

International Funding of Educational Development: External Agendas and Internal Adaptations—the Case of Liberia

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I. Introduction

The past quarter century has been a period of tremendous educational growth in developing countries. During the period from 1960 to 1985, primary school enrollments in developing states rose 50 percent, from 60.7 percent of the primary-school-aged population in 1960 to 91.5 percent in 1985.¹ Secondary enrollments tripled from 12.6 percent of the secondary-school-aged population in 1960 to 38.4 percent in 1985.² And enrollments in tertiary education quadrupled from 2.1 percent of 20–24-year-olds in 1960 to 8.8 percent in 1985.³ National expenditures for education in developing states showed paralleled increases during the period from 1970 to 1983, growing from 2.9 percent of the developing world's gross national product (GNP) in 1970 to 4.0 percent of its GNP in 1983.⁴

Despite the expansion of education in the developing world, development planners, educators, and education development researchers cite numerous problems with educational systems (including problems of access, quality, cost, and design)⁵ and express disappointment at the apparent failure of educational expansion to decrease dependency, reduce inequities, or to promote economic growth.⁶ The litany of problems characterizing

¹ Unesco, *Unesco Statistical Yearbook* (New York: United Nations, 1985), p. II-32.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, sec. 2, p. 36.

⁵ L. H. Kaluba, "Education in Zambia: The Paradox of the Public School Solution," *Comparative Education* 22, no. 2 (1986): 159–69; Philip H. Coombs, *Future World Critical Issues in Educational Development: A Report of Preliminary Findings* (Princeton, N.J.: International Council for Educational Development [ICED], 1981); Hermes J. Mosha, "The Role of African Universities in National Development: A Critical Analysis," *Comparative Education* 22, no. 2 (1986): 93–109; Hollis Chenery, Montek S. Ahluwalia, C. L. G. Bell, J. H. Duloy, and R. Jolly, *Redistribution with Growth* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974); Robert L. Ayres, *Banking on the Poor: The World Bank and World Poverty* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983); Kevin Lillis and Desmond Hogan, "Dilemmas of Diversification: Problems Associated with Vocational Education in Developing Countries," *Comparative Education* 19, no. 1 (1983): 89–107.

⁶ Coombs points out a weak association between economic development and educational expansion, noting that economic growth lags far behind educational growth in most developing states. See Philip H. Coombs, *The World Crisis in Education: The View from the Eighties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Sica and Prechel similarly fail to find a relationship between educational development and economic growth. See Alan Sica and Harland Prechel, "National Political-Economic Dependency

education systems in developing states and plaguing educational planners and project implementers reveals the weakness of educational development as an engine of social, economic, and political change. When seen in this light, the question is not why educational expansion has failed to promote economic growth, to reduce social inequalities, or to establish participatory political systems. The question is, Why, in the face of large investments of human and capital resources, are education systems in such disarray—what is going wrong with the educational development process?

The following pages concentrate on the question of what goes wrong in educational development. The findings reported here are based on a detailed analysis of one case, the West African country of Liberia during the period from 1972 to 1985.⁷ This effort to identify the impediments to educational development focuses on a major set of actors in the development process—international funding agencies. We outline the ways in which development projects sponsored by international funding agencies shaped and often distorted organizational aspects of the Liberian education system during the 14-year period under investigation. We believe that the Liberian case is not unique, that similar problems inevitably result from internationally funded development efforts wherever they occur.

II. Liberian Educational Development, 1970–85

Liberian patterns of educational development parallel those of other developing countries. During the period from 1970 to 1980, Liberian primary enrollments of children aged 6–11 grew by nearly one-half from 56 percent in 1970 to 76 percent in 1980.⁸ Secondary enrollments of

in the Global Economy and Educational Development," *Comparative Education Review* 25 (October 1981): 384–402. Psacharopoulos, Weis, and Kaluba provide arguments and evidence for education's perpetuation or even the increase of social inequalities in developing countries. See George Psacharopoulos, "The Perverse Effects of Public Subsidization of Education: Or How Equal Is Free Education?" *Comparative Education Review* 21 (February 1977): 69–90; Lois Weis, "Education and the Reproduction of Inequality: The Case of Ghana," *Comparative Education Review* 23 (February 1979): 41–50; Kaluba, Carnoy and Berman argue that the design and control of information systems and educational development projects by developed states tend to perpetuate Third World dependency. See Martin Carnoy, *Education as Cultural Imperialism* (New York: McKay, 1974); Edward Berman, "Foundations of United States Foreign Policy and African Education, 1945–1975," *Harvard Educational Review* 49 (May 1979): 145–79. Kelly and Altbach and Mazrui make parallel arguments pointing to the legacy of colonial educational institutions and curricula in the subordination of Third World education systems. See Gail P. Kelly and Philip G. Altbach, "Introduction," and Ali Mazrui, "The African University as a Multinational Corporation: Problems of Penetration and Dependency," in *Education and Colonialism*, ed. G. P. Kelly and P. G. Altbach (New York: Longman, 1978). Finally, Payer argues that educational development assistance programs are designed less to maximize development than to maintain existing unequal international economic relations and to benefit offshore economic interests. See Cheryl Payer, *The World Bank: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Monthly Review, 1982).

⁷ This research was conducted during our tenure in Liberia, where Nagel was a Fulbright scholar at the University of Liberia and at the Ministry of Education (1984/85) and where Snyder was a technical advisor at the Ministry of Education (1983/85).

⁸ Unesco (n. 1 above), sec. 3, p. 28.

children aged 12–17 more than doubled during the same period, from 10 percent in 1970 to 23 percent in 1980.⁹ And tertiary enrollments of those aged 20–24 nearly tripled from less than 1 percent in 1970 to 2.5 percent in 1980.¹⁰ Increases in student enrollments were accompanied by increases in the number of teachers and in the number of schools. In 1970, there were 4,048 primary and secondary, public and private school teachers;¹¹ by 1984, the number of primary and secondary teachers had increased 17 percent to 4,742 (a significant increase, though it failed to keep up with student enrollment expansion).¹² The number of schools also grew during the 1970–84 period, increasing 41 percent from 887 primary and secondary schools in 1970 to 1,251 primary and secondary schools in 1984.¹³

Ironically, just as these figures mirror those cited above for all developing countries, so too do the types and magnitude of problems underlying these expansive data. The Liberian education sector suffers from a shortage of trained teachers, problems with curriculum development, usage, and relevancy, limited access to education, lack of instructional materials, poor supervision, weak administration, and inadequate vocational and technical education.¹⁴ The list is essentially identical to those problems researchers identify as confronting most developing countries. Like those of other developing states, Liberia's educational development problems bear witness to their depth and tenacity.

Although Liberia became the African continent's first independent state in 1847, any systematic efforts at national educational development did not begin until the 1950s when, under President W. V. S. Tubman's Unification Policy,¹⁵ Liberia began an unprecedented expansion of its educational facilities, assisted in large part by foreign aid.¹⁶ The first decade of Liberian educational development was reviewed by a U.S. Agency

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Public schools are government operated. Private schools include religious and mission schools, concession-run schools, and private schools. Most private schools are subsidized by the government of Liberia.

¹² Data for 1984 were obtained from an extensive survey of schools conducted by the Ministry of Education's Division of Information Systems and Data Services and are considered to be significantly more reliable than the possibly inflated 1970 data.

¹³ Conrad W. Snyder, Jr., and Joane Nagel, *The Struggle Continues! World Bank and African Development Bank Investments in Liberian Educational Development, 1972–1985* (McLean, Va.: Institute for International Research, 1986), pp. 56–61.

¹⁴ U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), *Education and Training Sector Assessment* (Monrovia: Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs and USAID/Liberia, 1983); C. W. Snyder, Jr., and S. Ju, *Architecture for Progress* (McLean, Va.: Institute for International Research, 1984).

¹⁵ Tubman's Unification Policy was designed to begin integration of Liberia's vast majority (over 95 percent) indigenous population into a social, economic, and political system separated from parallel indigenous institutions and dominated by an immigrant "settler" or "Americo-Liberian" population.

¹⁶ Gus Liebenow, *Liberia: The Evolution of Privilege* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1969); R. D. Clower, G. Dalton, and M. Harwitz, *Growth without Development: An Economic Survey of Liberia* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1966).

for International Development—sponsored evaluation team; the evaluation was a depressing harbinger of subsequent Liberian- and foreign-sponsored assessments:

What is disturbing about Liberia is not that ten years have failed to produce a good educational system, but that ten years have failed to produce even the foundations of such a system. The reasons are not entirely clear. One can point to numerous instances of inefficiency, corruption, and incompetence in the development and operation of the expanding system of government schools; but difficulties of this kind are common to most developing economies and do not afford an adequate explanation of Liberia's peculiar backwardness in the educational field. It can also be argued that Liberia has not spent enough on education in recent years; but this argument is hard to defend, for one might with equal force contend that had twice as much money been spent, twice as much would have been wasted.¹⁷

While Clower and his associates did not successfully solve the puzzle of Liberia's educational development problems, their analysis remained apt, if somewhat overstated,¹⁸ nearly 2 decades later when we participated in a Liberian Ministry of Education—sponsored assessment of World Bank and African Development Bank (referred to hereafter as "Bank Group") projects.¹⁹ Our report stated, "The picture of Liberian education is a limited-access and high-wastage system that is expanding, but not fast enough to assimilate a greater proportion of a fast-growing population. . . . Bank Group investments . . . may have helped Liberia from losing more ground in meeting the educational needs of its populace, but little in the way of progress can be claimed."²⁰

As portrayed by the above reports, the Liberian educational development landscape looked uniformly bleak despite increases in enrollments and the number of teachers and schools.²¹ The incongruity between educational expansion on the one hand and education system disarray on the other hand leads to the inevitable question of what is wrong with Liberian education—why have 3 decades of development efforts produced so little successful education design and delivery? The answers are complex and, like the problems, not unique to Liberian education: a poor infrastructure in a poor nation; a borrowed design for schooling ranging from buildings to teacher training to curricula; an inefficient and often neglectful, often

¹⁷ Clower et al., p. 345.

¹⁸ In hindsight, it would be hard to argue now that either Liberia's educational "backwardness" or its slow development was *peculiar*, though perhaps extreme.

¹⁹ The term "Bank Group" is used here to refer to the combined investments of the World Bank and the African Development Bank. In Liberia there were four Bank Group projects, two of which were funded by both the World Bank and the African Development Bank (in 1976 and 1982).

²⁰ Snyder and Nagel, p. 48.

²¹ Researchers have reported some successes, e.g., the USAID-sponsored Monrovia Consolidated School System (MCSS), established in the 1960s, and the Bank Group—sponsored Mano River Union Forestry Training Institute (FTI), established in the 1970s, were reported to be operating well (Snyder and Nagel; USAID).

self-interested, educational administrative apparatus lacking in supervision and unable to exert control over a teaching staff that is poorly trained, seldom paid, and part of a profession that labors in an environment of low material and status rewards.

Reports of problems like these abound in the literature on educational development and are valid factors impeding development progress. However, like the aggregate statistics that depict a misleading pattern of educational expansion, these factors do not tell the whole story. Indeed, they are less explanations than they are factors themselves to be explained. To accept such problems as inefficiency, neglect, corruption, disorganization, absenteeism, or incompetency as the primary explanations for underdevelopment leaves researchers and educational planners at a dead end. An illuminating analysis should explain the persistence or even the production of these problems. The next section of this article explicates the ways in which one important aspect of educational development—international funding of development projects—contributes to and sometimes creates some of the most persistent and vexing educational development problems.

III. Liberian Education as a Loosely Coupled System

In the 1970s, organizational theorists challenged the traditional view of organizations as rationally planned and operated, bureaucratically and efficiently structured, and possessed of clear and identifiable functions and boundaries. After researchers documented the fluid, often apparently irrational and inefficient structures of many organizations, there emerged an alternate understanding of organizations as “loosely coupled,” that is, flexible, unplanned, decentralized, and diversely structured.²² Researchers cited a number of characteristics of loosely coupled systems: lack of relationship among resources, production, and demands; causal independence—inputs unrelated to outputs; redundancy—several means or units to achieve the same results; slow or absent coordination among units; mismatch between organizational chart and unit activity; concealment and poor surveillance opportunities/capabilities; absence of linkages among units; failure to implement rules; frequent and unpunished violations of rules; decentralization of authority.

Meyer and Rowan, in particular, have argued that loose coupling accurately characterizes American schooling, where there are pluralistic systems of control, but perhaps less accurately characterizes British and

²² Karl E. Weick, “Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 21 (1976): 1–19; M. R. Davis, T. E. Deal, J. W. Meyer, B. Rowan, W. R. Scott, and E. A. Stackhouse, eds., *The Structure of Educational Systems: Explorations in the Theory of Loosely-Coupled Organizations* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University, Center for Research and Development in Teaching, 1977).

Continental educational systems, where control is centralized and resides in ministries of education.²³ Many aspects of Liberian society are influenced by the American model; however, the educational system is ostensibly tightly structured under its national Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, in the course of our 1985 Bank Group assessment for the Liberian Ministry of Education (MOE), we observed fractionalization, lack of coordination, and drift in the education sector as a whole, and the same problems within and among the various education subsectors (primary education, secondary education, tertiary education, vocational/technical education, teacher training, curriculum development, supervision, and administration).

Teaching was an autonomous activity often divorced from any curriculum, instructional materials, or supervision. The pieces of schooling often failed to come together or else converged in an unexpected manner. We observed schools with no principals, no teachers, no instructional materials, and/or no students. We observed single buildings with more than one school, each with its own name, principal, uniforms, teaching staff, and student body. We observed teacher training programs operating without nationally approved textbooks, learning a curriculum different from the national curriculum, and producing graduates who planned and pursued nonteaching careers. We observed competing national systems of primary education, sponsored by different international agencies, each with its own schools, teacher training programs, supervisory systems, curricula, and instructional materials. We observed dissociation among the contents of (a) the national curriculum, (b) the national textbooks, and (c) the national examinations (not surprisingly accompanied by poor national high school exam results).²⁴

Further, we observed incongruities between the described and actual functions of many units in the Ministry of Education: a research division and a planning division whose work was routinely conducted by other units and by Liberian and international staff scattered throughout the ministry; a statistics division whose work was conducted by a unit created by a Bank Group development project; and an IBM unit created by another development grant, no longer functioning, but still staffed.

In addition, we noted jurisdictional ambiguities and conflicts between units within the Ministry of Education over control of primary schooling, science and vocational/technical schooling, the development and publication

²³ John Meyer and Brian Rowan, "The Structure of Educational Organization," in *Organizational Environment: Ritual and Rationality*, ed. J. W. Meyer and W. R. Scott (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1983); John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony," *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 2 (1977): 340-63.

²⁴ C. O. Agbenyega, Grace Morris, and Annette Henry, "The Liberia National Examinations and Standard Setting," in *Final Report of the 1984 National Policy Conference on Education and Training* (Monrovia: Ministry of Education, 1984), pp. 249-67.

of instructional materials, the sale of textbooks, and the administration of development projects. These jurisdictional problems extended outside the MOE as well, pitting the Ministry of Education against other ministries and agencies over such educational issues as planning (MOE's Department of Planning and Development vs. the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs), technical and vocational/technical education (MOE's Division of Science and Technical Education vs. the Ministry of Youth and Sport vs. the Bank Group-supported Agricultural and Industrial Training Board), and school construction (the MOE's Bank Group-created Division of Educational Facilities vs. the Ministry of Public Works).

Finally, we noted a gap between the official rules and procedures governing the education sector and the actual operation of education in Liberia: salary scales that were approved but not implemented; official student-teacher ratios (45:1 for primary, 40:1 for secondary) that were not enforced;²⁵ school operating schedules (days and hours open) that were not adhered to; and teacher salary payments that were repeatedly delayed.

While no system, education or otherwise, whether in a developing or developed state, operates completely smoothly or works exactly as planned,²⁶ the extent of fragmentation, conflict, and drift in Liberian education was so great that it was difficult to view the state of affairs as accidental. Ironically, the chaos seemed ordered, organized in a way that suggested that systematic forces were at work, forces that were pulling the education sector apart.

Once again, organization theory was relevant. Liberian education resembled what Ackoff, Finnel, and Gharajedaghi termed a "mess"—a bundle of interacting problems.²⁷ The interesting point they make is that, while a mess is complex, it is not chaotic. A mess is a *system* of problems: it is not random, it has an internal organization and logic, and it results from a process that is potentially explicable.

When viewed as a logical system, a thread of commonality could be seen running through the various problems constituting the Liberian education "mess." That commonality was the direct or indirect involvement of international funding agencies in so many of the problems of coordination and control described above.

There are three ways in which the international funding of educational development projects decouples education systems: (1) *the policies* that

²⁵ E. Tarpeh, "Government Clamps Down on Schools," *Liberian Educational Perspectives* 1, no. 1 (1984): 9.

²⁶ The Liberian education sector is not unique in its loose coupling. Similarly extensive characteristics have been reported in the Liberian agricultural sector. See USAID, *Institutional Profile: Liberian Agriculture* (Monrovia: USAID/Liberia, 1984).

²⁷ R. L. Ackoff, E. V. Finnel, and J. Gharajedaghi, *A Guide to Controlling Your Corporation's Future* (New York: Wiley, 1984).

guide development agencies (in particular, policy conflicts and discontinuities among multiple agencies and within a single agency over time); (2) *the structure of development projects* (especially as a result of development agencies' preferences for establishing new units and agencies in the education sector); and (3) *competition for control of development funds* (both among recipient units and agencies and among international funding agencies themselves). The following sections discuss these three mechanisms and illustrate the ways in which they worked to fragment the Liberian education sector.

IV. Educational Development Agency Policies

Organizations have their own internal dynamics that shape their dealings with the external environment. Development agencies are no exception. Much has been written about the content and evolution of World Bank development policies.²⁸ In its early development activities, the World Bank emphasized formal, particularly tertiary, education.²⁹ The entrance of Robert S. McNamara as president in the late 1960s resulted in a shift in World Bank education policy to soften the boundaries of loan-eligible areas. The publication of the first comprehensive education policy paper in 1971 recommended a systematic study of the entire education sector as a prerequisite for financing,³⁰ noting that "the most serious gap affecting everything else has been the management capability—organization, planning, evaluation, supervision—needed to meet the challenge of expansion,"³¹ and recommending lending activities be confined to the "established areas" of technical, agricultural, and teacher training and general secondary education.

The power of World Bank policy to shape not only its own development projects but also to influence the course of development policy formulation in other agencies is often noted, sometimes critically.³² That power was reflected in the pattern of Bank Group education projects in Liberia. The Bank Group's First Education Project in Liberia was appraised in 1972 in the amount of \$9.6 million.³³ The total amount was divided between projects in two categories: (1) educational planning and administration

²⁸ Robert L. Ayres (n. 5 above); Sohrab Shahabi, "The World Bank as an Agent of Change, with Particular Reference to the Issue of Population" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1982); Edward S. Mason and Robert E. Asher, *The World Bank since Bretton Woods* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1973).

²⁹ Ayres, p. 5; Wadi D. Haddad, "The World Bank's Education Sector Policy Paper: A Summary," *Comparative Education* 17 (June 1981): 127–39.

³⁰ World Bank, "Education: Sector Working Paper" (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1971).

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³² Ayres, pp. 2, 19–20, 36; Payer (n. 6 above); Shahabi, p. 140.

³³ World Bank, "Appraisal of a First Education Project in Liberia" (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1972).

TABLE 1
PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED BY BANK GROUP PROJECT APPRAISALS AND RELATED EDUCATION PROJECT
COMPONENTS FUNDED

Need to Improve	Project Components			
	First Project (1972)	Second Project (1976)	Third Project (1977)	Fourth Project (1982)
Educational planning	X	X	X	X
Educational administration	X	X	X	X
Curriculum development		X	X	
Testing		X		X
Instructional materials		X		X
Teacher training	X	X	X	X
Primary school facilities		X		X
Secondary school facilities	X		X	
Tertiary school facilities*	X			
Vocational/technical school facilities		X	X	X
Adult education		X		

* Includes funding for the University of Liberia's College of Agriculture and Forestry.

and (2) secondary and tertiary teacher training and agricultural and vocational/technical education facilities.

Table 1 displays the various project components for the four Bank Group projects. As we can see from the table, the first project exactly reflected the 1971 World Bank sector paper's emphasis on education sector analysis and planning and on the construction of postprimary technical education and teacher training facilities. No primary schools or "software" (curriculum development, instructional materials) were included.

The Bank Group's Second Education Project in Liberia was appraised in 1976.³⁴ The second project bore little resemblance in intent to the first project. As we can see from table 1, only three of the nine components of the second project were continuations of components funded under the first project. Of the \$5.4 million loan, three-fifths was allocated to primary schooling (building construction, instructional materials, curriculum development), and the remainder was divided among teacher training, adult education, and educational administration. The shift away from secondary and tertiary education toward primary schooling was no accident. It can be traced directly to the 1974 publication of two World Bank-sponsored documents: a bank education-sector working paper and Chenery et al.'s *Redistribution with Growth*.³⁵ These policy volumes emphasized the importance of primary schooling in educational development, an

³⁴ World Bank, "Appraisal of a Second Education Project: Liberia" (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1976).

³⁵ Chenery et al. (n. 5 above); World Bank, "Education Sector Working Paper" (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1974).

emphasis that was reflected in the Bank Group's Liberian education projects that followed.

The next two Bank Group projects in Liberia were the Third Education Project, appraised in 1977, and the Fourth Education Project, appraised in 1982.³⁶ As can be seen in table 1, these projects retained the Bank Group emphasis on primary schooling and educational planning and administration, increased support for vocational/technical education, and all but abandoned secondary and tertiary education.

The changing emphases of Bank Group policy contributed greatly to the expansion of primary education, but also exacerbated certain discontinuities in other parts of the education sector. Some of these discontinuities are evident in table 1. There we see one-time funding of tertiary school construction and adult education and two-time funding of primary and secondary school construction, curriculum development, testing, and instructional materials. Only teacher training and educational administration and planning were funded in three or more of the four Bank Group projects. The limited funding was not contingent on the well-being of these elements, so the loss of financial/technical emphasis was a serious handicap to sustained development.

Furthermore, multiple project funding for a particular component did not guarantee similarity of content in what was funded. For instance, both testing and instructional materials were funded twice under the second and fourth projects. However, in both cases the second phase of funding virtually ignored the first. In the case of testing, the second project's testing division was superseded by the fourth project's support for the West African Examinations Council. In the case of instructional materials, the second project's publications unit was superseded by the fourth project's textbook unit.

The changing emphases of World Bank policy had the positive effect of contributing greatly to the expansion of primary education, particularly in terms of school construction.³⁷ However, shifts in World Bank policy also created certain discontinuities in other parts of the education sector.³⁸ For instance, under the First Education Project (1972), two multilateral high schools (MLHSs) designed to provide instruction in science and

³⁶ World Bank, "Appraisal of a Third Education Project: Liberia" (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1977); "Staff Appraisal Report: Republic of Liberia Fourth Education Project" (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1982).

³⁷ The bank's preference for "hardware," i.e., construction, has been a basis for some criticism. See Ayres, p. 25; and Payer, p. 231.

³⁸ The problems for development of changing policies have been noted by a number of researchers, e.g., Aart Van de Laar, *The World Bank and the Poor* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), p. 1; John Simmons, *The Educational Dilemma: Policy Issues for Developing Countries* (London: Pergamon, 1980); Jonathan E. Sanford, *U.S. Foreign Policy and Multilateral Development Banks* (Boulder: Westview, 1982), pp. 23-24; Brian Holmes, "Paradigm Shifts in Comparative Education," *Comparative Education Review* 28 (1984): 584-604.

vocational/technical subjects were built in the two regional cities of Zwedru and Voinjama. The MLHSs were intended to improve regional student access to science and vocational/technical education. The cessation of funding following the early 1970s shift in bank policy toward primary education left the MLHSs without adequate science and vocational education equipment and staff. While the buildings were indeed built, the concept of the MLHS program was lost, and only very expensive, but traditional, high schools remained.

With a return to recognition of the importance of vocational/technical training in the late 1970s, the Bank Group resumed its willingness to fund Liberian science and vocational/technical education projects. However, instead of concentrating efforts on rescuing the foundering MLHSs, the decision was made to construct four new science and technology centers (STCs) in four other regional cities under the Third Education Project (1977). The fate of the STCs is discussed below.

Another casualty of changes in Bank Group policies was the University of Liberia's College of Forestry and Agriculture (COAF). The early Bank Group emphasis on agricultural education was not maintained, and consequently the COAF, built under the first project, lost important support and was seriously underutilized and barely operational at the time of the 1985 assessment. The COAF's problems were further exacerbated by the Bank Group-financed construction and staffing of the Mano River Union Forestry Training Institute (FTI) under the second and third projects. The FTI competed with the COAF for scarce staff, finances, and students, and contributed to COAF's decline.

This pattern of setting up one unit, subsequently failing to support it, and frequently undermining the unit by setting up a competitor, was a pattern we observed over and over in our assessment work. The pattern was not always the result of *changes* in policy over time. In some instances new (sometimes competing) institutional units were established as part of an explicit development strategy by development agencies. The following two sections discuss this strategy and its consequences in more detail.

V. The Creation of Autonomous Units in Development Projects

The World Bank has a documented preference for establishing autonomous units as part of its blueprint for development.³⁹ Van de Laar describes the intent behind the creation of these new units: "[To] cut across the many lines of independent and often conflicting autonomy or authority, and to coordinate activities."⁴⁰ The intent is understandable,

³⁹ Van de Laar, p. 189; Payer, p. 108; A. Fatouros, "The World Bank," in *The Impact of International Organizations on Legal and Institutional Change in Developing Countries*, ed. J. B. Howard (New York: International Legal Center, 1977), p. 57.

⁴⁰ Van de Laar, p. 189.

given the difficulties in trying to conduct change within any bureaucracy. However, this strategy for "cutting through the red tape" resulted in a vastly more complex set of conflicting authorities and many more problems of coordinating activities. In other words, a worsening of precisely the original problems.

In addition to the schools constructed under the Bank Group projects, the four Bank Group Liberian education projects created 20 new units in the Liberian education sector. Most of these units were involved in educational administration and planning. Many of them duplicated or monopolized the functions of other units. For instance, the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) was established under the First Education Project. Its duties were to administer the Bank Group education projects. It operated as an autonomous unit within the MOE, with its director reporting directly to the Minister of Education, thus bypassing intermediate authorities. This autonomy was efficient in some ways but problematic in others. The lack of supervision of PIU activities led to questions regarding its accounting procedures and the allocation of funds. Further, PIU isolation led to a communication breakdown and subsequent problems of coordination. Due to a lack of information about project status, the activities of other units of the MOE responsible for various aspects of different projects were delayed and uncoordinated. For instance, equipment delivered to the STCs sat unopened in boxes for months during and after construction because those responsible for unpacking them were unaware of their arrival.

Many of the problems of conflicting jurisdictions cited above were the result of Bank Group-created agencies duplicating or encroaching on the functions of other units. The most common approach to problem solving was to create a new unit. This strategy was used to deal with problems of instructional materials. Under the second project a publications unit was created in the MOE to draft textbooks and other instructional materials. When the output was not satisfactory, fourth project planners decided to use outside publishers and created a new textbook unit for textbook distribution. The publications unit was simply retained, a relic of an earlier project.

The strategy of creating autonomous agencies was not always a failure. The Division of Educational Facilities (DEF) was created under the First Education Project. Its function was to oversee the design and construction of Bank Group project buildings. Although it was resented by officials at the Ministry of Public Works, the DEF generally accomplished its goals. It did share some similar problems with the PIU in that its autonomy from the rest of the MOE tended to lead to communication and coordination problems.

The establishment of new, often autonomous units by development planners often results in the duplication of functions, jurisdictional problems, and system fragmentation. As we have seen, these problems can arise when only one funding agency is involved. When we expand the scope of our analysis to include the many other funding agencies that populate the Liberian educational development landscape, the problems of competition, conflict, and fragmentation multiply.

VI. Competition for Control of Development Funds

Two sorts of competition for control of development funds create problems for the education sector: (1) competition among units within the sector for allocation and control of funds and (2) competition among international development agencies for control of the sector.

A. Internal Competition for Development Funds

In all countries and in all private and public sectors there is much tension and conflict surrounding the effort to obtain resources for staff and program development. This is particularly true in developing states where resources can be desperately scarce. While battles are fought over national resources, often patterns of accommodation are worked out over time that tend to stabilize competition. This is less often the case with international resources due to their irregular availability and windfall nature. The competition for external funds among various ministries and among units within single ministries is one way in which local education planners collaborate with international agencies in fractionalizing education systems.⁴¹ When First Education Project appraisers arrived in Liberia, the state of affairs in education was desperate. The importance of international funding to Liberian educational planners is evident when the amount of the World Bank loan for the First Education Project in 1972 (\$9.6 million) is compared to the total Liberian government expenditures for education in 1970 (\$13.8 million). A development loan equaling 70 percent of public expenditures for education was simply irresistible to Liberian educational administrators.⁴² As a high-level Ministry of Education official told us, "Then, we would take anything they offered because we needed everything."

While officials at the MOE had their own agenda for building and improving the education system, they felt they were in a weak bargaining

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 201 and 236.

⁴² The relative amounts (as percentages of government expenditures on education) of the three subsequent Bank Group loans declined but remained significant parts of the Liberian education budget. In 1983, Liberian government education expenditures were \$89.9 million; World Bank and African Development Bank loans for the Fourth Education Project, begun in 1982, represented an additional \$23.3 million, or 25.9 percent, of the 1983 budget. See Unesco (n. 1 above), sec. 2, p. 36.

position because of their obvious need. Further, any resistance by one unit to outside development planners' proposals could be bypassed by planners approaching another unit. This strategy by development agencies of finding a sympathetic ear was enhanced by the ready availability of anxious listeners. The result was a widening of involved units, often with accompanying problems of coordination and agreement during project operation and completion.

The vocational/technical (voc/tech) sector illustrated the problem of multiple units involved in and seeking control over project components. The Ministry of Youth and Sport (MYS) became involved in several voc/tech projects under the second, third, and fourth education projects. Typically, the Bank Group plan to improve vocational/technical training was to build new institutions, principally the Agricultural and Industrial Training Board (AITB) (an administrative unit designed to set standards for voc/tech training and to oversee and license schools operating in the subsector), the Monrovia Vocational Training Center (a school for post-secondary voc/tech training and apprenticeship), and the Commercial Training Center (a school for clerical training).⁴³

Conflicts between the MOE and the MYS delayed construction and implementation of all three projects⁴⁴ and continued to hinder their operation after completion. Problems were worsened by the duplication of MOE Division of Science and Technical Education functions by the AITB, a situation that resulted in neither unit being able to effectively design and oversee vocational and technical education.

B. External Competition for Control of the Education Sector

Like most developing countries, Liberian educational development has been a partnership between various elements of the Liberian government, Liberian educators, and international development and assistance agencies. During the period from 1972 to 1985, a sizable number of international agencies were involved in a diversity of Liberian development projects: Unesco, International Labor Office (ILO), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), USAID, International Development Agency (IDA), World Bank, African Development Bank, Peace Corps, and the U.S. Information Service (USIS). The involvement of these many agencies contributed to the drift and discontinuities in the Liberian education sector.

⁴³ Omitted from this list are a number of other vocational/technical projects that the MYS was not involved with but that did involve other international agencies and that did further fracture the vocational/technical education subsector. Some of these are discussed in the next section.

⁴⁴ Due to interministry problems and financial problems, the Commercial Training Center will probably never be built.

The sections above outlined the ways in which one pair of international agencies, working together,⁴⁵ produced a number of new units and programs that enhanced some aspects of Liberian education, but that also further disorganized the education sector due to policy changes over time and due to particular development strategies. These disorganizing and fractionalizing effects were multiplied as the number of separate agencies involved in development aid increased. The ways in which the effects of *multiple* agencies worsened the problems of looseness in the education sector were twofold: (1) as a result of processes that paralleled the ways in which single agencies created contradictions and discontinuities, that is, policy variations among agencies and policy changes over time within agencies; and (2) as a result of a new process that emerged when multiple development agencies were present, for example, interagency competition for control of the education sector. In the next sections we provide an example of how each of these operated.

Interagency policy differences.—The Bank Group's Third Education Project allocated \$2.5 million for the construction, equipping, and staffing of four Science and Technology Centers (STCs) attached to four high schools in the Liberian regional cities of Greenville, Robertsport, Sanniquellie, and Buchanan. The STCs represented an effort by project planners to address recurrent deficiencies in vocational/technical education as well as to offer a partial remedy to regional inequalities in Liberian secondary science education. The STCs were to be used by students of high schools in the city and surrounding communities to supplement their secondary education. The STC construction was scheduled for completion in 1980. By the time of our appraisal in 1985, none of the STCs was open and operating as planned, although three were built and one was in partial use.

In order to rescue the STCs, and since no funds were allocated for them under the Bank Group's Fourth Education Project, the MOE obtained assistance from two American agencies—the Peace Corps and the United States Information Service (USIS). The focus of USIS/Peace Corps assistance was instructional (a focus consistent with the skills and orientation of those agencies) in the form of a project named Teacher-Text-Technology (TTT), begun in 1984. The U.S. Information Service provided technical assistance and instructional materials for the training of Peace Corps volunteers who initially staffed and subsequently trained Liberian teachers for the STCs. The curriculum to be employed retained the original STC science

⁴⁵ Although the World Bank (and its International Development Agency [IDA]) and the African Development Bank (ADB) are separate agencies, ADB and IDA assistance was incorporated into World Bank project plans, and so, in Liberia, interventions were coordinated.

emphasis, but the technology (vocational and home economics) component was deleted in favor of mathematics and language arts (two subjects presumably already being taught in the high schools, and not part of the original science and technology intent of the STCs).

While the instructional assistance provided by the two American agencies was needed, the problems of the STCs went far beyond manpower shortages and involved mainly construction (the Bank Group's policy focus), program organization and coordination, and finances. The three constructed STCs had no running water (due to construction problems), little or no electricity (due to regional power shortages and electricity delivery system problems), inadequate or absent equipment (due to ordering problems, finances, and theft), no funds or procedure for reordering supplies, no transportation or plan for busing in students from neighboring high schools or communities, and security and managerial problems. The TTT project's program of training and staffing the STCs was dwarfed by the magnitude of the existing problems. And in fact, further problems arose as a result of the TTT project itself.

In order to attract teachers to regional schools, the TTT project provided salary incentives to STC teachers. In a context of nationally low salaries and untimely salary payments, this disparity between STC teacher salaries and those of other Liberian teachers prompted a protest from the National Union of Liberian Teachers, which argued that the STC salaries violated MOE policy. The provision of instructional materials by the TTT project also illustrated the introduction of discontinuities in existing schooling policies and procedures by outside agencies. Although the Bank Group had financed the development and purchase of MOE-approved textbooks, non-MOE science, math, and language arts texts were obtained through the efforts of the TTT staff. Their use violated MOE policy and contributed diversity rather than continuity to the already diverse world of Liberian educational instructional materials.⁴⁶

The differences in policy orientation and approach between the Bank Group education projects and the USIS/Peace Corps TTT project illustrate the loosening effect such multiple actors can have on the education system. The next section describes a situation where policy differences between agencies escalated into a struggle for control over the Liberian primary education subsector.

Interagency competition.—Organizational research suggests that one of the reasons for loose coupling is multiple external pressures on an organization. Multiple resource flows or multiple external power centers can exert diverse, conflicting pressures on an organization that responds by fractionalizing programs, subdividing functions, and proliferating units.

⁴⁶ At the time of the 1985 assessment, TTT staff had agreed to use MOE textbooks.

This is precisely what occurred in the Liberian primary-education subsector as a result of competition between the Bank Group textbook program and the USAID Improved Efficiency in Learning (IEL) project.

Beginning in 1978, USAID funded the IEL project, designed, among other things, to provide an instructional system, including instructional materials, for use in Liberian primary schools. Simultaneously, under the Fourth Education Project the Bank Group funded a textbook program also designed to provide instructional materials for use in Liberian primary schools. As is typical of separately funded projects, the projects were distinct administratively and in their content and approach. Each project had its own project director, budget, and staff, and each project was under the control of a different deputy minister in the MOE. In addition, each project had its own teacher training program, supervisory system, curriculum, and instructional materials, and the two projects were implemented in different schools. However, when the MOE and USAID decided to extend and expand the IEL project in the form of IEL-II (originally scheduled for implementation in 1984), the two projects embarked on a collision course.

The reason for the impending collision stemmed directly from the independence of program funding. In order to obtain the resources necessary for the development of its primary schooling system, the MOE looked to the funding environment and found the Bank Group and USAID. The two agencies' somewhat competitive stance toward one another (no doubt linked to each organization's relevant economic and political environment), their project administration by separate MOE branches (the result of the competition for external resources discussed above), and the differing content of the two programs challenged any efforts at coordinating the two projects.

The result was an inevitable conflict between the two projects that took the form of a several-year struggle between USAID personnel, who refused to release IEL-II funds until an MOE commitment was made to make IEL the exclusive primary-education program in Liberia, and MOE officials, who steadfastly refused to abandon the use of Bank Group-financed textbooks in Liberian primary schools.⁴⁷

By virtue of their (1) design—each to provide curricula, teacher training, supervision, and instructional materials for grades 1–6 in the primary schools, (2) administration—in separate branches of the MOE, and (3) intent—each to be *the* primary instructional system in Liberia, the success of either the USAID IEL project or the Bank Group textbook program challenged the success of the other. Unsuccessful efforts to reconcile the

⁴⁷ The conflict was still not resolved in December 1986, and the IEL-II project funds (\$14 million) were still frozen by USAID.

competition between these two separately funded projects underlined the power that external agencies can exert and the fractionalizing effects such competition can have.⁴⁸ Whether the IEL textbook conflict was resolved, in favor of one system or the other or in favor of a solution that bifurcated Liberian primary education, remained to be seen. The resistance of the MOE to the latter solution testified to MOE's comprehension of the education sector's organizational and continuity problems and to a less desperate situation from that of an earlier era.

VII. Conclusion

The above analysis offers a partial explanation for the discrepancies, discontinuities, and difficulties typifying the development of the Liberian education sector. The loose coupling perspective described the structure of the education system and pointed to some of the forces that contributed to its particular shape and operation. We argued that educational expansion as denoted in enrollment and expenditure statistics is not an accurate picture of the realities of education in developing states. We further argued that international development funding, while helping to expand and enhance system segments, has also often unwittingly contributed to many of the problems of educational development in Liberia, and that Liberia was by no means unique in these problems.

In conclusion, we do not wish to characterize educational development as development *ex machina*, where local planners and educators are depicted as mere puppets on the strings of international agencies. As we noted above, local competition for external resources exerts fractionalizing pressures on the education sector as well. Our purpose here has been to identify the less obvious and unintentional role of international funding agencies in the problems of educational development, particularly in the fractionalizing of the education sector.

⁴⁸ C. W. Snyder, Jr., and J. A. Richard, "Accommodation or Competition: The IEL and the Fourth World Bank Education Projects" (Monrovia: Ministry of Education, 1984).