

CHAPTER 1

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FOR ALL BY ALL?

The World Bank's Global Framework for Education

The 2020 World Bank Education Sector Strategy *Learning for All (WBES 2020, hereafter)* was presented in its final form to the public in February 2011 (World Bank, 2011a). The enthusiasm of Elizabeth King, chief architect of *WBES 2020*, perhaps best captures the great expectations associated with the launch of the new strategy:

Let's Make It Learning for All, Not Just Schooling for All.

... Having spent nearly 18 months traveling the world to consult with our partners (government, civil society, NGOs, development agencies) about the best experience and evidence of what works in education and about the role of the Bank Group in the next decade, I feel somewhat like I've given birth, in this case to a global framework for education which we believe is the right one for the coming decade. (King, 2011)

Regardless of the debate on whether *WBES 2020* truly sets new accents or merely reaffirms the World Bank's technical approach to educational development,¹ the insistence on fundamental change begs for explanation. Why is it so important to the World Bank to emphasize the novelty of the approach? Strategy development is steeped in a political process in that it helps to garner support from within as well as from outside an organization to channel resources into particular activities. Applied to *WBES 2020*, the question becomes: which adversaries does it attempt to convince and which new coalitions does it intend to form? According to the World Bank, *WBES 2020* heralds a novel approach that is supported by major actors in development: donors ("development partners"), recipient governments ("clients"), and broadly defined civil societies (businesses, non-governmental organizations, people). The comprehensive stakeholder review of this latest educational strategy seems to suggest that it has been endorsed by diverse groups of stakeholders, inside and outside the World Bank, and by implication is no longer a World Bank strategy but rather should be treated as everyone's strategy. Furthermore, the ambitious claim of having "given birth" to "a global framework for education" positions the document as a strategy with global reach and with universal

solutions. In this analysis, I attempt to study the grand claim of universality reflected in the World Bank's insistence that *WBES 2020* is not only a global framework for All but, as this chapter will show, also one that has been developed by All.

Since the focus of this chapter is not so much on the content of *WBES 2020*, but rather on agency and process, the following research question arises: How and when did the transformation from a World Bank framework for education to a "global framework for education" occur? I will address this question in this chapter from a perspective that is informed by systems theory (see Luhmann, 1990; Schriewer, 1990). The World Bank is analyzed here as a *social system* with its own regulatory regime that draws its legitimacy from a clearly defined mandate, a strategy, a set of actors, and a set of beneficiaries. This particular research question reflects an interest in understanding the social system rather than criticizing individual authors that work for the World Bank.

Many concepts introduced in this chapter are informed by system theory. For example, donor logic, self-referentiality of knowledge, and functional integration of aid systems—presented in the following sections—are used to explain the ever expanding scope of conditions that the World Bank established over the years for determining the eligibility for loans or grants. For the longest time, recipient governments had to subscribe to a structural adjustment policy (reducing public expenditures and increasing revenue from private sources). Heavily criticized by many in development work, the economic straightjacket of structural adjustment was preserved but in the 1990s supplemented with a social dimension (poverty alleviation) and later on, at the turn of the new millennium, with a political requirement (good governance). Over the past decade the World Bank re-invented itself in the education sector and presented itself as a knowledge producer and knowledge manager. In this particular role as knowledge bank the World Bank now determines what works and what does not work in terms of educational development. The knowledge-based regulation of the World Bank has, in effect, generated a fourth conditionality for recipient governments: programmatic conditionality. In addition to the economic, social and political conditionalities (structural adjustment, poverty alleviation, good governance), they now have to subscribe to a particular reform package ("best practices") that was first piloted in a few countries, analyzed in impact evaluations, and then disseminated to other recipient governments.

ON DONOR LOGIC

There has been a proliferation of studies that analyze "donor logic," investigating who has given aid to whom (and why, and how), or trying to understand more broadly the idiosyncrasies of the various aid agencies in education. Such studies demonstrate that, for example, the World Bank's rationale for lending money or giving grants is distinct from a foreign policy framework, as pursued by bilateral aid, and is also fundamentally different from the donor logic of UN agencies, philanthropies, non-governmental organizations, or, more recently, of celebrities

(see Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Richey & Ponte, 2008; Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008). Phillip Jones' historical accounts of multilateral aid organizations greatly advanced this line of research (Jones, 1998, 2004, 2005). He scrutinizes the donor logic of multilaterals, including the World Bank, and finds great differences, depending upon how they are funded. He points out that UNICEF relies on voluntary donations from governments, private foundations, and individuals, and therefore "its analyses of need tend to be dramatic, its projections tend to be alarmist and its solutions tend to be populist" (Jones, 1998, p. 151). In contrast, UNESCO runs on membership fees that are, unfortunately, more successfully extracted from low-income governments than they are from high-income governments. Given the global scope of UNESCO's operation, supported by minimal funding, UNESCO relies on building alliances with resourceful development agencies.ⁱⁱ

I concur with Jones' observation that the World Bank has reinvented itself at the turn of the millennium and now functions as a knowledge bank. The concept of an international knowledge bank was first discussed at the Board of Governors of the World Bank in March 1996 (see Jones, 2004 and 2005). One of the options discussed was whether the financial lending operations should be delegated to the regional development banks (Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, etc.) while the Bank itself focused on the lending of ideas. Three years later, in 1999, the World Bank's Global Development Network (GDN) was launched at a conference in Bonn where South-South cooperation, in particular, the dissemination of "best practices" within the global South was discussed (see Stone, 2000). As a result, policy transfer would ideally occur within and among the countries that are perceived as being similar, replacing the practice of transplanting reform packages from the First to the Third World.

Although the World Bank has not decreased its role as a lender of money, it has acted increasingly, over the past decade, as a global policy advisor for national governments.ⁱⁱⁱ Needless to state, the World Bank's use of baseline analysis, target setting, and benchmarking as policy tools to coerce national governments into adopting a particular reform package, designed and funded by the World Bank, has come under serious attack. It has been rightfully pointed out by many, including several authors in this book, that the World Bank has elevated itself into the role of the "super think tank" among the aid agencies that, based on its extensive analytical work, knows what is good for the recipient countries but also what other aid agencies should support. Its self-described role as a knowledge bank, combined with the expensive impact evaluations which, in some countries, cost more than the actual "intervention" whose effectiveness they are supposed to measure, epitomizes the "what works approach." Worse yet, by implication the super think tank also functions as a judge on what does not work and consequently does not receive external financial support even if national governments prove the contrary and request funding for reforms that they deem important for their country.^{iv} For many, the World Bank has remained arrogant and big-footed, this time around not only because of the volume of money it holds but also because of the masses of data it collects as well as the multitude of technical reports it produces. Having

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reviewed the World Bank's analytical work on teachers, I make the argument in this chapter that the international databases of the World Bank are often agenda-driven and therefore vulnerable to methodological bias and coercive recommendations.

THE FUNCTIONAL INTEGRATION OF THREE AND MORE AID SYSTEMS

From a systems perspective, it is striking that the boundaries between the World Bank and other major development actors, in particular the United States and the United Kingdom, have become blurred. The strategies of the World Bank, DFID, and USAID have converged towards the same knowledge-based approach for delivering aid and chosen the same narrow focus on measurable student outcomes, notably on literacy and numeracy. Regardless of aid agency, there is nowadays an obsession with identifying progress indicators, a preoccupation with measuring results (including student results), and an institutional pressure to demonstrate the impact of an aid intervention. This is not surprising given the indicators of effective aid that the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness established. In addition, the education sector strategies of the two largest donors^v are remarkably similar to the World Bank's *Education Sector Strategy 2020* (World Bank, 2011a). In fact, *WBES 2020* adopted a title that was already in use in U.K. bilateral aid: *Learning for All: DFID's Education Strategy 2010-2015* (DFID, 2009). For DFID, but also for the World Bank and for USAID, skills development for youth is one of the strategic priorities (along with access and quality). The bilateral aid plan of the United States, released a few months before *WBES 2020*, also highlights student learning and skills development, and is entitled *USAID Education Strategy: Improving Lives through Learning* (USAID, 2011).

Even though the World Bank has a tendency to see itself as the representative of all bilateral donors,^{vi} there are many bilateral aid agencies that share neither its focus nor its technical approach to aid. The Government of Denmark, for example, represents the largest donor in terms of per-capita spending on aid. Its aid agency (Danish International Development Agency, DANIDA) follows to the letter the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and implements, among other features, results-based aid (DANIDA, 2010). At the same time, it pursues a human rights approach to education that does not reduce the value of education to literacy and numeracy. In the same vein, the Children and Youth Strategy of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is more holistic than *WBES 2020* and concentrates on three areas: child survival, access to quality education, and safe and secure futures for children and youth (CIDA, 2011). Similarly, Japan's Education Cooperation Policy 2011-2015 has also moved beyond narrowly defined strategic goals that coerce recipient governments into adopting donor-driven reform priorities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2010). In stark contrast to the aid strategies of Denmark, Canada, and Japan—which are sufficiently broadly defined to allow for national governments to set their own agendas—the recipients of a grant or loan from the World Bank have to adopt the narrowly defined (global) framework of education that is advanced by the World Bank but also to some

extent by DFID and USAID. The recipient governments have to subscribe, at least rhetorically and at the stage when international funding is secured,^{vii} to the donor's focus on measurable student-outcomes, testing, impact evaluation, and a host of other priorities that match the aid strategy of the donor but not necessarily the need of their country.

There used to be distinct differences between the various aid agencies, including between the World Bank, DFID, and USAID. In fact, they thrived from being different. They were, in terms of systems theory, "environment" to each other and thereby defined themselves in terms of how they differed from one another. We have witnessed over the past few years, however, a functional integration of the various actors. These three large donors, but also others, now inhabit the same system, that is, subscribe to the same international agreements (e.g., EFA, MDG) and adhere to the same standards of aid effectiveness (e.g., Paris Declaration 2005) that regulate the aid relationship between donors and recipients.

The argument is made here that *WBES 2020* attempts to cement a new aid environment, one in which World Bank tries hard to dissolve its boundaries with other development agencies—such as bilateral aid, multilateral agencies, non-governmental organizations—in order to assume global leadership on matters of aid. Thus, the standardization of aid that we are currently witnessing is very strongly dictated by standards propelled by the World Bank and with knowledge-based regulation tools used by commercial banks and businesses: ratings/rankings, performance assessments, targets, benchmarks, and progress reporting.

There are three aspects of the new strategy that deserve closer investigation: first, the broad stakeholder review process; second, the emphasis on "what works" and, finally, the circularity or self-referentiality in its knowledge production.

THE WORLD BANK: A HARMONIZER?

Stakeholder review is not out of the ordinary in democratic settings. This is not to say that the opinions voiced by stakeholders are considered and ultimately find entry in the published version of the strategy. In the case of the USAID education strategy, the stakeholders reviewed in fact the "wrong draft," that is, the version that they reviewed was not the one that got published. A first version of the USAID Education Strategy was carefully researched by experts brought in from outside the USAID system and the draft was circulated for feedback among internal and external stakeholders over a period of several months in 2009. At the end, the version reviewed and revised by the stakeholders was shelved. A new USAID strategy document was commissioned from scratch, completed within a short period of time, and approved within an even shorter time. The valid version was not stakeholder-reviewed.

Different from USAID, the World Bank stakeholder review process was orchestrated publicly and documents related to the strategy and to the strategy development process were posted on the web. The Consultation Plan included feedback on the overall approach and the concept note as well as on the draft strategy. The consultations were scheduled over the period February to November

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2010 (see World Bank, 2010). The concept note was translated into Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, Portuguese, and Spanish and feedback on the strategy material was solicited from a broad array of experts based in governments, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, and universities. The *WBES 2020* team visited over two dozen cities across the globe to solicit feedback and also presented the draft at the 2010 annual meeting of the professional association of researchers and practitioners in educational development, the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES).

The content of the *WBES 2020* is as important as the process of (1) developing, (2) reviewing, (3) approving, and (4) presenting the new strategy. The following summarizes the four phases of strategy development this document.

Development of the Strategy

It has become customary to have experts produce background papers on lessons learned, trends observed, and issues arising in educational development. These background papers provide the “scientific rationality” (see Luhmann, 1990, and Schriewer, 1990) for the priorities proposed in the strategy. They later on serve as quasi-scientific stamp of certification when political disagreements surface. As with the Global Monitoring Reports of UNESCO but also with (the first version of) the USAID Education Strategy, the World Bank had background papers produced that synthesized evaluations and other empirical studies on aid interventions and educational reforms. An important detail here is that all the papers were produced internally reinforcing the point that I will be making later about the self-referentiality of the World Bank’s analytical work.^{viii}

Review of the Strategy

The review of the strategy was, as mentioned above, staged as a public enterprise; internal *and* external feedback was solicited. It was important to the *WBES 2020* team to point out that all products of the strategy development process—the technical approach, the concept note, and the draft strategy—were reviewed by a broad array of stakeholders including, for example, by students and parents who typically have little to say on matters related to formal education. The participation of the broad range of stakeholders in education is acknowledged in the preliminary pages of *WBES 2020*:

The strategy team is grateful to the government officials of partner countries, global development partners, representatives of civil society organizations, students, teachers, parents, and business leaders who made valuable recommendations throughout the strategy development and drafting process. (2011a, p. vii)

The list of those that “deserve special mention” is actually shorter than one would expect, given the extensive stakeholder review. It must be assumed that some consultations were deemed politically more important than others—e.g., “a consultation dinner for representatives from Angola, Ethiopia, Kyrgyz Republic, Mozambique, Tajikistan, Vietnam and Zambia” hosted by the Government of

Russia (World Bank, 2011a, p. viii)—and therefore were listed in the acknowledgment section of the 97-page strategy document.

Approval of the Strategy

It is customary that authors of strategies and other texts acknowledge the feedback received from reviewers and mention that some of the proposed changes have been incorporated into the final revision. This is not the case in *WBES 2020*, probably because indeed there is little similarity between the draft strategy presented for review, the feedback given, and the final strategy that was approved. The stakeholder review process (phase 2) was sufficiently broad to enable the *WBES 2020* team to selectively adopt the feedback that best matched the World Bank's idiosyncratic priorities and aid agenda. Contrary to the publicly open review process (phase 2), the approval process (phase 3) occurred behind closed doors. As with the first phase (development of the strategy), the third phase (approval of strategy) is for individuals outside the system a black box because it was carried out internally.

Presentation of the Final Version of the Strategy

Outsiders were again involved in the final stage of the strategy. The document was translated into many languages, publicly launched, and widely disseminated.

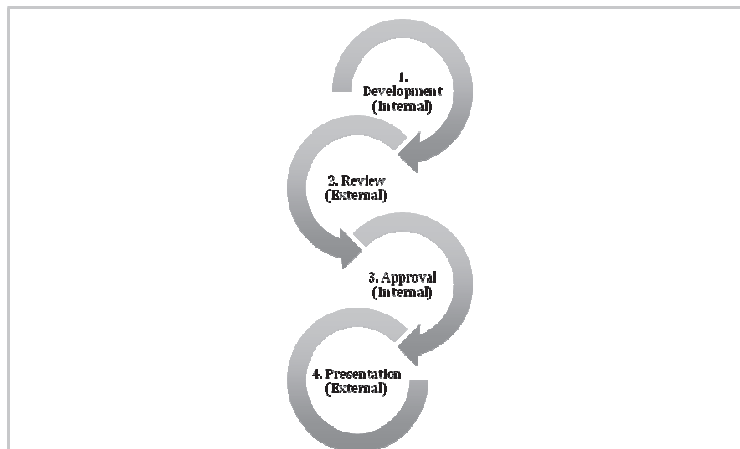


Figure 1. The Four Phases of WBES 2020 Production

As Figure 1 illustrates, the development (phase 1) and the approval of the strategy (phase 3) were carried out internally, that is, within the World Bank

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system. However, by emphasizing the inclusive approach and inviting outsiders to comment, that is, by visibly opening up the review (phase 2) of a product that was exclusively developed by World Bank staff and affiliates, the final version of the strategy (phase 4) was presented as *everyone's* strategy. The systemic shifts, internal-external-internal-external, illustrated in Figure 1 and explained in the previous paragraphs, enabled the World Bank to present its own education strategy as a product that was developed and endorsed by experts in *and* outside the World Bank system.

In policy studies, the process of consolidating various interests and agendas is called harmonization. What I have described with the four phases of *WBES 2020* is a process of *rhetorical harmonization* that enabled the World Bank to pretend that it has integrated divergent interests and agendas to the extent that their own education strategy now passes as everyone's "global framework of education."

"WHAT WORKS": IMPACT EVALUATIONS AND PROGRAMMATIC CONDITIONALITY

It is a bad idea to have the same institution review the education sector, identify a reform package, lend the money for implementing the reform package, and evaluate its effectiveness. In the same vein, it is ill conceived to have the World Bank analyze the problem and lend money for its solution. More often than not, the solutions exist before the analysis is carried out, turning the sequence of policy formulation on its head (see Steiner-Khamsi, 2010). Rather than first defining the problem and then searching for solutions, the reality on the ground differs: the formulation of the (local) problem is aligned with the already existing externally funded (global) solution. To be fair: the same applies to other aid agencies. They tend to invent problems and create a crisis in areas for which they have solutions to offer. Similar to other aid agencies, the World Bank pursues a limited number of educational reforms that it tests in a few countries and then disseminates—with a few adaptations here and there to reduce transfer cost—across the globe, regardless of country context. It would be more accurate to consider this particular reform package a portfolio of eligible reforms for World Bank funding rather than to use a label that carries a positive connotation: transfer of "best practices." I therefore suggest that the concept "transfer of best practices" be replaced with a term that captures the economics of policy borrowing as well as the power asymmetry between recipient and donor more poignantly: "programmatic conditionality."

The point I make in this section is that impact evaluation, for the World Bank and many other aid agencies the preferred mode for justifying their aid portfolio, has become a means for imposing programmatic conditionality on recipient governments. At closer examination, programmatic conditionality is, in effect, similar to the earlier, highly unpopular structural adjustment reforms that the World Bank and IMF imposed on recipients of grants and loans. Many of the pilot projects that nowadays make it into the World Bank portfolio of fundable projects aim at reducing public expenditures in education (by means of privatization,

rationalization, etc.), increasing revenue for the national education budget (from tuition, fees, etc.), and by reducing inefficiencies and wastage.

If it were not for the high cost associated with impact evaluations, one could simply criticize the World Bank for encouraging economists with doctoral degrees to carry out educational research. In teacher policy research, for example, the World Bank is enamored with impact evaluations that show that underpaid contract teachers produce better student outcomes than regular teachers who are not accountable, do not fear losing their jobs, and therefore either do not show up regularly in school, or if they show up, do not teach, or if they teach, do not teach effectively (see Bruns et al., 2011; Duflo et al., 2010). This complex causal chain of explanations is often simplified and reduced in the end to two variables only: low payment of teachers and job insecurity—both, according to the economists cited in World Bank publications, considered highly desirable for education systems that attempt to improve teacher effectiveness. Whether the contract teachers were members of the same community, perhaps spoke the same language as the students they instruct, or were more highly motivated because they were early-career teachers in a system that is, for a variety of reasons, demotivating for teachers, are all issues that educational researchers have examined in great detail. Alternative explanations are simply “noise” for a research agenda that attempts to scientifically prove that cutting public expenditures is not only necessary from a financial perspective but also, as impact evaluations supposedly demonstrate with “hard fact,” better for student learning.

Impact evaluations should also be criticized for being far too expensive for what they are able to offer in terms of explanations. A good case in point is the impact evaluation of the READ (Rural Education And Development) project in rural Mongolia, funded by the World Bank. READ provided children’s books to classrooms (40 books per grade level) in rural primary schools. The impact evaluation sought to assess two questions: first, do books make a difference for improving literacy skills of students and, second, does the preparation of teachers for integrating children books into their teaching matter? As with all quasi-experimental designs, the impact evaluation worked with large, representative samples. The design of the impact evaluation study is presented in Table 1.

The same standardized student achievement test was administered to primary school students and used as a tool to assess the effectiveness of the two interventions: (1) books only and (2) books with training. Even though the design of the study was methodologically solid, the research questions were for policy experts and practitioners banal. For the project staff in Mongolia, a formative project evaluation with recommendations on how to improve the implementation of the project was of much greater utility than the comprehensive impact evaluation with its quasi-experimental design. Furthermore, the research questions pursued in the impact evaluation were irrelevant for decision-makers in the Mongolian education sector. They had no doubt whatsoever that both children’s books and teacher training are much needed and they found it unethical to withhold books and training from rural schools in fifteen provinces (control group) only to

Table 1. Design of the Impact Evaluation of the READ Project in Mongolia

“Semi-Treatment” Group: Two Provinces	All primary classrooms in rural schools (in two provinces) receive 40 children books per grade
“Full-Treatment” Group: Three 3 Provinces	All primary classrooms in rural schools (in three provinces) receive 40 children books PLUS all teachers in these schools receive training on how to integrate children books into their teaching
“No Treatment Group” [Control Group]: 15 Provinces	None of the primary classrooms in rural schools (in 15 provinces) receive children books and none of the teachers receive a training

see whether the two interventions really have had an impact on students’ literacy skills. Finally, the decision-makers resented at the time that such a great amount of money was spent on the impact evaluation, and in particular on international consultants conducting the study, rather than on distributing books and training to more schools and provinces in Mongolia.

There was no doubt in anyone’s mind that the READ project filled an important gap in rural schools: provision of books and training. There was a great sense of gratitude towards this World Bank grant that enabled a revitalization of schools in rural Mongolia. But whom did the impact evaluation serve? As mentioned above, it was not meant to serve Mongolian decision-makers, but rather it was commissioned for the funder itself, more precisely for the knowledge bank of the World Bank. The World Bank evaluates its own projects and selects a few projects as “best practices” which it subsequently disseminates to other countries in the world. As mentioned above, what some scholars call the “scientific method” in educational research (quasi-experimental design) or “evidence-based policy planning” serves international organizations to package existing projects, brand them as “best practices” or a “global framework of education,” and transfer them—as part of the programmatic conditionality of a loan or grant—to developing countries.

WORLD BANK KNOWLEDGE: A SELF-REFERENTIAL SYSTEM

Over the past few years, I observed a growing interest of the donor community in issues related to teacher salaries, management, and deployment. Each of the funders is interested for different reasons in the topic, interprets the findings differently, and draws different conclusions from one and the same study. The World Bank, for example, is interested in this research area because 80 or 90 percent of national education budgets are allocated for salaries. UNICEF, in turn, is concerned with how to supply qualified teachers to schools that are marginalized in

terms of location or in other regards and has, against this backdrop, launched the Teachers for the Marginalized Initiative.

In the same vein, each agency used the findings from the various studies differently. A few comments on the idiosyncrasies of agency-funded educational policy research in developing countries might be in order here. The following presents examples of World Bank-funded policy research in the area of teacher salaries, management, and deployment in which I participated as researcher: one in Tajikistan (see Steiner-Khamsi, 2007) and another one in Mongolia (World Bank, 2006). There is a disjuncture between the type of teacher reform studies that the World Bank funds in-country and how it represents them in the headquarters. As I will demonstrate in the following, the analytical work in-country (exemplified by studies in Tajikistan and Mongolia) is less agenda-driven than its international database (exemplified by SABER-Teachers) in Washington.

The study in Tajikistan explored the structure and composition of the teacher salary which teachers and government officials found fragmented and non-transparent. Teachers in Tajikistan as well as in other post-Soviet countries are paid a very low base salary (based on a weekly teaching load or, in Russian, referred to as *stavka*) and a series of salary supplements for teaching additional hours for grading student notebooks, for serving as homeroom teachers, for managing a resource room or laboratory, etc. International agency after international agency have provided in Tajikistan, but also in other countries of the region, wrong advice and coerced the government into ill-informed reform priorities because they failed to understand the huge difference in teacher salary and work conditions in countries with a weekly workload system (used in Europe and North America) as opposed to the weekly teaching load system (used in the post-Soviet region). However, the important study on the “*stavka* system” (teaching load system in post-Soviet countries) was poorly timed. It was completed at a time when the Government of Tajikistan had just passed a comprehensive teacher salary reform by consolidating several salary supplements into the base salary and thereby lifting the teacher salary. Understandably, the Government of Tajikistan was not prepared to publish yet another report that proposed a revision of the salary structure, a better utilization of teachers, greater weekly statutory teaching load, and a much higher base salary for teachers. The ambitious World Bank study on the *stavka* system was exclusively read by World Bank staff and government officials but remained unpublished and underutilized.^{ix}

The opposite occurred with the World Bank-funded study in Mongolia. The Public Expenditure Tracking Survey in Mongolia (PETS Mongolia) included a large component on teacher salaries (World Bank, 2006). The timing for the study could not have been better: Mongolia experienced rapid economic growth, triggered by a booming mining industry, and the Government of Mongolia was therefore receptive to the recommendations of lifting the teacher salary, adapting a weekly workload system and thereby replacing the previous teaching load system, as well as making the salary structure more transparent and less vulnerable to deductions that were regularly and arbitrarily made by school principals.

In both countries with a socialist past, Tajikistan and Mongolia, accountability was not an issue, but the low payment and morale and the big shortage of teachers in rural areas represented major concerns. In fact, in both countries—but also in several other former socialist countries examined in the UNICEF CEECIS Study on Teachers (UNICEF CEECIS, 2011)—teachers are heavily controlled and their salaries or salary supplements are deducted if they do not show up in school, come late, do not grade the notebooks of students, damage school equipment, and are constantly humiliated in many different ways by school principals and education managers. PETS Mongolia addressed how teachers in Mongolia lacked support at all levels of the education system and also demonstrated the huge inequality of teacher salaries in rural and urban schools. PETS Mongolia, funded by the World Bank, was without exaggeration one of the most influential policy analyses in Mongolia that had a major positive impact on the country’s educational system. Many commentators in Mongolia attributed the 2007 teacher salary reform to the findings presented in the PETS Mongolia study. As the most recent UNICEF Mongolia Study on Teachers (UNICEF Mongolia, 2011) demonstrates, teacher salaries almost quadrupled, teacher shortage in rural schools disappeared, enrollment in pre-service teacher education doubled and, most importantly, teachers are nowadays able to make a living from their salary and do not have to rely on additional sources from teaching excessively, farming, selling products in the market or on the streets, or from privately tutoring students after class. Naturally, the economic boom in the country made the implementation of the proposed changes possible. Nevertheless, the World Bank-funded PETS Mongolia study laid a foundation to garner political support for a major salary increase that was long overdue in Mongolia.

There is a gap that yawns between World Bank-funded analytical work carried out in various countries and its global representation by World Bank Headquarters. Therefore, the flattering comments on the two World Bank-funded studies—the study on the *stavka* system in Tajikistan and PETS Mongolia—need to be put in perspective and compared with the global knowledge bank on teacher policies, SABER-Teachers, that the World Bank Headquarters is currently setting up. World Bank Headquarters seems to have the mandate of coming up with a global policy framework for all kinds of reform areas, including for teacher reforms. Such a mandate is in itself problematic. In the area of teacher reforms, SABER-Teachers (System Assessment and Benchmarking for Education Results) documents “teacher policies for public schools in developed and developing countries in order to inform policy choices and promote policy dialogue, globally” (World Bank, 2011b). SABER-Teachers pursues eight policy goals:

- Setting clear expectations for teachers
- Attracting the best into teaching
- Preparing teachers with useful training and experience
- Matching teachers’ skills with students’ needs
- Leading teachers with strong principals
- Monitoring teaching and learning
- Supporting teachers to improve instruction

– Motivating teachers to perform

As the eight policy goals listed above illustrate, the emphasis of SABER-Teachers is on teacher accountability. Both the language and the policy goals used in SABER-Teachers clearly depict a negative image of teachers. It is an image that does not do justice to many regions and countries in the world, including, for example, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia, and Mongolia, where teachers are micro-managed, controlled, and sanctioned. The language and concepts reflected in the policy framework of SABER-Teachers should be read as an invitation to decision-makers to come up with reforms that police and sanction the masses of underperforming teachers and provide material incentives to a small group of teachers who perform well. Without any doubt, the programmatic conditionality of the World Bank in the area of teacher policies is teacher accountability. This particular policy orientation is presented in detail in the World Bank publication *Making Schools Work. New Evidence on Accountability Reforms* (see Bruns et al., 2011, chapter 4). Judging from the list of “best practices” presented in the publication, the portfolio of eligible projects for World Bank funding are contract tenure reforms, pay-for-performance reforms, and other types of accountability reforms that, if implemented globally, make a profession that already suffers from universal shortage and low prestige even less attractive.

What bothers in publications of the World Bank, such as in *Making Schools Work* (Bruns et al., 2011), is the ambiguous case selection. As explained above, PETS Mongolia was an influential study in Mongolia and had a major positive impact on educational development in Mongolia. Yet, PETS Mongolia and numerous other World Bank-funded studies that paint a positive picture of teachers and contradict the larger agenda of teacher accountability are not presented in World Bank publications. Given the geographical scope of World Bank operations, one needs to be alerted if only a few countries are presented. One must assume that all the excluded case studies apparently did not fit the World Bank canon of teacher accountability reforms. Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys, for example, were conducted in dozens of countries but it is always the same handful of countries that are mentioned in World Bank publications; typically countries where major leakages and massive teacher absenteeism occur.

Methodologically speaking, the sample selection in World Bank reporting is seriously flawed. The bias has to do with the broader agenda of establishing a scientific rationality for teacher accountability reforms. The agenda-driven analytical work of the World Bank may lead to wrong conclusions and inappropriate policy recommendations that match the available project portfolio of the World Bank rather than the situation analysis that was carried out in-country.

The tendency to blend out any evidence from cases that do not fit the larger agenda is also reflected in the constant switch between internal and external agencies during the *WBES 2020* production process. In terms of system theory, the World Bank is a good case in point to illustrate the workings of the World Bank’s knowledge bank as a self-referential system. It only absorbs knowledge that perpetuates its own system logic. At the expense of being perhaps too polemic but

for the sake of clarity, the point on self-referential systems may be summarized as follows: The *WBES 2020* as well as other World Bank publications reflect the tendency of the World Bank to talk with everyone, speak on behalf of many, and listen only to their own. The self-referentiality of knowledge production is also reflected in the SABER-Teachers project:

Why did the World Bank embark on SABER-Teachers?

When client countries ask World Bank front-line staff how top-performing countries tackle different issues related to teacher policies (e.g., teacher training, incentives or accountability), project leaders have to respond to such requests on a case-by-case basis—*either by using Bank publications and databases or taking the initiative* to find out more about policies in top-performing education systems. (World Bank, 2011b; italics inserted by author)

As the excerpt from the SABER-Teachers portal website indicates, the World Bank is its own frame of scientific reference, that is, “Bank publications and databases” are the only source of information worth considering. Academics rightfully wonder whether there would be any harm to pick up a book or read articles in refereed academic journals on issues related to teacher policy. Research on teachers is not a rare commodity and others already took the “initiative” to study the topic in great detail. It is striking that the only quasi-external source of authority for World Bank publications are databases or student achievement studies (TIMSS, PISA, PIRLS, etc.) published by OECD or IEA.

WBES 2020: A FUNDRAISER FOR PILOT PROJECTS

Many multilateral, bilateral, and non-governmental organizations concentrate their efforts on funding pilot projects and hope that their pilot projects are eventually funded from sources other than their own. They expect that the recipient government, upon successful completion of the externally funded pilot will scale up the project with funding from the education budget or from other external financial sources.

UNICEF Kyrgyzstan commissioned a donor involvement analysis that yielded interesting results with regard to the preferred aid modality of donors (UNICEF Kyrgyzstan, 2008). The study found that, with the exception of textbook publishing and standards reform, not one single donor-funded project was carried out nationwide. All donor-funded projects, including the multi-million dollar loans and grants by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and USAID were designed as pilot projects, concentrated in a particular geographic region of the country and targeting a relatively small number of institutions or individuals.

In several other countries of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Mongolia, the role of funding incubator projects or pilot projects with innovative practices is typically reserved for NGOs, UNICEF, and UNESCO, which, despite their influence on the government, have to operate with limited funds. It is typical of these organizations to pilot innovative practices in the expectation that the government or larger donors

carry on with institutionalizing or funding their incubator projects. In the Kyrgyz Republic, in contrast, the two development banks favor the same aid modality that typically smaller organizations with limited funding pursue. ADB, the World Bank, and later on, also the EFA Fast-Track Initiative merely funded pilot projects for a limited time period with little attention given to how their projects will be scaled up nationwide.^x Small and large aid agencies alike are prey to the illusion that the government will eventually scale-up their pilot project and finance them from the national education budget. For example, the World Bank and the Open Society Institute in the Central Asia region both had the same unrealistic expectation with regard to the sustainability of their projects.

The cost factor, in particular for projects of large bilateral and multilateral donors is not to be underestimated. The pilot projects are, for a variety of reasons, too expensive to be replicated and scaled-up. There are also capacity costs associated with pilot projects that weaken the institutional capacity of an education sector. The management of these short-lived pilot projects, each funded by a different donor, absorbs the capacity and the time of government officials to administer their own educational system. Donor coordination alone is unlikely to solve the problem. Impact evaluations, in turn, are part of the problem rather than the solution in that they make the pilot projects exponentially more expensive than they already are.

What is almost entirely lacking in the discussion of results-based aid is a longitudinal analysis of externally funded reforms: what is left of these reforms five, ten, or fifteen years later? Given the preferred aid modality of the World Bank—funding one’s own idea of “good education” overseas and presenting it as a global framework of education—there are few lessons to be learned from the past because most externally funded projects are terminated shortly after the funding dries up. The inability of the World Bank to independently reflect on its work, however, curtails institutional learning at the Bank. Given the preferred aid modality of the World Bank as well as that of other donor agencies—funding their own “best practices” in the form of expensive and short-lived pilot projects—one wonders whether the policies which are compiled under the cover of *WBES 2020* represent anything more than expensive, and in the case of the World Bank well-studied, pilot projects that very few countries, if any, have scaled up nationwide.

As mentioned in the introduction, *WBES 2020* was released in early 2011. It is too early to fully understand the impact of the comprehensive stakeholder review on World Bank operations. I end this chapter with an invitation to examine the following provocative question in five years from now: Was *WBES 2020*, in the end, nothing more than a compilation of pilot projects for which the World Bank sought additional funding so that recipient governments had the means to scale them up nationwide? These additional funds for pilot projects—framed as “best practices”—were meant to be mobilized from within the World Bank but also from other donors. Would such an outlook on a possible scenario explain the attempt of the World Bank to present its pilot projects as everyone’s and nobody’s “global framework of education”?

NOTES

- ⁱ The World Bank approach has been polarized by supporters and opponents to an extent that makes it difficult to nowadays summarize it without making any value judgments. Formulated positively, the World Bank stance on educational development may be summarized as an approach that focuses on results, measurement, and knowledge in an endeavor to increase effectiveness and at the same time reduce cost in the education sector. With the same forcefulness, however, the World Bank has been criticized for working behind a “façade of precision” (focus on results, measurement, knowledge) to ultimately carry out its broader economic agenda.
- ⁱⁱ Jones’ point on donor logic is well taken even if one may find his depiction of UNICEF as too harsh.
- ⁱⁱⁱ OECD has a similar role for governments in developed countries. There is a need to analyze the close relation between OECD and the World Bank that has evolved over the past few years.
- ^{iv} A case in point is the long decade of neglect in rural education in Mongolia (1991-2003) that reduced the enrollment and increased the dropout of children (especially boys) from nomadic herder families. The Ministry of Education of Mongolia periodically requested external financial assistance for improving the infrastructure of schools in rural areas, many of which had boarding facilities for children from herder families. However, there simply were no international “best practices” or impact evaluations available to the Asian Development Bank (biggest donor in Mongolia) or the World Bank (mostly constrained to analytical work in Mongolia) to justify—vis-à-vis their own constituents in the banks—their involvement in rehabilitating the boarding school systems and the preservation of small multi-grade village schools that secured access for a population that, at the time, was not only nomadic but also widely dispersed (see Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006).
- ^v The five largest bilateral donors in terms of volume are the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Japan (see Aid Statistics 2010 compiled by OECD DAC).
- ^{vi} Similarly, the EFA Fast Track Initiative was renamed in 2011 to Global Partnership for Education. The secretariat of EFA FTI remains based at the World Bank.
- ^{vii} Once funding has been secured, recipient governments sometimes undermine the project objectives either by disengaging from project implementation (and delegating implementation to an externally funded Program Implementation Unit) or by refusing to scale up externally funded projects—most of them pilot projects—with their own funds from the national education budget. Several studies have dealt with the economics of policy borrowing (see Steiner-Khamsi, 2010; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2006) and analyzed the financial reasons for the “global speak” of recipient governments.
- ^{viii} The authors of the *WBES 2020* background papers are listed in the Acknowledgement section of *WBES 2020* (p. vi f.). Without any exception, the authors of these background papers are all World Bank staff.
- ^{ix} The analysis of the *stavka* system in Tajikistan, funded by the World Bank, was the first study that compared the features of the weekly teaching load system (Russian: *stavka*) with the weekly workload system. It did not have an immediate impact on educational reform in Tajikistan for the reasons mentioned above, but the categorization of teacher salary systems was subsequently used for the preparation of a GMR background paper (Steiner-Khamsi et al., 2008) as well as for ten different UNICEF studies on teachers in the CEECIS region, Eastern and Southern Africa region, and Mongolia (see, in particular, UNICEF CEECIS, 2011, and UNICEF Mongolia, 2011).
- ^x The World Bank’s Rural School Project, for example, initially chose the two provinces Talas and Issyk-kul as two “pilot” provinces. Teaching methods, teacher training, teaching material, and other innovative practices that were piloted in these two pilot provinces were supposed to be disseminated to the other provinces of the country. The initial scaling-up plan for nationwide teacher training, for example, had already been dropped during the second year of the project because the pilot turned out to be more expensive and non-replicable.

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