POST-2015 AGENDAS: NORTHERN TSUNAMI, SOUTHERN RIPPLE? THE CASE OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

By Kenneth King and Robert Palmer
About the authors

Kenneth King is the Editor of NORRAG NEWS. He is an Emeritus Professor at the School of Social and Political Studies, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK.
Email: Kenneth.king@ed.ac.uk

Robert Palmer runs NORRAG NEWSBite, NORRAG’s blog (norrag.wordpress.com) and twitter account (@NORRAG_NEWS). He currently lives and works in Amman, Jordan, for a non-profit organisation focused on education and development.
Personal twitter: @SkillsImpact
Email: rpalmer00@gmail.com

The authors would like to thank the participants of the NORRAG panel of the Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) Conference, on ‘Education Post-2015: Re-invigorating the Agenda, or Reshuffling the Lobbies?’; 13th March 2013. The interpretations remain their own.

What is NORRAG?

NORRAG (Network for Policy Research, Review and Advice on Education and Training) is a focus and a forum for the analysis of international cooperation in the education and training field. The main instruments of NORRAG are its publications (NORRAG NEWS and Policy Briefs), its website and its Blog and the organization of/and participation in meetings.

For more information and free registration, please visit: www.norrag.org or follow @NORRAG_NEWS on twitter.

NORRAG’s Working Paper Series

In addition to the twice-yearly NORRAG NEWS publication, NORRAG also conducts and commissions research on topics related to international education and training. In September 2012, NORRAG introduced an Working Paper Series to better disseminate and file such papers. Please see the full list at www.norrag.org or at the end of this paper.

NORRAG Co-ordination Address

Michel Carton
Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID)
Post Box 136
Rue Rothschild 24
1211 Geneva 21
Switzerland

Email: michel.carton@graduateinstitute.ch

© NORRAG 2013
Contents
Introduction ................................................................................................................................. 4

1. The Role of the South in Post-2015 Debates ........................................................................... 6
   1.1. Northern-led consultations ................................................................................................. 6
   1.2. Individual and institutional views from the South ............................................................... 9
   1.3. Reflecting on the many strands of Southern engagement: modalities and substance .......... 12

2. The Surprisingly Low Profile of Skills Development in the Post-2015 Debate ............... 14
   2.1. The current status of skills-related goals and the post-2015 agenda ................................. 14

3. A Complex Trajectory to New Education Goals: the Post-2015 Road Map of Influence and How Education and Skills are Featuring in it .................................................. 18
   3.1. Unfinished business to 2015 ............................................................................................ 18
   3.2. Education post-2015 ......................................................................................................... 19
     3.2.1. Education, skills and the post-MDG process ................................................................. 19
     3.2.2. Education, skills and the SDG process ......................................................................... 26
     3.2.3. Education, skills and the post-EFA process ................................................................. 28

4. Concluding Comments for Now ............................................................................................ 30
References .................................................................................................................................. 34

Annex 1: Education’s Yellow-Brick Road to 2015 ................................................................. 38
Annex 2: Current Suggestions for Education (and Skills) Goals ........................................... 39
POST-2015 AGENDAS: NORTHERN TSUNAMI, SOUTHERN RIPPLE? THE CASE OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

By Kenneth King and Robert Palmer

Introduction

We carried out an analysis of what looked like the gathering storm of proposals around education and skills in the post-2015 development agendas back in August 2012 (King and Palmer, 2012). But at that point only one of the eleven UN thematic consultations had taken place, none of the more than 70 UNDP-facilitated national consultations had happened, and several of the other global consultations, for example, by the European Commission (EC) or by the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) were also just getting underway. There had been no meetings of the High Level Panel (HLP) with its co-chairs from the political leaders of Britain, Indonesia and Liberia.

But in the last seven months, there really has been a hurricane of activity. The sheer volume of post-2015 proposals has been so great that the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has actually developed a special post-2015 proposal ‘tracker’ to help people keep on top of the pace of change in goal and target proposals, currently running at over 160 (Bergh, 2012). The High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda has had three substantive meetings (London, Monrovia, Bali), and the Intergovernmental Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been set up and had their first meeting. Post-2015 has become the title or subtitle for countless papers and reports, for UN meetings, for multi-lateral, bilateral and international NGO (INGO) meetings, and e-consultations have been held in all of the eleven thematic areas. But this is not just a policy arena. One of the world's best regarded conferences on international and comparative education, the UKFIET Oxford Conference, has dedicated itself entirely to interrogating, in September 2013, Education and Development Post-2015: Reflecting, Reviewing, Revisioning [UKFIET, 2013], and almost 300 people have submitted abstracts. Many NGOs in the EU have developed their own position papers on post-2015, for instance, in Norway, Denmark and the UK. Doubtless, there are many masters and doctoral dissertations already being dedicated to this theme with different sectoral foci.

But have things changed so dramatically since August 2012? One of the ‘red threads’ in our earlier paper was the concern with whether this preoccupation with post-2015 was genuinely worldwide. Was it much more a Northern agency and Northern NGO or think tank obsession than something to be found being debated and discussed in the developing economies? We suggested that, if this was indeed the case, it may be because the shape of any new development agenda was crucially important for the sustained funding of Northern NGOs and of traditional OECD donor agencies. If, for example, education or skills did not figure prominently in the next development agenda, this could have a major knock-on effect for the funding of education and skills development in particular bilateral agencies and in NGOs.

Beyond this financial link to interest in the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) process, the very presence in the North of well-staffed development agencies, consultancy firms and development institutes provides a personnel capacity that is

---

directly connected to issues of international development. Such capacity is lacking in many developing economies.

Another red thread was that while 'Education' in general was frequently mentioned in post-2015 proposals, 'Skills Development' or 'TVET' (technical and vocational education and training) were not. Would this have changed in the last seven months, and not least because in 2012 there was published a whole series of what could be called global reports on skills (See NN48, 2013)? In addition, the continuing financial crisis had suggested that employment and jobs were crucially important, and that, while skills could not create jobs, they could be regarded as a necessary condition for jobs or work to be created (King, 2012).

In this paper, we shall revisit the architecture of the post-2015 movement, paying particular attention to these two issues: the role of the South in post-2015 debates; and the role of skills in the Education and Skills debate.

In what follows, we analyse the role of southern partners in respect of post-2015. But with a battery of different levels of meetings and consultations, from local, to national, regional to international, how is it possible to contribute effectively to the debate? So a third dimension of this paper analyses the route map itself, and explores the process whereby any goals or targets for new development agendas might be established, and what are the key meetings that could determine this process (See also Annex 1 for a visual presentation of the route map). As noted above, the official UN post-2015 process had not started back in August 2012, but in April 2013 it is now in full swing; hence we shall comment on what role education and skills are managing to secure as part of this official process, and seek to explain the complex trajectory of meetings, consultations, and the High Level Panel.

A particular education challenge in this mapping of the landscape is what is the process for proposing an education dimension of future MDGs, and by contrast what is the way to revisit and revision the six Education for All (EFA) Goals in a post-2015 context. This double challenge may not be faced by some of the other thematic areas.

A fourth level is much more demanding. It goes beyond meetings and simple advocacy, and seeks to establish, through wide-ranging, but detailed analytical work what is the justification for particular goals or targets being recommended. Seven months ago, there were more ideas and "must-haves" than there were concrete evidence-based suggestions for future education and skills goals. There is still a paucity of this reflective work around the priorities for goals and targets. We examined some of this material in our earlier paper (for example the Compact for Learning by Brookings, or the think-piece by Burnett and Felsman of Results for Development, 2012). But in a next paper (later in 2013), and in a special issue of NORRAG News, No. 49, we shall examine critically any major new research-based material making the case for Education and Skills goals. We shall also inquire whether this material being generated around post-2015 in the field of education is raising any new questions about the relationship of education to development.

---

3 NORRAG News 48 is primarily dedicated to a critical analysis of the 7-8 global reports on Skills, Jobs and Employment (see www.norrag.org).

4 NN49 will be available at the time of the UKFIET Oxford Conference on post-2015 referred to above.
1. The Role of the South in Post-2015 Debates

1.1. Northern-led consultations

We took soundings with a series of individuals in different countries, including China, India, Bangladesh, Brazil, South Africa, Chile, and Kenya, in our last paper in August 2012; and the general view, admittedly from a highly individual perspective by policy people and academics concerned with international development education, was that there was not a very active debate around post-2015 in their countries (King and Palmer, 2012). In some cases, there was not a debate at all.

By contrast, a Google search in April 2013 for ‘post-2015 UK’ brings up the fact that the post-2015 discussion is of central concern to Britain’s bilateral development agency, the Department for International Development (DFID), which has a special dedicated unit concerned with post-2015. Of course, the interest in post-2015 within DFID is heightened for two reasons: first, by the fact that Britain’s prime-minister, David Cameron, is one of the three co-chairs of the High Level Panel on Post-2015; and, second by the fact that the UK holds one of the seats (shared with Australia and the Netherlands) on the newly formed Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which met for the first time in mid-March 2013. But it is immediately obvious via Google that post-2015 is a key priority of at least two of Britain’s leading development institutes: the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). There is also a strong parliamentary interest in the topic, through a House of Commons Select Committee on International Development (International Development Committee 2013). Equally, the post-2015 debate is strongly featured in influential newspapers such as The Guardian. Furthermore, in many if not most of the main NGOs from ActionAid to Oxfam to Save the Children, the post-2015 discussion has been taken extremely seriously (e.g. see Actionaid, 2012; Oxfam, 2013; Save the Children, 2012).

There are several lenses on the participation of the South in the post-2015 debates which we could take. One of these is what might be called Northern-led, or Northern-facilitated consultative processes. Thus, there have been several such consultations which are actually initiated from the North, but which intend to reach out to both North and South. One of these was the European Commission’s consultation process, ‘Towards a Post-2015 Development Framework’ (EC, 2012). This was a world-wide initiative, but it should not perhaps be surprising that of the 119 organisations responding, no less than 67% came from European NGOs. The Southern representation consisted of replies from just 10 countries (five African; three Latin American; and two Asian). There is no indication in the summary report of whether these developing economies took a particular approach to the topics discussed, such as ‘the potential shape of a future agenda’.

In the case of the world-wide consultation by the Global Campaign for Education on post-2015 (GCE), there is a similar pattern. There were replies by just 18 National Coalitions in all, but the bulk of these are in Europe and North America. The replies from the South came from Education for All (and Education pour Tous) networks and other bodies, but the only countries represented were Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Sudan, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Gambia and Mozambique. Overall, of course, 18 institutional

---

6 For a record of the first meeting, see http://www.iisd.ca/download/pdf/enb3201e.pdf
responses is not large, and again we don't yet know if the responses from the South were significantly different from those coming from the North.

Both these consultations are in a sense Northern-led, but there is a third consultation platform, MY World. My World was initiated by a number of organisations including the United Nations Millennium Campaign, ODI, the World-Wide Web Foundation and Ipsos Mori, as an attempt to get the citizens of the world to register their votes around a range of possible post-2015 themes ‘so that world leaders can be informed as they begin the process of defining the next set of global goals to end poverty’ (MY World, home page). Thus far, the initiative has reached 193 different countries and some 256,500 individuals. There is a map of the world on its website which immediately registers and reflects the numbers of citizens voting in each different country. Respondents are asked to select their top six priorities out of sixteen areas, covering such issues as ‘a good education’, ‘access to clean water and sanitation’, ‘better job opportunities’, ‘gender equality’, ‘climate change’, ‘better health care’, and ‘honest and responsive government’ etc etc. It is interesting to note that the preliminary results show that across both high and low Human Development Index (HDI) countries, ‘A good education’ comes out as the top priority (MY World, 2013).

We don’t of course know if those choosing ‘A good education’ looked at the definition which was as follows below. This covers a great deal, including skills development for adults, but it is unlikely that most voters looked up the particular definitions:

This means that all children should have a high quality primary and secondary education that equips them for employment and an enjoyable life. Governments and the private sector should work together to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and skills development for adults.

We must not exaggerate the significance of the MY World citizens’ survey; while it has far reaching plans to have online, offline and mobile platforms to reach global citizens, it is not a representative survey (and is not claimed to be). However, it is worth noting that My World is doing smaller surveys in a number of countries that are representative and can be disaggregated. The MY World website captures the numbers of respondents by country and is continually updated. The most striking first comment on the 256,500 responses to date (April 1st, 2013), is that over half of them come from just one country: Nigeria has just over 140,000 responses alone. This was the result of a large offline purposely conducted survey, rather than people accessing the MY World site online.

In general terms, however, following the pattern we have already alluded to, there are many more responses coming from individual high-income countries than there are from individual low- and middle-income countries. Thus, the UK has had 4,078 responses, and the USA 6,431, much larger than China 1,668 or Turkey 1,007. The pattern in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) is that a handful of countries have quite sizable response rates, while the majority have small or very small rates. For example, we have already noted that Nigeria has a massive 140,000 responses; six other SSA countries have more than 1,000 votes: Cameroon (6,452), DRC (4,214), Ghana (3,342), South Africa (2,184), Liberia (1,512), and Zimbabwe (1,190). Meanwhile, Tanzania has 244, Angola (51), Mozambique (77), Sudan (193), Chad (10), and Mali (25).

7 http://www.myworld2015.org/
8 As of 1st April 2013. As of 13th April 2013, the total responses were up to 288,586.
9 These numbers, and those below, are as of 1st April 2013.
Such a ‘United Nations global survey for citizens’ is open to all kinds of particular contextual factors, but it is certainly intriguing that Japan at 376 is ten times lower than the UK at 4,078.

With respect to the BRICS, Brazil and India both have sizeable response rates, at 11,527 and 10,321 respectively, while – as noted above - South Africa has 2,184 and China 1,668, but Russia is as low at 657.

It would of course be fascinating to know more about what are the drivers of these patterns. What for example are the priorities of the more than 11,500 in Brazil versus the 1,668 in China or the very small numbers in Japan, 376? Is it possible that this very large number for Brazil is connected to the Rio+20 meetings having taken place in Brazil and thus raised the levels of popular and NGO awareness around post-2015?

MY Word is planning to work with Ipsos Mori to experiment with different ways of weighting the responses to create a better global picture.

MY World, like the other initiatives we have briefly discussed so far, has originated in the North; so perhaps it is not surprising that those looking at the MY World survey in the North, and who recognise some of the organisations like ODI will proceed to respond more readily than those in Japan or South Africa. Also, and to be fair to MY World, we should stress that it is still very early days; the My World website only went live in January 2013 and the survey still has 12-18 months to run (in addition the anticipated offline and SMS components have not yet been rolled out).

Perhaps the same is true of several other consultative processes around post-2015. The principal amongst these is the UN-facilitated set of ‘national’ consultations. These were originally 56, but are apparently now running at over 70. Though they are called ‘national consultations’, these are all being encouraged or facilitated by the local UNDP country office, and they were drawn together into an interim synthesis report which went to the HLP in Bali at the end of March 2013. There is a diverse range of involvement evident from the websites of some of these national consultations, from just a handful of people being involved in some countries, to a more widespread consultation in others. Others again have not started at all. It is perhaps suggestive of the point we are making that for all the national consultations the ‘focal point’ is a UNDP staff member in the local country office.

Even the eleven UN thematic consultations have had a whole series of additional consultative processes attached to them. We have already mentioned that they have all had e-consultations, and, in the case of Education, these have run, in total, for just less than three months, 10th December 2012 to 3rd March 2013. But what has been the role of the South in these? How has the South reacted to the four themes of the e-consultation: (1) Equitable Access to Education (10-24 Dec, 2012); (2) Quality of Learning (8-21 Jan, 2013); (3) Global Citizenship, Skills and Jobs (23 Jan-6 Feb); (4) Governance and Financing of Education (10 Feb-03 Mar). And has it been possible to identify who has participated in the consultations? To a great extent, the answer is no; while many indicated their name and perhaps country, many others were anonymous. We also don’t know if some of the responses from individuals working at (I)NGOs were a reflection of institutional thinking or of personal views. It is also interesting to note that there were

10 See sitemap: http://www.worldwewant2015.org/sitemap
11 It is expected that there will be subsequent analysis and the final synthesis report will no doubt be targeted at the UN General Assembly meeting in September 2013, and the UN Secretary General’s own report on post-2015 that will go to that meeting (see more below).
about 550 comments made in total over these three months (including from the moderators). There were some 14,500 individual visitors and 24,000 page views of one or more of these comments; put another way less than 4% of visitors made a comment. However, in terms of impact, such e-consultations which are then summarized by the moderators may not be a very influential modality, regardless of whether the comments are made by people from the North or the South.

1.2. Individual and institutional views from the South

In our earlier paper, as mentioned above, we listened to a whole series of Southern voices from policy and academic positions. We have revisited those individuals now, seven months later and invited comments from them and from others.\textsuperscript{12} We reflect on some of these here:

**In India,** ‘the situation is a little different now from earlier; there is to be a consultation... but there is not much interest among policy makers at the highest level... Really there will never be any depth to this process in India. This is a sub-continental country, and it is struggling to reach its own goals’ (Senior policy analyst, 03.03.13). Nonetheless, India does have a seat on the Open Working Group on SDGs, which as we have noted met in mid-March 2013 for the first time.

**In China,** there is a member from China on the HLP, and it does also have a seat on the Open Working Group on SDGs. However, ‘It is still focused on its own issues indeed and there is not enough either interest or capacity in the government to be very much engaged in such cases as post-2015’ (Senior consultant, 28.02.03). It has not yet had a national consultation, but a preliminary meeting has been held in Yunnan to which we shall return (UNA, 2012).

**In Japan** too there is a member on the HLP, in the person of the previous prime minister, and it too has a member on the Open Working Group on SDGs. Furthermore, in 2011, Japan established an informal group, “the Post-MDGs Contact Group” with the aim to:\textsuperscript{13} explore what a new global framework for development beyond 2015 might look like; produce recommendations in preparation for more formal international discussion over the post-MDGs; and, provide the general public and CSOs with visions and ideas on the post-MDGs. As of mid-April 2013, the Post-MDGs Contact Group had met 6 times, with the last meeting taking place in New York 11-12\textsuperscript{th} March, 2013.

However, not all policy makers or academics are convinced about Japan’s level of involvement or interest:

‘As for the next MDGs, I observe that serious discussion on it has not started yet in Japan. The next Tokyo International Conference on African Development, which has a very local agenda, is paid much more attention.

As Japan has reduced its ODA by half and is preoccupied with its domestic issues, I do not see that MOFA could extract strong commitment for MDGs from various sectors in Japan except for a minor group of NGOs.

As for partner countries’ interests in MDGs, as you know, MDG is a donor-driven concept. So only those who are responsible for manipulating donors have interests in the post-2015 debates’ (Senior academic to KK, 19.02.03).

\textsuperscript{12}The authors acknowledge that other activities are going on in the South, and that groups such as GCAP (\url{www.whiteband.org}) and the ‘Beyond 2015 coalition’ have southern representation.

\textsuperscript{13}\url{http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/untaskteam_undf/group_d.pdf}
In Vietnam, ‘I never heard anybody except a few officials who are in charge of Aid Effectiveness in the planning ministry refer to the MDGs’ (Senior academic, 19.02.03). Vietnam’s presence on the newly created Open Working Group may change this.

In Thailand, despite Thailand having been the location for the iconic Jomtien World Conference on Education for All in 1990, and also being on the Open Working Group, ‘it has shown a complete disinterest in EFA over the last 10 years’ (Senior aid policy analyst, 21.02.03).

In South Korea, too, there is a representative on the HLP, and the country shares a seat on the new Open Working Group. But ‘regarding the temperature of post-MDG debates, it seems that it is similar to China and to Japan. The general opinion about participating in discussion about post-MDGs just sees it as something relevant to the international communities’ movement and activities because it was the UN which led in adopting the MDGs in 2000. There are not many critical reviews and researches on MDGs; so academia is not active in leading post MDG issues in Korea’ (Senior policy analyst in development agency).

Nonetheless, we should acknowledge the participation of some, like the Korea Development Institute, which have had a role in the so-called “Bellagio Goals” proposal (see Carin et al., 2012).

In Bangladesh there is also a representative on the OWG, but the situation seems dramatically different. There is, for one thing, an extremely vibrant civil society community, and already by 2005 dissatisfaction with the official government view of progress on the MDGs had led to the creation of a People’s Forum on MDGs (PFM). Then in the current context of MDG debates, since 2012, the PFM has sought to develop a civil society position on many of the key sectoral concerns, including Health, Education and Growth & Employment. The government meanwhile has gone ahead with the development of a government position and input to the official UN process, but despite claims to the contrary, there has been ‘no consultation, communication or interaction between the government preparation process and the PFM’ (Ahmed, 2013: 21). Nevertheless, PFM has proceeded to develop a whole series of nine position papers on the main development issues such as poverty, governance, conflict, health, food security and education.

The education paper in particular argues for a very substantial set of priorities, some highly Bangladesh-specific such as reducing shadow education, and others very relevant to countries everywhere (Nath, 2013). The question that arises from this highly interactive process around development issues is whether the MDG agenda has as much been used to generate urgent debates relevant to Bangladesh as to identify priorities which should be carried upwards to the UN’s higher level agenda setting process. In other words, have the timelines and deadlines of the world’s agenda-setting process been effectively used to sharpen the debate about development priorities within Bangladesh?

Bangladesh and the Southern Voice
Given the vibrancy of the NGO constituency in Bangladesh it should not perhaps be surprising that one of the most obvious examples of Southern engagement in the post-2015 debates should have been supported by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in that country. Along with a number of other think tanks in Asia, Latin America and Africa, it developed in September 2012 a proposal to the IDRC’s Think Tank Initiative to support an analytical process in the South, around the MDGs. The proposal was acutely
aware of the proliferation of work in the North on post-2015, and the opposite, as we have just illustrated, in the South. It argued that ‘a close scrutiny of these [post-2015] processes and their interplay reveals that they benefit in a very limited way from inputs of the entities located in the South, in particular from Southern think tanks’ (CPD, 2012).

Along with a series of these other think tanks, the proposal led to funding from the IDRC’s multi-donor Think Tank Initiative. In due course a first substantive paper was produced with the rather modest, academic title: First approximations on Post-MDG International Development Goals (Southern Voice, 2013). Like many Northern NGOs, this Southern Voice argued, amongst other goals, for improving the quality of education, including the setting of a target for universal secondary education. But it also argued in support of the ‘generation of more gainful employment opportunities’. It felt that this should receive separate mention, and that ‘the creation of productive capacity should be delineated as a stand-alone target’ (Southern Voice, 2013: 7). It is interesting, in connection with this concern with employment, that the Southern Voice should also pick out labour market issues, ‘including migration and migrants’ rights’, an area of massive concern to countries like Bangladesh. But arguably also it is very much a North-South issue.

An apparent anomaly in this issue of national and especially civil society interest in post-2015 is whether such interest gets reflected in MY World which we discussed above. It is most surprising, given the dynamism around post-2015 of the Bangladesh NGO networks, that so few individuals in Bangladesh have (so far) taken advantage of the MY World window to register their own development priorities. Bangladesh, as of 1st April 2013, has only had 361 individuals registering their views. By contrast, Pakistan has about twice as many responses, and countries such as Indonesia have over seven times more registrations, the latter being not unconnected with the President being one of the three co-chairs of the HLP.

Turning now from Asia to Africa, several of those we talked with in August 2012 register the same views now as then, and comment that there is little new interest in the post-2015 debates. This is particularly clear in South Africa. And here the MY World survey tool seems more accurately to reflect the mood of the country than it did for Bangladesh. In South Africa, perhaps because of its very active NGO community, there were as of April 1st 2,184 individuals who had registered their priorities for the next development agenda.

In Latin America, one of the more interesting countries to track is Brazil. Brazil, of course, hosted the UN Rio+20 conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012, with the outcomes document giving rise to the intergovernmental Open Working Group on SDGs. Brazil has been quite vocal about the need for the SDGs and MDGs to be separate, and that there ‘should in fact be two separate sets of goals’ (see, International Development Committee 2013: 16); which has implications for the treatment of education and skill in the post-2015 framework of course. Brazil is very much involved in discussions related to the SDGs (it coordinated the setting up of the OWG, and also now has a seat on it) and also with the HLP (their Minister of Environment is a HLP member).

---

16 However, one of those we talked to last time reported little or no change. A senior policy analyst-cum-academic comments that ‘There is nothing new or different around here. Brazil remains distant from such international agendas. It is driven by its own internal forces’ (Communication, 03.03.13).
Also of note since our last paper (King and Palmer, 2012), is the establishment of the Campaign for People’s Goals for Sustainable Development in October 2012 (known simply as “the People’s Goals”). This campaign consists of a diverse group of CSOs, movements and networks from across the south, from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The campaign has rapidly identified ten priority themes for its people’s goals; interestingly, not one of the 10 headline goals is education or skills related.

1.3. Reflecting on the many strands of Southern engagement: modalities and substance

Before leaving this section on Southern voices in the MDG/EFA debates, we should just summarise the modalities available and reflect on the substance of the messages.

i) First, as far as the attempt to ensure the South was part of the Northern-led consultations such as those by the EC or GCE, this did succeed but to a relatively modest extent. So far there has been no attempt to tease out whether the Southern messages were any different from the North. Instead, joint reports were written.

In the case of the citizens’ survey, MY World, where it might have been thought that the Southern countries should take the lead in indicating their individual development priorities, since many of the 16 development options are more pressing for developing economies, the reality is that (so far) with some exceptions, Northern citizens have been more proactive than those in the South. It is probable that this situation will change when MY World gets significantly more publicity and the offline and SMS components are rolled out.

What is currently inaccessible to those participating in the survey is any indication of the (early) patterns of development preferences by countries; all that is available to the public are the raw totals of those voting in Russia, Japan, Chile etc. Doubtless the organisers will be able readily to analyse the comparative development preferences by country, though there may not yet be enough votes in for many countries to make such an analysis meaningful at this stage. This would be fascinating to know.

ii) The second strand of Southern participation is via the series of national and regional consultations orchestrated by the UN family. Each of the eleven thematic consultations, including education, has had e-consultations, and there has of course been participation from the South, though not all of these can be identified. In the summaries of these consultations, there is no particular attempt to draw out emphases from richer or poorer countries. The focus at least of the education consultations was pre-set from the start; hence the inputs from both North and South were perhaps to some extent pre-determined.

As part of the thematic consultations, there have been regional meetings, at least in education. These have taken place in the Arab States, Latin America, Africa and in Asia. Interestingly, and unlike the pre-Jomtien process, there have been no regional meetings held in the North around education, though Brookings organized a donor consultation on 28th February 2013 (Brookings, 2013b). Paralleling the e-consultations, the focus of

17 http://peoplesgoals.org/
18 The new ‘results’ tab (http://www.myworld2015.org/?page=results) allows the public to view the responses by topic.
19 In fact, there were several recent meetings in the North regarding education, the first of which were during the week of the IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings in April 2013. There is also a
these meetings has in part reflected the same four sub-themes as the e-consultations: equitable access; quality of learning; global citizenship, jobs and competencies for life and work; and governance, financing and partnership. In the case of the most recent one, Asia-Pacific, of 28th February-1st March, the draft outcomes and recommendations cover no less than 19 key areas, and the list of scenarios and options cover a further seven. Mindful of the fact that 26 proposals cover a huge range of situations, the final sentence offers the text of a single education goal: ‘To guarantee equitable opportunities for all to participate in transformative quality learning at all levels aiming to provide knowledge, skills, competencies and values vital to achieve inclusive and sustainable development’ (UNESCO-Unicef, 2013a: 6).

The regional consultations were quite explicitly aimed at the global thematic consultation which took place in Dakar on 18-19th March 2013, and to find their way into the global UN report on the post-2015 agenda to be presented to the Secretary General in September 2013. Despite the extraordinary diversity of the Asia-Pacific region, for example, the intention was to provide to the next level of synthesis ‘a collective voice from the region regarding education priorities’.

iii) The High Level Panel (HLP) Process. If the national, regional and global processes we have briefly examined in analysing the role of Southern voices imply a bottom-up movement, arguably the opposite is true of the HLP process. Thus, in the case of education just mentioned, the recommendations at the country level were meant to feed into the regional consultations, and then up into the Dakar global meeting, being synthesised and adjusted between UNESCO and Unicef as the centralisation process continues.

Meanwhile the meetings of the HLP (in New York, London, Monrovia and Bali) have covered a great deal of ground. Where the education meetings have been looking at equitable access, quality, global citizenship & jobs, and financing, the HLP have already confirmed the importance of the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental - and the panel members are likely exploring illustrative universal goals and targets relating to these. It has also been agreed that any proposed goal, such as in Education, has to be presented so that it represents all three aspects, not as a solely social goal in an education silo (HLP, 2013a).

Whether the individual HLP members have set about organising workshops to secure examples of such integrated goals is not known for sure, but some sourcing of illustrative goals and targets has certainly been going on in the countries of HLP members.

When it comes to education, the HLP does not seem to be overly concerned about the particularity of what is being discussed in the education meetings just referred to. Rather, education and skills are being identified by the HLP as key elements in a radical, transformational agenda, and there is confirmation of the importance of ‘universal learning’ as can be seen in the communiqué from the Monrovia meeting:

This transformational agenda should create jobs, develop infrastructure, raise productivity, improve competitiveness and promote sustainable production and

Brookings-organised event on ‘The Sprint to 2015: Education and Learning, and the Millennium Development Goals’ on 17th April, as well as a series of meetings organized by Gordon Brown in his capacity as the UN Special Envoy for Global Education. The following day, on 18th April, there are ‘High-Level Country Ministerial Meetings’ on education. At the time of finalizing this current paper (14th April, 2013) these meetings have not yet happened.

http://educationenvoy.org/events
consumption. It should tap into the potential presented by a larger more educated and better skilled workforce, new technologies and innovation, and the expansion of national, regional and global markets (HLP, 2013a: 1).

With these two processes (top-down and bottom-up) underway, it should not be surprising if some of the particular initiatives around post-2015 are still trying directly to influence the HLP process as well as working their way up through national, regional and global thematic consultations.

We shall return to the crucially important role of the road-map of influence in a later section.

2. The Surprisingly Low Profile of Skills Development in the Post-2015 Debate

This was one of the themes in our last report (King and Palmer, 2012: 46-47). We noted that despite a lot of attention to foundation and transferable skills in several of the post-2015 proposals, there was little powerful focus on the role of vocational and technical skills in the education and skills goals and targets under discussion. We anticipated however that with several key reports on skills becoming available in 2012, there could well be an increase in attention to skills in a post-2015 context.

What is surprising is that despite a whole series of major global reports on jobs, employment and skills, there has not been increased attention to skills as a post-2015 goal (King, 2012). Or rather, there has been a good deal of attention to skills but principally this has been concerned with foundation and transferable skills (For detail on the key education and skills proposals, see Annex 2). Even in the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2012, there was much more space given to foundation, transferable and life skills than to technical and vocational skills. The suggested education goal for post-2015 in the EFA GMR 2012 is for universal lower secondary education, again emphasizing the role of foundation and transferable skills. However, a recent brief from the EFA GMR team has proposed five goals, including one related to skills:

‘Ensure that by 2030 all young people and adults, whatever their circumstances, can acquire skills needed to obtain decent jobs and lead fulfilling lives, through equitable access to appropriate training, including via second-chance programmes’. (UNESCO, 2013b: 3)

Part of the reason for the paucity in goals’ suggestions may be that internationally comparable indicators are not yet available for the domain of technical and vocational skills. But it may also be that the skills constituency is spread across different ministries at the country level and across different UN specialized agencies. The once large cadres of what the World Bank termed ‘vocational educators’ have all but vanished from the agencies such as the Bank itself, Sida, ODA/DFID, and Danida, though they remain in GIZ and in Swiss Development Cooperation, but often in separate departments from education. Training, the once largest department of the ILO, has been substantially reduced in size over the years, and is in 2013 subsumed under Employment Policy. The European Training Foundation (ETF) remains one of the largest groupings of professionals with skills expertise.

2.1. The current status of skills-related goals and the post-2015 agenda

Apart from the various references to skills made in our earlier paper, there have certainly been a small number of new proposals relating to technical and vocational skills or simply to skills development. The most suggestive and influential amongst these is likely to be the World TVET Report of UNESCO to which we return in a moment.
In addition to the proposal from the EFA GMR team noted above, there have been, however, several other post-2015 proposals that have included skills development. One of these emerges from the Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group on the post-2015 Development Framework for Education, which in its meeting in December 2012 proposed as a principal goal: ‘Post-basic education expanded strategically to meet needs for knowledge and skills related to employment and livelihoods’; however the more detailed specification of this was not particularly explicit about provision of technical and vocational education and training: ‘Invest strategically in expanded and equitable access to post-basic and tertiary level education and training linked to wellbeing, livelihoods and employment and the transition to responsible adult citizenship’ (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012).

Skills development in the regional thematic consultations around education in 2012-13 is another area worth examining. To what extent have these fora considered options for skills development in addition to basic education more generally? It is particularly important to review this status because UNESCO's World TVET Report (WTR), while not published till May 2013 (UNESCO, 2013a), takes a 'transformative' approach in reviewing TVET, making it very different from any traditional view of technical and vocational skills. A preview of this transformative lens on TVET was available in the Shanghai Main Working Document (UNESCO, 2012a), but at its centre is a focus on revising the scope and concept of TVET. In a sense this transformation would make TVET a more natural element within the EFA movement.

Interestingly therefore the report of Asia-Pacific Regional thematic consultation on Education in the post-2015 development agenda appears to anticipate this transformative perspective in commenting that: 'In this view, the emphasis of education policy and reform needs to go beyond the provision of academic knowledge and skills often confined to economic growth' (UNESCO-Unicef, 2013a: 2). But when it comes to the more detailed text on specific skills, there is certainly a great deal on a whole range of 'skills and competencies' which will be required increasingly. But like the Shanghai Document, there are almost too many types of skill mentioned: ‘21st century’, 'non-cognitive', 'transversal', 'life skills', ‘psycho-social skills’, ‘income generation skills’, ‘entrepreneurship’ and even ‘traditional knowledge and skills’. And when it comes to ‘relevant technical and vocational skills’, they are recommended as needing to be combined with ‘necessary “non-cognitive skills” for a decent life and work in a rapidly changing world’ (ibid: 5).

The parallel regional thematic meeting in Sharm El Sheikh for the Arab region underlined the importance of youth as a key element in the scope and shape of the post-2015 agenda, but it also covered rather too many dimensions of skills, even if it acknowledged that skills were for both life and work:

‘Youth: Need to focus on the education of youth, whether in terms of skills development for work and life, technical and vocational education and training, or general secondary education as the crossroads between basic education and further education, training and/or the world of work’ (UNESCO, 2012b: 9).

We shall also look very briefly at the profile of skills development in the Global Thematic Consultation on Education at Dakar, March 18-19th 2013, but we shall consider that at the same time as reviewing, lower down, the Dakar meeting as a whole, including its possible impact on the HLP process and the role of skills development within that.

---

20 See also Penson, 2013.
There have been a number of other suggestions for vocational training as a goal, target or indicator in post-2015 proposals. One of these would be the suggestion from the International Trade Union Federation that as part of *A new distribution of income and power* there is a role for considering investing in education and vocational training as a proportion of GDP (ITUC, 2012). This is of course situating the case for a skills goal more in relation to an employment goal than as an element in the rights to education. Such a connection of skills to employment and work rights is another strand in the case for a skills goal, and it may be that in due course this positioning can reinforce the case made for technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills in the thematic consultation on structural change, productive capacities and employment held in Tokyo in May 2012 (King and Palmer, 2012: 29).

In our earlier paper, one of the other strands that emphasized the role for skills acquisition was the Brookings' *Compact on Learning* (2011). We illustrated there the key role of their priority 3: Providing Post-Primary Education Opportunities, and within that the strategies for strengthening the 'link between post-primary education and improved life and labour opportunities. We noted the challenge involved in translating these strategies into domains and sub-domains in which particular skills and competencies might be developed (King and Palmer, 2012: 41). But in what was promising to be one of the more influential contributions to thinking about education and skills post-2015, it was interesting to see that skills acquisition was taken for-granted as a key strand.

However, now that the Learning Metrics Task Force (LMTF) has begun a process of determining what are the key learning domains where measurement and standards might be applied, it would seem that vocational learning has no longer got a place at the table. The first report of the LMTF, *Toward universal learning: what every child should learn*, provides a fascinating account of a whole range of 'skills' associated with the selected seven domains of learning. There is no longer the same concern with the transition from school to work, and to the extent that skills-for-work are considered, it would seem that the emphasis has been placed on problem-solving skills: 'At the post-primary level, the skills and abilities in this domain are not tied to particular economic or employment circumstances, but are aimed instead at the adaptability required in fast-evolving circumstances such as global urbanization and industrialization' (Brookings, 2013: 33). A senior analyst connected with the LMTF process has put the draft decision about skills this way:

> The seven domains of learning were those that the task force and working group members felt were important for all children to have an opportunity to develop. They decided that after around the time children finish lower secondary, they often start to specialize in one or two domains and it would be impossible to set global standards or targets for learning outcomes at a level beyond that. So they decided to focus instead on the foundational and transferable skills that support learning in whichever domains a young person goes on to pursue. (Communication to King, 01.03.13)

Doubtless, beyond these few just mentioned, there are other conceptualisations of how skills for work and for life can be accommodated in the emerging framework of goals being proposed through the consultative process. Certainly, the GMR's proposal for universal lower secondary education emphasizes the key role of foundation and transferable skills to that level of education. Equally, however, the WTR, when it is published in May 2013, will propose a complementary approach to the inclusion of skills in the education process.

The reality, however, may well be that there are only two ways that skills or TVET can be included as a new post-2015 goal. One is to develop the link with work, jobs,
productivity and growth; and the other is to present TVET as a natural continuation of EFA. It is the latter approach which the WTR argues is crucial for TVET’s transformation. Arguably, TVET-for-all can only become part of an education-and-skills goal if it is presented as part of everyone’s work as a human being:

The WTR argues that more of the same or slight improvements in TVET cannot be an option. Yet, there is a widespread international interest in skills that can promote development. The WTR’s response is to stress the potentially transformative role of skills for life and for work as part of a wider view of achieving sustainable human development. Whilst being in sympathy with some of the ILO and World Bank arguments about jobs and development, the WTR proposes that TVET is about more than employability and productivity, encompassing vocational work that builds communities and which contributes to a wide range of desirable developmental outcomes. Suggestively, it draws on emerging work on professional capabilities to suggest that a capabilities approach to learners and institutions could help ensure that the needs and hopes of those in vocational systems are taken into far greater account when planning TVET policies and programmes. (McGrath, communication, 05.03.13)

As the WTR examines TVET through its selected lenses, transformative, equity and economic, it recognizes that, though its ten key policy areas all treat some of the latest debates on TVET, the transformative lens in particular acknowledges that vocational capabilities should become much more inclusive, and that all human beings are called to work, whether in the home, factory or farm. Multiple skills are required in child-care, housework and household enterprise. Often these are not collected in national accounts. Skills are widely acquired and utilized before the age of adult work is reached, and they continue to be activated and deployed for years after the artificial barrier of ‘retirement’ has been reached. The WTR thus has a lifelong perspective on skill. But with its transformative lens, it challenges people to think beyond the vocational track, school or institute, and to recognize the vocational elements in the general curricula and the general elements in the vocational. This is not just a play on words, but hybridity characterizes many of the developments in TVET system reform.

The process of identifying key focuses for goals and targets is one thing, but the translation of these core ideas about TVET or skills development into the frameworks of world-wide discussions on post-2015 is something else. We noted something of the complexity of translating southern voices into these post-2015 conversations earlier in this paper. And we now perceive a similar challenge in translating the central message of vocation as a core element in universal learning into the discussions of post-2015.

Perhaps for the moment, we can identify the following draft skills goal as having merit, deriving as it does from our critical reflection on a wide range of thinking, especially by the World TVET Report, over this past year; it covers equity, quality, skills for life, skills for work, and for growth:

“Equitable access for all to quality skills for life, decent work and sustainable growth”.

Following our analysis of Southern voices and of skills, we proceed now in our third section to lay out the lines of the road map for post-2015, paying particular attention to the route for including education and skills in the national, regional and global debates.

21 Simon McGrath is one of the lead authors of the WTR (2013). The WTR will be available in May 2013 well before the UN General Assembly of September.
3. **A Complex Trajectory to New Education Goals: the Post-2015 Road Map of Influence and How Education and Skills are Featuring in it**

In this third section, we lay out some of the complexity of the goal-setting with which many different bodies have been tasked. The final deadline is clear: more than two years away in September 2015. But as we mentioned in our earlier report (in September 2012), the runners are going at different speeds, some still scarcely started, and others half-way round the track, while others again have completed their reflections on sector-specific goals. There appear to be different speeds across the eleven thematic areas, with our field of Education being one of the last to complete its thematic deliberations. We shall note that those concerned with Education-post-2015 face a double challenge of considering its place in the post-2015 MDGs, as well as in any future for the six EFA Goals beyond 2015.

Though the finishing line may appear to be September 2015, the realities may be that it is two years earlier. The High Level Panel will complete its deliberations in May 2013; those will be passed to the Secretary General who will complete his report on post-2015 and this will come to the General Assembly in September 2013.

It is widely felt, therefore, that these two headline processes need to be informed with whatever goal and target proposals have been made in the national, regional and global thematic consultations, as well as through the consultative CSO modalities.

We sketch some of this complexity below.

### 3.1. **Unfinished business to 2015**

September 2015 is still more than two years away. There remains a significant degree of unfinished business with regard to the education MDGs and EFA Goals (UNESCO GMR, 2012). The UN is keen that the world not lose momentum with regard to efforts to achieve the already agreed education goals. In this regard, (at least) two actions have been taken by the UN Secretary General (SG) to try to keep eyes on 2015 in respect of education.

The first action was the UN SG’s appointment of Gordon Brown as a ‘UN Special Envoy for Global Education’ in July 2012. Gordon Brown has been ‘tasked with delivering on the world’s promise to ensure that no child is denied the right to go to school and learn by 2015’.22

The second, related action was the launch of the ‘Education First’ Initiative in September 2012 which is meant to both ‘rally a broad spectrum of actors for the final push’ towards 2015 to ‘ensure we deliver on the promise of universal access to primary education’, and ‘lay the groundwork for a bold vision for education post-2015’.23 The focus of Education First is on access (primary and lower secondary), quality/learning, and global citizenship.

---

23 [http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/308.htm](http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/308.htm)
3.2. **Education post-2015**

There is currently a tripartite process of determining the position of education post-2015, each of the three processes has their own trajectory, but each with its final sights on a new agreement in 2015:

a) The post-MDG process  
b) The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) process  
c) The post-EFA process  

Below, we take each in turn and try to explain who is developing what (and when), what mention education and vocational skills are getting, and how they all fit together (or don’t). As we noted in our earlier paper (King and Palmer, 2012), in addition to the three main processes, there are a multitude of non-UN processes, consultations, reports, blogs and op-eds from CSOs, academics, experts, and think-tanks. We shall not revisit all this here, but only comment that the landscape is getting very crowded and the multiple pathways hard to keep track of, even amongst the UN initiatives. The fact that there is so much debate and interest in post-2015 from non-UN actors is very encouraging; whether these will be happy with the outcome of the official UN process remains to be seen. Let us return, then, to the tripartite process, and see how education and skills currently feature within this.

3.2.1. **Education, skills and the post-MDG process**

The first process that is exploring the role of education and skills post-2015 is the post-MDG process, which is currently represented by the UN High Level Panel, the UN facilitated consultations and the (still being set up) UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

*The UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post 2015 Development Agenda*

The UN High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post 2015 Development Agenda (HLP)\(^{24}\) have so far met four times since September 2012 – as noted earlier.\(^{25}\) They are due to produce a report to the UN Secretary General (SG) by the end of May 2013 as already mentioned, which will serve as an input for the SG’s own report to the UN General Assembly (GA) meeting in September 2013.

What do we know about how education and skills are featuring in HLP discussions? The HLP discussions have not been made public, but communiqués were released following both the Monrovia (HLP, 2013a) and Bali meetings (HLP, 2013b).

The Monrovia communiqué (HLP, 2013a) makes two direct mentions of education and skills: first by referring to the need to ensure ‘investments in young people’s development’ and ‘universal learning’, but without specifying what kind of learning should be universal, or indeed what type or level of education and training were being called for; second, by commenting, as we noted earlier, that the post-2015 development agenda ‘should tap into the potential presented by a larger, more educated and better skilled workforce…’. This latter comment follows directly on the importance of a ‘transformational agenda’ that will ‘create jobs…raise productivity, improve competitiveness…’. Meanwhile, other sections of the communiqué make it very clear that education and skills must, by implication, feature in a future development framework; for example the communiqué notes that:

\(^{24}\) [www.post2015hlp.org](http://www.post2015hlp.org)  
\(^{25}\) There have been meetings so far in New York (September, 2012), London (November 2012), Monrovia (January 2013) and Bali (March 2013).
• ‘Our vision and our responsibility is to end extreme poverty in all its forms in the context of sustainable development...’
• [we need] ‘to have in place the building blocks of sustained prosperity for all’.
• ‘we seek to make gains in poverty eradication irreversible’.
• ‘promoting sustainable development, supporting job-creating growth, protecting the environment and providing peace, security, justice, freedom and equity at all levels.’ (HLP, 2013a)

None of the above can happen without having equitable access to quality primary and post-primary education as well as skills for decent and productive work. It is hoped that the final report of the HLP will make this clear.

The Bali HLP meeting, which took place at the end of March 2013, focused on the issues of global partnerships, financing and means of implementation and hence the Bali communiqué (HLP, 2013b), unlike the Monrovia communiqué, made little specific mention of any sector, and no direct mention of any human resources issue, including education and health.26 From the communiqué, therefore, it is not clear if the Summary Outcomes of the Global Thematic Consultation on Education in Dakar ten days earlier (discussed below) has had any influence on the HLP. The five key areas identified by the HLP in order to progress their post-2015 vision might appear a world away from the specifics of education goals, or indeed health goals. And yet on closer examination, the broad sweep of the HLP core areas of focus, from Bali, do have direct implications for education, training and capacity building. For instance, the Panel’s emphasis on Sustainable Production and Consumption speaks directly of ‘changed behaviour’ and by implication the importance of worldwide education and training for sustainable development picked out also in the Summary Outcomes of Dakar (see UNESCO-Unicef, 2013b). Equally, the Panel’s demand for a Data Revolution with its requirement of ‘substantial investments in building capacity’ before 2015 also speaks directly to education and training needs. Indeed the whole paragraph of the communiqué on data availability and better accountability in measuring progress translates directly into the very concerns about the measuring of learning outcomes that, we shall note below, were discussed in Dakar. The same would be true for Health.

This is not of course to say that there has been any direct influence on Bali from Dakar. That is probably the wrong line to explore. Rather for Education as for Health and other thematic areas, it may be less a question of how to influence the HLP and more a question of making the sector goals really coherent in their own right, and then seeking to explore how the changing lenses of the HLP may have implications for the way the Education and other goals are interpreted. And not least by avoiding Education or Health silos

It is expected, nevertheless, that the final report of the HLP will have some direct targets for education and training systems, as well as these less specific but vitally important needs for capacity building and measurement of human progress, whether in education, health, or other sectors.

As noted, the report of the HLP will serve as an input to the UN SG’s own report on post-2015 to the 67th session of the UN General Assembly in September 2013. It will be interesting, however, to see the extent to which the HLP’s report and its priorities are

26 Some, including the Director of the EFA Global Monitoring Report would have like to have seen explicit mention of education (see Rose, 2013a).
taken up by the SG's report. It will, subsequently, be intriguing to see the reaction of the UN member states to the SG's own report in September 2013, and the extent to which its recommendations are accepted (or developed) by the inter-governmental Open Working Group (OWG) on the SDGs (see below).

**The UN-facilitated thematic and country consultations**

Another post-MDG strand has been the series of eleven thematic and over 70 country consultations that have been facilitated by the UN. How did education feature in these?

First, and most obvious for this paper is the ‘Education’ thematic consultation led by UNESCO and Unicef. The e-consultation dimension of this ran from 10th December 2012 to 3rd March 2013, and had 4 sub-themes, as mentioned earlier: equitable access; quality of learning; global citizenship, skills and jobs; governance and financing. Following the e-consultation, the face-to-face ‘Global Meeting of the Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda’ took place in Dakar, Senegal, 18-19th March 2013. This final consultation on Education took place relatively late in terms of the series of key milestones in the post-2015 Road Map. Its timing was just over a week before the meeting of the HLP in Bali, 25-27 March 2013. It proved impossible therefore to develop a full, final report, put it round the international education constituency for reactions, and then produce a final version which could go to Bali as well as informing the other UN high level channels, including the SG’s Report.

Nevertheless, despite the evident shortage of time, the global thematic meeting was duly held, with the location of Dakar perhaps signalling a reminder that at least for UNESCO the meeting had a double purpose: a) to identify agreement around a key role for education in the post-MDG development agenda, and b) to rethink the future of the six Education for All (EFA) Goals which were agreed in April 2000 in Dakar.

Compared to the relative accessibility and simplicity of the draft Health Goals of ‘Maximising Healthy Life Expectancy’ and ‘Universal Health Coverage’ in the Global Thematic Report for Health, the range of interests in education goals and targets is potentially enormous. There are interest groups concerned with early childhood right through to adult literacy and numeracy, others concerned with different dimensions of formal, non-formal and informal education, and others again with learning outcomes as well as with access. Even within learning or quality education, there are the different domains of skills, knowledge, attitutes and values. In addition, there are rights-based approaches as well as economic and investment approaches.

We shall just touch on some of these challenges to securing a consensus, and look at a little of what lies behind the two-page ‘Summary of Outcomes’ of Dakar (UNESCO-Unicef, 2013b), which is, as of 14th April 2013, the only agreed, publicly available output from a very large and multi-faceted meeting.

---

27 [www.worldwewant2015.org](http://www.worldwewant2015.org)

28 If we compare the Education thematic consultation process with the Health one, the ‘Draft for public comment’ of the global thematic health report was available on 1st February 2013; then there were nineteen days for reaction and review by the health constituency before a completed version would be ready to send by the end of March 2013, ‘so that the UN High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons and the UN Secretary-General can consider it when they are drafting their reports on the overall post-2015 development agenda’ (Health Global Report, 2013: 1).

29 For other commentary on the Dakar event, see Rose (2013b) and Anderson and Winthrop (2013).
A valuable coverage of the range of issues up for debate and possible agreement at Dakar was a 40-page background document, *Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda*, circulated to participants just a few days before the Global Consultation (Unicef, 2013). Some sense of the intellectual and political challenge faced by those framing the 'Summary of Outcomes' (UNESCO-Unicef, 2013b) may be gathered by even a brief glance at this background document. It wisely acknowledges that 'The list of thematic priorities is long and comprehensive, arguably making agreement on goals difficult. The list reflects a holistic vision of education incorporating and extending the current six EFA goals and the MDGs' (Unicef, 2013: 25). Illustrating this is the statement that there have been three sets of thematic priorities that have emerged over the consultation period before Dakar; these are 'Access to all levels and types of education', 'Quality and learning' and 'Cross-cutting issues'. However, within 'quality', for example, there turn out to be the following themes and sub-themes: learning environment, learning, teachers, relevance, skills for work, sexuality education, education for global citizenship, and education for sustainable development; within the 'cross-cutting issues' there are the sub-themes of gender, inclusion and emergencies; and even within 'access to all levels and types of education', the very title of the priority underlines its vastness.

It is interesting to see what happens to this very rich, but complex set of priority themes and sub-themes as a result of the 'UN Thematic Consultation on Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda' in Dakar. Inevitably, the focus of any interested reader will be on whether there is an education goal identified as there has been in Health. The answer is that there is, even if it is a bit of a mouthful: “*Equitable quality lifelong education and learning for all* is proposed as an overarching education goal to realize the world we want” (UNESCO-Unicef, 2013b). Presumably the three adjectives, equitable, quality and lifelong are also attached to 'learning for all'. Thus both education and learning are claimed to be lifelong, equitable and quality processes. Of course, this overarching goal is very much a commentary on the narrowness of the Education MDGs, and their failure to address quality and learning. But arguably the very generality or lack of specificity in the overarching goal then means it has to be translated into more meaningful prose in the rest of the short document. Once this happens, it turns out that ‘quality and learning outcomes’ cover so many domains of human life. Not just ‘proficiency in literacy and numeracy’, but quality education is also intended to ‘equip people with the skills, knowledge and values to obtain decent work’, ‘be active citizens’, ‘respond to the challenges of climate change’, and much else. Quality education also implies ‘safe and enabling learning environments’ with ‘qualified and motivated teachers’. Once ‘equity’ is spelled out, it too specifies a huge range of possible disparities. And finally ‘lifelong’ is translated into the very opposite of the MDG that was only concerned with primary education; it now covers ‘access beyond primary school’ for encompassing all education levels (ECCE), basic and post-basic), training, all forms of education (formal, non-formal and informal), and all age-groups’.

Once the overarching goal is translated into so many other dimensions of equity, access and quality, it is clear that the job of this global thematic consultation has scarcely begun. Indeed, that is precisely what is admitted in one of the last paragraphs of this two page Summary of Outcomes:

As the global conversation continues, these priorities need to be translated into appropriate sub-goals, targets, and indicators within a coherent and integrated framework, which takes into account existing processes and proposals. In particular, we will work towards seeking convergence between a revised EFA Initiative and the post-2015 process. Our framework should balance global, regional and national realities as well as capture both the contribution of the education sector to development and that of other sectors to education. Strong and innovative partnerships and well-governed and accountable education
systems are vital to achieve our goals and expected outcomes. (UNESCO-Unicef, 2013)

We can thus see that the most difficult work of the thematic consultation still lies ahead, including sorting out the dual challenge of any new EFA framework along with any post-MDG agenda involving education. The Summary of Outcomes does a good job in arguing the case for education but passes on to the next stage of the process all the tasks of specification. Whether it will prove possible, as planned, for a longer 10-page ‘draft synthesis report to be posted online for broad dissemination and feedback before its finalisation in April 2013’ remains to be seen. Equally, though it might be doubted that the High Level Panel in Bali would have been directly influenced by this minimal Summary of Outcomes, we have argued above that this may be the wrong question. Rather, the finalisation of the Dakar consultation could still consider some of the key implications for education and a skilled workforce from the different communiqués of Monrovia and Bali.

On its side, however, we have already noted that the HLP from its Monrovia communiqué is aware of the importance of ‘universal learning’ and of the vital role in ‘transformation’ of ‘a larger more educated and better skilled workforce’. Even if the Dakar Summary of Outcomes did not confirm precisely such a key role for skills and a skilled workforce, it does underline in its overarching goal the central issue of educational quality and of lifelong learning for all, and it underlines ‘the skills needed for life and work’.

Before leaving the Dakar Summary of Outcomes, we should just repeat the point that ‘skills for work’ had been very substantially commented upon in the 40-page background document for the meeting; indeed ‘the main message’ from the earlier consultations had been that the education system was not equipping children and particularly youth ‘with the relevant skills and competencies for securing decent work’ (Unicef, 2013: 19). The background document had also mentioned as critically important the argument in the Growth and Employment thematic consultation that the ‘employment and employability crisis could not be addressed without addressing the skills crisis’ (Unicef, 2013: 19). This language of skills and competencies for decent work does make it into the Dakar Summary of Outcomes in the form of ‘the skills, knowledge and values to obtain decent work’, but the sharpness of focus is perhaps lost by the Summary emphasizing the priority of access beyond primary to all levels of education and training, formal, non-formal and informal.

Doubtless, this critical emphasis on all young people having the skills for a job can be secured in the longer draft from Dakar being finalised at the moment. It may seem unnecessary to repeat this basic point about the role of skills for work. But the precise wording of goals and targets is of vital importance, as is seen by the years wasted through the careless use of ‘life skills’ in Goal 3 of Dakar 2000. Hence the vocational aspiration, both for life and for decent work, discussed earlier in relation to the WTR, does need to be distinguished from the foundation skills which the GMR 2012 has valuably shown are missing in so many millions of young people.

Second, the ‘Growth and Employment’ thematic consultation, led by the ILO and supported by JICA, contains discussion on skills and education, as mentioned above. The e-consultation, 11th January – 8th March 2013, had the following themes: Jobs and livelihoods; Growth, diversification, structural change; Development-led globalization; and, Sustainability and growth. The ILO moderator’s summary of the ‘jobs and

30 http://www.worldwewant2015.org/employment
livelihoods’ e-discussion, for example, noted that: ‘regarding youth employment, education and skill training have been pointed out (and rightly so) to be very important’.

Third, the ‘Inequalities’ thematic consultation, co-led by Unicef and UN Women has ‘education and learning’ as a focus area. The synthesis report on this thematic consultation (UNDG, 2013) includes numerous references educational inequalities. Many of the online discussion sub-themes for the thematic consultation on inequalities identified education as a priority. For example:

- ‘Prioritize access to quality education and skills development for all women and girls, especially those from socially excluded groups’ (p.90) (Gender equality discussion)
- ‘Prioritize the right of all girls and boys to quality education, with particular attention to getting the most vulnerable through secondary school’ (p.104) (Economic inequalities discussion)
- ‘Increase access to quality education for both girls and boys, with particular attention to girls’ completion of secondary education and access to non-formal education opportunities’ (p.113) (Young people and inequalities discussion)
- ‘Specific national-level measures, such as support minorities with education, skills and business development support…’ (p.117) (Minorities and inequalities discussion)

Lastly, it is true to say that all remaining eight thematic areas potentially have relevance to education and skills. In fact, a quick search of all the submitted comments reveals that education and training were referred to by commentators in all consultations, as noted below:

- Governance thematic consultation: discussion about governance and accountability of public education and training systems (e.g. enabling laws, public finance, decentralization, the right to education etc) and about the importance of quality education systems.
- Health thematic consultation: re-emphasised the role of education in improving health outcomes, and the role of health in improving educational outcomes.
- Environmental sustainability thematic consultation: the role of education in informing people about (the importance of) environmental sustainable practices.
- Food security and nutrition thematic consultation: the role of education in raising awareness about food security, food wastage management, health and nutrition
- Conflict, violence and disaster thematic consultation. E.g. The importance of comprehensive school safety in a post-HFA plan; fair access to services (including education) as a driver of peace etc.

---

31 http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/299835
33 http://www.worldwewant2015.org/node/268948/folder/134340
34 See also annex 2 of the Report of the Global Thematic Consultation on Education (Unicef, 2013).
35 The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is a 10-year plan to make the world safer from natural hazards. http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/hfa
• Population dynamics thematic consultation. E.g. the implications of rising population on public services like education; the importance of education in family planning and the empowerment of women etc.
• Energy thematic consultation. E.g. the importance of higher education and research in energy efficiency and renewable energy; the need for education about the negative health effects of carbon-based fuels used at household level (kerosene lamps, charcoal stoves - especially indoors) etc.
• Water thematic consultation. E.g. the role of education in improving awareness of sanitation and hygiene; the importance of having good water, sanitation and hygiene in schools (and links to participation and achievement), etc.

The fact that education and skills run throughout all eleven thematic consultations should be taken as strong recognition of the cross-cutting nature of education and skills to the post-2015 agenda. However, this should not be taken to as a signal to take our foot off the education pedal with regard to post-2015; we are still a long way from any new post-2015 education and skills framework being agreed! Indeed, the recognition that education is a cross-cutting issue in all major goal domains could mean that some may think it does not require its own separate goals or targets.

As noted above, there are also some 70 UN-facilitated country\(^ {36} \) consultations on post-2015 that are ongoing, and many (or all?) will cover education and skills topics. The aggregate report of these country consultations is not yet available; so we are unable to discuss the extent to which education and skills were in fact discussed, or about the type of education, level or other issues.\(^ {37} \)

Another piece of this post-MDG jigsaw is the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) that was set up end of 2012 to support the UN post-2015 process (including the HLP),\(^ {38} \) with thematic working groups now being established.\(^ {39} \) There will be twelve global expert thematic groups, including one on ‘Early Childhood Development, Education, and Transition to Work’, to be co-Chaired by Madhav Chavan (Pratham, India). The SDSN lists a number of questions that this thematic group will explore, including:\(^ {40} \)

• How can countries achieve universal access to high-quality early-childhood, primary and secondary education?
• What will be the skills, training, and labor market practices needed for the future?
• How do globalization, migration, and technological change alter the job prospects for youth today in various parts of the world? How should governments respond?
• How will societies in the future ensure high-employment economies?
• How should education systems be reformed in order to ensure universal access, social equity, lifelong learning, and affordability?

---

36 Each country consultation will be facilitated by the UN-resident coordinator and involve civil society, the private sector, government and other key national stakeholders.
37 However, one of the preliminary UNDP-facilitated consultations in China had Education as one of four main themes, and no less than eight key recommendations were made for education, including closing the link between education and employment (UNA, 2012: 3).
38 It is unclear how the SDSN will interact with the intergovernmental OWG.
39 [www.unsdsn.org](http://www.unsdsn.org)
40 [http://unsdsn.org/thematicgroups/tg4/](http://unsdsn.org/thematicgroups/tg4/)
How can new information technologies be used to promote greater access to formal education and to lifelong learning?

This is a very tall order, and how precisely it will fit into other parts of the route map (see Annex 1) is not clear.

3.2.2. Education, skills and the SDG process

The second modality that is exploring the role of education and skills post-2015, amongst much else, is the SDG process\(^41\) which emerged from the Rio+20 meeting in mid-2012. At Rio+20, there was agreement by UN member states to form a 30-member intergovernmental open working group (OWG) on SDGs. This was meant to be set up by September 2012, but was delayed as member states could not agree on seat allocation. In mid-January 2013, the OWG composition was announced and we can see that there are now some 70 countries sharing the 30 seats, with only 6 countries having a seat to themselves (Ghana, Benin, Kenya, Tanzania, Congo and Hungary).\(^42\) The five African States with one seat per country now find themselves in a potentially influential position. In fact, two of these ‘one-seat’ nations, Kenya and Hungary, will act as co-chairs for the OWG.\(^43\)

In mid-March 2013, six months after the OWG on SDGs was meant to be set up, they had their first meeting (as noted above), with the second scheduled for 17-19\(^{th}\) April 2013.

What can we expect from the SDG process with regard to education and skills? As of 14\(^{th}\) April 2013, we only have three reference points to work with: the Rio+20 outcomes document itself, the UN member state responses from a UN questionnaire on the SDGs, and the discussions at the first OWG on SDGs meeting in mid-March 2013.

First, the Rio+20 outcomes document itself (UN, 2012) makes some specific mentions related to education and skills, as we noted in our earlier paper (King and Palmer, 2012, emphasis added):

- **Universal access** to primary education.’ (p.43)
- ‘Full access to quality education at all levels.’ (p.43)
- **Equity of access** to education (for marginalised groups): ‘equal access to education for persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, local communities, ethnic minorities and people living in rural areas’ (p.43). ‘Equal access of women and girls to education’ (p.45)
- **Better quality and access** to education beyond the primary level.’ (p.43)
- **Improve the capacity of... education systems** to prepare people to pursue sustainable development’ (e.g. via teacher training, sustainability curricula, use of ICT) (p.43)
- ‘training and education to improve agricultural productivity’ (p.22)
- ‘equal access to opportunities to acquire job skills’ (p.29)
- Skills for the green economy (p.11, 29)
- Lifelong learning: ‘workers should have access to education, skills...’ (p.29)

Second, following the Rio+20 Conference in mid-2012, the UN sent Member States a

\(^{41}\) See the specially created Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/


\(^{43}\) http://post2015.org/2013/03/06/the-world-we-want-most-and-why-how-to-make-the-case-for-natural-resources-post-2015/
questionnaire related to the development of SDGs; only about 60 responses were received, including a joint statement from the EU and its Member States. One of the questions asked UN Member States to specify their priorities:

Please list a limited number, preferably between five and ten, of the important priority areas that must be addressed through the SDGs to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

The UN’s synthesis report of this questionnaire noted that, overall, education came out as the 4th SDG priority among responding countries, after: food security and sustainable agriculture; water and sanitation; and, energy. However, it is interesting to go back to the original responses from Member States and to find out if there was specific mention of the kind or type of education being referred to; in other words, can the original responses tell us anything about the priorities within ‘education’?

Of those countries specifying priorities, two-thirds (27 out of 40) mentioned education in some shape or form. Those countries that elaborated more than just ‘education’ as a priority, clearly signaled the desire to go beyond primary school – mentioning, for example, secondary and scientific research (higher education). Quality – of course – got a few mentions, but surprising ‘learning’ did not. Several of the ‘education’ priorities (e.g. Nepal, Algeria, CAR, Zambia, Colombia, Republic of Korea, and Montenegro) made direct or implicit mention of skills and training (including skills that link to work), but the responses are so diverse as are the countries that no clear priority emerges for any single theme within education and skills. The same is of course true of the education comments from the Rio+20 outcomes document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Popular Response</th>
<th>Country citing this</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstained from mentioning priorities at this time</td>
<td>Australia, EU and its Member States (23 EU/member state countries), Singapore*, Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No mention of education</td>
<td>Argentina, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Croatia, Fiji, Iraq, Japan*, Lebanon, Ghana, Guyana*, Norway*, Pakistan, Panama</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Education’</td>
<td>Chad, Greece, Hungary, Jordan, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Peru, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Universal primary education’</td>
<td>Comoros, UAE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Universal primary and Vocational Education’</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Universal primary and secondary education’</td>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Universal access to education’</td>
<td>Slovakia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Education, training and scientific research’</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Education, training and research’</td>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Education and skills development’</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘education... for better sustainable development, and encouraging scientific research and inventions’</td>
<td>Syria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Education for sustainable development’</td>
<td>Moldova</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of this analysis on the SDG questionnaire also appeared in the NORRAG NEWSBite blog on March 1st 2013 (Palmer, 2013).


Third, at the first meeting of the OWG on SDGs (14-15th March 2013) (OWG, 2013) some general mention of education was made; for example by the UN Secretary General, and by OWG member states including Serbia, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Cuba. However, since this was the first meeting, there was not much elaboration regarding possible priorities.

In summary, we may say that this second process still has a long way to go, and that any more specific focus on levels of education and types of skill are still to be determined.

### 3.2.3. Education, skills and the post-EFA process

The third process that is exploring the role of education and skills post-2015 is the post-EFA modality. This leg of the tripartite process may appear, like the SDGs, to be much further behind the post-MDG education process. For example, there is not yet any clear position on the post-EFA situation. However, the HLP report is due at the end of May 2013, and this will certainly contain both direct and indirect implications for education and training, to judge from the Monrovia and Bali communiqués.

UNESCO may not yet have a clear position on what should happen post-EFA, which might have helped to inform thinking about what a post-MDG education goal could or should look like. But we have noted above in our discussion of Dakar 2013 that even though there is not yet a fuller draft of the consultation outcomes than the 2-page summary, the intention, in finalising that report, is to seek ‘convergence between a revised EFA Initiative and the post-2015 process’.

This is in contrast to last time around; it will be recalled that the Dakar EFA goals of April 2000 came ahead of the MDGs themselves (which were put together about a year after the Millennium Declaration was signed on 8th September 2000), and that the MDGs were able to refer to the already agreed EFA goals (even if only UPE and gender parity were actually selected to go into the MDGs).47

This time, the HLP will have to develop its position on education and skills without having any revised UNESCO version of the six EFA goals. Of course the HLP can draw on the many education goal suggestions from the CSOs (see more on this below). It is also

---

47 Arguably, the MDG education goals did not so much derive from the six EFA goals, but directly from the international development goals set out by the OECD in 1996.
possible, as we have seen, that UNESCO/Unicef may think that the global meeting that took place mid-March in Dakar will be sufficient to at least start to develop both the recommendations for the post-2015 MDG agenda, as well as for post-EFA. Whether that can persuasively be done in the 10-page synthesis of Dakar currently being drafted may be doubted.

The 2012/13 regional meetings, referred to earlier in the case of Bangkok and Sharm El Sheikh, were the first real opportunity for UNESCO to start to define a post-2015 road map (in addition to continuing to take stock of EFA progress). These were in some sense intended to advance both the EFA and the Post-2015 agendas. But as they were partly co-organised with Unicef, it may prove difficult to synthesise the outcomes of these in a way that will satisfactorily address both the EFA and the MDG agendas.

- Latin America and the Caribbean – Santiago, Chile – July 2012
- Africa - Johannesburg, South Africa - Oct 17, 2012

In the light of what we have said above about the timing of this global thematic consultation on education, a great deal depended on the March 2013 Global Meeting on Education in Dakar. This was billed as a ‘High-Level Consultation on Education’, co-led by Unicef and UNESCO, and co-hosted by the Governments of Senegal and Canada, to bring together government representatives, NGOs and others to discuss education post-2015.48 We have seen that there was a 40-page background document to inform the meeting, drawing on the Collective Consultation of NGOs on EFA (CCNGO/EFA),49 regional meetings’ reports and the outcomes of the various online consultations. To deal effectively with both the post-MDG and post-EFA agendas would have been a very tall order indeed; even if most of the regional meetings were completed many months ago, the last was happening at the end of February and early March, and their report has just become available.

Despite the evident shortage of time, the background document, Education in the Post-2015 Development Agenda (Unicef, 2013), did manage to pay serious attention both to the future EFA agenda and to any future MDG agenda for education. While acknowledging that there had been disharmony in the past between these two different goal frameworks, the paper argued strongly that ‘A new post-2015 education framework should, at a minimum, bring the two frameworks together within a unified architecture buttressed by unified reporting mechanisms and processes’ (Unicef, 2013: 23).

Following our EFA theme still, we cannot yet be sure that the fuller, 10-page report of the Dakar Global Consultation on Education can succeed in securing convergence between a post-EFA process as well as a post-MDG process. There simply has not yet been the opportunity seriously to focus on the six EFA goals through a post-2015 lens.

Be that as it may, this fuller report of the Dakar meeting will surely be made available at some point before the end of April 2013, for comment and reaction, and in due course, a

48 http://unccd.iisd.org/events/high-level-consultation-on-education/
49 The CCNGO/EFA a thematic mechanism created by UNESCO to facilitate reflection, dialogue and joint action between NGOs and UNESCO in the area of EFA. The CCNGO/EFA network includes close to 300 national, regional and international member organisations.
briefing from that will be drafted by the end of June 2013 and submitted as an input to the UN General Assembly in September 2013.\textsuperscript{50}

Also in 2013, the real EFA assessment process will begin (and run to June 2014). This will be followed by EFA Regional conferences between June and September 2014 to review the EFA national reports and draw on an EFA regional agenda. In April 2015, a Global Conference on Education will be organized hosted by the Government of South Korea.

Precisely how this EFA strand can feed into and influence the larger post-MDG process is very far from clear. If the final conference on EFA takes place as late as April 2015, it must be assumed that by that time the shape of the likely agreed goals for September 2015 will have been secured, even if some discussion of them must still be anticipated in the General Assembly of 2015.

In summarising the complexity of the road map to post-2015, from all three of these perspectives (the MDG, the SDG and the EFA), we must admit to some disappointment on the position of education, let alone skills development. None of the three processes has yet been satisfactorily concluded; so we cannot be clear at the time of writing (April 14th 2013) what degree of convergence there will finally be amongst them.

At the very time when the High Level Panel will be proceeding to draw its own conclusions together by the end of May, it cannot be satisfactory from the viewpoint of the future status of education and skills that there is so little to show publicly yet from this costly series of education meetings and consultations.

4. Concluding Comments for Now

22 years ago NORRAG attempted (see NORRAG NEWS 7 and 8 on www.norrag.org) a policy history of how we got the Education for All Declaration and Framework for Action in the World Conference in Jomtien (UNESCO, 1990). As now, there were regional meetings and then a global meeting. But one of the differences was that there was already a very early draft of the World Declaration which could go to the regional meetings for comment and reaction, and there was a high level international advisory group and editorial group which was tasked with examining in detail the text of the Declaration and the Framework even in Jomtien itself.

In the case of the original MDG agenda-setting process, we have the very detailed analysis (from Manning, 2009) of how this came about. But that too was relatively simple compared to the process of the last year and more.

This time, the inputs into the process of defining goals or suggested targets, even for one sector, education, is hugely more complex. Apart from a series of regional meetings on Education, there have been almost three months of e-consultations on several sub-themes, with over 500 responses, and attendant summaries. These have involved a consideration of both the post-EFA and the post-MDG agendas. In addition, there have been a whole series of papers posted on the thematic consultation site.

We have shown that it is possible also to derive from the other ten thematic consultations a whole range of cross-cutting implications for education and skills. But

\textsuperscript{50} It is expected that the full report from Dakar would inform the UN team working on the SG’s report.
reviewing these may almost appear as a luxury compared with focusing directly on the education sector, and seeking to analyse any emerging consensus therein.

Also unlike the 1990 Jomtien and 2000 Dakar EFA and New York Millennium processes, there are, we have shown, a complex array of other highways along which there are discussions of goals and targets, indicators and measurements. These include the HLP motorway, the UN-facilitated national, regional and global consultation road network, the SDG highway (still far from complete), and a whole series of other trunk roads which we have briefly referred to above.

Beyond these, there have been a series of research-based inputs, just as there were in Jomtien 1990 and in the World Forum in Dakar in April 2000. These evidence-based reports are coming from civil society organisations and think tanks (such as those by Oxfam (2013); Save the Children (2012); ActionAid (2012); and by Brookings (2013a). Some are entirely focused on education, while others look across the post-2015 development agenda. These are in turn disseminated and discussed through specialist seminars, blogs and other social media. We shall be reviewing these in some detail in a third occasional paper, due by September 2013 at the UKFET Oxford Conference. But we are acutely aware that this research-based policy analysis around goals and targets does constitute another major source of ideas and potential influences in the whole road map.

For this present paper, we felt that an understanding of the complexity of the route map itself between 2012 and 2015 was worth sketching out, as many of the initiatives we have analysed have used its milestones for timing their reports and proposals.

But as NORRAG with over 45% of our membership based in the South, we have felt a particular concern with analysing the extent of Southern engagement with this very vibrant process of post-2015 debate and discussion. Equally, as a large number of NORRAG members indicate that one of their fields of interest is technical and vocational education and training (TVET) or skills development, we felt it worth reviewing the way this particular domain was perceived and recommended by the various bodies concerned with its visibility.

In respect of the Southern voices, we found, with just a handful of exceptions, that the temperature around post-2015 issues was not at all high in most countries where we were able to check with individuals who are very much concerned with international education and training. This is of course a highly anomalous situation if it is indeed the case on more rigorous analysis. The whole exercise of re-setting the development agenda from 2015 is meant to be of very direct interest and value to countries in South. Paradoxically, however, the post-2015 temperature is very much higher in the Northern countries. We have suggested that this may be directly connected to what is called ‘the aid industry’; in other words, Northern international bodies, whether INGOs, think tanks, consultancy firms, or development agencies themselves do perceive the shape and composition of the next development agenda as directly influencing their own operations in the developing world.51 Thus, if there is a new education goal or goals, and if these mention ‘early childhood care and education’, or ‘quality’, or ‘learning’, or ‘skills for work’, it will have direct financial consequences for the funding of one or more of these domains, just as the 2000 Goals of UPE and Gender Equity generated considerable funding for these objectives.

51 In the words of one aid policy analyst: ‘The ministry wants to use the MDGs as a tool to secure additional budget for ODA’ (06.03.13).
If this is the case, why would the same logic not operate in the case of ministries, think tanks and NGOs in the South? The sad truth may be that despite all the partnership rhetoric of Paris, Accra and Busan, aid remains still a Northern preserve. Aid is still about donors and recipients. If this is so, it might help to explain why emerging powers such as India, China, and South Korea are little engaged in the debate about the MDGs; their own outreach to the developing world proceeds on a different basis and rationale, not about aid or charity but ‘win-win’ cooperation (Mawdsely, 2012).

As for the position of ‘skills for work’ in the post-2015 debates, this too seems not completely secure. Despite one of the most severe economic crises affecting both North and South since 2008, there is little in the way of a groundswell of interests seeking to put on to the development agenda a goal that links work skills, employability, entrepreneurship, jobs, productivity and growth. This might seem a natural goal for East Asian donors like Japan and South Korea, and for agencies like the ILO. Partly this is to do with the fact that the North continues to regard the MDGs, as in 2000, as being principally relevant to the South and not to itself.

If there is not yet any strong focus around skills in relation to work, employment and productivity apart from the Dakar background paper, there does seem to be a possibility that a position could still emerge that presented a transformed TVET as a natural extension of EFA. The challenge of such a position we have mentioned above: however, the key document presenting this new conceptualisation of TVET (the WTR) has not yet been published, and will not be available until May 2013 (UNESCO, 2013). But the essence of the concept that preparation for work and for life could genuinely be for all was anticipated in the Shanghai 3rd World Congress on TVET. Securing the right language for this will not be easy, but there is a widespread, even self-evident, view in the South that skills matter for both economic and human development. A consensus could therefore emerge that drew in the inter-agency group on skills (ILO, UNESCO, World Bank, OECD, ETF etc) along with countries in the South to argue that skills were a necessary but not sufficient condition for economic growth, but at the same time UNESCO and other agencies (such as Unicef, Brookings, INGOs etc) could argue that preparation for work or for vocation was essential to human development.

Our review of the current status of skills proposals would suggest that we are still some way from any such consensus. Skills cannot succeed as a goal proposal if it is perceived to be just traditional TVET, however valuable that may have been in supporting economic development in many dynamic economies. But if the conceptualisation of TVET can sufficiently marry skills for work and skills for life (or for human development), then it should have traction.

We ended our previous report of August 2012 with the following comment: ‘From these reports, it can scarcely be argued that there is a strong and coherent lobby for skills development as a critical component in any post-2015 agenda. Possibly this might alter with the publication of the EFA GMR on skills development, and the World TVET Report later in the year. However, it seems essential for any skills goal to be very closely linked to the key factors that have emerged in education, such as the focus on learning, quality, equity and measurement’ (King and Palmer, 2012: 55).

We have not discussed the very powerful emphasis that has emerged on ‘learning’, ‘quality’ and measurable ‘outcomes’ in this paper, as we covered this fully in our earlier one. But what has been called ‘the learning lobby’ continues to have considerable influence. Hence it makes sense for any proposal around skills development to highlight the crucial need to be concerned with measurable learning outcomes.
We started writing this paper under the original title of ‘Northern tsunami and Southern calm’. We have shown that this needs to be somewhat qualified, not only in respect of a degree of Southern vibrancy around post-2015 but by a recognition that parts of the North are very far from vibrantly engaging with post-2015. Indeed, we can scarcely characterise the current state of play on the UN side of education goals (MDGs, EFA and SDGs) as having the force of a tsunami.

By the time of our next paper in August 2013, the HLP panel will have reported, and hopefully its full report will be accessible. The Secretary General will have prepared his report on post-2015 to go to the General Assembly in September 2013. It should be much clearer what is happening to the OWG on SDGs, and some of the other highways on the road map. The fuller report of the global thematic consultation on education, following Dakar, will also be available. From NORRAG’s side, there will be two detailed case studies of the state of ‘calm’ or of ‘tsunami’ in two very differing countries, Bangladesh and Burkina Faso, but both with very low MY World scores. The road ahead beckons! But the weather forecast is unclear!
References


NN7 - NORRAG NEWS 7. 1990. The World Conference on Education for All, and World Literacy Year. accessible at www.norrag.org

http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1700summaryowg.pdf


http://norrag.wordpress.com/


http://efareport.wordpress.com/

http://efareport.wordpress.com/


Annex 1: Education’s Yellow-Brick Road to 2015

Source: Authors
## Annex 2: Current Suggestions for Education (and Skills) Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Headline goal suggestion(s)</th>
<th>Sub-goals/ target/ indicator suggestion(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CONCRETE GOAL, TARGET, INDICATOR SUGGESTIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| UNESCO Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2013b) | 1. Ensure that by 2030, everyone has an equal opportunity to learn the basics, whatever their circumstances. | 1. Ensure that by 2030 all children and adolescents, whatever their circumstances, have equal access to, and complete, comprehensive early childhood education, primary and lower secondary education.  
2. Provide comprehensive early childhood care and education, primary and lower secondary education of sufficient quality to ensure that by 2030 all children and adolescents, whatever their circumstances, have an equal chance of achieving recognized and measurable learning outcomes, especially in literacy and numeracy.  
3. Ensure that by 2030 all young people and adults, whatever their circumstances, can acquire skills needed to obtain decent jobs and lead fulfilling lives, through equitable access to appropriate training, including via second-chance programmes.  
4. Eliminate inequalities in education by 2030, taking specific measures to reach those disadvantaged by factors such as gender, poverty, location, ethnicity or disability. |

---

52 As of 11th April 2013.
5. By 2030, ensure that no country is prevented from achieving education goals by a lack of resources: by maximizing government revenue and ensuring that government spending covers education needs, targeting the marginalized when necessary; by maximizing aid, and targeting it at countries and groups who need it most; by maximizing resources from the private sector, and targeting them at countries and groups who need them most.

| Brookings, Save the Children, Women Thrive Worldwide. (Brookings et al, 2013) | 1. Learning for All |
| Global Campaign for Education - United States Chapter (GCE-US, 2013) | 1. By 2030, all children and youth are receiving a quality pre-primary, primary, and lower secondary education. |
| Basic Education Coalition (Basic Education Coalition, 2013) | 1. By 2030, all children and youth should complete primary and lower secondary education which enables them to meet measurable learning standards and acquire relevant skills so they may become responsible, productive members of |

\(^{53}\) This was not phrased as the main post-2015 goal, but was a goal specified in general.


| **Save the Children UK**  
(Save the Children, 2012) | **Centre for International Governance Innovation**  
(“Bellagio Goals”  
(Bates-Eamer et al., 2012)) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>By 2030 we will ensure all children receive a good-quality education and have good learning outcomes</strong></td>
<td><strong>1. Appropriate education and skills for productive participation in society</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. Ensure that all girls and boys are achieving good learning outcomes by the age of 12 with gaps between the poorest and the richest significantly reduced.  
2. Ensure that the poorest young children will be starting school ready to learn, having already reached good levels of child development.  
3. Ensure that all young people have basic literacy and numeracy, technical and life skills to give them the chance to become active citizens with decent employment. | 1. ‘Indicators could extend beyond children, to include all age groups of the population’.  
2. ‘Targets and indicators for the education goal should focus on outcomes: learning, skills and literacy levels’.  
3. ‘Access indicators… should |
| | **measurable learning standards at each grade or level, and end of cycle, and data disaggregated by gender and other categories of marginalized and vulnerable groups.**  
3. Adult literacy rates, and rates of participation in and completion of continuing education and training.  
4. Percentage of countries whose national education plans and policies are standards-based and effectively track and measure learning outcomes, skills acquisition, and teacher and other educational staff's certification and professional development, and which make systematic use of standards-based exams and other tools for assessing continuous learning.** |

---

**Save the Children UK**  
(Save the Children, 2012)

1. **By 2030 we will ensure all children receive a good-quality education and have good learning outcomes**

- Ensure that all girls and boys are achieving good learning outcomes by the age of 12 with gaps between the poorest and the richest significantly reduced.
- Ensure that the poorest young children will be starting school ready to learn, having already reached good levels of child development.
- Ensure that all young people have basic literacy and numeracy, technical and life skills to give them the chance to become active citizens with decent employment.

**Centre for International Governance Innovation**  
(“Bellagio Goals”  
(Bates-Eamer et al., 2012))

1. **Appropriate education and skills for productive participation in society**

- ‘Indicators could extend beyond children, to include all age groups of the population’.
- ‘Targets and indicators for the education goal should focus on outcomes: learning, skills and literacy levels’.
- ‘Access indicators… should be’

1. **Every child completes a full cycle of a minimum of 9 years of continuous, free basic education and demonstrates learning achievement consistent with national standards**

2. **Post-basic education expanded strategically to meet needs for knowledge and skills related to employment and livelihoods**

3. **Reduce and seek to eliminate differences in educational outcomes among learners associated with household wealth, gender, special needs, location, age and social group.**

Areas suggested to be part of the post-EFA framework:

1. Reduce and seek to eliminate early childhood under-nutrition and avoidable childhood disease, and universalise access to community based ECE/D and pre-school below age 6 years.

2. Universalise an 'expanded vision of access' to a full cycle of a minimum of 9 years of continuous basic education.

3. Successful achievement of national learning outcomes in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains for both primary and lower secondary cycles at age appropriate levels up to the age of 15 years.

4. **Invest strategically in expanded and equitable access to post-basic and tertiary level education and training linked to wellbeing, livelihoods and employment and the transition to responsible adult citizenship.**

5. **Eliminate illiteracy and innumeracy amongst those under 50 years old.**

6. **Provide education opportunities for young people and adults who have not successfully completed**
| International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) (ITUC, 2012) | [suggestion in the context of an employment goal] | 1. Investment in education and vocational training as a percentage of GDP. |
| UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability (GSP) (GSP, 2012) | 1. 'Establish a goal of providing universal access to quality post-primary and secondary education no later than 2030, emphasizing the skills and knowledge needed for sustainable growth and jobs'. (GSP, 2012: 31) | |
| World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council (WEF-GAC) (WEF-GAC, 2012) | [No ‘headline’ education goal specified, just that there should be a goal related to ‘Education for All’] | |

**PRIORITY AND "THOUGHTS" ON GOALS**

**DFID**

DFID. 2012. DFID Discussion Slides on Education Post-2015 (PowerPoint presentation: December 2012)

NB. This is not DFID's

'Thoughts on goals':

A. Every girl and boy in school and learning.

B. Appropriate education and skills for productive participation in society.

C. Every girl and boy gets a

'Thoughts on targets':

**Learning**: All girls and boys achieve country specific learning targets at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels.

**Access/ Inclusion**: All girls and boys complete a full course of pre-primary, primary and
official position on education goals and targets. It is from a DFID document intended to “facilitate discussion”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>good start in life.</strong></th>
<th><strong>secondary schooling.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D. Every girl and boy grows up to achieve their potential.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Transition:</strong> All girls and boys successfully move from pre-primary school to primary school and from primary to secondary school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E. Ensure children everywhere receive quality education and have good learning outcomes.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Equity:</strong> Disadvantaged girls and boys, including those with disabilities and from religious and ethnic minorities have equal access to effective learning in school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Thoughts on indicators:**

**Learning:** Proportion of students achieving a benchmarked set of age appropriate competencies at each stage of the education cycle from ECD to secondary and on to tertiary

**Access/ Inclusion:** Access measures disaggregated by sex, socio-economic background, disability

**Transition:** Transition rates from one cycle to the next (ECD to primary, primary to secondary)

**Equity:** The rate of progress of the bottom learning quintile is at least as fast as the average rate of progress (at a country level)

---

**UN Education First Initiative**
http://www.globaleducationfirst.org/

**Priority 1:** Put every child in school

**Priority 2:** Improve the quality of learning

**Priority 3:** Foster global citizenship

---

**Global Compact on Learning**
Brookings Institute, Center for Universal Education (Brookings, 2011)

**Priority 1:** Support quality early childhood development and learning opportunities for girls and boys.

**Priority 2:** Build Foundational skills in literacy and numeracy in the lower primary grades.

**Priority 3:** Support transitioning to and completing secondary school and other post-primary opportunities that

1A: Extend quality early childhood development opportunities, particularly to poor and marginalized communities

1B: Ensure girls and boys start school at an appropriate age.

2A: Prioritize literacy and numeracy in the lower primary grades

2B: Provide mother tongue-based multilingual education in the lower primary grades.
| **build relevant life and labor skills.** | 3A: Reduce barriers that prevent girls and boys from transitioning to secondary school and other post-primary educational opportunities  
3B: Ensure that post-primary education prepares young people for healthy lives, productive work, and civic participation |
NORRAG Working Paper Series (available for free on www.norrag.org)


- **Working Paper #3**: Education in Conflict Emergencies in Light of the post-2015 MDGs and EFA Agendas, by Christopher Talbot, January 2013