



Elusive Equity: Education Reform in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Edward B. Fiske, Helen F. Ladd

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Elusive Equity chronicles South Africa's efforts to fashion a racially equitable state education system from the ashes of apartheid. The policymakers who came to power with Nelson Mandela in 1994 inherited an education system designed to further the racist goals of apartheid. Their massive challenge was to transform that system, which lavished human and financial resources on schools serving white students while systematically starving those serving African, coloured, and Indian learners, into one that would offer quality education to all persons, regardless of their race.

Edward Fiske and Helen Ladd describe and evaluate the strategies that South Africa pursued in its quest for racial equity. They draw on previously unpublished data, interviews with key officials, and visits to dozens of schools to describe the changes made in school finance, teacher assignment policies, governance, curriculum, higher education, and other areas. They conclude that the country has made remarkable progress toward equity in the sense of equal treatment of persons of all races. For several reasons, however, the country has been far less successful in promoting equal educational opportunity or educational adequacy. Thus equity has remained elusive.

The book is unique in combining the perceptive observations of a skilled education journalist with the analytical skills of an academic policy expert. Richly textured descriptions of how South Africa's education reforms have affected schools at the grass-roots level are combined with careful analysis of enrollment, governance, and budget data at the school, provincial, and national levels. The result is a compelling and comprehensive study of South Africa's first decade of education reform in the post-apartheid period.

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