

## Education Buzz (December 7): Education progress in Afghanistan | A policy failure in Indonesia? | More

**Author :** Robert Cannon and Colum Graham

**Date :** December 7, 2012



### Progress in education in Afghanistan

A World Bank [paper](#) documents improvements in education in Afghanistan. Projects have benefited general, technical, and vocational education, and particularly benefited girl. Australia's aid contribution to Afghanistan is outlined [here](#).

Examples of benefits are listed in the paper: enrolment in grades 1-12 increased from 3.9 million in 2004 to 6.2 million in 2008; girls' enrolment up from 839,000 to more than 2.2 million, and boys' from 2.6 million to 3.9 million—the highest enrolment in the history of Afghanistan.

Other reported achievements include: community participation in school management; teachers trained in large numbers; tertiary enrolment has increased and tertiary staff increased by 25 percent; new schools built; technical and vocational training established; first-ever IT capacity built; government reforms advanced and a five-year National Education Strategic Plan developed. But how sustainable are these achievements? Like many reports on educational development there is silence on this important issue. And, of course, sustainability of achievements will be influenced by the international troop draw-down in 2014.

### Teacher certification in Indonesia: a policy failure?

A World Bank [policy brief](#) shows that the impact of certification on improvements in teacher quality and student learning outcomes is limited. Although certification has led to some changes in teacher behaviour, these have not translated into improved student learning outcomes. Further analytical work needs to be done to assess whether recent changes in the policy program have gone far enough, according to the report.

Despite this criticism, the certification program is to be continued by the Ministry of Education and Culture, according to recent [media reports](#).

Another recent World Bank publication, [Teacher reform in Indonesia: The role of politics and evidence-based policymaking](#), previews a forthcoming World Bank book to be published in early 2013.

### AusAID Higher Education Forum

In response to concerns about Australian expertise in education and development, AusAID commissioned A *baseline study of the current status of engagement of Australian universities and research institutions in education for development*. The study was discussed at a Forum hosted by AusAID on 6 November by a group of about 40 people from universities, AusAID, NGOs, ACER and government.

The study, critiqued in this Devpolicy blog [post](#) by Robert Cannon, presents an analysis of the current status of Australian universities' work in education for development and a review of the key issues. It argues for the building of integrative university structures to advance education for development as a field of research and teaching activity and funding over a ten-year period to build capacity in these areas.

The Forum heard presentations from University of Melbourne's Professor Simon Marginson, co-author of the report, and from Professor Geoff Masters, Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council for Educational Research. These speakers were joined by Professor Stephen Howes, Director of the Development Policy Centre, and Kaye Schofield, Principal Sectoral Specialist for Education at AusAID, for a final plenary where critical strategies to strengthen university engagement in education for development were proposed for AusAID to consider.

### **New report on country performance in education**

Pearson, a major US education services company, has recently published a report titled [The learning curve. lessons in country performance in education](#). The intention of the report is to further our understanding of what leads to successful educational outcomes. It takes a "naming and shaming" approach to get countries (in particular, Mexico, Brazil and Indonesia) to lift their performance.

The research was conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit, which may explain its significant weakness— the neglect of serious *educational* research and the neglect of the processes of learning and teaching. In the one page 'Select bibliography', of the 33 references listed, at least 19 either deal with economic issues or have been published in economics journals. Missing is almost any reference to major educational research such as that by John Hattie ([here](#) and [here](#)). Hattie's work is based on more than 800 meta-analyses of 50,000 research articles and about 240 million students – surely worth something in a report of this kind, and an answer for the report's appeal for *more* research, when clearly much of what exists is being ignored. Reliance on work such as Hattie's would have given more attention to the processes of learning and teaching, to counter the report's heavy input–output focus. As Hattie argues, the greatest source of variance in learning outcomes relates to teachers.

### **Education networks, newsletters and resources**

**Behavioral design: A new approach to development policy.** In the November 2012 [Center for Global Development Policy Paper 016](#), authors Saugato Datta and Sendhil Mullainathan argue that the systematic application of behavioural design should help close the gap between what policy seeks to achieve and what it actually accomplishes. This paper sketches how to use behavioural insights to design better development policy.

The paper draws on development examples from different disciplines, including education, to illustrate the value of considering a behavioural approach. For example, many governments and donors have supported policies involving reducing school fees or providing financial assistance to poor parents as ways of increasing schooling among the poor. However, there is evidence that 'mental models', that is, the local underlying theory parents may have about schooling and its costs, can also play an important role in school attendance. These local theories need to be identified, understood and then taken into consideration in education policy development.

**NORRAG**, the Network for Policy Research, Review and Advice on Education and Training, is a forum for the analysis of international cooperation in the education and training. The [NORRAG NEWSBite](#) website has listed a number of new items that discuss educational policy issues including the following:

- Post-2015 education planning under occupation: a view from Palestine
- New perspectives on Dutch programmes for cooperation in post-secondary education and training
- How shadow education can undermine the EFA goals: the expansion and implications of private tutoring
- The role of education and skills in any post-2015 development agenda.

**School leadership in China and Indonesia** In a Special Issue, the journal *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, [Volume 23, Issue 4, 2012](#), has published several articles of interest to those working in educational development, including: *School leadership that makes a difference: international perspectives*; *National contexts influencing principals' time use and allocation*; *Principal leadership in China: an initial review*; and *Conceptualizing teacher leadership in a Chinese, policy-driven context*.

The most recent issue of *School Leadership and Management*, [Volume 32, Issue 5, 2012](#) also contains research articles on leadership: *Principalship in an Indonesian school context: can principal decision-making styles significantly predict teacher job satisfaction?* and *Instructional leadership in Indonesian school reform: overcoming the problems to move forward*.

**Research database** A searchable database of more than 8,000 books, articles, conference papers and reports on various aspects of international and development education from publishers in Australia and abroad is managed by the Australian Council for Educational Research and supported by IDP. The database has been updated recently and is accessible [here](#).

#### In brief

**Toilets and schools** November 19 was [World Toilet Day](#). This day was intended to raise awareness of some startling statistics about sanitation: 2.5 billion people do not have access to a clean toilet and, daily, 1.1 billion people defecate in the open. The lack of private and clean facilities in schools is known to be a major impediment to girls continuing at school as discussed [here](#) in Indonesia, for example. In [India](#), one estimate is that 23 per cent of girls drop out of school when they reach puberty and begin to menstruate—primarily due to inadequate toilet facilities at school.

**Australia supporting Palau to improve the skills of teachers** Australia is supporting Palau to improve the skills of teachers by assisting the Palau Community College to provide a teacher training course in English as a Second Language. An adviser is now working with the College to revise the curriculum. [AusAID](#) notes that Palau has one of the stronger education systems in the region, raising the question of why an aid-supported adviser is necessary to revise the curriculum at all.

**Mid-term review of AusAID's 'Development for All' strategy** AusAID has made available the positive mid-term review of its Development for All strategy and management's response to the review [here](#). As a cross-cutting issue, the strategy has important implications for education. The [Samoa Inclusive Education Demonstration Program](#) is described as an example.

**New basic education program launched in Indonesia** On 3 October 2012, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a \$83.7 million [education program](#) that will benefit more than 300,000 Indonesian students. The new USAID Prioritizing Reform, Innovation, Opportunities for Reaching Indonesia's Teachers, Administrators, and Students (PRIORITAS) program will seek to improve the quality of teaching and learning in 1,400 primary school, junior secondary school, and madrasah in 110 districts, focusing on low-income areas through teacher and management training. The program will work with teacher training institutions and will operate geographically in Aceh, Banten, Central Java, East Java, East Nusa Tenggara, North Sumatra, Papua, South Sulawesi, West Java, and West Nusa Tenggara.

**The Children and Violence Evaluation Challenge Fund** This Fund aims at reducing violence against children by funding evaluations of violence prevention and child protection interventions in low and middle-income countries. The Fund has announced its [second call](#) for proposals aimed at funding a new set of rigorous evaluations of violence prevention interventions. The deadline for proposals is 17 December 2012.

The physical and psychological abuse of children, including sexual exploitation, is a known – but too infrequently addressed – barrier to the continuing participation of all children and especially girls in education as discussed in this Development Policy Centre [blog](#).

**Westpac Fiji launches education grants** Westpac Fiji has [launched](#) its third women's education grant program. The program offers girls and women a chance to receive financial assistance for their primary, secondary or tertiary education if they wish to return to study. This year Westpac is offering six education grants for female tertiary students or workers to return to study: — two \$500 grants for primary school girls, two \$1300 grants for secondary students and two \$3500 grants.

**Universities and USAID partnership in development challenges** The Higher Education Solutions Network, described [here](#), is a partnership initiative between USAID and seven American and foreign universities. The Network is designed to develop innovative solutions to global development challenges. Universities will establish Development Labs that will work with USAID's field missions and Washington staff to solve key challenges in development. At the University of California, Berkeley, a \$20 million cooperative agreement with USAID will fund a new multidisciplinary laboratory to ready inventions for the developing world, train a new generation of development practitioners and innovators, and to launch a brand new field of research — Development Engineering.

**Blog for Indonesian women students in Australia** [Neng Koala](#) is a blog for Indonesian women writing about their experiences on studying in Australian universities. The blog is presented in Bahasa Indonesia and is intended to support and encourage women's higher education here.

*The [Education Buzz](#) is our monthly education and development wrap-up. The next Education Buzz will appear in the first week of February.*

[Robert Cannon](#) is an Associate of the [Development Policy Centre](#) and [Colum Graham](#) is a Researcher in the Centre.