hand, I have found one alternative teaching method, the formal debate, to spur careful student preparation; lack of preparation invites instant rebuttal by the other team. My second observation is that the intended lessons often eluded at least some of the students, just as with lectures. Whether such exercises enhanced analytical thinking or deepened understanding remains an open question.

To its credit, this volume does not downplay high start-up costs for alternative techniques. Some of the contributing authors also discuss problems such as free riders in group-learning situations. Unfortunately, the suggested remedies for free riders seem likely to raise as many problems as they solve.

In this reviewer’s opinion, the most important chapter was W. Lee Hansen’s on integrating writing into economics. The idea is hardly unique, for writing is synonymous with learning in most disciplines. The chapter’s importance is that it points out the surprisingly small amount of writing in economics courses, even advanced courses, and suggests ways to remedy this perceived problem. For professors who question the value of long term papers, Hansen suggests numerous shorter writing assignments.

Articulating something in writing is often the best way to clarify an issue and expose a weak argument. In making a written case, one teaches oneself in ways that mere reading cannot possibly achieve, for writing is active while reading is passive. Even trying to rephrase someone else’s idea is likely to generate new thoughts. Writing an explanation is an important complement to problems and diagrams; a student who otherwise may simply be moving lines around or doing algebra, is forced to delve into the question of what is really going on.

Other chapters discussed resources that can be incorporated into economics courses, even conventional lecture courses. The chapter on use of the internet was very helpful. Lists of useful web sites alone made the chapter worthwhile. The chapter on the use of sports in economics provided a rich array of examples as did the chapter on the use of literature. However, this reader believes that using literature merely to illustrate economic concepts misses the best opportunities. For example, the book suggests eight pages of Dickens’ novel *Hard Times* that illustrate comparative advantage. This ignores the fact that Dickens’ entire novel is an attack on *homo economicus*, that self-centered being who substitutes cost-benefit calculations for the virtues of faith, hope, and love. Why not design a course on “Morals and Markets” to study the novel’s critique of the view of human nature inherent in the utility-maximizing model? Some of the work of Nobel winner Amartya Sen is devoted to just this issue.

This volume is exceptionally valuable. However, its suggestions ought not to be used uncritically. The professor considering any of the recommended techniques should choose selectively.

D. Frey
Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC, USA
E-mail address: frey@wfu.edu
13 December 1999

PII: S 0 2 7 2 - 7 7 5 7 ( 9 9 ) 0 0 0 7 6 - X

**Education for All? The MONEE Project Regional Monitoring Report**
No. 5, Florence, Italy; UNICEF International Child Development Centre, 1998, pp. vii+135, Price: $20.00 (paper)

In its 5th annual report, Unicef’s Regional Monitoring Project for Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (MONEE) documents the dramatic deterioration of economic conditions in the transition countries and the concurrent, often equally depressing, state of education. In all but one of the transition countries, GDP was lower in 1996 than in 1989; in 19 of the countries, GDP was lower by 20% or more. Worsening inequality and reduced government capacity appear to have accompanied these enormous economic contractions. In several former Soviet republics, pre-transition inequality was about average for OECD countries; it has since risen to levels typical of notoriously unequal South American countries. Although the decline of the government sector is to be expected in countries moving from centrally planned to market economies, in some cases the decline in government revenue has severely limited essential government services.

In the best tradition of similar reports prepared by multi-lateral organizations, MONEE is careful to note the diversity of country experiences within general trends and is scrupulous about discussing data limitations that hinder pre- and post-transition comparisons. The report credibly describes pre-transition conditions, including near-universal enrolments in compulsory-level education, complementary school-based provision of nutritional, health and recreational services, high rankings in international assessments of student achievement and unequal opportunities in post-compulsory schooling based on socio-economic status.

The commitment to education spending during the transition period is mixed. Of the countries for which data are available, half saw increases and half decreases in public spending on education as a percentage of GDP. In most countries, the share of education in total public spending was steady or increased. But declines in GDP and government revenues reduced real education spend-
ing, with reversals particularly severe in the former Soviet Union. In Georgia, education spending fell by more than 90% between 1989 and 1996. Not surprisingly, available resources have been directed toward teachers’ wages, with a worrying decline in spending for building maintenance and repair. Extra-curricular and health and nutritional services have in most cases disappeared. Textbook provision has also suffered. Russia reported that it provided only half of the textbooks needed for basic instruction in 1996. Moreover, textbooks have not been updated to reflect the new political realities. In some cases, references to Marxist-Leninist doctrine have been literally “whited out” with no other changes to the text. Despite priority spending for teachers, real wages have fallen. These trends suggest deterioration in the quality of instruction. At the same time, however, teacher-pupil ratios have risen. This development may reflect perverse incentives of some decentralization schemes. In Macedonia, for example, funding is provided to localities based on the number of teachers employed. Alternatively, additional teachers may reflect the increasing provision of instruction in minority languages.

Enrolment rates in most of the transition economies for compulsory levels of schooling (typically covering children between the ages of 6 and 15) were lower in 1994 than in 1989. Indeed, the report acknowledges this as a worrying trend, especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Although these regions show the most pronounced deterioration, the modest reductions in other countries also merit attention. The report suggests that the enrolment rates may be artificially low due to problems in estimating the underlying counts of children in populations experiencing large rates of emigration. Nevertheless, given the prevalence of the reductions, the report might have devoted more attention here. At the upper-secondary post-compulsory level the report acknowledges widespread declines in enrolment, except in Central Europe. Ukraine is typical: upper-secondary enrolment rates fell from 76% in 1989 to 58% in 1996. By contrast, university level enrolment rates have been everywhere stable.

The report also documents problems in unequal access by socio-economic background, rural and urban location and ethnic characteristics. In many cases, the reduction of school spending by the state has been replaced, at least in part, by spending by households on fees, textbooks, and more onerously, payments to public-sector teachers for tutoring and better grades. This development presumably reduces access for poorer students.

Education decentralization has been a common policy reform during the transition. The report provides an excellent critique of this process, noting that decentralization has often been the result of a political struggle over control, rather than a planned educational reform. Without local institutional capacity, mechanisms for local revenue collection and equalization formulas administered centrally, decentralization schemes may well aggravate local and ethnic inequalities. The report argues that ultimately the central government must retain responsibility for ensuring equal access and minimum standards.

Given the dire situation and the real drawbacks of the prevailing decentralization policy, the report’s policy recommendations are disappointing. The decentralization process should be studied. Governments should make sure iodine enters diets, promote playgroups and pay more attention to access for minority and low-income children. Given the enormity of the problems presented so cogently, the lack of substantive policy alternatives leaves little room for optimism.

Melissa Binder
University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, USA
E-mail address: mbinder@unm.edu

PII: S0272-7757(99)00077-1