



Save the World

Development education, or the use of education as a tool for human capital development, is an intensely interesting and diverse field. First catalyzed by my experiences as a missionary in Apartheid-era South Africa, my conviction is that equitable access to quality educational opportunities is the key to development and, consequently, life advancement for individuals, families, communities, and nations. Within that basic conviction, I find development education fascinating in the “compound” nature of endeavors in the field: it is concurrently theoretical and practical, as well as technical and human. I don’t think of these four dimensions as geometrically aligned neatly along some Cartesian coordinate system but rather as “in play” at any given time in any particular project or opportunity.



The fascinating compound nature of development education is reflected in one of my first experiences working with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). I was in Paris helping to put together the capacity-development team for a project in Nepal that had been funded by DANIDA, the Danish government's aid agency. The project was theoretically interesting as it applied to thinking about the potential meaning(s) and impact of intervening as an "outsider" in the ancient and complex social context of Nepal's education system, largely comprised of small rural schools serving Hindu, Nepali, Muslim, Tibetan, and secularized populations (in order of decreasing proportions). At the same time, it was practical because we were responsible for developing an actual data collection and tracking system to follow enormous amounts of resources, along with the anticipated outcomes of those resources, dedicated to increasing the equity, access, and quality of educational opportunities for lower-caste Hindu girls under the age of fourteen.



Geo-locating schools on the precipitous slopes and chasms in the Himalayan mountain regions of Everest (called Sagarmatha in Nepali) and Annapurna, as well as designing data collection instruments that could be accurately and meaningfully completed by educators speaking several languages in these remote regions, were both technically challenging and exciting. At the same time, the powerfully human dimension of visiting the homes, schools, and villages of the children, families, and teachers that we were attempting to help was both humbling and touching.

No Events