education review // reseñas educativas
editors: david j. blacker / gustavo e. fischman / melissa cast-brede / gene v glass

a multi-lingual journal of book reviews

May 13, 2013 ISSN 1094-5296

Education Review/Reseñas Educativas is a project of the
College of Education and Human Services of the University of Delaware
the National Education Policy Center, and the
Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University
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Klees, S. J., Samoff, J. & Stromquist, N. P. (Eds.) (2012) *The World Bank and Education: Critiques and Alternatives*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Pp. 245 ISBN 978-94-6091-901-5

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For those researching in the field of international education policies, this book is a "must have" for several reasons. First, it gathers most of the main authors writing about the influence of the World Bank. Secondly, it summarizes the key criticisms about this international organization. Highlighted below are leitmotifs throughout the book:

> *World Bank as advocate of neoliberal ideology*: this ideology is characterized by "delegitimizing and cutting government, privatizing, deregulating, and liberalizing" (p. 227).

Citation: Lauwerier, Thibaut. (2013 May 13) Review of *The World Bank and Education Critiques and Alternatives* by Klees, S. J., Samoff, J. Stromquist, N.P. (eds.). *Education Review, 16.* Retrieved [Date] from http://www.edrev.info/reviews/rev1235.pdf

> *Instrumental vision of education quality*: linked to the previous point, education quality is seen by the World Bank as an education that integrates people into the global open markets, even when it deals with gender or equity, and thus is remote from human rights and environmental issues.
>
> *Self-referencing*: most of the references used by the World Bank in order to propose educational reforms come from its staff or consultants.
>
> *Transfer of best practices*: "the World Bank pursues a limited number of educational reforms that is tested in a few countries and then disseminates across the globe" (p. 10). This means that the organization does not take into account specific country contexts.

Menashy (2012) has already written an interesting review of this book for this journal and has incorporated most of these points. Also see Mónica E. Pini's (2012) review of the book in Spanish. This review focuses on some shortcomings in *The World Bank and Education*, partly due to theoretical and methodological inaccuracies which correspond to the authors' vision of education policies and globalization. Menashy has started to develop some of these limits but I will go further.

This book contains the idea that we live in a static and common world with global forces having so much ideological power over nations. Here is one example:

> In education, global policy has included the proliferation of strategies including standardized testing, paraprofessional teachers, user fees, and privatization. These are many problems with these neoliberal policies. Foremost among them, is the havoc they wreak on the lives of so many children and adults. Poverty, inequality, and myriad associated problems have reached new heights in this neoliberal era. Moreover, these policies have been adopted uncritically and alternative policies have been ignored, which leads to our focus here. The World Bank is the major architect in formulating a global education policy and has been so for decades (p. 209).

This kind of argument can be considered as partly relevant, but seems to miss the perspective that education policy in this global era is dynamic process. Indeed research on the World Bank's influence in Mali and Senegal has found that neoliberal fundamentals coexists with funding Francophone and Arabic Schools in Senegal, advocating on gender issues in Senegal and helping to the implementation of a national language program in Mali (Lauwerier, in progress).

I share the vision of Arnove, Torres and Franz (2012) who write that "common prescriptions and transnational forces are not uniformly implemented or unquestionably received (…) there is a dialectic at work by which these global processes interact with national and local actors and contexts to be modified and, in some cases, transformed. There is a process of give-and-take, an exchange by which international trends are reshaped to local ends" (p. 2).

In my own research in Francophone West Africa, I have seen for instance that teacher policy largely influenced by the World Bank has not been implemented in the same way in different countries. This means that when the World Bank intervenes concretely in specific contexts, it does not impose one vision of "global education policy."

This is why this mix of actions can lead to some contradictions as when we also read: "there are contradictions in the Bank's privatization of education strategy. These include: the Bank's ventriloquism between policy and evidence, versus its insistence on robust evidence and knowledge-driven policy" (p. 204). One of the explanations is that there are internal debates within the World Bank. Even in one national office, two persons do not have the same vision of education. This is the case in Mali or Senegal.

But according to World Bank staff and other actors of education system, State still has power, even in developing countries. In both countries, 80% of public budget in education come from the State and around 5% from the World Bank. This is why we should nuance these kinds of sentences: there are "efforts to diminish public control and finance of education" (p. 58).

Furthermore we should be more aware about the importance of other international organizations. Some chapters deal with this idea. The World Bank is not the only big organization in developing countries. Multilateral organizations like UNICEF or bilateral organizations like Netherlands agency can have more weight than the World Bank in terms of impact on educational policies in Mali or Senegal. This is even more important in that a lot of organizations defend more or less the same ideological position as the World Bank. In their discourse, we can easily find the concepts and practices such as "decentralization", "good governance", and "education for economic growth".

There are also some questionable points linked with methodological shortcomings. First, most of the chapters refer to document analysis based on the World Bank texts. They put particular emphasis on what can be the impact of these documents: "it is my belief that the World Bank's texts represent such dominant discourse because they contribute to shape people's lives. A few seemingly trivial words from the World Bank can convince politicians to adopt policies with far-reaching consequences" (p. 21). And if what this author writes is true, then I can think that when the World Bank has a non-neoliberal discourse in its reports, it will be also adopted by politicians. For instance, in its 1995 report on education, the World Bank writes on "everyone's right to a basic education" (p. 10).

And most of the authors refer to the 2020 report, which was written in 2011 and not yet really implemented. One could also ask whether it would be really implemented because it was not always the case with the previous reports: "nothing has been done" (p. 53); "narrowly implemented... more schooling, little learning" (p. 111).

Moreover, the 2020 report is a global report that concerns countries all around the world. But the World Bank also produces reports on regions or countries that are a bit more contextualized.

In my opinion, when we want to analyze the influence of an international organization, we should not only look at the reports but also how the organization actually conducts itself in the field. How are these texts translated into practice? Another important aspect is that we should not

only do macro level analysis but also micro level analysis in order to understand the impact of the World Bank guidelines at the local level. This is not an easy work, notably, because other actors in the field of education can have important power. For instance, education has not been completely privatized in Mali and Senegal. Decentralization has not been well implemented or education had not served only to create a productive workforce in a global market. Thus, what the World Bank wishes in its documents is not necessarily what happens on the ground. There are some examples with contextual data in this book like in the chapter of Steiner-Khamsi about *stavka system* in Tajikistan. This is interesting because one of her conclusion is that "the ambitious World Bank study on the stavka system was exclusively read by World Bank staff and government officials but remained unpublished and underutilized" (p. 13). This means the texts have not always had a big impact on national policies.

To go further, with this kind of analysis, I also think that there is an interest for comparative research. Crossley and Watson (2003) quote Sadler who "reminds us, every system of education is shaped by its local, historical, economic, cultural and social context" (p. 39); hence the interest to understand how global solutions were retranslated in different contexts. In Mali and Senegal, the influence of the World Bank does not have exactly the same characteristics in terms of guidelines, mediation, negotiation or impact.

We can read in the book that the World Bank does not build its action from contextual data. This is one criticism that could be also relevant for most of the chapters of the book(e.g., chapters 2, 4, 5 and 7).

Contextual or empirical data allow the researcher to criticize the World Bank with solid arguments:

> Before the implementation of World Bank reforms and conditionalities in 1986, Tanzania's primary school enrolment rates were almost a hundred percent, but within a few years of the structural reforms on the public sector including primary education, enrolment rates dropped sharply. Almost half of the country's children missed out on their

> legal right to primary school enrolment due to World Bank reforms (p. 35).

And Tikly (2001) argues that even effects of the structural adjustment programs, which are known to have been globally harmful, should be contextualized:

> It is important, however, not to be overly deterministic with respect to the impact of structural adjustment policies. Despite the fragility of the African State, some countries— notably Eritrea and South Africa—have, for different reasons, been able to resist structural adjustment loans and the conditionalities that accompany them. In the case of Eritrea this has been due to a conscious policy adopted by the revolutionary government. In South Africa's case it is because of its relatively strong economic and political position compared to other African states. Both of these countries have ostensibly pursued their own educational agendas, albeit within the confines of economic austerity and self-imposed restrictions on spending (p. 165).

According to this book, the World Bank has not changed over the past 30 years. Another interest of comparative research is to show that this organization in the 1980's is not the same as in the 2000's. The priorities and the weight are not in the same configuration even if we agree there are some common aspects like neoliberal fundamentals.

Only four chapters provide an analysis based on different periods and the authors sometimes recognize changes between periods: "it is important to note that, unlike the 1995 and 1999 strategy documents, the 2011 publication has no section labelled as focusing specifically on teachers" (p. 89).

I can give other examples: the World Bank in Mali closed training centres for teachers in the 1980s during the structural adjustment programs, but building new ones in the 2000s. We can also read that "current rhetoric about partnership and participation offers some different directions in theory, but in practice little has changed" (p.

51). In Mali and Senegal, aid methodology has however evolved. There is now a partnership framework in place lead by the minister of education organizing major donor and technical assistance agencies. Before the 2000s each organization negotiated its own projects with its own interests.

Finally, the authors provide utopian but interesting recommendations: the World Bank should stop giving advice on education. As Klees says: "the World Bank is a bank and does not know what to do with a rights-based argument" (p. 51).

Three comments regarding this suggestion bear mentioning:

1. As for international cooperation the influence of research on education policy such as in the form of recommendations is not a linear process with direct effects. In other words, it will be difficult to bring this suggestion into practice;

2. If they wish no more advice from the World Bank, these researchers should also stop giving advice to the World Bank on education. Some of the book writers have more or less important links with this organization (consultancy, research...) as they recognize it in their chapter;

3. The "Global Fund for Education" (GPE) that the authors wish is not necessarily an alternative. The GPE is indeed one already existing organization that the World Bank has contributed to create. It gathers different international organizations. Instead of creating a new institution, it would be easier to bring some of the ideas of the book to this GPE.

It is important to condemn the ideology spread by the World Bank because it takes little consideration of peoples' actual needs. But the authors' criticisms are not strong enough, primarily because they lack sufficient contextual data. These criticisms could be stronger if there were evidence that the World Bank's influence on education, notably through reports, has real harmful effects in specific countries and/or periods. Once again,

comparative research and micro-level field studies would be useful toward that end.

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The National Education Policy Center http://nepc.colorado.edu, and the
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