

## **ECONOMIC EDIFICE, URBANISATION AND RURAL EDUCATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**

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### **Abstract**

*The nexus between economic edifice, urbanisation and education is a somewhat understudied area in the academic literature. This applies especially to the urban-rural nexus and its impact on transition in economic edifice, which are especially pronounced in developing countries. This article addresses some selected consequences of urbanisation on education in developing countries within a context of transition in economic edifice. It is argued that transitions in economic edifice are for rural populations at times unrestrained and precipitous. It is further argued that the transition economic edifice impacts on social, economic and personal interests of not only the school-aged population, but also of the working and retired population. Against this background, this article discusses factors relating to effects of urbanization within a context of urbanisation and urbanisation theories, including transition in economic edifice, globalization, employment and employability, and vocationalisation of education. In conclusion opportunities and challenges for education in the context of transforming an economic structure in rural areas in a contemporary context is brought to the fore.*

*Keywords: Transition economics, development studies, urbanisation, rural education, urbanisation theories, globalization, employment, educational vocationalisation*

## INTRODUCTION

A discussion of economic edifice, urbanisation and education in developing countries is linked to transition of economic structure, and its effects are a daunting scholarly enterprise. One of the reasons is that there are a number of political, social and economic variables, which govern urbanisation, rural education and related economic transition. For example, when one talks about education, would it possible to argue that a transition in the economic structure has the same impacts on, and provides prospects and poses encounters for the whole education sector? In other words, would it be constructive to pose the question if the economic structures impact differently on the education sector and TVET sectors? The answer is tentatively in the affirmative, for issues of vocationalisation of education and employability through education differ. In this context there is a need to acknowledge a range of perspectives, which exist in relation to differences in conditionality and expectations for each education and training sub-sectors and in a context of access in rural vis-à-vis urban areas and thus urbanisation.

For the purpose of this discussion, it may be opportune to consider however briefly the phenomenon called 'urbanisation'. This discussion will to a large extent focus on 'urbanisation' in a demographic context, namely the population redistribution from rural to urban habitat. World Bank Institute (2015) states that in 2014:

[f]or the first time in history, more than half the world's population lives in cities, with 90 percent of urban growth taking place in the developing world. Over the next 20 years, nearly 2 billion new urban residents are expected...(n.p.)

To illustrate the point, in 2014, some 53% of a world population lived in urban areas. If we compare the proportion of rural and urban population in developed against the urban population in the Least Developed Countries (LDC) the following picture arises. In OECD member countries, 80% of the population lives in urban areas, whereas only 31% of the population in the LDC live in urban areas. Some comparative figures are: in EU 75% of the total population, in South Asia 33%, and in Sub-Saharan Africa 37% of the respective population live in urban areas (World Bank 2015a).

From an economic point of view, there is much empirical evidence that prosperity and economic, social and personal interests are best served in urban areas. Looking at a global scene 70% of global GDP is generated in urban areas (World Bank Institute 2015). In many developing countries, lack of opportunities to escape trans-generational poverty cycle leads to migration from rural to urban areas. This migration is mainly in search of better employment opportunities, higher income and better education. There are also other factors that contribute to migration and urbanisation. These include general labour market forces, stratification of local

labour markets, government policies leading to changes in land use, health services, budget allocations and changeable decisions by local (rural) governments (Becker 2007).

For a better understanding and the purpose of this discussion, 'rural' area is defined as having the following characteristics: Firstly, segment of the land area used by communities and infrastructure is relatively small, land availability is relative inexpensive pastures, and forests, mountains and deserts typify the natural environment. Secondly population density in settlements has a low population number (e.g. 5,000 – 10,000 persons or less and agriculture, horticulture or other forms of husbandry and farming is the major work/employment activity. Thirdly, there is increased production and distribution cost due to the remoteness of urban areas and markets. All these characteristics have the tendency to affect the economic livelihood negatively. In essence, the difference between rural and urban areas is that of the urban population lives in sizable, denser populated and more homogenous habitat as opposed to the heterogeneous rural population.

## **URBANISATION**

Urbanisation may be defined and viewed from a number of perspectives including demographics, but it also may be viewed from economic and social vantage points. More generally, urbanisation may be associated with modernisation and industrialisation in an economic, social and development milieu.

From a demographics point of view, developing countries such as PR China, India and Indonesia, with their huge populations, experienced in the last four years significant urbanisation. For example, PR China's urban population increased from 49% in 2010 to 54% in 2014 (World Bank, 2015b). It is anticipated that by 2030, some 70% of China's population will live in cities (World Bank 2014). Furthermore, urban population in PR China has in 2012 outstripped rural population (Jakupec 2013). Comparative figures for India show a modest increase from 31% in 2010 to 32% in 2013 and Indonesia's urban population increased from 50% in 2010 to 53% in 2014 (World Bank, 2015b).

From a social and economic point of view, urbanisation is intimately interrelated with the development of a form of economic structural transition between urban and rural areas, bringing with them significant socio-economic changes in urban and rural areas. These changes are driven by a strong desire at the political level to enhance economic performance, mainly by prioritising physical infrastructure development and financialisation within urban areas. This advances unbalanced development and bringing economic advantages to urban areas.

However, the advantages have a flow-on effect on surrounding rural areas. As these urban areas advance economically they have the tendency to absorb bordering rural areas, which requires infrastructure building and additional social services provision (Jakupec 2013). This requires physical, financial and human resources and provides an impetus for rural migration. This labour force migration from rural and to urban areas creates socio-economic problems and needs to be resolved if equity in terms of employment and income distribution, and access to equitable social services, employment opportunities and education are to be resolved. This is important in a context of poverty reduction through the provision of education in rural areas.

Notwithstanding that urbanisation is a major catalyst for poverty reduction it has, if not managed properly, a potential negative effect on rural and urban population. Urbanisation may increase slum dwellings in cities with limited or no access to education, healthcare and other social services for children of slum dwellers (Basu, K. cited in World Bank 2013). To put this in a broader context, urbanisation brings to the fore some very important issues in relation to rural areas. This includes the aforesaid employability and employment patterns, access to education and training, health and old age care in rural areas. In both the urban and rural context, urbanisation affects, above all, national economic structures. However tempting it may be to discuss each of the above issues, this remains outside the scope of this paper. We will nevertheless provide a brief discussion of urbanisation theories (cf. Orum 2011).

### **Urbanisation Theories**

Urbanisation theories are not a new phenomenon, however, over the last three decades new foci emerged and are intersecting, such as globalisation, industrialisation, environment and regional planning. Being in danger of oversimplification we shall briefly refer to three urbanisation theories, which may shed light on our discussion:

1. Self-generation cum endogenous urbanisation theory. From a demographic perspective, this theory focuses on rural migration to urban areas, referring to industrialisation as the basic catalyst for this population shift. This includes factors such as search for say factory jobs. However, if one were to substitute 'urbanisation' with 'migration' to industrial cities, another picture may emerge, namely a close relation between urbanisation and industrialisation and employment opportunities. By necessity, there is a transition of economic structure from primary to secondary industry and a subsequent concentration of education and training in industrial cities. This leads to a lopsided income and wealth distribution (cf. Abdel-Rahman and Anas, 2004; Storper and Manville, 2006)

2. Modernisation theory of urbanisation. The modernisation theory argues that the urbanisation route and relationship between developed and developing countries will be achieved through convergence of cultural diffusion, irrespective of social disequilibria. In essence, this theory supports the neo-liberal economic view of globalisation as espoused by proponents of the WTO. The basic premises of this theory are reliance on: (i) interaction of the roles that population dynamics; (ii) market forces and market competition, and (iii) infrastructure technology (e.g. transport and utilities), play in the process of urbanisation. Modernisation theorists use these basic premises as sign posts for developing countries' urbanisation, which is driven, inter alia, by technological progress, information technology, industrialisation and a socio-cultural diffusion (Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Wucherpfennig and Deutsch, 2009).

This techno-industrial world-view laid claim to a positive outcomes of augmented urbanisation processes but evoked an argument *ex silentio* of its effects on rural economies and societies. It missed the point of taking into consideration the reality of economic and geographic/regional inequalities, and especially social problems that developing countries face due to urbanisation (Kaikaus, 2009)

3. Dependency cum world-system theory of urbanisation. Viewing transition in economic structures and urbanisation in developing countries through the lens of this theory, it becomes evident that there is a major economic consequence of global capitalism and its regional economic divide. To be sure, from this perspective there is an imbalanced development leading to disparities in socio-economic structures and infrastructures not only between the rural-urban divide, but also between cities based on industrial foundations vis-à-vis cities that are centres for rural geographic areas. This is especially evident in developing countries with pronounced urban-rural imbalances, disproportionate city hierarchies, housing segregation, income imbalance, provision of health services, access to education and training, and employability and employment opportunities (Bhattacharya, 2010; Henderson 2012).

This theory contests the basic suppositions and conjectures of neo-liberal modernisation theory, which sees technology as being a more important catalyst for shaping urbanisation than the needs of society and its organisation in achieving successful urbanisation. However, notwithstanding that the dependency cum world-system theory of urbanisation challenges directly the basic techno-industrial world-view of the modernisation theory of urbanisation, it contributes to the accentuation of the external and often negative impact of unbridled globalisation on domestic economy and social services of developing countries.

To conclude the, however, brief and over-simplified discussion of three urbanisation theories, let us pose the following. Acknowledging that although the self-generation cum endogenous urbanisation theory provides general conditionality principles of urbanisation, it does not sufficiently provide insights into urbanisation and its effects experienced currently by developing countries. The same may be said of the modernisation theory of urbanisation. In addition, one of the weaknesses of the modernisation theory is the absence of in-depth discourse relating to class relation (rural versus urban socio-economic class structures) or employment (capital and wealth distribution). This in turn creates socio-economic tensions due to social organisation focussing on industrialisation (Fox 2012).

In contrast, dependency cum world-system theory of urbanisation has a stronger theoretical basis. This provides a nexus rather than an a priori relationship between urbanisation and social development including effects of urbanisation on rural society and economics. However, its weakness is its inability to fully articulate the latitude of state governance for the purpose of creating and sustaining urbanisation against the needs to provide appropriate social services such as education on both sides of the rural-urban equilibrium.

It would be tempting to look at each of these theories separately and in detail. However, this is outside the scope of this paper. There may be nevertheless a general comment in place. According to relevant literature concerning urbanisation and its effects on rural regions, the latter are more exposed and thus vulnerable to internal and external socio-economic risks than urban areas. Some of the reasons is the limited economic base, decreasing population due to migration of working age population to urban centres, small and disbursed population, geographic distances to markets and access and proximity to education and training institutions.

There are compelling arguments, which show that rural communities are linked to a specific sector of economic activities, such agriculture and other primary production. These limitations bring with them certain risks due to exposure to factors such as globalisation and knowledge society, rural primary industry, rural labour shortage, migration to urban areas, and an aging population, farm business agglomeration, agricultural technologies and export markets, to name a few (cf. Lawrence 2005). In terms of economic activities, there is a significant difference between urban and rural areas, which is delineated by the extent to which economic activity is more or less centralised or concentrated and accessible.

The key issues emerging from the above theories with reference to education and training may be summarised as follows: (i) Income distribution (see Self-generation cum endogenous urbanisation theory / modernisation urbanisation theory / Dependency cum world-system theory of urbanisation); (ii) employment (see Self-generation cum endogenous urbanisation theory / modernisation theory of urbanisation); (iii) human development (see

dependency cum world-system theory of urbanisation); (iv) globalization (see modernisation theory of urbanisation); (v) vocationalisation of education (see modernisation theory of urbanisation via techno-industrial world-view. Our thesis is that all of these are contributing to implications of urbanisation on education in developing countries.

## **TRANSITION IN ECONOMIC STRUCTURES**

For the purpose of this discussion 'transition in economic structures' is defined as a systemic transition or 'renovation' in a country's economy. These can be explained by political economy theoretical schools of thought such as liberalism and neo-liberalism, Marxism and historical materialism and mercantilism (Wellweber et al. 2013).

At a more simplistic level and depending on the school of thought, basic economic systems may be classified as a free-market economy systems, command planned economy systems and mixed economy systems. At a practical level, none of these systems exists in its 'pure' form. Today there is no pure free market economy and there is no 'pure' command economy, but there are a mixed economy systems. Thus, economic systems are a matter of degree – based on a continuum between free market and command economies. Thus, economic transition can be defined as an evolution along the afore-said continuum.

Transition in economic structure supports productivity growth but are not guarantors. However, sustained economic growths went step-in-step by structural changes. These contributed to labour migration, economic share shifts towards high productivity industries, production diversification, and, above all, strong relocation of human resources.

However, transitions in economic structures are not guarantees for economic success. There are no 'one-size-fits-all' formulas. For example, over the past two decades there was a difference between higher economic growth in East Asian countries and the lower economic growth in Latin American countries. In terms of economic development, East Asian countries have performed better than their Latin American counterparts. However, it should be noted that the former faced different form of transition of economic structure in comparison to the former region.

For a better understanding, let us look at the success of PR China and India, respectively. The former had a strong leaning towards a command economy, where the latter was leaning more towards free market economy. Despite these differences, there is similarity. Both countries have established high productivity employment opportunities through introduction and expansion of transition in economic structures. Both embraced globalisation, which arguably contributes to economic growths. The counter point is that globalisation has had less of an economic growth effect in a number of Middle East and North African countries (Walsh

2104). This is despite the fact that there were opportunities for transition to economic structures. Perhaps in some regions, labour market policies have moved into a wrong direction, or there are other social, cultural and economic reasons that may explain this phenomenon.

However speculative we suggest that in order to enhance economic growth, there are fundamental economic transition structures, which need to be met. These include (i) job and employment creation; (ii) development and introduction of industry-oriented education and training policies; (iii) establishment of a pool of responsive labour force; and (iv) favourable provision for attracting new industries.

To illustrate the above contention let us turn to PR China and Vietnam as examples. The point is that there are strong arguments presented in the relevant literature that Vietnam had a command or planned economy. This can and has been disputed and is debatable (Horbah 2008). PR China, Vietnam and other developing countries in the SE Asian region are developing a socialist-oriented market economy. It may be argued that successful transitions in economic structures and the introduction of socialist-oriented market economy promote human resource development, income distribution, industrialisation, and employment in those and similar economies. Here are some basic considerations in relation to the above notions.

### **Human resource development**

Notions concerning human development in forms of education and training, including life-long learning have been already canvassed already. Education and training are important activities that enable individuals to participate in the personal and societal economic development. Both these activities are not necessarily enhanced by economic transition processes. That is unless structural changes, such as education and training institutions are developed, and accessibility to such institutions is put in place human development will not prosper, at least not for a rural population.

A further issue is the funding for such human development institution within parameters of free market economy paradigm. To elucidate, a number of developing countries in the transition from so-called command economies to free market economies have introduced the 'fee-for-service' system, which rural populations may not be able to meet. There is also a tendency to 'free-up' the education and training 'market' by allowing the establishment of private or semi-private general education providers and private colleges and universities. These are located in main urban areas, which disadvantages rural populations in terms of access due to geographic distances and lack of financial affordability. Health service providers such as hospitals and social services providers such as kindergartens are being required to cover or



recover costs. Since such services are limited or are not always readily available in rural areas, the rural population is usually becoming the first casualty.

### **Income distribution**

One of the main factors in developing countries is the unbalanced income distribution between urban and rural population. This situation brings to the fore a number of political and social challenges, such as poverty reduction and the gap between the poor and the rich, and an inadequate access to social services and economic resources (Ravallion et al. 2007). Income determines access to health services, child and elderly care on the one side and the development of human resources through education and training on the other side. In relation to human resource development, it is important that individuals, irrespective of their social-economic and domicile background can develop competencies to participate in and contribute to socio-economic advancement.

### **Industrialisation**

A number of developing countries such as China and Vietnam, which had arguably command-planned economies have been exposed to forced industrialisation. However, this should not be seen automatically as a benefit. For example, if one considers the social and other costs associated with lack of readily available labour force, measured as GDP per capita it can be shown that the lack of labour force shortage is less problematic in transition economics than in industrialised economies. One of the many reasons is the potential of over-industrialisation in developed countries.

The prevailing industrialisation strategies in developing countries were often unsuccessful in the provision of adequate employment opportunities for rural labour force. If this stands to reason, then for the purpose of social and economic equality between urban and rural population any industrialisation strategy must focus on employment creation and thereby to improve earning abilities for unemployed, under-employed and the poor from rural areas. This may require prioritising labour-intensive industries or developing primary sector focussed industries in rural areas (Austin and Sugihara 2010).

### **Employment**

Arguably the command-planned economic system guaranteed full employment and life-long job security. The whole socio-economic infrastructure was built on this ideal. At a pragmatic level, this guarantee was not without its problems. Critics of the command-planned economic system pointed out that the 'cradle to grave' guaranty of employment and social services led to

underutilisation of the labour force, low efficiencies and productivity, and the lack of a labour force mobility and competitiveness. These have stifling effects on economic growths, at least from a globalisation point of view. The counter argument is that in market economies, there are high unemployment rates, a strong migration from rural to urban areas, leading to a potential reduction in primary production, and at the national level it leads to brain drain. However as a general observation, and irrespective of the economic system the economic and social benefits for the rural population was and still is inferior in comparison to urban population.

### **The 'Means' and the 'Purpose' of Transition in Economic Structures**

Having discussed, however briefly some key issues emanating from transition in economic structure, we may now ask a basic question: By which means and for which purpose do transitions in economic structures eventuate? In the absence of a definitive answer, we may turn to differing and competing elucidations.

It could be argued that the means and the purposes are interrelated. However, this interrelation is problematic. One of the reasons is that depends on the economic point of view there are competing accounts. On the one hand, there is a priori as well as a posteriori vantage points, as much as pro- and contra globalisation theories. There are other factors such as the end of the Soviet Union and the subsequent 'opening' of economies to market forces.

Let us briefly look at the globalisation from the 'opening of the economies' perspective in the post-Soviet era. Here the prevailing discourse may be abridged in line with a number of dichotomous arguments, ranging from political, economic, social and cultural factors, each contributing to transition in economic structures. Be this as it may the 'opening of the economies' or globalisation does not guarantee economic success as the GFC has shown.

### **GLOBALISATION**

For the purpose of this discussion, we refer to globalisation characterised by growing interdependence of world economies, removal of trade barriers, free trade agreements, global access to services, expanding technologies and free communication. In short globalisation ensures an on-going expansion and reciprocal integration of markets, unlimited access to human resourcing and flexible access to life-long education, training and continuing occupational and professional development. Privatisation and semi-privatisation of education and training can only succeed in a free market environment, in which the poor rural population may not be able to participate.

Despite claims to the contrary, it would be difficult to argue that globalisation has advanced economic growth in urban and rural areas of many developing countries equally. The

problem with globalisation is that, as Chomsky notes, it puts 'profits before people'. The paradox is that without people as human resources rural, industrial and financial services, profits cannot be made. The beneficiaries of transition in economic structures that embraces the values of globalization are in descending order multi-national companies followed by urban areas, especially large cities, with robust connections to service industries and proximity to high-tech manufacturing industries, followed by national industry and corporate identities followed by individuals which fall under the category of the new class of global citizens –the educated, mobile and highly skilled individuals. Economically disadvantaged are individuals and communities, which have not the opportunities to participate in and benefit from globalisation. Those are individuals who lack relevant skills and have limited access to education and training, and advanced technologies are the most disadvantaged.

### **EDUCATION FOR RURAL AREAS: 'ruralisation of the curriculum' and 'ruralisation of education'**

Since the advent of Official Development Aid (ODA) in the 1950's aid projects focussed on primary education in rural areas on particular needs of the rural population (cf. Adler 1970). The objective was to provide functional vocationally oriented education and training in order to provide learners with a better understanding and knowledge of their environment so as enable them to learn farming oriented skills (Malassis 2011). The aim of this type of education was both economic and social. By the mid-1970's, however, a different philosophy emerged, which differentiated between 'ruralisation of the curriculum' and 'ruralisation of education' (cf. Jackson 2000). The latter denotes various approaches in content and teaching-learning activities that provide rural areas with schools, teachers and facilities so that learners in rural areas have access to education. In contrast, the former denotes an overhaul of existing school curriculum to focus on the acquisition of agricultural capacity. However, this distinction did not emerge as an important discussion in an academic literature of its times. However speculative, it could be said that due to a lack of a substantive academic discussion certain vagueness in the concept of 'ruralisation' of rural education remains (Ndjabili, 2004). Notwithstanding this the concept of basic education gained traction in developing countries through ODA.

To illustrate the point, In the 1970's the World Bank provided aid funding for a number of developing countries in Africa and later in Asia. The aim was to refocus the curriculum so as to make rural education relevant to rural development. Practical-vocational subjects were introduced into the classroom emphasising agricultural activities and skills. This is akin to vocationalisation of education within a context of a neo-liberal agenda of education (Apple 2004; Giroux 2004). In other words, many developing countries that accepted loans and grants from

multi-lateral and bi-lateral donor agencies for rural education attempted to ruralise the curriculum orientation focussing on the rural environment and rural activities. The justification was that this should enhance the relevance of education for rural communities. It should suffice here to mention a few orientations, which emerged from World Bank and other multilateral donors such as Asian Development Bank, as far as rural education is concerned. These are: (i) introduction of manual activities in rural schools' curriculum including practical subjects to advance the acquisition of vocational and occupational competencies that would subsequently lead to employability and employment by meeting labour market requirements; (ii) flexibility in the schools attendance and delivery timing including pace of teaching-learning activities, double shift delivery and multi-grade teaching, diversification of the school calendar and school mapping, all in aid of enabling students to support farming activities of the parents.

However, these arrangements found both critics and supporters of parents and rural communities. On the one hand, there was support from parents on the basis that education has become 'more' relevant to the family economic activity as farmers. There were, however, those who argued that the focus on manual 'rural' activities embedded in the curriculum militates against progress to general education provided in urban areas. The former approach (i.e. introduction of manual activities in rural schools' curriculum), so the argument goes, militates against progression to more advanced levels of education (e.g. higher education) and attributes to a generational poverty cycle.

### **NEO-LIBERAL ECONOMIC IDEOLOGY AND VOCATIONALISATION OF EDUCATION**

Developing countries seeking foreign aid from multi- and bilateral aid agencies in form of ODA or similar aid modalities are confronted with the neo-liberal economic conditionality of free market development (cf. Easterly 2006; Moyo 2009). From this vantage point, there is a strong nexus between (i) education and training and poverty reduction, and (ii) economic development and sustainability. Both these factors are seen as catalyst for economic development internationally, nationally and individually. This argument may stand to reason, were it not for the fact that education, training and human resource development policies, as a response to poverty alleviation, need to take into recognise the needs of the rural population which does not traditionally participate in formal market economy.

The issue at hand is that throughout human history education and training has been, still is and will remain a political undertaking. It was and is used as a vehicle for either maintaining or changing the existing political and economic structures. Today the shift in developed countries is towards changing education towards vocationalisation, whereas in developing countries the focus is on changing education politically as well as contextually also leading to

vocationalisation, i.e. acquisition of work-related skills and competencies with the purpose of enhancing economic productivity.

### **Vocationalisation of Education**

Vocationalisation of education means among other things the implementation of a curriculum that is firmly focussed on skills development and employability in line with labour market demands. Not surprisingly, this approach has its critics. Critics of vocationalisation of education argue that education has been reduced to vocational training at the expense of liberal or humanistic education. Proponents of vocationalisation argue that this approach is justifiable, especially as it is necessary for education institutions to be held accountable to respond to the labour market demands.

Recently the neo-liberal ideology of education for employment based on vocational skills has given way to a less dogmatic approach – softer neo-liberalism. The aim of the new softer neo-liberalism approach is to increase students' employability through personal traits and general competencies such as entrepreneurialism, teamwork, problem-solving, creative thinking, and life-long learning to name a few. However, the level of significance and applicability of particular general competencies varies between developed and developing countries. These differences depend on the level of economic and socio-cultural development, polity, politics and policy decisions making. However, rural population is hardly involved in the discussions about economic and socio-cultural development or education policies decisions making and thus are not part of the discourse concerning transitions in economic structures and educational provisions.

### **ALTERNATIVES TO VOCATIONALISATION: Economics of Work-oriented education and training**

To reject vocationalisation of education in developing countries out of hand would be a potential mistake. It has its place and may succeed under the above-mentioned soft liberalism agenda. However as crude neo-liberal vocationalism, and vocationalisation of education there is little evidence to support the notion that vocationalisation of education is an efficacious undertaking. As Jagannathan (2014; p.1) observes:

Vocationalization of secondary education is much more expensive than general education and there is no widespread evidence that vocationalization has contributed to better outcomes at the secondary level. Yet, governments and policy makers are investing in it as an important means to improve relevance of education and increase economic benefits from education.

As an alternative to vocationalisation, we propose the introduction of work-oriented education and training. Our proposition is that work-oriented education should provide rural school population with an understanding and comprehension of a world-of-work, and occupationally relevant developments (cf. Dax and Machold, 2002).

On a basis of such understanding and comprehension, individuals should be able to investigate and appraise their individual social and economic developments, needs and demands. This analysis should focus on issues concerning employability and employment opportunities, and risks, taking into consideration technical, technological, economic and social changes that may impact on individual's well-being (Meier and Jakupec 2013).

### **Conceptualising Work-oriented Education**

Work-oriented education should be understood as an identification of the importance of technology and its influence on the workforce and its structure, the labour market society and economy. In academic literature, work-oriented education has a well-developed and tested theoretical and conceptual basis (Meier and Jakupec 2012a).

However, a cautionary note is here in place, for the conceptualisation of work-oriented education is problematic. On the one side, there is a substantive theoretical discourse within the academe and at the policy level. However, when it comes to the implementation of the concept and policies, a different picture emerges. There is a discerning inconsistency of approaches especially as far as the synergy between the vocationalisation as a praxis-oriented foundation of the labour market and labour force structure on the one side and theorisation on the other side is concerned (Meier and Jakupec 2012b).

This inconsistency is especially pronounced in many developing countries, where culturally and socially there is inadequate acceptance of vocational education and training as a viable option to general (humanistic and liberal) education. More importantly, work-oriented education in within general education curriculum is absent. Thus understanding of a labour force structure and the labour market is often missing amongst school leavers. This leads to lack of understanding the importance of school to work transition as well the socio-economic dimension of employability (Meier and Jakupec 2012a; 2012b).

The issue, as far as we are concerned is that education politics and policies in developing countries should within a context of transition in economic structures focus on a balanced approach to developing and maintaining a well-educated workforce, which is capable of securing gainful employment. The supporting structure for the development of such a gainfully employable rural workforce can be supported through the provision of work-oriented education.

## RURAL EDUCATION IN A CONTEXT OF ECONOMIC STRUCTURE TRANSITION

Advancing human development through national policies, which recognise rural issues, including education and training is a necessity within a context of economic structure transition (Lyons et al. 2009; Black 2005). As we have noted elsewhere in this discussion education, training and human resource development in developing countries have been funded to a large extent by multi-lateral and bi-lateral organisation. However, conditionality imposed by such organisations on policies and their implementations will not necessarily lead to a desired impact. To explain, relevant multi-lateral funding organisations, such as the OECD, the World Bank, IMF and others, need to recognise that there are existing inequalities entrenched in the 'project' of globalisation. These inequalities militate to a large extent against poverty reduction in developing countries' rural areas by limiting accessibility to and affordability of participating in education and training.

Notwithstanding the significant aid funding by the World Bank and regional and bilateral aid agencies, the great challenge is the reduction of poverty through education, training and human resource development. There are a number of challenges. Firstly, many developing countries are facing the problem that the transition in economic structure has not sufficiently included rural areas. This led to insufficient economic development on the one hand and a threat to agricultural resources. Secondly, as we have noted previously, there are the complexities associated with globalisation. Let us note that globalisation has both positive as well as negative impacts.

In a context of rural areas and the rural population, globalisation poses significant challenges concerning economic living conditions. This has a flow-on effect on agricultural production, and thus on rural poverty. If this stands to reason, the existing effects of globalisation and the changing rural environment require new approaches within a context of the transition in economic structures and the impact of education and training (cf. Barro, 2002).

There is a compelling argument to be made for empowering rural populations with necessary skills and knowledge for adopting new technologies in say rural production. There is a further compelling argument, namely that by improving productivity there is also the spin-off in a form of enhancing the socio-economic and cultural development aspects. This may counter the migration from rural to urban areas, especially migration of untrained rural population brought about by the transition in economic structure.

Not only are there challenges for individuals and families, but also for communities. Our thesis is that without an educated and trained population a community cannot successfully partake in social and economic development. Transition in economic structure is not a guarantee that enterprises, be their small or medium or large, and irrespective of the sector are

likely to invest or locate to in rural areas if skilled labour force is not readily available. At the same time, it is unlikely that a community may be able to retain educated and skilled people unless there are employment opportunities available. Thus, transition in economic structure brings to the fore a close link between education, training, human resource development, employability and employment, and the tyrannies of distance between rural and industrial urban areas, especially in low-income developing countries.

The challenge of provision of adequate development and provision of education and training in rural areas under the conditions of the transition in economic structure needs to be addressed by referring to cataclysms that have emerged in the agricultural rural environment. Rural environment, socially and economically has significantly changed due to the transition in economic structure. This is evident from the shift of non-rural employment of traditional rural workforce, and the perseverance of rural poverty in developing countries (Jakupec 2013).

Although there is at present no single solution to alleviation of rural poverty through transition of economic structure, education and training are critical constituents. However on thing is for certain: in order to respond to such a challenge, there is a need to achieve economic growth with equity. This includes but is not limited to restructuring the substance of education in order to adjust programmes to the circumstances, which influence rural economic life. The absence of education policies that ensure basic learning and human resource development opportunities remains, irrespective of economic advances and transition of economic structure, not only a cause but also an effect of rural poverty in developing countries.

## CONCLUSION

Access to relevant education and training for a rural population in developing countries is a key requirement for a successful transition to economic structures. In rural areas, this necessitates a wider access to education and training. From this vantage point, governments in developing countries need to allocate adequate funding for the education and training sector in rural and under-modernised areas. An adequate government funded education and training system for the rural regions has the potential to equalise socio-economic disadvantages.

Irrespective of the linking education and training opportunities for rural populations with transformations of economic structures, the full potential of a rural population remains in many developing countries untapped. One of the reasons is that employment of a rural population needs distinct government initiatives. As we have seen in the introductory part, rural labour force is predicted to grow in developing countries where economic development does not necessarily reflect a corresponding growth in employment opportunities. Turning this around



may reverse the rural migration patterns as seen in developing countries, such as Vietnam, PR China and India (cf. Li 2012).

To respond to such challenges at the national level governments need to develop and implement policies that address rural population employment needs. Such policies need to be accompanied by committing increased funding for economic development in rural areas and investments in institutional education and training infrastructure in rural areas. For this to be achieved some 'way forward' suggestions may be here in place.

## A WAY FORWARD

There are a number of issues, which emerged within the conclusion. These include the government policies addressing employment generation, investment climate, education and training needs and demands, and Private-Public-Partnerships for education and training.

At the core of these issues is a need for a coherent labour market analysis at the macro, meso and micro levels. For this to become reality, there is a need for developing up-to-date methods for innovative labour market economic modelling. But economic modelling is only part of the equation. There is a compelling argument to be made for analysing the socio-economic needs and demands of individuals. This would require socio-economic modelling, with specific methodologies, methods and techniques.

From this perspective, there is a need to conceptualise and implement socio-economic and labour market economic modelling. Bringing together two modelling concepts would *inert alia*, require resolutions of a number of issues. For example: (i) how far can economic labour market modelling incorporate socio-economic arguments; (ii) can socio-economic modelling inform economists how individuals perform as social actors in economic sense?

In order to respond to these and other related issues it may be helpful to develop labour-economics-social modelling based on the question of how rural-urban movements in employment, underemployment and unemployment may be empirically interpreted. Such modelling could provide necessary information for governments to: (i) formulate relevant labour market policies; (ii) ensure budgetary allocation for economic development in rural areas; and (iii) enhance education and training infrastructure in rural areas.

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