

Aid effectiveness in education

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This issue of *Prospects*, which focuses on aid effectiveness, comes at a time when the world is still reeling from what many consider to be the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression. The situation we are facing has repercussions at a global and local level for all nations, especially for developing countries. As Koïchiro Matsuura, the Director-General of UNESCO, said in a recent forum,

as growth slows, and trade and foreign investments dry up, the human implications for the poorest countries and households are potentially devastating—in terms of children taken out of school, of worsening public health, of lives lost to malnutrition and disease (Matsuura 2009).

The advancement of initiatives aimed at improving aid effectiveness is now more essential than ever if we are to adequately manage this crisis and prevent what could be a significant decline in aid disbursement levels.

The past decade has seen significant progress in the field of aid effectiveness, starting with the Monterrey Consensus of 2002, which established a basis for the dialogue on financing for development. In the Paris Declaration of 2005, representatives from over one hundred countries, international organizations, and civil societies made a pledge to work towards improving aid effectiveness. The goal was to transform aid into a working partnership between government and donors by harmonising, aligning, and managing objectives, agendas, systems, and procedures. This commitment to the transfer of ownership to key government players was further addressed during the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, which pushed for developing countries to play a more active role in discussions. The Accra Agenda also pressed for a quicker implementation of programmes aimed at reaching the objectives and deadlines created in Paris.

In the field of education, policies aimed at improving aid effectiveness have been centred on the World Bank's Education for All Fast-Track Initiative (FTI), created in 2002 to help low-income countries meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) goal that all children complete a full cycle of primary education

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by 2015. Very much in sync with the objectives of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda, the FTI aims at aligning the goals of donors and governments by generating support for a single national education sector plan. Donor resources are pooled through a Catalytic Fund.

Clearly, progress has been made in the global and even education-specific policy dialogue on aid effectiveness, but much work still needs to be done to implement transformative policies that take into account varying contexts. This issue of *Prospects* aims, firstly, to present and analyze existing aid effectiveness policies. We also hope to shed light on how these policies translate into action through a series of country-specific analyses.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Olav Christensen and Faryal Khan, who have spiritedly taken on the challenge and responsibility of guest editing this issue. Their work, in conjunction with that of the authors, is instrumental in paving the way for improved measurement of results in sponsored education initiatives.

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Reference

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