

THE WORLD BANK AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD: THE CASES OF UGANDA AND THAILAND

Christopher S. Collins and Robert A. Rhoads

We [the World Bank] are the Queen Mary here so it's hard to say when we start turning, because we move so slowly. But anyway, for about 10 years there was a lot of emphasis on basic education in the developing world and to some extent there still is in countries where illiteracy is high. On the other hand, as progress has been made and the knowledge economy has come to the fore we have not been so tightly focused on basic education, particularly in countries that have been making good progress in that area. Working across sectors, we now get more involved with our macro-economists and private-sector people talking about skills development and human capital or institutional capacity building – all those buzz words today – which are cross-cutting in a sense.

An Official at the World Bank

With changes in trade policy, scarcity of natural resources, regional conflicts, and everything else it is not easy to say that this is what our [the World Bank's] higher education project contributed. But having said that, certainly in Africa, you find the very lowest enrollment ratios anywhere in the world. I don't know what the right proportion is, but it has got to be more than 1 or 2 percent of the population participating in higher education. You cannot run a competitive economy in the world today with such few graduates. So, to the extent that we've been supporting the expansion of higher education in Africa, which we have been doing, I think it is only for the betterment of those nations. The challenge has been to get people to worry about the quality of higher education while you are expanding enrollments. In a political environment you can

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imagine all the politicians wanting to expand enrollments, because it makes everybody happy to get into the university, but nobody wants to champion quality because it is basically telling people you aren't good enough or you have to be fired because you didn't publish. As we say around here, "expanding access has a thousand parents but quality is an orphan" – politically speaking at least. We also try to weigh in on the side of the orphan.

An Official at the World Bank

The above comments were collected as part of formal interviews conducted with World Bank officials involved with higher education projects in the developing world. The comments call attention to challenges developing nations face as they seek to strengthen universities¹ and their ability to contribute to social and economic development. The remarks speak to two issues in particular that we intend to address in this chapter. First, developing nations face a monumental challenge in raising adequate funds for expanding the size, scope, and quality of their universities. Overcoming this challenge is critical if nations are to build forms of human capacity suitable for competing in a global knowledge-based economy. Second, financial constraints also limit the ability of universities in the developing world to contribute forms of research-based knowledge suitable for advancing a nation's role in the global economy. Overcoming this latter challenge requires developing nations to address a variety of complex issues, including brain drain, the inadequacy of scientific facilities and laboratories, and limited knowledge-based cultures upon which to advance science and technology (Peters & Besley, 2006). Adding to concerns linked to transforming universities and strengthening their role in the global economy is the fact that university contributions to nation building extend far beyond simply advancing scientific and technological knowledge; universities also play key roles in social development, especially in terms of supporting important elements of a society's culture as well as its social and cultural institutions.

The introductory comments also raise an important issue specific to the World Bank and its role in assisting developing nations and their universities: Because of the incredible size of the Bank, it oftentimes suffers from inertia. Like a gigantic sea-faring vessel – the "Queen Mary" in the words of one Bank official – whose change in course must be charted far in advance, the Bank can be slow and lumbering in its response to legitimate criticism and the need to shift direction. This facet of the Bank is particularly relevant to our discussion, as its policy makers maintain that a new course was charted in the 1990s in which the Bank increased support for higher education. In brief, during the last decade of the 20th century the

Bank began to recognize that its general policy of focusing on primary and secondary education, while pressuring developing nations to limit (sometimes withdraw) public support for higher education, was shortsighted and in need of correction. Given this relatively new course in educational policy, we intend to examine the Bank's funding priorities over the past several years by focusing on universities in the developing world. Our examination of the role of the Bank centers on key concerns raised in the opening comments, regarding the challenges of human capacity and institutional building, given their importance to any nation hoping to increase participation in a global environment.

More specifically, we focus our attention on the cases of the Republic of Uganda and the Kingdom of Thailand. We select these nations for several reasons. First, and most obviously, these countries are considered by most to be developing in nature and face serious financial challenges. For example, Uganda ranks 144th on the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) and its national debt of \$5 billion consumes an estimated 64 percent of its GDP. Thailand ranks 75th on the HDI and its national debt at over \$52 billion consumes half of the national GDP. Second, Uganda and Thailand represent two distinct and key regions of the developing world – Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asian. Third, we have intimate knowledge of these particular contexts, having traveled to and conducted research in both countries. And finally, we gained access to World Bank officials who have worked in Uganda and Thailand and who were willing to share their thoughts and insights regarding higher education projects in the respective countries.

In what follows, we first discuss the concept of globalization and its relationship to the worldwide transformation of higher education. We then examine the role of the World Bank in the developing world, including a brief discussion of the history and background of the Bank, as well as the evolution of its educational policies. A central piece of the puzzle for us concerns criticism of the Bank's educational priorities and its efforts to make adjustments from the mid-1990s to the present. We use a discussion of the Bank's shift in policy as a starting point for introducing key research questions framing our analysis. We move on to the cases of Uganda and Thailand by exploring their higher education systems and efforts to strengthen universities in light of World Bank funding programs. We then discuss key findings deriving from our analysis of higher education in Uganda and Thailand with a critical eye to the role of the Bank. Finally, we conclude by offering two competing interpretations concerning the Bank's involvement in the developing world. We do this with the hope of

extending the dialog as to how intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the World Bank might best serve the educational needs of developing nations.

THE GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Globalization has become such an all-encompassing concept that it is almost meaningless. However, most scholars recognize that the term conveys in some manner or form a shrinkage of time and space such that events happening in one part of the world have the potential to impact other locales (Giddens, 1999; Held, 1991). Beyond this most basic meaning, it is hard to find any agreement on what the term actually conveys or when in fact the world actually entered a global age (Morrow & Torres, 2000). Given the vagueness of globalization as a concept, the challenge then is to be as clear as possible in discussing various forces related to globalization that may impact a particular phenomenon under study. In the case of this chapter, the phenomenon of interest is university transformation in the developing world.

Several forces have been at work over the past 20 to 30 years to produce significant reforms in the structure of higher education at a global level. First, there has been a shift from an industrial-based to a knowledge-based economy driven by scientific and technological advances located primarily in central countries such as Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States, among others. We are not suggesting that an industrial-based economy has disappeared, but only that a new form of the global economy has emerged and this new form often assumes a dominant position. To a large extent, the new knowledge-based economy reflects the growing power of computerized, network-based processes connected to the production and management of information and/or knowledge. A variety of descriptors have emerged to better represent this worldwide transformation, including phrases such as “new economy,” “information age,” “network society,” “knowledge society,” “age of knowledge capitalism,” “post-Fordism,” “post-industrialism,” and so forth (Carnoy, Castells, Cohen, & Cardoso, 1993; Castells, 1996, 1997; Morrow & Torres, 2000; Peters & Besley, 2006; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Stromquist, 2002; World Bank, 2002). This global economic transformation is closely tied to changes in the university, whereby science and technology, along with research and development,

assume central importance (Calderone & Rhoads, 2005; Geiger, 2004; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Although the transformation of economies and key institutions such as the university impact all nations of the world, such a shift is far more prominent in the wealthier nations, where the most advanced forms of science and technology exist. Consequently, the place of developing nations and the role of their universities is a question that IGOs involved in economic development, including organizations such as the World Bank, have had to work through over the past few decades. Indeed, a central point of this chapter is to examine how World Bank policies have taken into account the changing nature of the global economy and the role of universities in the developing world.

Another broad trend linked to globalization – or cultural globalization in particular – is what some scholars define as “internationalization” (Scott, 1998). Although we treat cultural globalization as a distinct form of globality, clearly it would be shortsighted of us not to acknowledge the interconnections between economics and culture; obviously, as nations become increasingly intertwined economically, given their participation in a global marketplace, there will be concomitant cultural interactions and interactive effects. And given the economic dominance of the West, some have described the cultural influences linked to the growing power of global markets as the “Westernization” of the world, or in the case of the United States, “Americanization” or “McDonaldization” (Rhoads, 2003; Ritzer, 2004), although the power of local contexts to integrate global influences in a hybridized manner suiting their own needs also has been acknowledged (Luke & Luke, 2000; Rhoads & Liang, 2007). In any case, the internationalization of higher education is revealed in the movement and exchange of students and scholars transnationally; this includes the emergence of new forms of identity grounded in constructions of “global citizenship” (Szelényi & Rhoads, 2007) and increased opportunities to share ideas, including the growing reliance on the Internet for transnational communications and knowledge production. The growing prominence of English as the language of global academe is another example of cultural globalization and its influence on tertiary institutions (Altbach, 2003).

A set of global forces operating on today’s universities may be linked to the growing dominance of neoliberal economic views. Here, neoliberalism is understood as an economic philosophy stressing increased transnational and multi-national trade, the rapid flow of capital and investments, limited government intervention (with the exception of ensuring a free market), and a general rejection of public forms of services (often discussed as

“privatization”). Historically speaking, neoliberalism is seen as arising from the political/economic regimes of Ronald Reagan (“Reagonimcs”) in the United States and Margaret Thatcher (“Thatcherism”) in the United Kingdom (Apple, 2000; Torres & Rhoads, 2006). As an overarching philosophy, neoliberalism is enacted at a global level through the economic initiatives of multi-national enterprises (MNEs) and multi-national corporations (MNCs) seeking an unfettered global marketplace, often following policies enacted through a host of IGOs such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Seen in this light, actions of a neoliberal variety may be understood by some as simply a sign of the times, reflective of the neoliberal revolution that was led by Reagan and Thatcher. As such, the neoliberal revolution and its organizational outcomes often are situated as the natural progression of global processes playing themselves out in a social Darwinian sense.

In terms of the impact on universities, the power of neoliberalism is reflected in four major trends centered on: (1) accountability and efficiency, (2) accreditation and universalization, (3) international competitiveness and massification, and (4) privatization (Torres & Rhoads, 2006). The push for greater accountability and efficiency speaks to increased pressure on public forms of higher education to do more with less. This push is manifested in legislatures, governments, governing boards, and policy makers to increase productivity. The growing importance of accountability and efficiency is readily observable in the United States, where over the past two decades or so colleges and universities have faced significant pressure to manage public funds in a more productive and transparent manner and where an economic-based discourse centered on cost-benefit analysis has become dominant.

The movement toward accreditation and universalization represents the treatment of higher education services and students as products that may be more easily articulated and exchanged. A major push in this area comes from the WTO and its efforts through GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) to define and regulate higher education services (Altbach, 2001). But there are also more regional efforts to universalize colleges and universities, such as the case of the European Union and the Bologna framework, which is intended to harmonize higher education throughout the EU (Altbach, 2003).

International competitiveness and massification speak to a growing recognition of the importance of higher education to nations competing or seeking to compete in the global marketplace. This trend includes efforts to

expand higher education systems, while also updating the kinds of programs offered for students, given the growing impact of a knowledge-based economy. Challenges related to international competitiveness also include efforts to update and advance forms of academic science and technological development undertaken by universities. The trend toward international competitiveness and massification is readily apparent in the People's Republic of China, where policies of decentralization have been adopted with the goal of increasing organizational innovation and commercialization as a means of expanding and enhancing the nation's system of higher education (Mok, 1997, 2000, 2002). Additionally, national programs such as Project 211 have sought to enhance the scientific and technological contributions of China's top 100 universities with the goal of achieving world-class status as research universities. Such an effort is directly tied to national interests and the need to compete globally in a knowledge-based high-tech economy.

Finally, the push to privatize higher education is a central facet of neoliberalism and speaks to the deeply engrained conviction that market competition offers the best solutions to pressing organizational and social problems. Of the major trends associated with neoliberalism and the global transformation of higher education, we see the push toward privatization as particularly relevant to analyses of the developing world and the involvement of IGOs such as the World Bank. We say this because a central element of the policies of many IGOs involved in international policy setting has been the push to privatize public services, including higher education. In the past, for example, the World Bank and IMF have supported policies aimed at minimizing public support for higher education, while seeking to advance and/or strengthen the private sector. This policy trend is evident in structural adjustment programs of the IMF in countries such as Argentina and Mexico, as well as through efforts of the WTO to treat higher education services as a tradable commodity much in the manner of any other consumer product (Rhoads & Mina, 2001). Given the position over the years of key IGOs to support the dissolution of public services in favor of privatization – a position that often has led to underfunding the higher education sector – we are concerned about the degree to which present-day World Bank policies in the developing world adequately support the transformation of universities in a manner consistent with nation building, including advancing a nation's participation in a growing knowledge-based economy, but also in terms of strengthening social development. To better address the Bank's position with regard to higher education, we find it necessary first to explore its history.

THE WORLD BANK

History and Background of the World Bank

At the end of World War II, in July of 1944, the U.S. government invited 44 countries to participate in a conference held in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire. The conference's central concern was the creation of an international monetary fund that would rebuild and stabilize international currencies severely damaged during the war period (Goldman, 2005). Only once during the 14 days at Bretton Woods was the idea of a bank for development in the Third World mentioned (Kapur, Webb, & Lewis, 1997). Indeed, during the 1940s much of the southern hemisphere was still colonized and the idea of development was tabled by John Maynard Keynes and the British in lieu of rebuilding war-torn Europe (Goldman, 2005). The creation of the International Monetary Fund became the primary outcome of the conference. In the following year, 1945, the focus on development in the Third World became the primary concern of a second organization created from the Bretton Woods impetus – the World Bank. Thus, the Bretton Woods conference served the purpose of creating a worldwide banking and monitoring system aimed at preventing weaker economies from dragging down the rest of the world to be spearheaded by the IMF and the World Bank (Goldman, 2005).

World Bank tradition holds that the president must be a U.S. citizen, while the IMF is led by a European. The fifth World Bank president, Robert McNamara, known as the champion of the developing world, served from 1968 to 1981 (Kraske, 1996). McNamara believed in lifting people out of poverty, and that rich countries had a moral responsibility for redistributing wealth to poorer countries (Goldman, 2005). When McNamara's tenure ended at the Bank, a shift began to occur. Debt in the developing world was rising, and countries were borrowing just to pay the interest on old loans. During this period, the World Bank required governments to reorganize and reorient their economies. This resulted in dramatic decreases in spending on health, education, and welfare in order to comply with Bank stipulations. The shift was part of the Reagan–Thatcher neoliberal revolution, in which development economists were replaced with orthodox macroeconomists in what one Bank official called “economic genocide” (Goldman, 2005, p. 92).

As a consequence of the neoliberal revolution, including the push toward marketization and privatization, developing nations increasingly faced strict requirements on loans. The process of attaching requirements to a loan is

often referred to as “conditionality,” and is defined by Killick (1997), as “policy changes stipulated as a prerequisite to the approval of, or continued access to, a grant or loan, or to subsequent assistance” (p. 487). Oftentimes, the mandated changes were opposed by the borrowing governments, but nonetheless were forced upon them through the “financial leverage” of the lenders. For example, many such mandates have included requirements to shift portions of public expenditures to the private sector. From the Bank’s perspective, loan conditions are necessary for creating systemic economic change, given that “the success rate of individual projects is closely associated with the overall management of the economy in developing countries” (Pincus & Winters, 2002, pp. 10–11). As a consequence of this strategic view of economic development, policies and practices emphasizing greater conditionality were implemented throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Recently, conditionality has come under criticism, but the Bank continues to place certain requirements on loan recipients nonetheless (Stiglitz, 2002).

Currently, the World Bank operates with over 10,000 staff members located in over 100 countries with its primary headquarters in Washington, DC (www.worldbank.org). In 2005, 278 projects were approved for a total of US\$22.3 billion in loans. The Bank is divided into two primary lending organizations: the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) and the International Development Agency (IDA).² The IBRD is dedicated to loans for middle-income countries to be repaid over 15 years, while IDA funds are used for low-interest loans to developing countries to be repaid within 30–40 years. The breakdown of lending by these two arms of the Bank can be observed in Fig. 1.³

Beginning in June 2005, the Bank’s president was Paul Wolfowitz, a noted neo-conservative often included in discussions of the powerful DC policy makers constituting the so-called “Washington Consensus.” However, by mid-2007, Wolfowitz was pushed out of the Bank as a result of accusations that he engaged in favoritism and misconduct by arranging for a large pay and promotion package for his companion, Shaha Ali Riza. Subsequently, Robert Zoellick was nominated by the Bush administration and approved as the 11th president of the Bank. One of the primary responsibilities of the Bank’s president is to oversee the Executive Board of Directors, which is comprised of representatives from the 185 member nations comprising the Bank. Every member nation has a voting representative on the Executive Board of Directors, but each representative’s vote is weighted by the amount of the country’s membership subscription (roughly equivalent to equity shares). The five member nations with the greatest share and hence influence

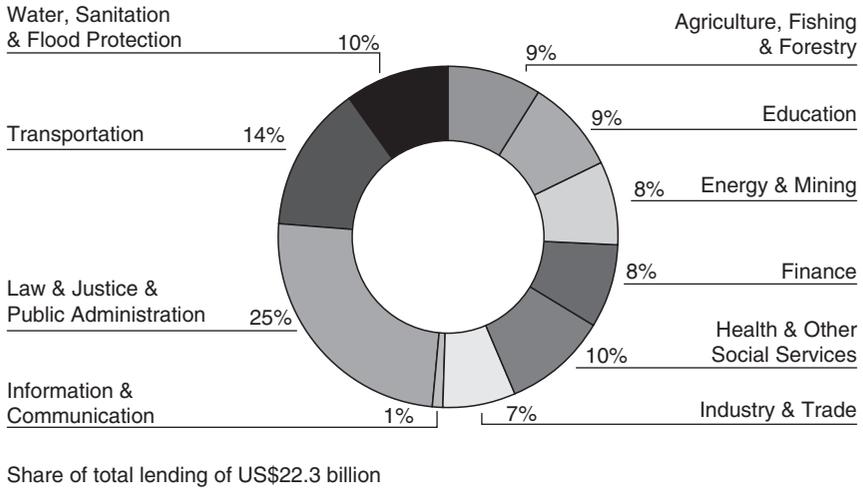


Fig. 1. IBRD/IDA Lending by Sector, Fiscal Year 2005.

are the United States, Japan, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom. Twenty-one countries from Africa, including Uganda, Ethiopia, and Kenya, are represented on the Board by only one vote. The weight of those 21 countries equals only 3.36 percent of the total share of voting. The United States constitutes a super majority with 16.41 percent of the weighted vote, based on its membership subscription. Obviously, the structure of the Bank provides wealthier nations the greatest influence, given their ability to make much larger contributions. A current World Bank official spoke to this issue:

With Africa you have two executive directors for about 50 countries, so it is not one country one vote. So, if the U.S. doesn't agree on a project and one or two of the other countries doesn't go along, they can pretty much block decision making. They don't have veto power, but because they are prominent they can influence the outcome. Also, if African countries wanted to do something important they would have to do an awful lot of lobbying and coalition building in order to get their voice projected into that decision-making arena.

Given the Bank's size and complexity, including how power and influence are disbursed, it is fairly easy to understand why one Bank official likened the organization to the Queen Mary, while another described it as a "1,000 organizations in one."

Evolution of the Bank's Educational Policy

When the Bank made its first move from providing infrastructure (e.g. roads, dams, electricity) to building human capacity (e.g. education), the primary framework for understanding development was that of human capital. This occurred around 1980, when the Bank hired economists to empirically calculate earning functions (Heyneman, 1999). George Psacharopoulos, one of the Bank's primary economists, utilized this framework as a method for understanding where to allocate money for educational development. The most basic explanation of human capital is that education enables individuals to be more productive and consequently they become more likely to contribute to improved economic conditions within a society (Psacharopoulos, 1988). With human capital theory as a foundation, the success of education may be analyzed through rate-of-return (ROR) analyses. Through his studies, Psacharopoulos repeatedly found primary education to be a better investment than secondary or higher education, based on the fact that unit costs for primary education are small relative to the extra lifetime income or productivity associated with literacy (Psacharopoulos, 1981, 1987, 1988, 1996, 2006). With regard to university education, Psacharopoulos (1988) concluded the opposite to be the case – meaning that unit costs are high relative to the extra lifetime income. Consequently, and based on human capital theory, for some 25 years Psacharopoulos (2006) has maintained that university education has a negative effect on equity and that too much of a typical national budget is allocated to an area with a low rate of return.

Psacharopoulos' findings were reported in World Bank policy documents and research papers. The *World Development Report 1980* noted that returns to investment (in countries with low incomes) in basic education amount to 27 percent, while secondary and higher education yield returns of only 17 percent and 12 percent, respectively. Based on ROR analyses, the World Bank (1986) explored policy options for financing education in developing nations. The outcome – based to a large degree on the work of Psacharopoulos – was that the World Bank started pushing for a disinvestment of public funds for higher education, primarily by attaching conditions to their loans. This was most evident at the Jomtien, Thailand Education for All (EFA) conference sponsored by the World Bank and UNESCO in 1990, where participants came out in support of public investment in primary education, women's education, and basic literacy, while largely ignoring higher education as a public enterprise. A consequence of Jomtien, according to Altbach (2004), was

that subsequent funding and policy decisions “disadvantaged higher education” (p. 71).

What has become increasingly clear over the years, since Psacharopoulos’ early work with human capital theory, as well as the Jomtien EFA conference, is the reality that returns from higher education investment may be far more complicated than was originally considered. Debates about the role of public investment in higher education, both within the Bank as well as external to it, have raged over the years (Birdsall, 1996), although methodologies for measuring higher education’s social contributions clearly have lagged behind the less complicated ROR calculations.

Even as late as 2004, Psacharopoulos generally refused to account for social returns or “externalities” associated with higher education and continued to argue from an individualistic human capital perspective, although by this point he had returned to academe (and later a position with the Greek Parliament) after some 17 years of service to the Bank. As Psacharopoulos (2004) noted in a moderated discussion published in *Comparative Education Review*, “[P]oor countries need additional literate people more than they need an extra handful of university graduates” (p. 84). Again, funding for primary and secondary education versus higher education, for Psacharopoulos, is decided by a calculus of individual or private return, mostly in terms of increased wages, and not in terms of any larger social or economic benefit such institutions might offer.

For Birdsall (1996), as well as other policy makers within the Bank, working largely in opposition to Psacharopoulos, ROR analyses were inadequate and ignored externalities associated with higher education, including benefits of advanced training (well-educated teachers, for example, may benefit personally from higher wages but they also may contribute to social improvements), basic and applied research, and various nation-building aspects of higher education such as conserving and/or adapting local traditions as well as advancing national identity. Growing support for funding higher education in the developing world was evident in two key World Bank publications: the 2000 *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise* produced by the Task Force on Higher Education and Society (TFHES) and the 2002 *Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*. The fact that the Bank was taking steps to revise its position on the importance of higher education investment, after years of internal debate, was evident in then Bank President James Wolfensohn’s comments about the TFHES report, wherein he noted that higher education was key to advancing poverty reduction and economic development (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2004).

Over the last 10 years or so, the Bank has essentially shifted its discourse about higher education. This shift has advanced a more sophisticated analysis of the utility of higher education to a nation's economic development. This evolving position of the World Bank suggests that commitments to new policies for higher education in developing countries should neither be discounted nor accepted uncritically. As evidence, the TFHES report concluded that, "Without more and better higher education, developing countries will find it increasingly difficult to benefit from the global knowledge-based economy" (2000, p. 9). This policy position was a stark contrast to the Bank's previous perspective based on human capital theory and ROR analyses. The report regarded such thinking as outdated and noted the following:

Narrow – and in our view, misleading – economic analysis has contributed to the view that public investment in universities and colleges brings meager returns compared to investment in primary and secondary schools and that higher education magnifies income inequality. As a result, higher education systems in developing countries are under great strain. They are chronically underfunded, but face escalating demand – approximately half of today's higher education students live in the developing world. (World Bank, 2000, p. 10)

Just as important, the report argued that higher education offers the potential to increase a country's engagement in research and knowledge production.

Two years later, the Bank released a second report (*Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education*) that reinforced the need to strengthen higher education in the developing world, placing great emphasis on expanding a country's capacity for participation in an "increasingly knowledge-based world economy" (World Bank, 2002, p. 2). The report also sought to address the mounting criticism of the Bank's policies toward higher or tertiary education:

There is a perception that the Bank has not been fully responsive to the growing demand for tertiary education interventions by clients and that lending for the sub sector has not matched the growing importance of tertiary education for economic and social development, especially in the poorest developing countries. It thus became necessary to revisit the Bank's policies and experience regarding tertiary education in light of the changes in the world environment and the persistence of the traditional problems of tertiary education in developing and transition countries. (World Bank, 2002, p. 2)

Although the discourse was fairly calculated, casting potential policy errors simply as "perceptions" of clients, the Bank nonetheless seemed ready to direct greater attention, and most importantly, money, to higher education in the developing world.

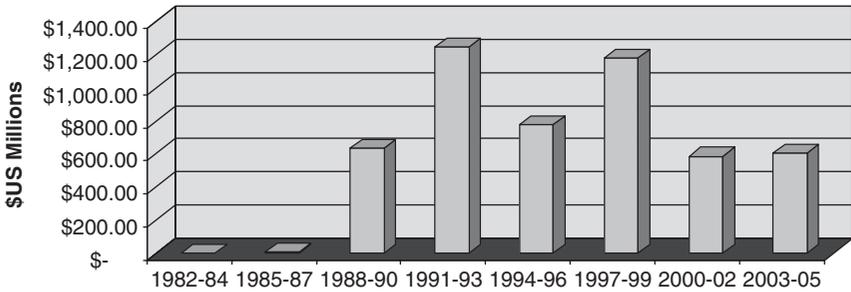


Fig. 2. World Bank Loans for Higher Education.

In terms of financial commitment alone, there is a clear trend toward increasing funds for higher education projects. Fig. 2 shows the progression of Bank loans for higher education over time.⁴ At first glance, the Bank appears to be walking the talk, in that funding trends over the past decade and a half seem to reflect the conclusions of the 2000 and 2002 World Bank reports. However, more in-depth analysis is required to better ascertain the Bank's engagement in developing nations and its commitment to higher education. For one, we need to know more about the nature of higher education projects in the developing world. Additionally, we also must recognize the complexity of the World Bank and that its influence goes well beyond its funded projects; more specifically, the Bank's influence also includes the manner by which it shapes governmental spending in the developing world through conditionality.

Criticism of the Bank

Although increased loans for higher education in recent years have provided much needed assistance, there nonetheless exists a good deal of criticism of the Bank and its educational policies. Embedded within this criticism are three primary concerns: (1) policies that condition an exclusive primary and secondary education focus, while calling for a disinvestment in higher education; (2) the pervasive effort to expand the private sector, while sacrificing public enterprises, often through structural adjustment programs (this includes difficulties inherent in the decentralization of government services in areas such as banking, airlines, utilities, etc.); and (3) the overall broad effect of preventing developing nations from participating in the knowledge economy in culturally appropriate ways, including forms of

participation that incubate indigenous ingenuity and research (Caffentzis, 2000; Goldman, 2005; Peet, 2003; Pincus & Winters, 2002).

The first criticism speaks to conditions that resulted from ROR analyses demonstrating that investment in higher education was less productive than investing in primary and secondary education (and basic education in general). Studies published by the Bank from 1986 to 1991 showed that the organization called for “a drastic reduction of higher education in Africa ... advocated in the name of higher efficiency and a more egalitarian distribution of educational resources” (Caffentzis, 2000, p. 3). Such loan conditions reduced the ability of the region to support adequate development of the higher education sector, given the pressure to focus almost exclusively on primary and secondary education. The logic and reasoning behind the conditions were written and explained, but the motives and impact were left in question. Caffentzis attributed the decrease in support for higher education to the Bank’s “bleak view of Africa’s economic future and its belief that African workers are destined for a long time to remain unskilled labor workers” (2000, pp. 3–4). The World Bank, in turn, was not well regarded in Sub-Saharan Africa, due to a strong conviction that policies and behaviors directed toward borrowing nations were largely conducted in an arrogant manner (Sender, 2002). Indeed, numerous student protests and empty classrooms at the university level were suggestive of the shortcomings of the Bank’s sub-Saharan educational programs (Federici & Caffentzis, 2000). Caffentzis criticized the Bank’s position for implying that the surest way to “improve African higher education is to decrease the investment in the universities (by laying off ‘unnecessary staff’), decrease the number of students, and charge high fees to those who remain” (2000, p. 6).

In our interview with World Bank officials, bringing up such issues as the Bank’s marginal support for higher education and the practice of mandating loan conditionalities elicited responses such as, “That was the 1980s”. However, Eurodad, a network of 52 nongovernmental organizations working to overcome debt crisis and poverty, found that there is currently an average of 67 conditions attached to each World Bank loan (Eurodad, 2006). For example, Uganda was granted a large poverty reduction loan in 2005. Eurodad counted 197 conditions in the loan, including “87 social and environmental conditions followed by 72 public sector reform related conditions and finally 35 financial and economic reform conditions” (2006, p. 8). A few of the objectives found in the World Bank (2006c) loan document include conditions related to reducing public expenditures as a percentage of the GDP through “budget rationalization” (p. 12), and increasing private sector competitiveness by liberalizing trade policy and

harmonizing initiatives in support of private sector development (p. 13). Both of these objectives are conditions of the loan. The loan agreement also states that the original amount was for US\$150 million, but because of unsatisfactory performance with regard to certain objectives, it was reduced to US\$135 million (World Bank, 2006c, p. 11). Consistent with the Eurodad report, and in terms of education, Stephen Heyneman (2003), a former World Bank executive, cited three common Bank recommendations often presented as conditions to a loan: (1) shift public expenditures away from vocational and higher education toward academic and basic education; (2) increase the private cost for attending universities; and (3) install loan schemes to set off the financial burden on individuals who must now face high tuition increases for higher education (p. 325).

A second criticism is tied to the Bank's commitment to expanding private-sector growth. Here, Bank officials are much less apologetic in their support of loan conditions and structural adjustment programs – the general view being that privatization will ultimately bring great benefits to developing nations. This belief seems beyond reproach, from the Bank's perspective, and, of course, is consistent with neoliberalism, or what Carroll (2006) described as the post-Washington consensus (PWC) in action in the form of a socio-institutional neoliberalism focused on fundamentally altering key social institutions. As an example, one Bank official spoke of efforts to privatize higher education in Brazil and the possibility of conditions:

In higher education, we occasionally put in ideologically driven conditions which have to do with radically shifting the cost of education from the public to the private sectors ... In Brazil, we were advising the minister of education. The minister was the biggest champion of no additional public funding to universities, so we didn't have to do it. This was in the late 1990s, so there has been a maturation process. The minister at the time was a former rector of a top university of Brazil. So he had seen it from both sides. It made our job easier.

Based on conversations with this Bank official, as well as with others, the importance of privatization was a dominant theme. In the scenario described above, loan conditions were not deemed necessary, as the minister of education made the Bank's job easier by opposing increased public funding for higher education. A second Bank official noted, "Anytime you can get private capital to do something that the government is trying to do, you increase the impact." Although there clearly is a reasonable economic rationale – reducing public expenditures – behind seeking private-sector support, there may also be a downside to overemphasis on privatization.

In developing countries like Uganda, where the private sector is relatively weak, policies that encourage decentralization and privatization are difficult to implement. As noted in the preceding comments by two Bank officials, the private sector can be very useful in providing additional services and options for a country; however, when private-sector support is used to replace or undermine the public sector or when a government-run industry is privatized, the impact can be damaging to the country. For example, over reliance on private education, while undercutting public education can contribute to a financial crisis that serves both to limit human capacity building and constrain research and development, including the promotion of various fields of inquiry needed for meeting local and regional needs in the developing world (Santos, 2006). In the push to dismantle the public sector, neoliberal policies have in effect disempowered public and national universities, oftentimes in favor of less productive and less accountable private institutions, believing that all that is private is “good,” and all that is public is “bad” (Apple, 2000). Such a philosophy challenges the idea of a public university created to serve a democratically negotiated public good (Rhoads & Torres, 2006a, 2006b; Schugurensky, 2006; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

In part, a third criticism is derived from the second, concerning the degree to which World Bank programs have adequately considered, practically and theoretically, the role of developing nations in a global, knowledge-based economy. For example, by prioritizing funding in the primary and secondary sector, while ignoring the development of university science and technology, the Bank has been criticized for relegating developing nations to the industrial sector of the world economy. Here, we cannot underestimate the importance of developing nations strengthening academic science and technological development. Indeed, a system of science, including public research laboratories and institutions of higher education, has been identified as one of the key components of a nation’s participation in the knowledge economy (Peters & Besley, 2006). Concerns about strengthening academic science and technology also are tied to issues of human capacity building in that the development of skills and talents among a nation’s citizens must be grounded in a particular conception of its role in the broader global economy. Thus, a legitimate concern to raise is the degree to which World Bank policies and practices have adequately acknowledged (and theorized) the relationship between human capacity building and academic science in a knowledge-based economy. Additionally, the Bank’s self-proclaimed shift from a “lending bank” to a “knowledge bank” raises questions about how such a shift is reflected in its support for higher education in the developing world.

In addition to the preceding criticisms tied to support for higher education, other broader concerns about the Bank have surfaced over the years. For example, several issues consistently arise within the extant critical literature on the Bank, including the following: conditionalities inappropriately linked to various social concerns (concerns that go well beyond support for higher education), conditionalities informed by weak policy assumptions, the cultural appropriateness of various Bank policies and practices, the broad nature of interests being advanced (public versus private; socialism versus capitalism; U.S. hegemony versus interests of the developing world), the degree to which democratic decision-making processes are employed, and the evolving nature of the Bank and its leadership (Caffentzis, 2000; Dreher, 2004; Goldman, 2005; Pincus & Winters, 2002; Ritzen, 2005; Wade, 2002).

With widespread commitments for private sector growth and a history of promoting disinvestment in higher education, Fox (2005) raised serious questions about the Bank and its programs: "What does it mean when the World Bank changes its discourse to call for substantial policy changes and financial investments in sustainable development, gender equality, and poor people's empowerment? How do we assess this shift in the official discourse? Is it just for show?" (p. 308). The skepticism inherent in questions raised by Fox frames our analysis as well, for we cannot simply accept proclamations by the World Bank at face value. Critical analysis must be brought to bear on the Bank's claim that it has shifted its focus as a "lending bank" to a "knowledge bank," positioned to assist developing nations and their participation in a knowledge economy.

In light of the aforementioned criticism, it must be acknowledged that the structure of the World Bank is such that it cannot entirely direct its own course. For example, the Bank raises funds to give the least developed countries credits or grants from the International Development Association (IDA), a branch of the bank. In order to generate funds for these credits, the Bank relies on contributions from the governments of wealthier member countries, often described as the "donor community." Pressure to promote or avoid particular projects is often associated with these contributions. Additionally, various organizations (i.e. agencies, private foundations, etc.) may make contributions and these too may include certain restrictions or expectations about the use of funds. For example, during the past several years there has been pressure from the United States and other major donors to combat corruption in developing countries. Former President Wolfowitz attempted to make this a major focus of his tenure (this was of course interrupted by his own conflict of interest and subsequent departure

from the Bank). To further complicate matters, while the United States sought loan conditions aimed at limiting governmental corruption, in September 2006 the British government, arguing that corruption-related concerns came at the expense of helping the poor, threatened to withhold about \$US 94 million in protest of conditions (Associated Press, 2006). Clearly, in some cases the Bank is at the mercy of conflicting desires deriving from the donor community.

Given the preceding concerns and realities of the World Bank's operations, we now turn to the Bank's higher education initiatives in the nations of Uganda and Thailand. Three overarching research questions frame our analysis: (1) To what degree and in what manner has the World Bank addressed development of the higher education sector and its role in human capacity building in Uganda and Thailand? (2) What view of knowledge (and its relationship to society) is suggested by an analysis of World Bank higher education programs in Uganda and Thailand? (3) To what degree and in what manner do World Bank initiatives in the area of higher education incorporate decision-making processes that adequately account for local and national concerns, as identified by educational leaders and policy makers in Uganda and Thailand? Although answers to these questions may speak most directly to the particulars of Uganda and Thailand, the literature on higher education transformation in the developing world affirms the critical nature of our concerns (Chapman & Austin, 2002; Reddy, 2002, World Bank, 1994, Ziderman & Albrecht, 1995).

THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

Establishing the Context

Located in Eastern Africa, west of Kenya, Uganda has a population of about 28 million and is slightly smaller than the state of Oregon. Prior to British colonization in the late 19th century, what is now known as Uganda was occupied by diverse kingdoms of various ethnic groups representing a range of cultures and socio-political systems. Uganda's diverse kingdoms, including the powerful Kingdom of Buganda, at times limited the control of the British East Africa Company (surrogate to the British government), and eventually contributed to the independence of Uganda in the early 1960s. Milton Obote led Uganda in its early years as an independent nation, but was overthrown in a 1971 military coup led by Idi Amin. Uganda suffered

for some nine years under Amin's authoritarian regime, witnessing violent oppression and economic stagnation. Today, Uganda is led by Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, who came into power in 1986 and has maintained the presidency ever since (he extended his presidency with a 2006 victory in which he achieved 60 percent of the vote). The violent conflicts of the past are still present in the clash between the northern tribes and the often favored Buganda tribe of the south. What is known as the Lord's Republic Army (LRA) actively resists the powerful south and engages in the abduction of children for military training and other inhumane activity to advance its position. Thus, Uganda's present-day challenges must be understood in the context of its postcolonial environment, in which despite being considered one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, with a GDP close to US\$52 billion, it nonetheless remains one of the poorest countries in the world (Musisi, 2003). Furthermore, with half of the population under the age of 14, education is a critical component of this growing economy.

Given the nation's political, economic, and postcolonial conditions, public education was not a national project until the 1960s. Prior to independence in the early 1960s, education was framed to a great extent by colonial influences and Christian missionaries (Musisi, 2003). Today, the structure of the Ugandan education system consists of primary education (seven years), followed by the lower secondary cycle (four years), and the upper secondary cycle (two years), after which there is the possibility of three to five years of university studies for students who gain entrance and obtain either government or private sponsorship. Upon completion of primary school, a student may either join lower secondary school or take a three-year craft course at a technical school. However, only about 40 percent of primary school graduates are absorbed into the secondary school cycle (Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, 2007). Upon completion of lower secondary school, students may continue on to a variety of upper secondary options and upon completion be eligible for university studies. Musisi (2003) reported that 24,000 students annually reach the eligibility mark to enter into higher education, but only 25 percent actually enroll.

Through years of turbulent governments and disinvestment in the university sector, Uganda has struggled to adequately support the higher education needs of its citizens. According to the Ministry of Education and Sports, there are 6 public and 13 private universities in Uganda. Quality is a general problem in higher education. Qualified professors are scarce in all disciplines and the nation's entire system has fewer than 550 PhD faculty,

about 1 per 200 students. Professors are poorly paid; some take on huge teaching loads to supplement their salaries, while others may neglect teaching in favor of paid consultancies (World Bank, 2006b). The sector also is relatively young. For example, in 1986, the only university in existence was Makerere University, with an enrollment of less than 5,000 students. Today, Makerere has over 30,000 students, accounting for over 75 percent of the entire higher education enrollment in Uganda (Uganda Ministry of Education and Sports, 2007). Thus, to speak of advanced education in Uganda largely centers on a discussion of Makerere and its role in meeting the nation's higher education needs.

Located in the capital city of Kampala, Makerere maintains an academic staff of almost 1,000, with 221 holding doctorates (Musisi, 2003). Until around 1990, Makerere University relied on 100 percent government funding, which covered both tuition and living expenses for all students. Despite the government's support, it was still considered one of the most underfunded universities in Eastern and Southern Africa (Mayanja, 1998). Funding arrangements began to change in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with a withdrawal of support for students' living expenses, support for books, and free education. Uganda's shift in support was congruent with World Bank conditions for reducing public expenditures. This resulted in the closure of Makerere during two separate periods (1989–1990 and 1990–1991), a consequence of student demonstrations aimed at challenging the government's withdrawal of transportation allowances and the introduction of a book bank to save on book costs (Kajubi, 1992).

Issues of insufficient staff pay, heavy faculty and staff workloads, increased enrollment, inadequate facilities and equipment, space problems, including overly congested lecture theaters and laboratories, all persist today (Ssesanga & Garrett, 2005). In 2005, the *Washington Post* published an article about Makerere, describing the university as underfunded and overrun. Students commented that there are 20 students to every one computer and four students crammed into closet-sized rooms in the university's dormitories (Wax, 2005). *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported that in November 2006 a faculty strike at Makerere closed the university for just over a month and ended with a proposed salary increase substantial enough to entice faculty to return to work (Kigotho, 2006). As part of its effort to address financial constraints, Makerere has been lauded by Clark (2004) for implementing cost sharing schemes that include tuition fees, as well as the provision for privately sponsored students (supported by parents, employers, churches, etc.). While cost sharing can be an effective way to enhance the ability of a university to advance

enrollments, Mayanja (1998) warned that it must not be an escape route to relieve the government of its obligation: “The government must continue to accord high priority to higher education and shoulder the primary responsibility” (p. 37).

The broader economic perspective concerning education and government funding in Uganda is highlighted in Figs. 3, 4, and 5.⁵ Fig. 3 shows that the GDP has increased and is estimated to continue increasing over time, while government expenditures as a percentage of GDP are expected to decrease from 23.7 percent in 2001 to 20.7 percent in 2008. Fig. 4 builds on Fig. 3 by showing the education budget at a peak in 2003, followed by a decline in support for education as a percentage of government expenditures and GDP since 2004; the percentage of government expenditure targeted for education

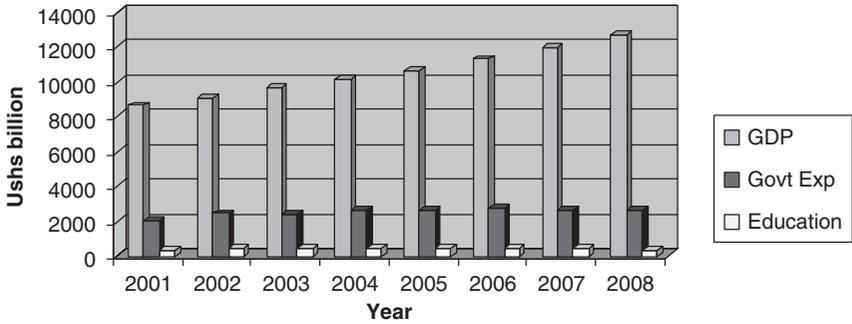


Fig. 3. GDP and Government Expenditure.

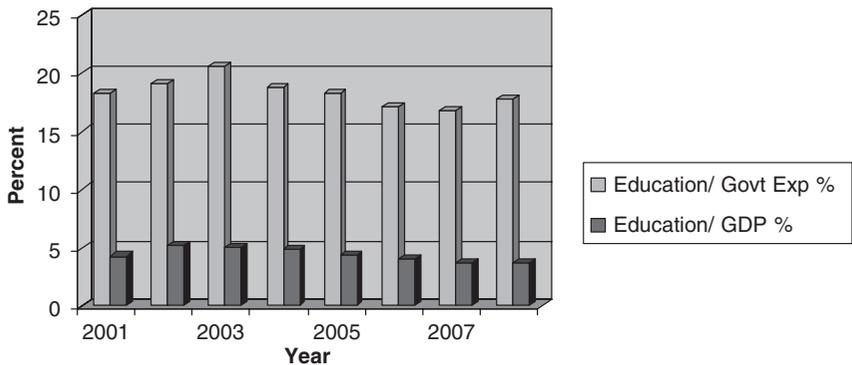


Fig. 4. Education Budget as Percent of Government Expenditure and GDP.

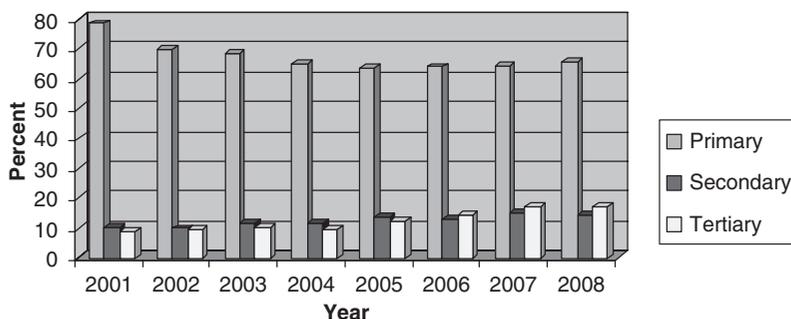


Fig. 5. Education Budget by Level of Education (%).

is estimated to decline from 18.3 percent in 2001 to 17.8 percent in 2008. Additionally, the education budget, as a percentage of the GDP, is expected to decline from 4.2 percent in 2001 to 3.7 percent in 2008. Fig. 5 shows a break down of the education subsectors – primary, secondary, and tertiary. It also reveals an increase of tertiary education spending as a percentage of the education budget over time.

In an effort to diversify university funding, the World Bank and the IMF have stipulated the development of private higher education in Uganda, in addition to several other African nations (Federici, 2000; Heyneman, 1999). Recent World Bank efforts in Uganda reflect the previously discussed shift in funding policies and practices – that is, there is a greater financial commitment to developing the nation’s higher education sector. For example, in the 1980s and early 1990s, the Bank actually conditioned the disinvestment of public funds for higher education. However, through its apparent shift in public policy – in part, a consequence of a political struggle at the Bank over the role of ROR analyses and the relevance of higher education to a nation’s development – the Bank now offers loans to developing countries such as Uganda for higher education. Out of the current and active US\$1 billion in World Bank loans that Uganda has procured, US\$30 million go to a project for the development of university science and technology for the entire country.⁶ Although the Bank has increased its support for higher education, there is still great emphasis placed on private sector growth (this will be demonstrated further in the next section) and cost sharing programs within the public sector. In addition, the percentage of overall funds that actually go to higher education versus other areas (utilities, road projects, etc.) still remains relatively low (only three percent).

World Bank Loans and Projects

Uganda has been collaborating with the World Bank on education projects since 1967, when its first education loan was approved to support the growth of secondary schools. Projects with the Bank, however, have certainly not been limited to education. The first loan, granted in 1961, targeted improving the supply of electrical power. Since then, Uganda has taken out a total of US\$5.5 billion in loans from the Bank. The loans have been for a variety of projects, including roads and railways, the privatization of water and electricity (to improve delivery and reliability of service), as well as education and many other concerns. Large-scale loans in the late 1980s and early 1990s were called structural adjustment programs, which essentially stipulated a reduction in public expenditures in order to stabilize the national economy. It is within the context of the structural adjustment programs that controversial loan conditionalities came into play. For example, the following subsection of a Project Information Document on a structural adjustment loan to Uganda in 1994 for US\$ 80 million noted some of the objectives of the loan (the italicized words represent our emphasis):

The objective of the proposed credit is to reduce poverty through accelerated economic growth and rapid human resource development. Accordingly, it will assist the Government to achieve a number of key objectives. First, it will support further *deregulation* of the economy involving the removal of the remaining barriers to trade and investment in the coffee subsector and *liberalization* of the cotton industry. Second, the credit will support actions aimed at completing the divestiture of the Departed Asians' Custodian Board properties [during the 1970s under Amin, the government expelled owners of tea estates, mostly Asians, and this Board allows those who were expelled to apply for repossession or compensation]. Third, it will assist the Government to step up domestic revenue generation which is still only around 8 percent of GDP. Fourth, the credit will help to deepen the Government's efforts aimed at prioritizing both recurrent expenditure and development expenditure. Fifth, it will support further measures directed at *downsizing the civil service* and raising its efficiency. (World Bank, 1997, p. 2)

The loan conditions highlight the Bank's interest in supporting private-sector development, while calling for disinvestment in public services, including higher education (based to a large extent on ROR analyses, and apparently still in use in 1994). One Bank official elaborated on the role of conditionality and structural adjustment loans: "The word conditionality is often used to refer to structural adjustment loans that were made in the 80s and they are coordinated with the IMF [but still managed by the World Bank]. Basically, a structural adjustment loan is an attempt to get an economy back on its feet because it has been mismanaged or ineffectively

managed.” Although conditionality is often associated with the 1980s, as this Bank official noted, we have already noted that a present-day loan to Uganda also contains significant conditions.

An existing project – the “Millennium Science Initiative Project” (MSI) – was approved for Uganda in 2006 and is presently underway in the amount of US\$ 30 million. This is the second major project that Uganda has had with the Bank for the development of university education. The project has two objectives that align with Uganda’s Poverty Eradication Action Plan⁷: (1) enhancing productivity, competitiveness, and income by increasing the amount and quality of skills available to the labor market in areas critical to private-sector growth and (2) improving human development by reforming higher education curricula through greater emphasis on science and technology (World Bank, 2006c, pp. 4–5). In order to fulfill these objectives, the project has two components: (1) a competitive fund to support research, education, and training in science and engineering, as well as linkages to the private sector and (2) an outreach, policy, and institutional strengthening component (World Bank, 2006c, pp. 8–9). Essentially, the first component includes a fund that will provide grants for the following requestors: (1) to individuals or teams who are emerging young investigators at universities or research institutes, (2) to those boosting undergraduate programs in the sciences (laboratory equipment, texts, etc.), and (3) to those seeking to form partnerships with industry. The second component involves marketing campaigns like a National Science Week, and strengthening the Ugandan Council for Science and Technology through reorganization and improved science policies (this Council is similar in mission to the National Science Foundation in the United States, with the exception that it does not focus on national defense).

The agreement between Uganda and the World Bank for the MSI is representative of the Bank’s evolving commitment to higher education and its recognition of the importance of universities to the knowledge economy. However, previous policies involving structural adjustment programs and conditionalities, as well as the emphasis on developing the private sector at the possible expense of public-sector services, leave unanswered questions about the adequacy of present-day policies.

Analysis

We organize our analysis by our three key research questions, the first concerned with the degree and manner by which the Bank has addressed

development of the higher education sector and its role in human capacity building in Uganda. Considering data collected about the Bank's involvement in Uganda, the organization clearly has noted the need and desire to improve higher education. The MSI is a practical outcome of this strategic mission. The degree to which funding for higher education in Uganda has increased demonstrates this relatively recent policy change. However, one might raise questions about whether or not 3 percent of US\$1 billion in Bank loans is adequate support for university development.

In terms of a commitment to human capacity building, the Bank ties such activities to advancing science and technology at the university level and mostly ignores other important facets of nation building and the role of universities, such as the promotion of centers for history and cultural preservation, citizenship development, and so forth. As part of the MSI, science and technology (S&T) are defined as key areas in which human capacity building takes place, and consequently, the Bank's program in Uganda focuses entirely on this area of knowledge advancement.

Our second research question is concerned with the view of knowledge undergirding the Bank's higher education programs in Uganda. A Bank official involved with projects in Africa offered insight into the organization's strategic mission in developing countries such as Uganda:

The bar has been raised for knowledge about most goods and services [meaning there is an increase of information about trade in the knowledge economy] and the world economy is more integrated than it used to be. So for developing countries to even maintain their current share of global income, they have to try to advance at the same pace that the leading countries are advancing. There are a lot of strikes against them in doing that and I think that the increasing view of high technology as a driver of global economic growth or technological mastery has gotten the attention of policy makers. They realize that they are going to need to try to invest in skills and capabilities, high-end skills, for the sake of economic growth and prosperity. That has had a strong effect on the role of higher education.

A large injection of money, combined with the goal of advancing research to promote scientific and technological growth, appear to be driven by the assumption that knowledge and the production of knowledge are core components to a nation's development. In this regard, the Bank's position seems to recognize that developing nations such as Uganda cannot be relegated only to the industrial sector of the world economy. A major problem though is that for many years the Bank's policies did not reflect such a view; instead, the Bank tended to subscribe to the position that developing nations had no chance of competing in science and technology arenas and so providing loans in this area made little sense. In light of

previous damage to the higher education sector as a consequence of under funding, one is left to wonder about the adequacy of present-day World Bank initiatives. Can \$US30 million really help Uganda keep pace with advances in university science and technology, keeping in mind that a single university in the United States, Johns Hopkins University, received US\$612 million in one year alone (2005) from the National Institutes of Health, and Stanford University spent over US\$600 million on research for one year, while our own university, UCLA, spent over US\$800 million.

A third concern relates to the manner in which the Bank's higher education initiatives incorporate decision-making processes that adequately account for local and national needs. In terms of garnering input from developing nations, one Bank official was particularly concerned about past mistakes and the need to account for national and societal differences:

Political appropriateness is a factor where countries have their own internal processes for deciding what they want to spend on higher education and how they want their economies to be oriented. One country's idea of their culture may include economic success, prosperity, increasing technology, and so forth. Others may be different – it means that there is not one model. Higher education and skills are shown to be important for economic growth. One has to remember that there can't be a single model. You have to respect people's desire, as expressed through the political process: Do they want to be a developmental state like Korea or do they want to be Ethiopia or Eritrea? You can't expect that every country wants to adopt the same developmentalist goals that perhaps are considered most effective by the Bank, which focuses almost strictly on economic development.

In the project documents for Uganda's MSI, there is a thorough evaluation of what the country's goals are in areas of poverty reduction, educational development, and economic growth. There is also a process in place for garnering input from experts throughout the country. Members from the ministry of education, the parliament's committee on science and technology, the Uganda National Council for Higher Education, Uganda Christian University, Uganda National Academy of Science, Makerere University Faculty of Medicine, and others were a part of the process of preparing the loan. Despite these apparent steps to instill more democratic processes, Ugandan officials expressed serious concerns about the level of the Bank's commitment to developing their nation's university sector, as well as resentment over past conditionalities and structural adjustment programs that have left the higher education sector in such terrible shape. Ugandan officials believe their nation is paying a heavy price for years in which the World Bank and the donor community ignored their calls for increased support for academic science in particular and university

education in general. The Bank's own documents point to this problem, noting that Uganda has neglected science and technology and presently has a large disconnect between its needs and the ability to meet them (World Bank, 2006b). However, the same report stops short of pointing a finger at the Bank and its previous policies.

THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND

Establishing the Context

The Kingdom of Thailand, known as "Siam" until the 1940s, borders Malaysia and Cambodia, and is commonly recognized as the only nation of Southeast Asia never to have been colonized by a European power. With a population of over 64 million, the country is geographically about the same size as France. Functioning governmentally as a constitutional monarchy, the chief of state, King Phumiphon Adunyadet and Prime Minister, Surayut Chulanon, both are located in the capital city of Bangkok. Generally, the Prime Minister is selected by the House of Representatives (selected through national elections), but the most recent change in Prime Ministers occurred through a coup in September 2006. Today, the GDP is almost US\$180 billion (by comparison, over 20 times that of Uganda) with rice and rubber being the major agricultural products and tourism and textiles as the predominant industries (World Bank, 2007). With a free-market-enterprise economy, and although Thailand has been one of East Asia's best performers, it nonetheless suffers from a public debt roughly equal to 45 percent of the GDP; the country also has been hit hard economically by the Asian financial crisis of 1997–1998, the 2004 Tsunami, and the 2006 military coup (World Bank, 2006a). Other challenges include sectarian violence in the southern provinces, the ongoing threat of the spread of avian flu, and fallout from the SARS epidemic (which hurt the service/tourism sector of the Thai economy during the early 2000s).

Given its fortune never to have been colonized by the West, Thailand's long cultural history has been protected and preserved to a great extent. The nation's educational structure also has benefited from its cultural stability. The general educational structure includes six years of primary school followed by three years of lower secondary school, thus amounting to nine years of compulsory education. There are also three years of upper secondary school, which are free, but not compulsory (Thailand Ministry of Education, 2004). A breakdown of levels of educational attainment among

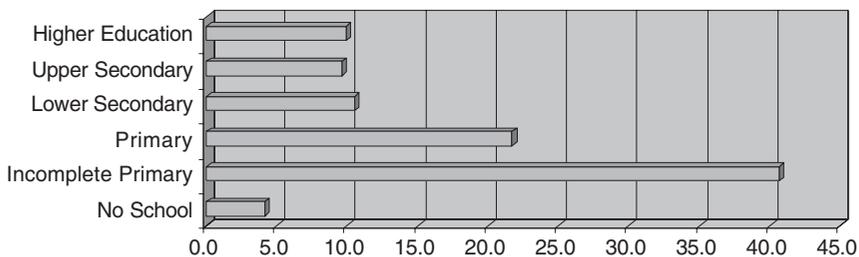


Fig. 6. Distribution of Highest Level of Educational Attainment by the Population Aged 25-64.

25-to 64-year-olds may be observed in Fig. 6.⁸ With 2.2 million students in higher education, Thailand has seen an increase from 26 to 40 percent of the enrolled population from 1995 to 2004 (Thailand Ministry of Education, 2004). One reason for the enrollment growth is believed to be expansion within the higher education sector, in terms of an increase in the number of colleges and universities. In 1995 there were 30 private and 22 public universities, but by 2003 the sector had grown dramatically to 77 private and 171 public universities (Thailand Ministry of Education, 2004). Despite some significant progress, Thailand also has experienced its share of difficulties in supporting education. For example, Kirtikara (2001) argued that Thailand has failed to couple higher education with industrial development, and consequently, has lagged behind economies such as South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. In addition, although the nation's GDP has been growing, the percentage of support for education, relative to the GDP, is decreasing (see Fig. 7 for the percent of GDP spent on education and Fig. 8 for a breakdown by educational sector).⁹ After 40 years of industrialization, the National Education Act of 1999 was designed to initiate reform in the higher education system, in terms of restructuring the administrative system, changing the public sector role from regulatory to supervisory, and creating a national set of education standards (Kirtikara, 2001).

In order for students to gain entrance into a college or university, they must score well on the highly competitive Joint Higher Education Entrance Examination (JHEEE) in addition to obtaining a Certificate of Secondary Education by completing the mandatory three years of lower secondary school and the optional three years of upper secondary. Only 30 percent of those who take the examination secure a place at a public university (Sedgwick, 2005). A 2004 Thai Ministry of Education Report identified

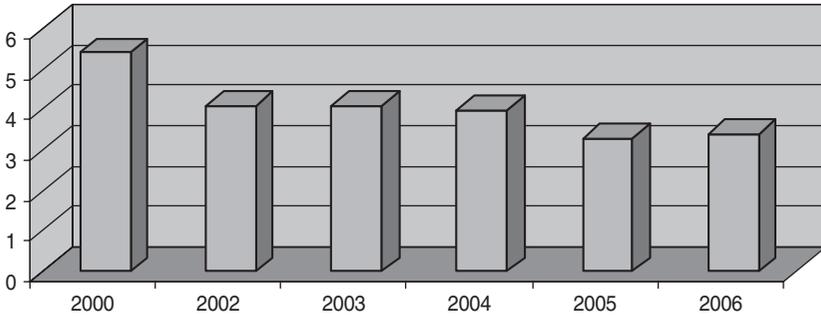


Fig. 7. Percent of GDP Spent on Education. *Note:* Data for 2001 was not available.

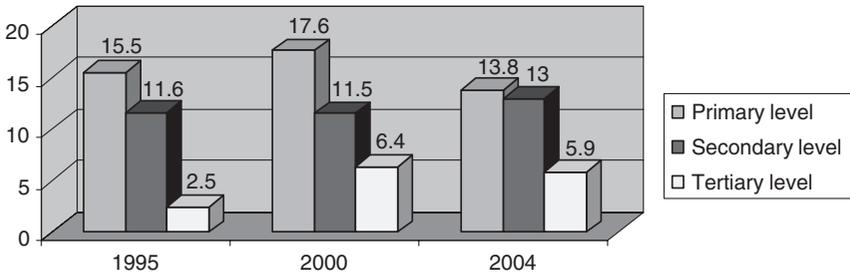


Fig. 8. Public Expenditure Percent on Education by Sector.

equity in higher education as a central concern, as the selection process clearly gives advantage to students from wealthy backgrounds, especially those who live in the Bangkok area, considering that almost half of all universities in the country are in or around the capital city. In addition, the cost of attending higher education places low- and middle-income families at a considerable disadvantage. The report suggested that financial reasons for not attending higher education should be addressed through scholarships and income-contingent loans designed to “ensure that all can afford higher education fees” (Thailand Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 52).

Some of the more selective universities include Culalongkorn, which is ranked in the top 200 universities in the world (according to the Times Higher Education Supplement in the UK) and is the oldest university in Thailand with an enrollment of almost 30,000 students, Thammasat, which has over 20,000 students and was founded in 1934, and Mahidol, which began as a public health institution and now has an enrollment of 27,000. All three of these universities offer bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees.

In addition, they are all beneficiaries of World Bank loans to develop university science and technology.

World Bank Loans and Projects

Thailand began borrowing from the World Bank in 1950 with three loans procured to develop railways, ports, and an irrigation system totaling just over US\$25 million. Since then, the Thai government has taken out a total of US\$7.7 billion in World Bank loans for projects ranging from the aforementioned to the development of dams, telecommunication systems, and education. Over the course of more than 50 years of borrowing, the government has limited its procurement of structural adjustment loans to only two, for a total of US\$325 million during the 1980s. Of these two loans for structural adjustment, the World Bank has made only one loan document available. Although the document includes the typical language of deregulation and decreasing taxes, the demanding conditions found in other nation-specific loan documents are lacking.

Lending for education began in 1966, with a US\$6 million loan for vocational education. Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Thailand continued to borrow from the Bank for primary and secondary education. Lending for education was absent from 1982 to around 1996, when the government procured a loan to improve the quality of secondary education. In 1997, the Universities Science and Engineering Education Project loan was procured for US\$260 million. Since this project loan was granted, there has not been additional Bank lending for education in Thailand. Thus, the total lending for education since the first loan in 1966 to the present is almost US\$600 million. Of the US\$7.7 billion that the Bank has provided Thailand throughout the history of this lending relationship, less than 8 percent has been dedicated to education.

We focus primarily on the Universities Science and Engineering Education Project, as it represents the Bank's commitment toward advancing Thai universities and their ability to contribute to the knowledge economy. The project was completed in 2003 and is summarized in the "Implementation Completion Report," provided by the Bank (World Bank, 2004). The document explained that the project supported quality improvements in 20 public universities through financing and implementing the following objectives: (1) to strengthen teaching capabilities of faculty; (2) to upgrade the content of existing programs in science and engineering and broaden the range of programs relevant to Thailand's technological

advancement; (3) to modernize laboratories and strengthen their management; (4) to improve the utilization of resources in faculties of engineering and science and establish a system for the large-scale procurement of equipment (pp. 2–3). The report beams about the impact of the loan on the development of Thai science and engineering programs, stating that all objectives were either met or exceeded.

Various outcomes of the project are included throughout the report. The project helped to create 139 staff development programs in engineering and science, contributed to an 82.7 percent increase in graduate engineering programs, and updated equipment in 295 laboratories (World Bank, 2004). The report also states that all institutions supported by the loan reported a significant increase in their ability to produce science and engineering graduates. In terms of scientific development, increased research and improved methodologies, as well as an improved capacity to develop resources, also were mentioned as important outcomes of the project.

To date, Thailand continues its relationship with the Bank, having recently finished a project focusing on the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT). Of importance to this chapter perhaps was the clear intent of the Bank to privatize the EGAT through a step-by-step process known as the “Privatization Action Plan,” and involving commercialization, organizational restructuring (“breaking up” the EGAT into five autonomous business units), and corporatization.

Analysis

As in the case of Uganda, we organize our analysis around the three key research questions, with the first focusing on the nature and degree of the Bank’s involvement in higher education and human capacity building. Through its loan for the Universities Science and Engineering Education Project, the Bank offers a concrete example supporting claims to an educational policy shift. In addition to demonstrating a fairly modest commitment to the transformation of higher education in Thailand, the project also reveals the Bank’s focus on science and engineering, connecting these areas of academic development to human capacity building and Thailand’s involvement in the new knowledge economy. Outcomes related to increases in the number of students interested in science and engineering, courses offered, and research projects all demonstrate a degree of impact on the part of the Bank. These outcomes speak directly to a serious challenge Thailand faces, a concern revealed in World Bank documents and through

data collected from Thai officials: a shortage of university graduates with advanced technical skills has limited the nation's ability to participate in the knowledge economy.

The view of knowledge suggested by the Bank's involvement in Thailand clearly recognizes the importance that science and engineering play in today's global economy and in the development of national economies. The project specifically supports research projects with the goal of extending the knowledge of academics and improving their teaching. Engagement in the construction of knowledge reinforces the development of human capacity in the university setting by advancing the theoretical, conceptual, and practical understanding of professors and students. An additional point to note is that the Bank's role as a "knowledge bank" seeks to enhance the development of scientific knowledge in developing nations not only by supporting research projects financially, but also by utilizing the expertise of scientists and economists to "transfer knowledge." This involves enhancing research projects in Thailand and elsewhere by sharing pertinent knowledge held by the Bank and its extensive staff. A Bank official spoke to this matter:

The exchange of experience, international experience, and knowledge about how things are done in other countries is quite accelerated in almost every area by the presence of the Bank. There is an active searching for things that have worked elsewhere – a very active transfer of those experiences. The extent to which the countries adopt them or whether we get them right is various. The transfer of knowledge and best practice experiences is an important part of the way that we influence development.

This statement reinforces the idea that the Bank sees its contributions to development as extending well beyond its financial resources to include the knowledge of its staff and their role in working with developing nations. This was a key component of the Thai science and engineering education project.

In terms of decision-making processes involving the Thai government, the science and engineering education project heavily involved the Ministry of University Affairs. Indeed, the Thai government appears to have had a significant voice in shaping this project, as well as other decisions to distance itself from World Bank involvement, including the decision to reject participation in another of the Bank's higher education projects – the Millennium Science Initiative, a program piloted in Chile and presently operating in Uganda. As one Bank official explained, "The MSI loan in Thailand never led to lending. There was some initial interest, but it didn't lead to a project. Thai officials didn't want to borrow or never got the political support for it to become a lending operation."

Thailand's habits as a borrowing nation appear different from other developing nations. Whether this has to do with the government's inability to reach consensus with the Bank or its general sense of autonomy remains unclear. What is clear, however, is that Thailand has managed to avoid some of the more significant entanglements (e.g. severely restrictive conditionalities) that other developing countries have dealt with, the consequence being a greater ability to shape its nation's policies based on its own local and global interests. Perhaps, the fact that throughout its history Thailand has been able to avoid colonization and retain a degree of autonomy plays a part. But despite the government's independence, economically and politically speaking, Thailand continues to struggle against other neighboring economies, including that of South Korea – a country which has not borrowed from the Bank since its last project ended in 1998.

DISCUSSION

A key concern of our study focused on the manner and strength of World Bank efforts to transform higher education in the developing world, as part of human capacity and institutional building. Here, the Bank has not always had a stellar record, as up until the 1990s it offered virtually no support for higher education. But our analysis of World Bank involvement in Uganda and Thailand reveals a policy shift in which increased attention is paid to higher education and its role in aiding these nations and their engagement in the global knowledge-based economy. Although one might argue that the amount of money loaned is relatively small – as we pointed out, World Bank loans to Uganda, as well as to Thailand, pale in comparison to research expenditures in the United States, where individual universities such as Stanford and UCLA spend millions in one year alone on research and development – nonetheless, the Bank appears to have shifted its position in recognition of the economic contribution of university investment. This is a key finding and represents movement toward a broader recognition of externalities associated with investing in higher education (particularly in terms of enhancing scientific and technological capabilities), as opposed to the previous individual-oriented rate-of-return analysis. Bank officials recognize that human capacity building in today's knowledge economy must involve a proper dose of science and technology. This was obvious in both Uganda and Thailand, where science and engineering initiatives tended to define the Bank's priorities.

We also must point out that in the process of developing loan agreements, national governments negotiate the terms and conditions that they are willing to accept, based on their own assessment of need. But both Ugandan and Thai officials noted that at various points certain projects and their conditions were more aligned with national initiatives than others. For example, a professor at Makerere University in Uganda emphasized that the conditions of any loan have to be understood from the perspective that, “when you are desperate and hungry you need to eat and the consequences are not readily considered but impact the country for generations to come.” Although governments certainly play a role in loan negotiations and have the responsibility to protect their citizens from long-term harmful consequences, an element of desperation clearly accompanies such processes. In the end, some governmental officials may accept certain conditionalities for the benefit of a short-term fix.

Overall, the World Bank’s progression toward increasing its support for higher education was long in coming and reveals some of the ideological tensions taking place behind the scenes. For example, an ideological element fairly apparent throughout our study relates to economic assumptions grounded in neoliberalism and those who generally believe in the essential benefits of the privatization of public services, including higher education. It is not surprising to us that many of the Bank’s assumptions about economics and public policy are presented as logical outcomes of rigorous analysis, when in fact they reveal what amounts to nothing more than a particular ideological orientation – one that is quite hostile to public services in particular and socialism more broadly conceived. In pointed remarks, one former Bank official alluded to how research was often conducted to prove something that the Bank already believed, upon which it was already committed to act:

You have to understand one thing and that is that research at a public institution, including most government research, or World Bank research, is strategic in its orientation. An institution does not engage in research for research sake; it engages in research because it has a strategic interest in the outcome. And very often we already know the outcome and what we do is use this research to generate what we want. So it is not true that research results lead to better operations or management ... In order to lend in areas where we currently do not, we generate the kind of research that will justify doing what we want to do.

This official talked about how the work of Psacharopoulos had served its purpose at one time, but as pressure to support higher education in developing nations increased, new forms of research (and “findings”) were needed to justify such a shift. Consequently, ROR studies fell into disrepute

and other studies focusing on the broad economic and social returns associated with higher education became more popular.

Another key element of our findings relates to the view of knowledge advanced by the Bank in its efforts to transform universities in the developing world. The Bank's support for higher education in Uganda and Thailand reveals a view of knowledge fairly in line with neoliberalism and the growing dominance of scientific and technological knowledge. Within the context of university knowledge production in wealthier nations, market-oriented and revenue-generating academic fields have come to dominate universities in what Slaughter and Leslie (1997) defined as "academic capitalism." Several years later, Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) drew upon Michel Foucault's (1977, 1980) work on power and knowledge and elaborated the "academic capitalist knowledge regime." As they explained, "The academic capitalism knowledge regime values knowledge privatization and profit taking in which institutions, inventor faculty, and corporations have claims that come before those of the public. Public interest in science goods are subsumed in the increased growth expected from a strong economy" (p. 29). As a regime of power giving shape to the contemporary university, academic capitalism operates as a set of norms and practices in which university scientists find themselves in hot competition for research revenues, driven by an expanding, global knowledge-based economy. As a consequence, revenue-generating fields have taken on greater relevance, while other less profitable areas of academic life become more or less second- or third-class citizens in the increasingly hierarchical neoliberal model of the university.

The Bank's view of knowledge and its definition of human capacity building are clearly grounded in the academic capitalist knowledge regime, but as an overall contribution to nation building we find this view of knowledge rather limited. It is noteworthy to us that even in wealthier nations of the West, including the United States, where the academic capitalist knowledge regime dominates university affairs, there still exists other regimes of power, including what Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) described as the "public good" regime. An element of the public good regime includes a broad view of liberal education and the role universities play in preparing citizens for participation in civic life. What seems lost in the Bank's projects in Uganda and Thailand is any notion of the broader mission of university education and the responsibility to develop citizens knowledgeable of their own history and culture. Some associate this view of the modern university to the Humboldtian ideal, in which the university is seen as obligated to educating students in the ways of the nation, in part as a means of forging

national cohesion (Aronowitz, 2000). However, we find the discussion of the “democratic and emancipatory university” by Santos (2006), in which universities are oriented to serving a “national project” – essentially the interests of the particular society as defined and negotiated by a nation’s citizens – more in line with our thinking, given certain elements of elitism that also accompany Wilhelm von Humboldt’s vision and the early German model. We are not suggesting that universities in the developing world ought to provoke nationalism, but certainly universities can do a great deal toward preserving and advancing local and national cultural and historical understandings, as well as addressing specific local and national needs. Clearly, universities in wealthier nations serve in this capacity, but apparently this is not a priority of the World Bank, where the definition of what counts as knowledge is firmly embedded in a neoliberal model of the world.

Another key finding concerns the degree to which World Bank involvement may have damaged higher education sectors in developing nations to such an extent that any hope of contributing to human capacity building consistent with a knowledge-based economy (including the critical elements above that we suggest ought to be included) seems remote, even with present-day Bank lending commitments. The case of Uganda is particularly instructive here as it highlights how past Bank project involvement limited university development, given conditionalities that forced Uganda to reduce support for higher education. This latter finding raises serious questions about the present level of financial support and whether or not the Bank may have a large debt to repay to the developing world for past damages done in the name of ROR analyses that left universities in such disrepair. Related to this point, Dikson (2003) offered sharp criticism in noting that the Bank ought to take a good deal of the responsibility “for the current poor state of science in many developing nations.” He added that the Bank’s structural adjustment programs inflicted serious damage to higher education, arguing that, “Many countries in Africa, for example, continue to suffer from the consequences of policies that, while attempting to streamline economic efficiency, frequently did so at the expense of much-needed investment in public goods (including research).” Santos (2006) supported this argument as well when he discussed the serious damage that had been done to African universities by the Bank: “Unable to include in its calculations the importance of the university in the building of national projects and the creation of long-term critical thinking, the World Bank concluded that African universities do not generate sufficient ‘return’ on their investment” (p. 66).

Questions concerning the degree of nation-specific participation in World Bank decision-making also raise interesting considerations. For example, several Bank officials with whom we spoke noted how ministry of education officials had been angry with the Bank's policies regarding support for higher education for many years. Indeed, policy makers in both Uganda and Thailand voiced serious criticism of World Bank processes that tended to define government officials and policy makers in the respective countries as "outsiders" in loan and project decisions, at least at the initial stages of development. Ugandan officials complained for many years about World Bank pressure to reduce public expenditures for higher education only to see the Bank revise its stance and begin programs to advance university science and technology. Obviously, conditionalities played a major role in shaping the Ugandan policy on higher education.

Lost autonomy linked to World Bank conditionalities seems less of an issue in Thailand, given its ability to retain control over its own educational policies. In part, the economic situation of Thailand is much better than that of Uganda. But additional factors may be more historical and cultural in nature, given that Thailand has avoided colonialism and consequently has retained a greater degree of independence throughout its history. Along these lines, Jansen (2001) included the avoidance of colonialism as a factor in the country's impressive economic growth. A sense of national esteem or "resurgent nationalism," linked to its long-standing independence in part contributed to Thailand's negative reaction against Western hegemony, globalization, and IGO interventions, such as those of the World Bank and IMF, in the wake of the 1997 economic crisis and the de facto devaluation of the Thai *baht*. The crisis threatened the nation's independence with a new form of colonialism – "economic colonialism" – and generated populist calls for "demonizing international institutions" (McCargo, 2001, p. 99). This may help to explain why more recent higher education plans between Thailand and the World Bank, involving the Millennium Science Initiative, for example, have not come to fruition.

CONCLUSION

A key matter undergirding our discussion in this chapter concerns the degree to which developing an adequate university structure for academic science and technology falls on public versus private sources, and if both, what is the proper balance. The new knowledge economy based on a

neoliberal version of globalization is dominated by private ownership and the accumulation of profit. In order to increase or liberalize private ownership, the role of state support must be diminished. Indeed, disinvestment in the public university has occurred in instances where the World Bank has concluded that higher education does not generate a sufficient return on investment (Santos, 2006). In such an environment, higher education expansion is predicated on the view that private providers, often involving international parties, are to support such growth. However, without the state's support for an autonomous and national higher education sector, the construction of a public-good university capable of balancing local and global pressures arguably is severely weakened (Rhoads & Torres, 2006a; Santos, 2006). As a consequence, processes associated with a neoliberal vision may in the end relegate developing nations to consumer status in the global knowledge economy as well as ignore the ways in which public support has been crucial to advancing university science and technology in developed nations such as the United States (Geiger, 1986, 1993).

Based on the evidence we have gathered from the Bank, and relative to the cases of Uganda and Thailand, as well as the Bank's overall efforts in the developing world (with regard to support for higher education), two alternative conclusions warrant consideration. One possibility is that the Bank, as it has claimed, has indeed reformed and now acknowledges that one-size-fits-all solutions just do not work. And so blanket conclusions with regard to the role that higher education plays in elevating the development of a particular nation have fallen by the roadside and opened the door to greater funding for the sector, including possibly the role of state support. Consistent with its self-professed identity as a knowledge bank, the World Bank has come to recognize the legitimate role developing nations can play in a global knowledge-based economy.

But another interpretation also exists and speaks to the matter of conditionality as well as the limited scope of the Bank's higher education projects in the developing world. On the one hand, the Bank clearly has increased loans for higher education projects, and seems mindful of the national importance of knowledge construction and the advance of academic science and technology. On the other hand, the Bank continues to attach conditions to loans that restrict national support for higher education and the development of public universities. This contradictory position raises serious questions about the Bank's real ambitions, and whether or not World Bank policy makers fully believe developing nations hold the potential to contribute meaningfully to the new economy.

NOTES

1. We recognize that the category of “higher” or “tertiary” education includes many more types of postsecondary institutions than simply universities (e.g., two-year or community colleges, technical schools and/or institutes, liberal arts colleges, comprehensive universities, etc.). However, given our interest in the role postsecondary institutions play in economic development, most specifically in terms of advancing science and technology as well as human capacity building, we choose to focus on universities and their importance to developing nations.

2. The World Bank Group is actually made up of five different agencies, but the IDA and IBRD are the two primary lending agencies.

3. The source for this chart is a World Bank Group brochure available at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTABOUTUS/Resources/wbgroupbrochure-en.pdf>

4. The World Bank projects page, located on their website (www.worldbank.org), lists all of the loans that have been made for the theme, “education and the knowledge economy.” This chart is the result of analyzing 215 loans listed under this theme and extracting the percentage of each loan dedicated to higher education. While there are other types of postsecondary education funding (e.g. vocational education) this chart exclusively displays loans for higher education relative to the improvement of colleges and universities.

5. The data for these figures are taken from the World Bank (2006b) project appraisal document for the Uganda Millennium Science Initiative loan. Each figure is a medium term expenditure framework, which offers data from the past five years and estimates the figures for three years into the future. The currency used in Fig. 3 is the Uganda Shilling (Ushs) in billions (US\$1 = 1750 Ushs).

6. Each World Bank project has a set time and amount of money to accomplish the project’s objectives. Some projects (e.g. the road development project) began in 1999 and are still active, while others began in 2004 and are already completed. There is currently around US\$1 billion in active loan money for Uganda.

7. This plan was established in 1997 on four pillars to help Uganda become a modern economy: creating a framework for economic growth and transformation, ensuring good governance and security, directly increasing the ability of the poor to raise their incomes, and directly increasing the quality of the life of the poor.

8. The source for UNESCO Institute for Statistics is at: www.unesco.org

9. The source is at: Thailand Office of the Education Council (2006).

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