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Education and Development in Africa: Lessons of the Past 50 Years for Beyond 2015

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This paper addresses the major emergent question in education-for-development, the place of education in global development policy and planning after the millennium development goals (MDGs). Unlike most of the recent debate, which appears trapped in the "permanent present", devoid of any historical depth (Hobsbawm 1994: 3), we use the opportunity of the CAS@50¹ event to explore what the past fifty years of post-colonial experience regarding the relationship between education and development in Africa tell us about the desirable focus and potential challenges of the emerging "Beyond 2015" development agenda.

We suggest that the past half-century of development theory, policy and practice, focusing particularly on the specific role of education in development, raises a series of key issues that have not been satisfactorily resolved. These include the role of state, market and community in delivering education; the place of both vocational and higher education in education systems; and the challenge of achieving quality education for all. Behind all these lurk further questions regarding the purposes of education; the nature of development; and the role of international assistance.

Our argument is that an understanding of why some issues have remained so challenging over the decades is essential if any new set of international development goals are to be sensibly constructed. The current policy moment contains much talk about evidence-based policy but there is a strong tendency for this to be understood in narrow positivist ways that equate evidence with randomised control trials and statistics. However, we contend that a genuine engagement about "what works" requires a critical, historical and contextual analysis of complex successes and failures, which necessitates a blending of methodological approaches.² Our own contribution, in this paper and elsewhere, sits firmly in an international and comparative education tradition that values context and which is deeply sceptical of universal answers, particularly when they are generated in the North (Crossley and Watson 2003). Moreover, and it is particularly appropriate to insist on this for the current paper and event, we are both informed by the tradition of the Centre of African Studies in Edinburgh, which has encouraged the coming together of disciplines not to produce convergent accounts but to develop a realisation that it is the divergence of such approaches and accounts that is our best chance of approximating to reality. In the tradition of both African Studies and international and comparative education, we are concerned with what voices are heard and which silenced in the international debate on African education and its role in development. We see this as mattering not just ethically but also in practice, on the assumption that imposed solutions cannot work effectively.

Thus, in this paper, we do not try to present a totalising account of what education has to say about itself or development. Rather, we construct an argument based on our own readings of the particular lessons and challenges of fifty years of post-colonial education in Africa. In doing so we draw upon our own decades of experiences as teachers, researchers, policy advisors and consultants working across a range of African countries and our involvement in regional, continental and global policy debates.

¹ Though the Centre of African Studies was founded in 1962, and is being celebrated in a conference in June 2012, we shall take the 50 years to cover the period from 1961.

² For a discussion of this widespread preoccupation with value for money in international education see NORRAG News 47.

The rest of the paper proceeds through three stages. In the first, we revisit some of the historical shifts in debates about education, development and aid as a way of generating key questions about the current state and possible future directions of these major debates. In the second, we briefly examine some of the perennial education- and-development debates of the past 50 years. Again, our purpose is to explore these not primarily as historians but in order to undermine the tendency of policy towards historical amnesia and so as to highlight the very great difficulty of resolving key educational tensions. Finally, we draw these together in a section that tries to insist on the complexities that these readings generate and what this means for the next round of international targets. However, as we acknowledge, this critique also has to be balanced against the real dangers of not engaging with the continuing fascination with such targets.

Historical Shifts in Educational Planning for Africa

The Euphoria of Independence and the Beginning of Targets – the early 1960s

Our 50 year safari most sensibly begins in Addis Ababa in 1961. This was when UNESCO and UNECA convened the African leg of a series of regional conferences on education.³ Most significantly, it was when international targets entered into African education systems, with the conference setting a target of universal primary education (UPE), to be achieved by 1980 (UNESCO/UNECA 1961; cf. Fredriksen; Thompson - both 1981). The Addis Ababa conference anticipated many of the themes of our safari in addition to the attraction of targets. There was frank recognition of the needs for and complexity of aid, as the world could not exist “half rich and half poor”, but also that “international co-operation is good business” (UNESCO/UNECA 1961: 15). The conference marked the entry of economists into the field of international education. Arthur Lewis, Hans Singer and Fred Harbison, amongst several others, were all present and made forceful interventions. Consequently, education was presented as a “productive investment”, with a “high rate of return” and with a priority focus on “high-level manpower” despite the UPE target (UNESCO/UNECA 1961: 9). Of the nine background papers, all but one were from the more developed economies; only one by the scholar and academic, Joseph Ki-Zerbo, was from Africa, a very thoughtful challenge on the scale and creativity required for the transformation and Africanisation of curricula including of languages of instruction (see Trudell, this conference). In the main report, there were pages upon pages of recommendations on the Economics of Education, Targets in Education, Planning, International Cooperation, and Financing of Education, and just four paragraphs from Ki-Zerbo’s reform of curriculum, with no mention of language, despite Haile Selassie’s inaugural address having picked out the challenge of a common African language as critical for independent Africa.⁴

This red thread of planning by others for Africa, as contrasted with African planners and policy makers deciding on Africa’s priorities for education and training, runs through most of these fifty years.

At this time of increasingly rapid, though complex, transition towards independence, universal primary education appeared largely inevitable, with many territories experiencing sharp increases in enrolments. There were some cases of attempts to limit the focus of educational expansion to UPE only. For very different reasons, both Nyerere and Verwoerd (in the case of Africans’ education) were amongst those few national leaders who pursued such pro-basic education policies, as such an approach would be called at a later time. Elsewhere, it was seen as self-evident that all levels of education

³ The first such conference had been in Karachi in the previous year. We should also recall that the Arab Region event, in 1966, also took place in Africa – in Tripoli.

⁴ For Haile Selassie’s address and the selected background papers, see UNESCO/UNECA 1961, Annexes III and IV respectively.

needed to be developed, and rapidly. One of the greatest challenges at independence for most countries was the lack of indigenous high-level manpower, which was deemed necessary to run an independent country. Thus, a more pressing challenge than UPE for the new administrations coming into being during the early 1960s was how to staff their civil services, hospitals and parastatal industries. Given the industrialisation-modernisation paradigm of the time, and post-independence confidence, there was an understandable imperative to generate the necessary human resources to engineer and manage growing formal economies. The critical shortages of such local manpower in the new secondary, technical and tertiary education institutions led to one of the largest technical assistance operations ever organised, through Peace Corps, VSO, British Council, CUSO, Teachers for East Africa, Britain's Inter-university Council, French Cooperation, *Service Civil National*, JOCV etc etc.⁵ This massive technical cooperation in support of African education actually reinforced English and French as the languages of instruction despite the rapid Africanisation of the curricula in the Arts, Social Sciences, Theology and Law which was supported by some of them.⁶

Unsurprisingly then, this was an era of massive university building in Africa, as nationalist self-assertion and manpower needs intertwined. Indeed, the Addis Ababa conference was followed a year later by one in Tananarive on the topic of the "development of higher education". This projected a manpower-related need to expand post-secondary education nine-fold in the next 15-20 years (UNESCO 1962: introduction). However, the conference also stressed that higher education was not simply a matter of human capital development:

For full and complete development and enrichment of the individual, higher education institutions in Africa should become responsible for placing emphasis on moral and spiritual values, developing a sense of social and civic responsibility as well as appreciation of beauty in art, music and ethics. It should endeavour to develop an awareness of local problems and aspirations, cultivate the ability to analyse and seek solution to problems, and help realise the national aspiration. Such self-identification of the individual with the greater cause of society, evokes a loyalty and dedication to Africa and its people and strengthens the bonds that bind us to the larger human society (UNESCO 1962: I.3)

This was the era too of competition between capitalist and communist states to gain influence in Africa but both shared a firm faith in industry-driven economic take-off.⁷ On the capitalist side, this was the time of the rise of the economist of development (and their adjutant economists of education), as noted above. With the exception of a few heretics such as Hirschman, they believed strongly in big-push development, with powerfully interventionist states pursuing ambitious industrial and social policies. In this, they were in tune with North Atlantic policy trends, such as Wilson's drive to revitalise UK industry through technology, and the Kennedy-Johnson social policy drive in the USA.

⁵ VSO- Voluntary Service Overseas (UK), CUSO – Canadian University Service Overseas; JOCV – Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, which started in 1961. The French *Service* was an alternative to military service.

⁶ Illustrative of Ki-Zerbo's challenge to Africanise the curricula of Africa, Edinburgh University's George Shepperson, one of the founders of the CAS, was teaching the History of Nyasaland to Nyasaland soldiers, in 1945 in India, as they prepared to return from the Burmese front; David McMaster taught African geography in Makerere from 1951 till 1962, before coming to CAS; he was joined by George Shepperson who taught African history in Makerere for part of 1962. Henry Ord, similarly, was in the Treasury in Kenya; then in the East African Institute of Social Research in Makerere till 1960, and then went to CAS; and Kenneth King taught English and some of the early African novels in Addis Ababa from 1962-65 and taught African history in the University of Nairobi from 1968-72, before joining the CAS in Edinburgh. Alan Barnard taught African anthropology in the University of Cape Town in 1972-73. Lalage Bown (at this conference) illustrates the longest term commitment to Africa, having worked from 1949 to 1981 in African universities, before coming to the University of Glasgow.

⁷ It may be recalled that Lenin was very taken by American Fordist expansion in planning the Soviet approach to economic development, whilst, at the time in question, Rostow (1960) developed his theory of capitalist take-off in direct response to the widespread appeal of the Marxist-Leninist approach.

There is little evidence of attention being given by African policymakers to Asian development paths in the early 1960s, with the exception of China (King 2010). However, countries like South Korea, which were as poor as Africa was at this time, would shortly leave Africa far behind.

A Crisis of Confidence in the School and the University? - the late 1960s

By the late 1960s, the almost universal faith in intertwined economic and educational progress had dissipated in the face of multiple sources of questioning. Here, we will just recall three major strands of this loss of faith. First, within Africa itself there was a growing concern that educational expansion was far outstripping economic expansion. In contrast to a simplistic reading of the new human capital theory, individual (and community and state) investment in education was not generating the expected economic returns. Rather, there was a new problem emerging for development policy, planning and theory: educated unemployment. This was most famously crystallised in a report of the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK 1967) which led to the Village Polytechnic movement. In spite of the warnings contained in an earlier article by Foster (1965), the answer that the NCCCK, and many others, settled upon was a move to a community-based vocational provision.⁸ Whilst the standard argument for vocational education and training (VET), then and now, was about better insertion into the formal economy, the NCCCK focus was primarily on equipping rural youth with rural skills. There were parallels in Botswana's Brigades and Nigeria's informal apprenticeships. This can be seen as echoing an earlier tradition of educational adaptation (cf. Phelps Stokes Fund 1922 and 1925; King 1971; McGrath 2011), although trying to separate the message of the importance of rural development from adaptation's colonial and Apartheid baggages (cf. McGrath 1997). Arguably, many of these initiatives for facing the primary school leaver crisis were driven by expatriates working in Africa.⁹

Second, these "African" concerns that the dominant model of education-economy-development links was not working can be seen as intertwined with a wave of thinking about development theory and planning in the North. Most obviously in the education-for-development space is the work of Coombs, as the first Director of UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning, established in 1963. His argument was that the educational crisis being talked about in countries such as Kenya was a "world crisis in education" (Coombs 1968). In parallel to the Kenyan focus on rural skills, the global recommendation was for an emphasis on non-formal education (cf. Coombs, Prosser and Ahmed 1971). The authors argued, surprisingly, that even before the target year of 1980 for UPE had arrived, it would be impossible for a poor West African country, for example, to provide primary education for all; hence alternative non-formal provision should be explored. This was soon reinforced by the "discovery of the informal sector", conventionally dated to 1972 (Hart 1973; King and McGrath 2002).¹⁰ At the same time, the wider developmental discourse was being briefly reshaped by a new World Bank President, McNamara, who emphasised pro-poor development, including non-formal education.

The combined impact of the shifts towards non-formal education, the informal sector and pro-poor growth dealt a severe blow to the short-lived excitement about high-level manpower and the development of the young universities of Africa. McNamara's first

⁸ Such programmes were the focus of the 1976 CAS Conference on Education and Community in Africa (CAS 1976).

⁹ The initiators of the village polytechnics and the NCCCK report were John Anderson and Andrew Hake from the UK (see Anderson's *The Struggle for the School*); while the South African refugee, Patrick Van Rensburg, initiated the Brigades; and Archie Callaway drew attention to the promise of traditional apprenticeship in Southern Nigeria for answering the challenge of youth unemployment.

¹⁰ For the parallels between the discovery of the informal sector and non-formal education, see King 1977, chapter 1.

education sector report portrayed the educational expansion as elitist and non-developmental (McNamara 1974: i).¹¹ With the era of non-formal education, and "More help for the poorest" now pursued by Britain's Labour government in 1975,¹² universities began to lose their crucially important external support. Furthermore, many African governments, increasingly under military rule, began to view them as sources of critical opposition (Zezeza 1994; Mkandawire 2000). Despite Coombs' later promotion of the "Developmental University", the damage had been done (Thompson and Fogel 1976).

Third, we should remember that this was the time of a major phase in the recurrent crises of global capitalism. The period from 1968 to 1973 is widely seen as a transition phase between Keynesian and Neoliberal orthodoxies, as the old regime of accumulation collapsed under the pressures of student and trade union unrest, the oil crisis, stagflation and the demise of the fixed exchange rate regime. Ideas such as those of Coombs mirror a Northern literature critiquing both formal education and the professions (e.g., Goodman 1964; Illich 1971) and can be seen as part of the political and cultural ferment of the late 1960s. Moreover, we should recall that the dominant figures in development (McNamara) and international education (Coombs) were former senior officials of the American Kennedy-Johnson administrations. Thus, it seems inconceivable that they were not, in part, translators of North Atlantic angst into global debates.

A Lost Decade? The 1980s

We will fast-forward now to 1980. On the global stage, of course, this was the moment when the Neoliberals gained power, represented by the Reagan-Kohl-Thatcher triumvirate. As far as our principal story thread is concerned, it was the year that UPE in Africa was to be achieved, according to the Addis Ababa commitment. This is an important fact to remember for the rest of this paper, as it marked the first of a series of failures for international education targets to be met, a point of great salience as we begin to contemplate the next round of such target-making. Yet, unlike what we can already see in the case of 2015, this deadline passed with little political or policy attention.

However, the 1980s did see the World Bank established as the major force in research on education-and-development. Thus, from a research perspective, it was not a lost decade at all, but a very rich, albeit highly controversial, one. The Bank's new education research priorities were captured in its very influential Education Sector Policy Paper of 1982. This built on a series of early research studies that famously made the link between female education and reduced fertility and infant mortality (Cochrane 1979); between four years of education and farm productivity (Lockheed, Jamison and Lau 1980; King, Palmer and Hayman 2005); and, particularly in developing African economies like Uganda, argued that inputs like textbooks would "make a difference" to a much greater extent than in the older developed economies (Heyneman, Farrell and Sepulveda-Stuarda 1978). These studies tended to focus on primary education as a key element in delivering wider developmental benefits (cf. Colclough 1980). But it was left to Psacharopoulos to deliver the body blow in favour of primary education, and against secondary and higher education through a range of cross-national rate of return studies that showed that primary education largely consistently gave a significantly better return on investment than other forms of formal education (Psacharopoulos 1981 and 1985).¹³

¹¹ "...much of the expansion [of their educational systems] has been misdirected". "Among the questions this paper raises, and attempts to answer, are: How can educational systems be reshaped to help the poorest segments of society?" (McNamara, foreword to World Bank 1974: i).

¹² Ministry of Overseas Development, 1975. Overseas Development: The Changing Emphasis in British Aid Policies: More. Help for the Poorest. Cmnd. 6270, HMSO, London

¹³ We are fortunate to have two academic memoirs of key actors in the "golden age" of World Bank education research in the shape of Heyneman (2003) and Psacharopoulos (2006).

Meanwhile, the Bank was also busy in spreading a new message of structural adjustment to Africa. In 1981, the Bank released a report entitled "Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa" (World Bank 1981). At its heart was an argument that Africa's developmental woes were largely self-inflicted, being the result of bad governance and statism. Together with the IMF, the Bank developed a set of conditionalities for loans to Africa (and other regions). Though their neoliberal confidence was often misplaced, the Bretton Woods institutions did paint a picture of Africa's ills that was agreed with by many internal commentators. However, many of these also argued that forced austerity would lead to greater poverty, and called for African versions of the East Asian development state (Mkandawire 1988 and 1999; Onimode 1988; Olukoshi 1993).

The education parallel to structural adjustment was the World Bank's "Education in Sub-Saharan Africa" (1988). Based on the research studies we have referred to, but also on inadequate research on the African university sector, the Bank delivered a further body blow to the already fragile university sector in Africa. Even the subtitle: "Policies for Adjustment, Revitalisation, and Expansion" reminded the reader that this was an education parallel to economic structural adjustment. There was an articulate African critique of this World Bank report, including by the then two ministers of education in Zimbabwe (Chung; Mutumbuka - both 1989),¹⁴ but this had little traction compared to the Bank report. The chapter in the Bank report relating to international cooperation made the point that despite the Bank's research studies, a great deal of foreign aid to education went to support of tertiary education in Africa. Within two years, that was about to start changing dramatically.

Jomtien and Education for All – the 1990s

To date, the most significant of all the international conferences and target-setting moments for education has been the Jomtien World Conference on Education for All of March 1990. Here the wealth of research evidence generated by the World Bank in recent years came together with a strong human rights discourse, largely from the international NGO community, to generate a set of six suggested goals for "education for all" (EFA), to be achieved by 2000.¹⁵ It is worth taking a moment to recall the breadth of the EFA goals, as that breadth subsequently has largely been forgotten.¹⁶

¹⁴ 1989 was also the year that Simon McGrath arrived to teach in Zimbabwe for three years before starting his masters, doctorate, and post-doctoral research in CAS. Mark Bray had been teaching in Kenya in 1970 and then for three years in Nigeria, 1973-75, before coming to do his masters and doctorate in the CAS from 1975 to 1979.

¹⁵ As part of the history of target setting, it should be noted that in the international advisory committee for Jomtien, two ministers of education from the Indian sub-continent argued very strongly against the possibility of reaching UPE by 2000, but they were over-ruled by the Executive Director of UNICEF, Jim Grant.

¹⁶ One of the most articulate supporters of the breadth of the Jomtien goals was the late Ingemar Gustafsson of Swedish Sida.

The Six Dimensions of EFA targets at Jomtien

- expansion of early childhood care and development activities, including family and community interventions, especially for poor, disadvantaged and disabled children;
- universal access to, and completion of, primary (or whatever higher level of education is considered as 'basic') by the year 2000;
- improvement of learning achievement such that an agreed percentage of an age cohort (e.g. 80 per cent of 14 years olds) attains or surpasses a defined level of necessary learning achievement;
- reduction of the adult illiteracy rate (the appropriate age-group to be determined in each country) to, say, one half its 1990 level by the year 2000, with sufficient emphasis on female literacy to significantly reduce the current disparity between male and female illiteracy rates;
- expansion of provision of basic education and training in other essential skills required by youth and adults, with programme effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural change and impact on health, employment and productivity;
- increased acquisition by individuals and families of the knowledge, skills and values required for better living and sound and sustainable development, made available through all education channels including the mass media, other forms of modern and traditional communication, and social action, with effectiveness assessed in terms of behavioural change. (WCEFA 1990)

It is important to emphasise that Jomtien's focus was not narrowly on basic education of children but more broadly on "meeting the basic learning needs" of children, youths and adults. Like with the earlier Bank education sector policy papers, Jomtien was yet another external influence impacting on Africa. The Jomtien process was driven essentially by the heads of UNICEF and of the World Bank, but its priorities were a far cry from the more inclusive spirit of the Addis Ababa conference. It did not use the words "primary education" at all, but it did use "basic education" 158 times in 37 pages! "University education" was only mentioned once. So the message was clear.

One year after Jomtien, in 1991, a further external influence, in the form of the World Bank's first education sector policy on vocational and technical education and training was issued. Its critique of public sector vocational education and training (VET) was so pronounced that it effectively weakened both the national and donor agency case for supporting VET in Africa (World Bank 1991). Despite the continuing influence of Psacharopoulos's rate of return work (see above), the Bank produced its first higher education policy paper in 1994 (World Bank 1994; King and Buchert 1995). Arguably, the Bank review of "Priorities and Strategies for Education" the following year (1995) was more influential. It claimed controversially that "the major difference between East Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa is due to variations in primary school enrolment rates" (World Bank 1995: 23).

Although EFA was not supposed to be the same as UPE, it quickly became apparent that UPE was still a powerful rallying call. Indeed, the rise of multi-partyism, e.g., in Malawi and of populist reformers, most notably in Ethiopia, Ghana, Rwanda and Uganda, led to a number of African governments taking on the EFA agenda, though repackaged largely as UPE. Such a policy played well both to local and international audiences, as part of a positioning of these countries as the "donors' darlings". Although this African uptake of a version of the Jomtien message points to more regional agency than previously, it is difficult to separate this off from a strategic commitment of governments to an international agenda. Certainly, the wider agenda of pro-poor growth and human rights did not get much more than lip service from the new leaders.

The later part of the 1990s also saw the beginnings of attempts to move beyond structural adjustment and the Washington Consensus. At the World Bank itself, the appointment of James Wolfensohn as President in 1995, and his subsequent invitation to Joseph Stiglitz to be his Chief Economist, marked the beginning of a shift within the Bank

towards a more holistic view on development (including an interest in the importance of faith); a greater emphasis on national ownership (rather than conditionalities); and a stressing of the importance of the “knowledge economy” (both in terms of internal organisation and the Bank’s portfolio of projects) (King and McGrath 2004).

Recasting the Goals – 2000 to now

2000 came and went with the EFA goals of Jomtien unmet. However, attention to this fact was largely distracted by the United Nations’ declaration of a new set of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that same year, which drew very heavily on a set of “international development targets” proposed in 1996 by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Although it is a staple of international policy rhetoric to point to the fact that the MDGs were agreed to by all governments as evidence for their Southern ownership, it is salient for this paper to re-stress the real origins of the MDGs in an agency of the richest countries, meeting in Paris (King 2007).

The MDGs incorporated two education targets:

- Universal primary education
- Equality of enrolments by gender in primary and secondary education.

As can be seen, this reflected a considerable narrowing of the EFA agenda to one of the original goals and another that had been added at the 10 year review meeting in the World Forum on Education for All in Dakar. Most strikingly, education had come to be seen once more as identical to schooling. Moreover, these narrower targets were now seen as requiring a further 15 years (until 2015) rather than 10 of Jomtien to be achieved.

The new goals produced a new drive to ensure their achievement, with investment in secretariats in both UNESCO and UNICEF; innovative funding mechanisms, such as the Fast Track Initiative (now renamed Global Partnership for Education); and a series of Global Monitoring Reports, published from UNESCO but funded externally and led by a series of British directors. As noted above, there has also been a plethora of funded academic research in this field including through large-scale investment by DfID. Amongst the highlights of this is a greater understanding of the multiple points at which potential or actual learners are likely to be excluded from formal schooling (Lewin and Little 2011).

Arguably of more importance is a return to a concern about quality. Whilst the third Jomtien target spoke of acceptable levels of minimum learning achievement, there is now a wealth of research that points to the widespread failure to achieve quality whilst driving forward on quantity during the EFA era (e.g., Hungi and Thuku 2010; Zuze and Leibbrandt 2011). Of some significance to our overall argument, it is noteworthy that much of this data was generated by African collaborations, such as the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ). The once donor-dominated Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)¹⁷ has recently focused on “Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for sustainable development in Africa: how to design and implement an effective response by education and training systems” (ADEA 2012), but the searing reality for much of Africa is that university-based research, for instance, on skills and qualifications is almost completely absent (UNESCO 2012).

¹⁷ ADEA is the successor of Donors to African Education (DAE) established immediately after the WB’s 1988 paper on African Education.

The 2000s also saw an increasing concern that a poverty reduction-only focus for development was too narrow. In particular, the spread of the discourse of the knowledge economy led to concerns that developing countries needed to focus on building knowledge-intensive industries. As a result, the importance of higher education began to be reassessed, once more, within the international community. Most notable here was the report of a joint UNESCO-World Bank task force (UNESCO and World Bank 2000).

Across Africa, higher education enrolments increased markedly. Governments invested in expanding existing universities, upgrading other tertiary institutions and opening new universities. They also (with the very clear exception of South Africa) reduced obstacles to private higher education, and a wave of new, local and international, private providers entered into many national systems. But over the 30 years since agency and government support for higher education had been questioned in Africa, the earlier national institutions had been weakened substantially. Structural adjustment had ensured that despite university expansion, funding had been constrained and, as a result, one-off consultancies had replaced long-term research in even the once most prestigious universities such as Makerere, Ibadan and Nairobi.

Although VET never left the agenda in the North, the power of Foster's and Psacharopoulos's twin critiques, taken together with the EFA move and the 1991 World Bank paper, had resulted in a new orthodoxy across most international development agencies that VET was old-fashioned and ineffective. VET provision did continue across the continent, however, driven largely by persistent concerns about youth unemployment rather than by any rigorous reading of what industry wanted (McGrath 2011). The substantial if partial success of EFA in getting more children into schools, nevertheless, has started to push VET up the policy agenda, as has relatively high growth across a number of economies. This has led to greater international interest in the issue. Hence, 2010 saw UNESCO-IIEP publish a new account of the key issues in planning VET (King and Palmer 2010), whilst 2012 will see a new UNESCO World Report, an International Congress on TVET and a Global Monitoring Report on Skills. The past two years have also seen SADC and ECOWAS support regional initiatives for VET reform, whilst the South African Department for Higher Education and Training has launched a R75m¹⁸ research programme on post-school education and training. Thus, at least at this moment, there is some sense of renewed African leadership in determining that VET is a research and policy priority, although this is starting from a very low base, as we have noted above.

The beginning of the new millennium saw increased efforts at African cooperation in constructing a regional approach to development. The African Union was established in 2002 and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was inaugurated (Hayman, King and McGrath 2003). As the decade progressed, and growth began to be seen in some African economies, there was a new wave of popular economics books that argued that aid was a barrier to development; the encouragement of entrepreneurship and trade being what was required (Easterly 2007; Moyo 2009).¹⁹

The decade also saw the rise of another discourse that sought to stress agency in poorer countries, although from a very different ideological position than the anti-aid camp. Building on the work done at the UNDP to offer an alternative to the Washington Consensus, and especially to the use of GNP as the sole measure of development, Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2000) developed the human development and capabilities approach, which stressed the importance of individual and community identified views of the good life over international models of development. However, its application to education largely consisted of accepting the human rights-based drive of

¹⁸ c£6m.

¹⁹ These books, though they received much attention for their "insights", essentially rehashed a long-established genre in development studies writing that stretches back into the colonial era.

EFA and seeing education as a means of facilitating other capabilities and functionings (McGrath 2012).

Although the very different anti-aid and capabilities accounts suggested a move away from “big development”, this was not the message of much of the agencies’ continued work, nor of the Director of the UN Millennium Project, Jeffrey Sachs (2005 and 2008), whose rhetoric and proposals were strongly reminiscent of some of the big push development ideas of the 1960s.

Although conditionalities were declared to be dead, a new discourse of aid effectiveness emerged as agencies sought to get national buy-in to the MDGs and the policies, systems and new aid modalities deemed necessary for their achievement. The iconic policy was the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD 2005). As with the MDGs, the driving force behind this new approach was the OECD, cementing its rise to a role as a central player in global policymaking, notwithstanding its official status as a membership organisation for developed countries. Although partnership was a central element of the new account, it was easy to see this, like the MDGs, as Southern participation in a Northern-devised process.

Alongside effectiveness also came a new form of developmental positivism in which randomised control trials and systematic reviews came to be seen as the way to measure development in a way that far outstripped the World Bank’s earlier research into “what works” and which rejected as unscientific the large amounts of more interpretivist and critical research that had become dominant in fields such as African Studies and International and Comparative Education.²⁰

Recurrent Themes in the Education-Development Relationship

In a review of the first 30 years of the *International Journal of Educational Development*, McGrath noted areas of continuity in writing about education and development (McGrath 2010a). In 1981, IJED’s first issue comprised a series of reviews of the UNESCO regional conferences of the 1960s, including the papers from Fredriksen and Thompson cited above. Writing in 2010, McGrath noted how issues of access and quality were reflected in a large number of recent IJED articles. In turn, these were strongly influenced by DfID’s decision to launch three large education research programmes on access, quality and outcomes, which ran from 2006 to 2010.

It is crucial both for policy and research on education’s role in development to consider why these three themes continue to be so salient, even if they are not seen to be specific to Africa. Whilst there is a growing tendency in the UK, at least, to place the blame on the weaknesses of international education research,²¹ it may be time to remind policymakers, as we move towards 2015, that the problem also has to do with the intractability of the challenges being addressed and the inadequacy of the tools being used, including the architecture of planning, aid interventions and targets.

There are tough questions that do need to keep being posed about the development of educational systems. For instance, is there a trade-off between educational quality and quantity? If this does exist in certain circumstances, what causes it and how can it be tackled? Might we want to recall many of the concerns of earlier authors such as Coombs, Goodman and Illich and question whether more formal schooling, and formal vocational and higher education, might be creating problems as well as (perhaps, instead of) solving them? On the other hand, is non-formal education likely to be of low status and quality when it coexists with formal education?

²⁰ See NORRAG News 47; also Lykins (forthcoming) Why “What Works” Still Doesn’t Work: How to Improve Research Syntheses at the What Works Clearinghouse.

²¹ As international and comparative educators we must continue to address this seriously.

There has also been a growth of research about pedagogies, which has developed into a rich debate about the extent to which Western learner-centred approaches are an international “best practice”²² or are beyond the resource capacities of poor countries and/or are culturally inappropriate in other contexts (Schweisfurth 2011). One issue that emerges from this literature is the powerful effect that aid projects have had on transmitting an international toolkit of best practice in this area, and the difficulty this causes in separating out aid effects from issues inherent in adapting learner-centredness in African contexts. The challenge of policy learning nationally as opposed to policy borrowing from international best practice is another way of expressing this.

There have also been new answers to the question of how to reach the poorest with quality education that reflect the ideological shifts from the 1960s. Instead of community self-help and non-formality being celebrated, the emphasis of much more recent literature has been on private provision of education for the poorest (Woodhead, Frost and James in press); public-private partnerships; philanthropy (Srivastava and Oh 2010); vouchers (Elacqua; Mizala and Torche – both 2012); and conditional cash transfers (Heinrich 2007). However, these answers remain contested and controversial, and there is simply no consensus, especially in Africa, on the relative roles that should be played by state, market and community in ensuring access to quality education for all. Indeed, it appears that most of the analysis flows very neatly from initial ideological and epistemological assumptions. Thus, any attempt at “systematic review” of these increasingly copious literatures appears impossible as there is no fixed point outside the debate from which to conduct such an analysis.

The question of language use in education has remained a current one for many researchers (cf. Trudell’s paper to this conference; and NORRAG News 34), although it has struggled to ever make it to the heart of the global education debate over the past 50 years, in an echo of the marginalisation of this issue at the Addis Ababa conference. There remain complex issues here, including debates about national cohesion; the costs of supporting “minority languages”; language needs for insertion into the global knowledge economy; and learner, parent and community “choice”, mediated as it is by these other discourses.

From radio and television to Web 2.0, technologies to support learning and teaching have also been a perennial matter of interest for educational planners and researchers. Yet, there has been little work on Africa that shows a compelling case for successful technological advances in this field. Indeed, few educationalists would take seriously the following statement by Sachs:

Distance learning is now ubiquitous in countless informal ways, and will become the standard for much formal education and training as well. Classrooms will go global, with lectures and student participation taking place in several countries simultaneously. (Sachs 2008: 308)

Equally, the past 50 years have seen relatively little advancement in our understandings of how educational institutions in Africa can be developed, or capacity created amongst teaching staff, university researchers or national planners and policymakers.

In education there remains considerable scepticism regarding the merits of targets, especially global ones (cf. King and Rose 2005). As we are very aware within the field, 50 years of targets for African education have not resulted in all children being in school, let alone achieving even minimum learning outcomes. We know too that a narrow focus on one part of education cannot bring about the successful development of a whole education system. We shall return to this point in our conclusion as it is of great salience to the current discussions of “Beyond 2015”.

²² For a critique of “best practice” in international education and training, see NORRAG News 39, October 2007.

In another 2010 paper McGrath explored the gap between the accounts of development as provided by educationalists and economists (McGrath 2010b). Sachs' naive faith in technology was one example provided there but the wider point was to highlight the absence of understanding of education and its importance to development in economists' accounts. In spite of the centrality of the education-development link to the MDGs, and the widespread policy acceptance of human capital theory, including its newest manifestation in the discourse of the global knowledge economy, education remains marginal to development theory.²³

Indeed, these two positionings of education for development, and their co-existence, is one aspect of the problem. The MDGs are not grounded in a clear theory of development. Rather, they reflect a marriage of convenience between human capital assumptions and human rights advocacy. On the human capital side, it is assumed that getting better education and health will improve the stock of human capital and thus contribute to competitiveness. In spite of a considerable body of work that has questioned or qualified the Bank's "golden age" findings, Sachs shows an acritical acceptance of education's instrumental and secondary role in population control, the girls' schooling reduces fertility thesis, and the oft-cited link between education and agricultural productivity. However, for economists, this is implicitly a necessary but not sufficient element of growth and development; the real drivers of development lie elsewhere in fields such as trade, technology transfer and infrastructure as both Japan and China also have consistently argued. Another major theorist of economic development, Collier (2007), argues that too much attention has been given to education by the MDGs, dismissing schooling as poorly equipped to be a major vehicle for poverty reduction.

On the other hand, the human rights approach cannot credibly be seen as a theory of development, as it lacks any detailed account of how the achievement of these rights relates back to the economic sphere. This too may be seen as a critique of human development accounts. However attractive human development theory is as postulating that broader well-being should be considered rather than narrow economic development, there is need for caution regarding how this approach can generate improved well-being in the contexts of local and global forms of capitalism.

Development theory thus is highly problematic as we approach the expected next round of targets. Whilst purer forms of human capital and economic development accounts are increasingly out of fashion, the combination of a variant of this with the human rights-inspired MDGs does not offer a satisfactory account. Whilst human development approaches have become more attractive, these too are lacking, particularly when it comes to how to move from a sound philosophical argument to policy and practice. In none of these accounts is there a rich understanding of the possibilities, but also limitations, of education, whether understood narrowly as schooling or conceived of in broader terms.

Going beyond theory to policy, we see a continued faith in international targets for development, as witnessed in the latest iteration of the aid effectiveness targets and the talk of a new set of international development goals for when the MDGs are due to end in 2015. However, as this section has suggested, thinking of where we are going in Africa with a "Beyond 2015" agenda appears very challenging, a point we shall explore in the concluding section of this paper.

²³ This may be illustrated by how few "Educational researchers" are members of the Development Studies Association of the UK. For example, Lalage Bown, Martha Caddell, and Kenneth King.

Where do we go to Beyond 2015?

Over the past 50 years development theory has made a useful move away from a narrow faith in the trinity of economic growth, industrialisation and modernisation. However, none of the currently competing accounts satisfies as an account of development in all its richness. In spite of being an integral part of the current international development targets, education's position in the major development theories is insecure or marginal. At best, education is a human right and/or an instrumental tool for meeting larger developmental goals. The risks of further marginalisation of education are heightened as donors look for scientific certainty and short-run value for money in an area characterised by long-term effects and huge complexity. Yet learning is a central facet of being human. Thus, for those of us working on education and development, there is a pressing need to articulate better our accounts of the crucial role of education in promoting human well-being in ways that avoid neglecting the criticality of sustainable economic success.

At the same time, aid policy appears still wedded to targets and indicators, regardless of 50 years of their failure as a global policy technology. For all the language of national ownership, targets are still being developed in Washington and Paris. Even where the targets are increasingly being localised in places such as Addis Ababa, as the home of the African Union, they seem to largely be drawn from an externally produced script and based in an implausible faith in currently almost absent capacities to collect and use the necessary data.

We should enter a qualification here however about critique of international targets. Japan's Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) and China's Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) have both employed targets. So too has the India Africa Forum which has met twice (in Delhi and in Addis Ababa since 2008). FOCAC, for instance, has had triennial targets since 2003, and what is different from the OECD targets discussed above is that the FOCAC targets generally appear to have been successfully achieved. The fourth FOCAC set of targets for China and Africa will be announced on 19-20th July 2012 in Beijing after the Ministerial Meeting with all but four African states and the Chinese leadership.

What may make these Japan-Africa, China-Africa, and India-Africa targets different from the MDGs, or the EFA Dakar targets which were decided upon after the world leaders had left New York and Dakar is that these Africa-specific targets were fully discussed with high level African leadership, and were jointly announced, even if Japan, China and India were the main donors. But on closer analysis, it can be seen that the FOCAC and India-Africa pledges are not pure ODA in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) sense; rather they would seem to represent what China likes to term "win-win" economic cooperation, or "common development". There is "mutual benefit" to both sides in the India and China pledges to Africa.²⁴ This makes them a different kind of target than the EFA goals or the MDGs.

Nonetheless, the OECD countries and their development agencies, which constructed the international development targets of 1996 and the MDGs of 2000, are already hugely preoccupied with the construction of the next international agenda after 2015. One of the earliest very substantial discussions about "The MDGs and Beyond" was captured in a special issue of the IDS Bulletin (Sumner and Melamed 2010). Out of its nineteen articles, just two very short pieces are by African contributors, Yehualashet Mekonen, and Alfred Nhema. Of these, Yehualashet's on "A '2015' Agenda for Africa: Development from a Human Perspective" is closest to our human resources perspective. He argues that there have been two sets of targets, the ones which were initiated *by Africa*, and

²⁴ See for example Melamed's 'Post-2015 discussions kick off in China' for the different, non-aid focus of the post-2015 debate in China, and its priority for infrastructure rather than social sector goals and targets (Melamed, 2015).

those *for Africa*. Those initiated by Africa “were unfortunately opposed, undermined and failed largely due to lack of support”, but at least they were based on a vision of self-reliance and transformation. Those targets designed *for Africa* such as the structural adjustment programme targets did little to alleviate poverty (Yehualashet 2010: 45-6).

His proposals for a post 2015 agenda for Africa contain five principles: No universal targets; based on qualitative indicators, not just quantitative; sensitive to population dynamics and child poverty; based on long-term capacity building in science and technology; and flexible with policy space for African governments to exercise decision-making.

However, the different UN specialised agencies are concerned with their own specific role in development and whether that will figure in the post 2015 world. How the unfinished EFA agenda and different elements within that, such as VET, might be secured in any new set of goals or targets have already been discussed in countless meetings and conferences, three years ahead of the deadline of 2015. The most recent illustration of this human resources approach to the post MDG world took place in Geneva on 1st June 2012, under the title, “Post-2015 Politics and Foresight: What Room for Education?” (NORRAG/UNDP 2012). It will look at different dimensions of education (economic, human & social, and humanitarian) in any future development agenda. Compared with this “Beyond 2015” debate, Africa’s First Decade of Education (from 1996) had little traction or convening power, and there seems little indication that the Second Decade (2006-2015) is making much difference at the level of the continent’s national priorities (African Union 2006).

As the UN’s next agenda for development seems likely to be set in 2013, in a world that is preoccupied with the wider global financial crisis, it is far from certain that social sector commitments such as those in the EFA or wider human resource agenda will automatically figure in the post 2015 world. However, in “Realising the Future We Want for All: Contours for the Post 2015 Development Agenda”, there is an acknowledgement of the role of the “Knowledge Challenge”, but this is not converted yet into any specific education targets:

Education, science and technology have arguably been the most powerful forces of global change over the past centuries and increasingly so in today’s highly interdependent world. Access to quality education, science and technology are essential to economic progress, food security, better health, and environmental protection. Inequalities in the access to education and technological progress remain vast, both between and within countries. More equal sharing of knowledge will thus be an ingredient for more inclusive global development. (Tawil quoting UN Task Team 2012)

If education and training are to make it into the next agenda at all, it seems more likely that VET could only figure, provided that it could be strongly linked to the creation of youth employment and to economic growth. But it seems more possible that the triad of skills development, employment and growth could be more attractive than the narrower concept of formal VET.

The current international juggling around the next development agenda must seem a world away from the realities and challenges of education-and-development in Africa. The continent remains one of regions where the EFA/MDG targets are not being achieved in many countries, and the few available indicators of skills development would suggest that Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole is the least well served of any region apart from

South and West Asia, even if there are pointers to improvement.²⁵ Hence it could profit from any new international agenda that focused on skills development.

Equally, it could be argued, following Yehualashet above, that long-term capacity building in science and technology are crucial to securing any of the MDGs or other meaningful development targets. This was of course precisely the message of the UK Commission for Africa, - that "it is crucial to fund the whole education sector - not just primary, but secondary and higher as well, including adult learning and vocational training", and in revisiting the Commission's message for post 2015, its secretary has reaffirmed the S&T agenda in respect of Africa: "Specific action for strengthening science, engineering and technology capacity is an imperative for Africa" (Wickstead 2010: 125).

However, in conclusion, it could be argued that Africa has indeed not been well served by the largely externally determined targets of 1980 (from Addis), 2000 (from Jomtien) and 2015 (from Dakar and New York). We have argued that they have affected the aid agenda for Africa, as did other temporary priorities such as non-formal education, and the World Bank's changing agendas for education. But Africa has been largely a recipient of these external agendas for its education and training priorities, whether they were Africa-specific as with Phelps-Stokes, Addis Ababa, or the World Bank, or whether they were global as with EFA in Dakar and the MDGs in New York. There is little indication that Africa will play a key role in setting the next international development agenda, and in particular its education component, if any. But is this because its leading nations such as Nigeria and South Africa do not represent a powerful and persuasive case of education's leading role in development achievement?

At least for South Africa, the country's leading critical analyst of education policy, Jonathan Jansen, would argue that "targeting education" and the "politics of performance" have not been central to the achievement of education for all South Africans:

But for targets and target setting to have any educational meaning in the day-to-day lives of teachers and learners, these transnational activities will require much more humility about their measurement, much more honesty about their motivation, and much less hype about their meanings. (Jansen 2005: 379)

Securing education for all of high quality in African nations cannot be, except on the margins, the result of external international targets or even of external aid. National funding, supported by national research evidence on the role of education and training, is what is required. There is little to suggest that the current development agency preoccupation with "value for money" has much to offer in the improvement of education. Jansen again has put the issue very powerfully as follows:

Then there is the question of adequacy, a much-needed legal and financial concept in developing countries. We seldom pause to ask how much money is enough to yield desirable educational results. The black-box approach to funding often overlooks the question of adequacy in severely underfunded school environments. We have little research on what kinds, combinations and levels of funding would lead to particular teaching or learning outcomes. (Jansen 2012: 23)

²⁵ If upper secondary vocational education is one of the dimensions of skills development, the latest figures from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (Motivans 2012) point to there having been a substantial rise in upper secondary VET provision in SSA from 10% to 17% over the decade from 1999 to 2010.

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