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BILDUNG UND ENTWICKLUNG?

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BIRGIT BROCK-UTNE

**Development Cooperation in the Field of Education –
Between Neoliberal Economics and Alternative
Educational Models**

A Special Focus on Norwegian Aid to Tanzania

1. Introduction

The neoliberal agenda of the World Bank has had an effect on all development cooperation in the field of education. In this article I shall focus on the effects of the neoliberal agenda on equity within the education sector, especially in Africa. I shall show how even a “like-minded donor” like Norway in the mid 1980s joined the bandwagon of the World Bank. There has been a “Worldbankification” of Norwegian development aid (Hole et al. 2005). The coordination of development aid to the education sector seems to be done by the World Bank rather than by the developing countries themselves. In the latest principles for aid to the education sector in developing countries the Norwegian Foreign Ministry speaks with the same voice as the World Bank. There is no discussion any more of the type of education to be given. There is an assumption that the type of education introduced by the colonialists and promoted by donors is what developing countries need. What possibilities have alternative educational concepts of surviving in the neoliberal environment? Here I am thinking of models building on the culture and language of the local community. I am thinking of models that are inquiry based and learner-centred.

2. Privatization of education and cost-sharing

Anyone interested in studying the pressure put on African countries to follow the neoliberal agenda within the field of education has to study the World Bank document called Education Policies for Sub-Saharan Africa (EPSSA) (World Bank 1988). Here concepts like cost-sharing (having the poor to pay for an education which was earlier provided by the state) and diversification of education (opening up for market-driven forces and privatization) are key-concepts (Brock-Utne 2000). The document follows the structural economic policies of the World Bank insisting on reduced government spending, privatization and liberalization. The neoliberal agenda outlined in this almost twenty year old document has since that time been followed up in other important policy documents like Education for All (EFA), Fast Track Initiative (FTI) or Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). It should be pointed out that some of the more cited recent World Bank documents, like the new Education Sector Strategy Update (ESSU) (World Bank 2006) contain some rhetorical changes in comparison to earlier documents. The World Development Report 2004 relates to strategies such as tuition subsidies to poor families and elimination of primary school fees. Also, the EFA documents have a rhetoric that differs from the one of the World Bank (e.g. call for abolishment of fees in primary education and a reference to alternative educational concepts such as learner-centrism etc.). However, the neoliberal agenda remains. The ESSU (World Bank 2006: 1) builds on the World Bank's 1999 sector strategy for education (World Bank 1999) but claims to show "greater concern about the huge learning gaps across and within countries". No acknowledgement is, however made of the fact that the learning gaps are due partly to the structural adjustment policies forced down the throat of poor countries by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The learning gaps are also caused by the use of an unfamiliar language as the language of instruction. This fact is not acknowledged at all in the Education Sector Strategy Update of 2006. The key elements of the ESSU are the use of a Results Measurement System developed by International Development Association (IDA), a branch of the World Bank.

The EFA principles have been worked out in two large donor initiated international conferences, one in Jomtien in Thailand in 1990 (Brock-Utne

2000) and the other one in Dakar, Senegal in 2000. The aim seems to have been to have donors and developing countries invest more in primary education. In 2002 the World Bank launched the Fast Track Initiative to help countries reach certain targets when it came to the Education for All policies (Vestbø 2006). The World Bank describes the Fast Track Initiative as “a partnership of developing countries and donors created in June 2002 to help low-income countries achieve the Millennium Development Goal of universal completion of primary education by 2015.” (World Bank 2006: 7)

Neither the EFA declarations nor the documents around the FTI pay much attention to the language in which children are to be educated. A point to which I shall return.

In September 1999 the World Bank announced that governments hoping to receive loans, development assistance or reduction of their debt had to develop so-called Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). The blueprint given for writing these PRSP is held within the same neoliberal ideology which one finds in the structural adjustment programs. The rhetoric is, however different. While the Structural Adjustment policies looked as (and were) tough conditionalities for the developing countries to follow, the donor’s rhetoric of the PRSP claim for country ownership. The language has changed. Now developing countries are asked to show “recipient responsibility”. They are made responsible for the failures of a policy, which are not of their making. Norway has demanded of Tanzania and Mozambique, which are main partner countries of Norway in Africa, that they write PRSP and participate in the harmonized PRSP processes (Hole et al. 2005). A group of Swedish NGOs has made a criticism of the PRSP strategy called: *Reducing poverty or repeating mistakes?* (Cash/Sanchez 2003). The group criticizes the neoliberal ideology of the PRSP leading to cuts in government expenditure, liberalization and privatization. Apart from this criticism, the Swedish critics also comment on the language that is being used in the local hearings on the poverty reduction strategies. They maintain that a democratic participation can be ruled out if the deliberations around PRSP take place in a language people do not normally use. In countries like Nicaragua and Cambodia the PRSP were first written in English, in spite of the fact that that language is not even the official language of the governments. In Cambodia this resulted in the plans being analyzed and discussed among foreign consultants while

most Cambodians (including the program officers in the Ministries) were totally unable to understand the documents, let alone discuss them.

In EPSSA, the World Bank voices the opinion that a revitalization of education in Africa and a selective expansion (which to them primarily means increased enrollment of primary school pupils) cannot take place without major structural adjustments in the way education has been financed in most African countries. These adjustments represented, when they were introduced, major breaks with the policies of most African countries. When African countries got their independence a major promise African leaders made to their people was a rapid expansion of free basic education for the masses of Africans. In a country like Tanzania Nyerere saw to it that also secondary and tertiary education was free though limited to few students. This was seen as an important principle in order to have young people from poor environments and rural areas participate. Whether children should get a good education should not be dependent on the income of their parents. These countries have wanted to look at education as a social service and a right for all people and have wanted to use education to eliminate regional and class differences instead of creating or increasing such differences. In line with neoliberal thinking the authors of EPSSA advocate the establishment of more private schools at the primary and secondary levels, a policy which creates a dual school system, in which the powerful elites have their children in private schools where classes are small, teachers have good salaries and there is plenty of instructional materials while the public, government-financed schools continue to be poorly financed and overcrowded, teachers poorly paid and learning material in great demand.

The policy called by the innocent name “cost-sharing”, under which parents/families are required to pay fees when their children are in school, has many of the same undesirable effects as the creation of private schooling. This fact is partly acknowledged in EPSSA but the introduction of the policy is still advocated: “It is probably inevitable that parents’ contribution to the costs of primary education, and particularly secondary education, will increase, despite very real concerns about the impact of this on overall equity and efficiency.” (World Bank 1988: 95) Why is it “probably inevitable”? Is there anything the powerful industrialized countries of the North, with all their wealth and international agencies like the World Bank and the IMF, could do to prevent the pessimistic trend away from a policy of equity to one

of survival of the fittest? The countries of the North could cancel all debts, could allow the developing countries to protect their own markets and create more equal and fair terms of trade¹. After a lot of harm has been done through the World Bank policies on school fees, the World Bank has reconsidered its position on user fees in primary education (World Bank 2004a; 2004b) while still recommending it for the other educational sub-sectors.

The cost-sharing policy entails the use of fees, having parents pay for instructional materials and university students pay their own living expenses, and a shift from boarding schools to day schools. Such measures are likely to increase social inequities, regional inequalities, and inequalities between sexes. When the World Bank advocates a shift from boarding schools to day schools, it argues that living expenses should be carried by parents. It is said that these expenses do not belong to the education sector, since they are expenses, which would have had to be met by the students or their parents had they not gone to school. Yes, but in that case the students would have been working instead! This argument is not taken into account. A study in Tanzania by George Malekela has shown that students, and especially girls, do much better in boarding schools than in day schools (Malekela 1983). When in boarding school they have more time to study since they do not have to do so many household chores. They have light, so they can study also at night, and have enough food to eat.

2.1 The effects of cost-sharing – an example from Tanzania

Schooling will always have to be paid for and is never “free”. The question is: Who should pay for the education? If schooling is “free”, all taxpayers pay for schooling. Those who earn most, and often have the fewest school children, pay the most. Free schooling becomes an equity measure and a way of redistributing a society’s resources from the richer to the poorer. The re-introduction of school fees and so-called cost-sharing measures mean that the poor parents, who often have many children, have to bear a disproportionate share of the burden of their education. Often they will not be able to do so, and greater inequities will occur, both because some children will not be able to attend school and because the resources available in school will vary greatly depending on local community wealth levels. An example from Tanzania illustrates what happens with equity between social classes and between boys and girls when school fees are reintroduced. The pressu-

re on the Tanzanian government by the IMF/the World Bank and bilateral donors to reintroduce school fees, liberalize the textbook sector and open up for private primary schools, started in the mid-1980s.

During the colonial period the issue of school fees was one of the issues in Tanzania around which mass discontent was mobilized against the colonial authorities. To provide equal access to secondary schooling in Tanzania, school fees were abolished in 1964. Primary school fees remained until 1973, as they were considered minimal compared to secondary school fees. They were, however, abolished in 1973 (Galabawa 1990). The abolition of school fees was one of the measures to ensure the legitimacy of the post-colonial state. On the advice of the World Bank and the IMF primary school fees were restored in Tanzania in 1984 as a development levy². Tuition fees were introduced at the secondary level in 1985 (Samoff/Sumra 1992). The reintroduction of school fees in Tanzania has been received as an extremely unpopular measure by the Tanzanian population. The heated debates in Parliament and the pronounced discontent of parents and students at the raising of the secondary school fees is an indication of such discontent.

Difficulty in the payment of school fees is a gender issue as well as a class issue. Suleman Sumra and Naomi Katunzi found that the reintroduction of school fees in secondary schools affected girls more than boys, and girls from the middle and lower classes much more than girls from the upper classes (Sumra/Katunzi 1991). The table below shows the results for children from less well-to-do homes. Their sample consisted of 235 secondary school girls and 84 secondary school boys drawn from three locations, one in Dar es Salaam, one in Kilimanjaro, and one in Handeni.

Percentage of Students Reporting Difficulties in Paying School Fees

Students From:	Girls	Boys
Middle class families	20.6%	12.1%
Lower class families	53%	30.3%

Source: Sumra and Katunzi (1991)

If students come to school without fees having been paid, they are sent home. In Handeni Secondary School, of the students not reporting during the first week, 68 percent were girls, and of those who were sent away, 80 percent were girls (Sumra/Katunzi 1991: 27). As one girl stated: “I have been sent home three times, twice this year. Last year I was sent away once. This year when I went to collect money, my father informed me that the money was spent to pay my mother’s hospital bill. My brother was given the fees first and I was asked to wait till my father could sell his coffee again.” (Quoted in Sumra/Katunzi 1991: 27)

While students are looking for school fees, the lessons continue at school. Here is an excerpt from an interview with another secondary school student in Tanzania: “I remain behind my colleagues because I waste lot of time going back home to collect school fees. Teachers are unwilling to offer compensatory classes. I copy notes from my friends without understanding what they mean.” (Sumra/Katunzi 1991: 27)

2.2 Even the “like-minded donors” join the bandwagon

The expression “like-minded donors” is an expression that in donor parlance has come to denote the Nordic countries, Holland and Canada. These countries have in earlier times come up with fewer conditionalities to the developing countries and listened more to their concern. It used to be said in Tanzania that when Julius Nyerere felt that the World Bank/IMF were unreasonable, he would take a direct phone to his friend Olof Palme in Sweden and ask him for help and support.

Interviews I held with officials in the Ministry of Education in the spring of 1992 revealed that, according to them there had been a sad shift in policy of the Nordic countries around 1985 (Brock-Utne 2000). Before that time Tanzania felt that they could seek support from the Nordic countries if they did not like the conditionalities set up by the World Bank. It seemed to them that after that date the Nordic countries had joined the bandwagon of the World Bank. I later found the following explanation in a government White paper in Norway (St.Meld.nr.74 1984-85:27): “The Nordic countries insisted that an agreement with the IMF had to be reached if Tanzania should get any external resources whatsoever [...] *and that any extra support from the Nordic countries without such an agreement would not be given.*” (italics added, my translation).

The government officials I interviewed were upset about the fact that Norway had bought into a World Bank concept, the National Education Trust Fund, which would provide funds only to private secondary schools and only where some initiative had been taken locally. This would mean the creation of greater inequality in the education system in Tanzania they maintained. Later evaluations of this initiative have proved the government officials right (Galabawa/Alphonse 1993; Samset/Katunzi 1995). They were likewise upset about the fact that Sweden pressured them to privatize their schoolbook sector.

2.3 Coordination of aid – by whom?

In the fall of 2004 the Norwegian Association for Development Studies arranged a meeting on education and development in the city of Bergen and a plenary panel in which Olav Kjørven and I participated. Our debate later continued in written form in the journal *Forum for Development Studies* (Kjørven 2004a; Brock-Utne 2004; Kjørven 2004b). Kjørven in his intervention was concerned with “donor cooperation, harmonising donor procedures”. He writes that “it has been agreed that the local donor groups will decide when the sector program is credible and advise on the financing contributions.” (Kjørven 2004a) He admits that “donor technical assistance has largely remained outside of the control of the national government.” Donor coordination is hardly of benefit to the developing countries if the coordination is done by the donors on their terms. When a poor country forced to repay a debt it in reality has repaid several times, is to meet a group of powerful donors, the word “partnership” is a misnomer. Hassan Keynan, an education specialist from Somalia, characterizes the donor/recipient relationship as a “Beautiful Tyranny misnamed Partnership” (Brock-Utne 2000: vi). There are two problems when it comes to coordination of aid to the education sector in developing countries:

- When all the donors speak with one voice, it is difficult for the developing countries to find donors who will be more likely to understand their concerns.
- The second problem has to do with the question of who should coordinate. Whose logical frameworks should be used? How much is the national government and the national Ministry of Education in the “driver’s seat?”

Ulla Kann, who just after independence in Namibia held the position as aid coordinator in the Ministry of Education and Culture in Namibia tells that she thought she understood what she was supposed to do when she signed the contract. It was clearly stated that she was to assist the Ministry in coordinating the inputs of the various donors and show loyalty to the Ministry and the Government of Namibia. But during her time in the position as aid coordinator she was forced to realize “that aid coordination was considered by the donors to be an issue for donors. But I did not, and still do not, agree with that understanding.” (Kann 1997: 5)

2.4 Educational strategy with a World Bank imprint

With buzz words like “harmonization” and “alignment” donor policies tend even more to align behind neoliberal World Bank policies. The Norwegian government in 2003 issued a policy document meant to guide Norwegian aid to the education sector. This was under a conservative coalition government. The Minister of Development was from the Christian party and the Secretary of State, Olav Kjørven, likewise. He had also worked in the World Bank. The policy document was called “Education – Job Number 1” (MFA 2003). In the fall of 2005 Norway got a different coalition government consisting of the Social Democrats, the Centre party and the Socialist Left party. That government has not yet (Fall 2006) issued new principles for development aid to the education sector.

Neither in the policy paper “Education – Job Number 1” nor in the intervention made by Secretary of State Olav Kjørven (2004a) in the plenary debate and printed in *Forum for Development Studies* is the main concept “education” looked at critically. The policy paper claims: “Education is a precondition for development.” (MFA 2003: 6) Is this true? It may be true, or it may not be true. That depends totally on *what type of education* is promoted. It is not enough to say that it should be education of good quality. Such a claim begs the question: What is meant by quality? My main problem with the policy paper is the lack of a professional, critical and informed discussion of key concepts. In spite of the colourful art works made by children in developing countries which brighten up the policy paper, it represents a definite set-back compared to the policy paper “Basic Principles” made by NORAD in 1995 (NORAD 1995). The following is a quote from the 1995 policy paper (NORAD 1995: 1):

“History shows that education has several conflicting functions:

- Education can be a progressive force where oppressed groups gain identity, self-respect and skills for their advancement. But education can also be used to indoctrinate and for oppressive control.
- Education can function as a tool for creating equity. But through education one can also legitimate and strengthen discrimination – of gender, social classes and groups.
- Education can build cooperation and solidarity. At the same time education is an instrument for social selection based on individual performance.”

This type of thinking, one does not find in World Bank policies. It is also totally absent in the newest strategies from the Norwegian government. These strategies look like they have been copied from a World Bank blueprint written by bureaucrats without any professional expertise within educational thinking and research. The important concept “quality of education” which the newest strategies make frequent use of and which also Kjølven uses, lacks further definition and discussion. What is quality education? A minimum prerequisite should be that it is a type of education that builds on what the student already knows and takes his or her culture, language and experiences into account.

3. When the most important educational question is overlooked

There seems to be general agreement that students learn better when they understand what the teacher is saying. We are just four and a half million people in Norway, but we see it as a matter of course that our children are taught through the medium of the Sami or Norwegian languages not only in primary school, but also throughout secondary school, professional colleges and universities. We even have two written varieties of Norwegian, both used in school, and a variety of dialects, which can be used orally in our classrooms. In the north we have an indigenous population, the Sami people, with a very different language than Norwegian. For about hundred years they were treated the way African children are still treated in many places in Africa. They came to school and could not speak or understand Norwegian, which was the language of instruction. They were even punished for speaking their own Sami language. Around 1880 teachers were in-

structed not to use any Sami language with Sami children even when the teachers could speak that language themselves. For a hundred years a strict Norwegianisation policy was followed in the areas where the Sami people live. Henry Minde quotes a Sami woman who in a Norwegian newspaper in 2001 noted: “If it has taken 100 years to Norwegianise the Samis, then it will perhaps take another 100 years to make us Samis again.” (Minde 2005: 6) The Sami children were taught to look down on their own language and their own culture. Sami teachers who were not able to demonstrate good results in the change of language to Norwegian were not given a wage increase.

This changed around the 1980s with the Alta controversy of 1979-81, which became a symbol of the Sami fight against cultural discrimination and for collective respect, for political autonomy and for material right. This was also a time when the Sami language was restored as the language of instruction in schools with Sami children. Since that time Sami children use the Sami language as language of instruction both in primary and secondary school and learn Norwegian as a subject. There is also a Sami institution of higher learning where one can study in Sami. The University of Tromsø has courses in the Sami language, and all signs on buildings are in both Sami and Norwegian.

In many of the developing countries, which receive support from Norway, students sit day in and day out in school and understand nothing of what is going on. Paulo Freire defined the practice of imposing a foreign language upon the learner for studying another subject as a violation of the structure of thinking (Freire 1985). Yet this is the situation most African children find themselves in today (Brock-Utne 2000; 2001; 2002; Brock-Utne et al. 2003). The former colonial powers use a large part of their aid budget to promote their own languages as languages of instruction in the schools in Africa. Their policy has found backing in the World Bank. Alamin Mazrui mentions that a World Bank loan to the Central African Republic, allegedly intended to improve the quality and accessibility of primary education, came with a package of conditions that required the nation to import its textbooks directly from France and Canada (Mazrui 1997). It has been estimated that due to similar World Bank projects and linkages, over 80 percent of schoolbooks in “francophone” Africa are now produced directly in France (Nnana 1995: 17). Walter Bgoya (1992) has given a detail-

led account of how the English Language Support Project in Tanzania benefited British publishers like Longmann and Macmillan but did nothing to promote the Tanzanian publishing industry (Bgoya 1992). Neither did it make it any easier for Tanzanian students to be learning through English. The greatest educational problem in Africa today is the use of unfamiliar languages as languages of instruction.

For two years I was hired as a consultant by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to make some AGEI (African Girls Education Initiative) project visits to schools in Africa, which got Norwegian support through UNICEF. I sat at the back of classrooms in Uganda, Swaziland, Namibia, Niger, Mali and Guinea. Everywhere I found the same tragic situation, children and teachers who had great difficulties expressing themselves in the foreign medium of instruction, whether it was French or English. Teachers would use code-switching (switching between the foreign medium and a local one which was more familiar to the children) and would tell me that this was the only way they could get the students to understand. Use of this strategy is, however, outlawed in most countries in Africa. If the student uses a familiar local language to answer a question in an exam paper, s/he is awarded zero points, even though the answer may be completely correct. In Guinea government representatives told me how grateful they were to the German and Swiss development agencies that helped them with their new policy of using their own local African languages as languages of instruction and gave support to have textbooks published in these languages. Neither in "Education – Job Number 1" (MFA 2003) nor in the intervention by the Secretary of State in the Foreign Ministry Kjørven (Kjørven 2004a) is there any mention of the greatest educational problem in Africa: the foreign medium of instruction which is a barrier to all learning. This is disappointing from a nation so proud of its own language. Norway joins forces with the World Bank, the former colonial powers and the tiny African elite (about 5 percent) who have a good command of the imperial languages. This policy works to the detriment of the masses, of the poor people in the developing countries. Kjørven writes: "Norway will strengthen development of good quality textbooks." Good quality textbooks are textbooks written in a language students understand and master and with a content responsive to their environment.

The “Education for All” strategy formulated in Jomtien in 1990 was meant to target the poor (Brock-Utne 2000; 2005a; 2005b). In an article on education for all, policy lessons from high-achieving countries Santosh Mehrotra draws our attention to what he sees as the most important characteristic of those developing countries that really target the poor and have the highest percentage of the population with a completed basic education: “The experience of the high-achievers has been unequivocal: the mother tongue was used as the medium of instruction at the primary level in all cases.” (Mehrotra 1998: 479)

Yet in the 2000 World Education Forum in Dakar there was, according to Nadine Dutcher no mention of the language issue in the plenary sessions of the conference (Dutcher 2004). There is also little consideration of the language issue in the resulting documents from the Forum. There is limited reference in official documents to the fact that millions of children are entering school without knowing the language of instruction. Many of these children are in Africa. Dutcher holds: “It is shocking that the international dialogue on Education for All has not confronted the problems children face when they enter school not understanding the medium of instruction, when they are expected to *learn* a new language at the same time as they are learning *in* and *through* the new language. *The basic problem is that children cannot understand what the teacher is saying!* We believe that if international planners had faced these issues on a global scale, there would have been progress to report. However, instead of making changes that would lead to real advancement, the international community has simply repledged itself to the same goals, merely moving the target ahead from the year 2000 to 2015.” (Dutcher 2004: 8, emphasis in original)

With the help of expatriate consultants teacher guides are being worked out and teacher training courses given to have African teachers become more “learner-centred”, to help them activate their students and engage them in critical thinking and dialogue. Teachers are asked to abandon a teacher style where students just copy notes from the blackboard, learn their notes by heart and repeat them at tests. Little thought has been given to the fact that this teaching style might be the only one possible when neither the teacher nor the students command the language of instruction. Africa is called anglophone, francophone or lusophone according to the languages introduced by the colonial masters and still used as official languages. These langu-

ages are, however, not the languages spoken in Africa. They are comfortably mastered only by 5 to 10 percent of the people. The great majority of Africans use African languages for daily communication. Africa is afrophone.

From a socio-political aspect, the use of African national languages in the educational process represents, for those African states making the option, a sign of political sovereignty with regard to the old colonial power, as well as an assertion of their cultural identity, denied in the past by the colonialists through the harsh relegation of African languages to the inferior status of “vernaculars”.

The World Bank referring to an undated paper from SACMEQ (n.d.) notes that regional studies in Africa have found that as few as ten percent of children master the intended curriculum (World Bank 2006: 75). This information does not make the authors of the World Bank report discuss whether the reason for this could be that the curriculum has an unfamiliar content and is presented in an unfamiliar language.

My main criticism of the policy paper “Education – Job Number 1” is the lack of a problem oriented critical approach to the difficult task of aiding developing countries when it comes to education. I also lack a Norwegian imprint. What do we as Norwegians have to offer? Maybe the most important thing we have to offer is a history of an equality oriented, state financed educational system built on the use of the Norwegian languages as the language of instruction not only at primary and secondary level but at the tertiary level as well. Though we have a nasty hundred years history of trying to norwegianise the Sami people and outlaw their language as a language of instruction in school, the Sami language has now been restored as a language of instruction in primary, secondary and higher education. The Norwegian society has tried to repay its debt to the Sami population by a massive investment in producing textbooks and training teachers in the Sami language.

4. Alternative educational models

What possibilities are there for alternative educational models to take root in countries forced into accepting the neoliberal agenda? There are hardly any possibilities. Curriculum development centres, which were built up in many places in the developing countries after they got their independence, have been dismantled (Brock-Utne 2000). Donors have come in with their own curriculum packages, which they want to see introduced in schools in Africa, programs in life skills and in HIV-Aids education. A good example of donor involvement is given by Mbunda. He tells how: “Nearly all curriculum integration projects based at the Ministry of Education and Culture headquarters or TIE (Tanzania Institute of Education) are run by donor funds, without which they will stop. At TIE, for example, there is the Family Life Education Project funded by UNFPA; the Environmental Education Project funded by GTZ; AIDS Control Education funded by WHO. The donor pressure on what should be included in the content is tremendous.” (Mbunda 1997: 183)

He tells how the donors through their aid have an enormous influence on the curriculum, especially in those subjects and themes that they are interested in. Donors have exerted great pressure to have the themes they are interested in become full-fledged subjects in primary school. Mbunda tells how the government has tried to counteract this pressure and instead agreed to have the themes the donors wanted included in the new integrated subjects both at primary and secondary levels. But the donor pressure continues: “So far the most affected subjects include the English and French languages, Unified Science (certain themes), Social Studies (certain themes), and primary teacher education. The projects were introduced with conditions laid down by both the donor and the implementing agency. Threats of withdrawing funds or other action to be taken by the donor where the implementing agency fails to honour the laid-down conditions are common.” (Mbunda 1997: 184)

The donors support what they deem important. It may often not coincide with the wishes of the recipient. In Swaziland I saw how the government, which received funding for one education project from USAID, obsessed with learning assessment and using American consultants, quickly

tried to redefine the same project to have to do with basic education targeting the girl child to secure funding from Norway.

The system of competitive bidding, which is forced on developing countries by institutions like the World Bank and IMF, has led to curriculum material being developed by American firms instead of local curriculum centres. For instance Uganda some years back was forced to put out a tender for the construction of new instructional material for their Education for All initiative. The curriculum development centre in Uganda put in a bid but did not win the tender. The tender went to the American firm, Creative Associates located in Washington DC, close to the World Bank. The teacher guides made by this firm instructed teachers all over Uganda to use English only from grade 2 even though the official language policy of Uganda says that the local languages shall be used in the three first grades in rural areas (Brock-Utne 2000). The former colonialists have supplied textbooks printed in their countries and in their languages. The language question is of course central to the whole issue of an alternative education. A type of learning environment where students are active, build on their own knowledge and are inquisitive assumes the use of familiar languages as languages of instruction.

4.1 The language used in an inquiry based model of learning

Ranaweera the former Director of Education at the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education, in Sri Lanka writes about the great advantages to the population of Sri Lanka of the introduction of Sinhala and Tamil as the languages of instruction to replace English – *especially* for the teaching of science and technology: “The transition from English to the national languages as the medium of instruction in science helped to destroy the great barrier that existed between the privileged English educated classes; between the science educated elite and the non-science educated masses; between science itself and the people. It gave confidence to the common man that science is within his reach and to the teachers and pupils that a knowledge of English need not necessarily be a prerequisite for learning science.” (Ranaweera 1976: 423)

Ranaweera tells that the change of medium of instruction in science and mathematics always lagged behind the other subjects, because of special difficulties like the absence of scientific and technical terms, textbooks

and proficient teachers. Yet he found the need to switch over to the national languages to be greatest in the science subjects. He gives two reasons for this claim: First, science education was considered the main instrument through which national development goals and the improvements of the quality of life of the masses could be achieved. Thus, there was a need to expand science education. He tells that the English medium was a great constraint, which hindered the expansion of science education. Second, he mentions that in order to achieve the wider objectives of science education, such as in calculation of the methods and attitudes of science, the didactic teaching approach had to be replaced by an activity- and inquiry-based approach which requires greater dialogue, discussion and interaction between the pupil and the teacher and among the pupils themselves: Such an approach makes a heavy demand on the language ability of the pupils and will be more successful if the medium of instruction is also the first language of the pupils (Ranaweera 1976: 417).

Ranaweera's argument of bringing science to the people through the languages people naturally command is an argument *for* democracy and for a new and active teaching approach. The current trend in Sri Lanka, where the use of English as a language of instruction, especially in science and technology is again being promoted, works *against* the democratizing trend adhered to by Ranaweera. The World Bank claims that in order "to promote social cohesion in Sri Lanka, the Bank is supporting [...]the introduction of English as the medium for education in schools designated as "Amity Schools". (World Bank 2006: 37) The promotion has, however, been rather unsuccessful. Punchi found that students shed away from the classes taught in English even though there were incentives connected to attending them (Punchi 2006). Punchi suggests as a better way of promoting social cohesion in Sri Lanka that the Sinhala speaking children learn Tamil and the Tamil speaking children learn Sinhala in school (Punchi 2001). These are the languages of Sri Lanka spoken by all the people. English is a foreign language used by the elite.

4.2 A culturally sensitive model of learning

Will the use of an indigenous language as a language of instruction in school be a guarantee for survival of local cultures? Foreign thoughts from foreign cultures in an artificially created environment can be conveyed

through local languages. Local culture and curricular content can likewise be conveyed through foreign languages.

In an article on the impact of formal education on the Huaorani of Amazonian Ecuador Laura Rival argues against those who think that the cultural heritage of children will be preserved solely by providing literacy in the mother tongue. “No culture can be reduced to its linguistic expression”, she claims (Rival 1993: 131). I have argued that languages should be preserved not only to retain culture. Language is more than culture. But likewise culture is not only language. Rival shows what the norms deeply enshrined in the institution of western schooling do to forest life when a school is introduced among a hunter and gatherer group like the Huaorani in the middle of the tropical forest. The institution of schooling itself separates children from their parents, reduces the time they have to learn from the older community members, learn what is necessary and valuable in the kind of society they live. It breaks up the day in a hitherto unknown way and forces a community into a more sedentary life than what they have normally led.

In a paper on the relationship between language and culture I have presented and discussed the following four models (Brock-Utne 2006):

	Foreign language	Local language
Foreign content	A) Textbooks written and published abroad in a foreign language adopted for use without any modification	B) Direct translations of e.g. textbooks and curriculum material made abroad
Local content	C) Some well-known authors write from Africa in the ex-colonial languages. Some textbooks have also been produced in foreign languages but with local content	D) Texts taken from the local culture written in the local language

Of these four models model A is the least desirable, but unfortunately the one most in use in Africa, while model D is the most desirable but in little use.

4.3 A model built on local culture and local language

Though model D above is unfortunately the one we see the least, it does exist. An interesting educational program, known as the Village School Program, was in 1994 put in place for the Ju/'hoansi San children in the Nyae Nyae area in the northeastern part of the Otjozondjupa region in Namibia (Brock-Utne 1997; 2000). The project was supported by the Swedish development agency, SIDA. The general aim of the Village School Project was to provide basic education in the mother tongue for the first three years of school. The philosophy of the Village School Program is that school facilities should be close to where the children live. The school should not divide children from parents. For four of the five village schools school buildings were constructed. In the fifth school the teacher taught under a tree (Pfafte 2002). The older people are integrated in the village schools. Religion is not taught in the schools since the learners receive their own religious instruction from home. The teachers are from the community and speak the language of the children.

The educational program is geared to the culture of the learner. The language of instruction is the local language Ju/'Hoan. The Ju/'hoansi San children are known not to attend school, but they attend the Village School Program of the Nyae Nyae Foundation. The reason for this may be the cultural sensitivity of the program. Part of the reason why the Ju/'hoansi San have not wanted their children to attend school is that schools have practiced corporal punishment (such punishment has now been outlawed in Namibian schools). Corporal punishment is a practice which goes completely against the Ju/'hoansi San culture. In the Village School Program such punishment has never been practiced. When the learners get fidgety or bored, the lessons are simply stopped. They then do something else or stop completely for the day (Brock-Utne 1995; 2000).

According to personal communication from the Nyae Nyae Foundation, the 220 children in the Village School Program are far ahead of other learners because they learn in their mother tongue and are exposed to culturally sensitive teaching material and teachers whom everyone respects

(Brock-Utne 1995; 2000). The production of teaching material was done within the program and great emphasis has been placed on local curriculum development. Joachim Pfaffe tells that during the course of the project literacy primers of the Ju/'hoan language were developed, based on traditional stories of the Ju/'hoan people. These were collected in the villages of Nyae Nyae by the student teachers themselves. During the subsequent development process of the readers, the original stories were accompanied by illustrations and also didactically adapted for initial literacy teaching. Pfaffe tells how: "Following the production of the Ju/'hoan literacy primers, their subsequent translation into English promoted the cultural richness of the Ju/'hoan people, and made it accessible to a wider audience. Moreover, the English readers are now offering possibilities for contextually appropriate teaching of English as a foreign language." (Pfaffe 2002: 161)

The teaching of English as a foreign language will follow model C in my table, while the teaching of all other subjects will follow model D. The likelihood that a program like the one put up by the Nyae Nyae Foundation will be introduced on a larger scale, is though highly desirable, unfortunately small.

5. Conclusion

In this article I have focused on the effects of the neoliberal agenda on equity within the education sector, especially in Africa. I have shown how even a "like-minded donor" like Norway in the mid 1980s joined the bandwagon of the World Bank. I have shown how the pressure put on African countries to follow the neoliberal agenda within the field of education is already outlined in the 1988 World Bank document Education Policies for Sub-Saharan Africa (EPSSA). Here concepts like cost-sharing (having the poor to pay for an education which was earlier provided by the state) and diversification of education (opening up for market-driven forces and privatization) are key-concepts. The document follows the structural economic policies of the World Bank insisting on reduced government spending, privatization and liberalization. The neoliberal agenda outlined in this document has, since that time, been followed up in other important policy documents called Education for All (EFA), Fast Track Initiative (FTI) or Poverty

Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). With buzz words like “harmonization” and “alignment” donor policies tend even more to align behind neoliberal World Bank policies. I have in this article shown the effects of the donor policy “cost-sharing” in a poor country like Tanzania. There is growing inequality between rich and poor. Some parents can afford schooling for their children, others cannot.

The Norwegian government in 2003 issued a policy document meant to guide Norwegian aid to the education sector. This policy document is analysed here. The important concept “quality of education” which this strategy makes frequent use of lacks further definition and discussion. There can be no quality education unless education builds on what the student already knows and takes his or her culture, language and experiences into account. I have shown how the most important question there is when it comes to education in developing countries, namely the language of instruction, has been overlooked by most donors and institutions like the World Bank. In Sri Lanka before they introduced the national languages as languages of instruction the English medium was a great constraint, which hindered the expansion of science education. In order to achieve the wider objectives of science education, the didactic teaching approach had to be replaced by an activity- and inquiry-based approach, which requires greater dialogue, discussion and interaction between the pupil and the teacher and among the pupils themselves. Such an approach makes a heavy demand on the language ability of the pupils and is unlikely to be successful unless the medium of instruction is also the first language of the pupils. Towards the end of the article I present and discuss four models on the relationship between language and culture showing that the best model is when both the content of the curriculum and the language are familiar to the student. There is a good pedagogical principle which states that it is wise to start with the familiar and reach out to the unknown. This principle needs to be followed up also when it comes to education for development.

- 1) These were the wishes voiced by the South (the less industrialized, mostly formerly colonized countries) at the 1990 EFA conference in Thailand (Brock-Utne 2000).
- 2) To be fair to the World Bank, we should remark that the World Bank seems able to learn from its mistakes (but without admitting that they have been mistaken and only after much harm has been done in poor countries). The 1995 *Review* states that no fees should normally be charged at primary level (World Bank 1995). This is reiterated by Burnett and Patrinos (1996).

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Abstracts

Der Artikel behandelt die Auswirkungen des Neoliberalismus auf Chancengleichheit in der Bildung, insbesondere in Afrika. Er zeigt, dass sogar ein „*like-minded donor*“ wie Norwegen sich Mitte der 1980er Jahre der Politik der Weltbank angeschlossen hat, sodass von einer „*Worldbankification*“ der norwegischen Entwicklungszusammenarbeit gesprochen werden kann. Eine Diskussion darüber, welche *Art* von Bildung nötig wäre, findet nicht mehr statt. Es wird angenommen, dass die in der Kolonialzeit etablierte und von den Geberländern geförderte Bildung für Entwicklungsländer gut genug ist. Aber inwieweit können Kinder in Afrika lernen, wenn der Unterricht in einer Sprache abgehalten wird, die nicht einmal das Lehrpersonal wirklich beherrscht? Welche Möglichkeiten haben alternative Bildungskonzepte, in dieser neoliberalen Umgebung zu bestehen? Wie können in einer solchen Situation lernerzentrierte, dialogische Unterrichtsmethoden umgesetzt werden?

This article focuses on the effects of the neoliberal agenda on equity within the education sector, especially in Africa. It shows how even a “like-minded donor” like Norway in the mid 1980s joined the bandwagon of the World Bank. There has been a “Worldbankification” of Norwegian development aid. There is no discussion any more of the *type* of education to be given. There is an assumption that the type of education introduced by the colonialists and promoted by donors is what developing countries need. But how much are children in Africa able to learn when instruction is given in a language neither they nor their teachers command well? What possibilities have alternative educational concepts of surviving in the neoliberal environment? How possible is it in such a situation to introduce learner centred teaching methods and dialogue?

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