



ASSESSING CONTRIBUTIONS: THE CASE FOR EPISTEMOLOGICAL PLURALISM AND INDUCTIVE IDENTIFICATION

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ECONOMIC IDENTIFICATION

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- Identify the effect of higher education on individuals, also allowing social aggregation
 - Human capital as the causal pathway
- Primarily focused economic returns with attempts to measure non-economic benefits

THE CHALLENGE OF ATTRIBUTION

EPISTEMOLOGICAL PLURALISM

- Draw from many disciplines
- Open to a wide set of contributions
- Comfortable with gaps in explanation and uncertainty

WHAT IS EXPECTED?

- Understanding higher education's contributions empirically require making assumptions about what is expected.
- Base assumption: The consequences of higher education are real.
- What amounts to a contribution?
 - cultural values and practices
 - socially constructed priorities
 - political processes
 - economic conditions

REFORM AS A WINDOW INTO EXPECTATIONS

- How are contributions assessed?
 - Abstract theorization
 - Empirical measurement
- An inductive, descriptive approach intended to identify what reform processes reveal about expected contributions



SETTLEMENTS MAY NOT LAST LONG

- Reform movements develop an internal logic.
- New demands and shifting priorities are continually added.
- Higher education is difficult to steer – even when politics are centralized, and the state is strong.





REAL BUT NOT
FIXED