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**Sub-theme: *The Post-2015 Futures of Development Goals and Development Assistance to Education and Skills***

**Donor policies, practices and investment priorities in support of education, and post-2015 prospects: a review**

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***Abstract***

The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011, while conceding that considerable progress towards education related goals had been made over the previous decade, reminded us that many challenges still remain. This paper follows on from the conclusion of a study commissioned by the European Commission in 2012 to examine the policies, practices and investment priorities of bilateral and multilateral donor agencies in support of education since 2002. The overriding development policy focus has been on poverty reduction and economic and social development; and educational development policy has been prepared in the firm belief that relevant good quality education for all is a crucial driver of overall development. But have there been any noticeable trends in policy and investment priorities? To what extent has evaluation of practice been able to feed into the policy making process? This paper attempts to answer these and other questions. It derives lessons learned over the past decade and suggests ways in which these can guide development assistance to education in order to address both existing and emerging challenges from 2015 onwards.

**Keywords:** Development; education; policy; strategy; investment; priority; evaluation; donor.

**Introduction**

In October 2011 the European Union (EU) renewed its development policy – *Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change* – in which it identified sectors which build the foundations for inclusive and sustainable growth, most notably social protection, health and education. It further specified that at least 20% of EU funds would be allocated to social inclusion and human development. In order to investigate the best ways forward for the EU in supporting the education sector, the European Commission (EC) commissioned a study on donor policies, practices and investment priorities. The study relied on a mixed set of methods, including a review of some 160 documents and articles, data analysis and some complementary semi-structured interviews. It

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examined the overall development policy or strategy documents of 18 OECD-DAC<sup>2</sup> countries, three multilateral agencies and UNICEF<sup>3</sup> and their education policy documents. The period covered was from 2002 to 2012.

This paper summarises the findings of the study which was completed by the end of 2012. It also updates some of the findings, particularly with reference to policies or, at least, policy statements issued by donor agencies since September 2012 (see Annex A for a list of the latest policy documents). It is only latterly that donors (apart from the EU and the World Bank) have been considering post-2015 policy directions for completing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This paper makes no attempt to second guess what directions those individual agencies which have not yet issued a policy statement will take post-2015 but, guided by observations made in recent journals, it does offer comments on the relationship between policies, practice and investment priorities, and on some of the conclusions reached at the recent EU High Level Conference on Education and Development (EC 2013).

A note of clarification is needed first of all. In their assessment of Europe's Commitment to Development, Barder *et al.* (2013: 847-8) point out that '[d]iscussions about the effects of rich countries on poor countries sometimes conflate *development policy* and *aid*. As well as aid, European countries affect developing countries through policies on migration, trade, the environment, security, transfers of technology and investment practices, and the scale of these effects on development may be much larger than the positive effect of aid. ... On some dimensions of the [Commitment to Development] index, such as aid and environment, Europe's consolidated record is encouraging and sets a good example. On others, such as encouraging trade and technology transfer, Europe performs poorly relative to the rest of the world.' The policies discussed below are for the most part "aid" policies rather than "development" policies in the broader sense.

## **Overall development cooperation policies**

Policies on development cooperation (or aid) are important statements of intent whether or not they are translated directly into practice. In the same way that education processes and education systems do not occur in a vacuum, so we might assume that a policy to support educational development exists within or, even better, is integrated with an overall development cooperation policy. However, this has not always been the case if we look at the common features of such policies and the extent to which education is given priority<sup>4</sup>. Findings from the review of these overall policies point to highly ambitious and 'crowded' donor agendas, including a wide range of policy areas. Five defining features emerge from the review.

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<sup>2</sup> Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee

<sup>3</sup> The 18 bilateral agencies reviewed were: (in Europe) Austria, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom; (outside Europe) Japan and United States. In this paper, mention is also made of Australia, Canada and New Zealand. The three multilateral agencies reviewed were the African Development Bank (AfDB), the Asian Development Bank (AsDB) and the World Bank. Only one United Nations agency was reviewed, namely UNICEF.

<sup>4</sup> The 22 donor agencies originally reviewed together represented 86% of total official development assistance (ODA) and 85% of total aid to education in 2010 (UNESCO, 2012b: 395-6).

**Poverty reduction.** The vast majority of donors' overall development policies show a strong commitment to poverty reduction. Some, such as the EU, even go as far as stating that their primary objective is poverty eradication. Where poverty reduction is not mentioned specifically as the priority, the drive for **economic development** and **wealth creation** is foremost. For 16 donors **sustainable development** (which includes economic and social progress) is also a high priority, together with a firm commitment to achieving the MDGs.

**Peace, security and stability.** A theme running through the majority of development policies is the objective of 'ensuring **peace and human security**, especially by promoting **democracy**, the **rule of law**, **human rights** and **good governance**'<sup>5</sup>. The importance of good governance for development cooperation to succeed has gained greater prominence in donor policies over the past decade. For example, the official budget support policy of the EU<sup>6</sup> ties budget support strictly to the political conditions of the recipient country, whilst the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>7</sup> states categorically that they 'will give no budget support to countries where there is evidence of corruption, human rights violations or poor governance.'

**Regional priorities.** Donors have at several high level events, such as the UN MDG summits and the Gleneagles G8 meetings, manifested their commitment to achieving the MDGs in Africa by giving priority to the region in the allocation of aid resources. In June 2005, the Member States of the European Union agreed to double aid between 2004 and 2010, and allocate half of the increase to Africa.<sup>8</sup>

**Fragile and conflict affected states.** Whether in Africa or elsewhere, half of the donors make mention of the special challenges posed in fragile and conflict affected states. For example, the UK is having a clearer focus on conflict prevention – putting almost a third of its aid into unstable states, supporting freer and fairer elections, giving people a voice and helping their governments to build essential services and maintain law and order (DFID, 2011b). Switzerland has also increased its commitment in fragile contexts and France aimed to allocate 10% of grant-aid for crisis and post-crisis management for 2011-13.

**Education as a priority.** The importance of education as a driver of economic and social development and as one of the basic building blocks of every society is well-documented<sup>9</sup> and universally acknowledged. For 17 of the 22 donors listed in Annex A, education, often together with training and skills, is highlighted as an important area for development cooperation. In 12 cases the word "priority" or the phrase "key sector" is used when education and training is considered a priority along with other areas of cooperation.

**Education no longer a priority.** There is one donor for whom education no longer remains a priority. By 2008 the Netherlands had increased support to the education sector to about 12% of ODA; at that time it was the largest contributor (about US\$400 million) to the Fast Track Initiative (FTI). However, in 2010, a Scientific Council for Government Policy report, while supporting development

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<sup>5</sup> Austrian Federal Act on Development Cooperation (2002).

<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2011).

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011b).

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, 2005b; see also European Commission 2005a, *EU Strategy for Africa: Towards a Euro-African pact to accelerate Africa's development*.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see the notes (and references) presented in DFID's latest education policy statement (DFID 2013) and in the review of the Dutch contribution to basic education 1999-2009 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2011a).

cooperation both on moral grounds and on grounds of national interest, pointed out that Dutch aid was spread too thinly over too many sectors and too many countries and that it had paid too little attention to the economic sector and more than enough to the social sectors (health, education and social protection) without determining the extent to which this aid was leading to poverty reduction. In 2011, a new government responded to the report findings by articulating four “spearheads”<sup>10</sup> of Dutch development cooperation policy. This has meant that less money will be given in support to (a) education that does not contribute to the four spearheads, (b) the Global Partnership for Education (GPE, formerly the FTI), (c) education sector budget support, and (d) central research programmes unrelated to the four spearheads (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011b).

It is somewhat ironic that this policy was adopted before the report, *Education matters: Policy review of the Dutch contribution to basic education 1999–2009* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011a), was presented to Government and which provided convincing evidence that Dutch support for basic education had been, in general, highly relevant, well-aligned with other donors and particularly supportive of the priorities of its partner countries. For the future, the report recommended that aid efforts should focus on the poorest countries and regions, where most is to be gained from providing basic education aid. This is clearly a case where an evaluation of practice had little or no effect on a new policy *before* it was made. It demonstrates the difficulty in linking current policy with evaluation of past practice, especially when there is a change of government.

## **Education sector policies**

Of the 26 donor agencies listed in Annex A, 17 have adopted separate education development policies or strategies since 2006.

### **The education system as a whole and the comprehensive approach**

Following on from over a decade of advocacy for the sector-wide approach (SWAp) to supporting the education sector as a whole or the basic education sub-sector, there appears to be a strong move towards what is now being termed a comprehensive approach. Prominent in promoting such an approach is the World Bank in its *Education Strategy 2020* (World Bank 2011) which states that the Bank’s priorities will be, first, to strengthen the capacity of education systems to achieve learning goals and, second, to contribute to building a high-quality global knowledge base on education systems. In other words, the focus will be on making partner countries’ education systems more effective. The difference between this approach and the SWAp lies mainly in the premise that education contributes to, or is contributed to by, other sectors ranging from agriculture to water resources<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, education (and training) is not considered to be the preserve of the ministry of education alone but comes within the remit of other government departments as well as being the responsibility of NGOs, communities, families and individuals.

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<sup>10</sup> They are (a) security and the legal order, (b) food security, (c) water and (d) sexual and reproductive health and rights.

<sup>11</sup> Sectors are: agriculture; climate change; energy; environment; gender equality; governance and anti-corruption; health, nutrition and population; information communication and technology; private sector development; science, technology and innovation; social development; social protection and labour; transport business; urban and local government; water resources; and post-crisis direction (World Bank, 2011: 80-83).

Another major proponent of the comprehensive approach to supporting education is Germany. Its Education Strategy (BMZ 2012) states that education will be promoted on a “holistic” basis. This approach addresses every level of education, together with transition from one level to another, from early childhood to tertiary education including TVET and adult education and covers every type of education—formal, non-formal and informal—with a view to encouraging lifelong learning. The second dimension of the holistic approach is the involvement of everybody working in the sector, and the third is that the focus will be on the whole individual through education, training and the development of life skills. It is too early to say what concrete evidence there will be to show how this approach is put into practice.

Other proposals for comprehensive approaches, either in terms of the education sector as a whole or of its symbiotic relationship with other sectors and challenges or both, are noted in the education policy documents of the EU, France, Ireland, the UK and USA. In support of the EU’s allocation of at least 20 percent of its development budget on social protection, health, education and jobs, Cremin and Nakabugo (2012) have found that ‘various empirical and theoretical studies have shown that rather than expecting economic development to bring about improvements such as the alleviation of poverty, better educational standards or improvements in health, development should be pursued in *all* of these areas directly in the knowledge that progress in each area will interact favourably with the others’. Essentially a comprehensive approach can be said to recognise the fact that (i) education does not take place in an economic, social or environmental vacuum, (ii) one level of education is necessarily inter-related with other levels, (iii) different parts of the education system need to be coordinated in order to streamline its management and finance and (iv) support to TVET is often wasted if it is not linked substantially to the existing or potential labour market.

### **Sub-sectoral priorities**

**Early childhood care and education.** In the policies of three donors (Japan, the EU and UNICEF) and in interviews with two donors (the UK and Germany) mention is made of early childhood care and education (ECCE). For UNICEF, ECCE is clearly a priority. There is increasing recognition that ECCE can make an important contribution to achieving the MDGs, especially those related to equity.<sup>12</sup>

**Primary education** is a stated priority area for 17 of the 22 donors reviewed, often referred to in relation to fulfilment of MDG2—completion of universal primary education (UPE) by 2015. France and Ireland, in a similar way to the UK, mention in their policies the importance of strengthening the whole education system at the same time as giving priority to the provision of high quality primary education. Primary education is likely to remain a priority for development cooperation post-2015.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> As argued in the United Nations report (2010) *Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, by reaching families and children in their earliest years of life, ECCE has the potential to facilitate changes in the attitudes and behaviours of caregivers and to set children onto positive developmental trajectories that have long term outcomes in the health, psycho-social and cognitive spheres. The first 2–3 years of life are crucial for both nutrition and child development. Rapid growth, including brain development, places high demands on nutrition. However, early brain development also requires environmental stimulation. Inadequate cognitive or social stimulation during the early years has lifelong negative consequences on educational performance and psychological functioning. A number of studies have shown the correlation of attendance in ECCE programmes, such as preschools, to enrolment and retention in primary school. Importantly, early childhood interventions represent cost-effective strategies and generate higher rates of economic return and lead to more positive long-term outcomes for individuals and society than later interventions.

<sup>13</sup> The 2012 EFA GMR (UNESCO, 2012b) claims that there were still 61 million primary school age children out of school in 2010. Carr-Hill (2012) argues that there may be as many as 115 million such children out of school if one includes those children omitted both by design and in practice in household surveys which, he further argues, are inappropriate for

Much work remains to be done, particularly in developing sustainable education systems where all children can enter school at the appropriate age, do not repeat grades unnecessarily and do not drop out. This, sensibly, is the first priority emerging from the recent EU High Level Conference on Education and Development (EC 2013).

**Basic education** is used in several policies to include both primary education and lower secondary education. Whether mentioned separately or included under basic education, **lower secondary education** is mentioned as a priority area in 15 of the 22 donor policies. It is natural to suppose that since the drive for UPE has been moderately successful over the past decade attention is being given more to lower secondary education.

**Upper secondary education.** Only three of the donor strategies propose upper secondary education as a priority – Germany, Japan and AsDB. However, from the interviews we learned that DFID has emerging programmes in lower and upper secondary education in India, and France is focussing more on secondary education as a whole. Germany is also supporting upper secondary education more than any other sub-sector – in 23 out of the 35 countries compared with the next highest, teacher education, in 11 countries. The arguments for investing in secondary education are several, clearly articulated in summary by Lewin and Little (2011)<sup>14</sup>. However, secondary education has to compete with scarce resources just as other education sub-sectors with sound arguments for investment, such as early childhood education.

**TVET and skills development.** Half of the donors pay attention to TVET and skills development in their education policies. Most frequently, the rationale for this attention is based upon the need for better links between education and the labour market, concerns with high youth unemployment, and the critical role of education in economic productivity and growth. The ways in which TVET and skills development are included in donor education policies vary substantially and are often linked to other priority areas for the specific donor, such as gender (Denmark), youth programming (USA) or a systems approach (World Bank). Several education strategy documents include useful accounts of what lessons they have learnt from previous support to vocational training and skills development.<sup>15</sup>

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obtaining information about the poorest of the poor. UNESCO (2012b) also points out that in 2010 the number of out-of-school children had actually increased in Sub-Saharan Africa, there were still 29 countries with a net enrolment rate of less than 85 percent, there were 71 countries with a net intake rate at primary level of less than 80 percent, and in low income countries an average of 59 percent of children reached the last grade of primary school, drop-out being more common among those who start school late.

<sup>14</sup> Despite access to secondary education being a necessary condition for achieving UPE, EFA initiatives have long neglected transitions to and the quality of secondary education. Those countries with low transition rates to secondary school have never achieved universal completion of primary school nor have they achieved gender equality in enrolments. Widely available secondary schooling is necessary in order to produce enough graduates willing and able to become primary teachers. It is also central to meeting the needs of any modernising economy for increased numbers of school leavers with abstract thinking skills and analytic capability. Getting policy on secondary schooling right is not straightforward because costs are higher, public subsidy is likely to be regressive, and the effects of allowing quality to deteriorate are more serious for economic growth and the ability to attract foreign direct investment. Development partners, therefore, have a role to play in accelerating improved access, most obviously by providing external support if domestic resources are insufficient.

<sup>15</sup> A recent study (Patron & Vaillant, 2012) has shown that the efficiency level in the education sector affects wage distribution: more inefficiency leads to more inequality. This is so because inefficient education systems tend to produce a relative excess of unskilled labour; on the other hand, education policy targeted at improving system efficiency could improve completion rates, upgrading the composition of the labour produced, with positive effects on wage inequality. There is a strong argument—one which has been posited for at least two decades—to suggest that education policy may enhance skills by ensuring the broadest access to education at all levels, and that the production of skills could be favoured by increasing the quality of basic (primary and lower secondary) education. In other words, for investment in educational development to realize its potential economic benefits, there need to be jobs available and the skills acquired in school should be the basic skills required in those jobs. This argument supports both the move towards the comprehensive

For example, the AsDB has learned that: (a) the link with employment is the most important factor in training success; (b) setting skill qualification standards, and providing workplace training, are crucial to improving skills in the labour force; (c) labour market analyses and tracer studies of those who have graduated from TVET programmes can provide valuable feedback to assess the effectiveness of TVET programmes; and (d) pre-training activities (e.g., market analyses to identify occupations that are likely to generate income) and post-training activities (e.g., broadening access to credit and marketing services and the provision of expert business advice) have contributed to the success of skills training programmes in the informal labour market (AsDB 2010).

***Towards broader support for higher education.*** Some of the reviewed donors have longstanding traditions of providing support to students from developing countries to undertake studies at the tertiary level in the donor country. Two such common types of support are individual scholarships and so-called imputed student costs<sup>16</sup>. What both types have in common is that they are directed at the individual, and funds do not reach partner developing countries but stay in the donor country. However, there is now a shift in policy direction regarding individual scholarships. In particular, core policies for the direction of aid to education in Austria, Germany, Portugal and Spain all stress the need to see scholarships as one instrument within broader efforts to strengthen the higher education sub-sector in partner countries. This ongoing policy shift appears to have been driven by evidence from evaluations of scholarship programmes.

## **Related issues**

***Gender equality.*** A striking feature in donor education policies is the strong emphasis on gender. All policies stress commitment to achieving gender equality in education, often but not always referring to the specific target for MDG3<sup>17</sup>. A closer examination reveals some similarities across donor policies. First, donors tend to focus on parity in girls' and boys' access and retention in education rather than on broader, and less easily measureable, issues of gender equality. Second, few donors move beyond stating their commitments to gender parity. Overall, in view of the strong commitment, surprisingly little is said about the main aspects of their own organization's contribution to gender equality. Whilst all the reviewed education policies state gender disparities to be a major challenge, less than a handful (e.g. UNICEF and the World Bank) describe specific strategies that will be supported to address inequalities between girls and boys, women and men.

***Quality of education.*** There is a sense of urgency regarding the low quality of education in developing countries with all donors stressing the need for quality improvements and giving extensive attention to the topic. There appears at the same time to be great awareness of the complexity of the issues involved. USAID's Education Strategy (USAID, 2011) indicates that 'efforts to improve educational quality are highly context specific and context dependent. They require a good understanding of the complex cultural, social and political forces at work, and they take time to yield results.' Improving the quality of education lies at the heart of DFID's education strategy (DFID, 2010) in the conviction that improved cognitive skills for more children combined with an appropriate number of years of schooling can contribute towards an annual growth in GDP growth

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approach to educational development and the drive towards UPE at the same time as the need to improve the quality of learning outcomes at primary and secondary levels.

<sup>16</sup> Indirect ("imputed") costs of tuition in donor countries.

<sup>17</sup> *Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and at all levels of education no later than 2015.*

and improving the learning outcomes of poor performers in school helps to reduce income inequality. The World Bank points to the need for system approaches and underlines the importance of working with education governance and management to improve education quality (World Bank, 2011b). USAID also points out that for an improvement in the quality of education there needs to be greater engagement, accountability and transparency by communities and the public (USAID, 2011), which is also one of the key conclusions of the EU High Level Conference (EC, 2013).

Perhaps because of the recognised complexity in improving education quality, only a few donor policies (e.g. DFID, USAID and the World Bank) provide solid approaches for supporting quality improvement. However, no strategies mention the crucial matter of which language children learn best in or learn to read best in (Brock-Utne, 2012). To improve learning outcomes, therefore, a key focus must be on support to the development and use of the most appropriate language of instruction and literacy from the *learner's* perspective. Allied to that could be a strategy to support the well qualified teaching of foreign languages in school.

**Teachers.** A number of education policies (e.g. those of Japan and Portugal) mention teacher training as a priority area for donor support, but often without strong evidence or links to how to ensure that higher numbers of trained teachers will contribute to better learning. Without doubt teachers are the key to educational quality, but it takes more than training to ensure not only that teachers turn up for work but also that they perform well in and out of the classroom for the benefit of those for whose education they are responsible. Also to be taken into account are the tools—teaching and learning materials and equipment—they are using, the physical environment in which they are working, their conditions of service, their living conditions, their family and health, the opportunities available to them to upgrade their qualifications and skills, the regularity of their payment, sufficient pay to obviate the need to supplement their income through the private tuition of those students for whose education they have responsibility during school time or through other means – all conditions for ensuring personal satisfaction in the job they are doing (Tao, 2012). The training, employment, deployment, promotion and professional development of teachers are all functions of a well-managed education system, which in turn is one of the foci of a comprehensive approach to supporting educational development.

### **Gaps in policy documents**

An overview of donor policies will naturally tend to look at commonalities in focus between donors. However, there are a number of areas which receive attention from one or two donors only and a few which appear to receive no attention. Patently, a donor agency prefers to become engaged in those areas in which it has or can contract most expertise – as exemplified by the most recent Dutch development cooperation policy (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011b). The review did not examine in minute detail each education policy or strategy but it is clear that there are some areas which are not dealt with as much as others, notably adult education, distance learning, non-formal education, children with special needs and marginalised and disadvantaged children. Notably absent has been the importance of teaching and learning materials, and other stimuli for learning and for teaching. More broadly, very few education policies paid strong attention to how to address persistent education disadvantages based on poverty, ethnicity or location.

Given that education does not operate in a vacuum and that improvements in education can, along with other social, economic, environmental and infrastructural policy actions, lead to poverty reduction, there appears to be no mention in the policy/strategy documents of the increasing peri-urban slum populations. These populations have come about for many reasons, a major one being migration from rural areas when both subsistence and cash-crop agriculture have declined as a result of either food aid or preferential trade agreements whereby the import of heavily subsidised foreign agricultural products has made it impossible for local farmers to get a competitive price for their produce. The provision of adequate education services for the burgeoning peri-urban populations should not be left to NGOs alone but is the responsibility of governments and development partners alike.

In addition, returning to overall development policies, there appears to be no mention of the poorest of the poor or where the majority of the poor now live. Two decades ago, most of the world's poor (93%–95%) lived in countries officially classified as low income countries or LICs. Now 71%–76% of the world's poor—850–950 million people—live in middle income countries or MICs (and most of them in stable, non-fragile MICs). The shift has been brought about by fast growth in a number of countries with large populations which have graduated from being LICs to being MICs. This “new geography of global poverty” raises questions for the current model of development assistance, where national per capita income is a key determinant of the volume and composition of aid flows (Kanbur and Sumner, 2012). This is the case for the World Bank and for many other multilateral and bilateral donors who argue that LICs are the countries with the greatest need. For those donors and multilateral agencies who continue engagement with MICs, there is the additional issue of how this engagement should differ, if at all, from their engagement with LICs. Important to consider, therefore, is the rationale for differentiated strategies between MICs and LICs and how it will be affected by the new reality that the bulk of the world's poor now live in MICs.

### **Donor practices – a brief overview**

***Aid effectiveness.*** Whilst significant progress has been made in improving aid effectiveness, very few donors have met overall Paris Declaration targets<sup>18</sup>. Across the donors examined in the study there have been varying approaches to aid delivery and use of aid modalities and this is reflected in the extent to which aid effectiveness targets have been met. While limited progress has been made in improving support for capacity development, there has been good progress in coordinating technical assistance but this is predominantly supply-driven and does not respond sufficiently to partner country needs.

***Capacity development at the middle level.*** A number of donors have over the past decade put a strong emphasis on more harmonised and aligned aid in support of national education sector reforms. At the same time, some critical issues in capacity development remain. Donor attention has been focused at the top level (e.g. Ministry of Education) on upstream planning and budgeting systems, and sometimes at the school level. Too limited attention has been paid to the capacities and systems needed at decentralised (sub-national) levels to plan, implement and supervise the provision of education services.

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<sup>18</sup> As reported in OECD (2011) *Aid Effectiveness 2005-10: Progress in implementing the Paris Declaration*. OECD Publishing.

**Results-orientation.** In recent years, the focus of donor agencies has moved increasingly towards achieving results (rather than on inputs and activities), not only at the output level but also at the higher levels of outcome and impact. At the same time accountability to the electorate has gained prominence as efforts are made to ensure value for money and make every penny count in the drive to reduce poverty. At primary and secondary education levels, the emphasis has been on easily quantifiable outputs such as enrolment, teachers trained, classrooms built, textbooks supplied and so on. There has been little attention paid to improving quality and how to measure it.

**Modalities of support.** A comprehensive approach to support to the education sector needs to take into account not only all levels and aspects of the education sector itself but also the physical, social and economic environment in which education takes place. Modalities of support range from general budget support to specific projects. However, donors appear to be coming to the conclusion that applying a single modality is not the best way forward; rather, donors are considering that a mixture of modalities will lead to greater aid effectiveness.

**Monitoring and evaluation.** To some degree, performance monitoring and evaluation are undertaken by all donor agencies. What emerges from the study is that monitoring and evaluation make more sense when there is clarity of objectives and when it is the effectiveness of activities (i.e. the extent to which objectives are achieved) that is measured. Furthermore, evaluations are more useful in guiding future policy choices and programme orientation when a robust system of monitoring is incorporated in programme design from the beginning.

As a result of donor country governments being likely to change every four to six years, there are only a few which have commissioned independent evaluations of their development practices. Notably, the Australian government commissioned an *Independent Review of Aid Effectiveness* in November 2010 which led to Australia's development, and education development, strategies<sup>19</sup>. The Irish government also consulted widely following the publication of its White Paper on Irish Aid in 2006, which led to *One World, One Future: Ireland's Policy for International Development* published in 2013. For education, DFID's current focus on the quality of education has been influenced by reports such as the Independent Commission for Aid Impact's *DFID's Education Programme in Three East African Countries*. Amongst the multilateral agencies, the World Bank's strategy *Learning For All* was informed by the Independent Evaluation Group's *World Bank Support to Education Since 2001: A Portfolio Note*. From this Note a most telling statement—and one that could well summarise the evaluation of performance in the sector by many donor agencies—is:

'The performance of education projects has dropped substantially over the decade and is now below the performance of projects in other sectors. Bank support has been most successful at increasing access to education and improving its equity, while fewer than half of projects have achieved education quality, labour force, management, learning, or efficiency objectives. Improving the quality of education inputs has not necessarily improved learning. Support to post-primary education has expanded, but the share of projects with labour market objectives has not, suggesting possible issues in the labour market relevance of post-primary efforts.'

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<sup>19</sup> *An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference—Delivering real results* (2011, updated 2012) and *Promoting opportunities for all: Education* (2011).

To a large extent donor performance is determined by how well the programme has been designed and by the results achieved in terms of outputs, outcome(s) and impact. Bazely (2011: 19) sums it up neatly:

‘... what makes programs work is clarity of objectives, the diligent, informed application of the established norms of best practice in the design and configuration of aid flows, expert and intelligent analysis of context, responsiveness, and – not least – due attention to the creation of genuine ownership and leadership of development by partner governments ... through greater use of government systems. ... It is when those basic principles of good practice slip that programs don’t perform.’

### **Donor investment priorities<sup>20</sup>**

The **total amount of aid to education** nearly doubled between 2002 and 2010 (see Annex B, Figure 1). This increase was driven by overall aid increases, rather than education becoming a higher priority in total aid. About one tenth of total aid continued to be devoted to education, with large variations across donors (see Annex B, Figure 2). Considering donors individually, the picture is mixed with some donors increasing the proportion of their aid going to education, others reducing it and the rest keeping it much the same (see Annex B, Figure 3). Only Germany and Portugal showed a match between policy priorities and the share of aid devoted to education.

**Aid to secondary education** increased more rapidly than aid to other sub-sectors. With growing cohorts of children in primary education, greater demands for secondary education in partner countries are understandable, as are donors’ growing interests in support to this sub-sector. At the same time, the priority given to **basic education** in total aid to education did not increase with the last decade’s policy emphasis on the MDGs and UPE but remained about the same after 2000 (for the distribution of aid across education levels in 2009-2010, see Annex B, Figure 4; and for the types of aid per education level, see Annex B, Table 1). Best available estimates (UNESCO, 2010) showed that the financing requirements to achieve basic education for all in the poorest countries were still nearly three times current spending levels, pointing to an immense financing gap to reach those at the greatest education disadvantage.

The **distribution of aid to education** to more or less poor countries has not changed much in recent years, and it remains very much in favour of middle income countries (MICs). In 2009-10, the group of 35 LICs received only 28% of all country programmable aid (CPA)<sup>21</sup> to education, representing a decline by 3% since 2004-05. (See Annex B, Figure 5 for the distribution of CPA to education across country income groups in 2009-10.) However, only a quarter of the world’s poor live in the 35 LICs which are largely in sub-Saharan Africa, where the share of aid to education fell by 3% between 2004-05 and 2009-10, despite it being cited often as a priority region in donor policy statements.

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<sup>20</sup> For the analysis of donor investment priorities, the study used data from the EFA GMR team, which in turn were derived from the OECD-DAC aid databases. Compared to the earlier parts of the study, a broader set of donors was analysed. Total aid figures comprise *all* bilateral and multilateral donors reporting aid disbursements to the DAC databases. For analysis of aid data *per donor* included are all 23 bilateral DAC donors plus the EU, AfDB, AsDB, the World Bank and UNICEF.

<sup>21</sup> CPA is a subset of ODA which excludes a number of items which either do not reach developing countries, or cannot be programmed or used by governments, such as imputed student costs, the cost of refugees in rich countries, humanitarian aid or debt relief.

There was no major **concentration of aid** to education to fewer recipient countries. Overall, the OECD-DAC data do not point to major reductions in the number of recipient countries receiving aid to education. The great majority of donors have increased their aid to education since 2004-05 and in order to disburse more funds for education most have increased their number of recipient countries (see Annex B, Figure 6). To a large extent, this finding works against donor policy statements in favour of a division of labour across countries. Only a few have combined increases in aid to education with significant reductions in the number of recipient countries. The high number of countries receiving aid to education from the EU, combined with a very limited number of staff assigned to and with expertise in education, is likely to have major consequences for the management of EU's aid to education.

**Project-type aid** and **scholarships** continue to dominate. After more than a decade of efforts to shift towards types of aid that channel funds for education through the national treasury account, the record is poor. Even for donors with strong policy commitment to align their aid with national systems, such shifts were not easy to achieve. Canada, the EU and the UK disbursed about one-quarter of their aid to education as sector budget support in 2010. Nearly half of all aid to education continued to be disbursed as project-type aid<sup>22</sup> and one-quarter as scholarships and covering student costs for higher education studies in donor countries. Several small and medium size donors give relatively high shares of their support to education through specific education programmes managed by international organisations (most notably GPE and UNICEF's thematic programmes).

## Conclusion

Commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 has provided a global incentive for ODA to be directed towards reducing poverty, encouraging peace and security through the promotion of human rights, good governance, the rule of law and democracy, and investing in sustainable economic and social development. The large majority of donors reviewed in the study have affirmed the crucial role that education plays in this process. For the most part donor policies for support to education are part of wider overall development policies reflecting the fact that education processes and systems cannot operate alone. This has led to the emergence in donor policies of a comprehensive approach to education. Common features of such an approach are recognition of the interconnections between different levels and parts of the education system, the placing of education within broader social and economic development and the linking of TVET to the needs of the labour market. This appears to be a realistic way forward but not easy to carry out without the full cooperation of partner governments in their entirety, other donor agencies and NGOs working in the recipient country.

While primary education and basic education are favoured sub-sectors for support by the majority of donors, there is growing support for secondary education and TVET. Some donors are also moving away from individual scholarships towards broader support to partner country higher education institutions. For other donors early childhood care and education appears as a focal area for support. Success in these areas has been achieved in varying degrees through support from all donor

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<sup>22</sup> It is likely that World Bank education programmes which encompass (sector) budget support have been classified as "projects" since this is the term used most frequently by the World Bank itself.

agencies, depending to a large extent on (a) the committed expertise in a particular area both at agency headquarters and in the field, (b) ownership of the planning, policy and implementation process by the partner country, thus ensuring that the programme is relevant, implementable and likely to succeed, and (c) the harmonised cooperation of all stakeholders. It must be recognised firstly that donor policy direction is determined predominantly by the government of the donor country, which may change at any point in time within a four to six year period, secondly that there are sound arguments for supporting every level of education, the education of girls and women, and education for the marginalised, disadvantaged and those with special needs, and thirdly that each recipient country at programme level is to a large extent unique in that a global strategy for educational development – or even a global education goal as proposed at the EU High Level Conference on Education and Development (EC, 2013) – is not *per se* suitable for every circumstance or country.

By far the largest share of education spending in most countries is funded by domestic resources – for example, combined budget and off budget support by development partners to the Namibia Ministry of Education between 2005-06 and 2010-11 was less than 6% of the total education budget (Sayin *et al.*, 2011). Yet developing countries are committed to delivering better (and more) services from pre-school through to higher education, often in a situation where the overwhelming bulk of expenditure is on salaries. A scarcity of public resources, a diverse (and often not universally accepted) educational agenda and competing demands from other sectors can lead to less priority being given to education than it merits. As a result, many countries have looked for and continue to look for support through ODA to fill the funding gap, but what can be gained from more efficient delivery of aid from OECD-DAC countries is limited if the aid is not deployed strategically to maximize the impact of *total* domestic and external funding on national education outcomes.

Finally, emerging from the study and from policy statements made in the last 12 months, it is clear that the focus for support to education both *ante*- and *post*-2015 needs to be on improvement of the quality of education at all levels together with appropriate and relevant means of measuring such improvement in terms of benefits to both the learners and society as a whole. Most importantly, well-planned, timely and accurate monitoring and evaluation are essential for informing policies of both donors and recipient countries.

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**Annex A: Latest development cooperation policies, education development policies and DAC Peer Review year of countries/agencies reviewed**

#	Country/Agency	Latest development cooperation policy [DCP] document (year)	Education/skills in latest DCP (✓/✗)	Latest separate education development policy document (year)
<b>OECD-DAC Members</b>				
1.	Australia	<i>An Effective Aid Program for Australia: Making a real difference—Delivering real results</i> (2011, updated 2012)	✓ (1/10 objectives)	<i>Promoting opportunities for all: Education</i> (2011)
2.	Austria	<i>Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2010–2012</i> (2011 update)	✓ (priority in 3 countries)	<i>Higher Education and Scientific Cooperation Strategy</i> (2009)
3.	Belgium	<i>Belgium and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Policy note</i> (2010) [But most policies date back to 2002 and have not been renewed to reflect changing circumstances/times.]	✓ (for MDG2 & MDG3)	<i>Respect for the Rights of the Child in the Belgian Development Cooperation. Strategy Paper</i> (nd). [But Belgium's latest <i>Education Sector Strategy</i> was produced in 2002.]
4.	Canada	<i>Canada's Aid Effectiveness Agenda: Focusing on Results</i> (2010)	✓ (but not clearly stated)	<i>Securing the future of children and youth. CIDA's Children and Youth Strategy</i> (2011)
5.	Denmark	<i>The Right to a Better Life. Strategy for Denmark's Development Cooperation</i> (2012)	✓ (through FTI/GPE)	2004? [Not cited now except within the Gender Strategy.]
6.	European Union	<i>Increasing the impact of EU Development Policy: an Agenda for Change</i> (2011)	✓ (linked with social protection, health and jobs)	<i>More and Better Education in Developing Countries</i> (EC staff working document, 2010) [But last policy document was <i>Education and Training in the context of the fight against poverty in developing countries</i> (2002)].
7.	Finland	<i>Finland's Development Policy Programme</i> (2012)	✓ (1/4 priorities)	<i>Education Strategy for Finland's Development Cooperation</i> (2006)
8.	France	<i>Development Cooperation: a French Vision 2011-2020</i> (2011)	✓ (mentioned in 3/4 challenges)	<i>L'action extérieure de la France pour l'éducation dans les pays en développement 2010-2015</i> (2010)
9.	Germany	<i>Minds for Change – Enhancing Opportunities</i> (2011)	✓ (as future-proofing against shocks and attacking the causes of poverty)	<i>Ten Objectives for More Education. BMZ Education Strategy 2010-2013</i> (2012)
10.	Ireland	<i>One World, One Future: Ireland's Policy for International Development</i> (2013)	✓ (under essential services)	<i>Education Policy and Strategy. Building sustainable education systems for poverty reduction</i> (2008)

#	Country/Agency	Latest development cooperation policy [DCP] document (year)	Education/skills in latest DCP (✓/✗)	Latest separate education development policy document (year)
11.	Italy	<i>Italian Development Cooperation for the three-year period 2012-2014. Policy planning guidelines and orientations</i> (2011)	✓ (through FTI/GPE)	[Not yet available in English.]
12.	Japan	<i>JICA's Approach to the Millennium Development Goals</i> (2010)	✓ (MDG2 and MDG3)	<i>JICA's Operation in Education Sector. Present and Future</i> (2010)
13.	Luxembourg	<i>Stratégie Générale 2012. Stratégies et Orientations</i> (2012)	✓ (with health, multi-sectoral support for local development and micro-finance)	<i>Education. Education de base, Enseignement technique, Formation et insertion professionnelles. Stratégies et orientation</i> (2009)
14.	Netherlands	<i>Letter to the House of Representatives presenting the spearheads of development cooperation policy</i> (2011)	✓ (but <u>not</u> as a priority)	<i>New priorities in Dutch education policy for developing countries</i> in letter from Minister of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation to parliament on 22 January 2013
15.	New Zealand	<i>New Zealand Aid Programme: Sector Priorities 2012-15</i> (2012)	✓ (as one of seven "enablers of growth")	na
16.	Norway	<i>Norad's Strategy towards 2015: Results in the Fight Against Poverty</i> (2011)	✗ (not specifically)	<i>Education Job number 1: Norwegian Strategy for Delivering Education for All by 2015</i> (2003)
17.	Portugal	<i>A Strategic Vision for Portuguese Development Cooperation</i> (2006)	✓ (as a priority sector)	<i>Estratégia da Cooperação Portuguesa para a Educação</i> (2011)
18.	Spain	<i>IV Plan Director de la Cooperación Española 2013-2016</i> (2012)	✗ (not specifically)	<i>Estrategia de Educación de la Cooperación Española</i> (2007)
19.	Sweden	<i>Global Challenges – Our Responsibility. Communication on Sweden's policy for global development</i> (2008)	✗ (not specifically)	na
20.	Switzerland	<i>Message on International Cooperation 2013-2016. Key points in brief</i> (2012)	✓ (for vocational skills)	<i>SDC Guidelines for basic education and vocational skills development</i> (2010)
21.	United Kingdom	<i>UK Aid: Changing Lives, Delivering Results</i> (2011)	✓ (as one of eight areas of work)	<i>Education position paper: Improving learning, expanding opportunities</i> (2013)
22.	United States	<i>USAID Policy Framework 2011-2015</i> (2011)	✗ (not specifically)	<i>USAID Education Strategy 2011-2015</i> (2011)

#	Country/Agency	Latest development cooperation policy [DCP] document (year)	Education/skills in latest DCP (✓/✗)	Latest separate education development policy document (year)
<b>Multilateral agencies</b>				
23.	African Development Bank (AfDB)	<i>African Development Bank Group. Medium-Term Strategy 2008-2012 (2008)</i> <sup>23</sup>	✓ (human capital formation as one of three priorities)	<i>AfDB's Human Capital Development Strategy (2012-2016). One Billion Opportunities: Building Human Capital for Inclusive Growth in Africa (2011)</i>
24.	Asian Development Bank (AsDB)	<i>Strategy 2020 (2008)</i>	✓ (as one of five core specialisations)	<i>Education by 2020: A Sector Operations Plan (2010)</i>
25.	World Bank / IDA	<i>Report from the Executive Directors of the International Development Association (IDA) to the Board of Governors : additions to IDA resources - sixteenth replenishment - delivering development results (2011)</i> <sup>24</sup>	✓ (as one of six sectors)	<i>Learning for All. Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development. World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020 (2011)</i>
<b>UN agencies</b>				
26.	UNICEF	<i>Investing in children: the UNICEF contribution to poverty reduction and the Millennium Summit agenda (2005) UNICEF medium-term strategic plan 2006-2009.. 2011.. 2013.</i>	✓ (as one of five child-related priorities)	<i>UNICEF Education Strategy 2006-2015 (2007)</i>

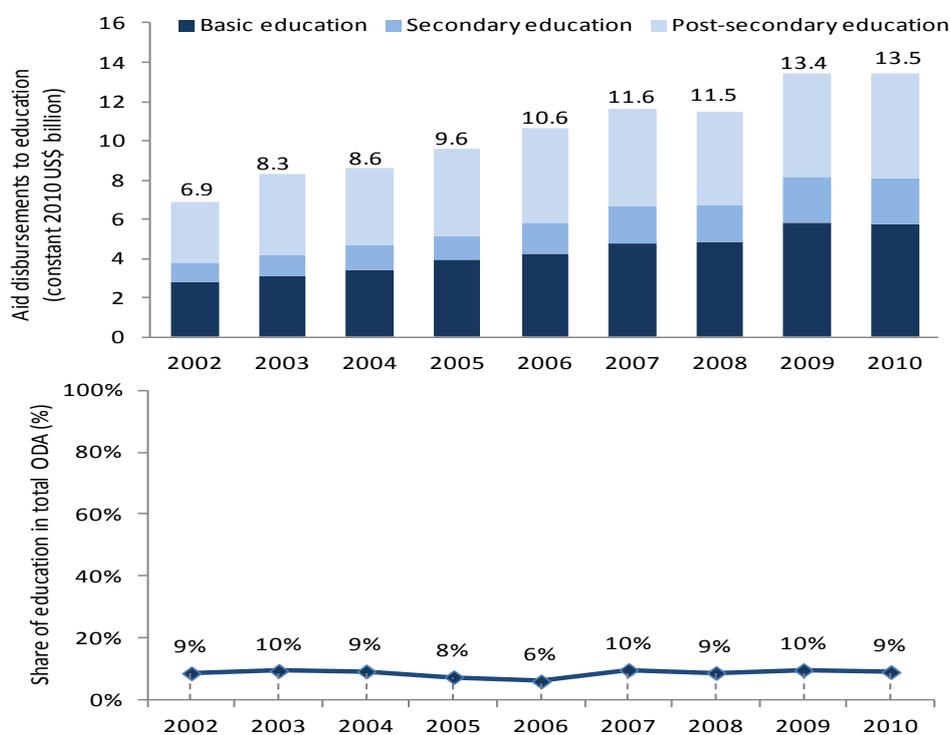
<sup>23</sup> In mid-2013, the AfDB is preparing its Long Term Strategy 2013-2022.

<sup>24</sup> In mid-2013, the World Bank is preparing IDA17 Replenishment: Maximizing Development Impact (2015-2017).

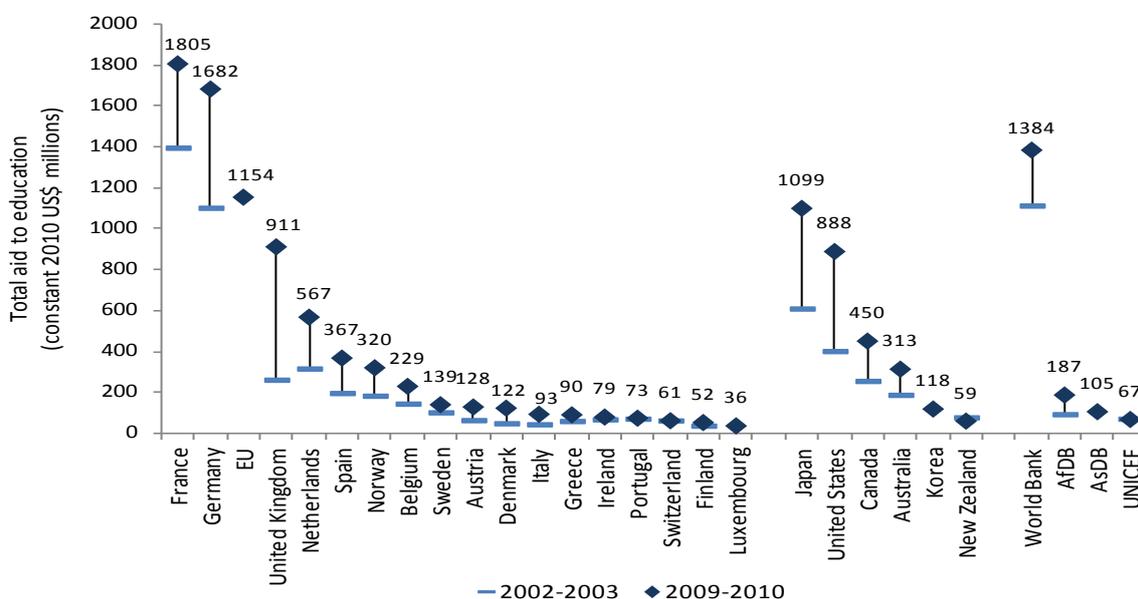
## Annex B

NB: The sources for all data given in Figures 1-7 and Table 1 in Annex B are OECD-DAC (2012) *International Development Statistics: Creditor Reporting System* and UNESCO (2012) *Aid to education database 2000-2010*.<sup>25</sup>

**Figure 1: Total aid disbursements to education and share of education in total ODA, 2002-2010**



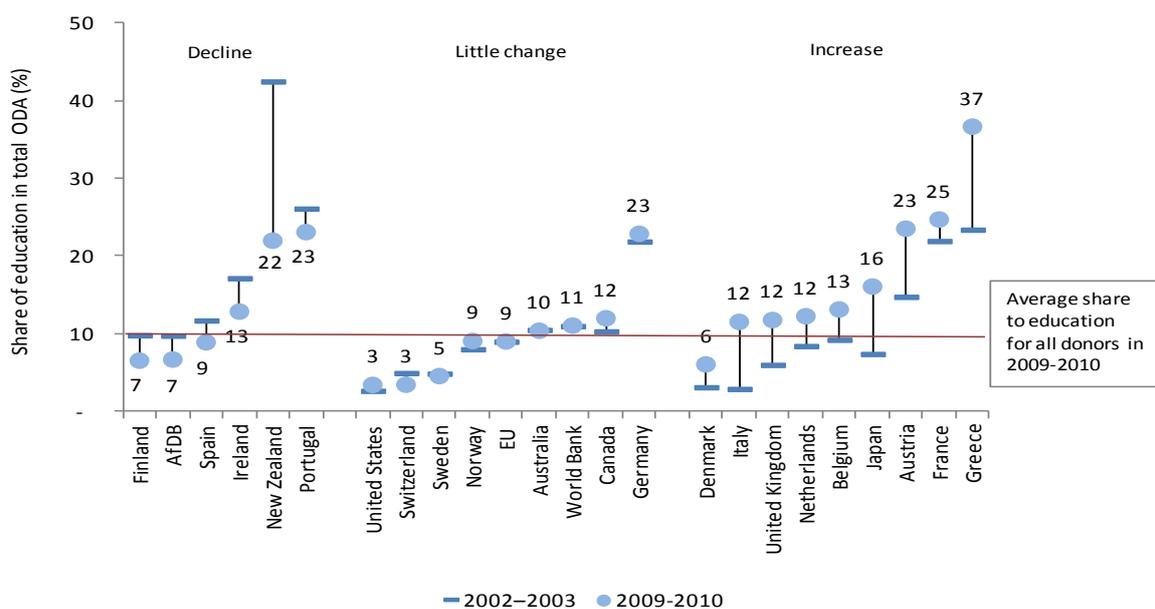
**Figure 2: Total aid disbursements to education by donor, 2002-2003 and 2009-2010 averages**



Note: Aid from the EU includes funds from the European Development Fund (EDF) and the EC. Aid from the World Bank includes IDA funds, for AfDB funds from the African Development Fund and for AsDB funds from the Asian Development Fund. Data for 2002-2003 appear unreliable for the EU and are not available for Luxembourg, Korea and AsDB.

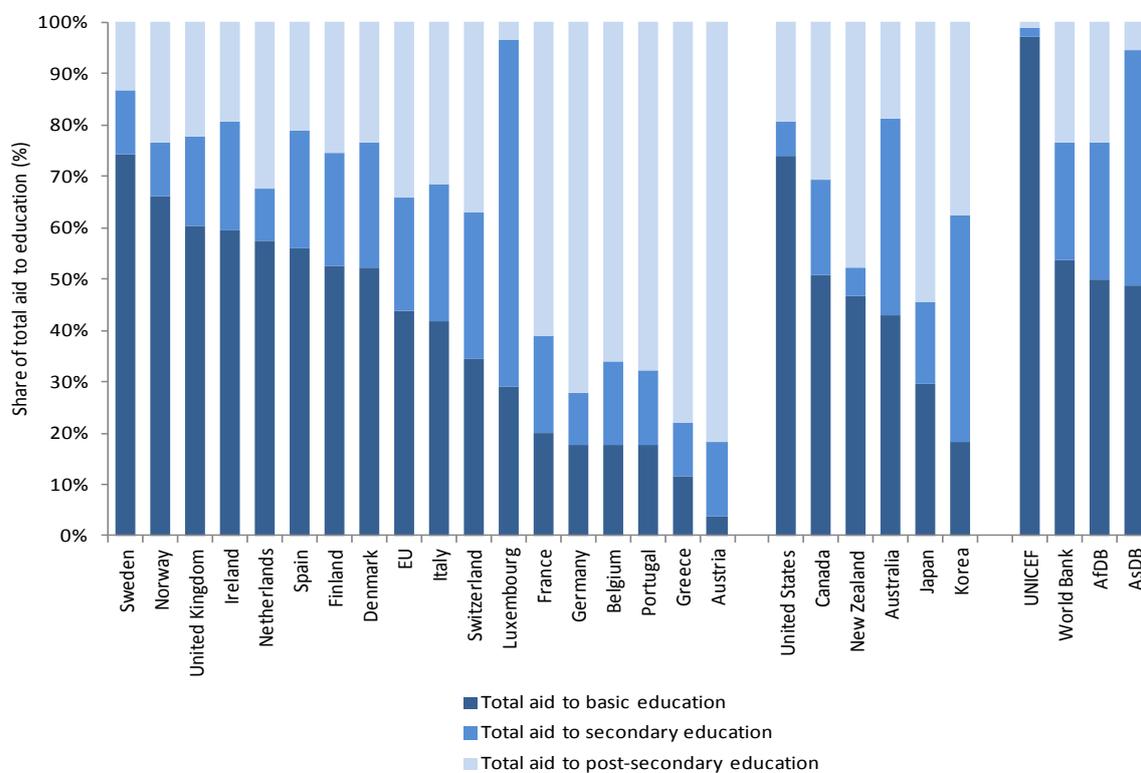
<sup>25</sup> The author gratefully acknowledges the work of Anna Haas (formerly of the EFA GMR team) in compiling these Figures and Table.

**Figure 3: Share of aid to education in total aid by donor, 2002-2003 and 2009-2010 averages**



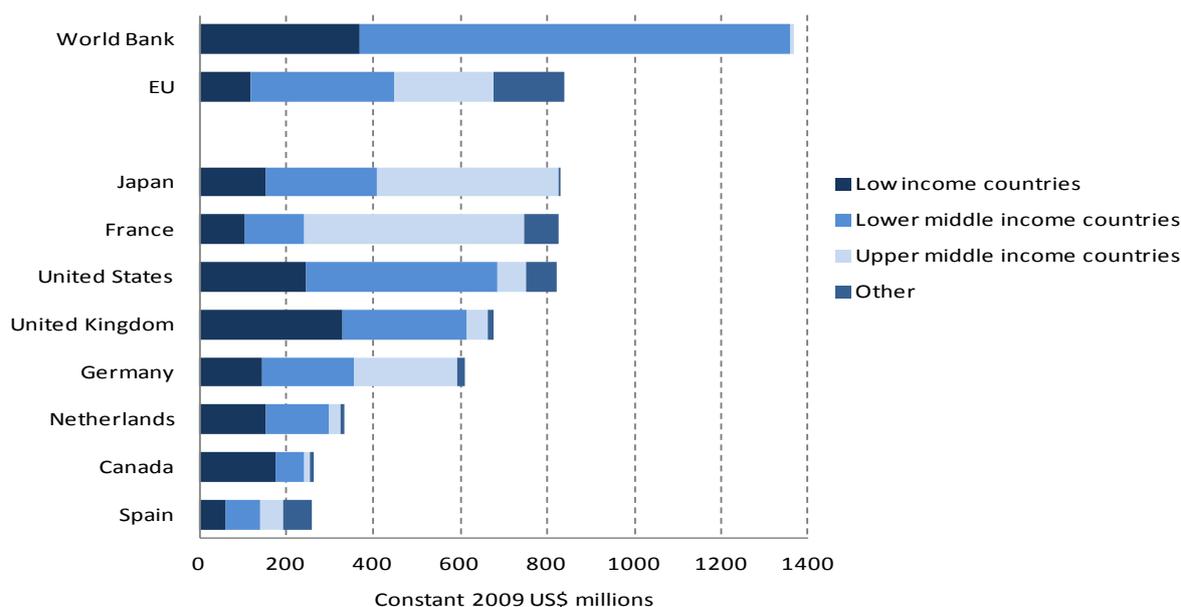
Note: Aid from the EU includes funds from the EDF and the EC. Aid from the World Bank includes IDA funds and for AfDB funds from the African Development Fund. Trend data are not available for AsDB, Korea, Luxembourg and UNICEF.

**Figure 4: Aid to education by level of education in 2009-2010**



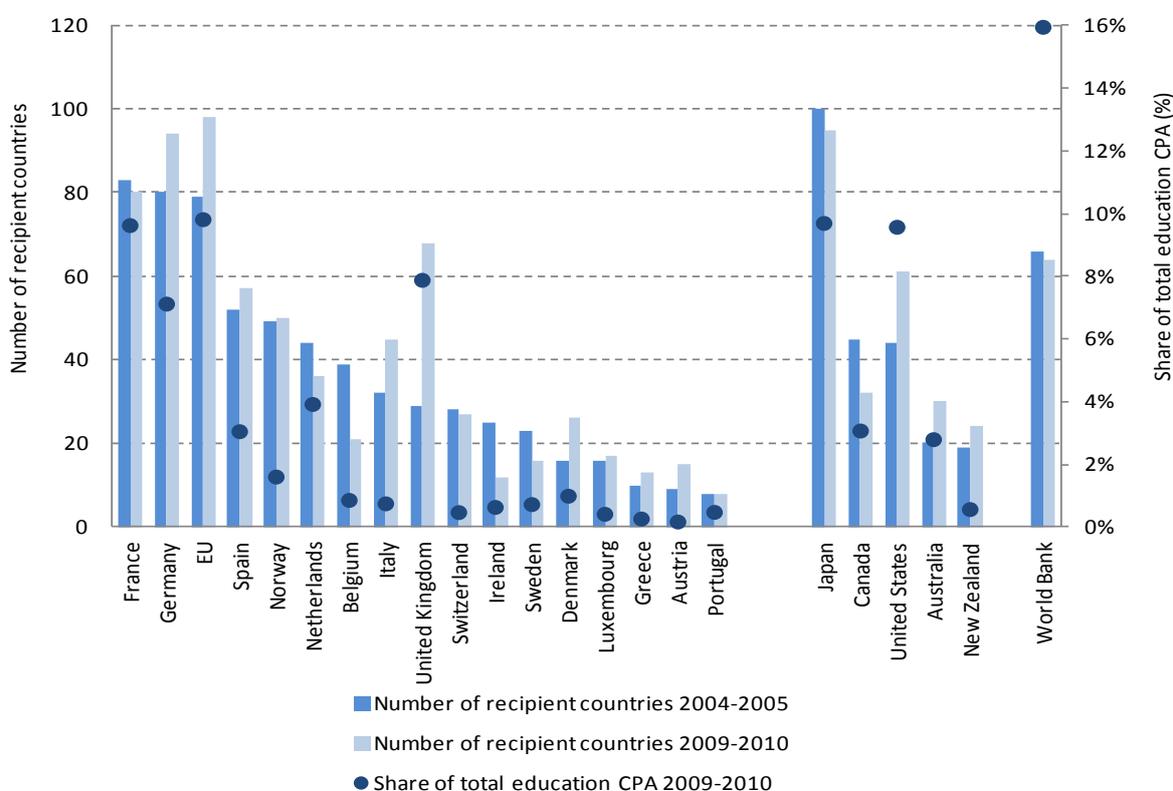
Note: Aid from the EU includes funds from the European Development Fund (EDF) and the EC. Aid from the World Bank includes IDA funds, for AfDB funds from the African Development Fund and for AsDB funds from the Asian Development Fund.

**Figure 5: Distribution of CPA to education across country income groups for the 10 highest donors in 2009-10**



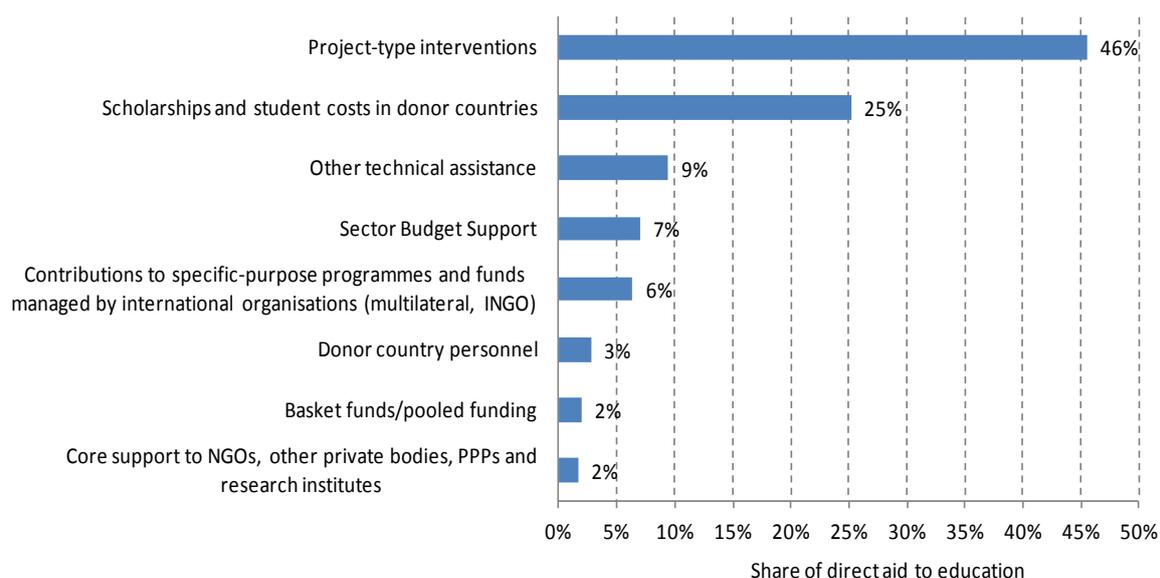
Notes: Aid from the EU includes funds from the European Development Fund (EDF) and the EC, while aid from the World Bank covers IDA funds. The data are expressed in constant 2009 prices, as this is how the CPA funds were expressed in the original OECD-DAC data set. The group called 'Other' includes mainly regional programmes.

**Figure 6: Number of education recipient countries per donor in 2004-05 and 2009-10, and each donor's share of total education CPA in 2009-10**



Notes: Insufficient data are available for AfDB, AsDB Finland, Korea and UNICEF. The methodology used for these calculations builds on work by the DAC Secretariat. To be included as a donor to a recipient country, a threshold of disbursing at least US\$250,000 per year in education CPA was used (as by the DAC Secretariat).

**Figure 7: Direct aid to education by type of aid in 2010**



*Note:* The category scholarships and student costs in donor countries include 9% scholarships and 16% imputed student costs. The figure only includes direct aid to education, i.e. excludes the share of General Budget Support (GBS) benefitting education. In total aid to education, which includes 20% of all GBS, the share of GBS is 9%.

**Table 1: Type of aid to education per level in 2010**

Type of aid	Basic education	Secondary education	Post-secondary education	Level unspecified
Basket funds/pooled funding	4%	0%	0%	3%
Contributions to specific-purpose programmes and funds managed by international organisations (multilateral, INGO)	17%	0%	0%	5%
Core support to NGOs, other private bodies, PPPs and research institutes	2%	2%	1%	2%
Donor country personnel	1%	3%	2%	5%
Other technical assistance	7%	22%	6%	13%
Project-type interventions	65%	68%	17%	53%
Imputed student costs	0%	0%	48%	0%
Scholarships/training in donor country	0%	0%	25%	0%
Sector Budget Support	5%	3%	2%	18%
Grand Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Note:* The table only includes direct aid to education, i.e. excludes the share of General Budget Support (GBS) benefitting education.