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Education – a Way out of Poverty?

Editor: Mia Melin

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Education – a Way out of Poverty?

Research presentations at the Poverty Conference 2001

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New Education Division Documents may be ordered from:
Biståndsforum, Sida
S-105 25 Stockholm
Phone +46 (0)8 698 50 00
Fax +46 (0)8 698 56 38
E-mail: info@sida.se
Homepage: www.sida.se

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY
Address: SE-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden.
Office: Sveavägen 20, Stockholm
Telephone: +46 (0)8 698 50 00. Telefax: +46 (0)8 20 88 64
E-mail: info@sida.se Homepage: www.sida.se

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Foreword:

Linking Research and Sida's Education Development Co-operation Within the Framework of Poverty Reduction

By Anna Haas, Education Division, Department for Democracy and Social Development, Sida

We are at present experiencing a growing international consensus that poverty, with its different facets, constitutes the greatest challenge to the world's development. Although many of the poor countries with whom Sweden co-operates have experienced significant improvements in terms of social and economic development, mass poverty still holds its firm grip on people.

Education and poverty reduction

An interesting and challenging paradigm shift is taking place, where poverty is not only seen as a lack of economic resources, health and education. The new concept also includes less easily measured conditions, such as vulnerability and lack of power. For most of us who are interested in education, the shift towards a more holistic view on poverty is a welcome step towards the recognition of the many potential roles of education – for the individual, throughout his or her life span, as well as for the development of society. Education is potentially good for income generation, but it also has a strong potential to improve a person's self-esteem. However, both research and experience show many obstacles that stand in the way for education's contribution to poverty reduction. A number of factors in society interact to make education more or less successful when it comes to improving life conditions of the poor.

An interesting aspect of the paradigm shift is that it puts new demands on us as policy makers concerned with education. It may be that we have been too used to claiming that investment in education *is* poverty reduction, without analysing the circumstances under which education actually reaches poor groups in society, or how education contributes to poverty reduction in different empirical situations. Even though education should be seen as an end in itself, being a human right as it were, it is also a means for poverty reduction, and we should analyse how its impact can be maximised. Education as a human right is the value basis on which rests our analysis of how education can strengthen poor people and be conductive to development.

Based on his thinking that development is "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (Sen, 1999), Amartya Sen suggests that education contributes to development

- directly, because of its relevance to the well-being and freedom of people,
- indirectly through influencing social change, and
- indirectly through influencing economic production.

Sen provides researchers as well as policy makers with a useful framework for analysis of the interlinked relationships between education and poverty reduction. It also captures Sida's view on education, both as a goal in itself and as a means for poverty reduction, and hence development. Sen's framework might also be a helpful entry point for

linking the work of researchers and policy-makers' closer to each other, since it has an holistic view of education, connecting it to the overall development agenda.

This volume gathers a selection of the papers presented at the Poverty Conference in October 2001 in Stockholm, and it is Sida's hope that it will stimulate the discussion on the role of education for poverty reduction. Several papers (Daun, Hagberg, Widmark) discuss the relationship between education and identity and difficulties involved in adopting education to the needs of different populations in poor countries. Others (Coombe, Widmalm) analyse the role of education in social change, mainly by focusing on the role of governance. Dr Stromquist examines three different co-existing perspectives of the role of literacy for development, and Dr Benson studies the implications of use of mother tongue for girls' school participation. Dr Tilak makes a brief review and compares the role of education in the human capital approach and the human development approach. Together, these papers cover a broad spectrum of academic disciplines. Taking the risk of being too wide or too general, the aim of the Poverty Conference (as well as the aim of this volume) was precisely to stimulate researchers from different areas to reflect on education and development through poverty reduction.

The changing role of Swedish education development co-operation

Why, then, did Sida invite researchers to present papers on education and poverty reduction? The answer may seem obvious, as there is always a need for policy makers to be guided by research. Actually, though, it has also to do with the changing role of Sida's development co-operation with the education sector.

The strong emphasis on poverty reduction in the international discourse in recent years has had clear implications for development co-operation in the education sector. This sector should never been seen isolated from the rest of society's development. Even though education is always a human right and a prerequisite for development, it has to be incorporated into the nation's overall development strategy. This is especially important, as many of Sweden's partner countries are developing national poverty reduction strategies, normally giving education high priority.

During the last decade, the role that Swedish education development co-operation plays in the contribution to development in our partner countries has changed. Today, the main approach is work towards so-called Sector Programme Support (also called SWAp). This kind of support implies a gradual shift from aid to basic education projects to development co-operation for the implementation of the partner country's own education sector strategies, thus slowly strengthening national ownership. Apart from providing funds, Sida also has an important role as a dialogue partner and supporting capacity development.

Step by step, the Sector Programme Support implies a shift in dialogue focus from a rather narrow follow-up of how Swedish funds are used to discussions on policy options and priorities for the education sector development. Sida will often need empirically well-founded standpoints when discussing matters such as strategies for the use of education in tackling the HIV/aids pandemic, language policy and issues related to cost sharing in education.

The need for policy-relevant research

The shift towards a more policy-oriented dialogue with Governments and NGOs has clear implications for which kind of information Sida will need in order to be an informed dialogue partner, with clear standpoints on different policy choices. Here, applied research becomes crucial. Sida calls for well-founded analyses of the role of education for development and poverty reduction, in the empirical settings where Sida works. Comparative perspectives between different empirical settings are valuable.

It is our strong belief that the quality of Swedish support to the education sectors in our partner countries has much to gain from a closer relationship with the research community, making Sida's assessments and reviews better informed and increasingly guided by research. Apart from researchers in the partner countries, it would also be useful for Sida's education division to co-operate more closely with Swedish researchers. This is why Sida/SAREC, in co-operation with Sida's Education Division, invites Swedish researchers to apply to the area of special invitation called "Education for Poverty Reduction". This is also one way of promoting a closer relationship to Swedish researchers from different academic disciplines and of encouraging them to engage in this area of research.

The Swedish research community and Sida's education development co-operation must begin to see their common interests in order to meet. Sida clearly needs to strengthen its dialogue with partner countries through easy access to applied research.What is Academia's interest in having a closer contact with Swedish development co-operation in the education sector?

Let us continue to discuss how we can work together within the framework of poverty reduction. It is our hope that this volume can be an input in that discussion.

Can Research Contribute to Understanding the Relationship Between Education and Poverty Alleviation?

By Ian Christoplos, Collegium for Development Studies, Uppsala University

The papers in this report are drawn from a conference organised by Sida and the Collegium for Development Studies at Uppsala University to look at how research can contribute to our understanding of education's role in poverty reduction. The Collegium has been interested in this issue as part of a broader aim of helping Swedish academia to support policy formation in development cooperation. The issue of education and poverty is particularly interesting as it may provide illustrations of how to apply existing research to answering the normative goals of the development cooperation discourse. The underlying question for the conference was to bring together research that describes how education has and could enhance opportunity, empowerment and security for poor people, i.e. whether education relates to the underlying goals of Swedish development cooperation. Furthermore, questions were raised about how research can help to define what we mean when we talk about a "rights-based approach" to development.

Relating the academic discourse to these normative frameworks is a major challenge, conceptually and practically. Academics and development policy-makers speak different languages. Social science research is primarily about retrospective analysis of systems in a social context. It helps us to understand, for example, how schools today relate to the communities in which they operate. New emerging concepts of poverty alleviation are in many cases based on an assumption that schooling must break out of earlier structures and assumptions about the "proper" roles of state, civil society and the private sector. We must move beyond a critique of the past, to look for a conceptual framework for the future. This suggests a new role for research. The papers in this volume describe the challenges for research to help policy makers to prepare to deal with a future where old schooling systems have collapsed due to crumbling infrastructure and – especially in the case of HIV/Aids affected areas – a disappearing human resource base.

It is overoptimistic to assume that conferences such as this should lead to consensus, but a better understanding by researchers and practitioners of each other's languages has certainly emerged. The following papers provide a start for closer collaboration between development practitioners (not only at Sida, but also NGOs), and the academic community. The three normative objectives of Swedish development cooperation in enhancing opportunity, empowerment and security are not so far from the objectives of poor people themselves. An understanding of the aims and desires of the poor is something that the research community is actively engaged in exploring and analysing. The linkages are there, we just have to learn how to use them. The following are some preliminary suggestion of how these three themes of opportunity, empowerment and security could provide a conceptual bridge between academics and development practitioners working in education, and how they relate to our understanding of livelihoods and rights.

Opportunity

The opportunities facing poor people in the South are changing. The two basic career paths that the poor have strived for in the post-colonial era, the civil service and peasant farming, are both shrinking rapidly. Livelihood opportunities are being diversified, for better or for worse. There are new markets being opened, just as the viability of peasant agriculture shrinks, and as the poorest people in many rural areas no longer have any land to farm. In many African countries the majority of the rural population no longer produces a significant proportion of their own food. They are wage labourers, migrants, petty traders, transporters and food aid recipients. Has education provided support for these changing livelihoods, or have schools remained fixed in models from the past? Does the aid community do any better? Are we stuck with yeoman farmer fallacies that assume that sons will take over small family farms and that daughters want to be supportive wives? For those looking to escape from the (supposed) drudgery of rural life, do education systems still implicitly assume that a career in the civil service is the best way out? Has thought been given to what people need to know to enter careers in the private sector or with non-governmental organisations? Do we even know what skills are needed for these Brave New Worlds?

This is very much a challenge for redesigning the research agenda, as very many academic researchers themselves remain stuck in old assumptions about the choices facing poor people. An anthropologist may point out the frustrations of an educated young man who realises that his dreams of a respectable job in the government are not to be realised, but do we know how to avoid the disillusionment that has led such young men to join warlords in places like Sierra Leone? Can educational bureaucracies be supported to adapt vocational training to rapidly changing vocations? Or are there other actors who are more in tune to market signals? It is easy to point the finger at inflexible bureaucracies, but how can development practitioners be best supported to help education planners to learn and adapt? Research on education needs to focus on how poor people explore opportunity, and how to relate to the actors that might aid them in this task.

Empowerment

The concept of empowerment has, for very good reasons, often been thrashed by researchers as a façade, window dressing for empowering people to demand those services that "we" want them to demand of us. Schools have, quite justifiably, been revealed as manipulative institutions that work to empower the poor to live up to "our" expectations of a sustainable livelihood. Empowerment, and the participatory methodologies that have become popular in recent years, have too often been found to merely justify business as usual behind more modern rhetoric. Participatory assessments tend to veil the power politics going on in the real institutions that steer the imaginary "communities" that are hailed as the basis for new forms of development planning. Research has helped reveal the origins of these fantasies.

Empowerment through enhancing ethnic cohesion, for example through accepting and even supporting the use of minority languages, raises complicated questions. Is it better to strengthen and legitimise the use of local languages or better to enable people to deal with national bureaucracies through the national language? Is this an either or question? Other issues relate to how to best enable a bureaucracy to contribute to (or at least not impede) empowerment. Does decentralisation merely bring

corruption closer to the people, or does it actually change power structures and permit poor people to exercise control over those who are supposed to be serving them?

Policy research is needed to separate the rhetoric from the reality. Research has played an important role in revealing the fallacies of simplistic models of empowerment. It has provided a reminder that empowerment is about *power* (something that has often been oddly absent in many simple populist and instrumental participatory approaches). A challenge remains regarding how to find a role for research in design of better policies and better practices with regard to participation and empowerment. The deconstruction of the naïve participatory discourse of the 1990s was essential, but has research revealed any viable alternatives?

Security

Sweden is a major actor when it comes to relating education and security. Sida provides major support for education in the midst of humanitarian emergencies, not the least in Afghanistan. During Sweden's EU presidency in 2001 there was a conference held in Norrköping that underlined the importance of using education as a normative tool in conflict situations. It is being realised that education systems in many countries are crumbling due to the effects of HIV/Aids, and there is a readiness to invest in solving these problems. But do we have a solution?

Sweden has not been very good at integrating an understanding of the security pillar of poverty alleviation into country strategies and programming frameworks. There is, in my view, a hesitation among development programme officers to openly acknowledge the risks that poor people and poor state institutions face in places like Angola or Rwanda. Such an acknowledgement would imply that projects for these places are too risky to finance. A frank assessment of prevailing insecurity in a turbulent world would implicitly suggest that "sustainability" is a highly ambiguous concept in many places where Sida works. Admission of what we do not know about the future in Eritrea, Colombia or Nicaragua would run counter to the modernisation paradigms that still underpin so much of development co-operation. We simply do not know where the revenues will come from to cover the recurrent costs of schooling amid weak states and chronic instability. Furthermore, there has also been a failure to acknowledge how little market solutions will serve to ensure the provision of public services where bullets are flying and the "customers" are destitute, orphaned and displaced.

This represents a challenge for the research community to open a more frank and realistic dialogue about what is really going on in places like these. One of the main findings of the various studies of local perceptions of poverty is that people are more interested in reducing their vulnerability than they are in getting rich. They know that an escape from poverty in not a realistic objective. They want to become better at surviving crises. This is not something that development planners like to hear. For them crises are annoying blips in the grand path to development. For the poorest of the poor, they are usually right around the corner.

What role does/could education play? Many see education as a way of diversifying household assets by placing a family member somewhere else. A daughter can move to town. A son can travel to a neighbouring country in search of semi-skilled agricultural job. We also know that information is the most important tool in reducing risk. Preparedness for livelihood shocks is best facilitated by increasing awareness of the implications of disease, climate change and conflict. This awareness must be

developed both upwards and downwards. Poor people need to understand about HIV/Aids, about how to protect their homes and crops from floods, and how to deal with a changing economic system. Those doing the "teaching" must also understand how the poor themselves use their assets to reduce risk. Is education a platform for such mutual learning? Does bilingual education create an enabling environment for addressing potential ethnic conflict, or is it just tokenism? How can we see the difference?

Education as a human right, what then?

The Swedish Government has decided that education shall be addressed as a human right. This conference has considered what this means in practice. Discussions highlighted how rights-based approaches may provide an important basis for advocating for greater investment in education, but also the meagre results that such advocacy has thus far yielded. These discussions raised attention to the two fundamental weaknesses in rights-based approaches. First, perhaps the greatest difficulty in applying rights-based approaches is the inability to accurately define responsibilities. Who are the duty holders and how do they see their duties and capabilities when the state is searching for ways to shed its responsibilities and reduce recurrent expenditure? Second, rights-based approaches provide few clues for prioritisation of public sector investments amid declining financial and human resources. The impact of HIV/Aids on the educational system in South Africa is catastrophic, but do we know how to weigh this against the broader systemic impacts of HIV/Aids on South African society? The papers in this volume present a number of failures to live up to our objectives regarding rights to education. The challenge ahead is to place these concerns within an emerging discussion of responsibilities.

By revealing the real life situation of teachers and students, research can provide a good start in this. Will the market engage as the state withdraws? How has the introduction of school fees impacted on these rights, and who else has the responsibility to cover the costs of education? Are parents to be considered as citizens, taxpayers or customers? What is a realistic role for civil society, or the so-called "community" in filling the gap? Has decentralisation resulted in a more locally anchored discourse on basic rights? Or is decentralisation an excuse to ignore these rights when the "new" duty holders are teachers and local authorities who have their hands full ensuring their own basic survival?

Most importantly, how do poor people themselves construct their view of rights to basic education in contexts of weakening states and unclear roles for the private sector and civil society? How have *they* incorporated New Public Management into their livelihood strategies? If we can begin to unpack issues such as these, we can also begin to move beyond the impasse of merely pointing out failures to engage in a discussion of alternatives for poverty alleviation.

Education and Poverty

By Jandhyala B G Tilak, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi

Abridged version of the keynote address delivered at the Poverty Conference on 'Education – A Road Out of Poverty?' (Stockholm: Swedish International Development Agency and Uppsala University, 17–18 October 2001). The full version is appearing in Journal of Human Development (UNDP) [website of the journal: http://www.tandf.co.uk]. Permission of the Editor and the publishers to include it in this volume is gratefully acknowledged.

Alternative approaches to development

Poverty is conventionally defined in terms of income poverty, i.e. number of people below the poverty line, and is measured in different ways, predominantly in terms of inadequacy of income to procure a minimum level of calories. Quite a few indices are developed in the literature that broadly relate to this phenomenon. Poverty line is defined at the national level considering the income level required to purchase a defined minimum level of calories of food. Poverty line is also defined at international levels, by considering US$1 and US$2 per head per day as alternative minimum levels of income. Unfortunately, thepoverty line so defined, nationally or internationally, considers the minimum level of income needed for a bare minimum amount of food for survival, and nothing else. Estimates on income poverty – both using nationally and internationally defined poverty lines – are available on a large number of countries (see, e.g., UNDP, 2001; World Bank, 2000).

Eradication or at least reduction of poverty has been an important goal of development strategies in most modern societies. This is also on the agenda of several international development organizations, including UNDP, World Bank and UNICEF (e.g., World Bank, 1980b, 1990, 2000; UNDP, 2000). Several approaches have been in practice towards reduction of poverty, including direct measures like provision of food, employment, and even income to the poor, and indirect measures like provision of education, health, etc., enabling people to earn or increase their earnings, so as to get out of the poverty trap. The later ones may be of long-term nature and effect, making the gains in poverty reduction more effective and sustainable.

The human capital approach

The human capital approach regards education as an important instrument for reduction of poverty. According to human capital theory, investment in education leads to formation of human capital, which is an important factor of economic growth. Education together with training imparts skills and productive knowledge and transforms human beings into a more valuable human capital. "The stock of skills and productive knowledge embodied in people" constitutes human capital (Rosen, 1989, p. 682). This knowledge, imparted through education, increases the productivity of the people and thereby their earnings.

In short, a strong linear relationship between education and earnings is envisaged, as shown in Figure 1. Economics of Education is abundant with studies that firmly establish the correlation between education and earnings – earnings rising with increase in education levels, almost universally and quite steeply and systematically, in

case of general populations as well as sub-groups of populations – males, females, rural, urban, socially backward sections, etc. As Blaug (1972) noted, the universality of this relationship is well recognized beyond doubt (see Psacharopoulos and Tilak, 1992).

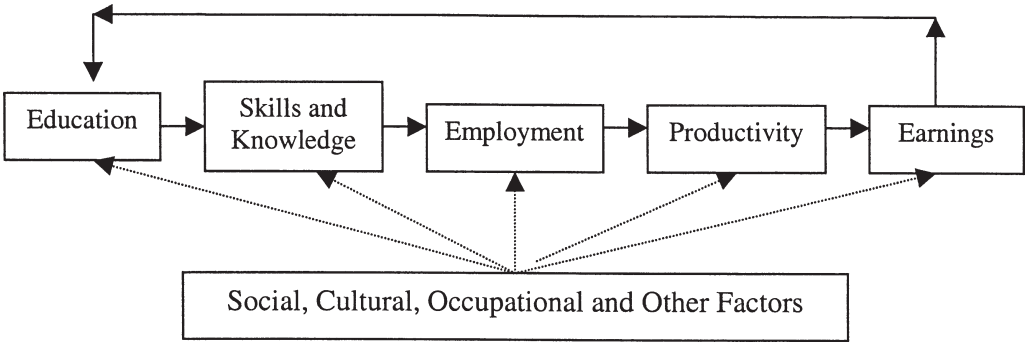

Figure 1: Relationship between education and earnings in the human capital framework

The relationship between education and earnings is also examined in the human capital framework by rate of return analysis, and production function analysis – at individual as well as social/national levels. Rates of return are estimated using either Mincerian earnings function (Mincer, 1972), or using the concept of marginal efficiency of capital that relates costs of education to the lifetime benefits, essentially earnings associated with education. Both kinds of estimates on rates of return are available for a large number of countries (see Psacharopoulos, 1994). The several estimates have shown that education yields attractive returns, comparable to alternative rates of return, both to the individual and to the society at large. Similarly, production function analyses, including Schultz and Denison's growth accounting equations (see Bowman, 1964) and the recent growth equations (e.g., Lucas, 1988; Barro, 1991; Romer 1990) have reported significant positive effects of education on growth.

Research that has examined the relationship between education and earnings bulged in size over the years. Neither inclusion of several other socioeconomic, occupational and other variables, nor methodological sophistications have substantially reduced the relative significance of education in increase in earnings. Studies on demand function (for education) have also shown that increase in earnings will further result in more demand for education and increase in the level of education.

Though the origins of human capital theory can be traced to the earlier economists – from Adam Smith (1776) to Alfred Marshall (1920) – it is Theodore Schultz (1961) who created a 'human investment revolution in economic thought' by emphasizing the role of human capital in economic growth. Schultz (1961), Gary Becker (1964), Jacob Mincer (1972), Edward Denison (1962) and many others with their voluminous pioneering contributions placed education at a high pedestal in the theories of economic growth, which until then focused on the traditional factors of production, viz., land, labor and capital.

Research in the following period also investigated the contribution of education to various facets of development – agricultural productivity, poverty reduction, income distribution, health, nutrition, democracy, civil rights etc. In all this, education is viewed as an important instrument of development. The human capital approach

thus recognizes both the direct contribution of education to development (e.g., to health, nutrition, democracy etc.,) and the indirect contribution (influence through productivity and earnings) to development. It also recognizes the role of education in social change, though this is not valued as much by human capital economists as by sociologists.

The basic needs approach

In contrast, the basic needs approach, developed during the mid-1970s (ILO, 1976) recognizes education as a basic need. "Education is itself a basic need and equality of access to educational services, particularly in rural areas, is therefore an important ingredient of a basic needs strategy" (ILO, 1977, p. 28). At the same time, closely akin to the human capital theory, the basic needs strategy also recognizes that education helps fulfill other basic needs and improves quality of life (see Streeten, 1977).

The indirect effect of education on poverty through fulfillment of basic needs (such as better utilization of health facilities, shelter, water and sanitation), and its effects on women's behavior in decisions relating to fertility, family welfare and health etc., was also well researched (Noor, 1980; Cochrane, 1980; Jeffery and Basu, 1996). Fulfillment of other basic needs, in turn, enhance the productivity of people and yield higher wages. The relationship between poverty and education is further strengthened, as education and other basic needs reinforce each other (Noor, 1980; Tilak, 1989b; Unesco-PROAP, 1998).

So, the basic needs approach focuses on the instrumental role of education, while recognizing education as a basic need in itself. In other words, though the basic needs approach does not value the income-increasing role of education per se, it nevertheless views education not only as an end (as a basic need) in itself, but also as a means of fulfilling other basic needs. As the World Bank (1980a, b) has argued, fulfillment of any one of the basic needs (nutrition, safe drinking water, health, shelter and education) can be beneficial to the fulfillment of each of the others, and conversely. However, education was ranked higher among the several basic needs: education forms a critically important factor in the basic needs framework, as it is fundamental to the satisfaction of all basic needs (Noor, 1980). ILO (1977, p. 28) goes a little further and notes that "lack of access to education denies many people.. . the opportunity to participate fully and meaningfully in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the community." These aspects did not attract the attention of many, until the human development approach was developed in the mid/late 1980s.

The human development perspective

The limitations of income poverty as a meaningful measure of poverty are increasingly noted by scholars and development planners. Some recognized that "poverty is not only a problem of low incomes; rather it is a multi-dimensional problem that includes low access to opportunities for developing human capital and to education" (World Bank, 1994, p. 9); but they still focused their attention on investment in human capital, particularly in education, as a means to reduce poverty. Simultaneously the weaknesses of human capital theory and the emphasis on economic growth were also noted. It was argued, "Development must, therefore, be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus must be people" (UNDP, 1990, p. 10). Accordingly, search for alternative paradigms of development began..

Finally, in contrast to the human capital and the basic needs approaches, a human development perspective slowly emerged, á là Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq, as an alternative paradigm of development. It has dominated the development thinking of the 1990s and of late. Human development is viewed as a "process of enlarging people's choices" (UNDP, 1990, p.10) and as "means and ends" (Streeten, 1994). Though the concept of human development seems to be new, the approach to view human beings "never merely as means, but in every case at the same time as ends in themselves" was advocated as early as in the 18th century by Immanuel Kant (1785, p. 58; emphasis original) [quoted in Prabhu, 2001]. Human capital economists do recognize the concept of human development, but emphasize the economic contribution more than the human welfare. Human development, in addition to improving human welfare directly, is an excellent investment in terms of its contribution to economic growth (Birdsall, 1993).

Focusing on human development, concepts such as 'human poverty' are formulated, largely owing to human development specialists. "Human poverty is more than income poverty: it is a denial of choices and opportunities for living a tolerable life" (UNDP, 1997, p.2). In this sense, denial of human rights itself constitutes poverty, and accordingly a rights-based approach to poverty eradication is being increasingly argued (e.g., Speth, 1998). The human development approach recognizes education primarily not as an instrument or means of development, but as development itself, and lack of the same constitutes not just a cause of poverty, but poverty itself. Educational deprivation or poverty of education becomes an integral part of human poverty. Accordingly standard of living, quality of life, human development, and human poverty etc. are measured in terms of, inter alia, educational status of the population.

Human development to human capabilities

Amartya Sen (1999) expanded the human development approach further and called it a human capabilities approach. Human development needs to be seen as a "process of expanding the capabilities of people" (Sen, 1984, p. 497). According to Sen (1999, p. 87), 'real' poverty can be sensitively identified in terms of capability deprivation: deprivations that are intrinsically important, unlike low income that is only instrumentally significant. Relative deprivation in terms of income can yield absolute deprivation in terms of capabilities. Sen thus distinguishes between income poverty and capability poverty and argues that the later is obviously more important. Capability poverty refers to deprivation of opportunities, and choices and entitlements. The later can be regarded as an extension of human freedom. The notion of freedom is embodied in the concept of capabilities (Sen, 1987, 1992, 1993). Sen views development as freedom, and freedom encompasses education as well, which enhances capabilities of people.

Human capability is close to, but goes beyond 'human poverty.' Sen argues further that the instrumental relation between low income and low capability varies between different individuals, or groups. The relationship is strongly affected by several individual factors such as gender and age. Education can very significantly influence both income poverty and capability poverty and also the relationship between the two, besides constituting itself a part of capability poverty. In fact, education deprivation itself is capability poverty, and investing in education of the poor itself is reduction of capability poverty.

As Sen rightly argues, reduction of income poverty alone cannot possibly be the ultimate goal of antipoverty policies. He further warns against viewing poverty in narrow terms of income deprivation since this might lead to the confounding of ends and means, e.g., viewing education as a means to end income poverty, while education is both an end and a means. Education constitutes a part of human freedom and human capability. Sen also recognizes the public and the semi- (or quasi-) public good nature of education, basic education in particular, and argues strongly that markets do not have much role in providing public goods such as basic education. Efficiency as well as equity considerations require public investment in education, and education has to be provided as a right and as an entitlement to all.

To sum up, as Sen (1999) rightly notes, the two major approaches to poverty and development, viz., human capital and human development (more appropriately, the human capability) approaches are distinct, though closely related. Both approaches have a long tradition, but they are explicitly recognized only recently: the human capital approach in the early 1960s, and the human development approach in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Human development is a much richer notion than human capital; and as a paradigm, it offers more than human capital theory. The human capital approach tends to concentrate on the agency role of human beings in augmenting production possibilities. The perspective of the human capability approach, on the other hand, focuses on the ability – the substantive freedom – of people to lead the lives they value and to enhance their real choices. The human capital approach focuses on the workforce, their employment and their contribution to growth; the human development approach in turn focuses on people whether they are engaged in economic production activities or not. According to a human capital approach – though the consumption nature of education is recognized – it is mainly the economic contribution of education that determines what importance it should have in development priorities of the economies (or even at individual level). On the other hand, a human development approach gives more emphasis to the intrinsic value of education; it views education as a human right, as an opportunity, and as an entitlement, and it argues for its provision to all.

The 'human' component in human capital/development/ capabilities approaches

The main strength of the approaches seems to be that they place humanity at the center of attention, as Sen (1997; 1999, p. 293) rightly argues, unlike many who condemn the human capital approach as one that does not recognize the human component at all. Sen also finds both approaches relevant. 'Better understanding of human capital perspective helps in better appreciation of the relevance of human capability perspective.' Human capability has an intrinsic value for the well-being of people, and an indirect role in influencing social change and economic output. An educated person has a higher level of earnings than a less educated or illiterate person; with the same level of education, he or she is also able to read, write, communicate and argue with others, is able to choose among different alternatives in a more informed way, is taken more seriously by others, and so on. All these aspects represent a higher standard and quality of life.

Education helps to broaden the base of understanding among people, and thereby helps to strengthen the democratic process, which in turn could pave the way for the promotion of sustainable development through a better understanding of the

intimate relation between environment, ecology and sustainable development. Thus, by strengthening democratic forces, education would help in promoting sustainable human development, making rapid social progress, including abolition or containment of the elite's discretionary power (see Cohen, 1998, p. 15) and wider social equity. The benefits of education thus exceed its role as human capital.

Education empowers the people, particularly the poor and the weak, by attacking ignorance, building skills, and by changing the outdated attitudes and values (Unesco-PROAP, 1998). Education can be a life empowering experience for all, and what the poor need most is empowerment. In other words, education is not only *for* empowerment; it *is* empowerment. Thus education serves at the same time both the 'constitutive' and 'instrumental' roles of development. While recognizing that the economic importance of education in increasing incomes and reducing poverty remains unchallenged, the human capability approach values these additional roles as well. There lies the main strength of the human capability approach. A human capability perspective provides an integrated approach to development – education's direct relevance for the well-being and freedom of the people, its indirect role through its influence on social change, and its indirect role through its influence on economic production (Sen, 1999, p. 296).

Another important strength of both approaches lies in their policy implication for development planners and thinkers. The policy implication is common and straightforward: education should be given high priority in development work, as education is development and/or it contributes to development. This holds true for individuals, families, communities, groups of population and nations as well. However, there can be differences in the type and content of education, and even in its delivery.

Education poverty and income poverty

Human poverty, that includes specifically education poverty, is an integral part of capability poverty. The features of education poverty include non-participation or low rates of participation of children in schooling, high rates of dropout and failures, low rates of continuation in schooling, low rates of achievement and finally exclusion of the poor from education. All these aspects of education poverty are closely related to income poverty. Poverty of education is a principal factor responsible for income poverty; and income poverty, in turn, does not allow people to overcome poverty of education. It also follows that improvement in education will lead to reduction in poverty, which in turn will result in increase in demand for education, and finally improving the education status of the people. While there may be several other factors, this relationship seems to be direct, mutually reinforcing.

Available research in the last couple of decades (e.g., Fields, 1980; Tilak, 1986, 1989a, 1994) clearly shows that education and poverty are inversely related: the higher the level of education of the population, the lower the proportion of poor people in the total population, as education imparts knowledge and skills that are associated with higher wages/earnings.

Micro level investigations also have highlighted the role of education in reducing income poverty. The incidence of income poverty is the largest among the illiterate households, and it declines consistently by increasing levels of education in developing countries (Tilak, 1994). In other words, poverty is predominant among the illiterates and it is almost a non-existent phenomenon among the educated households. As Galbraith (1994) observed, there is "no well educated literate population that is poor,

[and] there is no illiterate population that is other than poor." Education and incidence of income poverty are very significantly and systematically inversely related, with a large drop in poverty occurring between illiterates and primary/secondary school graduates.

Poverty and economic constrains keep many children from economically poor families away from schools. Income poverty does not allow households to meet the high direct costs of schooling, nor to bear the opportunity costs of schooling. A large proportion of children from poor families participate in wage-yielding economic activities, participate in non-wage related economic activities such as household chores, and get engaged in activities that may relieve their parents and/or adult members of the household to participate in wage-related activities. Among poor children going to school, a large number drop out.

A second important set of factors that explains the non- or low participation in schooling relates to the poor quality of school infrastructure – physical and human. Not enough teachers, absence or inadequate number of schools, long distance from home to school, and absence of an attractive learning environment constitute this second set of factors.

The inverse relationship between education and incidence of income poverty exists at state level as well. Economically poor states would not be in a position to provide enough schools for all children, ensure good quality of education with adequate number of qualified and trained teachers and other infrastructure facilities, nor to make special arrangements (positive discriminatory measures such as incentives to children to participate in schooling) for the poorer sections of the society. In short, income poverty of the state adversely and severely affects quantity, quality and equity dimensions of education. All this results in a higher degree of education poverty in the society.

However, this is not an ironclad poverty equilibrium that cannot be broken. While the relationship between education and income poverty is a complex one, with a multitude of interactions between several factors, it is increasingly clear that lack of access to education and correspondingly low levels of participation in education is the single most important long term factor responsible for poverty of the masses. The role of education in reducing poverty and relative income inequalities is found significant. In fact, some consider education as a more effective instrument for the alleviation of poverty than other measures such as distribution of land, employment, public distribution system etc. (e.g., see World Bank, 1990; OXFAM, 1999). It is also noted that, thanks to education – especially of women – a society could move out of poverty traps and progress into prosperity.

Strategies for development of education in developing countries

Education is rightly regarded as an important component of anti-poverty programs in many developing countries, and various types and strategies are adopted for the development of education, primarily as an instrument of reduction of poverty, but also – though not at the same level – as a measure of empowerment, a right and an entitlement, as a measure to reduce capability poverty. While there are significant differences in the nature of and emphasis laid on different strategies in education policy adopted in developing countries, there are a few that dominate in this regard. Some of them are not necessarily non-controversial.

Faulty assumptions and unsustainable approaches

Some approaches to education development are based on underlying assumptions that are unsound and mutually contradictory. Some of the very commonly stated important assumptions and approaches include the following:

- Poor societies cannot afford good education. Formal education is costly. It requires huge resources that many international organizations and some developing countries cannot afford. Hence, the most appropriate forms of education suggested for poor developing countries are less expensive, non-formal education and adult education (e.g., Coombs and Ahmed, 1974). Accordingly, for a long period development planners concentrated their attention rather exclusively on adult literacy and non-formal education programs. These programs are offered as an alternative to formal education; and they are of short duration (six months to two years). This is partly based on a presumption that formal education is not relevant for the poor. Governments in developing countries also favored non-formal and adult education, primarily because it was 'cheap' relative to formal education, and they could still claim to be engaged in promoting education for eradication of poverty. Since formal education facilities are not sufficiently available, it became not the second-best option but rather the only available option to the poor (Haq and Haq, 1998, p.10). However, short-duration, non-formal and adult education cannot be a substitute for formal education, and it cannot provide a sustainable solution to the problem of poverty. Such policies may also increase inequalities between rich and poor.
- At best, formal primary or basic education is enough to eradicate poverty. It is assumed that post-primary, more particularly higher education has neither a role to play in reducing poverty, nor can it be afforded by poor developing countries. Hence emphasis was laid on basic education, and secondary and higher education was ignored to a great extent in development plans of many developing countries. Global education programs, such as 'Education For All', also led to the strengthening of these tendencies. In fact, basic education and higher education are viewed as two alternatives, ignoring the inter-dependencies between the two layers of education on the one hand, and the role of higher education in development and in poverty reduction on the other. After all, analyses of the relationship between higher education and poverty also reported significant contribution of higher education to reduction of poverty (Tilak, 2002b). Perhaps higher education may form a more sustainable means of reduction of poverty and also a more reliable measure of development than mere basic education.
- It is no more necessarily so that the State must assume responsibility for educating its citizens. It is increasingly argued, particularly in the current global wave of privatization and marketization, that the responsibility of education can be left to the private sector and that the State can save its scarce resources and efforts for other activities. Though education has traditionally been a responsibility of governments in most modern civilized societies, governments in developing countries begin looking towards the private sector for promotion of education Accordingly, state policies are formulated in such a way that all levels of education, including basic education, get rapidly privatized in many developing countries, and simultaneously the State can gradually withdraw from the education sector, leaving it altogether to the private sector and the NGOs. The governments' scarcity of resources on the one

hand, and compulsions caused by 'structural adjustment' loans and programs borrowed from the international financial institutions on the other have significantly contributed to this. One may, however, question, how the private sector, characterized by profit motives, will help in the development of education, as a means of reducing poverty and or as a measure of welfare and development in itself. After all, education is widely recognized as a public good and also as a merit good.

- Along with the above, it is also assumed that there is willingness to pay for education on the part of the people, including the poor. Accordingly, serious attention is being given to policies relating to introduction of and increase in cost recovery rates in education, including basic education that generally is expected to be freely provided, as per the UN conventions and national constitutions. Perhaps it is possible to argue that it is not 'willingness to pay', but 'compulsion to pay' that the poor people feel, as the State does not spend enough on education. (Tilak, 2001, 2002c, d). Families feel compelled to spend on textbooks, stationary, uniforms, private coaching etc., as the State neither spends adequately on primary schools, nor on libraries, laboratories etc. in colleges and universities; also, the State does not recruit an adequate number of good quality trained teachers
- A trained qualified teacher is not important, even in basic education. This is one of the most dangerous assumptions increasingly circulating in developing countries. Partly supported by isolated micro level experiments by NGOs – national and international, or others – and mainly lured by the possibility of saving huge public resources on teachers' salaries, while avoiding the problems of teacher management, governments began recruiting 'barefoot' teachers (e.g., Shiksha Karmis in India). These do not posses required qualifications and training to teach, and they teach on contractual basis for a very small pay. The adverse effects of such strategies on quality of education could be very severe.
- Poor people do not value education. The most damaging assumption underlying several education strategies of developing countries is that people are ignorant; they do not value education, and therefore whatever is provided is appropriate. The high rate of non-participation in schooling is attributed more to the ignorance of the people than to the inadequacies in supply of education. It is increasingly argued that there exists no demand for education. But as recent surveys (e.g., PROBE, 1999 in India) have revealed, there does exist a huge demand for education; even poor, illiterate parents living in rural areas want education for their children, including for their girl children. But what is demanded is not just any education, but reasonable quality education.
- Decentralization is the key for education for development. One of the most fashionable approaches to education development in recent years is 'decentralization' (together with liberalization and privatization) (Streeten, 2000). Decentralization per se is desirable; it is also particularly important in large-size developing countries, where central governments may not be able to effectively plan, provide, manage and supervise the education systems in all parts of the country. While few doubt the importance of decentralized approaches to education development, it is also important to note that some central governments find it convenient to use decentralization as a mechanism of abdication of its own responsibilities for educating the people. Secondly, a decentralized approach is also viewed in many places as a mechanism for raising resources from local communities that will

substitute the budgetary resources of central government for education. Thirdly, reliance to a great extent of local resources, might contribute to regional inequalities. The dangers involved in decentralization are too serious to ignore.

Summary

This paper has presented a brief overview of the relationship between education and poverty. It has also quickly reviewed the two major approaches to education development, viz., the human capital approach and the human development approach. The later is close to a human capability approach á là Amartya Sen. Reference is also made to the basic needs approach developed by the ILO.

- The basic needs approach recognizes education as a basic or a minimum need and at the same as a basic need, the fulfillment of which helps in fulfillment of other needs.
- The human capital approach emphasizes education as a means of development, while
- the human development approach recognizes education as an end in itself.
- The human capability approach offers an integrated approach on the role of education as a direct measure of well-being and freedom, as an indirect influence on social change, and as an indirect influence on economic production.

While all approaches recognize the 'instrumental' role of education, at the same time they place varying degrees of emphasis on it. It is only the human development and human capability approaches that recognize the 'constitutive' roles as well. While the human capital and human development approaches are distinct, they are also closely related.

Education also forms an integral part of human poverty. Education can reduce poverty, through its influence on productivity and earnings – while poverty leads to education deprivation. It has been argued that the mutually reinforcing cyclic relationship between education and income poverty can be broken effectively by concentrating on education development of the poor.

Lastly, a brief attempt has been made to review some of the widely prevalent approaches towards development of education in developing countries and their underlying assumptions. The selection of the approaches is not exhaustive, and the discussion on them is not in depth. But, it has been found that not all assumptions are sound, and not all approaches could be expected to yield positive outcomes in relation to improvement of education status of the poor. Basically most approaches and strategies of education development view education as a means of poverty reduction, rarely as an end in itself, as reduction of poverty or as development in itself. Some of the recent policy initiatives, such as emphasis on non-formal and adult education, neglect of secondary and higher education, introduction of cost recovery measures in education, declining role of the State and corresponding increase in reliance on the private sector, as well as decentralization, may indeed cause harm to the development of education in developing countries and accentuate both education poverty and human poverty in general, including income poverty and capability poverty.

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Literacy and Gender: When Research and Policy Collide

By Nelly P. Stromquist, Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California, Los Angeles

The recent explosion of technological and economic developments has demonstrated the crucial and positive role of education in our rapidly globalized world. The salience of knowledge in modern society has propelled its current recognition as the key tool by which nations become economically productive and individuals healthy and active citizens. Echoing this trend, the public discourse of important international organizations refers to knowledge as the "highest form of capital." Not surprisingly, the UNDP's measure of human welfare, the Human Development Index, recognizes the importance of education twice in the configuration of HDI values, first as literacy and then as school enrollment[1].

Curiously, the powers attributed to knowledge are emerging in the context of an increasingly polarized social reality. While the global economy rewards well those with high levels of education, it provides technical and professional forms of employment only to a handful. Simultaneously, the global economy is creating many jobs in service areas, jobs requiring limited skills and providing low wages. Though the school's promise of social mobility continues to be true in individual terms, it is false in aggregate terms since not all educated people can secure good jobs, leaving many unable to enjoy the advantages education is expected to provide (Enguita, 1996).

As a prerequisite to higher forms of education, literacy is gaining renewed interest as a key means for individual and collective betterment, and concern is being expressed about the persistent presence of illiteracy. Research findings consistently show that there is a very strong connection between limited education and poverty, even though education by no means ensures living conditions removed from poverty. As we look at the poor, a picture that reflects different geographical situations emerges. In many Sub-Saharan African and South Asian countries, many poor are illiterate because they were not able to have access to school (in part because of the still limited supply of schools). In the case of Latin America, as noted by Ferreiro (1992), the low literacy levels of many adults, especially among the poor, are the result mostly of the low-quality schooling received in primary levels.

In this presentation, I would like to take you through a brief but somewhat complex journey of what I see as crucial points of collision between literacy research findings-definedfindings – defined as a systematic attempt to capture reality – and policy positions on literacy – at times based on a diagnosis of reality with little foundation in the empirical world.

In focusing on literacy, the contribution of three different perspectives is examined. The first, endorsed by multinational institutions, international development agencies, and governments, views literacy as a set of coding and decoding skills that can be easily decontextualized and expanded throughout the world. The second perspective, derived from academic research in the past 20 years, proposes the concept of multiple literacies and decries efforts to divide the world into literates and illiterates. The third perspective, fueled by sentiments of social justice and the need

[1] Comprising a set of three indicators of development, the HDI assigns a weight of one-third of its value to life expectancy; another third to adjusted average income; and another third to education, divided in turn into one-third for formal schooling (enrolment rates) and two-thirds for adult literacy (Gibson, 2001).

for redress, advocates adult literacy as a means of constructing active citizenship and rebuilding the state and society[2].

Literacy as a basic skill for development

The dominant view about literacy is that it is a skill that cuts across contexts and represents the foundation that will make a nation more economically productive as well as enable its population to function as individuals in an increasingly complex environment. Numerous research findings show that literate persons place greater value on nutrition, health, and education for their children, demonstrating that positive intergenerational benefits accrue from literacy (Windham, 1999). Moreover, there exists qualitative evidence that literacy can contribute to increased sense of selfesteem, greater trust from others, and assertiveness in social interaction, thus providing individuals a greater sense of agency vis-à-vis their household and community (Stromquist, 1997; Egbo, 2000). It should be noted, however, that the large majority of studies on the power of literacy, particularly the quantitative studies, confuse the impact of literacy with that of schooling, and particularly with years of schooling. The result of this confusion is the tendency to believe that positive individual and social impacts can be obtained with the bare minimum levels of educational development – which "literacy" usually represents.

In the official discourse, literacy is sought in order to gain access to knowledge that is information oriented rather than person-dependent. Literacy is said to offer knowledge that can be compartmentalized and future-oriented, enabling access to the public world, and facilitating the resolution of conflicting information through analysis and questioning. Considered as a means to acquire modern knowledge, literacy is often contrasted with traditional knowledge, which is said to have an emphasis on unity, on wholeness and interconnectedness, and on learning from the past (Teasdale and Teasdale, 1994, cited in Teasdale, 1997). According to the influential work of Amartya Sen (1981), the poor are not poor because of inherent reasons but because they have limited capabilities and rights, such as access to health and skills. From this perspective, literacy can serve as a means to secure important capabilities or opportunities.

Attached to great promises of literacy there continues to be a relative lack of understanding on the part of policy makers regarding its potential, limitations, and demands for implementation. It is not uncommon to find statements by government officials identifying such targets as "literacy reduction of 80 percent over a one-year period." Economists of the World Bank still produce papers in which they refer to the need for "eradicating the plague of illiteracy" (Ritzen, 2000), as if illiteracy were caught by contagion through an undiscriminating virus floating in the air.

Concomitant with this rather simplistic understanding of illiteracy has been a dichotomous view of its definition, establishing a clear boundary between literates and illiterates. This continues to operate through the application of inexpensive methods to measure literacy based on self-report or on formal educational attainment

[2] The different literacy camps find a parallel in the literature on reading and writing among children in formal schooling. Phonic approaches to reading concentrate on coding and decoding words, often isolated from familiar context, and give teachers very prescribed methods for drilling sounds and words, as reflected in the Open Court method widely used in the U.S. In contrast, whole reading approaches emphasize meaning and seek to present reading materials whose content is close to the children's experience. Within this second camp, there is a group of literacy scholars concerned with the attainment of literacy skills among minority children and who pay attention to literacy content and methods to facilitate the students' social awareness (MacGillivray, 2001).

as a proxy for literacy skills (Murray, 1999), measures typically employed in both national census data and household surveys. UNESCO has changed its definition of literacy since the 1950s, when it was measured as one's ability to "understand and read a short simple statement on his [sic] everyday life" to the current more complex and relational conceptualization dating from the 1970s, which defines as literate, "a person who can engage in all those activities in which literacy is required for effective functioning of his/her groups and community and also for enabling him/her to continue to use reading, writing, and calculation for his/her own and the community's development" (UNESCO, 1978, cited in Murray, 1999).

In the industrialized world, there have been advances in the measurement of literacy, building on psychometric developments for item selection and scaling according to level of difficulty. Defining literacy now as "a mode of adult behavior" (Murray, 1999, p. 220), researchers have advanced more refined measures of literacy that distinguish three modalities (prose, document, and quantitative literacy), and have assessed it through a continuum that progresses from 0 to 500 points. This form of literacy assessment, which uses mostly open-ended questions, requires about an hour to administer in a person-to-person interview.

Because of its cost, it has taken place only in industrialized countries. The first attempt, known as the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), was first administered in the US in 1994 and re-administered in 1996 and 1998 to persons aged 16 years and older. NALS found that among Americans with 10 years of schooling, nearly 25 percent had the equivalent of only fourth-grade literacy skills or lower (Wagner and Venezky, 1999). The survey also found that adults with low literacy skills usually report that their limited skills create no serious difficulties for them in everyday life. As Murray reports, "When asked if their reading skills were sufficient to meet their everyday needs, most respondents replied overwhelmingly that they were, regardless of tested skill levels" (1999, p. 221). This may reflect the wide range of literacy requirements in the job market. Because of the relationship between occupational and literacy skills, people tend to gravitate to jobs that are at least to some degree commensurate with their literacy proficiency. On the other hand, many have learned ways to cope with their low literacy levels in both work and social situations.

The effect of literacy on cognitive skills

An intriguing question, very much related to the potential of literacy to improve people's life chances, focuses on literacy's ability to improve one's reasoning. This possibility was explored in a study that compared people who had acquired literacy in school with those who obtained literacy in their indigenous language through informal means (notably, the study of the Vai in Liberia by Scribner and Cole, 1981). This study found no cognitive differences that could be attributed solely to literacy, independent of schooling.

Almost twenty years later, in 1998, Bernardo conducted a quasi-experimental study in the Philippines comparing cognitive skills across three groups (illiterate, literate through formal education, and literate through non-formal and informal education). He looked at five cognitive skills (conceptual understanding, conceptual organization, conceptual comparison, deductive reasoning, and explanation or inductive reasoning). As Scribner and Cole before him, Bernardo found "no generalized transformation in the mode of thinking toward more formal or abstract processing of the information" among those with literacy skills (1998, p. 56), but he did discover that

persons who became literate through schooling were able to provide more complete explanations and to produce fewer irrelevant replies than persons in the other two groups. He attributed this to the schooling socialization toward complete and focused replies rather than to literacy per se.[3]

He found also that improvements in the ability to categorize concepts were linked to the degree of integration of literacy into everyday practices. More literate communities – that is to say those with activities such as group discussions, newsletter writing, and the provision of seminars and workshops – foster greater individual cognitive changes. Bernardo found that, "Even illiterate members of the community participate in the community practices that use literacy; therefore, even illiterate members change in the way they process information as a result of the integration of literacy practices" (1998, p. 85). On the positive side, Bernardo found that illiterates are not debilitated psychologically or mentally, since human beings, regardless of educational levels, are able to grasp concepts and use them in their understanding of their surrounding world.

On the less positive side, he found that, like many other cognitive skills, literacy is not easily acquired; he concluded that, "Literacy needs to be scaffolded onto other skills in the person's existing repertoire" (Bernardo, 1998, p. 133). Ferreiro offers a similar view when she critiques the emphasis in Latin American public schools toward decoding at the expense of meaning, without providing modeling of the social functions of literacy (cited in Dexter, 1998). This finding leads us to conclude that literacy rates may not be accurate indicators of the extent that literacy practices have been established in communities; they may, in fact, tend to overestimate actual uses of literacy.

While Bernardo found no effect of literacy on any specific cognitive skill, the adults in his study had at most fifth grade of primary schooling, so his findings do not constitute a test of the ability of education to alter concept formation. Literacy, of course, is endorsed by educators not merely as a survival skill at the basic level but as a means to attain increasingly higher levels of education and knowledge. It is important to note that the community practices that integrated literacy skills in the Philippine communities were those located in "community or people's organizations" (p. 104), thus Bernardo's study recognizes as important not merely the context, but a context fostered by organizational ties.

Decontextualized language in schools

Positions that advocate access to print literacy typically defend its ability to enable individuals to process information that transcends a particular time and circumstance, and to deal with descriptions of objects or events with which a person may have no direct contact. Dexter et al., 1998, have introduced the concept of "decontextualized language," defined as "language detached from the speaker/author as well as the listener/reader, and [in which] meaning must be derived primarily from the words themselves rather than the context to have roughly the same meaning to different people" (p. 142). Dexter et al. further argue:

> To be comprehensible to a wide audience, decontextualized language displays textual features that distinguish it from conversational language. One important feature is the type of vocabulary required to make meaning as explicit as possible. While conversa-

[3] Illiterate women in Brazil seemed to recognize this when several observed that literacy would help them speak better (Stromquist, 1997).

> tional language often uses vague or general vocabulary that is clarified by context or shared knowledge, the vocabulary of decontextualized language must be as specific as possible in order to constrain interpretation, and words must have standardized meaning. A second language relates to grammar. Conversational sentences typically are simple and fragmentary for a number of reasons: speakers have little time to compose complex sentences, there is less need for the explicitness that complex grammar creates, and intonation and pauses convey some of the information that complex grammatical structures convey…. A third feature is the discourse structure of decontextualized language, which is more monologic than dialogic. Longer utterances than are common in conversation increase the cognitive load for both speaker and listener; and logical relationships between ideas must be specified with words and phrases such as "because," "in contrast," "rather than," "for that reason," or "therefore," while temporal relationships are described with language such as "after that, "then," " in the meantime, or "in the morning." Still a fourth feature is the impersonalization of the speaker/author in the text. The speaker/author presents him- or herself as an objective conveyor of truths rather than an individual with a particular perspective (pp. 144–145).

Dexter et al. (1998) maintain that schools, being talk-saturated environments, are prime venues for the acquisition of decontextualized language[4]. In their study of the impact of maternal schooling in rural Mexico, they found that the ability to process decontextualized language correlated highly with health-related listening, reading, and speaking tasks, and that length of schooling was a significant predictor of the ability to provide decontextualized noun definitions, to understand spoken health messages, and to understand printed health messages even though at all levels of schooling there was wide variation in the women's reading abilities (Dexter et al., 1998). Interestingly, the authors found also that literacy barriers create oral language barriers, as women with little or no literacy had difficulty following the verbal explanations and instructions conveyed by doctors and nurses.

Linked to the perspective that literacy is a set of decontextualized skills needed for national development is the willingness to consider the role of others in helping an individual acquire the proper modernization messages. Thus, a quantitative study by Gibson (2001), focusing on factors that facilitate children's health (proxied through children's height), found that illiterates can benefit from having access to a literate person, even though the effects were slightly higher when the parents themselves were literate. Gibson concluded that we need to operate with the concept of the "proximate illiterate – a person who cannot read but lives with someone who can and that, instead of merely measuring the adult literacy rate in a community, we need to know how literate and illiterate adults are distributed among households.

It is well known that, while governments expect large enrollments in literacy programs, it is more typical that fewer than anticipated will enroll and that many will abandon the programs shortly after enrolling in them. While literacy programs may be seen officially as a major means to bring modern ideas to communities or to make them more economically productive, the objectives of the students participating in the programs are very different from those held by program designers. In her study of women learners in literacy programs in Sao Paulo (Brazil), Stromquist (1997) found the personal aims for participating rather modest, from learning to sign their names

[4] Citing research by Snow, Dexter et al. (1998) assert that many reading or writing problems children encounter after acquiring a simple level of skill are in fact problems of processing and producing decontextualized language, both oral and written.

to acquiring a wider vocabulary, or merely for the opportunity to leave the house for a few hours of camaraderie and relaxation[5]. It is also the case that programs intending to serve "illiterates," in reality attract individuals with various degrees of reading and writing proficiency. Again, in her Brazilian study, Stromquist (1997) found that abilities to decode and comprehend text varied substantially among the women participating in the program and that their years of formal schooling reached as high as the fifth grade of primary school.

Despite some differences, the perspective that considers literacy as a set of basic skills that can be detached from particular contexts has been making improvements in the measurement of literacy and continues to assert that its mastery, at either the individual or household level, is essential to national development. Often, however, this perspective remains silent about issues of program implementation.

Literacy as embedded in cultural practices

In the past two decades, a number of university-based researchers, particularly in the fields of linguistics and anthropology (and to a less extent in semiotics, psychology, and history) have challenged the views that there is a stark divide between literate and illiterate persons and that print literacy skills may be attained independent of the surrounding social context, in which people live. Known as the "new literacy studies" (NLS), this school of thought and research has examined people's everyday experiences, looking for instances in which communication and the use of print occurs (Heath, 1983; Street, 1984, 1993, 1995; Gee, 1996; Gee et al., 1996).

Through ethnographic studies using open interviews and observation, NLS researchers found that individuals across a wide diversity of social settings develop skills to cope with social demands despite their limited ability to either read or write text. Very informative and insightful studies using the NLS approach have been conducted in South Africa through a series of community studies centering on such settings as squatter settlements, the taxi industry, farms, schools, and migrant communities confirm the linkage between literacy skills and contextual practice and the individuals' resourcefulness to function socially even with their low print literacy skills (Prinsloo and Breier, 1997).

NLS argues that conventional literacy programs are often too concerned with cognitive outcomes and not sensitive enough to how the literacy process works for participants and how it adapts to its surrounding culture. In the view of NLS scholars, focusing on the need for literacy unwittingly marginalizes the illiterates in their communities (Street, 1995; McEwan and Malan, 1996). Two important NLS concepts have been "literacy events" and "literacy practices," which have enabled us to gain a greater understanding of the meanings and uses of literacy. The first concept, proposed by Heath (1983), refers to real occasions in which the written language is connected with the nature of the participants' interventions and their interpretive processes and strategies. The second concept, by Street (1993), expands on these events to include cultural models and events that further shape how behaviors and accompanying meanings are related to actual uses of reading and writing.

[5] On the other hand, participation in the safe spaces provided by literacy classes, produces positive and unintended effects in the development of assertiveness and empowering attitudes, particularly among women.

NLS research methods have revealed that individuals possess a variety of communicative skills, and that familiar activities, values, and patterns of time and space influence individuals' responses to written texts across societies and institutions (Heath, 1999; McEwan and Malan, 1996). Literacy practices are said, therefore, to acquire meaning only in the context of cultures of performance and symbolic display. Consequently, increased literacy competence depends on extensive practices. For instance, one of the most common literacy practices tends to be reading the Bible. Frequently people without schooled literacy or with low levels of literacy claim to be able to read the Bible and to attribute that to divine inspiration (McEwan and Malan, 1996; Stromquist, 1997). Such people claim also to be able to read religious hymns. Both practices can be taken as examples in which the printed word functions as an aide-memoir for repetitive texts and practices so that, rather than "reading," individuals are refreshing their memory by recognizing key letters and words (along with shapes and location of text).

An NLS study focusing on the taxi industry in South Africa noticed a surprisingly high rate of illiteracy among drivers (55 percent among Johannesburg and Soweto drivers), despite the fact that the occupation creates high literacy demands (Breier et al., 1996). Drivers learned to cope by memorizing rules, associating messages with colors and shapes to decode signs and forms, and enrolling the support of other people to mediate their needs, particularly with the law. Further, the study by McEwan and Malan cited above, found that what is learned at the community level are important avenues to status and authority that adults may not gain through schooled literacy.

As Heath (1999) observes, time and future identities of family and culture, employment, and spiritual membership shape reading and writing. Further arguments offered by Lankshear and O'Connor (1999) state that forms and presentation of communication today are changing rapidly, exposing individuals to a greater integration of text, images, and sounds in the communications systems (through the use of radio, TV, and videos), thus obliging people to become prepared to interact through multiple points. Consequently, through their participation in literacy classes, the learners seek to fulfill needs "across the spectrum of their social roles and identities" (Lankshear and O'Connor, 1999, p. 32). NLS holds also that literacy is not a homogenous concept (Gee, 1996): while there are indeed dominant or school-based literacies, there are also important local or community-based literacies, which are gained through social practices in natural situations. In this vein, it has even been asserted that, "there is no such thing as a level of literacy" (Rogers, 2001, p. 25).
Major contributions of NLS include:

- the recognition of the importance of supportive community practices for the stable acquisition of literacy;
- the need to consider the multiplicity of ways by which people communicate, including the use of mediators for access to print;
- the demonstration that many low-skill jobs do not require literacy skills; and
- the discovery that it is possible to take classes dealing with technical skills (e.g., the use and maintenance of vehicles, building construction, carpentry, welding) without having literacy skills.

By relying on qualitative methodologies, NLS has shown that individuals learn to cope with their print environment despite their lack of literacy skills. For instance, when dealing with government documents, they put an "x" instead of a signature to receive payments, and find a relative or friend to help them decode extensive documents. NLS also offers solid contributions to the design of literacy programs by highlighting the crucial importance of teacher training in mediating roles and of engaging in multisectoral work to provide supportive grounds for the development of literacy habits. Kell (1996) proposes training development activists as literacy mediators – with roles in interpreting texts, writing petitions, filling in forms, and training illiterate people within development activities themselves; this suggestion would certainly help anchor literacy skills to unfolding community practices.

In many countries, teaching adults to become literate within the schooled paradigms has often been unsuccessful. Unquestionably, literacy must be linked to further education and supportive environments; however, NLS presents characteristics that are not conducive to the consideration of literacy as a political project. One of these features is its unproblematic consideration of the non-literate's reliance on another person, a condition that might create a very dependent relationship for the non-literate and which might have negative effects, if the "mediator" decides to take advantage of the non-literate, or if mediators are not available. A second politically unproductive feature is the assertion that since there are many kinds of literacy, print literacy is just one among a larger set, with no particular salience; this is contrary to positions that see print literacy as a crucial skill in dealing with increasingly complex social institutions. A third feature is that among NLS researchers the context acquires too much importance; hence, the individual becomes so limited by his/her environment that literacy operates at best in a reactive way, seldom proactively.

Literacy for individual and collective empowerment

While the global illiteracy rate is steadily decreasing, there are some 872 million illiterate adults (one in four) in developing countries. Moreover, the proportion of women who are illiterate has remained constant over the past 10 years, representing 64 percent of those in this category (UNESCO, 1999)[6]. In South Asia, where 44 percent of the world's poor live, women have only about half as many years of schooling as men (World Bank, 2001). In face of this reality of widespread women's educational disadvantage, the tradition of popular education and feminist work with adult women takes an approach to literacy different from that of NLS and from the perspective of literacy as merely a tool for modernity and economic production. It sees literacy as an essential element on the path to greater knowledge and understanding of one's environment, and thus as a necessary, if not sufficient, tool for the development of an expanded citizenship – one that recognizes not only the political rights of individuals but also their civil and social rights.

The nested nature of human existence is obvious. Individuals live in households, which are embedded in communities, which are located in particular regions and provinces of a country. In a feminist perspective of literacy, poor and illiterate individuals are seen as able to cope with the various dimensions of their environment, as evidenced by their ability to survive under oppressive conditions. But this kind of

[6] Most of the decrease in illiteracy since 1990 was achieved in East Asia, while the number of illiterates increased by 17 million in South Asia and by 3 million in Sub-Saharan Africa.

response is not considered totally acceptable because the values of autonomy and self-reliance may be suppressed in such a coping process. Education, even at its very basic levels, is seen as an individual right for all, including women. Moreover, research on the everyday realities of women shows that women's literacy practices are linked to the women's perception of their roles as mothers and caregivers in the family and, among older women, as active church participants (Rockhill, 1987; Gibson, 1996; Stromquist, 1997). In other words, literacy practices often serve to induct women into existing conventional gender roles.

Multiple reasons for women's participation in literacy projects

While the empowerment perspective upheld by feminist perspectives seeks to make literacy a tool for creating a more active political life at home, community, and national levels, research on women finds that they, no less than men, participate in literacy projects for multiple reasons, some educational, several social, and many psychological. Within the educational reasons, the needs are also quite diverse: among the younger participants there is a hope to move into the formal educational system and get the credentials necessary for social mobility; among those who are married, learning to write notes for their children, improving their ability to speak and negotiate with others, and developing greater arithmetic skills are frequently stated goals; among older women, signing their name is a common desire (Stromquist, 1997). It is also evident that many adult women perceive literacy as a series of discrete tasks, such as signing their name, reading street and bus signs, reading supermarket prices, rather than as a generalizable skill to access a more complex discourse and analysis of their social, political, and economic world. On the other hand, there seem to be positive outcomes attached to participation in literacy classes, such as developing higher feelings of self-esteem, efficacy, and empowerment (Stromquist, 1997; Egbo, 2000).

Women face substantial problems in the acquisition of literacy. First are the difficulties related to their daily participation in literacy programs; second are the problems related to the development of stable literacy practices. As women join literacy classes, they face the challenge of engaging in regular attendance because literacy classes fight for time among many other competing demands in the everyday life of women. Their role as mothers and caretakers means that any emerging family situation acquires greater priority than attending classes.

Rockhill (1987) notes that for a gender analysis of literacy, it is important to see the household not as a unified collectivity but rather as a setting, where women experience divergent and conflicting preferences and interests. The discontinuity created by some domestic events prevents women from maintaining regular progress and ends up discouraging their participation. Second, routines in domestic work, such as cooking, washing, cleaning the house, and picking up children at school, usually do not present reading and writing demands. Among the poor women who work outside the home, jobs as maids and cooks continue skills that do not require reading and writing, except in rare circumstances (Stromquist, 1997).

A third characteristic affecting women as literacy students is that many of them come to literacy classes either as a result of traumatic experiences at home or while experiencing significant physical and psychological suffering. The work by Horsman with immigrant women in Canada (1997) shows that domestic situations characterized by beatings and insults, migrant situations precipitated by rape, and life with partners who drink excessively, create impacts on attendance and concentration while

in class, and develop adult needs for emotional support that literacy teachers are seldom prepared to provide.

Literacy programs may reproduce old gender ideologies

Perhaps the major challenge to literacy as a tool for women's empowerment centers on the content of the messages women read while attending literacy classes. Here, we find a contrast between the ideal situation and reality. Often, the content of literacy programs, especially those provided by government agencies, conveys messages whose language expresses deeply embedded gender ideologies that assign mostly reproductive roles to women and continue to sustain conventional conceptions of femininity and masculinity (Stromquist, 1999; Patel, 1987). To promote women's citizenship, therefore, it is essential to produce counter-discourses discourses through which the possibility of women's active engagement in social transformation at micro- and meso-levels is examined. This implies that literacy teachers must be made gender-aware and that they must be trained to conduct literacy classes that build on adults' experiences and abilities rather than reproduce schooled forms of education, often similar to those of a first-grade classroom. It also implies that literacy classes will have to be designed in ways that foster learner engagement by means of alternative pedagogies such as dialogues, games, role-playing, and popular theater.

Those who see literacy as a tool for women's empowerment extrapolate from research on education to make a demand for women's literacy. Literacy is seen as the first step toward expanded education. Thus, while the research on literacy per se indicates that literacy may not produce concept formation, it can be firmly argued that the reading habits that come through greater education enable individuals to gain access to more sophisticated, complex, and detailed information – which in turn can help these people produce more informed and defensible positions and preferences.

Research on women's literacy shows that women's domestic roles are not without possibility for the creation of potentially useful spaces for women's agency. Although not recognized by many in the household, in fact women engage in a number of literacy practices that give them power in the family through interaction with others on behalf of her family (Gibson, 1996; Rockhill, 1987). Since women assume responsibility for children and family management, they are the ones who must see and respond to communications from school and government agencies (pertaining to such topics as utilities, welfare, taxes). In contrast, because of the nature of the jobs held by poor women and men, the workplace tends to afford more literacy practice and thus more empowerment for men than for women (Gibson, 1996).

The four components of empowerment

While women need to become empowered, literacy can be only one component in a more complex web of personal and collective change. The concept of empowerment goes beyond "consciousness raising" and "formal political participation," to consider the perception of oneself as capable of being an agent in the process of transformation. In one form, empowerment is seen as having four components: the cognitive (of which literacy would be part), the psychological (feelings of self-esteem), the economic (some modicum of financial independence), and the political (the ability to organize and mobilize) (for greater elaboration, see Stromquist, 1995). It is clear that empowerment is socially constructed and made possible through a multiplicity of social and

cultural structures, within which social actors function at any given time (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994).

The conception of literacy as empowerment at this point is more a desire than a reality. Nonetheless, its potential can be discerned. Giroux, an educator who utilizes critical theory in his work, defines political (and thus empowering) education as follows: "Political education means decentering power in the classroom and other pedagogical units so that the dynamics of those institutional and cultural inequalities that marginalize some social groups, repress particular types of knowledge and suppress critical dialogue can be addressed" (1999, p. 255).

Expanding on this view, McLaren (1992), another critical theory educator, explains that transformative pedagogy does not mean bracketing reality but seeking to restructure it by questioning traditional beliefs and challenging social practices, while being at the same time conscious of the power/knowledge relation between the teacher and the student. As he puts it, "The primary referent for the empowerment of disposed groups should not be their moral, ethnic, gender, or political strangeness or displacement outside the boundaries of the dominant and the familiar, but rather the establishment of criteria that can distinguish claims of moral, ethnic, gender, or political superiority which we exercise as outsiders." (1992, p. 333). A critical literacy is, therefore, one in which the personal is always understood as social, and the social is always historicized to reveal how the subject has been produced. Subjectivity is understood "as a field of relations forged within a grid of power and ethics, knowledge, and power" (McLaren, 1992, p. 334).

The contributions from the three perspectives of literacy we have reviewed above reveal that the term "illiterate" does not capture the substantial variability in terms of reading and writing skills. These perspectives differ in their premises about the need for individual literacy, and in their assumptions about what makes literacy a successful and stable skill. Two of the approaches that are sensitive to context, the NLS and the feminist perspectives, view literacy in markedly different ways. While NLS would be inclined to recognize other forms of literacy and the role of mediators, the feminist perspective would emphasize the importance of print literacy and would require literacy as a citizen and, thus, individual prerogative.

The social embeddedness of literacy constitutes both a paradox and a major challenge. Literacy is needed to acquire knowledge to transcend the local; if only local knowledge and practices are considered and fostered, the status quo is being maintained even though now it is a more literate status quo. Yet if the local is not supportive, literacy cannot take root. The challenge is to provide literacy programs for adults while simultaneously creating environments in which literacy is fostered. This necessitates action at the educational level but also the engagement of governmental and nongovernmental institutions in the provision of other measures, measures compatible with the acquisition of print literacy.

Juxtaposing literacy and poverty

As we examine the problem of poverty among most "illiterates," it is clear that they hold survival needs at a much higher priority than educational needs. In many developing countries, poverty has occurred through the misdistribution of resources over many years of conquest and colonial domination. There is thus a powerless peasantry, which continues to have limited access to national benefits. For the rural poor, the main survival strategies are wage labor, labor migration, and income-generation

projects (Grindle, 1986). Not surprisingly, recent case studies conducted by the World Bank (1999a) of 147 persons who were able to move out of poverty found that self-employment or entrepreneurship was their most frequent path. This was followed by income from wages and salaries, benefits from family, income from agriculture and, finally, access to land. Skills obtained to run a business or other specific skills were mentioned as important in 27 percent of the case studies. In contrast, only 15 percent of the individuals interviewed mentioned education as an effective strategy, with considerable variability across geographical regions; for instance, while 20–30 percent of respondents from Latin America and former Soviet Union countries saw the value of education, about 4–7 percent of those in Africa and Asia did (World Bank, 1999a, p. 47).

Women's empowerment cannot exist independent of resolution of complex socio-economic problems. Most programs to address the condition of poor women steer solutions away from issues dealing with redistribution of assets. Taylor (1997) observes that, in South Africa, land reform and land restitution are not considered in parallel to programs of sustainable livelihoods, food security, and micro-credit to benefit poor women; absent also is the training of women to play roles in secondary industries such as food processing, and making farm machinery and fertilizers. Similar observations can be made about national plans focusing on women in other developing countries. The fact that most indigent women are married to indigent men creates additional problems in uplifting women. Under conditions of poverty, men also experience feelings of helplessness and low self-esteem. If they cannot get jobs but women can, the men's roles and identities become confusing and contradictory (Silberschmidt, 2001).

What then is needed to address poverty? Since the World Bank wields such great influence in Third World governments and bilateral agencies, it is pertinent to analyze the strategies it proposes in its most recent document on poverty (2000). In this document, the World Bank admits that market reforms cannot succeed without the necessary institutions in place. It proposes a three-pronged approach for governments: 1) promoting opportunity, 2) facilitating empowerment, and 3) enhancing security.

1) Under promoting opportunity, it advocates national conditions such as having private investments, expanding international markets, building the assets of the poor, addressing asset inequalities across gender, ethnic, racial, and social divides, improving infrastructure, and increasing knowledge in the poor, rural areas. The document, however, is profoundly silent regarding measures that scholars from different disciplines, including economics, have proposed for a long time. Thus, the World Bank does not mention the need for changing the terms of trade, providing living wages, and the near impossibility of governments to implement social policies when neo-liberal pressures call for a reduction of state responsibilities.

2) Under facilitating empowerment, the document calls for inclusive and accountable legal institutions, a better public administration, decentralization and community development, promotion of gender equity, tackling social barriers, and supporting poor people's social capital. Yet, amid this long list of proposals, it makes no mention of the need for organized action and how groups in civil society, particularly women NGOs, can play a substantial role in mobilizing people. As Oyen (2001) observes, the report ignores the role of labor unions, even though these have historically protected worker's rights and thus the living wages.

A consequence of neo-liberal strategies is what is known as the "New Policy Agenda." Through this approach, the role of the state has been circumscribed to providing a supporting environment for private provision and to reduce public expenditures on social services (Rutherford, 1999). An important element of neo-liberal neoliberal strategies, the widespread adoption of structural adjustment programs, in reducing the size of the state, has weakened the administrative capacity of government to deliver social policies. All these developments are ignored by the World Bank. And some of the recommendations it makes do not reflect solid theoretical anchoring or empirical research findings. As a case in point, its call for decentralization does not contemplate the likelihood – not mere possibility – that some community leaders may not be pro-poor (Oyen, 2001) or favor social justice in favor of women.

3) The third approach, enhancing security, refers to micro-insurance programs to complement micro-credit programs and macro-economic policies to protect against financial and natural disaster; further, it argues the need to design national systems of social risk management that are also pro-growth. Again, in a context of a reduced state with fewer civil servants and a chronically insufficient allocation to social sectors, it remains unclear how governments may engage in such security enhancement activities. More fundamentally, in the discussion of all of these measures, there is no identification of social actors. Women, for instance, appear at best as target populations rather than crucial groups to be mobilized.

Inappropriate funding works against empowerment

When reading the kind of empowerment that the World Bank envisages for women, it is clear that it is to be obtained through formal political means. Yet, we know from the sociological, anthropological, and feminist research findings that empowering women is not merely increasing their representation in national and social assemblies and providing token instances of farming and micro-enterprise support. Women need to be allocated much greater funds at individual levels for credit and technical assistance on a nationwide scale. They also need to be given much more financial support at the collective level, so that they may strengthen grassroots and nongovernmental organizations with a greater degree of institutional capacity. How can the World Bank assertion that poor people need to receive support for the development of their social capital be taken seriously, if no specific measures are identified for funding grassroots organizations and NGOs?

Micro-financing is the most popular type of poverty reduction today. While it does not get to the roots of the causes of poverty, it can create a difference in the livelihood of women. However, it is being offered on a scale obviously insufficient to function as a reasonable strategy. In 1999, 10 million women around the world were being reached by systems of small loans (UNDP, 1998, p. 34). There have been recent pledges by central countries to increase these loans to $100 million by 2005 (UNDP, 1998). But since there are 1.2 billion people in the world earning less than $1 a day and women constitute 50 percent of the population, there are about 600 million indigent women. In this context, even if the $100 million pledge were to materialize, it would be equivalent to providing loans of $0.16 per woman.

Social Investment Funds (SIFs hereafter), introduced by the World Bank, and supported by the three regional banks and most bilateral agencies, were supposed

to be a mechanism to attend to the needs of the poorest segments of the populations that were adversely affected by neo-liberal economic models. These SIFs are relatively small and provide temporary employment for the construction of schools, health posts, roads, and water canals. It has been noted, in the case of Peru at least, that these funds do not cover the maintenance of such infrastructural construction. They tend to generate clientelism and increase the country's external debt since they are part of renegotiated loans (Ballón, 1999; Béjar, 1999). They do not help women because they are not the majority of those employed. More critically, since the support is not given as a social right but rather focuses on the poorest of the poor, SIFs often function as charity, forms of assistance that depend on the good will of leaders or international organizations (Vargas, 1999). Such support does not contribute to a decrease in social inequality; at most it generates relief employment.

Colliding discourses

The perspective on literacy as a basic skill – that is to say the prevailing, official perspective – tends to be very rhetorical. It argues for the importance of literacy but shows little interest in becoming informed about its complexity (except in developed countries) and much less in committing the resources needed to address it. A particular disjuncture occurs between official declarations on the importance of literacy and the funds actually assigned to it. In the US, federal and state investments in adult education, where investments have risen substantially in the last decade, are "still trivial with respect to investment in formal schooling and the growing needs in adult education" (Wagner and Venezky, 1999, p. 26). In most developing countries, the support for adult education, of which literacy constitutes the largest portion, amounts to less than 3 percent of the national education budget. The prevailing pattern is to find a series of small, ungrounded literacy projects, poorly funded and with no attempt to develop literacy provision sensitive to the findings (as listed above) we know from the available research literature.

The 1990 Education for All (EFA) meeting in Jomtien, Thailand, concluded with a clear recognition of the importance of literacy by national representatives from 155 countries on the importance of literacy, all of which were signatories to the resulting document that expressed the goal of reducing "massively" national literacy rates by the year 2000 (UNDP et al., 1990). According to UNESCO statistics, the average illiteracy rate for developing countries was 33 percent in 1990 and 26 percent in 2000, signaling a decrease by one-fifth over the decade. This decrease has been slightly greater among men than among women (21 percent points compared to 18 percent points, respectively) (UNESCO, 1999).

At the meeting in Dakar in 2000 to evaluate the attainment of EFA objectives, it was resolved that the new literacy goal would be, "achieving a 50 percent improvement in literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults" (World Education Forum, 2000, p. 36). The postponement of this significant goal by 15 years was not accompanied by any research findings on the likelihood of attaining the objective, or by reflection on the implementation of past national efforts. Therefore, this new literacy goal has to be considered one of the most egregious examples of playing with rhetoric and expressing no serious intention to correct past performance.

Beyond Dakar, it can be observed that literacy does not appear in major national educational reform plans. Very little public funding continues to be allocated to literacy programs. In fact, it has been observed that support for adult education today is a small fraction of what had been assigned at the end of the 1970s. Klees (forthcoming), analyzing the content of the most recent World Bank education sector policy (World Bank, 1999b), finds that the World Bank avoids the word "adult education," preferring to talk of "lifelong learning" instead. Even so, lifelong learning, while mentioned in the text of the policy document, does not appear in its "recommended policy directions" (discussed on pp. 31–36 of the document). Initiatives being implemented for education in Latin America by an influential network of research centers with substantial backing by the Inter-American Development Bank and USAID refer exclusively to formal education (PREAL, 1997)[7]. Pressed between tendencies to improve the quality of formal education and reduced educational budgets, adult literacy remains a very secondary priority.

Education, perhaps more than any other social allocation, reflects the notion of a just society affording equal opportunity to all. Other services ensuring access to a minimum level of services (health, social security benefits, basic welfare support) have a compensatory character and thus are also distributive. But it is education that seeks to have an egalitarian character and on occasion even adopts forms for positive discrimination such as affirmative action and provision of scholarships (Enguita, 1996).

Literacy may be particularly useful for policymakers, because it is not a redistributive policy. One reason for endorsing redistributive policies is that their impact on equity is more immediate than other policies. However, three shortcomings of redistributive policies are that: they are difficult to implement, transfers of wealth supposedly diminish the incentive to generate wealth, and redistribution policies – which touch the assets and income of wealthy people – tend to be highly conflictive (Saavedra-Rivano, 1987). Historically, asset redistribution has never taken place under normal (i.e., non-revolutionary) circumstances, and it is feared that any benefits may be offset by the social disruption such policy might cause.

Concluding remarks

The world of adult literacy is complex, difficult, and characterized by contradiction and neglect. Research has been making progress in the definition of literacy, in understanding the variations in which it exists, and in recognizing the importance of contextual support to permit the development of stable reading and writing habits. Feminist positions advocate literacy as a prerequisite to the attainment of an expanded citizenship for women but recognize that content and financial commitment to make literacy programs successful need to be in place. The position of government and donor agencies visibly endorses literacy but tends to oversell the effects of literacy and to underestimate the difficulty of the implementation of literacy programs. Governments and donor agencies have not yet demonstrated the kind of financial and intellectual commitment necessary to make literacy accessible to the adults they purport to serve. They tend to fund short-term programs, typically focused on narrow coding/decoding skill acquisition.

[7] PREAL, which stands for Programa de Promoción de la Reforma Educativa en América Latina, has been in existence since 1995. It presently promotes greater public investment in K-12 education, the international assessment of learning through testing, school-based decentralization, and teacher salary increases.

The clearest conclusion that can be drawn from looking at national and international investment in literacy is that adult literacy carries large symbolic and political value, and thus its importance is publicly recognized. Unfortunately, symbolic recognition has been buttressed neither by an acknowledgment of the numerous valid research findings on literacy nor by investments congruent with what is needed to attain and maintain literacy skills and practices.

Enabling marginalized adults to obtain literacy skills is difficult and requires substantial effort and financial investment. This should not constitute grounds for skirting literacy and related education programs because, were this to occur, new generations will grow up illiterate and vulnerable to undesirable social and economic conditions. The investment in women, in particular, cannot be avoided if the objective is to promote greater social equality and stronger conceptions of citizenship.

Regarding poverty, that constant companion of literacy, the dominant view seems to be that it does not require special treatment, as economic growth by itself will take care of it. The world of the poor receives much attention today but the formulation of solutions is more palliative than deep and structural. So, amid large sets of minuscule projects to generate temporary income and even smaller attempts to provide literacy for adult women and men, the status quo prevails.

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Learning to Live or to Leave? Education and Identity in Burkina Faso

By Sten Hagberg, Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, Uppsala University

The main purpose of this paper is to reflect upon how more or less poor people perceive different educational systems in Burkina Faso and the roles they can play in the improvement of people's basic capabilities. Inspired by the idea that poverty must be seen as "the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes" (Sen 1999:87), I seek to explore how such basic capabilities relate to education and identity. What happens with the children going to school compared to those who do not? Why do certain ethnic groups favour formal school education when others refute it? To what extent reproduces formal school education the colonial divide between citizen and subject? How is education and identity interrelated in for example primary schooling and adult education?

While most scholars and practitioners would agree that there is a need to strengthen poor people's capabilities, less attention has been paid to the relationship between education and identity in postcolonial contexts. Sending children to school is not only a question of money and other resources, but it is also a question of opting for a modern way of life, ideally as a civil servant. In other words, the school tends to be seen as preparing the children to leave the traditional way of life in favour of a life in the city. For someone who has been to school farming is most often not a valid activity any longer. Yet with the disengagement of the state and the lack of employment opportunities, there are simply not enough jobs to absorb the educated youth. A central question is therefore whether children 'learn to live' – that is, to sustain and improve their basic capabilities – or if they de facto 'learn to leave' – that is, to move from the rural village to town and, most often, engage in informal sector activities. The ideas that non-educated people have about formal education are here crucial, because they reveal how education and knowledge are perceived.

In this paper, I will explore the linkages between education and identity in Burkina Faso. I will first reflect upon the ways in which knowledge and education are conceptualised in postcolonial contexts and then describe how formal education is represented in Burkinabe everyday life as an expression of modernity. Furthermore, I will discuss how adult education has become an educational alternative, offering means to bridge the divide between 'scientific knowledge' and 'endogenous knowledge'.

Conceptualising knowledge and education

In most postcolonial contexts, people tend to distinguish between so-called scientific knowledge and endogenous forms of knowledge. It marks off the knowledge taught in schools and universities from craftsmanship, indigenous institutions, religious wisdom and so forth that are taught outside the formal educational setting. Yet the knowledge of traditional healers could neither be written off as 'non-systematic' and 'non-rational' nor could it be seen as craftsmanship. Islamic schools in West Africa, particularly in the universities of Djenne and Timbouctou in present-day Mali, the religious *marabouts* followed by their disciples also represent examples of a long tradition of higher education. Initiation to secret societies, such as the hunters' brotherhood, represents the acquisition of knowledge of practical, moral and religious character. But although people make distinctions between modern education and endogenous

knowledge in everyday life, the conceptual distinction is far from clear-cut. In other words, that the distinction between 'the way of the Whites' (*tubabuya*) and 'the way of the Africans' (*farafinya*) is constantly referred to in Burkina is more ideologically than empirically grounded.

The distinction between scientific knowledge and endogenous forms of knowledge is central in development discourse. Mark Hobart argues for instance that western scientific knowledge has played an important part in the problem of underdevelopment. "Not only are indigenous knowledges ignored or dismissed, but the nature of the problem of underdevelopment and its solution are defined by reference to this world-ordering knowledge" (Hobart 1993:1). The distinction between 'scientific knowledge' and endogenous forms of knowledge originates in European Enlightenment. As opposed to superstition and ancient beliefs, 'scientific knowledge' would illuminate people and thus promote rational progress. The very distinction between 'scientific knowledge' and endogenous knowledges can thus be traced back to a specific historical process in Europe.

In postcolonial contexts education is clearly linked to a history of foreign domination. There education is as much a way to state whom one is as it is to obtain knowledge and knowing. In other words, education and identity are intimately, yet ambiguously linked. On the one hand, formal education represents a way to become 'modern' and thus escape 'ignorance'. Pupils are sent to school 'to know the paper'. But, on the other hand, formal education is said to 'spoil' children and thus contribute to moral decline. Old people often regrettably state "today the world has changed".

Citizen and subject reproduced

The ambiguous conception of education goes back to the colonial school system. But while the colonial divide between citizens and subjects has been aptly analysed (Mamdani 1996), this divide is particularly striking in the context of education. Those who were educated 'became' citizens, albeit they remained of African origin. Only a small minority of African individuals were 'citizens' in a legal sense.

The divide between citizens and subjects is an entry-point to education and identity, but it is worth noting that the divide is not only a legal one. Today, this divide is to a large extent expressed as that between educated and non-educated people. In daily life people make distinctions between 'the intellectuals' or 'the instructed', on the one hand, and 'the population', 'the villagers' or 'the peasants', on the other. While the former category allows people to be approached as individuals, the latter tends to be addressed collectively, especially in development projects. In voluntary associations, this divide is often conceptualised as between 'the people who know the book' and the illiterates. In these associations such a divide is reproduced in the distinction between 'active members' and 'automatic members' (Lentz 1995). The 'active members' are the leaders and other people with modern education who are apt to define activities and channel funding. The 'automatic members' are the villagers who are to be 'developed' by providing labour.

Far from being only a question of how to earn a living, education is tightly linked to status and identity. Those with a modern education are supposed to spatially and symbolically leave the illiterates behind. If they return to farming, that would be a failure. Let me just mention one example. In 1990 I was to conduct a focus group interview in a small village in Western Burkina. A young man at the age of 18 years welcomed me upon arrival. He presented himself as the controller of the cotton

weighting and thus seasonally employed by the parastatal SOFITEX. He had been to school in Bobo-Dioulasso and was now back in the village (probably as a school drop-out). At my arrival the young man imposed himself as mediator between the villagers and myself. I felt uneasy about this intrusion, but as it was a village in which I had not been working before, I did not want to ask him to withdraw. But in the heat of a debate around a specific question, the young man said loudly to me: "Do not consider these people, they are ignorant, illiterate, they do not understand anything, […] they are not intellectuals". An old man who had understood at least the sense of the young man's statement now furiously stood up and insulted the young man. He shouted that nowadays children do not respect the elders any longer. The old man walked away in anger and, needless to say, the interview was spoiled and I ended it quickly.

The above example highlights potential tensions between those being 'instructed' and who possess 'the knowledge of the White man', at least speaking French and reading and writing it rudimentarily, on the one hand, and those representing 'the knowledge of tradition', possessing ancestral knowledge and respecting moral values, on the other. Here the difference between 'scientific knowledge' and 'endogenous forms of knowledge' has less to do with what is knowledge and not, than it has to do with status and identity. The young man behaved in an unacceptable manner, justified by his five to six years in school and his employment for the 'modern' cotton company. Thus the divide between 'scientific knowledge' and 'endogenous knowledge' is related to asymmetrical power relations. While a Mande proverb holds that 'ignorance is an illness' (*kunfinya ye bana ye*) (quoted by Ki-Zerbo 1992), ignorance is a state that people attribute to others. To label someone as 'ignorant' is a way to design the 'Other' (Hobart 1993). This is particularly striking in postcolonial contexts where the state apparatus and formal education reproduce values of the former colonial power.

Debates over knowledge and knowing tend to be contested and contradictory. For instance, Professor Joseph Ki-Zerbo who urges for 'endogenous development' is himself deeply rooted in a French scholarly tradition (Ki-Zerbo 1992). Among African scholars there is a long tradition of claiming for authenticity of knowledge. Achille Mbembe argues that the 'modern African interrogation' of identification processes includes, among other things, an incantation that is based upon three tragic historical experiences: slavery, colonisation and apartheid. Today the experience of globalisation may be added (Mbembe 2000b:17). These experiences have had serious consequences for Africans: the separation of the self, the material and psychological dispossession and the loss of dignity. Current African identities are forged in the interface of cosmopolitanism and autochthonous values, because the desire for authenticity is to a large extent linked to globalisation processes (Mbembe 2000b:43).

The local production of knowledge and education

The interface of what Mbembe calls 'cosmopolitanism' and 'autochthonous values' is clearly manifested when it comes to knowledge and education. Many Burkina children start school without knowing any French, the language in which education is conducted. While they speak Dyula, Mooré or any other local language with their peers, in the classroom French is taught. So, before accessing the content of education, albeit cultivating a critical stance towards what is taught, children have to learn French. These pupils often experience conflicting claims of modern education and tradition.

For the purpose of this paper I want to suggest that instead of seeking to discern local, endogenous or traditional knowledges from so-called Western scientific knowledge and, in consequence, remain hopelessly trapped in global-local dichotomies, we need to see how knowledge and education are produced locally, be it in the modern school, Islamic teaching, initiation or adult education. To retrace 'authentic African knowledge systems' would be to miss the point, because village schools need to be contextualised in the same manner as any ritual or 'bush school', of which the latter institutions have been studied for a long time by anthropologists. It is the interface of cosmopolitanism and autochthonous values that must be placed in the core of analysis.

In Burkina Faso people have experienced different kinds of education, despite the fact that the most important education has been carried out according to French curricula. According to Kaboré et al, formal education is to a large extent mirrored in the development strategy of the moment. While educational reforms in the 1960s and 1970s targeted to attain 'the quantitative development', the very content of education became increasingly addressed in the late 1970s and, in particular, with the educational reform in 1986 (Kaboré et al. 1999:18–19).

The current Law of Education Orientation was issued in 1996. It stipulates that, "no child should be excluded from the educational system before the age of 16 years, provided that the infrastructures, equipments, human resources and current rules allow it" (Law 013/96/ADP 9 May 1996, Article 2, my translation). The law distinguishes between three types of education in Burkinabe educational system: 'formal education', 'non-formal education' and 'informal education':

- 'Formal education' refers to primary, secondary and higher education, that is, leading to university degrees and diplomas. Within formal education access to higher education is possible, provided that the pupil has his/her diploma.
- 'Non-formal education' refers to functional alphabetisation, *école rurale*, education in national languages and professional training, and so on. It takes place in a non-school frame.
- 'Informal education' is diffuse and daily. It is often conducted within the family and the social group. "The informal education is non-organised whereas political authorities pay particular attention to the other two" (Kaboré et al. 1999:14, my translation).

The consequences of this typology are easily detected. Formal education, that is, an education according to a French curriculum, is given priority and non-formal educational attempts, such as functional alphabetisation and teaching in national languages, are nonetheless recognised. But other educational efforts are out-defined as diffuse and non-organised. Once again the postcolonial context of knowledge production is expressed, regardless of the many attempts undertaken to 'africanise' or 'endogenise' the educational system (cf. Kaboré et al. 1999:25–30).

For the sake of clarity in this paper I take 'formal education' as a short hand for the training that pupils receive within the formal school system, based on a French curriculum. The label is not, however, loaded with any normative statement of what is good education. I do not look into curriculum development and schooling conditions, but I am, instead, interested in the identity process related to formal education, because it can help us to understand the motives for parents choosing to send children

to school or not. While it is reasonable to assume that children of educated people are more likely to go to school, I am focusing on how non-educated people perceive formal education.

It is the very process of identification – both as the act of identifying and as the state of being identified – that interests me more than any description of a perceived innate identity of people. People have no problems in being Dagara (an ethnic group with many 'intellectuals'), initiates to religious cults and civil servants, but the question is how they identify with various forms of knowledge and education in different contexts.

Tradition and modernity

Formal education in Burkina Faso is very much seen as a way to become modern. In the French language, people refer to those educated as 'instructed': When talking about someone people might say, "he is not instructed" (*il n'est pas instruit*). Public schools dominate primary education. About 90 percent of all primary school children are enrolled in public schools. Laic private schools represent some 3.5 percent of all school children. Taken together, Catholic and Protestant schools cover less than one percent (0.7) of the pupils, whereas Franco-Arabic schools (*medersas*) enrol as much as five percent of all children (Bayala et al. 1997:11; see also Kaboré et al. 1999:30). In 1990, the schooling rate of primary school was around 29 percent and in 1998 it was more than 40 percent.

Formal education is tied to French colonial legacy. The early Catholic missionaries invested a lot of work to ensure that the converts and their children received a good (i.e., French) education. The Catholic involvement was strong in formal education until the 1970s when the state took over these schools. The Catholic school was often considered to be better and more disciplined than public schools. In the 1990s, Catholic schools have reopened in Burkina.

Despite a rhetoric that puts emphasis on schooling, only one third of Burkinabe children are admitted to school at the age of seven. It is particularly the poorer segments of society whose children are not attending school. A study on education and poverty indicated that while 62.7 percent of 'non-poor children' are admitted to school, only 19 percent of poor children are. The net schooling of children between the ages of seven and twelve is 35.3 percent in Burkina Faso; in the urban area 73 percent are schooled but there are far less (28.8 percent) in the rural area (Bayala et al. 1997). There is also a wide difference in schooling between the country's regions. In the North, the overwhelming majority (87.6 percent) of children between the ages of seven and twelve are not schooled (Bayala et al. 1997; see also Gérard 1998; Kaboré et al. 1999; Ouédraogo 1998).

Notwithstanding the high percentage of non-schooling in Burkina Faso, it seems to be relevant to ask why this is so. My fieldwork material suggests two main clusters of problems for people not sending their children to school, namely financial problems, and social and cultural matters.

Financial reasons for non-schooling

To put a child in school indeed involves expenses, and the financial dimension of schooling is critical to most people. Although public schools are free, parents still need to buy schoolbooks, writing material, proper clothing and so on. Parents who are relatively 'better off' try to hire private teachers to train the pupils after school hours.

But many parents see the prospects for their children to 'succeed' and get a job after school as uncertain. Today, the argument goes, even university graduates have difficulties in finding a decent job, so how can those with only primary and secondary school be able to get a good job? Investment in education is a great cost for many parents with diminishing prospects for a payback in terms of a job with a decent income.

Beyond these immediate expenses, it is also a question of labour. In rural communities, children's labour is needed in production. The young boys often help in farming and livestock keeping, and the girls get involved in cooking and other domestic tasks. In the cities, the girls' workload may be heavy, as they have to carry out much housework. Children may also be expected to conduct petty trade. Boys and girls younger than ten years old often sell items aside the street or in the market place

Cultural reasons for non-schooling

There is also a cultural dimension to the low level of schooling in Burkina Faso. Schooling is associated with modernity, implying that the children are to leave the rural way of life behind them. The school is seen as 'spoiling' the children. They go to school to get a job, but are unable, and often unwilling, to do farm work any longer. Schooling may then involve a double loss: a financial burden and a drain of labour. In particular, girls' schooling is problematic, because traditionally the girl is to get married elsewhere and only her family-in-law will benefit from her skills (Gérard 1998:198). While it is nothing new in the fact that schooling has turned pupils from the rural and manual work, structural adjustments have direly reminded people that even well-educated people might, they too, have serious difficulties in getting employment.

There are also remarkable differences between different ethnic and religious groups with respect to schooling in Burkina Faso. I will take two examples: the Fulbe non-schooling and the Dagara schooling.

Fulbe pastoralists are reluctant to let their children go to school. Many Fulbe informants in the Banfora region stated on several occasions that "the Fulbe do not go to school". Instead, when the white colonialists wanted children for schools, the Fulbe sent their 'slaves', that is, their former captives the Rimaibe. The Fulbe children stayed outside modern education. Today, however, the Fulbe see that 'their slaves' have become government officials and that Fulbe interests are not defended. One Fulbe man said: "The government is Haabe [that is, for non-Fulbe Black Africans] and only God supports the Fulbe".

Koranic schools, however, represent another schooling in line with local Muslim moral and educational values. In particular, the Franco-Arabic schools (or *medersas*) seek to integrate Muslim teaching with knowledge in French and other subject matters. These schools are managed by Muslim brotherhoods in urban centres and have classes from primary education to high school degree. The high school degree gives access to universities in Arabic countries, such as Egypt, Yemen and Saudi-Arabia (Kaboré et al. 1999:30). The Franco-Arabic school provides an interesting compromise between modern education and Islamic teaching, in particular for many Fulbe. For instance, the only two Fulbe who speak rudimentary French in the village of Djalakoro, in which I have worked for a long time, have both attended the Franco-Arabic school. The Franco-Arabic school is a relatively recent urban phenomenon, but the Koranic schools tend to remain in rural areas (Kaboré et al. 1999:30).

However, the Fulbe represent one extreme of non-schooling, and the Dagara – an

ethnic group of South-western Burkina and North-western Ghana – represent another. The Dagara have many 'intellectuals', occupying important posts in state administration. The most important single factor explaining this is the presence of the Catholic mission. The conversion experience among the Dagara has been analysed elsewhere (e.g. Poda 1997; Tengan 2000) and also in relation to political leadership (Lentz 1998). But to my knowledge, less attention has been paid to the impact on schooling and thus the many intellectuals in at least the Burkinabe state administration.

The examples of Fulbe and Dagara show the different roles played by religion. Christianity in the Dagara case has been instrumental in bringing these Dagara children to school. But Islam seems to have contributed to prevent the Fulbe children from schooling. The politically significant aspects of knowledge production can scarcely be more evident. Koranic schools are defined as religious and traditional, but Catholic schools are intimately linked with modernity and progress. Although laic public schools dominate in Burkina, the impact of Koranic and Catholic schools needs to be taken into account. Gender differences are strong in religious schools. Boys rather than girls are those who dominate in Koran schools and thus those who will inherit the cultural capital of Islam (Gérard 1998:205).

There is an ongoing debate over primary education and its role in development, because 'education' has become a panacea for overcoming any obstacles to development. State agents and other development practitioners often argue that "we need to work for a change of mentalities", which in fact implies that those without education are 'ignorant'. Schooling of girls is especially considered to be critical for development to take place. Marie-France Lange highlights how the discourse on girls' schooling is based on utility. Policies that are conceived to favour schooling of girls and training of women is enclosed in a utilitarian discourse, which imposes upon girls a schooling under conditions and upon women a utilitarian training (Lange 1998:9).

Educated or knowledgeable – different identities

Education is seen as a prime factor in becoming 'modern' and 'developed' and thus escaping 'ignorance'. But the educated may also lose power and influence in local settings as illustrated by the following example. A man I know well since many years' back (let us call him Bwa) is acting as the Master of the Earth or Earth Priest (*dugukolotigi* in Dyula or *chef de terre* in Burkinabe French). The Master of the Earth institution is common in rural societies on the West African Savanna. The Master of the Earth is the eldest living agnatic descendant of the first settler of a site and is in charge of the community's relations with the Earth. He is the one in charge of conducting sacrifices to the spirits of the earth and the ancestors as to ensure fertility. He distributes land and gives land to strangers who want to settle there. The idea of being first is ingrained in this vision of the world: first, the Master of the Earth is the descendant of the first settler; and second, he is the eldest living man in the lineage of the first settler.

Bwa who is in his 50s is acting as the Master of the Earth of the locality. He is thus an important person in the local setting. He has never been to school. Once Bwa told me that his maternal uncle did not allow him to "make the bench" (*faire le banc*), a fact he deeply regrets: "I could have been someone, you know". However, Bwa is a descendant of the first settler of the site, but he is not the oldest living descendant. His elder brother (let us call him Moussa) resides in the same locality and is the one who should normally occupy the position of Master of the Earth. This extraordinary

situation seems to be due to two factors. Firstly, sacrifices to the Earth are seen to 'spoil the prayers', that is, this kind of sacrificing is against Islam. Moussa prays five times a day and avoids alcoholic beverages. Although Moussa should conduct sacrifices to the spirits of the Earth he explained to me that this is not compatible with Islam. Secondly, Moussa has been working as a medic and been employed by the state. He retired relatively recently and returned to his home locality. Thus Moussa has been to school and got an education, but this also made him less apt to occupy the position of Master of the Earth. But Bwa "stayed with his uncles" since he was a boy and thus learned a lot about rituals of the Earth. He acquired the knowledge of how to act in agrarian rites and how to make 'reparations' (purifying rituals) in case of bloodshed (cf. Hagberg 1998, 2001a). Bwa is the bearer of crucial local knowledge, but he has not "made the bench".

This example illustrates that 'formal education' does not necessarily make a person knowledgeable. Bwa possesses knowledge that is critical for the well-being of the community. This knowledge, however, is located outside the frame of both formal and non-formal education; it is instead what the law refers to as 'informal education' being 'diffuse' and 'non-organised' (Law 013/96/ADP 9 May 1996). But the case of Bwa and Moussa shows how education not only relates to knowledge but also to identity. While Bwa identifies himself as Master of the Earth and guardian of tradition, his brother Moussa is locally defined as 'intellectual' and Muslim.

A quest for identity

The preceding discussion on how education relates to discourses on tradition and modernity reveals the question of individual and collective identification. People with formal education are simultaneously identifying with a certain way of life and are identified by others as being 'intellectuals'. The divide between so-called scientific knowledge and endogenous knowledge is reinforced in this process.

Most children in Burkina Faso still do not go to school. One study indicates that the schooling rate is slightly more than 40 percent (Kaboré et al. 1999:45) whereas another estimates net schooling of children between the ages of seven and twelve to 35.3 percent in (Bayala et al. 1997:18). Only 19 percent of 'poor children' are in primary school. It is for this reason that informal education must be assessed as a means by which the divide between formal education and non-formal education is bridged.

The Franco-Arabic schools are interesting in the context of collective identification. These schools aim to ensure an education that applies to non-Islamic educational system and that simultaneously puts emphasis on Koranic teaching. While the traditional Koranic schools often remain in rural areas, the Franco-Arabic schools are urban-based. The emergence of Franco-Arabic schools is an expression of the close linkage between education and identity. Parents want to ensure that their children receive a good education, but that they should remain within the moral values of Islam. In other words, the requirements of formal education are respected, but Koranic teaching is thought to strengthen the morality of the pupils.

Adult education has become increasingly important in many African countries. Today, most French-speaking African countries have inscribed the use of national languages within their educational programmes (Alidou-Ngame 2000). In Burkina Faso, emphasis has been placed on 'functional alphabetisation' to eradicate illiteracy and to

increase people's productive capacities. Such alphabetisation campaigns should support a rural youth apt to modernise agriculture and animal husbandry (Kaboré et al. 1999:25–28). In the 1960s and 1970s, attempts to combat illiteracy by means of 'functional alphabetisation' seem to have had relatively limited impact. But since the 1980s – in particular after the Alphabetisation Policy in 1984 – adult education has grown in Burkina. During the school year 1990/91, there were 2,356 alphabetisation centres with about 70,000 pupils; six years later (the school year 1996/97) there were 4,669 centres with more than 130,000 pupils (Kaboré et al. 1999:55). There has been a steady growth in female participation: from 39.8 percent in 1990/91 to 50.6 percent in 1996/97.

State agents and developers often promote 'functional alphabetisation' with the argument that it responds to illiterate people's needs. By learning book keeping and the ability to read and write instructions, the argument goes, these people will get the knowledge they need to be 'developed'. Efficiency is seen as the rationale for alphabetisation, and it will improve their basic capabilities (cf. Sen 1999). But in practice alphabetisation is not merely functional, and there are good reasons to look at the very content of the educational material. This is how history is narrated in adult educational material in the village of Noumoudara.

Alphabetisation and local history

Noumadara is the 'capital' of the 'Tiefo country'. The ethnic group Tiefo are firstcomers to the area. Or better, they are locally considered to be firstcomers and therefore they occupy the position of Masters of the Earth (*dugukolotigiw*). The Tiefo have a reputation as warriors, referring to their legendary leader Tiefo Amoro in Noumoudara from the end of the 19th century, who was renowned for his courage and feared as a warrior, refusing to compromise. In 1897, however, the Dyula Emperor Samori Toure took Noumoudara under siege, and Noumoudara was betrayed and defeated. Many were killed – some testimonies estimate up to 2,000 deaths (cf. Hébert 1958). Tiefo Amoro, who had promised never to surrender alive and become a slave, killed himself.

These events that occurred a few years before the territory came under French command shape the ways in which the Tiefo look upon themselves and how they perceive other peoples – as well as how others see the Tiefo. The Tiefo refer gloriously to their legendary warrior chief. A Tiefo intellectual once declared: "I am proud to know that my ancestor did not surrender, but that he kept his word not to be taken by Samori. He was defeated, but he did not surrender".

However, the Tiefo are often described as 'a disappearing people' in Burkina Faso. Historical memory is scant. Except for the story of the destruction of Noumoudara, most Tiefo have obscure notions about history. Many admit not really knowing from where they originate (Hébert 1958). But most Tiefo share the interpretations of some critical events that occurred in the 1890s, in contrast to other interpretations that members of neighbouring peoples defend. Also, the Tiefo language is indeed 'disappearing'. Only two villages speak the Tiefo language; all other Tiefo speak Dyula, the lingua franca of the region, albeit with a Tiefo accent. Most other ethnic groups of the region speak their own language besides the Dyula language, but the Tiefo do not. The Tiefo have difficulties to find their place in present-day Burkina Faso, and some say that they have 'become' Dyula!

It is in this context that adult education in Noumoudara can be understood. People get access to reading and writing, but they also gain access to local history. The

centre for adult education in Noumoudara has two classes with parallel alphabetisation sessions. The two class-room buildings are built in concrete. While the village groups provided manual labour, a development project furnished building material and skilled labour. The teachers are paid by the project, but the villagers have to provide them with food. In Noumoudara, alphabetisation in Dyula takes place in the dry season when there is little farm work. The first school year includes 50 days, the second 30. Fifty women have been 'alphabetised'. One woman stated: "We cannot write letters to our friends and therefore all people have to be alphabetised".

This 'functional alphabetisation' has stimulated other interests than merely reading and writing. There are books in the school, and a monthly journal *Hakilifalen* ('change of ideas') is produced to support adult education in the entire region. Local history is predominant in many books. The preface of one book narrating historical events says: "These are the speeches [*kumaw*, cf. French *paroles*] of the old people". Other books present Dyula proverbs and tales.

It is striking how tradition is represented in these books. Although a more in-depth analysis of the books remains to be done, three remarks can be made. Firstly, in these books history is first and foremost narrated by 'big old people' (*mogokorobaw*) or 'big old men' (*cekorobaw*). The speeches of old people are treated as pure and the writers of the books, curiously anonymous, define themselves as 'translators'. Thus, these are the 'true' and 'authentic' speeches that have first been collected and then written down!

Secondly, ethnic identities are treated as unproblematic categories. The Sambla, the Tiefo, the Bobo and the Dyula are referred to as representing homogeneous identities. In this sense, the books reproduce ethnic stereotypes that are used daily in Burkina Faso. They locate different groups of people within local history. The books thereby provide a means by which collective identification is strengthened.

Thirdly, the defeat of Tiefo Amoro is bravely described in the book *Horonyakelew*. With other groups portrayed as traitors, Tiefo Amoro – who took off his warrior cloths (which would otherwise have protected him) and let his albino servant kill him – is portrayed as the one who did not surrender (*Horonyakelew* N.d.:20). The ideal of Tiefo Amoro is reproduced in the books, giving the Tiefo a place in the history of the region.

Narratives of the past are critical to the ways in which identities are forged. Adult education in Noumoudara is not only 'functional' in the sense that it supports people's basic capabilities to improve their living conditions, but it is also central to collective identification as 'Tiefo people'. It urges adult people to be stimulated in reading, because through the books they may listen to 'the speeches of old people', who have already passed away.

What basic capabilities and for whom?

So far this paper has sought to reflect upon how education is perceived by more or less poor people in Burkina Faso. I have particularly tried to show the extent to which education is associated with discourses on tradition and modernity and how different kinds of education relate to individual and collective identification. Children going to school get access to something else than those who do not. Yet many parents in Burkina choose not to send their kids to school. The financial costs linked to formal education are definitely critical. The need for children's labour, especially in rural areas, is

another factor. The distance between home and school is also important; not all Burkinabe villages have a school. But education is also associated with identity. A son going to school may later be unwilling to take up farm work, because he has become intellectual. Girls' schooling can be seen as useless by uneducated parents. The girl will marry elsewhere and only her family-in-law will benefit from her skills. A Dyula *marabout* stated:

> "If a girl will study, she will have open eyes, she will become independent, she will not feel shame any longer and she will get a hard head [she will not be submissive]. Thus, she will refuse the choice [of husband] of the parents." (quoted by Gérard 1998:198, my translation)

The growth of Franco-Arabic schools is one interesting example of bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. The moral values of Islam are maintained together with teaching in French, math, history and so on. Adult education is another bridge. It provides adult persons with an opportunity to read and write in a local language. But adult education may also give people the opportunity to identify with the past.

Ideally, education should support people's capabilities to get a job and simultaneously make individuals empowered to improve their own living conditions and those of the society as a whole. However, the expression widely used in Burkina – that people with education are 'instructed' – puts emphasis on the transfer of knowledge from the illuminated teacher, backed-up by the formal educational system, and the pupils supposed to receive this instruction. In reality, formal education is not a one-way process. It would be more appropriately described as encounters (of people, epistemologies and institutions) in specific settings (classroom and schoolyard) with the explicit purpose of learning. The contexts in which education actually takes place are interesting to study by way of exploring linkages between education and identity. In the interface of cosmopolitanism and autochthonous values in African contexts (cf. Mbembe 2000b), education is very much part of individual and collective identification.

Much has been said and written about education in Burkina Faso, but at least in public debates one gets the impression that the interrelatedness of education and identity is left aside. In July 2001 the majority political party CDP organised a conference on education. It was established that Burkinabe education has many weaknesses:

- weakness of educational supply and its regional and sexual disparities,
- insufficiency of personnel,
- insufficient infrastructures,
- inappropriateness of training for employment,
- weak involvement of partners [i.e. donors],
- lack of funding.

In Article 2 of the Law on Education Orientation (Law 013/96/ADP 9th May 1996), the lack of basic infrastructure is apparent: no child less than 16 years should be excluded from the educational system, provided that infrastructures, equipment, human resources and school rules allow it. In other words, if there is a school with a teacher, no child can be prevented from going to school!

It could be argued that a country like Burkina Faso should first seek to solve the material and human problems in order to provide adequate schooling. The non-

schooling would then find its solution, because the supply of education would improve in quantity and quality. Although I strongly sympathise with the idea that major investments need to be pursued in the educational sector, it worries me that the role of education in people's individual and collective identification is addressed much more rarely. What happens, for instance, with people who have been to school and who are not able to sustain themselves? And what are the potentials of alternative forms of education?

Dropouts from school and unemployed youth with university diplomas form part of a steadily growing urban population. Many of them sustain on subsistence activities in the so-called informal sector; some even get into 'illicit activities'. While high school and university students are a political force that has played and continues to play important roles in the country's postcolonial history (Hagberg 2002), these youths experience serious difficulties in finding ordinary jobs. Many of them seem to be what Ferguson in a study about mineworkers in Zambia (1999) has called 'disconnected'. But disconnection, like connection, implies a relation and not the absence of a relation.

> "Disconnection, like abjection, implies an active relation, and the state of having been disconnected requires to be understood as the product of specific structures and processes of disconnection. What the Zambian case shows about globalization is just how important disconnection is to a 'new world order' that insistently presents itself as a phenomenon of pure connection." (Ferguson 1999:238)

In line with Ferguson, I find that the educated but unemployed youths in Burkina feel disconnected from an imagined world 'out there'. They have acquired the skills to take cognisance of global flows of information, but they have difficulties in finding a place in Burkinabe society. Dropouts from school and less successful youths do face a double loss: they experience disconnection from the modern world, and they fail to fulfil social obligations (supporting parents, getting married etc.).

However, the Burkinabe society also displays many positive examples of people finding jobs in the state administration, for projects or for NGOs. The ingenious bricolage that people do to sustain or to make a living (*se débrouiller* in French, *ka bamba* in Dyula) creates new dynamics. While Ferguson focuses on 'structures and processes of disconnection', I find it necessary to pay specific attention to individual agency. The reason is that individual experiences of connectedness have an impact on Burkinabe society as a whole.

Alternative forms of education shed new light on linkages between education and identity. Children in Franco-Arabic schools remain within 'traditional spheres' of life. They get reading and writing skills, but they are less exposed to ideas of connectedness. The Fulbe who have gone to these schools are often using their skills in business, e.g. cattle trading or shop keeping. But many also tend to loose their skills when they go back to the village.

Adult education carves out a new space of literacy in that people read and write in a local language. But these skills are not merely 'functional' for development activities and associational life. They also contribute to strengthening and ingraining individual and collective identification by means of local history. This is an interesting interface of cosmopolitanism and autochthonous values.

Mbembe and others have reminded us that the desire for authenticity is to a large extent linked to globalisation. Adults who are trained in the village of Noumoudara

do not aspire to get connected to the new world order in the same way as the drop-outs from school do. But they do aspire to get connected to outside organisations, such as development projects and state services, to improve the living conditions of the family and the community. Investments in housing (iron roof, building in concrete), technology (plough, draught animals) and other activities (petty trade, social obligations) may well be facilitated by the skills they have acquired in school. These adult pupils are stably settled in villages and the impact of education on village life is easier to assess.

To analyse socio-cultural dimensions of education seems to be urgently needed in postcolonial contexts where the state apparatus and formal education reproduce the legacy of colonialism. While formal education faces many problems in present-day Burkina Faso, Franco-Arabic schools and adult education are no panacea either. I would like to argue for the necessity to carefully investigate the socio-cultural contexts in which different educational systems are implemented.

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Learning and Participation in the Construction of Own Life Situation in Senegal

By Holger Daun, Institute of International Education, Stockholm University

> Maïmouna grew up in a Senegalese village. In the beginning of the 1980s, her parents sent her to evening courses in the Koranic school for several years but never to the primary school. In different ways she has learnt how to cure disease and to solve problems related to her garden and rice field. Today, she grows vegetables and sells them in a kiosk close to one of the principal roads. She has learnt to count and earns her own living. She is married and has one child.

> Sidibe was successful in primary school, never repeating a grade, but he did not pass the entrance examination for secondary education. As a lorry driver in a construction company in the capital, he now earns less than Maïmouna. His wife is working at home. With three mathematical problems to solve, he is not more capable than Maïmouna.

Schooling and literacy have been credited with a wide variety of benefits at societal and individual levels (Lewin, 1994; Lockheed, Fuller & Nyirongyo, 1989; Lockheed, Verspoor et al 1991; Walter, 1999). A number of causal relationships between – on the one hand – schooling, and – on the other – development, democracy etc. are assumed to exist, regardless of time and space. However, research findings show no clear causal relationships between these phenomena (Bangura, 1998; Chabbot and Ramirez, 2000; Lewin, 1994). In many cases, especially in Africa and Latin America, predicted development has not taken place despite massive increase in school enrolment (World Bank, 1975, 1995). In some cases, economic and technological progress have been accompanied by spiritual and social decline (Escobar, 1997; Esteva and Prakash, 1997)

The role of schooling differs, from time to time and from one place to another (Lewin, 1994). Although the large-scale and generalised concept of development as a policy and analytical concept has been heavily criticised for being based on a view taking industrialised and technologically advanced societies for granted (Siddique, 1997), it still prevents us from looking outside such a framework.

This paper discusses some principal ideas associated with learning and development against the background of findings from a Senegalese study conducted in 1999–2000. The grass-root mosaic conditions both learning and the relationship between learning and life conditions in complex and – from the Northern perspective – unexpected ways. In short: people learn a great deal in alternative ways, while primary education does not always attain its explicit goals.

Life situation in Senegal

When it became independent from France in 1960, Senegal in West Africa had an economy based on groundnut production. The Senegalese society was largely organised to extract resources from inland to the coast and the capital. The per capita income was among the lowest in Africa. Having been self-sufficient in rice, Senegal is now heavily dependent on rice import.

Today, 80 percent of the population makes a living in the agricultural sector. More people are employed in service, administration etc. than in the industrial sector.

The latter is of importance only in the Dakar (capital) region, where 80 percent of all industrial jobs are found (Kasse 1990).

In the beginning of the 1980s, foreign debt was so large that international lenders (mainly the World Bank) required a structural adjustment of the Senegalese economy (Kasse, 1990; Unicef, 1985). The implementation of the programme included the ingredients most common to such programmes: liberalisation and privatisation of the economy as well as a decrease in public expenditure, partly by lowering the number of employees in the public sector. The percentage of the labour force employed in the public sector was among the highest in Africa, reaching its maximum in 1985, then decreasing. Employment in the service sector had increased, while those in other branches (mainly industry) had decreased.

Islam accompanied trade across the Sahara desert long before the colonial period, and today 95 percent of the population is Muslim. A Senegalese brotherhood – *Muridiyya* – emerged in the beginning of the 20th century. *Marabout* (Muslim leader) – *Talibé* (follower) relationships replaced both clan and descent group relationships and the old class society (nobles, peasants, warriors and "non-classified"). All Muslims are integrated in a network with mutual rights and obligations between *Marabout* and *talibé* and between *talibés* (Coulon, 1983; Villalon, 1995).Other villages have other types of networks, based on clan for example. From national level to village level, clientelistic structures of political control and loyalty were developed already during the colonial period and have been maintained. Most of the interviewees are part of such networks.

From the 1970s, formal rights and liberties have been more extensive in Senegal than in most other African countries. More than one political party have been allowed, there has been a rather high degree of freedom of speech, and elections have been relatively fair (Vengroff & Creevez, 1997). Administration was decentralised to "rural communities" already in the beginning of the 1970s, when administrative tasks and finances were moved to lower levels of the state apparatus. However, initiatives from grass-roots level have not been invited. Rather, rural councils have largely been expected to execute and implement decisions taken at central level.

Learning in the Senegalese context

Individual life situations are here studied in relation to the different types of learning that people have been involved in since the beginning of the 1980s. Learning takes place in many different instances and situations:

- in indigenous arrangements of socialisation, such as home education, rites of transition, work situations and apprenticeship schemes;
- in the Western system (primary and secondary education). The Senegalese education system has continued to be as elitistic and selective as it was during the colonial period (Rideout & Bagayoko, 1994). The rates of grade repetition and drop-out are comparatively high. In the 1990s, some hundreds of Muslim primary schools were established. They follow the national curriculum but are owned by Muslim associations, give Islamic education as extra-curricular subjects and are subsidised by the government (Breda, 1995);
- in Koranic schools (*daaras*) that existed in Senegal already when the first Europeans arrived. Here, children primarily learn the basics of Islam and memorise

Koran verses. They also learn to work hard. In the 1970s, it was estimated that 60,000–70,000 children participated in Koranic education full-time, while some 10,000 attended such schools part-time (Mbaye 1977; Ndiaye, 1985). In a survey conducted in the 1990s, 3,000 *daaras* were found to exist. Approximately 6,700 children attended, half of them with boarding arrangements (Breda, 1995);

- in Arabic schools that began to expand south of Sahara in the 1970s, with support from some Muslim countries. The pupils learn the 'theory' of Islam, the Arabic language and some mathematics, natural science and history in addition to religious subjects. Education is divided into grades or stages, and its duration varies from four years in some schools to six years in others. These schools have a curriculum and a time schedule similar to those of primary schools, although the proportion of religious content is large. The language of instruction is most often Arabic.

Case studies have shown that both types of Muslim schools might be instrumental for jobs in the informal sector, such as artisan, small businessmen, tradesmen etc. (Daun, 1992, 1995; Oni, 1988). After the Jomtien conference in 1990, Islamic education has become a legitimate object for development assistance. Unicef, for instance, supports Islamic schools through NGOs.

The participants in the present study grew up in two Senegalese villages. Village A is situated in the region of Diourbel, in the heart of the Murid area. Their dependence on groundnut production for export makes the farmers in the village greatly influenced by international conditions. Due to lack of land, migration from the village is extensive. Two principal ethnic groups exist: Wolofs and Serers. Murid *Marabouts* are important persons who do not in general perform manual work. The importance of lineage has been replaced by affiliation to the Murid brotherhood and dependence on a *Marabout*. In the beginning of the 1980s, when the respondents were of school age, several fulltime Koranic schools, one Arabic school, and one primary school existed in the village

Village B is situated in the region of Casamance in the southern part of the country. The majority belongs to the Diola ethnic group – also the majority in the area – and converted to Islam later than many other groups. The population of this case village can be said to be partly Islamised. Rice is the principal crop, cultivated mainly for local consumption. The Diola are known for their extensive seasonal migrations (even to other countries) for employment. Another Diola characteristic is their intensive network of organisations and associations. The village has a large number of organisations for different purposes. Indigenous learning is important. It includes learning from home education, apprenticeship schemes and rites of initiation. Everybody, regardless of sex and social status, has to participate in the rites. For males, such rites are organised at intervals of ten to fifteen years, in the sacred forests outside the village. Ceremonies are organised centrally for the whole village, when the male rites for transition into adulthood are completed. The latest ceremony took place in the mid-1990s. The respondents mention these ceremonies as "circumcision".

In the beginning of the 1980s, several part-time (evening) Koranic schools, one Arabic school and one primary school existed.

A longitudinal study started in two Senegalese villages in the beginning of the 1980s. All children from these two villages belonging to the school age cohorts (6–13 years old) were included in this study. They were distributed on all four types of system described. In 1999–2000, they were traced and contacted for an interview follow-

ing a questionnaire with some 60 items. These were questions concerning their background as well as items measuring their knowledge and skills. 328 out of the sampled 510 learners were found. A few were deceased, and the remaining 170 had migrated to other places in Senegal, to other African countries or even to other continents (Asia, Europe or North America).

Learning and life situation

Policies for and analyses of relationships between peoples' learning and their life conditions (material standard of living, participation, knowledge etc) have shifted over the past decades: Human Capital Theory, the Basic Human Needs approaches and Human Resource Development approaches. However, these approaches have certain deficiencies making them less appropriate for an analysis of learning and its outcome in some African contexts. In many African and Asian countries, a large percentage of children do not enrol in primary school. Among those who do, some drop out before completing primary education. Established development thought takes it for granted that dropout and repetition are "wastage" (see, for instance, Unesco, 1975, 1998).

The learning taking place outside formal schooling, as well as spill-over and transfer between learning in and out of school, are seen as irrelevant or ignored in the approaches mentioned (Schuller & Field, 1998).

The individual's life situation – the sum of actions and interactions within different fields – is a concept that has much in common with what Held (1995) calls "life chances" as well as with UNDP's "human development". For Held, "life chances" means "the chances a person has of sharing the socially generated economic, cultural and political goods, rewards and opportunities typically found in their county" (p. 49). Giddens (1994), on the other hand, argues that "life politics is politics not of life-chances but of life-style. Generative politics seeks to allow individuals and groups to make things happen rather than have things happen to them...." (pp. 30–31).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 1991) argues for a concept of "human development" (HD), that includes socio-economic conditions, life quality and participation among other things. It sees human development as "a process that enlarges people's choices" and makes it possible "for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living" (Ibid. p. 11).

The concept "life situation" (as defined here) covers a broad domain of an individual's life. Therefore, the study can be seen as exploratory and screening or mapping various segments of people's life situation, here defined as:

a) material standard of living (occupation, monetary income, and housing quality);

b) well-being (subjective health, social network and experiences/memories);

c) participation in associations and decision-making; and

d) knowledge and skills (within the areas of health, agriculture, politics and mathematics) (Baldo & Furniss, 1998; Chinapah, 1992; Doyal & Gough, 1991; Miller, 1988; UNDP, 1991).

a) Material standard of living

Indicators to measure material standard of living were monetary income, occupation and residence quality.

Income: In all categories of learning background, men earn more than women. There is considerable variation in income between categories, as well as within each category. For both men and women, the longer the education, the larger the variation in income. The large variations within each category of learning suggest that factors other than education alone determine the level of monetary income.

Occupation: It is evident that only a complete secondary education is powerful enough to "channel" people into a certain life situation, completely different from those of other learners. Most men in each learning category (except complete secondary education) have become farmers, and this tendency is four times stronger among those with incomplete primary education or some Islamic education than among those with complete primary education. To have become artisan/tradesman or worker is also frequent.

One third of the men with complete secondary education is employed in the public sector. In addition, approximately 15 percent of the men with this background define themselves as unemployed. Among women, the most frequent situation is that of a housewife, and this is most common among those with a long Islamic education (either Koranic or Arabic). "Housewife" in combination with an economic activity (farming, trade, artisanship etc) comes second. Some unmarried women define themselves as "farmers", more frequently among those with incomplete secondary education.

Quality of residence: Among men, quality of residence co-varies with type and degree of learning, except for those with incomplete secondary education. Several men in this latter category have returned to their home village, where there is no electricity, for instance. Among women, there is no straightforward correlation, since the majority are married and their quality of residence is that of their husband. If access to land is not considered, the correlation between quality of residence and learning background becomes more straightforward for both men and women.

b) Well-being

For well-being, three indicators were used: self-reported health, problems and support when problems occur, and pleasant memories.

Health is to some extent related to type and level of education. Among men, those who have some years of or complete secondary education report the best health. Among women, those with long Koranic or Arabic education report the best health situation, while those with complete primary education report the worst health situation.

Problems and support when problems occur: The problems most frequently mentioned by all groups were of financial nature, and most often support was received from somebody within the extended family. Those with incomplete primary education mentioned different types and especially financial problems more than others.

Pleasant memories: pleasant memories or events remembered with pleasure were classified in twelve categories. Own wedding and the birth of the first child (family events) are mentioned frequently by all respondents – except by women with indigenous education! However, those events make up the largest category among both men and women with some type of Islamic education. The latest male circumcision in village B is frequently mentioned, mostly by women with learning in indigenous arrangements, but also by women with some or full secondary education!

c) Participation

Participation was measured by two indicators: position in the political domain or local community; and situations in which one can decide for oneself.

Regarding the first, the interviewees were asked to tell what *position* they held in village life or in the quarter of their city of residence. A large proportion of women have not responded to this question. When participation in traditional associations is included, those who have long Islamic education report the most frequent participation, and most of this participation takes place in such associations. Women and men differ in degree of participation in a traditional context; for men it is most common among those with long-term Islamic education or complete secondary education, while for women it is most common among those with indigenous or long Islamic learning experience.

Interviewees were also asked in which contexts or situations they could *make decisions on their own*. Most of them mentioned their own household, own compound, own job or own agricultural fields. Men can decide in their jobs or on their farm, while women feel limited to the household, house or compound. Some – especially men and women with primary education – said they did not make decisions alone but reached consensus after a discussion (with husband, wife or colleagues). A large portion of women with long education (Islamic or Western secondary) insisted that they never could make decisions.

d) Knowledge and skills

A number of items were used to indicate knowledge in health (16), agriculture (2), politics (2) and mathematics (3). Many items were formulated as questions or statements, and respondents chose between alternative responses; the mathematics test consisted of three problems.

Health knowledge and skills: Generally, women have more correct answers then men in all learning categories. There are no systematic differences according to educational background.

Agriculture: Women have a higher frequency of correct answers than men, and type of learning does not result in any considerable difference, neither for men nor women.

Politics: The two indicators deal with national politics (the national motto and the title of the country's leader) that are taught in primary and secondary education. Consequently, those with primary or secondary education have larger percentages of correct answers.

Mathematics: In mathematics, women in several learning categories have more correct answers than men. Regardless of gender, secondary education leads to better results, but among women the level is surprisingly high also among the ones who have an indigenous learning background. Only a more detailed analysis will hopefully show why this is the case.

Discussion: learning and life situation

The following are findings about *men:*

Men with incomplete primary education have among the highest overall scores and the highest scores in agricultural knowledge and skills. Despite this, they have – on the average – the lowest income among men, report bad health, many problems and low participation in organisational life.

Men with complete primary education have among the highest scores on health items, the highest on political but the lowest on agricultural items. They have a reasonable income but report bad health. Their participation in organisations is strategic, ie they participate less than many others but tend to have specific functions in addition to simple membership. They also have fewer children than many other men.

Among men with incomplete secondary education, the overall knowledge and skills scores are among the highest (especially on health, political and mathematical items). They also have "positive" indicators on life situation. In addition, they prefer to have fewer children and actually have fewer children than many others.

Complete secondary education is accompanied by high overall test scores, especially in politics and mathematics. Men from this group also have "positive" life situation indicators. They, too, prefer a small family and either have that or are unmarried.

In many aspects, men with a long Islamic education are not very different from those with long Western education (complete primary or some or full secondary). Since they are not significantly different, they do not appear in the above comments.

Findings indicate in many cases that *women* score higher than men (within the same category of learning background) on the tests.

Women with an indigenous learning background have the highest overall test scores due to the fact that they score higher than other women on health and mathematical items. They have comparatively "positive" indicators on life situation. On the average they have more children than others and say they prefer to have it that way.

Women with short Islamic (Koranic or Arabic) education have the lowest overall test scores and distinguish themselves from others by mentioning few problems, low participation in organisational life, and by the fact that they can never make decisions on their own.

Incomplete primary education is accompanied by high overall test scores, especially on health items. Many indicators of life situation are "positive", but this group of women reports a high number of problems, principally financial and bad health conditions.

Women with complete primary education score comparatively high on political and mathematical items but have a low income. Like men with this educational background, they participate strategically in organisational life – low frequency but high percentage of specific functions. They also have fewer children than many other women.

Women with incomplete or complete secondary education have high overall test scores due to high scores in the political and mathematical domains. They are not as frequently married as other women. They prefer to have few children and actually have fewer children. Most of their life situation indicators are "positive", except those on participation, and many of them report that they can never make decisions on their own.

A tentative framework for analysis and interpretation

We intend to follow up this study with in-depth interviews with selected individuals. Meanwhile, the framework hinted in this section will be used.

Society may be seen as consisting of different spheres (economic, civil and state) and different levels (from global to individual). Each sphere follows its own logics and implies different structures, cultures, ideologies and drives (Bourdieu, 1993; Dale, 1989; Miller, 1989; Thomas, 1994).

In the *economic sphere*, driving forces range from needs for physical survival to profit-seeking (Doyal & Gough, 1991; Giddens, 1994). In low-income countries, less penetrated by market forces, sections of the economy (often called the informal sector) are not primarily driven by profit-seeking or individual utility maximisation but by the need for collective (extended family, clan, tribe etc.) survival. Solidarity between members of a group is an important feature, also in urban areas, and the economy is conditioned by this (Anheier, 1987; Hoerner, 1996; N'Dione, 1997; Zaoul, 1997).

A large proportion of people in this study are employed in the so-called informal sector. They are involved in the type of networks mentioned. People from village A are linked to *Marabuots* at different levels, while those from village B have established a general committee (and sub-committees) in every urban area. These organisations are copies of the organisations that exist in the home village.

The *state sphere* includes all agencies and activities that are publicly financed (Dale, 1989). The nature of state varies across countries in a number of dimensions, three of which are: 1) degree of centralisation/decentralisation; 2) regime and "rules of the game" (part of the political culture) that define the relationships between state, surrounding society and individual (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997); and 3) capabilities. Where state capability is weak, crude coercion and force or *laissez-faire*/neglect are the alternatives. This is not uncommon in developing countries. Such states tend to be hollow and have a weak ability to decentralise effectively, for instance.

The Senegalese state has always been comparatively centralised. The regime/political culture has considered mass involvement in politics legitimate or necessary, but participation has taken place via *Marabouts* at different levels. During the first period after independence, the state attempted to regulate and control but its capabilities were weak – especially in relation to Muslim groups led by *Marabouts*. Then with the liberalization and the relaxation of the control of NGOs, people used the "space" available when the state withdrew or was unable to act. A large number of Arabic and Koranic schools competing with primary and secondary schools are one indication of this.

Social phenomena not belonging to the economic or state sphere are perceived by Western researchers as civil society (Azarya, 1994), the informal sector (McGrath and King, 1994), the third sector (Anheier, 1987, 1989), and so on. The *civil sphere*, distinct from the state and the economy, is the space for generation and use of social capital (Bourdieu, 1990; Coleman, 1988; Gopalan, 1997) and biological reproduction. Interaction is guided by reciprocal expectations about behaviour, and networks/ties tend to be non-utilitarian and in African societies, associations and organsations tend to be multi-functional and holistic (Anheier, 1989:425; Hoerner, 1995). Thus, the civil sphere often generates social capital and other types of capital simultaneously.

The civil sphere contains different voluntary associations and networks as well as "totalistic" networks: lineages, clans, kinship groups, extended families, fundamentalist groups, commercial/religious networks, female associations, and so on. The latter are "ascriptive", i.e. individuals are born into them, a fact that implies control and regulation of the individual but also support from other members when needed. Furthermore, a great deal of learning takes place in these contexts (N'Dione, 1994).

The life situation has here been presented in an "atomised" way, but analysis and interpretations have to be regarded from a holistic perspective. Hoerner (1995), N'Dione (1994), and Zaoul (1997), among others, have shown that "life is holistic" in a society of Senegalese type. Cultures differ considerably in the extent to which the

individual is socially and culturally constructed. For instance, Shweder and Levine (1984: 193) argue that the concept of "the person" varies cross-culturally. They identify two major alternative conceptualisations of the individual-social relationship, viz., the "egocentric contractual" and the "sociocentric organic".... They are ideas, premises by which people guide their lives...".

The former views individuals as independent from their contexts, while the latter does not view individuals as such but as elements in an ontological and cosmological whole – in time and space. The latter is predominating not only in Muslim communities but also in communities of the type represented by village B.

Discriminating factors

The possession of knowledge and skills is embedded in a complex of factors. Three principal factors seem to be 1) whether the knowledge is certified or not by the state; 2) gender; and 3) whether the acquisition and use of knowledge is an individual or collective affair.

Certification: The first factor is very evident in the case of those with incomplete primary education or some Islamic education. To have knowledge and skills without being able to manifest or articulate them in reading and writing in a European language seems to be a feature among those with indigenous or Islamic learning background. Furthermore, many individuals with incomplete primary education have higher levels of knowledge and skills (as measured by the tests) than many others but have not had the opportunity to convert this knowledge into life situation advantages. Instead, this category is considered by national governments and international organizations to represent non-knowledge and is, therefore, prevented from entering certain fields that would improve their life situation. On the other hand, as we have seen, people can have a reasonable life situation without being literate in a dominating language (men with a long Islamic education). Whether one's level of knowledge is certified by the state or not has certain implications for one's life situation.

Not only are those with incomplete primary education considered wastage from the official and system perspectives, but they also seem to be stigmatised in one way or another. Two things seem to support this suggestion. In a previous study of the same group of individuals it was shown that they – more than others – were absent from school due to illness, and that teacher predictions of their school careers in 1980 seemed to become self-fulfilling prophecies some years later (Daun, 1995). In the 1999–2000 study, indicators taken together show that individuals with this learning background seem to live in something of a vacuum. They work and earn an income but participate neither in traditional associations nor in modern organisations.

Gender is the most important factor of screening and selection. It was shown in the study mentioned that girls marry according to traditional patterns and criteria. If those with complete secondary education are not considered, women, almost regardless of type of learning background, married a partner and at an age that had been established by tradition (Daun, 1992). In the 1999–2000 study, women often have higher levels of knowledge than men in several domains and within the same category of learning background, but they report a less favourable life situation.

Knowledge as an individual or collective affair: In addition, possession of knowledge is not only or even primarily a private or individual matter. In Morocco, Wagner (1993)

found that individuals are integrated into networks. A person does not have to be literate in order to get access to information, services and support. Similar findings are reported from other studies, for instance from some black communities in the USA (reported in Walter, 1999). Senegal is similar to Morocco in this regard. In Senegalese society, there is a large number of networks or associations. Since they are not defined as NGOs – with written or even explicit rules and criteria for membership and decision-making – they are not considered eligible for development assistance from abroad.

Whether or not one has been enrolled as a child in a primary school relates to parental strategies some twenty years earlier. Such strategies were and are based on estimations of risks and probabilities concerning the future labour market – the formal as well as the informal (Daun, 1998; Oni, 1988). With the structural adjustment programs (and subsequent privatisation and shrinking of the public sector), the number of jobs in the formal sector decreased, while those in the informal increased. A complete primary education was and is not a precondition for many jobs in the latter. Paradoxically, structural adjustment programs and liberalisations have, therefore, often stimulated non-participation in Western education.

Finally, a few words should be said about the studies conducted in Guinea-Bissau and Tanzania. A preliminary screening of data indicates that the relationships between learning and life situation differ considerably between the three countries involved in the study. The countries have had and have different types of state, different rates of enrolment, different education policies and education systems, and so on. In addition, Guinea-Bissau suffered from a civil war in 1999, when the study was planned to take place.

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Education as Expanding Freedoms in Bolivia

By Charlotta Widmark, Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, Uppsala University

There is a need to explore the relationship between education and the empowerment of the poor. Poverty has social and political as well as economic dimensions. People who suffer from deprivation are deprived in more than one way, which requires a multi-dimensional approach to poverty. In this essay I will focus on Bolivia and explore poor people's views and experiences of education and the role it has played in their life careers. I am focusing on bilingual Aymara-Spanish urban dwellers, i.e. first or second-generation migrants in the city of La Paz. This is a group that is considered poor by better-situated groups in the city. The migrants sometimes consider themselves poor, but more so marginalized or excluded from the center of political and economic power in the city. According to Amartya Sen, the role of education is to expand the freedoms, and to give people increased capacity, to live the life they value, and have a reason to value. Does education fulfill that role for people with Aymara origin in Bolivia?

For most poor people in Bolivia the role of education is ambiguous. On the one hand, school has functioned as the prime representative and tool for the assimilationist politics during the 20th century, with the aim to integrate the country's indigenous minorities into the modern Western model of national citizenship. Education has at best provided poor people with tools to enter the job market and gain some influence within the existing and unjust structure of the country. Education has sometimes been achieved at the cost of self-esteem of marginalized and culturally oppressed groups. On the other hand, in some cases education has functioned as an empowering measure, achieved through experiences of alternative, culturally adapted, or critical curricula and methods, or simply through the resistance that students develop when they feel that their indigenous identities are at stake.

In my interviewees' accounts the question of cultural and ethnic identity is central, because it strongly influences poor people's positions and thereby their opportunities within a certain power structure. As ethnicity and class are so intimately intertwined in Bolivia, it is necessary to discuss poverty in relation to the indigenous population's culturally subordinated position. It is also important to discuss the role of education in relation to Bolivia's multicultural character and the country's educational reform and decentralization measures.

Migration towards the cities is increasing rapidly in Bolivia as elsewhere. In the city newcomers often experience a tension between cultural assimilation and revitalization among their own people. In the city and in relation to the urbanization processes those questions of identification become manifest. As Low (1996) points out, the city as a site of everyday practice provides opportunities to study the linkages between macro processes and human experiences.

Recognizing the multicultural society in Bolivia

In 1993, Bolivia got its first vice President with indigenous origin. It was the Aymara intellectual, leader of the kataristas, Victor Hugo Cárdenas. In 1994, the constitution of Bolivia was changed, and in its first article Bolivia is recognized as a multiethnic and multicultural state. An acknowledgement of the multicultural society is an important part of the Bolivian democratization process. It relates to whether more space is being created for the country's indigenous majorities, socially and politically margin-

alized since colonial time. Yet, there are difficulties associated with the will to create the multicultural state that relates to culture and identity.

Two constitutional reforms were decided upon during the mandatory period of Gonzalo Sanchez de Losada (MNR) and Victor Hugo Cárdenas (MRTKL) (1993–1997). Those were the 'Law of Popular Participation' and the Educational Reform, both relating to the question of indigenous peoples' rights and status. The law of popular participation officially recognized the indigenous authorities at the local level. The educational reform legislated on bilingual and intercultural education. One of the official aims of the reforms was to extend democratic rights to formerly excluded groups, such as indigenous groups in the rural areas.

Both of the laws were initially debated and resisted by peasants, teachers and parents to schoolchildren. For example, at the introduction of bilingual education many parents did not see this as a possibility for their children to be better equipped for the future. An emphasis on mother tongue was interpreted as an attempt on behalf of the state to reinforce colonial divides and to keep the rural population marginalized. A 35-year-old female schoolteacher that I interviewed in 1998 said:

> "The reform is only introduced in a few schools. Of course books and journals from the reform are arriving, but in some communities the very parents are the ones opposed to this education, that first one should learn in one's mother tongue and then in another language,.. Spanish…The parents say: 'Why should our children continue to be relegated like us? Why shall they continue to speak Aymara? What we want is that our children shall know how to speak Spanish through which they can express themselves better when confronted with the authorities of the government'…In some communities they don't accept because they [feel like they] are going to continue to be relegated, displaced, on a second [social] level. That is what the government wants. They [the parents] think like that."

One reason for the parent's opposition, then, was related to the parents' experiences of being defined and categorized by the state. They were afraid that the educational reform would reproduce the same kind of subordinate position for their children as they themselves had experienced. The initial resistance changed gradually into a more accepting attitude towards the reform. Here the initial resistance is discussed as an illustration of people's reactions to categorizations imposed by the state. When cultural differences are emphasized, there is a risk that stereotypes are made permanent even if the reform probably was the result of good intentions on behalf of the lawmakers.

Ascribed vs experienced identity

The dynamics of access and exclusion in Bolivia is structured in terms of limited access to information, power relations, racist attitudes and discrimination. How a person identifies him/herself and how s/he is perceived by others have an effect on what resources (economic, political, symbolic) s/he has access to, and how s/he sees his/her possibilities of changing or creating the life s/he wants to live. Different people occupy different places in a structure of power relations. A person's liberty of action is determined by his/her place in the structure with concomitant possibilities, limitations and different access to resources. There is often a difference between how, for example, minorities are construed by the state compared to how they experience themselves and their sense of belonging. In other words, there is often a difference between ascribed and experienced identities.

In Bolivia the class-structure is combined with an unspoken racism that – since colonial times – excludes the country's indigenous populations. The notion of race has differentiated the elite (or "whites"), *mestizos*, and Indians and justified unequal access to political participation, to the legal system, and to economic resources. Legally this is no longer acceptable, but racism as a mental structure is still present among all social groups. There are stereotypical ethnic and social categorizations in political rhetoric as well as in daily life that people have to relate to. Class and ethnicity strengthen each other, both as ascribed and experienced identity. At a general level 'indigenous' equals 'poor'. The poor are confronted with a double subordination in society, being looked upon as poor Indians.

Another problem is related to something that Nancy Fraser (1998) has called 'the redistribution-recognition dilemma'. She distinguishes broadly between two kinds of injustice. One is socio-economic, rooted in the political-economic structure. The other is cultural or symbolic, rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, communication etc. These two kinds of injustice require different kinds of remedies. The remedy for socio-economic injustice is redistribution, i.e. redistribution of income, reorganization of division of labor etc. The remedy for cultural or symbolic injustice requires recognition, i.e. revaluation of disrespected identities and cultural products, recognition and positive valorization of cultural diversity etc. Fraser asks what sorts of mutual contradictions can arise when both kinds of claims are made simultaneously. Recognition claims tend to promote group differentiation. Redistribution claims, in contrast, often call for abolishing economic arrangements that underpin group specificity. People who are subject to both cultural and economic injustice need both. They need both to claim and to deny their specificity (Fraser 1998:21–24). This dilemma is indeed real to people with indigenous background, which complicates any multicultural actions taken by the state.

Formal education is highly valued…

I have interviewed many poor bilingual Spanish-Aymara people in La Paz about their social ideals and strategies for survival and social mobility. In a more official setting (taped interview, scheduled time) a large percentage of the interviewees say that they want to obtain education for themselves (in the case of young people) or for their children.

Many people are well aware of the importance of education. One woman who was born in the country was sent to the city to study at an early age. Her father was aware of the fact that there were serious problems with schooling in the rural areas (lack of continuity and capacity, teachers' frequent strikes etc.), so when he got the chance, he sent his children to school in the city. Parents can go far in terms of personal sacrifices, to be able to get their children to school and to receive a further education. Another couple had been living separately for ages, because she had to stay at their small farm while he worked in a church project in another area. The reason they gave for this arrangement was that they needed money for their children's education.

Many of the interviewees, especially the women, did not seem to have a clear image of what formal education actually implies. When I asked why they wanted their children to get an education, they said that they wanted them to get a title, to get a job, and have the chance to get a better life than they (the parents) had had. It was

difficult to get any further elaboration on the topic. This could be explained by the fact that several of the interviewed mothers did not have more than a maximum of six years in school themselves. It was also quite common that informants paid lip service to the importance of education for their children, while in practice they encouraged them to work instead of finishing school.

However, in the Bolivian society it is not easy to get a job, even if you have a university title, and the occupations in which most people with Aymara-origin are involved for a living (artisans, carpenters, saleswomen) do not require an education. One of the social and cultural ideals is to start a business of ones own (*conseguir un negocio*), i.e. realize oneself within the commercial sector. Ordinary education does not prepare people very well for these occupations. The Aymara historian Roberto Choque discusses the lack of practical skills provided by the official education. He sees different forms of education (the official education system, community/home-based Aymara education and popular education) as in many ways contradictory. For example, while the different levels of learning in community-based education are useful to practical skills, reaching new levels within the official education merely implies social mobility and prestige (Choque Canqui 1992:289). For many people, to obtain a title of education seems to be more of a measure to enhance one's status in society than to prepare for certain jobs.

…but difficult to achieve

The striving for a title to enhance one's status seems to be more important among the elder, first-generation migrants. In 1998, I interviewed ten young people (16–18 years old) about their future plans. All of them wanted to continue studying after they had finished their high school degree. They all thought it would be possible one way or another. They said they were going to work and study at night, or that their parents' would pay, or whatever. "It depends on each one" (*depende de cada uno*) was a common expression in relation to this topic. "We will manage, we will overcome any obstacles" said two confident young men. One of them wanted to become a psychologist ("because young people need to talk to psychologists, they have communication problems with their parents"). The other wanted to become a lawyer ("because I like defending people"). The two men showed a kind of social conscience, well aware of the difficulties poor people meet. They seemed to have some idea of why they needed the education and what they were going to do with it, apart from social prestige.

Two years later, in early 2001, I came back and met some of the young people again. Very few had managed to continue studying after finishing high school. There are a lot of structural obstacles that poor people have to confront. First and foremost the problems concern money. Even if the curriculum fee is not very high, books, food and bus-fares can be enough of an obstacle to a poor family. Furthermore, it is very difficult to be admitted entrance unless you have contacts within the university. In Bolivia's reality of increasing unemployment, more and more young people apply to the university. Admittance is done through tests, and there are numerous stories and rumors of how a large number of tests are not even graded and that admission in the end depends on hazard. As a matter of fact, corruption within university administration is frequently reported.

The forming of families and having babies are other reasons for not continuing to study. If this is the case, normally the young man has to find a job to support his family,

while the young woman is taking care of the small baby. Later she tries to get an income from an occupation that she can combine with taking care of the child, for example, working as a maid or laundress or keeping a small grocery shop. In the case of unmarried young mothers it all depends on her parents. If the parents themselves have struggled to survive (which is often the case), many think that irresponsible young people should learn to take care of themselves and their children. It should be noted that there are no strong moral objections to being an unmarried young mother, but it is practically impossible to combine it with studying, unless the grandparents take care of the child.

For children living under extremely poor and socially difficult circumstances, school has often functioned as a constructive place of resort. In the *barrio* where I lived most children and young people seemed to like school. Vacation was not seen as such a positive thing. Many of them had to work hard at home and/or felt bored waiting for school to start again. Most families did not have the means or the tradition of leaving for some other place during the vacation. Parents that were formally employed only had one or two weeks of vacation a year, and as most parents worked within the informal sector, their possibilities to take a few weeks off were often minimal. In some cases the children were sent to relatives in the rural areas. Some students getting closer to their high school graduation dreaded life after school because of the uncertainty that awaited them and, especially for the girls, a life much more tied up to the parents' home.

"Dominant" and "muted" discourses

The school system has functioned as the prime representative and tool for the governments' assimilationist politics during the 20th century. The aim has roughly been to integrate the country's indigenous minorities into the Christian Western inspired modernization process. This official aim is probably what has influenced the above-mentioned interviewees to lift up education as one of their prime goals for their children. The state's official aims and the elite's ambitions is part of a dominant discourse in Bolivia. Ardener (1989) coined the concepts "dominant" vs. "muted" structures. He argues that some groups can become "muted", because the dominant structure is expressed from the position of some other group (Ardener 1989:129–30). Different groups have different frames of interpretation (or represent different structures that are expressed in different discourses). In this case the bilingual Aymara-Spanish speaking population in La Paz could be seen as the "muted" group, while the elite could represent the "dominant". The statements of the interviewees that express a favorable attitude towards education and give the impression that almost everybody has the same possibilities, probably represents the "dominant" discourse. However, there is also a "muted" discourse around school and education, which relates to the subjugation of poor indigenous people's cultural identities.

The "muted" discourse on education is about discrimination towards people with indigenous origin. A 35-year-old school teacher pointed out that traditional dress is forbidden for school teachers, because it is considered to set a bad example: "Well, in my profession it is forbidden to use the *pollera*, because a teacher cannot teach dressed in *pollera*, then what example will the children take, that is what they say in the history of education". She says that this was obvious when she went to the teachers' training college.

> "When there are several young people that have received their high school degree in the provinces (rural areas), not in the city, in the provinces. They have come dressed in pollera to the teachers' training college to study to become teachers. In that moment, the woman who was registering told them that 'here you cannot study dressed in *pollera*. We do not want *cholas*, we want you to change to wearing a dress. In that way we will let you study, but if you come dressed as a *chola* it is preferable that you look for another career, another profession, it is not for this'. That is what they had told them and what can one do? One is forced to change if one wants to succeed, if one wants to study, one has to leave (the *pollera*)."

This happened about five years ago, in spite of the anti-discriminatory legislation in Bolivia. According to a lawyer friend, if someone would accuse the college of discriminatory practices the college would undoubtedly loose, but to his knowledge there had so far never been any case of judicial plaint.

Several of my interviewees had negative experiences of school that they associate with discrimination. A 25-year-old woman remembered that when she was an adolescent girl, she got her braids cut off by the schoolteacher, because she had not combed her hair properly. It was a symbolic punishment, as braids are worn particularly by indigenous women and not so much by women and girls from other social groups. An underlying reason for the teacher's action is other stereotypes about poor indigenous people being dirty and disorderly.

Lack of language proficiency is often interpreted as a reason for discrimination. In the Buechlers' account of Sofía Velasquez, she remembers from her childhood how she was hit by her school teacher in the first grades. She interprets the situation as if she was hit because she spoke Aymara and did not learn fast enough:

> "I only remember from that time that the teacher would frequently hit me. She would grab me by the hair and knock my head against my book because I couldn't learn how to read….When I was small I only spoke Aymara. My cousin Juana,…,would criticize me for being a monolingual Aymara speaker… She would say [to my mother], 'Your daughter won't be able to learn Spanish, *tía*, she is an *aymarista*'. Because my mother doesn't speak Spanish, I learned how to speak only Aymara too. My teacher probably hit me for the same reason: I was unable to learn, and I didn't know any Spanish at all." (Buechler & Buechler 1996:6).

Those who have been placed by their parents in 'better' or private schools in order to get a better education have several experiences of the stigma attached to having a mother traditionally dressed '*de pollera*'. A 38 year-old man told me that he went to a private college, because his parents wanted him to become well-prepared. He remembers how he begged his mother not to come to school, because it would embarrass him in front of his more well-off classmates. He felt that if they would discover that his mother was dressed '*de pollera*' they would exclude him from their social circles. During the first year he asked an aunt, modern dressed '*de vestido*', to replace the mother. The categorization of women as being dressed '*de pollera*' versus '*de vestido*' always applies to lower class women with indigenous origin. Stereotypes refer to dichotomies, such as traditional/modern, rural/urban, Western/Aymara, educated/non-educated, but in reality there are seldom any differences between these women when it comes to culture, identity and education.

Resistance, social movements and increased self-esteem

The struggle for education, and later bilingual education has been an important part of the social movements. Aymara activists have been working for education since the beginning of the 20th century, promoting bilingual education since the seventies. In earlier decades, teaching in Aymara was forbidden and teachers who taught Aymara and students who spoke Aymara in the classroom were punished. Many promoters have claimed the importance of language and culture as a joint venture. This claim is related to the common experience of the official education as denigrating native values (see Luykx 1998, Layme 2001, Choque Canqui 1992).

Some activists see the current educational reform as the fruit of their long-standing claims. Others are more critical and see it only as a prolongation of the governments' assimilationist politics. It is important to take the dialectics between state policies and social movements into account. According to Cárdenas (1992), the traditional description of the history of Bolivian education is limited to formal experiences of urban education, and if rural or indigenous education is included, only a few isolated experiences are mentioned. These examples should be seen in a larger context, where the struggle for schooling has been part of the more general struggle to reclaim indigenous' rights (ibid.: 5–8).

Aurolyn Luykx's (1998) study of a Bolivian Teachers' College shows that students are not passive but that they actively influence the content of the training. "[S]tudents confront the assaults which their professional training wages against their indigenous identity, as they alternately absorb and contest the ethnic, class, and gender images meant to transform them from 'Aymara Indians' into 'Bolivian Citizens'"(ibid.).

For Aymara-speaking migrants in the city, the commitment to the movements has often sprung from the possibility to study in combination with their own experiences of discrimination. According to Albó, in 1980 the majority of social movement members and sympathizers were people of Aymara-origin, established in the city but born in the rural areas. In the late sixties, a group of Aymara intellectuals emerged that focused on the creation of an Aymara ideology (Albó 1980:510).

Felix Layme, university teacher in Aymara at the Catholic University in La Paz, and active promoter of bilingual education, said he discovered the importance of the mother tongue when he was teaching in a rural school:

> "It was the first time I found serious communication difficulties in Spanish with the Aymara children… As I had recently graduated form the Teachers' Training College I was sent to teach the children of the first grades of primary school. The children in that educational center were very quiet in class and they did not answer my questions in Spanish. When I did my auto-evaluation I noted that the class had been a kind of failure to me. I confirmed that there had been no real communication with the children. …In the next class I started to talk to the children in their mother tongue, that is the Aymara language. The change was total! I had never seen such an emotional change among children before. They felt happy and pleased and they did not leave my side, not even during the breaks. It was not only that they answered all the questions I formulated; I also received a total confidence from the children and, there was learning... I decided to go for bilingual education and the Aymara language" (Layme 2001).

The role of the educational reform

The official discourse, which is also adopted by poor people, is about the value of education and claims that everyone has access to it. Poor people value education and put a lot of efforts into getting their children through school. In practice, everybody does not have access to good quality education and higher education due to the many structural limitations that confine the poor. Formal education has not been able to prepare people for what most of them will be doing after graduation, which has diminished parents' motivation for obtaining education for their children. Among the older generation, education is mainly thought of as a means to enhance one's status, which illustrates the gap between what education prepares them for and what they will actually do for a living.

The current educational reform is both an institutional and a pedagogical reform. It is basically about the introduction of bilingual and intercultural education, a student-centered pedagogy, decentralization, and community control. It is important that questions of social inequality are addressed properly within the reform. There are increased possibilities for private schools to establish themselves within the new system, schools that poor people do not have access to. It is also important not to let the gap between the different school types increase, as this would be counter-productive for the overall aim of the reform. Another problem is related to the already existing inequalities between rural and urban areas, as well as between poor and rich urban areas. To be effective in empowering the poor, the educational reform has to be supported by politics aimed at changing the overall unequal power structure at the national level, and at creating possibilities for marginalized groups to participate in social and economic life.

As a consequence of the reform of 1994, bilingual and intercultural education was established. People's ambivalent reactions to bilingual and intercultural education relate to negative experiences of being categorized by the state. There is also a muted discourse on discrimination against people with indigenous background and their culture within the educational system. These problems should be dealt with, and probably are, in relation to the aims of intercultural education. According to Javier Medina (2000) the aims are to see the country's diversity as a potential for development and to create conditions for native peoples' culture and language to fit within pedagogical practice (ibid.: 21). The meaning of the concept "intercultural" is discussed nationally and has an important role to play in a future multicultural state. It is important that these discussions are not polarized in a way that perpetuates the colonial divide. Luykx (2000) has illustrated this kind of polarized debate in relation to the themes of interculturalism and gender equity, both important goals of the educational reform. She says that: "In this context preoccupation with gender is often perceived as an imposition of foreign values, while the concept of interculturalism tends to be limited to a non-critical respect for indigenous values"(ibid.:150). I agree with her conclusion that interculturalism and gender equity, far from being incompatible, are tightly interdependent and should be analyzed and pursued in a complementary manner. It is important to remember that indigenous groups are not as culturally and politically homogenous as they have often been portrayed. There is always a need to contextualize and recognize that there are different opinions, conflicting ideologies and social stratification at all levels of society.

Concluding remarks

Education and the proposed changes within the educational system are very important for poor people. Actually, in spite of the fact that education for many is difficult to achieve and implies negative experiences of discrimination, it is extremely important as a vehicle for expanding freedoms and enhancing capacities for poor people. This may be a far-fetched example, but the combination of migration and education creates indigenous leaders, which is in itself a sign of empowerment. No matter how assimilationist the aims of education are, it will always give some tools for analysis and foster some resistance, which also seem to serve as an empowering measure. For changes to be effective there has to be interplay and a dialogue between different sectors of society, in which educated leaders have an important role to fulfill.

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Bilingual Education in Africa: An Exploration of Encouraging Connections Between Language and Girls' Schooling[1]

By Carol Benson, Centre for Research on Bilingualism, Stockholm University

The purpose of this paper is to explore some possible connections between the use of mother tongue in primary schooling and girls' school participation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Based on work experience and research in bilingual education in developing countries, I have reason to believe that use of the mother tongue affects girls even more positively than it does all children, especially children from rural and non-privileged backgrounds. Using examples from educational experimentation in Guinea-Bissau, Niger, and Mozambique, I will attempt to make some connections between language and gender and demonstrate why they are worthy of further investigation.

While the formal education of African girls is generally recognized as an important issue, and many of the challenges facing girls have been well documented, it appears that we need to explore more practical strategies for improving the situation of girls. Western literature (and urban African, e.g. Makau 1995) suggests that we adopt new teaching practices aimed at girls, especially in math and science. Unfortunately, these have limited potential for application in systems whose capacity to teach children basic literacy and numeracy skills is in question. At the other extreme, literature on educational development tends to describe such far-reaching needs that gender-related problems are seen as secondary at best, and are often treated only superficially in development reports because a "section on gender" is required by the donor agency. This paper makes an effort to go beyond simple reporting of enrollment rates or test scores by gender, and to demonstrate the usefulness of other indicators such as more qualitative measures of educational success in assessing opportunities for girls.

Improvement of educational approaches is only one way to address the needs of traditionally underserved, rural, or otherwise marginalized children. Likewise, the use of their mother tongues in school cannot resolve all of the problems of an educational system, nor can it remove the obstacles children must overcome to become well-educated, equal participants in their societies. On the other hand, it is difficult to question the need to provide instruction in a language the student understands. Those of us working to apply bilingual schooling approaches in some of the remaining colonial-style school systems in Africa believe that instruction in the mother tongue facilitates both teaching and learning for the majority of people, and especially those who lack equitable access to the official ex-colonial languages of their countries.

Obstacles to the schooling of girls

In this post-Jomtien[2] age with its ideal of quality education for all, post-colonial nations with limited human and material resources strive to meet the needs of their growing school-aged populations. According to most measures, sub-Saharan African countries

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[2] The 1996 World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, sponsored by various United Nations agencies and the World Bank, expanded the call for basic education for all by including quality as an important aspect.

are generally succeeding to increase their sheer numbers of enrollees in primary schooling, and in some cases are also managing to gain on high birth rates and increase the overall percentage of school-aged children who at least have an opportunity to begin formal schooling. However, rural and disadvantaged populations continue to be underserved, and a significant subset of these is made up of girls. In virtually every nation, the percentage of girls attending school is well below that of boys. Table 1 presents data on three countries that share the dubious honor of being considered among the poorest in the world, and will be used as illustrations in this paper.

Table 1: Primary enrollment and literacy figures (in percent)

Country		Primary Gross Enrollment	Primary Net Enrollment	Adult Literacy
Mozambique	Total	60	40	40
	Males	70	45	58
	Females	50	35	23
Guinea-Bissau	Total	64	46	55
	Males	81	60	68
	Females	47	33	43
Niger	Total	29	26	14
	Males	36	34	21
	Females	22	19	7

(Information source: UNICEF, 1999)

While these statistics establish a pattern of female underdevelopment, they mask the vast rural-urban disparities that exist within individual nations, and fail to clearly demonstrate the fact that many African girls never get to school in the first place. Further, of those who do begin primary schooling, most drop out by the end of the third year. Table 2 demonstrates some of these internal differences by comparing data from two relatively rural provinces of Mozambique with the same data from the capital city and the nation as a whole.

Table 2: Proportion of Mozambican student population which is female, selected areas

Area	% of grade 1 students	% of grade 1 repeaters	% of grade 5 students	% of grade 5 repeaters	% of gr. 1–5 students	% of gr. 1–5 repeaters
Maputo (city)	49	49	51	51	50	48
Tete (province)*	45	45	32	38	40	43
Zambezia (province)	41	43	27	30	36	40
National average	44	46	39	42	41	44

* One of the provinces in which bilingual experimentation took place 1993–97.

(Information source: MINED, 1996)

In the city, conditions for girls appear to be more or less equivalent to those of boys at this level; as shown, the same percentage of girls attending class repeat grades, except for the overall figures grades 1 to 5 where girls actually repeat less often than boys. However, in the two provinces shown here, girls are poorly represented among the student population, especially by grade 5 where they represent less than one-third of the student body. Meanwhile, both provincial and national averages demonstrate disproportionately high repetition rates for girls, which indicates that, for whatever reason, teachers fail higher proportions of girls than boys.

Lack of schooling for girls appears to stem from a variety of social, economic, and cultural conditions. I have summarized the most common from experience in the three representative countries here, but similar lists can be found in the literature (Chowdhury, 1993; Kane, 1995; UNICEF, 1999). With the caution that these are broad generalizations and certainly do not reflect the situation in every African society, the following are the most common explanations:

- If the family has limited financial resources for school fees, books, uniforms, or other school-related costs, they must choose which of their children will go to school, or which will continue on to higher levels. This choice may be based on an assessment of who will be most successful, and/or who will bring the highest "return" on the family's investment. Since in many societies it is the oldest son who will provide for parents/guardians in old age, the tendency is to support formal schooling for the oldest boy(s) of the family.
- Girls are often required to carry out essential household tasks, such as childcare and water bearing. Gathering firewood and cooking are further responsibilities typically assigned to girls. These tasks are time-consuming and (at least in the case of carrying water or wood) physically demanding, and their scheduling may coincide with school hours.
- Many African societies are characterized by patrilocal relationship structures, meaning that once a girl marries she joins the husband's family. While some effort may therefore be put into making a girl "marriageable," the practical result in poor families is more likely to be a reluctance to invest in formal education for someone who will not be a future provider for the family who raised her.
- Parents often fear that their daughters will become pregnant as a result of contact with teachers (who are usually men), fellow students, or even strangers encountered along the route between home and school. In many societies, a girl's marriageability relies on the degree to which she can be considered a virgin (this may be actual or apparent, as evidenced by not having been pregnant), while boys are permitted and even encouraged to engage in sexual activity. The family must prevent pre-marital pregnancy unless they want to remain responsible for upkeep of daughter and baby, and their distrust of male teachers is unfortunately well founded in many areas.
- Parents, teachers, and girls themselves may fail to see a need for girls to obtain formal schooling. The academic nature of a public school curriculum seems irrelevant given girls' home activities or even other income-generating activities undertaken by women in the informal sector. There are few if any role models in terms of women in the community whose positions make use of a formal education.
- Girls are treated differently from boys at school. Girls are often given cleaning tasks in the classroom such as sweeping and dusting desks, as well as carrying

water once again. Their teachers, often men, appear to have lower expectations for their female students, which may result in differential treatment such as failure to call on girls, segregation of girls to less-attended parts of the classroom, laughing at girls for their errors, and so on.

- Girls themselves are likely to lose motivation to attend school, for a combination of reasons like these mentioned. Their home duties are tiring, as they may have to carry water and/or wood for 2 or 3 hours before school, but if they fall asleep in class they will be considered lazy or unmotivated. Where there are no women teachers, and few girls in the upper grades, girls lack role models or mentors; equitable female representation is also lacking in school textbooks. Being treated as academically inferior may make girls believe that they actually are inferior. They may have a long walk to and from school that is tiring and possibly dangerous. Finally, their demanding home tasks after school may prevent them from doing homework, which puts them at a disadvantage in class and feeds teachers' and classmates' prejudices.

The attitudes, beliefs, and practices described above work separately or together to inhibit the formal schooling of girls. Examples from interviews done in Mozambique confirm some of these:

Male school director, Tete:

"In Tete, female participation is not very satisfactory. During the beginning years it is okay, when they are 7 years old. But when they are 14, they stop coming to school. You can see the level of enrollment. I know that the failing rate of girls is higher. Household activities distract girls more. We can do a study, I have data..."

Female teacher, Tete:

"Here they send the girls to school, but most of them drop out later. They get married or do stupid things [get pregnant]."

(Benson, 1997, my translations)

In Guinea-Bissau, the parents in one sociolinguistically homogeneous region where there was a bilingual school told us that they did not want their daughters to attend more than a couple of years of primary school because those who did refused their arranged marriages. Among this group, arrangement of marriage while the girl is extremely young obliges the future groom, who is much older, to help on the family's farm. If the girl refuses this obligation when she reaches marriageable age, the family must compensate the man for his years of work (Buckner, personal communication, 1993).[3] Whether refusal of arranged marriages by educated girls was fact or myth, parent respondents from this community often made the connection between schooling and disobedience (Benson, 1994), as has been done by respondents in other countries (Chowdhury, 1993). Not coincidentally, this particular region in Guinea-Bissau had among the lowest rates of female enrollment in the country (Ahlenhed, et al., 1991).

[3] Buckner's anthropological study, done for a health-based NGO, followed a group of women who had bought themselves out of this arrangement with their families through income gained from prostitution. These women had remained in the profession because of the economic independence it offered them, despite severe risks; in fact, almost all of them tested HIV-positive at the time of the study.

As a further illustration of the perceived relationship between schooling and disobedience, one female teacher in our Mozambique study, age 50, communicated differing moral expectations for her female students:

Female teacher, Gaza:

"A girl's education may be different – 'Whoever educates the woman educates the family.' Now we give reading and writing instruction, but in the past we educated the child as well. Boys and girls are different beings, they are not the same. In the past we educated the girls to respect older people. Now this is really lacking – behavior is bad."

Need for workable strategies

In examining the conditions under which many African girls live, one marvels at the fact that some do enter school, that some of the original group actually "survive" to the end of primary school, and that a select number of them actually attain secondary or tertiary levels of education. Those who are successful often cite the support of family members, especially their mothers, or other role models/mentors who are usually women. For this reason, one of the few relatively promising and credible strategies for addressing girls' school participation is the encouragement of more women to become teachers. Unfortunately, this strategy is not always operationalized. For example, in a document called National Educational Policy and Implementation Strategies (1995), the government of Mozambique states among other things that it will:

> Raise the number of female teachers, recruiting them from their respective communities; and improve the living and studying conditions at the teacher training centers (MINED, 1995: 22, my translation).

The document fails to spell out how recruiting will be done, or how (and by what financial means) conditions will be improved for female teacher trainees. A later document puts the national average of woman primary teachers at 22.8 percent, and mentions that most of them are in urban centers (MINED, 1997: 21). To my knowledge the proposed recruitment has not taken place, though I know that the Ministry has adopted a policy of promoting female teachers to administrative positions in provincial and district directorates. This may have the effect of increasing female presence in some educational decision-making arenas, but tragically it removes them from their classroom positions and contact with female students.

Another generally accepted strategy involves preferential placement for girls with passing scores into the next levels of study, for example between lower and upper primary grades, or between primary and middle schools. Unfortunately, families may feel that there are even greater risks for their daughters to continue their education after the basic level, since this often means arranging for them to live with other families in larger or more central communities where schools offering the next level are located. Perhaps as school networks expand to cover more territory, this difficulty will be overcome.

As with the case above, operationalization of many so-called strategies to improve schooling for girls may call for changes, which are outside the scope of the education sector, such as changes in social behavior or improvement of infrastructure. For example, the same policy document from Mozambique suggests the following:

> Make society aware about reducing the domestic work load of girls, provide access to water and reduce the need for firewood by use of improved stoves (MINED, 1995: 21, my translation).

Once again, we must question how the Ministry of Education intends to carry out its plans: How will society be "made aware"? Who will deal with water and fuel issues? In response to these difficulties in operationalizing strategies, the next section discusses concrete ways in which bilingual programs may improve the quality of basic education for all children, as a bridge to discussing ways in which gender and language may interact with positive results for girls.

The pedagogical advantages of bilingual schooling

Bilingual schooling, while not specifically designed to address the needs of girls, offers solutions to many of the problems facing African school systems, especially in terms of providing a reasonable quality of basic education. What could arguably be considered the most overwhelming obstacle to learning is the continued use of official (ex-colonial, European, non-native) languages as media of instruction, despite the fact that few children who begin primary school speak these languages. This situation, compounded by other chronic difficulties such as low levels of teacher education and training, poorly designed, inappropriate curricula, and lack of material support to schools, makes both teaching and learning extremely difficult.

Mother tongue or bilingual programs come in various forms. The general idea is to provide at least beginning instruction and initial literacy in a language spoken by the student, i.e. the mother tongue – known as the first language or L1 – or a reasonably close[4] second language. Few programs deny the necessity for children to learn the official language in addition; however, this language – often known as an L2 – should ideally be taught as the second or foreign language that it is, beginning with oral skills and later developing L2 literacy on the basis of transference of skills learned first in the mother tongue. Most programs involve greater use of the L1 in the early years, with a transition from the L1 to the L2 as language of instruction at some point in the schooling process (see Cummins, 2001 for a review of the principles in operation). In order to achieve the ideal of bilingualism and biliteracy, students need to have continued opportunities to develop L1 skills throughout their school careers.

Bilingual programs offer a number of pedagogical advantages. First, they provide content area instruction (math, for example) in a language that children understand, so that learning does not have to be postponed until children master the L2. In traditional programs that submerge children in the L2, the L2 is the language of instruction but is not explicitly taught; teachers rarely have any strategies at their disposal other than to "talk at" students and elicit rote responses. When instruction is in the L1, teachers and students can interact more naturally and negotiate meanings together, and teachers can get a much better idea of what their students have learned.

Another pedagogical advantage of bilingual programs comes from the use of the L1 to teach beginning reading and writing, facilitating both an understanding of

[4] This concept of "closeness" is difficult to quantify, but in my dissertation based on fieldwork in Guinea-Bissau (Benson, 1994) I try to demonstrate using ethnographic, sociolinguistic, and language test data why, in the absence of L1 programs, use of the widely-spoken creole is preferable to continued submersion in Portuguese, the ex-colonial language which fewer people speak.

sound-symbol correspondence – at least in the case of phonetic languages – and the connection between spoken and written communication. In contrast, L2 submersion programs may do a reasonable job of teaching children to decode words; however, they are extremely inefficient, because it is often a matter of years before children are able to discover meaning in what they are "reading".

A further pedagogical advantage of bilingual programs is that they teach the L2 explicitly, as mentioned above. The early focus on oral communication skills in the L2 ideally allows students to learn the new language through meaningful interaction. This contrasts with submersion systems where teachers, again lacking strategies, may sometimes translate but otherwise provide few if any contextual cues as to what they are talking about. In bilingual programs, once students have basic communicative skills in the L2, they can begin reading and writing the L2, transferring the literacy skills they have learned through the mother tongue.

Additional advantages of bilingual education

Other advantages of bilingual programs are less easy to quantify or even to document, but are nonetheless worthy of consideration. Most importantly, in my opinion, use of the mother tongue promotes recognition of the value of the language, culture, and experience that the child brings with her to school. Students whose backgrounds are appreciated by the teacher and the school are likely to have higher self-esteem, which should improve their chances for success in school. In contrast, L2 submersion rejects children's linguistic and cultural values and personality, as many African scholars have noted (Moumouni, 1975; Ogbu, 1982; Ngûgî, 1987). In sum, as one Nigerian scholar has explained:

> [T]here is little doubt that the systematic but frequently ignored differences between the language and culture of the school and the language and culture of the learner's community have often resulted in educational programmes with only marginal success at teaching anything except self-depreciation (Okonkwo, 1983:377).

Bilingual education addresses self-esteem in at least two ways. First, children are allowed to express their full range of knowledge and experience in a language in which they are competent. Second, use of the mother tongue in the official context of school demonstrates that their language and culture is deemed worthy of high-status activities such as schooling.

Similarly, use of African languages in school elevates their status and usefulness in the eyes of both users and non-users, which has the potential to improve social relations and political participation as well as education. Even widely spoken, well established languages have been undervalued or, more precisely, devalued since colonial times. Indigenous languages have often been called "dialects" or "pidgins," which stigmatizes both languages and speakers as being insufficient or incomplete. Submersion programs have strengthened this position, while bilingual programs revalue African languages and cultures. In Mozambique the importance of this recuperation of value was not lost to parents; of the 105 parents and guardians of bilingual students whom we interviewed, fully half of them mentioned that *valorização* of their language was an important benefit of the bilingual experiment.

A sometimes unexpected but welcome outcome of bilingual programs is often increased parent participation in school affairs, a situation that cannot be divorced from the fact that parents are finally allowed to use the L1 to speak to the teacher. The formerly great distance between home and school, between parent and teacher, is narrowed when the parent is free to speak the language in which he is most competent. Increased rapport between parents and bilingual teachers has added pedagogical benefits, of course, in that teachers are more aware of home situations that may affect the child's school participation, and parents are more aware of ways in which they may support their child's schooling.

In sum, schooling in the L1 may offer the student benefits such as development of strong self-concept and self-confidence, communicative competence, and higher-level cognitive skills, all of which can then be applied to learning in the L2 (Dutcher, 1995; August & Hakuta, 1997). In addition, it is common to have increased parent involvement in children's schooling, and more general valorization of the local language and culture.

As I said above, changing the language of instruction does not solve all of the problems of a school system. In reality, bilingual programs are subject to as many limitations as traditional ones, especially in terms of economic and human resources. One of the most common problems is an inadequate application of bilingual education principles, i.e. adoption of what I call a "short-cut" model where children are supposed to transition to exclusive use of the L2 after only one or two years. This has the benefit of assuaging political concerns and parental fears about time lost in L2 learning, and requires fewer materials and teachers. However, it is now widely established that the greater the development of the first language, the more successful students will be in acquiring skills in the second (Cummins, 2001; Dutcher, 1995). Indeed, numerous comparative studies (especially Ramirez et al., 1991; Thomas & Collier, 1997) have established that for students to receive the maximum benefit from L1 literacy, their L1 skills should be developed for four to five years, preferably more, and ideally throughout their formal education. Meanwhile, students should receive comprehensible, interactive, communicative instruction in the L2.

Cost-benefit analysis

Critics note that there are serious costs associated with teacher education, materials development, and other inputs necessary to implement bilingual programs. However, implementation of any innovation or improvement has costs and benefits. Teacher training is sorely needed, no matter what type of education is to be implemented, and using teachers' mother tongues can make the process easier, since most speak the L2 themselves with difficulty. While teachers cannot always be expected to be literate in their own L1s, they share a set of cultural and cognitive meanings with their students that can be drawn upon in both training and practice. In addition, teachers and literate members of the local communities are excellent resources for written texts of all kinds that can be incorporated into didactic materials. There are many ethical ways to produce books economically: using techniques such as the Language Experience Approach, where students generate their own texts, developing local printing technologies such as those used by many adult literacy programs, or printing commercially with standard bilingual page-setting formats where local languages can be substituted without disturbing pictures or diagrams.

One important input to bilingual programs that can be costly is the development of languages that do not have written traditions. Linguistic and sociolinguistic studies, standardization and orthographical development, as well as determination of academic terms, are activities that make written use of local languages possible. One could argue that this is not the express task of education, and that the price of redeveloping African languages is well worth national and even international consideration in terms of linguistic human rights. In the case of many languages, much of the groundwork has already been done, whether by missionaries, neighboring governments (in the case of many cross-national languages), or well-trained local linguists and sociolinguists in more recent times.

In addition, the costs of failing to use a language that children speak and understand are incalculable. From the above descriptions, the reader may already have a picture of classroom situations in which teachers are teaching in a non-native language without explicitly teaching it, where children who do not understand this language are struggling to learn basic skills, and where all of this is done with precious few technical or economic resources. On top of this, as we have noted, the female half of the population suffers from disproportionately high rates of dropout and repetition, and low rates of enrollment and completion. As explained by specialists from an experienced NGO, "Africa's women are being disempowered and their low status reinforced by increasingly inadequate education... [with] serious long-term consequences... for social and economic development" (Oxfam, 1993:3). When we consider that failure to provide basic education to such a large segment of the population means loss of a skilled workforce and great social and economic inequities, an investment in bilingual programs seems less costly and well worthwhile, as demonstrated in one cost-benefit analysis by Chiswick et al. (1996). Whether it is put in educational, social, or economic terms, the benefits of bilingual education seem clear.

Possible connections between African girls and language

As I have done above with relation to African girls' schooling, I will (over-)generalize here regarding gender and language, for the purpose of exploring potential connections. While it may be difficult to distinguish between sex and gender as the basis for observed differences, I believe that in general we are talking less about sexual or biological differences between girls and boys than we are about social or cultural constructions (using the clarification proposed by Wodak, 1992:2). This is said in the way of a caveat, because we do not have the type of cross-cultural data needed to say gender differences are universally experienced.

Studies in Western countries have long shown that girls lead boys in their early development, especially in terms of language; Maccoby (1966) has been widely cited. Girls tend to talk, read, and count earlier in their lives than boys do, and conventional wisdom among American primary teachers holds that 5-year-old boys are less likely to be ready for academic work than 5-year-old girls. Girls tend to be more verbal than boys, whether speaking to parents or other children. As reviewed in Ellis (1994), a number of studies have shown that girls do better than boys on tests of language, especially second language; for example, a longitudinal study of 6000 English-speaking children learning French found that girls scored consistently higher in the L2 throughout the study (Burstall, 1975, in Ellis, 1994:202). Ellis also says that a number of studies

suggest that females have more positive attitudes to learning language, such as a Gardner and Lambert (1972) study in Canada finding that girls were more motivated than boys and had more positive attitudes (in Ellis, 1994:203). Maltz and Borker (1982, in Ellis, 1994:204) found that girls are more likely to stress co-operation and deal sensitively with relationships, as opposed to boys who are more hierarchical and assertive. As Ellis cautions, reasons for reported differences can only be speculated, and gender is likely to interact with other variables such as age and social class. He adds:

> It will not always be the case, therefore, that females outperform males. Asian men in Britain generally attain higher levels of proficiency in L2 English than do Asian women for the simple reason that their jobs bring them into contact with the majority English-speaking group, while women are often "enclosed" in the home (Ellis, 1994:204).

Why, then, might boys get the advantage at school, especially where school requires special language competence? One Western theory explains that boys "act out" while girls "act in." Due to the nature of the classroom situation, boys must be controlled more because they present more problems to order. For this reason, it is believed, teachers call more often on boys than on girls.

There are many other possible explanations related to teacher expectations, role models, participation structures, and others, and we have not even begun to talk about linguistic and cultural differences. Since girls' school participation is markedly lower than that of boys in so many African nations, it appears there may be some cross-cultural similarities. On the other hand, it could be that there are factors particular to the African context that give the advantage to boys, such as the fact that in many countries primary teachers are men, and there is often a belief that girls are less academically capable than boys.

In fact, statements made by Mozambican school personnel appear to confirm many of these observations. When asked how the education of girls might be different from that of boys, many of them specifically mentioned differences in behavior. The following are two illustrative comments:

> *Female teacher, Gaza:*
>
> "The boys are more active. The girls are more shy. One girl stayed at home for two months!"
>
> *Female teacher, Tete:*
>
> "Most of the female students show a tendency to be dominated. This causes failure at school and gives support to the boys where they don't deserve to be supported." [5]
>
> *(Benson, 1997, my translations)*

What we do know about the relationship between gender and language is limited, but there does seem to be a connection. First, there is the generalization that in many cultures girls tend to do better on academic measures of language. My own data from Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique confirm this difference in performance, no matter what the form of education. For example, on our pilot test of Portuguese,

[5] The latter statement could be translated in various ways, but the general idea is that boys are listened to or are put in a better position because of girls' reticence, not because boys especially deserve that position.

given to 55 students in a Changana-speaking suburb of Maputo, girls out-performed boys by an average of 12 percentage points; such a difference was not found on the mathematics or science tests (Benson, 1997). Similarly, in identifying students who had the "best" or "worst" Portuguese language skills for our more intensive individual testing, bilingual teachers mentioned more girls with positive achievement and fewer girls with negative achievement than did teachers of traditional classes (see Table 3 below).

Table 3. Number of female students identified as "good" or "bad" in Portuguese

How girls were identified:	Positively		Negatively	
	# students	% age	# students	% age
By bilingual teachers	19/39	49	11/32	34
By "control" teachers	8/17	47	9/16	56

Another generalization to explore about gender and language comes from anthropological or sociolinguistic data on multilingual societies and, stated simply, posits that women tend to be the conservators of the mother tongue. Investigators standardizing dialects or testing literacy materials commonly test both spoken and written word on middle-aged rural women to assure its accuracy, appropriateness, and/or acceptability. Of course, this varies depending on people's economic or other activities both inside and outside the home, which influences their types of social networks and the language repertoires they develop. A more recent sociolinguistic concept, the "community of practice," describes a group of people who are engaged in some common endeavor and share ways of talking and thinking about it (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992). In the traditional life of rural Africa, a common pattern is for the man to work outside the home, meeting others and gaining access to the languages needed for outside communication, while the woman works primarily at home and communicates mainly with family members and neighbors, mostly female, who share the same activities and the same local language.

In this way, women may spend more time in homogeneous language contexts, so that even if they have learned some of the L2 in school, this knowledge is not useful and the language is not practiced. The low rates for women's literacy listed in Table 1 above may include those who have lost literacy skills through disuse. Women who are exceptions to this rule are those who continue their educations and hold positions which require L2 use, and to a lesser extent women who generate income through entrepreneurial activities such as selling fish at the market, where they have contact with a variety of customers; however, in this latter situation L2 skills would tend to be superficial (counting, responding to requests) rather than deep (self-expression, cognitive development).

In the language data I collected in Guinea-Bissau on bilingual students' parents or guardians, women were overwhelmingly monolingual or bilingual in two Guinean languages, while most men reported being bilingual in the mother tongue and the creole, and many of the latter also claimed to know some Portuguese. Even if we accept that self-reporting of language skills is likely to be gender influenced, it is apparent that men have more access to the ex-colonial, higher-prestige language (Benson, 1994).

Possible effects of bilingual education on girls' participation

As will by now be apparent, a change of the school language from the L2 to the mother tongue cannot in itself resolve deep-rooted educational development problems. However, I would like to examine the possibilities. In this section, I will hypothesize about how bilingual education programs might positively impact girls, explaining why this is possible. For each hypothesis, I will discuss any data I have that could confirm (or disconfirm) what is suggested.

Hypothesis 1:
More girls may come to school in the first place if it has a bilingual program.

We know that teachers in bilingual programs talk to their students in the L1, and it is logical that they also feel freer to speak to their students' parents in their language. This increases parents' access to information about their children and about the school overall. Increased communication means increased parent participation in school activities and decision-making, so that schools respond better to what the community wants. This could mean that the curriculum better meets local needs, and that parents see the need for their daughters to attend school. Better communication could mean that parents trust the teacher not to take advantage of their daughters sexually or otherwise.

To adequately assess this hypothesis we would need gender-specific enrollment data from both bilingual and "control" classrooms in the same communities and over time, so that a possible effect of bilingual programs could be detected. It would also be useful to have parent interview data requesting reasons for enrolling their children in school, how they feel about bilingual programs, what they do to support their children's schooling, and so on.

Because most of my experience is with experimental programs, it is difficult to confirm or disprove the hypothesis that more girls might attend bilingual schools from the beginning. The bilingual experiment in Mozambique ran for only five years with one cohort of students, and parental confidence was only detected through interviews at the end. The bilingual experiment in Guinea-Bissau lasted through eight years and six cohorts of students, but unfortunately I do not have enrollment statistics by gender. In Niger, bilingual programs have been in the "experimental" stage for 20 years, but general deterioration of educational services and competition from French and Moslem schools would confound any data on changes or differences in enrollment.

What has been found in all three countries is high (virtually 100 percent) parental support of bilingual programs. In the case of Mozambique, of the 105 parents and guardians interviewed, only one expressed doubts about use of the mother tongue in school, and she had only recently become the guardian of an experimental student and was completely unaware of what bilingual education entailed. According to reports from school directors, the experiment created a demand for post-experimental bilingual schooling, as families were reported to have taken in children from relatives or friends in anticipation of their being able to attend bilingual classrooms (Benson, 2000). When bilingual programs re-start in those areas, comparative enrollment should be monitored to determine whether girls' initial enrollment may be higher for bilingual programs.

In addition, interview results indicated strong confidence in the bilingual teachers. In responding to the question, "Do you know your child's teacher? If so, what do you think of his/her proficiency in your mother tongue?" 96 of the 105 respondents (or

91 percent) answered that they knew the teacher well and found him/her to be a good speaker of the language. In addition, 100 percent hoped that their children would go on to Class 6. Though we do not have comparable data from parents of students in non-bilingual classes, I would predict that they would also want their children to go on to Class 6, but that many less would actually know their children's teachers, and few would be in a position to assess the language skills of those teachers.

Hypothesis 2:
Girls might stay in school longer if they have bilingual classes.

Bilingual programs that begin schooling in the mother tongue should make the home-school transition easier and improve home-school communication and support as mentioned above. Since girls are more closely associated with home tasks, they may have less contact than boys do with outside languages, and they may feel more comfortable speaking the L1. This may help them to enjoy school as well as learn better. If girls can communicate better with the teacher, they can demonstrate both what they know and what they have learned, so that teachers can make more realistic assessments of student knowledge. Both teachers and girls may see that girls are more capable than they originally thought. Higher teacher expectations may raise girls' performance and self-confidence, and thus their happiness relative to school.

To judge this hypothesis, we would need comparative enrollment data based on gender and covering at least an entire primary schooling cycle per cohort. We would check for differences in dropout rates of girls for each year of schooling. We would also hope to see differences in teacher behavior toward girls in the classroom, which might be possible if teachers in both bilingual and traditional classrooms are observed in a systematic way.

For the Mozambique study, I did analyze student data from Tete – the more disadvantaged of the two provinces where the bilingual experiment took place – by looking at student lists from grades 1 through 4 and using names to distinguish their sex. By my count, bilingual girls in grade 1 numbered 49 of 129 students, or 38 percent of the bilingual cohort. By grade 4, girls numbered 23 of 52, or 44 percent of the students remaining. The percentage of female bilingual students who remained in school through Class 4 was 11 percent higher than for bilingual boys, and 39 percent higher than the national average for girls (Benson, 1997). This could indicate that girls gained more benefit from the use of the mother tongue.

Observations in Mozambique did find dramatically greater levels of classroom participation on the part of bilingual students than their colleagues in "control" classrooms, and warmer, more familial relations with their teachers. In light of traditional teacher behavior toward girls, which would by most standards be considered less than encouraging, improved interaction might indeed provide some of the motivation girls need to stay in school (Benson, 2000). Though we were not observing with any gender-based differences in mind, our impression was that female teachers tended to call on girls more often than male teachers did. Otherwise, we know that bilingual teachers were not given any orientation toward girls' schooling, so their expectations of girls were presumably no different than traditional expectations, at least at the beginning.

Hypothesis 3:
Girls might have higher passing rates in bilingual programs.

In Mozambique, repetition rates are extremely high for all students, and girls are kept back more often than boys (see Table 1 above). We did collect passing rate data for the bilingual students, but did not have access to the same data for students in the "control" classes. In an attempt to get a rough estimate of the difference, I looked at Class 4 children's ages in bilingual and non-bilingual classrooms in the same schools (Benson, 1997). The results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Bilingual and "control" student ages at grade 4

Group	Number of students	Age in years		Difference in years
		Girls	Boys	
Bilingual	169	10.5	11.0	Girls – 0.5
"Control"	173	12.2	11.9	Girls + 0.3

Knowing that both bilingual and traditional students began school at or near age 7, we can see some interesting differences between bilingual and "control" students. First, it is clear that bilingual students are younger than those in the comparison group; this is because the experiment did not make provisions for repeaters, while those in the grade 4 comparison group had repeated grades an average of 1.3 years. More interestingly, we see that "control" girls are older than their male peers, suggesting two possibilities: that more girls than boys have repeated grades, or that girls have repeated grades more often than boys. Finally, bilingual girls are younger than bilingual boys, which might suggest that they were perceived ready to enter school at a slightly earlier age than their male peers.

We can only speculate on reasons bilingual girls pass more often, but we know that the use of the L1 means that teachers can more accurately access individual children's understanding of school material. Instead of assuming girls are incapable, the teacher is provided with actual evidence to the contrary. Another possibility is that bilingual teachers expect different levels of performance from students than do L2 submersion teachers; however, bilingual teachers are normally recruited from a pool of teachers with years of experience in submersion systems, and they probably have more or less the same passing standards as their colleagues. Finally, it is possible that use of the L1 actually helps girls to perform better in school, as we explore next.

Hypothesis 4: Girls might be more academically successful in bilingual programs.

On measures of Portuguese language, bilingual girls out-performed their male peers but were out-performed by girls from the "control" group (Benson, 1997). More research would therefore be needed to establish a specific link between bilingual education and female school success.

We detected an interesting phenomenon in the test data from the province of Tete in Mozambique, where the experimental schools were in more rural and disadvantaged areas. Of the two provinces, Tete appeared to gain more benefit from bilingual education in terms of test performance, where by the end of grade 5 bilingual students out-performed or had comparable scores with even a cohort of grade 5 "control" students which had the advantage in being older, attending more years of

school, and having more years of exposure to the L2. Table 5 lists the differences (in percentage points) in average scores of bilingual and "control" students, and demonstrates the comparatively better performance of bilingual girls, both overall and in many subject areas.

Table 5: Differences in Class 5 bilingual and "control" student test scores in Tete

	Difference in percentage points on test averages:		
Subject	Overall average	Girls	Boys
Average all tests	3.6	6.8	1.6
Portuguese (L2)	1.0	- 0.5	2.6
Mathematics	6.3	4.7	6.9
Natural Science	11.5	21.4	5.2
History	- 0.6	4.1	- 3.5
Geography	- 3.1	0.7	- 4.9

Note: Darkened cells indicate where bilingual students had an average higher than "control" students; the darkest cells indicate where bilingual girls had the highest average.

Though we are not yet able to explain bilingual boys' higher scores in the most basic subject areas, Portuguese and mathematics, it is clear that bilingual girls in Tete had the best test performance overall and in subject areas requiring a great deal of language (L2) both to understand and to demonstrate understanding.

Conclusions and recommendations

From these less-than-definitive data, it is at least apparent that bilingual education programs and gender-related factors may interact in some interesting and important ways. Use of the mother tongue in primary schooling already has some powerful justifications, but if it could also be shown to help girls stay in school, arguments for implementation could be made even more convincingly. Likewise, attracting girls to attend school and involving their parents in school affairs are other potential "side effects" of bilingual programs in the positive sense that should not be ignored.

Limitations of the data discussed here lead me to suggest that researchers consider the gender factor while developing and implementing evaluative instruments in bilingual or other innovative programs in African educational systems. It would not be so difficult to include gender-sensitive information in the usual instruments; for example, for classroom observations the change could be as simple as substituting S for student with G for girl or B for boy. Another relatively simple change would be adding a question or two to a survey or interview protocol regarding girls' education, and by this I mean not only opinion-type questions but also actual practices, for example: How many school-aged girls and boys are under your care, and which of them are in school? Why? In my experience, simply asking a question related specifically to girls may raise awareness, or in the very least show that others care about this issue.

A final non-intrusive strategy for including gender in the discussion of bilingual or other education programs is to present statistical data carefully and differentiate

between males and females where salient. Even noting where there seems to be no gender-related difference may be revealing, in the case of an urban program, for example. Whether or not we have handy explanations for all of the differences, the fact that they exist (or do not) seems significant, and may lead to further research that delves more fully into gender as a factor.

Some evaluation teams might be well advised to make more comprehensive changes in their work to explore issues of gender. For example, longitudinal studies as opposed to year-end evaluations should provide more information about the process of educating girls. It would be ideal to have gender-specific data, both statistical and ethnographic, on enrollment, participation, classroom interaction, parent support, and dropout or retention throughout the life of a bilingual program and, where possible, gather comparative data from non-bilingual classrooms.

Finally, I believe we need to pay more attention to qualitative data if we are going to determine how to improve schooling for girls. Since we know that social and cultural attitudes and practices have a lot to do with individual decision-making, and that language may play a significant role in the process, we can look for more systematic ways to gather descriptive information. Research should explore gender- and language-related attitudes and practices on the part of parents, teachers, and girls themselves. We need to explore girls' participation structures at home and in school, their similarities and differences, and how to bring schooling closer to meeting girls' linguistic, cultural, and social needs. An exploration of girls' satisfaction with their lives, problems, family relations, school, classmate relations, goals in life, and goals in schooling would give a voice to those girls of Sub-Saharan Africa who up until now have remained relatively anonymous. Speaking both literally and figuratively, bilingual education may be the means for giving girls a voice.

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Decentralisation and Development: The Effects of the Devolution of Power on Education in India

By Sten Widmalm, Department of Government, Uppsala University

During the 1990s, decentralisation[1] has been prescribed by bilateral donors and major economic players as a general solution to development problems. It is presumed that the more a state decentralises its powers, the closer the channels of influence come to the people.[2] This would also give a higher level of legitimacy to public policies, and improve the chances of making the political elite directly accountable to the people. In short, decentralisation is expected to enhance "the efficacy, quality and legitimacy of democracy".[3] Today, however, policy makers recognise that what determines the outcome of decentralisation is a more complicated issue.[4] Or as one observer puts it, decentralisation can in one context lead to improved democratic performance, while in another it can lead to anything from a decline in economic growth to "ethnic strife and civil war".[5] Clearly, if the public administration is plagued by corruption, policies and reforms will fail.[6] Against this background the *panchayat* reforms initiated in India in the 1980s and 1990s, which may turn out to be one of the world's largest decentralisation schemes, naturally attract attention.

The Asoka Metha committee report presented in 1977 recommended that *Panchayati raj* institutions in India, which had been undermined in the 1960s and 1970s, should become an "organic, integral part of [the] democratic process."[7] Later, a number of constitutional amendments, most of them passed in 1992, established a uniform three-tier system below state level safeguarding, at least constitutionally, the devolution of power.[8] Today, however, it is hard to judge what improvements have followed from this process in India in general.[9] As in many other developing coun-

[1] Decentralisation as a concept undoubtedly leaves room for several different views about how administrative structures should be shaped to provide increased democratic and also economic performance. For the purpose of this study we begin by regarding decentralisation as a form of devolution, or the transfer of resources and decision-making powers to local bodies in the administrative apparatus. Later, however, we will need to give some more precise definitions.

[2] This seems to have been the case in West Bengal when land reforms (Operation Barga) were implemented in the 1980s. See Bhattacharyya 1994.

[3] Diamond 1999: 120.

[4] See for example "3.35 Is Decentralisation Pro-Poor?" in The draft World Development Report 2000/1.

[5] Yusuf 1999.

[6] This was to some extent the case in Jammu and Kashmir where the misuse of the devolution of power in combination with widespread corruption triggered the violence that spread in the 1990s and which has since then threatened peace between India and Pakistan on several occasions. See Widmalm 1997. Manor and Crook (1998) point out the challenges in carrying out decentralisation reforms in the third world context. In the industrialised world, too, decentralisation reforms have proved to produce unforeseen outcomes in the shape of corruption. See for example Segal 1997 who describes how decentralisation of schools in New York has contributed greatly to an increase in corruption.

[7] For more information on the reforms see Mathew 1995; Verma 1972; Singh 1990; Inbanathan 1994.

[8] The best known is perhaps the rule guaranteeing women one-third representation in the *Panchayati Raj* Institutions.

[9] For an evaluation of the negative effects of the *panchayat* reforms see for example Lieten, 1996. For an evaluation of the positive effects see for example Mathew and Nayak 1996.

tries, empirical research on decentralisation, and above all systematic research, is to a great extent lacking. There are, however, important and relatively successful cases that deserve attention. They may provide indications of what is needed to make local democratic units efficient and more self-sustaining, and they may also tell us something about the type of policy recommendation that may be suitable in more general as well as specific contexts.

Against this background, this article will examine some factors that may determine the different outcomes of decentralisation and, in particular, factors that are important when reforms manage to improve democratic and governance performance in spite of a hostile or harsh institutional environment. The specific case to be studied is how the *panchayat* reforms have affected one of the biggest problems of public schools in India – personnel absenteeism, often caused by the fact that publicly employed personnel are neglecting their duties to work for private institutions. This study is part of a project that attempts to search for mechanisms that may have played a crucial role in making education and health services more effective following the giving of more power to local democratic governing bodies in the decentralisation schemes, and the first findings from a pilot study carried out in the Indian state Madhya Pradesh in the autumn of 2000 will be presented.[10]

Governance, corruption and decentralisation

One main problem impairing the quality of governance in the developing world – as well as in the industrialised world – is the various forms of corruption. Corruption creates distrust in the public sector and hinders economic growth. And at the most basic level of state structure, corruption impedes education and health programmes – two of the pillars of development. We should therefore listen with great interest if, as is claimed in India, schools in some areas have begun to operate more efficiently as a consequence of decentralisation reforms.[11] Is it really decentralisation that has led to the improved performance of educational institutions or is the correlation spurious? This is no easy question to answer, but factors related to corruption play a crucial role here. Therefore, we should look to the field of theory on the subject to identify the questions on which the study may be expected to shed light.

One of the biggest problems of schools and also health institutions in India is undoubtedly personnel absenteeism.[12] Before we proceed to discuss corruption we may ask whether staying away from work to earn extra income should be considered a case of corruption? More commonly we associate corruption with bribery. Bribery is certainly by definition a form of corruption, but corruption comes in many forms. Absenteeism among publicly employed teachers and health workers – caused by the fact that they are selling their services to private institutions while they are being paid

[10] The study will continue on a larger scale, with comparisons with other states in India. The project was initiated with the support of a scholarship provided by the Faculty of the Social Sciences at Uppsala University. From January 2000 the project is being funded by Sida/SAREC in Sweden. I am very grateful for this support. Furthermore, in India, I am greatly indebted to George Mathew and the Institute of Social Sciences for supporting this project. Also, great thanks to Prodipto Roy and Bikram Singh in New Delhi, *Debate* in Bhopal, and R. Gopalakrishnan and Amita Sharma, Government of Madhya Pradesh. In Sweden I have received important help from Jan Teorell, Anders Westholm, Ashok Swain and Hans Blomkvist at Uppsala University, Olof Petersson at SNS, and Frida Widmalm at the Ministry of Finance.

[11] See for example Mathew and Nayak 1996.

[12] See Sainath, 1997. Nornvall 1999 provides a good illustration of teacher and health worker absenteeism in India.

for working in public ones – can, according to some of the most commonly accepted definitions, be regarded as corruption. Classical definitions usually refer to the "abuse of office for private benefit".[13] In a general sense we can argue that this is what teachers or health workers employed by the state do, if they are absent from their posts because they are working in the private sector.

However, most economic theories today use the principal-agent framework to analyse corruption.[14] Their views are equally useful since the principal-agent "approach defines corruption in terms of the divergence between the principal's or the public's interests and those of the agent or civil servant: corruption occurs when an agent betrays the principal's interest in pursuit of her own."[15] Such a "betrayal" can easily be argued to exist in cases where publicly employed teachers and health workers are simultaneously working for private institutions.[16] The proposed operationalisation of corruption – absenteeism by publicly employed teachers as a consequence of selling services to the private sector – therefore falls within more widely accepted definitions of corruption.[17] The field of research on corruption, as well as the decentralisation debate, is then relevant as a source of plausible hypotheses to be tested in the study.

Decentralisation/corruption hypotheses

Robert Wade, who has contributed greatly to the field of research on corruption, in particular with reference to India, claims that the major impediment to development in India is "the corruption-transfer mechanism and its effects on bureaucratic initiatives."[18] In his study of an irrigation department in South India, Wade describes why transfers of bureaucrats are so plagued by corruption, mainly in the form of bribes.

> Officials have a preference ranking of posts. Some of the preferences are idiosyncratic (such as nearness to place of origin). But many of the preferences are shared. Everyone prefers a post in a town with good schools, hospitals, clean drinking water, transport facilities, to one in a remote backward area (other things being equal). Everyone, we will assume, prefers a post where large amounts of illicit revenue can be raised over one where the opportunities are limited.[19]

Wade describes what is also known as one of the core features in how rent-seeking behaviour is stimulated. When there is "a big excess of demand" for posts controlling resources monopolised by the state, we can expect problems with rent-seeking and corruption – especially in the Indian case that Wade describes, where the Transfer Sanctioning Authority (TSA) is unmonitored. Those who are interested in getting a good transfer have to be very efficient in collecting bribes. Looking at teacher absentee-

[13] Johnston 1996; Tanzi 1998.

[14] Goudie and Stasavage 1998: 117: Rose-Ackerman 1999.

[15] Klitgaard, R.E. 1988. Controlling Corruption. Berkeley: University of California Press. p.24, quoted in Johnston 1996. An agent-principal perspective on corruption is also used by Shahid 1989.

[16] We find a close link with relation this discussion in Shleifer and Vishny 1993.

[17] Absenteeism can naturally have other causes (such as lack of transport) but would then fall outside the corruption category in this study. Consequently we can say that the case studies concern illegal absenteeism.

[18] Wade used corruption at the irrigation department in a South Indian state as an example in his classic study presented in the mid 1980s. See Wade 1984; 1985a; 1985b.

[19] Wade 1985a.

ism, a good area to be transferred to would mean a place with good opportunities to make extra money as a private teacher (usually at the expense of public teaching duties).

It is possible to imagine that decentralisation schemes could be effective in combating problems related to the corruption-transfer mechanism. For example, if teachers were recruited for jobs in the area where they live, that could remove some of the opportunities for bribery that bidding for transfers implies. However, those who support decentralisation to improve the education system do not necessarily do so because they want to find a way around a dysfunctional transfer authority. A commonly advanced argument concerns the effects of bringing teachers, decision makers, and users of the schools closer together to create a stronger sense of commitment. Accountability and commitment of teachers and decision makers are assumed to be proportional to the distance between teachers and decision makers, on the one hand, and people, the general public, on the other. Distance, however, may not only be measured in physical terms. It may be better described from a subjective perspective.

If a representative of the public administration is available and contacted by a member of the public, and the representative agrees to meet the person to discuss some question within a week after the request was made, we could say that this representative is very close to the people. If, on the other hand, an elected politician will not reply to written questions or is never visible in the community, that representative can be considered to be very distant from the people. In short, a representative that is visible, available to his electorate, and responds to inquiries is close to his people. A representative who is not seen, to whom people cannot gain access, and who does not reply to queries is distant.

Moreover, the role of *panchayat* reforms in India brings another dimension to the concept of devolution. In the international debate, devolution is most often seen as the transfer of resources and power from a higher to a lower level of the administrative apparatus. However, the *panchayat* reform also includes the transfer of power to another legal entity. This includes the right to appoint teachers that was previously the sole prerogative of the public sector (which contains only appointed personnel) and is now, to some extent, carried out by the *panchayats* (which are elected bodies).

Nonetheless, decentralisation is not the only remedy against corruption, so we need to consider alternatives.[20] Some of them are sometimes assigned to the decentralisation category while, in fact, they do not have to presuppose decentralisation at all. We have to consider alternative, potentially corruption-reducing, factors that could accompany or be included in a decentralisation reform, but could work just as well on their own. The role of salary levels is one factor of this kind.

"Inadequate wage levels" is possibly the most frequently advanced explanation for corruption. Tanzi, in a summary of the arguments and empirical research in this debate, explains that corruption can be seen as motivated by pure greed as well as by the need for a minimum standard of living.[21] Consequently "[t]he higher the wage level, the lower is corruption." The question for this project is whether levels of wages have been raised above the thresholds described by Tanzi.

[20] Gary Becker works very hard to promote the idea that the simplest way to do away with corruption is to get rid of government (See for example Becker 1994). A free market, however, does not produce schools or hospitals for the poor so we have little use for Becker's suggestions. In this project we are however interested in how public institutions can compete with other markets.

[21] Tanzi 1998.

Efficiency wages theories, however, claim that raising salaries is not the only solution for dealing with officials unhappy with their paychecks. An alternative is found in various ways of monitoring, as argued by, for example, Akerlof and Yellen.[22] This argument takes us deeper into an institutionalist way of thinking.[23] When wages are not sufficient incentives we expect that rules, in combination with auditing systems and eventual punishment, will control the behaviour of officials.

It would seem that this might offer sufficient behavioural hypotheses, but we also find arguments that fall outside the more simplified "carrot" and "stick" categories. The level of corruption may be determined by how we think, and in a way that owes more to culture than to clear-cut legal and monetary incentives. One important line of thinking is that corruption is endemic in less developed countries, since the culture in question does not uphold a clear distinction between the public and the private sphere. In the words of Rose-Ackerman:

> [T]he distinctions between prices, bribes, gifts, and tips are difficult both to draw and to evaluate normatively. In developing countries the problem is much more vexing. The line between market and family and between the public and the private sectors is often blurred and in flux.[24]

But Rose-Ackerman admits that empirical research from less developed countries indicates that the line between public and private is not necessarily so unclear. However, if the problem is at least to some extent that citizens and bureaucrats are not clear about the distinction between public and private, we could expect to solve part of the problem by making principals, agents, and clients aware of it. Educating citizens in some kind of "awareness programme" would then be the remedy.[25]

Somewhat related to the "culture" variable is the factor of "collective pressure". If there is awareness of corruption, we may expect communities with a vital civil society to create pressure on local bureaucrats to perform less corruptly. But the capacity to act is related to the level of social capital. As Nornvall points out in his study of teacher absenteeism in Uttar Pradesh, India, the lack of social capital is one clue to the failure of education. Therefore this study also should consider the role of civil society and levels of social capital in the areas to be investigated.

To conclude, we have five hypotheses concerning variables that may to some extent explain the success or failure of education programmes implemented as part of decentralisation schemes in India.[29]

- *Decentralisation*: giving power to lower levels of the bureaucracy and other legal entities can circumvent dysfunctional parts of the public administration. Also, remoteness of governing institutions will allow corruption. In a successful decentralisation reform the distance between decision maker and citizens has not only

[22] Akerlof and Yellen 1990.

[23] For a study that strongly emphasises the usefulness of institutionalist perspectives in the studies relating to corruption, see Blomkvist 1984.

[24] Rose-Ackerman 1998:104.

[25] Fombad 1999,

[26] Rose-Ackerman 1999: 162.

[27] Sainath 1997 illustrates this well.

[28] Nornvall 1999.

[29] The categories to some extent overlap and are not mutually exclusive. The purpose they should serve is mainly to introduce the broad working hypotheses that are used in questionnaires and interviews.

decreased but also changed character, giving citizens more power over their community.

- *Monitoring/Punishment (stick)*[30]: the absence of monitoring and auditing systems will allow corruption. In successful cases we can expect that reforms have been carried out together with improvements in the implementation of the law and in the installation of systems for inspection and auditing.
- *Culture*[31]: ignorance of the distinction between the public and private sector will allow corruption. In successful cases we can expect implementation of reforms to have been accompanied by campaigns educating citizens and bureaucrats about corruption and the distinction between private and public.
- *Civil society and social capital*[32]: the absence of organisations and ties between individuals and groups in society will allow corruption. In successful cases we can expect reforms to have been carried out in areas with a strong civil society and sturdy ties between individuals and groups in society.
- *Salaries (carrot)*[33]: low salary levels will allow corruption. In successful cases of devolution of power to the *panchayat* level, we may expect that salaries have increased significantly for teachers and health workers.

Studying decentralisation and the education guarantee scheme in Madhya Pradesh

The current *panchayat* reforms in India follow from the 1992 Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, which provides for regular elections at district, block and village level, and new possibilities of self-governance. In the case of Madhya Pradesh, the corresponding levels in the three-tier system are called the *Zilla panchayat*, the *Janpad panchayat*, and the *Gram panchayat*. However, as noted by several observers studying these reforms, the *panchayat raj* reforms cannot in themselves be the engine for change. The *panchayat raj* should rather be considered as an "enabling framework" that allows for real decentralisation reforms.[34] Two examples may be instructive.

Amendment 73 clearly says how regular *panchayat* elections should be held and how certain groups – such as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women – should have certain quotas for seats in the local decision- making bodies. However, although Amendment 73 certainly opens up the possibility of carrying out extensive decentralisation reforms, it does not require the states to do so in an effective way. Since it is not clearly stated to what extent the *panchayats* should be economically independent, the state government has the main responsibility for providing the *panchayat* with resources and/or deciding what revenues the *panchayats* may be allowed to collect for themselves.

Consequently, Bihar – a state that for a long time has been led by the most corrupt state governments in India – has provided no real opportunities for local

[30] See Rose-Ackerman 1999:78.

[31] See Goudie and Stasavage 1998: 131-133; Rose-Ackerman 1999:104–110.

[32] See Rose-Ackerman 1999: 162; Nornvall 1999. A far more refined view of ties has developed by Granovetter (1973).

[33] See Lindbeck 1998 (quoted in Tanzi 1998.); Rose-Ackerman 1999; Tanzi 1998.

[34] For example, Mathew 2000.

autonomy, and the effects of decentralisation are negligible. In Madhya Pradesh, another state that, like Bihar, is considered to be quite poor, the reverse is true. This state currently has a political leader, Chief Minister Digvijay Singh, who can be described as "development-oriented" and who has shown an impressive will to implement many large-scale reforms. Several of them are geared towards decentralisation. We will look more closely at one such scheme that uses the *panchayat* reforms and the *panchayat* structure for government to improve education – namely the Education Guarantee Scheme.

The education guarantee scheme and the case study

The Education Guarantee Scheme was initiated in Madhya Pradesh in 1997, three years after a "working *panchayat raj*" system had come into existence in the state.[35] Taking its cue from Amendment 73 and the *panchayat* system, the reform includes what it calls a "demand-driven" programme.[36] The programme allows parents to make demands for locally based primary education to the *Gram panchayat* – also, the *Gram panchayat* can formulate such demands for education facilities on its own. The *Gram panchayat* leader then presents the demand to an EGS committee established at district level with the *Zilla panchayat*.[37] If the demand for primary schooling comes from an area with at least forty children, where there is no educational facility within one kilometre, the scheme says that the EGS has to provide for the appointment of a teacher and supply basic infrastructure for teaching within three months. Most important, the recruitment of the teacher – or the *Guruji* – should be made from within the *Gram panchayat* that made the demand, and, "as far as possible preference should be given to women."[38]

Although it is difficult to give exact and reliable numbers, it can be said that the scheme is currently being implemented on a large scale in Madhya Pradesh. By 1999, 21,000 new schools had been established, and now the programme is reaching even the most remote areas of the state.[39] Also, the state government has created an elaborate evaluation system for the programme, through which regular surveys of the performance of EGS schools are conducted. If the census of 2001 in India shows a significant rise in literacy levels, it can be attributed to the EGS. All available evidence shows that this education reform is unparalleled in the "BIMARU states" to which Madhya Pradesh has long been considered to belong.[40]

In order to investigate the effects of decentralisation on this programme, we should compare high- and low-performing cases in the programme and also compare these with how the old public school system performed. At this stage, a pilot study has been carried out with one high- and one low-performing area in the EGS scheme.

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[35] See "From Your School to Our School" 2000:17. It can be added that the state constitutions that adopted the seventy-third amendment was the Madhya Pradesh *Panchayati Raj Adhiniyan* (1993) which came into effect on 25 January 1994.

[36] Ibid. Also, interview with Gopalakrishnan, 22 September, 2000. Amita Sharma, 21 September, 2001.

[37] The EGS committee consists of the *Zilla Parishad* President, the Collector and the head of the Education Department. See "From Our School to Your School 2000:5. Also, other members can be included in the EGS committee.

[38] In sparsely populated or tribal areas, twenty-five children are enough. See "From Your School to Our School" 2000:4,7. The person that can be recruited has to have passed the higher secondary examination, or if no one in the area has such qualifications "the qualification can be lowered to Tenth pass."

[39] See for example Filkins, Dexter. "Ending Century of Illiteracy" in Los Angeles Times, 7 December 1999.

[40] The BIMARU states are Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh, which are known for their low performance on education and health. The word resembles the Hindi word *bimar* which means "sick".

The aim has been to explore factors that can be crucial in making decentralisation work, and to find out what type of research approaches and questionnaires are the most effective in relation to this topic.

The Rajgarh district, scoring low on development indicators, was selected; the Human Development Score for this district was 0.458 in 1998 which places it number 33 if we look at state ranking.[41] Only 12 districts out of a total of 45 ranked lower in one of India's least developed states.

Within this district, one block – Biaora – was selected where reliable key informants on performance could be used. Although the state officials were helpful in providing information on performance of the EGS scheme, it was decided to use local key informants to evaluate what areas were affected by absenteeism in the scheme. Three *panchayats* in one area were known to have problems with teacher absenteeism in the scheme. It was decided to make them one unit of analysis and compare it with a nearby group of three *panchayats* with high performance (i.e. with low levels of teacher absenteeism). The two areas are similar in many respects:

- they are rural areas with 90 percent of the population making their living as farmers;
- apart from a small tribal population almost all the people in the area are Hindus;
- it is a caste-based and patrilineal society where family life is governed by the rules of endogamy and patrilocal residence.

Information was collected at three different levels. In-depth interviews were carried out with public servants working with the EGS at various levels in the state administrative system. A small elite survey (N=36) was carried out, mainly involving teachers and *panchayat* members in the two areas. And, finally, a random sample (N=285, 136 persons and 149 persons in the high- and low-performance areas respectively) was drawn from the two regions with their total population of about 5,000.

Preliminary results of the Madhya Pradesh study

Decentralisation, monitoring and salaries

Interviews with R.Gopalakrishnan, EGS Mission Coordinator and the Missions Secretary to the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, and Amita Sharma, EGS Mission Director, bring forward important information regarding three of our hypotheses. The reason why the EGS has been successful so far is that it places the responsibility for recruitment at the local level. Using the *Gram panchayats* to channel demands, recruiting teachers in the villages for training as *Gurujis*, and using the local decision-making bodies to help in determining who should become the *Guruji*, are the reasons why the EGS is working. Decentralisation provides strong attachments between teacher and community, and it also provides an effective system for monitoring. A teacher who lives where he/she teaches cannot be absent from work without reason and without being subjected to pressure from the citizens.

The salary factor is not as crucial as one may have expected. In the "old" system, or the system that until now has been the main provider of public education, teachers

[41] See "The Madhya Pradesh Human Development Report" 1998:156. The rank for Rajgarh is about the same as for Nigeria in 1999. See http://www.undp.org/hdro/Backmatter1.pdf (date: 19 March 2001). The HDI investigated by the UNDP gave India a 0.545 score in 1999

are paid about Rs. 7,000 (about USD 200) per month. However, they are then expected to carry out a number of other qualified tasks for the state government, such as election and census duty. Although this is a relatively high salary, in many places it is still not enough to ensure that teachers go to their workplace. The *Gurujis* on the other hand are paid only about Rs. 1,000 per month but seem to have a generally high attendance at work, at least so far.[42] However, some *Gurujis* that were interviewed complained that it was difficult to manage on this salary, only about Rs. 150 above the mean income for the areas surveyed.[43] But it seems that in a short-term perspective, decreasing the distance between those who appoint and those who are appointed – and the monitoring effects that naturally follow from this – may be sufficient to counter the absenteeism problem.

Another effect of the EGS, not explicitly mentioned by the interviewees but probably equally important in a more general discussion of the corruption problem, is that the EGS structure circumvents old and entrenched corruption transfer mechanisms similar to that described by Wade. The new system may of course become plagued with corruption as well, but one great incentive for bribery is removed – namely paying a price for an attractive transfer. Some of the circumstances that may lead to large-scale corruption seem to have been removed.

What is the role of "distance" from a citizens' perspective, and what are the opinions of teachers and *panchayat* leaders at local level regarding the various ways of combating absenteeism? Do they agree with those that implement policies at state level?

In the high-performing area, a clear majority of the people considered the standard of the school system improved or significantly improved lately – a total of about 62 percent. In the low-performing area, the corresponding number was 53 percent. Whatever the level of performance was before, the EGS seems to have brought changes that were positive in the eyes of the public, even in the most challenged areas. However, although most people felt that politicians at national and state level were quite distant, there was an undramatic, but clear, tendency for politicians from *Gram* to *Zilla panchayat* level to be perceived as closer to the public in the high-performing than in the low-performing area.[44] Also, to a similar extent, the local teacher was considered closer to the public in the high-performing than in the low-performing area.

The order of causality is not obvious. People in an area where reforms have been effectively implemented may naturally feel that they are close to their political leaders. But could it be that a smaller distance between citizens and public administrators and elected officials will cause the effective implementation of programs? Or may it be that public administrators and elected officials – regardless of how distant or close they feel they are to the public – can carry out reforms in an effective way, and that the public perception that the distance is close or closing is a result of this? We will

[42] Interview with Saxena, 2000.

[43] From here onwards the survey data used is Decentralisation and Indian Governance (DIG), 2000-01 and 2000-02.

[44] For example, interviewees were asked to indicate on a scale ranging from 0-4 how close or distant they perceived politicians to be - "0"meaning "close" and "4" meaning distant. Twenty and eighteen percent of those who were asked in the high and low-performing areas respectively considered Members of Parliament close. When asked the same about the *Zilla panchayat* leader the corresponding figure was thirty-two and sixteen percent. Forty-three percent of those living in the high-performance area would consider the Village *panchayat* representative close and twenty-two percent would consider him/her distant. In the low-performance area, thirty-five percent would consider the Village *panchayat* representative close and twenty-five percent would answer "distant".

return to some of these questions below, but first we should consider what other key informants think of the strategic options for fighting absenteeism.

In the small elite survey, we asked about the most effective way to combat absenteeism. A majority considered co-operation among the public, inspection systems, and the education level of the public to be highly influential in combating problems of absenteeism. Although there were positive responses to suggestions of increasing salary levels, carrying out decentralisation measures and giving the *panchayats* financial autonomy as measures for decreasing absenteeism, the support for such schemes was significantly lower.[45] In other words, although we do not find a clash of opinions, we find that policy makers at state level emphasise decentralisation per se more than teachers and *panchayat* members in the field do.

Evidently, the EGS scheme is a successful decentralisation reform in the sense that it is delivering education on a large scale to groups that have had virtually no other opportunity to obtain schooling. This is shown in studies more detailed than the present one.[46] However, the survey in general corroborates the perceptions of the policy makers in Madhya Pradesh that decentralisation may have the effect of bringing decision makers closer to the people and make government work better.

Two essential requirements are fulfilled here. The decentralisation scheme has been managed by a powerful and efficient elite group that has allocated sufficient resources for the policies to be implemented. What, then, is the biggest challenge or enabling factor that may affect the outcome of a decentralisation scheme when these two requirements are met? Looking at the two variables "culture" and "civil society", we will find what may be described as a caste-coin with two quite different sides – one that may be conducive to success, and one that may hinder even the most ambitious decentralisation scheme.

Culture and civil society

Some aspects of culture and civil society do not seem to be very relevant to the outcome of the decentralisation scheme. The expectation that people see corruption as natural or that they fail to make a distinction between what is private and public in areas where corruption is widespread – at least to a higher extent than people living in a less corrupt area – finds no support here. In general, there was equally strong resentment of public servants, teachers and health workers taking bribes in both the high- and low-performance areas – about 97 percent would be strongly opposed to bribes.

There was an equally strong support for a normative model of an ideal or typically Weberian bureaucrat. The "ideal civil servant" described in the survey had three traits: he/she would treat everyone equally, regardless of income, status, class, gender or religion; he/she would never under any circumstances accept bribes; he/she would always act according to the stipulated rules and laws. In both areas, 70 percent described this ideal type as very important, although a majority suspected that their view was not shared by public sector personnel.

[45] The interview persons in the elite survey were asked to indicate on a scale ranging from 0-4 if they thought various measures would significantly decrease (0) or increase (4) the level of absenteeism. For "improving inspection systems" the following frequencies were received; 0= 44%, 1=31%, 2=11%, 3=3%, and 4=8% (similar results were received for "co-operation" and "education"). For "giving more power to the local administration" the following frequencies were received; 0= 36%, 1=19%, 2=33%, 3=3%, and 4=6% (similar results were received for "salaries" and "finance their own services").

[46] See for example Srivastava 1998; Rao 2000; Vyasulu 1998.

Finally, a knowledge test measuring the capacity to differentiate between what can be considered public and private failed to reveal any crucial distinction between citizens in high- and low-performing areas in the study. Surprisingly many, around 60 percent, knew the number one hallmark of a public sector activity – that it is financed by taxes.[47] This is quite an encouraging result in an area where almost 60 percent of the adults are illiterate. Evidently, there is no contradiction between finding corruption in an area and great awareness of what corruption is. On the contrary – and this can certainly be seen as an ironic comment, but an important bias in theory development is revealed here; writers in the social sciences should have assumed this more often – those that are exposed to corruption may be quite aware of the distinction between private and public, and they may the ones who oppose attempts to blur the distinction the most.

Another factor that does not seem to play the large role one might expect, at least not at first glance, is civil society. Very few people in the surveyed area were members of voluntary organisations, political parties or unions.[48] Nevertheless, we would find various types of social capital. In the area surveyed, high levels of trust were found among those that could be counted as members of "one's own community", in this case Hindus, the caste group, but also the village and *panchayat* members.[49] Members of the army, teachers and health workers were also greatly trusted, while foreigners, non-Hindus and members of the police force were greatly distrusted.[50] In other words, we find strong ties expressed as trust in the community. However, this does not seem to lead to an even distribution of political "empowerment", if we look more closely at different caste groups in the area surveyed. It is now time to look at some of the more interesting differences found when comparing the high- and low-performance areas.

Although engagement in political as well as voluntary organisations is low in the whole area surveyed, it turns out that in the high-performing area 7.5 percent (N=10) of the citizens had participated in a *dharna* or demonstration during the last year. In the low-performance area, not a single such individual was found. Ten persons are not many, but we do know from literature and other studies of the role of protest movements that a small "core group" can be crucial in influencing politics. It is possible to conclude from this that a potentially crucial factor for making decentralisation work is that the scheme lands in an area where at least a small group of citizens actively protests and exhorts strong pressure on the local officials and politicians in their community. Recalling that the core idea of the EGS is the "demand-driven scheme", we can surely expect it to be more successful where citizens are better at making demands. One should be restrictive in drawing far-

[47] 66 percent gave the right answer in the high performing area and 58 percent gave the right answer in the low performing area. Each knowledge test question (a total of eight questions were presented in the survey) had three alternatives for the respondent to choose between.

[48] About 90 percent had no membership of voluntary organisations or political parties, and the survey only found a total of two people who claimed a union membership. The ten percent that were members of voluntary organisations belonged to a member in a "cultural or religious association, such as church, caste, temple, mosque association."

[49] The respondents were asked to indicate their level of trust on a scale ranging from 0 to 4 where 0 represented "no-one" and 4 represented "all". Hindus, one's own caste group, and village members received a ranking of 4 from 60 to almost 80 percent of the respondents.

[50] See Blomkvist (2001), Hulterström (1996), Granovetter (1973) for further discussion on this topic. In the survey the army and teachers received a ranking of 4 from 94 and 61 percent of the respondents while about 75 percent gave foreigners, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists a ranking of 0.

reaching conclusions from this material, but the findings lead to an important track that should be followed.

The "protesters" are evenly distributed in the three *panchayats* that make up the high-performance area: three in two *panchayats* and four in one. A closer look at the protesters shows that almost all belong to a socio-economic middle caste group, and half of them belong to a caste group or *jati* called Dangi.[51] None of the protesters are members of low caste groups, which are otherwise highly represented in this region. There are 25 percent Dangi (middle caste), 16.6 percent Charmakar (low caste), and 22 percent Gujjars (low caste) in the area. It turns out that if we assign all *jatis* to high, middle and low caste categories we get the following distribution:

			Panchayats		
			High performance	**Low performance**	**Total**
Caste	**High**	Count % of high and low perf.	7 5,2%	20 13,4%	27 9,5%
	Middle	Count % of high and low perf.	92 68,1%	28 18,8%	120 42,3%
	Low	Count % of high and low perf.	28 20,7%	95 63,8%	123 43,3%
Don't know		Count % of high and low perf.	1 0,7%	0 0,0%	1 0,4%
Missing data		Count % of high and low perf.	7 5,2%	6 4,0%	1.3 4,6%
Total		Count % of high and low perf.	135 100,0%	149 100,0%	284 100,0%

Clearly, the high-performing region is dominated by middle caste groups and the low-performing area is dominated by lower caste groups. Furthermore, most of the citizens categorised as upper or high caste are more prevalent in the poorly performing region. In other words, it is not only where there are many low caste members that the performance is low; it is high dispersion of caste groups that brings down performance.

Finally, other indicators such as income, standard of living, and literacy show that the people in the highly performing area are at least slightly better off than those living

[51] Dangi claims to belong to either Vaishya or Kshatrya varna categories. They are also categorised as OBC (Other Backward Classes). However, we can see that this is some kind of middle category under those that would be considered high caste and above those who would be considered low caste.

in the poorly performing area. Had we only looked at these indicators we would most likely have concluded that small differences in these variables can greatly affect the performance or outcome. However, after we revealed the strikingly different distribution of caste groups in the areas we should be able to argue that the differences in human capital, living standard, and income have a more limited effect and perhaps even a spurious influence on the outcome. Caste membership in itself plays the key role here.

Conclusions

We have attempted here to create a "most similar case model" for comparison, although there are some well-known disadvantages in choosing one's cases on the dependent variable. Although one should be cautious about drawing far-reaching conclusions from the material, we can at least speak of what seems to be the most important indications revealed. Obviously, the EGS in Madhya Pradesh is successful in providing education to groups that never had the opportunity to receive any. But when studying the implementation of this programme, we can find out when and why decentralisation works to counter corruption, which in this case is measured as teacher absenteeism.

James Manor and Richard Crook describe quite clearly how dependent on political will and sufficient resources any decentralisation reform is for its chance of survival.[52] In this case we have seen that basic requirements have been fulfilled and that the scheme has contributed to change. An important feature that should be noted, most commonly not mentioned in literature on this topic, is that we need to use at least two dimensions to look at decentralisation in order to understand why it may be important in improving governance. The concept of devolution usually only considers the level in a bureaucratic hierarchy at which decision-making power is located. It is necessary also to take into account whether decision-making powers are moved to other legal bodies.

However, when basic requirements are fulfilled, we see that the greatest obstacle to a successful decentralisation reform in India may lie in the caste structure. As has been observed in numerous studies before, caste identity works to the advantage of some groups and against others.[53] It is most difficult for low caste groups to receive reform benefits although they surely need them the most. However, what is an obstacle to one group, in this case the Charmakars and Gujjars, can be seen as the strength of another, in this case the Dangi. We saw that it was the dominant caste group in the area studied that was able to make demands and participate in political protest – and in the area where the dominant caste is residing the scheme functioned well.[54]

Caste identity, it seems, had a positive influence on performance. But the opposite was true for the area dominated by the low caste community, where we found no protesters and where performance was low. This is important, since the EGS is a "demand-driven" scheme. The weakest have the hardest time in formulating demands. And in this case, it is not the demand for a school that has failed – it is the demand for high teacher attendance that has not been formulated as effectively as in the high-performing and middle-caste dominated area. Consequently, in areas with a

[52] Crook and Manor 1998.

[53] For more recent research on his topic see Blomkvist 2001.

[54] This also corroborates some of the recent findings made by Nicholas van de Walle and Michael Bratton and earlier contributions by Robert Dahl.

"dominant caste group" that has the capacity to protest, a system for monitoring performance is not as important when carrying out decentralisation reforms – the scheme can be checked by the public.[55] Therefore, in low caste areas with no, or poor, capacities for protest, the responsibility for monitoring performance by the EGS councils is much higher.

Finally, it seems that the problem revealed has one more side to it than what has been expressed in debates where high and low caste groups are simply juxtaposed. The low-performance area is not only the area where most of the low caste people live, it is also where most of the upper caste people live, although they are much fewer in absolute numbers. We can connect the observations in this study with a line of argumentation similar to the middle-class argument in economic theory saying that high economic growth can be expected in areas with low dispersion of income and wealth, but not in areas with high dispersion.[56]

Drawing on this line of argumentation, we may conclude with a new hypothesis: performance in decentralisation reforms should not only be seen as a zero-sum game, where high caste members gain what the low caste members lose. Performance can be seen as an outcome decided by the dispersion of caste in an area – and in the case where dispersion is low the net gain of all society members will be significantly larger than in areas where dispersion is high.

[55] Most parts of India has always had what can be seen as a functional equivalent of a middle class but expressed through what we more commonly describe with the term "dominant caste." A dominant caste is often not the highest but perhaps the group that owns the most land and dominates politically. See for example Kohli 1992; Frankel and Rao 1991. Therefore, the capacity for political influence would not necessary have to show up in inclination to protest. It could also be that the dominant caste is very effective in co-operating with the state and getting through its demands in "non-protest" ways. (Private conversations with Arild Ruud in March 2001.) Nevertheless, we can suspect that in this case-study, performance has been positively affected by the "protest proneness" of the middle cast group in one area.

[56] Aghion, Caroli and Garcia-Peñalosa. 1999. Inequality and Economic Growth: The Perspective of the New Growth Theories. Journal of Economic Literature. pp. 1615–1660.

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HIV/Aids, Poverty and Education: The Circle of Hope and Despair

By Carol Coombe, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria, South Africa

This article concerns the impact that HIV/Aids, as a pandemic, is having on education, within the context of the poverty discourse. It considers the scale and scope of the pandemic and its anticipated impact on education systems in heavily-infected sub-Saharan countries. It looks for lessons derived from twenty years of coping with HIV/Aids in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region. The paper concludes by suggesting how the education sector can improve its management response to the pandemic in order to protect education provision and quality, and to mitigate the distress of increasing numbers of orphans and other vulnerable children.

Introduction

Amartya Sen perceived that systematic public action can eradicate terrible development problems, including hunger and starvation (Sen, Tanco Memorial Lecture 1). Sen maintained that success in coping with a public crisis relies on the extent to which the protective role of government can be integrated with the efficient functioning of other economic and social institutions. This, then, needs to be supplemented by sensible public activism going beyond state planning and government action. Sen argued for public action to protect civil entitlements, better planning, and the cultivation of peace as a basis for development.

Sen suggested that so long as a crisis is "relatively cost-free for government, with no threat to its survival or credibility, effective actions…do not have the urgency to make them inescapable imperatives for the government" (Sen, Tanco 13). He maintained as a corollary that where there is independent democracy, an unfettered press, and energetic and sustained public pressure to take quick and effective action, governments could be held accountable to act.

Sen addressed both what needs to be done and how a crisis can be overcome, and perhaps that is one of the most significant aspects of his credo. His principles in this regard are clear. It is necessary to

- diagnose and analyse the causes of the crisis,
- make determined integrated efforts to counteract those causes,
- integrate government efforts with those of civil society, and
- sustain public pressure for action.

This paper echoes his principles, applying them to the battle to eradicate HIV/Aids and save lives.

The nature of the problem

The scale and scope of the HIV/Aids pandemic can be broadly predicted for various regions of the world, including the SADC region. Action can be planned and considered. The problem is that national leaders and their governments have for too long been unwilling or unable to take appropriate action and the pandemic is now out of control.

For the past twenty years, counterattacking HIV/Aids has focussed principally on preventing the spread of the disease. But the reality in 2002 is that the virus has infected and affected such vast numbers of people that it has transformed into a pandemic, a vastly complex set of social, behavioural, governance, economic, and psychological factors that constitutes a completely new phenomenon. Unfortunately there is so far little evidence (in Poverty Reduction Support Programme planning, for example) that the consequences of HIV and Aids are being factored into planning for development (Collins and Rau).

The HIV/Aids pandemic is fuelled by disadvantage. In turn it creates and sustains further immiseration, making it impossible for children of poverty to benefit from development. In this way it gives birth to an even larger population susceptible to infection and vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic. The issue for development specialists in these circumstances is "how to achieve sustainable development essential for an effective response to the epidemic under conditions where the epidemic is destructive of the capacities essential for the response" (Cohen 12).

Poverty, HIV/Aids and education together create a circle of hope and despair. Poverty and HIV/Aids thrive on each other, while education provides some hope for a way out of despair – for children affected by the pandemic, for families devastated by its onslaught, and for countries caught in its grip. But basic social services – health, education and social support – are inequitably accessible to the poor in many countries. Further, the education service in high-prevalence countries is itself under attack from the pandemic and therefore too often unable to respond appropriately to the material, emotional and more complex learning needs of those affected by HIV and Aids. Education systems have shown too that they are incapable as yet of responding usefully to Aids-related special needs of educators who are affected by Aids, or of orphans and other vulnerable children – in particular girls.

The consequences of the pandemic are of particular concern for families and their children. Children lose parents and with them access to social support, socialisation and acculturation, and to skills development. Poor nutrition leads to persistent health problems. Affected children's chances of escaping from poverty are limited further, because they perform poorly or are forced to drop out of school altogether. They are likely to adopt behaviours that lead to sexually transmitted infections including HIV, and thus become the next cohort of the impoverished HIV-infected.

The impact of HIV/Aids on education

HIV/Aids has consequences for learners, educators and the system itself. Through the very few formal assessments of the impact of HIV/Aids on education, we have only recently begun to understand all its ramifications. We are having to move quickly from a narrow virus-focused set of prevention schemes, toward a much broader focus on the psycho-social and economic consequences of Aids, and understand how to respond appropriately.

It is not possible yet, as recent initial surveys from India and China have shown, to assess the impact of HIV and Aids on learners and educators in low-prevalence countries. But there are clearly lessons to be learned from experience in Africa about the characteristic profile of the pandemic and its implications for education. Formal assessments of the impact of HIV/Aids on the education sector (Botswana, South Africa, Swaziland, Namibia and Zimbabwe) give clear indicators of the consequences

of the pandemic for learners, educators and education quality. Where prevalence is high, as in sub-Saharan Africa, HIV challenges education: all learners and educators, education provision and access, education quality, education development and the achievement of Education for All goals.

Impact on learners and the demand for education

Because of HIV and Aids, there will be fewer learners than predicted, as fewer children are born to HIV-infected mothers, who are less fertile and bear fewer children before they die. Children who are infected at birth are likely to die before they reach school. Those who continue through school are at significant risk of infection during or soon after completing their education. Helping to prevent the spread of HIV/Aids among learners is likely to be the most important determinant of whether spending on education has been a success for human and economic development. Finally, children infected and affected by HIV have more complex cognitive, social and emotional needs. Aids-affected children may be ill and unmotivated. They have to cope with trauma and stigmatisation of Aids-related loss in the family. Many are orphaned, isolated and undernourished, and at greater risk of sexual abuse, violence and withdrawal from school.

The consequences that need to be addressed by education systems include declining school enrolments, delayed enrolments, erratic attendance, poor attention and performance, higher dropout levels, and reversal of Education for All development gains in the sector.

Impact on educators and the quality of education

In some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, as many as twenty percent of teachers are thought to be infected and about ten percent of principals, and this may double by 2010. Many experience lowered morale and stress, and there is an increased workload for those who are well. In these conditions, systems lose efficiency, as they struggle to sustain costs related to educator attrition, redeployment and replacement, medical aid costs, pensions and sick benefits. Increased labour-related tension is almost inevitable because of poorly managed stress, loss of management and training capacity, and loss of workforce replacement capacity.

The problem is not merely one of attrition from the education service, but the loss of hard-to-replace skilled and experienced professionals across the system, from early childhood development, to teacher training colleges and universities.

The overall impact will be high educator attrition, declining quality, reduced access and larger classes, fewer specialists, poor performance and morale, and decline in management expertise.

Trauma

Perhaps the most difficult impact is the 'inchoate unease' that is said to characterise education systems in high-prevalence countries as loss, isolation, grief and stigmatisation pervade learning institutions.

HIV/Aids is affecting the learning climate and teacher morale is low where impact is high. Both educators and learners have difficulty concentrating in the face of illness, death, mourning, and dislocation. Learners affected by the presence of HIV/Aids have a widespread sense of anxiety, confusion and insecurity. The psychosocial needs of affected children – manifested as visible problems like truancy or anti-social behaviour, violence and withdrawal – are rarely met effectively. Where abuse and

violence along with teacher misconduct characterise the learner community, young girls and boys fear they will be sexually abused or maltreated. There may be uncertainty and distrust between learners and educators if the latter are seen to be those responsible for introducing or spreading HIV/Aids. All this adds up to change and distress in heavily infected countries and schools. Not all institutions will suffer to the same extent. But there is enough personal and systemic trauma to undermine education quality generally.

What have educators learned?

It has taken a long time to face some of the basic facts about HIV and education. In the Africa region, where the pandemic quickly comprised managerial capacity, there has been little systematic attempt – by governments at least – to learn from experience. In Asia and the Pacific, there has been a mistaken sense that HIV is an 'African' phenomenon, that even if the virus appears in some Asia-Pacific countries, it would be confined to at-risk populations (drug users and sex workers). Even then, it was thought that HIV prevalence would peak 'naturally' at low levels.

Infection rates in Asia and the Pacific are still too low for an accurate assessment of the pandemic's likely consequences for education. But the region can start nevertheless to learn from Africa. Europeans – now that the virus is spreading like wildfire through Russia and other former Soviet Union territories – are also likely to want to watch Africa's response.

More and more information and data are becoming available through research, and formal assessments of the impact of HIV/Aids in a number of countries. They await practical analysis. There are some HIV/Aids and education policies in place or in draft (Namibia and South Africa) and strategic plans are being drafted. There are many good intentions. The fact is however, that little or nothing of consequence is being done by education managers in Africa to help contain the disease, care for those affected, and protect the quality and viability of education services. Compare the international response to the New York disaster of 11 September 2001 – generals and presidents, a network of cooperating governments, US$50 billion committed, 7,000 operatives on duty, and military massed for action – to the international and national reaction over the past twenty years to 22 million Aids-related deaths, and at least 40 million to come.

At the same time, HIV highlights management deficiencies. It shines a merciless torch on the fragility of education sector capacity, procedures and infrastructures as governments face the need to respond to a crisis of this magnitude. After twenty years of watching HIV spread, two out of thirteen countries in the heavily infected SADC region have life-skills or sexuality curricula in place. Only one has materials, two have trained school-teachers to deliver life-skills curriculum, none has trained teacher educators, and there has been no comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of curriculum prevention programmes. As for protecting education provision, one country has a policy in place, two have strategic plans (starting to be implemented), and four have completed impact assessments (see Annex).

Three reports to Unicef's Innocenti Research Institute in Florence in September 2001 showed that, globally, there are no holistic and operational policies in any country aimed at HIV and poverty, HIV and education, or children affected or infected by the disease. (The reports were provided by staff at the Health Economics and Re-

search Division at the University of Natal; the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria; and Save the Children United Kingdom).

Policy formulation and planning in countries – and internationally – is often based on fallacies, or even pretence. For example, we think that we understand the complexities of the pandemic, when we do not; that we are making progress, when we are not (as rising prevalence rates show); that governments are responding effectively and purposefully, when they are not; and that we have the planning and management capacity to make a difference in this terrible crisis, when we do not – yet. We are hoping that we are helping to contain Aids, when all the indicators suggest we are not.

But, we are learning. We understand now that the education sector's task is not merely to help contain HIV/Aids by providing life-skills or sexuality education with an HIV component in the primary and secondary school curriculum. There is consensus among countries and within the international community (the UNAIDS Inter-Agency Working Group for example) that the education sector must

- help to prevent the spread of Aids;
- help to reduce its consequences for those infected or affected by HIV/Aids;
- protect the level of provision and quality of education.

Achieving these objectives means that the education sector must build a strong foundation for purposeful executive action.

Principles of crisis management

Governments are not managing this cataclysmic crisis well, if at all. There is no model for what to do, and how to do it. Sen argues for clear-minded diagnosis and collective dedication to deal with a crisis successfully. What this means as far as HIV/Aids is concerned is that our response to the pandemic needs to be managed, and managed properly. Experience all over sub-Saharan Africa clearly demonstrates that effective HIV and Aids management must include:

- informed leadership,
- collective dedication by partners in the sector,
- research and information collection and analysis,
- management appropriate to the demands of the catastrophe,
- a policy and planning framework to coordinate action in the sector,
- funds mobilised and allocated to those who can use them best,
- priorities for short-term and long-term action,
- monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in operation.

Ministries of education cannot do this job alone, but must work collaboratively with partners in and out of government. That means mobilising the whole education sector, from top to bottom and from inside out, working intra- and inter-sectorally, and attracting funding from national and international sources (Larson and Narain).

Two pillars of strength have emerged, and they must have a central role to play in counterattacking HIV and Aids. The first is communities where people are ill and

dying, and where their families, friends and colleagues are working together for survival. Sen's ideal of public activism, as well as his notion of accountability, is well and strong in communities that are hard-hit by Aids, as governments ponder their next moves. The second pillar of strength is youth who have shown they have the energy and confidence, the ability to learn from their experience, and the sheer dramatic *chutzpah* to fight this disease among their peers.

Reducing the impact of HIV/Aids on education

HIV/Aids lurks in communities and families, in the most intimate, private moments of human relationships. It is a creature of culture and circumstance, local perceptions and behaviours, custom and religious belief. That means it is virtually impossible to generalise about good practice: what works to break the power of HIV/Aids in one place may not work in another.

Some generic tools

UNAIDS has analysed successes in Senegal, Thailand and Uganda in reducing the spread of Aids. My own perception – from working with governments, international development agencies and NGOs, in carrying out fieldwork and undertaking literature reviews, and from working with professional colleagues (doctors, educators, social workers, statisticians, economists and demographers) as part of the Mobile Task Team on HIV and Education supported by USAID in the SADC region – is that there are a number of practical generic tools for making a difference on HIV and education, saving lives, and protecting education.

Firstly, we need to be more honest. We must stop pretending that we are doing our best. The fact is that this is a horrible disaster and we are not responding to it effectively. It is important that we analyse, diagnose and then manage the situation appropriately.

Secondly, we must work together and make use of the resources of government at all levels, of NGOs, faith-based organisations, civil society and international development agencies, and of officials and parents – especially mothers.

Thirdly, HIV/Aids must be factored into poverty reduction planning, and the pandemic confronted within the context of poverty that drives it. Relatively simply, radical, humanitarian interventions must be made: treating sexually transmitted infections, providing sufficient condoms, establishing home based care and school feeding schemes, training peer health educator teams for all institutions, ensuring each institution has access to adequate latrines and potable water. These measures are only the beginning, but they can save lives in the short-term – while longer-term development pilots are being tried, governments mobilised and resources allocated, while the capacity of NGOs is strengthened and behaviour change programmes started.

Fourthly, crisis management capacity in and out of government must be enhanced. Curriculum specialists with a part-time brief to keep an eye on HIV matters must be replaced with senior executives, generals who can fight the battle with appropriate staff, mandates and resources.

Fifthly, experience suggests that significant progress can be made by choosing relatively simple-to-manage interventions that are appropriate to the management capacity of the sector. Changing adolescent behaviour via the curriculum is a complex and long-term initiative while tracking down and treating sexually transmitted infections among learner populations can make a 50 per cent reduction in HIV incidence.

Finally, longer-term interventions will require the mobilisation and strengthening of education sector partners, and constant evaluation and monitoring of their performance with respect to content, implementation and practical results. Governments, NGOs and faith-based organisations, as well as international agencies, must be held accountable for taking effective action against agreed performance benchmarks wherever possible.

Providing support for children in trauma

Educators are going to have to develop techniques for targeting orphans and other vulnerable children (OVCs) within the context of poverty. Orphans are learners or potential learners, and as many as 10 to 15 percent of all learners in high-prevalence countries will be orphans within the decade; in some schools as many as 60–70 percent of learners may be profoundly affected by loss of parents. Hunter and Williamson suggest that effective strategies for OVCs must include strengthening families' and children's capacity to cope, mobilising community and government support, and creating learning and social environments that protect and promote the rights of children and their families.

Unicef, UNAIDS and other partners elaborated these principles in 2001 in a strategic planning document (Unicef, UNAIDS et al). Botswana, where the Office of the President is in charge of the nation's Aids response, has already taken practical action and is promoting the concept of a 'circle of care' which includes largely voluntary home-based care, a school feeding scheme for all children, orphan subsidies, and close co-operation among teachers, social workers and health practitioners.

Working collaboratively

Governments, though increasingly well intentioned, have for too long been characterised by inertia as far as HIV/Aids is concerned. In theory, they are committed to co-operating with NGOs. In practice, it is not clear how partners at national and local level are being strengthened and resourced. Governments clearly have a responsibility to co-ordinate and strengthen local responses, create policy and establish a regulatory framework. It is their duty to deliver health and social welfare services appropriate to community requirements, as well as to shift school and clinic programmes to cope with changing demands. They must ensure that sufficient funds are mobilised and channelled to those who can make best use of them. Ultimately, governments must work in support of communities, and national strategies must reflect this balance.

No one underestimates the difficulties of creating collaborative mechanisms, structures and processes to drive local programmes. There are few models from which to learn. Ministries of education have struggled for years to decentralise decision-making and executive responsibility, and now that lives depend on it, perhaps they will make faster headway in this regard. There is as yet however no clear indication in heavily infected countries that the potential of HIV and Aids to create havoc for education requires that senior, full-time and experienced executives be appointed. The challenge of five million Aids orphans in the SADC region by 2010 may help to focus governments' attention more purposefully. This is a crisis that demands crisis management.

Meanwhile, at local level, NGOs, community- and faith-based organisations are making a difference in the lives of women and children. They provide support to teachers and heads as counsellors. They train children and teachers in peer counsel-

ling. They teach lessons of safe sex, work in communities to defuse violence, and care for the abused and violated. They are at the coalface. They are doing the job. Their contribution is not just considerable, it is fundamental – however fragmented it may be. Strengthening education's response now depends on how the programmes of non-government partners are integrated in the sector's strategic planning and resource allocations, and whether or not they can be scaled up effectively.

Breaking the circle of despair

The awesome pandemic we call HIV/Aids is undoing the development gains of the past three decades, at least in Africa. It is folly to believe that similar challenges to development will not emerge in Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Asia and the Pacific. This is not an 'African' disease.

HIV thrives on poverty, and it feeds poverty. Education may be the key to unlocking a better future for coming generations of children, but only if we can sustain adequate levels of education provision now that HIV is attacking the education service. Such large numbers of educators and learners are affected by HIV and Aids that enrolments and performance are already dropping in some areas, and the trauma of loss and grief is starting to characterise the education service in affected areas.

African governments and their international partners have been slow to respond to the challenges of the pandemic. But slowly we are understanding that the response to Aids must be local, as the infection breeds in the unique behaviours, values and understandings of each community. Communities and young people have shown that they are willing partners – and indeed sometimes in the vanguard – of the fight against Aids.

However, real progress will only be made when senior educationists and governments make a true commitment to fight this battle: money, resources, and senior executive personnel required to make things happen. So far, the management foundation for creating an enabling environment is notably absent in infected areas of Africa. And all the time, more and more children are dispossessed by the burden of Aids.

Amartya Sen's principal concern was about making things happen, about finding ways to make a difference in the face of catastrophe: diagnosis, counteraction, collaborative dedication, and sustained accountability. The complex phenomenon we call the HIV/Aids pandemic is slowly being defined so that we can identify where action must be taken on a broad development base. Government inertia has in effect empowered communities to work co-operatively to take control of their own security and survival. But planning how to reduce the impact of the pandemic on the education service must still lie with national authorities. Who will hold them accountable?

HIV/Aids is the most significant issue in developing country education today, and perhaps the biggest challenge to development. The imperative to respond effectively to this pandemic requires a fundamental re-think of development principles and procedures, and of relationships between governments, local communities, and funding partners. HIV/Aids is rooted in poverty, and until poverty is reduced, little progress will be made in limiting its transmission or coping with its consequences. Education is the potentially positive component of the HIV–poverty–education circle of hope and despair. Whether it brings hope to the dispossessed and afflicted remains to be seen.

Annex: SADC Ministry of Education responses to HIV and Aids
(thirteen countries[1] as at February 2001)

CREATING A FOUNDATION FOR ACTION	Y	P	N
Combined approach: Is equal consideration given to (1) preventing spread of the disease and to (2) reducing the anticipated impact of the pandemic on education?	3	6	4
Leadership: Are political leaders, senior officials, unions, the teaching service, and school governing bodies knowledgeable and committed to action?	4	8	1
Collective dedication: Are partners outside government involved in the fight against HIV/Aids? Do mechanisms exist for partnerships?	4	7	2
Research agenda: Is information about HIV/Aids being collected, analysed, stored and spread? Is there an HIV/Aids and education research agenda for the education sector?	2	3	8
Effective management: Has a full-time senior manager been appointed? Does a standing structure exist which includes partners in and out of government?	5	1	7
Policy and regulations: Are HIV/Aids sector policies and regulations in place? Are there appropriate codes of conduct for teachers and learners, and are they applied rigorously?	1	4	8
Strategic plan: Is there an education sector HIV/Aids strategic plan which covers all levels of the whole education sector, and is it funded?	2	5	6
Resource allocation: Are plans being funded adequately? Are funds being channelled to various levels of the system, and to partners outside government who can use them?	2	5	6
HELPING TO LIMIT THE SPREAD OF AIDS			
Appropriate curriculum in all learning institutions: Are learners being guided through the curriculum on safe sex and appropriate behaviours and attitudes?	2	5	6
Materials developed and distributed: Have materials suitable for learners in schools and post-school institutions been development and distributed to institutions? Are they up to date?	1	7	5
Serving educators prepared: Are school teachers adequately prepared through preservice and inservice to teach life skills curricula? Have they accepted this responsibility?	2	5	6
Teacher educators prepared: Have university, teacher training college and local teacher support staff been trained in HIV/Aids issues and curriculum implementation?	0	3	10

[1] Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Swaziland, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe)

Evaluation of curriculum and materials: Have materials and courses been evaluated in terms of content, implementation and outcomes?	1	1	11
Counselling for learners: Can pupils and students who are affected by Aids find help from their teachers? Or from someone else?	0	2	11
Counselling for educators: Are teachers affected by Aids, and those who are dealing with the trauma of children affected by Aids getting help to cope?	0	1	12
Partnerships: Are other partners helping with prevention programmes?	0	9	4
MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF HIV AND AIDS ON THE EDUCATION SECTOR			
Assessment: Has an assessment been done of the likely impact of HIV/Aids on the education sector in future?	4	2	7
Risk profile: Is there some understanding of the factors that make educators and learners vulnerable to infection?	0	5	8
Stabilising: Are steps being taken to sustain the quality of education provision and to replace teachers and managers lost to the system?	0	3	10
Projecting: Have relatively accurate projections been made of likely enrolments and teacher requirements at various levels of the system over the next five to ten years?	2	3	8
Social support: Are children affected and infected by the pandemic receiving counselling and care? Is there a culture of care in schools and institutions?	1	1	11
Responding creatively: Is the system trying to provide meaningful, relevant educational services to learners affected by HIV/Aids, finding new times, places and techniques for learning and teaching?	0	0	13
Orphan needs: Is planning underway to understand and respond to the special needs of increasing numbers of orphaned and other vulnerable children?	1	5	7
All subsectors: Is attention being paid to the planning requirements of all education subsectors – from early childhood development through to university?	0	8	5

Y Yes, action in being taken **P** Some action is planned **N** No action is being taken

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Contact the Authors

Carol Benson,
PhD, Guest Lecturer,
Centre for Research on Bilingualism,
Stockholm University, Sweden
Carol.Benson@biling.su.se

Ian Christoplos,
PhD, then Director,
Collegium for Development Studies,
Uppsala University, Sweden
cristoph@bahnhof.se

Carol Coombe,
Research Associate, Research Leader,
HIV and Education Programme,
University of Pretoria, South Africa
coombe@mweb.co.za

Holger Daun,
Professor,
Institute of International Education,
Stockholm University, Sweden
holger.daun@interped.su.se

Anna Haas
Programme Officer,
Education Division, Sida,
Stockholm
anna.haas@sida.se

Sten Hagberg
PhD, Research Fellow in Cultural Anthropology,
Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology,
Uppsala University, Sweden
sten.hagberg@antro.uu.se

Nelly Stromquist
Professor, Rossier School of Education,
University of Southern California,
Los Angeles, USA
nellystromquist@juno.com

Jandhyala B G Tilak
Professor,
National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration,
New Delhi, India
jtilak@vsnl.com; j_tilak@hotmail.com

Sten Widmalm
PhD,
Department of Government,
Uppsala University, Sweden
sten.widmalm@statsvet.uu.se

Charlotta Widmark
PhD Candidate,
Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology, Uppsala University,
Sweden
charlotta.widmark@antro.uu.se

Editor:
Mia Melin
Coordinator,
Collegium for Development Studies,
Uppsala University, Sweden
mia.melin@kus.uu.se

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SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY
S-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Fax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
E-mail: info@sida.se Homepage: www.sida.se

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