, where there is sustainable economic and social development for all and poverty reduction? Although current action to achieve high-quality and relevant education for all, Education for Sustainable Development and the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals provide a useful foundation for action, the authors in this book clearly demonstrate that this is insufficient. They argue that it is also important to pay greater attention to devising concrete, action-orientated ways of promoting social justice and peace building, through means such as lifelong learning, skills development for employability, values/ethics education and high-quality, relevant educational research.

The authors of the chapters present powerful and coherent arguments concerning the importance of strengthening the public sector in education, examine the vexed issue of how to promote quality in teaching and make equity work, scope progress achieved to date in international education movements such as Education for All and Education for Sustainable Development and examine the importance of educational research. In various ways, the contributors refer to the importance of adopting a holistic approach to learning. That is, while formal education, through institutions such as schools and colleges, is an important way in which individuals learn, there is

an increasing need to stress the importance of ‘lifelong learning’. Lifelong learning involves three types of learning: *formal learning*, which occurs within a teacher-student relationship, in an academic environment such as a school system; *nonformal learning*, which is organised learning that occurs outside the formal learning system, such as in a training workshop where people can learn by coming together with people of similar interests and exchanging viewpoints; and *informal learning*, which refers to the experience of day-to-day situations, such as learning from everyday life, from friends and from the mass media.

We believe that this book will reach a wide audience of education policymakers, researchers and practitioners who admire and respect the significant work of Phil Hughes in education. Sadly, Phil passed away towards the end of 2011, before the publication of this interesting and important volume. We would like to thank all of those who have contributed to bringing this project to fruition under what were very difficult circumstances due to the death of Professor Hughes. In particular, we thank Phil’s wife, Kelli Hughes, and KWOK Sin Yan (Ada), research assistant in the Centre for Lifelong Learning Research and Development, the Hong Kong Institute of Education, without whose great efforts and care, this project would not have been completed in such a timely way.

Hong Kong
Tokyo
7 June 2012

Rupert Maclean
Ryo Watanabe