

Social Progress and education: Enhancing equality to improve access to and quality of education

Presentation for the Symposium: Social Progress in and through Education
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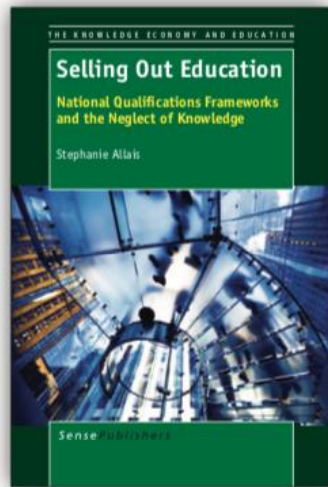
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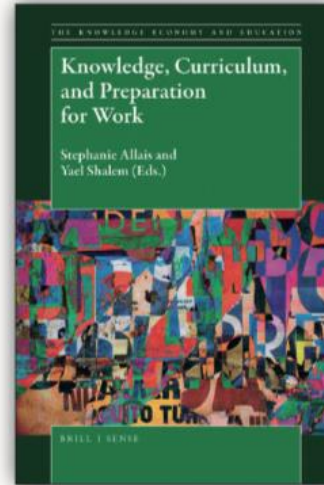
Sources for presentation



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Selling Out Education:
*National Qualifications Frameworks
and the Neglect of Knowledge*

Stephanie Allais (University of the
Witwatersrand, South Africa)



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**Knowledge, Curriculum, and
Preparation for Work**

Stephanie Allais and Yael Shalem (both
at University of the Witwatersrand, South
Africa) (Eds.)

Sources for presentation

- Allais, S. (2019). Vocational education and inequalities in transitions from education to work in three African countries. Forthcoming in Valodia, I., Webster, E., and Francis, D. *Inequality: Studies from the Global South*. Routledge.
- Allais, S. (2017). Towards measuring the economic value of higher education: Lessons from South Africa. *Comparative Education*, 53(1), pp. 147-163.
- Allais, S., Cooper, A., and Shalem, Y. (2019). Rupturing or reinforcing inequality? The role of education in South Africa today. Forthcoming in *Transformation*.
- Allais, S. and Shalem, Y. (2019). Hope, disappointment, and the relationship between economics and sociology in explaining and tackling educational inequalities. Presentation for the European Conference for Educational Research, Hamburg, 3-6 September 2019.
- Allais, et al. (2019). Draft Working Paper from an international comparative project, *Skills for Industry in 6 Developing Countries*, led by Markus Maurer at the Zurich Teacher Education University.

Overview of argument

1. The relation between 'developed core' and 'under-developed periphery' is key to understanding economic development and shapes the possibility of what education can and can't do. Much education policy research hides this.
2. Much influential research (eg World Bank) has internal inconsistencies: the push is for increased enrolments and critique of quality, ignoring their own analysis.
3. This research has become increasingly dominated by econometric analysis of large data sets, often with misleading or weak proxies, which could make education more impoverished.
4. In sub-Saharan Africa highly unequal education systems mirror highly unequal labour markets with dysfunctional consequences for the provision of skills for the industrial sector.

“Twenty-five years after Jomtien (Education for All) and 15 years after Dakar (Millennium Development Goals), education systems in Sub-Saharan Africa have expanded beyond recognition, enrolling tens of millions of first-generation learners in the primary grades, extending access to secondary education, and employing millions of newly recruited and trained teachers. ... Net enrollment rates in primary school have risen sharply, from a regional average of 54 percent in 1999 to 78 percent in 2013. ... These trends exemplify the tremendous advances made by Sub-Saharan African countries in expanding primary school participation ...”

(Bashir, S., Lockheed, M., Ninan, E., & Tan, J.-P. 2018. *Facing Forward. Schooling for Learning in Africa*. Washington D.C.: The World Bank. P. 8)

Rising education levels

‘... at the start of the 20th century, the majority of the labour force in most of today’s “old” industrialized countries had made the transition out of agriculture, at a time when the coverage of their secondary education was well below that of SSA [sub-Saharan Africa] today.’

(Fredriksen, B., & Fossberg, C. H. 2014. The case for investing in secondary education in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): challenges and opportunities. *International Review of Education*, 60, 235–259. p. 248)

‘There are many strategies to make education more attractive, meaningful, and accessible, but the fact remains that millions of students, some in rich countries but mostly in low-income countries, go through school without learning to read and understand a simple text or solve a simple arithmetic problem, or gaining a grasp of very simple scientific facts.’

(Spiel, C., Schwartzman, S., Busemeyer, M., Cloete, N., Drori, G., Lassnigg, L., ... Reich, R. 2018. *The Contribution of Education to Social Progress* (International Panel on Social Progress, Ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P. 764)

‘Africa faces a “severe learning crisis” that undermines economic growth and the well-being of its citizens, according to a new World Bank study. The region has made considerable progress in boosting primary and lower secondary school enrollment, but some 50 million children remain out of school, and most of those who attend school are not acquiring the basic skills necessary for success later in life.’

(World Bank press release: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/03/04/africa-can-tackle-its-severe-learning-crisis-needs-to-focus-on-access-and-quality-says-world-bank>)

‘Progress at the lower-secondary level has been much slower than at the primary level, and enrollment ratios at this level remain low in Sub-Saharan Africa. Overall, the share of children enrolled in lower-secondary schooling rose from 41 percent in 2000 to 66 percent in 2014.’

‘Three anglo-phone countries—Malawi, Uganda, and Zimbabwe—have universalized primary education but have barely increased lower-secondary coverage over a 15-year period.’

(Bashir et al., 2018, p. 15)

‘Capitalism in the colonies was not a mirror image of capitalism in Europe, but the other side of the imperialist coin’

(Cope, Z. 2019. *The Wealth of (Some) Nations. Imperialism and the Mechanics of Value Transfer*. London: Pluto Press. P. 207)

'The most profound global income variations correspond to residence and non-residence in the major imperialist countries. Global income divergence is the accumulated effect of the historical and enduring subordination of Africa, Asia, and South and Central America to the requirements of imperialist industry, finance, and commerce.'

(Cope 2019, p. 131)

‘... the share of low- and middle-income countries has grown from 6 percent of participating education systems in the second Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) in 1980 to over 25 percent in the sixth TIMSS in 2015, and from no low- and middle-income countries’ education systems participating in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2000 to over one-third of those countries participating in PISA 2015.’

(Bashir et al., 2018, p. 4)

‘Within Sub-Saharan Africa, however, there is little association between a country’s knowledge capital and its subsequent economic growth, although the evidence is limited’ (Bashir et al., 2018, p. 56)

‘In some extreme cases, countries with similar “knowledge capital” as measured in 2000 differed widely from each other in terms of GDP per capita growth over the ensuing 15 years’ (p. 57).

‘Globally, low- and middle-income countries exhibit greater between-school inequality—“academic segregation”—than do high-income countries. This is demonstrated by the share of total variance in student performance that is attributable to school-level variance as opposed to student-level variance.’

(Bashir et al., 2018, p. 81)

Extreme marginalization of TVET in Africa ...

- with long roots in the history of colonialism and the nature of education systems, economies, and governments which colonial powers established ...
- reinforced by contemporary economies in which small elites are educated through general education, and large numbers of the workforce are either in survivalist work or unemployment.
- Academic education remains the general aspiration of those in education, **even when the academic education that they are in is very weak, and even when employers require specific skills.**

Year 1 enrollments 3 730 535 learners

Grade 5 completion (53,5% survival, of which 82% complete grade 5)

Grade 8 (30% write exam, 28% pass)

Grade 10 24% enroll; 70% pass

Grade 12
8.4%

Total university 731 602 FTEs

TVET
total
302 083

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Calculations based on data in: Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2017). *Education Statistics. Annual Abstract 2009 E.C. (2016/2017)*. Addis Ababa: Ministry of Education, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Year 1 enrollments--just under a million learners

Basic education (year 9) completion (about 50 000 fewer than year one)

Year 12 enrollment (about 700 000)

TVET total FTE 182 836

About 450 000 pass final year 12 exams

100 000 university degree

Total university 731 602 FTEs

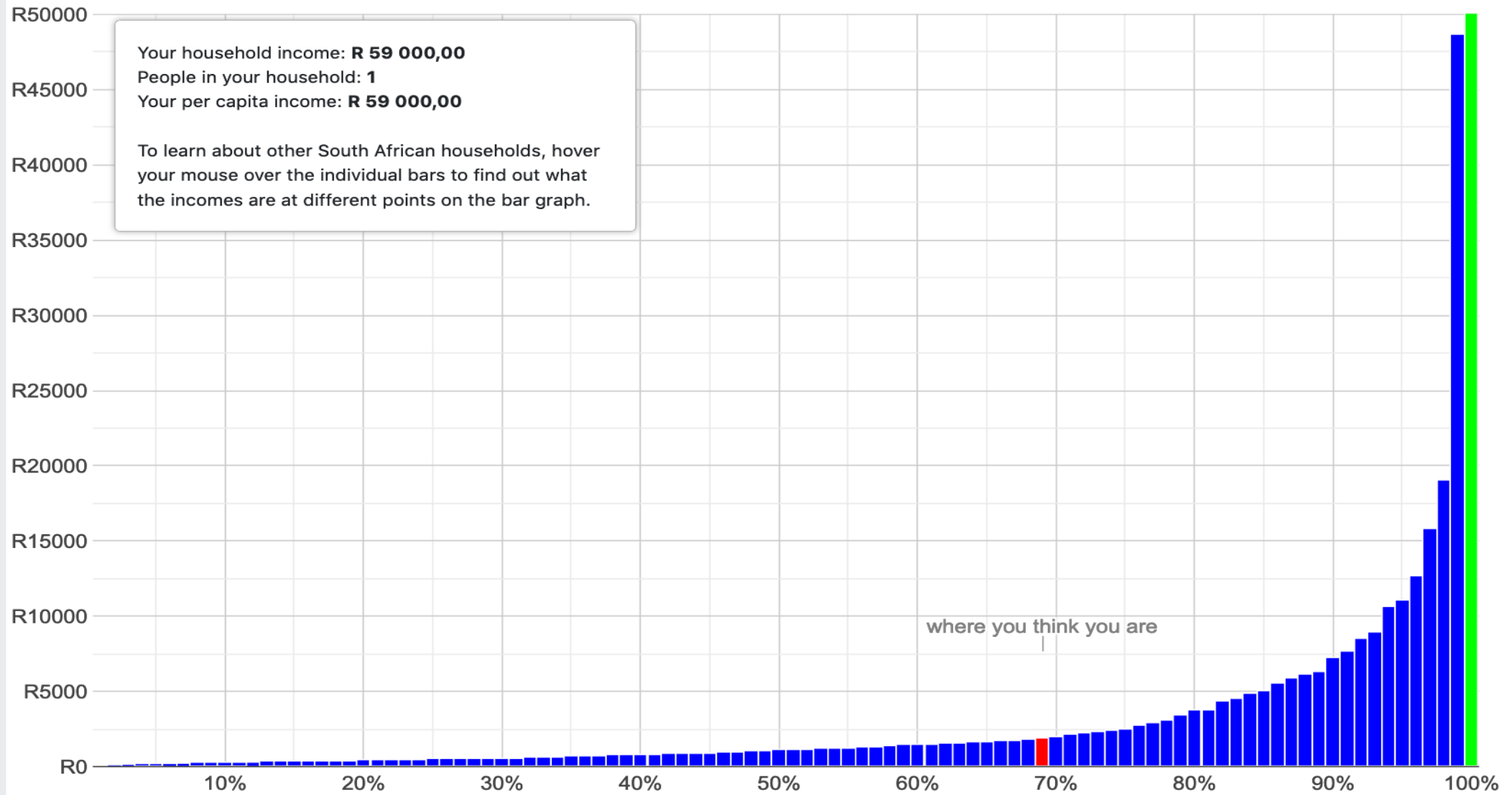
N1-
N3

N4-N6

NCV

Calculations based on data in: DHET (2019). *Statistics on Post-School Education and Training in South Africa: 2017*. Pretoria: Department of Higher Education and Training, South Africa.

Per capita income in South African households



A highly unequal labour market has perverse effects on skill formation

- Extreme inequality in the labour market, and the history of how it has related with the education system since colonial days, creates a vicious cycle that works against the development of technical skills required by the labour market.
- Educational arms races have a particularly detrimental effect in economies with only a very small percentage of good, well-paying, protected jobs.
- More unequal labour markets undermine TVET provision.

In sum

- The over-focus on education as the solution to economic problems abstracted from the crisis of poverty and inequality in which the global South is expanding educational access, together with the recent focus on policy actions informed by analysis large data sets, is likely to undermine the possibility of building education systems which achieve the desired normative goals for education in Africa, and many other countries of the global South.