

BOOK REVIEW

Learning as Development: Rethinking International Education in a Changing World

DANIEL A. WAGENER

New York, NY: Routledge, 2018, xv, 324 pages, ISBN: 9781848726079

Daniel Wagner's *Learning as development* is an important contribution in this area and, as Marlaine Lockheed of the World Bank points out, the volume "humanizes and broadens the discussion of education and development". Wagner's book calls for rethinking education and defining its relationship with international development. It calls for moving towards "an agenda that puts human development closer to the center of global ambitions and prioritises learning as the thread that binds each phase of human life into a coherent whole".

The world has come together and has agreed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be realised by 2030. According to Wagner, the shift from the "economic growth" models to a human and sustainable development approach has necessitated a need to rethink education in the context of international development, particularly with reference to equity vis-à-vis poor and marginalised communities. While lamenting the siloed approach in education, Wagner offers a four interconnected and overlapping quadrant learning framework vis-à-vis learning contexts and learning practices. This framework covers the entire gamut of learning: structured non-formal education, less structured non-formal learning, structured formal education, less structured in-school learning. The conventional educational policies and programmes offered at educational institutions in many developing countries are sectoral and focus exclusively on structured formal education.

While reading Wagner's book, one cannot avoid relating his arguments with that of Stiglitz and Greenwald's (2014) "Creating a Learning Society" where they write that a learning society can be created not just by developing sound educational policies and programmes alone but also by trade, industry and agriculture policies and programmes. The investments by firms, industries and markets in promoting learning, such as on-the-job training, probably falls into the category of structured non-formal education. Though Wagner has given limited focus to this type of learning, he describes the learning taking place in sectors such as agriculture and health, and has given attention to non-formal education and learning, which is usually missed in large number of works on education.

The book carefully avoids romanticising education and learning. The Western "banking" pedagogy criticised by Paulo Freire and "The World Educational Crisis" of Coombs are referred to readers, calling upon them to introspect their own educational system.

The book is well-written, engaging the readers with perspectives, stories, research and data. Its structure, with four parts and twelve chapters, follows the essential theme of the book: rethinking



education and learning in the context of international development. Educational researchers will be particularly interested in the chapter on “Measurement of Learning” where Wagner mentions the three principles, “if you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it”, “if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail” and “looking only where there is a light”. In particular, his elaboration of the third principle, “individuals and international professionals and agencies typically look for solutions that are convenient, within their competencies ... poses development challenges “is a warning that educational policy-makers, researchers and agencies need to understand and respond to.

SDG 4 aims at lifelong learning while most of its targets and indicators are oriented towards formal education. The book could have given more emphasis to lifelong learning even though it refers to learning in and out of school. The four-quadrant learning framework in essence is a framework for Lifelong Learning. However, the theoretical perspectives of blending pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy for such a framework is still at an early stage and the education system is yet to evolve a clear approach in operationalising of lifelong learning.

SDGs can end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity, only when there is an effective linkage between the 17 Goals. Thus, the value of each SDG depends not only on the achievement of its own targets, but also on its ability to add value to the other 16 SDGs. Even if SDG4 achieves all its targets, it cannot be construed as development unless it is able to influence other SDGs such as SDG 5 (gender equality and empowerment) and SDG 1 (poverty reduction), etc. Education should lead to other development outcomes, including an increase in gender equality and empowerment, as well as a decrease in poverty.

Wagner’s *Learning as development* is a highly significant addition to the debate on the role of education and learning in development and has the potential to guide stakeholders such as policy makers and practitioners.

Reviewed by:

Dr. K. Balasubramanian, Vice President, Commonwealth of Learning, Canada. Email: kbala@col.org

Reference

Stiglitz, J. E., & Greenwald, B. C. (2014). *Creating a learning society: A new approach to growth, development, and social progress*. Columbia University Press.

Cite this paper as: Balasubramanian, K. (2018). Book Review: Learning as Development: Rethinking International Education in a Changing World by Daniel A. Wagener. *Journal of Learning for Development*, 5(3), 313-314