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A Research Programme Consortium on
Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries

THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY IN EDUCATION: A REVIEW OF THE 'INTERNATIONAL' LITERATURE ON THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY IN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews key documents that have influenced understandings of educational quality in low income countries amongst international agencies concerned with and researchers based in Anglophone countries. There is a particular focus on quality as defined with reference to formal primary education. The paper identifies five dimensions of quality that are recurring themes of debate on quality. The literature review remains 'work in progress' that will take on board more of the literature and thus develop over a period of time, both feeding into our research programme and being informed by it.

The paper starts by differentiating education from schools and argues that any framework to conceptualize educational quality is necessarily value-based. Two broad approaches to understanding quality are then outlined in Part 2 and a selection of key texts reviewed that falls into each approach. The humanist/progressive approach is characterised by a broad concern for the development of the whole child and human development or social change. The second broad approach, the economist approach, is largely concerned with efficiency and effectiveness, and the achievement of learning outcomes at reasonable cost. Learning outcomes tend to be narrowly defined in terms of cognitive achievement. This approach is identified with the World Bank and two key Bank publications are reviewed.

Part 3 summarises the conceptualisation of quality implied in three Education for All documents: the *World Declaration on Education for All*, the *Dakar Framework for Action* and the *Global Monitoring Report 2005: the Quality Imperative*. These are found to take a broad approach to understanding quality that emphasises learning for social development, through the promotion of Life Skills. However, despite setting goals of quality education in terms that embrace a broad range of personal and social learning outcomes, assessment of progress in achieving quality is mainly restricted to those cognitive learning outcomes that are easy to measure using pen and paper tests. Part 4 complicates the dichotomous schema used to categorise understandings of educational quality by drawing on Chitty's three concepts of schooling. These are schooling for human fulfilment, schooling as preparation for the world of work and schooling for social progress or change. In part 5, the authors present five key dimensions to education quality that have emerged from their reading of the literature. The conclusion poses questions raised by these five dimensions for the development of the EdQual programme of research.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: AIMS AND LIMITATIONS IN THIS REVIEW	1
1: EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING: AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION	2
2: TRADITIONS WITHIN 'EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT'	2
The Progressive/Humanist Tradition – Quality of Classroom Processes	3
Constructivist Quality – Beeby (1966)	3
C.E. Beeby (1966) 'The Quality of Education in Developing Countries'	3
Goals, Context and Agency – Hawes & Stephens (1990).....	4
Equity and Quality – Sayed (1997)	5
The Delors Report (1996)	6
The World Bank and the Economist Tradition.....	6
The World Bank Education Sector Strategy (1999)	7
3: THE EDUCATION FOR ALL MOVEMENT	8
The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005) Education for All: The Quality Imperative.....	10
4: EXTENDING THE FRAMEWORKS	11
5: COMPONENTS OF A QUALITY FRAMEWORK	13
6: CONCLUSION	15
REFERENCES	16

INTRODUCTION: AIMS AND LIMITATIONS IN THIS REVIEW

This literature review was undertaken with the aim of identifying interpretations of educational quality in the academic and development literature from a wide range of sources. The particular emphasis in our search for relevant material was on notions of quality in the context of low income countries and disadvantaged groups within those countries.

It was quickly realised that the volume of literature addressing the concept of quality in education, either as its prime focus or as a component of a wider focus, is vast. Within the time and resources available it would be impossible to produce a comprehensive or exhaustive review at this stage. Instead, it became clear that a more realistic initial target would be to identify dominant definitions and uses of the concept of educational quality that appear in this literature and to place these within some analytical frameworks. These might usefully frame our discussions and the ongoing development of our understanding of the concept to inform our research over the next five years. It must be emphasised therefore, that this literature review remains 'work in progress' that will take on board more of the literature and thus develop over a period of time, both feeding into our research programme and being informed by it.

The initial focus has been on what we might call the 'mainstream literature' in order to identify the dominant understandings of the concept. Given the powerful role of agencies such as the World Bank and UNESCO in setting educational agendas in the target countries, it was important that literature from these agencies was included in this initial search. What is not so well represented yet in this review are some of the more radical interpretations and critiques of mainstream usage of the concept of educational quality.

The rest of this review is organised and presented in three parts. The first is brief but emphasises a distinction that is fundamental to any further consideration of the nature of quality in education: the distinction between education and schooling. The second follows from this and identifies traditions of analysis of the role of education in development that have different implications for the interpretation of quality in education. These traditions are then traced within literature emerging from some of the key agencies involved in educational development. The third part of the review analyses uses of the concept of quality in terms of five components that can commonly be identified in the literature.

1: EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING: AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

When discussing or defining quality, it is important to distinguish between 'education' and 'schooling'. Some of the literature does make this distinction but much of it conflates the two concepts, in some cases using them as though they are completely interchangeable. This is perhaps particularly true amongst those working within the 'quality management' paradigm, where 'institutional effectiveness' commonly becomes a synonym for educational quality.

Although rather dated, a broad definition of 'education' from Hirst and Peters (1970: 19) is a useful starting point for making the distinction. They describe education as **"the development of desirable qualities in people"** Of course, there is no agreement about the end of "desirable qualities" and what these are, and some of the positions commonly adopted on this will be the focus of the second part of this review. The point we are making is that an understanding of these educational purposes is a prerequisite to any detailed consideration of quality.

Schooling, on the other hand, is about providing the service of 'education', i.e. of educating young people through institutionalised and universalised 'organised' learning. While the universal provision of "basic education" has been considered a major improvement for the individual and society in the early 20th century, both in today's context and in its interpretations it remains heavily contested. (See, for example, Illich, 1974; Postman & Richter, 1998; von Hentig, 1996; Harber, 2004.)

The importance of this distinction underpins a paper by Sayed (1997), who argues that 'the concept 'quality' in education is elusive and ... frequently used but never defined' and goes on to discuss how its multiple meanings reflect 'different ideological, social and political values.' By critiquing key approaches to education quality, Sayed highlights what he calls the value-bases of any framework for education quality. Drawing on Bunting (1993) he declares that, 'Quality in education does have a bottom line and that line is defined by the goals and values which underpin the essentially human activity of education.' The clear implication is that this bottom line must be the starting point for our understanding of the notion of quality in education so that we do not 'reify the practice of education ... [and] reduce education to a technical activity that is static and unaffected by contextual and contingent circumstances.' (For an extended discussion of this same point see also Holt, 2000.) The next section of this review therefore begins its analysis of quality by looking at various traditions in our understanding of the purposes of education in relation to development.

2: TRADITIONS WITHIN 'EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT'

It is possible to identify two dominant traditions within quality discourse, which have grown up together and are to an extent interdependent. The 'economist' view of education uses quantitative measurable outputs as a measure of quality, for example enrolment ratios and retention rates, rates of return on investment in education in terms of earnings and cognitive achievement as measured in national or international tests. The progressive/humanist tradition tends to place more emphasis on educational processes. The word 'indicators' in itself implies a positivist approach to measuring quality and so, tends not to be used within this tradition. Judgements of quality are based on what happens in schools and in the classroom. Learning of basic cognitive skills, literacy and numeracy, as well as general knowledge are considered vital to quality. However, schools are also recognised as places where learners acquire attitudes and cultural values. Hence, characteristics such as learner-centred pedagogies (e.g. Prophet, 1995; Ackers and Hardman, 2001), democratic school governance (e.g. Harber, 1993; Karlsson, 2002; Suzuki, 2002) and inclusion (e.g. UNESCO, 2004) are included in notions of quality education. Each of these contrasting approaches is associated with a large international organisation in the field of development. The 'economist'

view tends to dominate World Bank thinking on education. The World Bank, as Jones (1992) reminds us, is first and foremost a bank and as such justifies its loans for education development in terms of public financial returns. Since its inception, UNESCO has viewed education as essential although not sufficient for human development and as having cultural, even spiritual, benefits (UNESCO, 1947; Delors and *et al.*, 1996). At the current time this emphasis is realised through its 'themes' of cultural and linguistic diversity in education, inclusive education, peace and human rights education and education for sustainable development. The United Nations has highlighted the first and last of these themes through the institution of an International Mother Tongue day and declaration of 2005-2014 as the 'Decade of Education for Sustainable Development'.

The Progressive/Humanist Tradition – Quality of Classroom Processes

Constructivist Quality – Beeby (1966)

C.E. Beeby (1966) 'The Quality of Education in Developing Countries'

In his landmark text, *'The Quality of Education in Developing Countries'*, C.E. Beeby made the first attempt to generate a model for understanding educational theory. He conceptualised quality as having three levels. First, classroom quality, which is concerned with the acquisition of measurable knowledge and learning skills as well as harder to measure behaviours and attitudes, including "habits of industry ... attitudes of respect for authority and love of country" (Beeby, 1966:11). At the second level, quality education must serve the economic goals of the community in which learners and live. Related to this, at the third level, quality is judged by broader social criteria. These last two criteria for quality education are now defined as relevance (Hawes and Stephens, 1990) or "external quality" (UNESCO, 2005). Beeby's "stages of development" only concerned the first criteria of quality, i.e. the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. He was writing at a time when human capital theorists had started developing quantitative techniques to measure the economic benefits of investments in education and hence, was motivated to propose a theory of quality of education to match the sophistication of their statistical analysis. It was also a time when the rapid expansion of particularly primary education provision in low income countries was perceived as a threat to quality.

Beeby's 'stages of development' model is limited to a description of primary schooling. Teacher education and preparation are seen as being the key to educational quality. However, each stage is described in terms of systemic as well as curriculum and classroom characteristics (see table 1), foreshadowing the place given to context, as a determinant of quality, in later key texts (Hawes and Stephens, 1990; Heneveld, 1994; UNESCO, 2005).

Table 1: Beeby's stages of development (based on Beeby, 1966:72)

<i>STAGE</i>	<i>TEACHERS</i>	<i>CHARACTERISTICS</i>
I. Dame School	Ill-educated Untrained	Unorganized, relatively meaningless symbols; very narrow subject content – 3R's; very low standards; memorizing all-important.
II. Formalism	Ill-educated Trained	Highly organized; symbols with limited meaning; rigid methods – "one best way"; one textbook; external examinations; inspection stressed, discipline tight and external memorizing heavily stressed; emotional life largely ignored.
III. Transition	Better-educated Trained	Roughly same goals as stage II, but more efficiently achieved; more emphasis on meaning, but it is still rather "thin" and formal; syllabus and textbooks less restrictive, but teachers hesitate to use

		greater freedom; final leaving examination often restricts experimentation; little in classroom to cater for emotional and creative life of child.
Meaning	Well-educated Well-trained	Meaning and understanding stressed; somewhat wider curriculum, variety of content and methods; individual differences catered for; activity methods, problem solving and creativity; internal tests; relaxed and positive discipline; emotional and aesthetic life, as well as intellectual; closer relations with community; better buildings and equipment essential.

Beeby drew upon his experience as an educational administrator in a number of high and low income countries, almost all within the British Commonwealth. This has made his stages of development vulnerable to the criticism of containing “a teleological purpose of westernization disguised as ‘better’ teaching” (Guthrie, 1980:421). In other words, Beeby’s fourth and final stage of meaning represents the notions of quality education and characteristics of education system that predominated during the sixties in high income Commonwealth countries. More accurately, they represent a certain view that was popular amongst educationalists in English-speaking Western countries and, as Beeby himself makes clear, had influenced his own personal educational values. In this respect, there is little to distinguish Beeby’s approach to later texts on educational quality. As stated in Part 1 of this paper, notions of education quality necessarily imply educational values, which may be more or less explicit. Beeby’s educational values were informed by the humanist progressive tradition in education, an international tradition which includes amongst its most significant influences Pestalozzi, Froebel and Dewey. Although it has evolved to embrace contemporary preoccupations with human rights, democracy and environmental sustainability, and is cast in a new set of terms (learner-centred, participative, democratic), it is an enduring tradition within education. On the other hand, the cultural basis of Guthrie’s (see also, Guthrie, 2003) and other researchers’ assessment of the viability of learner-centred pedagogies (e.g. Tabulawa, 1997; Harley *et al.*, 2000), that notions of education quality are restricted by a Western-bias, demands attention be given to other possibilities. For example, some researchers adopting postcolonial perspectives incorporate communalist values into their notions of quality (e.g. Dei, 2002; Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist, 2004) that are often missing or only thinly treated in mainstream literature.

Goals, Context and Agency – Hawes & Stephens (1990)

H. Hawes & D. Stephens (1990) ‘Questions of quality: Primary education and development’

Hawes & Stephens’ (1990) key text also restricts itself to primary education in low income countries and takes an essentially humanist stance on education and development. It proposes that quality can be interpreted as having three strands:

- Efficiency in meeting set goals
 - Relevance to human and environmental needs and conditions
 - ‘Something more’ in relation to the pursuit of excellence and human betterment.
- (Hawes and Stephens, 1990:11)

‘Efficiency’ is interpreted as making the most of inputs, or the tools that are available, in order to reach and improve different kinds of standards, including standards of attainment in knowledge and learning skills; standards of creativity and critical thinking and standards of behaviour. Relevance includes relevance to context, relevance to the present and future needs of learners and relevance to humanity. The latter covers the notion that education has

social as well as personal benefits for the individual. Hawes & Stephens do not privilege national economic benefits. The 'something more' is explained as "that extra quality of inventiveness, stimulation, excitement, concern for others or happiness which is found but found rarely, in schools and teachers" (Hawes and Stephens, 1990:17).

From this starting point, they construct a model for assessment and improvement of quality, which they call 'the quality wheel'. The 'goals of quality' (e.g. promotes human development and survival) and the 'principles of practice' (learner-based, experience-based, resource-based and sequenced) are placed at the hub of the wheel, surrounded by 'conditions for successful implementation' and an outer circle of 'agents of implementation' (e.g. teachers, administrators). Hence, Hawes & Stephens privilege the value-basis of education as a measure for assessing quality. Enabling context and the agency of educational stakeholders are identified as key inputs, necessary for quality education. In more recent work, Stephens has highlighted the context-dependency of educational practices by emphasising the role of culture (Stephens, 1998; 2007).

Equity and Quality – Sayed (1997)

Y. Sayed (1997) 'The concept of quality in education: a view from South Africa'

Sayed analyses the 'quality movement' as having emerged in response to economic crisis in the 1970s, spawning management approaches such as Total Quality Management. He identifies the political and ideological nature of the application of this movement and its techniques to education as 'the new right's assault and transformation of educational practices', essentially concerned with the marketisation of education as the only legitimate device for promoting educational quality. 'Quality' in this case is defined in terms of efficiency, value for money and meeting the demands of 'educational consumers'.

In seeking an alternative to this new rightist approach, Sayed contrasts 'idealist' and 'fitness for purpose' definitions of educational quality. The former identifies educational quality as a judgement of the level of achievement in some defined attribute relative to a standard – a 'gold standard'. In contrast, 'fitness for purpose' approaches define quality in terms of the production of goods or services to fulfil perceived needs or to conform to specific criteria in their production – two variants. Described as consumer-oriented or producer-oriented approaches to quality. Sayed critiques both of these paradigms as providing only partial definitions of quality, where 'partial' here means both incomplete and also relying on the judgement of only part of society.

He goes on to suggest a resolution to this problem of the existence of these two distinct approaches by drawing on a model that appears in the ANC's Education And Training Policy document. This model is interesting in that it attempts to deal with what is commonly seen as a tension between the concepts of quality and equality in education. (See for example, the collection edited by Welch, 2000). This is done by using a notion of 'quality as entitlement', essentially including the idea of equity within that of quality. A closer examination reveals that this does not actually remove the tension between quality and equity in practice but, it does ensure that 'the notion of quality is disconnected from narrow concerns of costs which may result in practices that either marginalize some or privilege others.' It further builds into the concept of quality the recognition of its essentially moral, political and ethical nature. Sayed argues that this understanding of the concept becomes meaningful if it is combined with greater transparency in public life that exposes educational decision-making to critical and informed dialogue.

The Delors Report (1996)

J. Delors et al. (1996) 'Learning: the treasure within'

Delors' report essentially contains UNESCO's vision for a global education. The basis of the report is the four pillars of education described in chapter 4:

- **Learning to know** – this is concerned with acquiring a sufficiently broad general knowledge and mastering the tools of knowledge and understanding. Apart from being the basis of most traditional knowledge, the first pillar also comprises 'learning to learn'. Knowledge from this point of view serves both as a means and as an end. As a means, knowledge enables people to develop occupational, critical thinking, and communication skills; to understand their environment and be able to lead their lives with dignity. As an end, it satisfies intellectual curiosity.
- **Learning to do** – developing the competence to deal with different situations and form the aptitude for teamwork. This pillar is closely associated with vocational training and implies a shift from certified skills to technical/vocational skills; communication/interpersonal social skills. Applying this in the context of young people, learning to do implies involving young people in formal and informal social work.
- **Learning to live together** – refers to family and community as well as the global context. It addresses the skills for understanding self and others; taking responsibility for participating in and contributing to society; collaborating for the common good and learning to manage conflicts.
- **Learning to be** – refers to the development of individual potential. Education must take into account all aspects of a person's potential, memory, reasoning, aesthetic sense, physical capacities and communication skills. This pillar is concerned with uncovering hidden talents - 'the treasure within'.

The Delors Report has been influential on the development of the concept of Life Skills, particularly as elaborated in the Dakar Framework for Action (World Education Forum, 2000). Life Skills encompasses social attitudes, basic knowledge and practical skills. It includes but is considerably broader than vocational skills, practical skills and knowledge that lay the foundation for children to be economically productive when they enter the world of work. 'New' curricular areas or cross-cutting themes, such as peace education, health or education for sustainability, can be viewed as focusing on the relatively neglected pillars of learning to live together and learning to do.

The World Bank and the Economist Tradition

Lockheed, Verspoor & associates (1991) 'Improving Primary Education in Developing Countries'

Lockheed & Verspoor's key text was authored by researchers working for the World Bank and published by the World Bank. Like Beeby's and Hawes & Stephens' texts, it only concerns itself with primary schooling, which in most low income countries at the time represented the basic education cycle. It may be taken as representing the economist view of quality in education and illustrates how this developed into an interest with school effectiveness approaches.

In the first chapter, investment in improvement of primary education provision is rationalised in terms of economic and social development. The work of human capital theorists is drawn on to argue that education is a necessary, although not sufficient condition for national

economic development (these arguments have been reiterated in recent research using more sophisticated calculations e.g. Loening, 2005). Rates of return analysis, led by Psacharopoulos at the World Bank is reported as linking education to higher earnings and other World Bank studies are used to argue that it is also linked to high productivity in the agricultural sector (Lockheed *et al.*, 1980). That primary education supports social development was argued through reference to studies linking fertility levels (more recent studies have also confirmed this link, e.g. Lloyd *et al.*, 2000; Benefo, 2005), improved child health and nutrition and attitudinal modernity to primary schooling. Attitudinal modernity was defined as, “adopting rational, empirical, egalitarian beliefs, which are a precondition for functioning effectively in the political and economic institutions required for development.” The same arguments for investing in primary education continue to be made up to the present time by researchers using up-to-date data sets and sophisticated statistical analysis (Appleton and Balihuta, 1996; Dessus, 2001; Verner, 2004; Schnell-Anzola *et al.*, 2005). Lockheed & Verspoor go on to discuss the importance of “cognitive competencies”, emphasising literacy and numeracy as the most important pathway between education and development.

On this basis they then set out a model for cost-effective improvement of learning achievements. The implied notion of quality education may be summarised as cost-efficient in producing academic achievement, as indicated by students having a high probability of completing the primary cycle without repetition (Lockheed and Verspoor, 1991:40-41). Lockheed & Verspoor also refer to the school effectiveness literature from high-income countries, most especially UK. Hence, some of their recommendations are consonant with the progressive tradition, most notably that students need to participate actively in their classrooms and even in the running of the school. However, they go into no detail and claim statistical evidence rather than an ideological position as a basis for the recommendation. They highlight four elements of an effective school:

- Orderly school environment;
- Academic emphasis, with high expectations for student learning;
- Instructional leadership, i.e. the qualities of the headteacher;
- Acquisition, distribution and use of material inputs.

The first three of these are drawn from high-income country literature. At that time, as Penrose (1993) observed in his review, school effectiveness literature on developing countries was concerned with inputs-outputs and could more accurately be called ‘school efficiency’ literature.

Whilst, Lockheed & Verspoor are undeniably influenced by a school effectiveness approach, their analysis tends to adopt a deficit view of schooling in low-income countries, oriented towards blanket one-size-fits-all policy recommendations, for which the World Bank was criticized during the nineties (Lauglo, 1996; Samoff, 1996). The influence of school effectiveness literature, with a richer range of concerns, on World Bank thinking on education quality persists to the present day, as does the Bank’s tendency to nevertheless reduce effectiveness to efficiency (World Bank, 2000a; World Bank, 2000b; World Bank, 2004a; Moreno Trevino *et al.*, 2005).

The World Bank Education Sector Strategy (1999)

Although still maintaining its concern with cost-efficiency, the World Bank’s rhetorical treatment (Klees, 2002) of quality has changed over the course of the nineties. ‘Quality’ has taken the place of ‘improvement’ in World Bank discourse and although still defined in terms of learner achievement, the definition of what is to be achieved has been refined, in a direction that reflects international EFA documents:

The long-term goal in education is nothing less than to ensure everyone completes a basic education of adequate quality, acquires foundation skills—literacy, numeracy, reasoning and social skills such as teamwork—and has further opportunities to learn advanced skills throughout life, in a range of post-basic education settings. (Human Development Network, 2002:431)

The Bank's policy priorities have also shifted towards a greater emphasis on improving access for disadvantaged groups, especially girls and the very poorest (Human Development Network, 2002:433), including historically educationally-disadvantaged ethnic groups (World Bank, 2004b; Moreno Trevino *et al.*, 2005) and other disadvantaged groups (Peters, 2004). In practice, however, the Bank has supported more programmes and research targeting disadvantaged groups in Latin American and Caribbean countries, where enrolment ratios are already much higher than in most sub-Saharan African and South Asian countries. Some of the policy priorities highlighted by Lockheed & Verspoor persist, such as the measurement of learning achievement, decentralisation of education systems and early interventions in child development and health (Human Development Network, 2002:433-4).

A recent independent evaluation of World Bank investments in primary education since the 1990s (Independent Evaluation Group, 2006), has criticised programmes for measuring quality in terms of inputs (infrastructure, textbooks etc) and outputs (e.g. number of teachers trained) and not giving enough emphasis to learning outcomes (measurable improvements in learners' cognitive achievement). It notes that ongoing projects are more likely to include learning outcomes as indicators of quality, suggesting a shift that Lockheed and Verspoor would applaud. Equity concerns were found to be prominent with girls and "the poor" [sic.] being the main target groups, although rural and indigenous children are also targeted. A growing focus on disabled groups was also noted, with 30% of ongoing projects singling them out compared to 10% of completed projects.

3: THE EDUCATION FOR ALL MOVEMENT

There can be little doubt that the Education for All (EFA) movement assumes a humanist stance with respect to education. Their rationale for taking a particular ideological stance with respect to interpreting and prioritising quality rests on the dual rationale of promoting human development and human rights. Because they assume an unassailable ideological position and because, further they are ratified by country representatives from around the globe, EFA documents do not have to justify their position through reference to empirical measurement and analysis, as World Bank documents do, or to educational theory, as progressive theorists do. As a consequence, the aspirations that are set out within them often seem to be "long on rhetoric and short on analysis and strategy" (Soudien, 2002:447). Having set the targets, individual governments, NGOs and donor agencies are exhorted to cooperate in finding and implementing strategies to achieve them. The rhetoric of EFA documents, such as the World Declaration on Education for All, signed at the 1990 Jomtien conference and the Dakar Framework for Action, signed at the World Education Forum in 2000, and, to a lesser extent, a series of visionary UNESCO documents, of which the most recent is the Delors Report, has influenced discourse on quality education by governments and agencies, including the World Bank (see above), around the world. For this reason, they should be included in a review such as this one.

A common cause between the humanist approach and its most well-known international advocate, UNESCO, and the economic approach of the World Bank lay behind the Jomtien Conference and the ensuing international EFA movement. During the eighties, the World Bank's economic analysts, led by Psacharopoulos, identified primary education as yielding the greater national and social rates of return on public investment. As UNESCO had been focussed on basic education for sometime, they collaborated together with UNICEF in organising the Jomtien Conference to galvanize national governments and aid agencies throughout the world to move towards education for all. The conference produced the 'World Declaration on Education for All', which called for universalisation of access to basic education for children, youth and adults. Whilst the Declaration covered early childcare provision and a variety of formal and non-formal delivery systems for meeting the basic education needs of youth and adult, formal primary education was seen as the main delivery system for basic education. The Declaration called for the universalisation of primary education, a goal that was reiterated at the World Education Forum held in Dakar in 2000 and that constitutes the second of eight Millennium Development Goals.

Cognisant of the disappointments of educational expansion in the sixties and seventies, the Declaration insisted that universalisation of access to basic education had to mean universalisation of access to *learning*. Hence, from the outset the EFA movement linked access of education to quality of education. Although the main impetus for the Jomtien conference came from the World Bank and was motivated by economic as well as social concerns, the rationale for EFA was framed in terms of social and human development.

Box 1: From: Extract from 'World Declaration on Education for All, ARTICLE IV'
(World Conference on Education for All, 1990)

FOCUSING ON LEARNING

Whether or not expanded educational opportunities will translate into meaningful development - for an individual or for society - depends ultimately on whether people actually learn as a result of those opportunities, i.e., whether they incorporate useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills, and values. The focus of basic education must, therefore, be on actual learning acquisition and outcome, rather than exclusively upon enrolment, continued participation in organized programmes and completion of certification requirements. Active and participatory approaches are particularly valuable in assuring learning acquisition and allowing learners to reach their fullest potential. It is, therefore, necessary to define acceptable levels of learning acquisition for educational programmes and to improve and apply systems of assessing learning achievement.

Box 2: Extract from 'World Declaration on Education for All, PREAMBLE'
(World Conference on Education for All, 1990)

Therefore, we participants in the World Conference on Education for All, assembled in Jomtien, Thailand, from 5 to 9 March, 1990:

Recalling that education is a fundamental right for all people, women and men, of all ages, throughout our world;

Understanding that education can help ensure a safer, healthier, more prosperous and environmentally sound world, while simultaneously contributing to social, economic, and cultural progress, tolerance, and international co-operation;

Knowing that education is an indispensable key to, though not a sufficient condition for, personal and social improvement;

Recognizing that traditional knowledge and indigenous cultural heritage have a value and validity in their own right and a capacity to both define and promote development;

The Dakar Framework for Action reaffirmed the World Declaration's commitment to improve access with quality. The Regional Framework for Sub-Saharan Africa stated that the priority areas of focus would be "access and equity, quality and relevance, capacity building and partnerships" (Regional Conference on Education for All for Sub-Saharan Africa, 1999). Signatories to the Dakar Framework for Action committed themselves to improving quality along with access (see box). The Dakar Framework also reaffirmed Jomtien's commitment to achieving gender equality within basic education and meeting the learning needs of disadvantaged groups, most especially those with disabilities. The Dakar Framework placed greater emphasis on quality than any other internationally ratified text had in the past by calling for equity and inclusion both in terms of access and achievement, highlighting learning outcomes as key indicators of education quality and calling for the inclusion of life skills in basic education curricula, which encompass the learning to live together and learning to be pillars defined in the Delors report (see above).

Box 3: Extract from 'Dakar Framework for Action - Education For All: meeting our collective commitments'

(World Education Forum, 2000)

Within the Dakar Framework for action, signatories committed themselves to:

- (i) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- (ii) Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- (iii) Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- (iv) Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- (v) Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- (vi) Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

The EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005) Education for All: The Quality Imperative

The main focus of the 2005 report is on quality of education and progress towards achieving the MDGs and related development outcomes. The report is divided into six sections:

- **Understanding education quality** – this sets the debate in a historical context and looks at understandings of the notions of quality drawn from different traditions of educational thought: humanist approaches, behaviourist theory, critical approaches, indigenous approaches and adult education approaches. In an attempt to reconcile the various approaches, the report provides a comprehensive framework for understanding, monitoring and improving education quality. The different variables influencing the processes of teaching and learning as contained in the framework are:
 - **Learner characteristics** – what learners bring to the learning experience can influence the quality of learning. Thus characteristics such as: previous learning experience, socio-economic background, place of residence, health, cultural and religious background, is important determinants of quality learning.
 - **Context** – societal values and attitudes, economic status, national policies for education provide an influential context for education.
 - **Inputs** – the success of teaching/learning is influenced by the availability of material and human resources. The management of these resources is also important in determining the quality of education provided.
 - **Outcomes** – often expressed in terms of measurable learning objectives through test and examination performance. Proxies for learner achievement such as economic gains from employment are sometimes used.
- **The importance of good quality: what research tells us** – this section of the report reviews research evidence on the multiple factors that determine education quality:
 - Cognitive achievement – indicators on national and international achievement tests, influenced by socio-economic status. There is some evidence linking cognitive gains from basic education to protection against HIV/AIDS, higher lifetime earnings and making informed choices about fertility. Measures of learning outcomes in areas such as values, attitudes, capacities and other non-cognitive skill are however not given.

- Teacher qualifications and motivation
 - Pupil/teacher ratios – the regional median in SSA = 44:1
 - School effectiveness
 - Years spent in school – survival rate to grade 5 of primary education
 - Instructional time
 - Education spending
- **Policies for better quality** – the report maps out key policy options for improving the teaching and learning process with a focus on resource constrained countries. Emphasis is placed on formal school in this section – school effectiveness. Areas to be addressed include:
 - Learners, as they are at the centre of learning – inclusive learning environment, distance learning for disadvantaged groups.
 - Teaching and learning – policy decisions about teaching/learning are to focus on: establishing appropriate goals for the curriculum, developing relevant content, using learning time well, ensuring effective pedagogy, carefully considering the language of instruction and developing a sound assessment policy, supply and distribution of learning materials, secure physical environment with adequate facilities.
 - Better teachers – teacher recruitment, training/CPD, salaries and conditions of service are areas for policy attention.
 - Better schools – greater school autonomy, better leadership.
 - Build partnerships, develop accountability and combat corruption.
- **Towards EFA: the quality imperative** – the report outlines a seven point agenda and priorities for action, particularly suited to resource constrained countries. These include:
 - If methods of teaching/learning are to respond to cultural and classroom contexts, reforms to teacher training and school management will be required. Also of importance is pedagogically sound language policy, e.g. allowing children to learn in their mother tongue for the first few years in schools.
 - Investment in teachers
 - Quality and availability of learning materials – national book policies can provide a framework for the development of local publishers and enable schools to make their own choice of books.
 - Greater autonomy for schools guided by well defined accountability frameworks. Head teachers and principals are critically important to this endeavour
 - Exploiting relationships among different parts and aspects of the education sector to help improve quality.
 - A strong acknowledgement of the existence of special needs in education – support to be given to useful educational approaches for disadvantaged groups
 - Finally, investments in services, networks and structures designed to develop and share local and contextual educational knowledge can yield significant returns if schools are enabled to make much better use of limited resources.

4: EXTENDING THE FRAMEWORKS

Although notions of education quality find a common ground in: ensuring the cognitive development of learners; building attitudes, skills and values that are likely to enable individual well-being and social development; and equity, there is still much focus on quantitative aspects of education. Quality indicators appear difficult to uncover. The major argument put forward by the Global Monitoring Report for improvement in education quality is through school effectiveness, strong partnership among government departments responsible for early childhood care and education, literacy and health and a higher national spending on basic education.

Furthermore, it must be clarified that although this section began with a statement that two traditions can be identified in the literature, such a division is not the only possibility. There is a certain arbitrariness about such divisions and ultimately they are to be judged on their usefulness as analytical devices that can help inform our understanding and, through that, inform practice and policy. A couple of further examples can be briefly mentioned.

Chitty (2002:2), for example, examines the concept of schooling (which seems to be used interchangeably with 'education') under three broad headings, each of which leads us to a different interpretation of the nature of quality, as summarised in Table 2, below. Although there is clearly an overlap with the binary classification outlined above, Chitty also brings in a more radical view of the purpose of education.

Table 2: Concepts of schooling (Chitty, 2002: 2)

Purpose of schooling	Educational paradigms (Hart & Robottom (1993); Sauvé (1996))	Illustrating quotes/references
Schooling as human fulfilment	Humanist educational paradigm	"...if only our schools can successfully educate every individual child in self-confidence, independence and autonomy, then society can with confidence be left to take care of itself."
Schooling as preparation for the world of work underlined by the belief in a "direct and indisputable correlation between educational reform and economic prosperity" (Chitty, 2002:3).	Rational educational paradigm - 'human capital theory' Consequently, performance in school and school career became 'tools' and selection criteria for vocational careers and scarce work and study places (von Hentig, 1996:50). Education as having instrumental value.	"Education itself, which under the sway of Enlightenment thought came to be seen either as a moment in the progressive unfolding of freedom, as in France, or as means of promoting national health, as in Germany, is now reduced to performativity, to training and skills... thus emancipatory reason gives way to technocratic rationalization... Increasingly within a market-led world, managerial solutions are sought to contemporary dilemmas." Lyon (1999:54/55),
Schooling as an essential element of social progress and social change	Education as a tool for transformation or social engineering. Education as being about developing "desirable abilities in people", which includes functioning within an existing society, but also to use this functioning and one's ability for working towards changing / improving / envisioning it. Multiple discourses concerned with the idea that "all education systems have social functions and consequences" (Chitty, 2002:4)	Dewey (quoted in Chitty, 2002:5) points out that "the conception of education as social process and function has no definite meaning until we define the kind of society we have in mind". O'Brien (2004:1) in the tradition of Paulo Freire, argues that education is not a neutral instrument. It either functions as an instrument that "brings conformity to the present system of logic" by integrating young people into it or as an instrument that "provides resources necessary for students to transform their world" in a critical and creative way. Education equips "young people with both the ability and the determination to improve society according to changing needs" (Dewey, cited in Chitty, 2002:5)

5: COMPONENTS OF A QUALITY FRAMEWORK

The literature contains recurrent references to various components of educational quality that can be taken to form a useful analytical framework for the concept. These components (which receive different degrees of emphasis from different authors) are identified as:

- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Equality
- Relevance
- Sustainability

These components are often in tension with each other so that actions to improve one may have negative effects on another. In particular, attempts to increase the equity of a system may be in tension with concerns over efficiency. Some analyses of quality treat equality as a distinct issue and suggest that there are inherent contradictions in attempts to address both quality and equality (Welch, 2000).

Effectiveness refers to the degree to which the objectives of an education system are being achieved and it is conventional to distinguish between internal and external effectiveness (Hawes and Stephens 1990; Tibi 1985). External effectiveness refers to the degree to which the education system meets the needs of individuals and society as a whole. In this sense it is closely linked to the above discussion of the role of education in development. Educational economists will naturally tend to emphasise the links between education and individual income or national economic development, perhaps most clearly discussed by Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985). A broader consideration of effectiveness will include considerations of personal fulfilment at the level of the individual and issues such as social cohesion, participation and human rights with respect to nation states (Chitty 2002; Delamonica et al 2004).

The term internal effectiveness is most properly applied to the functioning of institutions and appears primarily in the vast literature on school (or sometimes other institutional) effectiveness. This literature is so vast that it must be left to a separate review.

Whereas effectiveness is concerned with outputs of education, **efficiency** brings in considerations of the inputs required to meet those outputs. These inputs may be measured in monetary or non-monetary terms but whichever is used efficiency refers to the ratio of outputs to inputs. That is, efficiency measures the extent to which we make best use of inputs to achieve our educational goals. The literature commonly refers to different aspects of efficiency and, confusingly, some of these are used interchangeably with 'effectiveness' (see Lockheed and Hanushek 1988).

The external efficiency of a system refers simply to the ratio of monetary outputs to monetary inputs and appears in the well known calculations of personal and social rates of return to education (e.g. Psacharopoulos and Woodhall 1985; World Bank 1990). Technical efficiency, on the other hand, refers to the organisation of available resources in such a way that maximum feasible output is produced (Windham 1988) and operates with non-monetary measures such as number of teachers, examination results, classroom facilities, etc. To add further confusion, the term *internal efficiency of a system* looks at the ratio of non-monetary outputs to monetary inputs. Lockheed and Hanushek (1988) attempt to distinguish the various terminologies in the following 2 x 2 table.

Table 3: Internal and external effectiveness and efficiency of education systems

How are inputs measured?	How are outputs measured?	
	Non-monetary (#) terms (e.g. learning)	Monetary (\$) terms (e.g. earnings)
Non-monetary (#) terms (e.g. number of textbooks, classroom organisation)	Internal effectiveness (technical efficiency: #/#)	External effectiveness (\$/#)
Monetary (\$) terms (e.g. cost of textbooks, teachers' salaries)	Internal efficiency (effectiveness-cost: #/\$)	External efficiency (benefit-cost: \$/\$)

An unusual variation on these considerations of outputs to inputs, which brings in the notion of 'quality' more explicitly, appears in Heyneman and White (1986). This begins by asking the question: How much money is available (or is actually being spent) per primary school pupil? It then goes on to suggest 'how much quality' can be bought for such an input. That is, it is taking the definition of efficiency in terms of outputs per unit input but assuming that the available inputs are pre-determined, or limited by other considerations, and stating the limit of what can be achieved for any given input. Or, putting it more bluntly, it adopts the position that 'the most you can get is what you pay for'.

Equality as a component of educational quality commonly arises from a position that takes a 'quality education' as a human right (see, Sayed 1997, UNESCO 2000). This in turn builds on the relationship of education to development models based on human development and poverty reduction, social cohesion, social diversity, peace, etc. (Michaelowa 2001; Chapman et al 1996). A key element in the discussion of equality in education is the identification of groups that are disadvantaged in terms of access and achievement. Although certain groups can be identified as being commonly disadvantaged across a range of countries (e.g. girls, the poorest, the disabled), it is important to analyse each context and understand both the sources of disadvantage and their complex interaction (e.g. between gender, ethnicity and social class) (UNESCO 2000; Watkins 2000). A tension between concerns over efficiency and equality appear in the literature (Welch 2000), often in relation to the high costs of bringing education to disadvantaged groups such as those in remote areas.

Consideration of the **relevance** of education inevitably brings us back to the earlier discussions of the relationship between education and development and the central question of the purposes of education. A synthesis of various sources in the literature brings us to a brief categorisation of the educational quality concerns of different categories of nation states, as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Priorities in educational quality by level of national development

State	Emphasis within the quality debate
Post-conflict; newly founded states	Subsistence, security, trust – school system, curriculum
Low income countries	Access, livelihoods (coping; lasting; flexibility) – primary schools
Middle income countries	Continuation – secondary schools, disadvantaged groups
OECD countries	Competencies, responsibility, lifelong learning, sustainability

Synthesised from: McDowell (2002); Michaelowa (2001); Akkari (2005); Romano (2002); Kagia (2005)

The fifth element in our framework for educational quality, **sustainability**, is probably the least addressed in the literature, both in terms of its meaning and how it is to be achieved. Sustainability essentially implies that all of our considerations in relation to the other elements must bring in thoughts not just of the present but of the future. The UN MDGs (UN, 2000) emphasise the need for sustainability in all development options, but even what this might look like in broad terms remains an area of debate. Its translation into educational systems and practice remains even more in its infancy (UN 2003). Some possibilities are, however, outlined by Lawrence and Tate (1997), building on capability and livelihood approaches to development and drawing on Chambers (1993, 1997). From these perspectives, quality education emerges in the context of 'the obligation to establish and sustain the conditions for each and every individual, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, race, or regional location, to achieve valued outcomes'. A suggested aim for quality education is given as building 'human capacity not only for employability, but for broader lifelong learning as well as for adaptive and 'coping' livelihood strategies in a fast moving and complicated world'.

6: CONCLUSION

In this paper, we have reviewed key texts that have shaped notions of education quality, referring to key academic texts, World Bank, UNESCO and EFA documents. We have then suggested an extended framework. The approaches to education quality reviewed cover the three main educational goals that Chitty (2002) identified, namely: human fulfilment, preparation for the world of work and contributing to social progress and social change. We have identified five key dimensions of quality:- effectiveness, efficiency, equality, relevance and sustainability. These five dimensions can serve as a basis for analysing the quality of educational innovations aimed any aspect of the education system (e.g. policy changes, national administration, local administration, classroom interventions). However, it is possible on the basis of this review to conceive of other ways of conceptualizing quality. We will finish by suggesting questions that also might be asked of the literature on the quality of primary education in low income countries:

1. The various frameworks for conceptualizing quality place central importance on different aspects, such as agreed goals, the learner, outcomes, processes. Which of these is an appropriate focus for the initiatives that EdQual aims to develop through its programme of research?
2. What do the five dimensions of quality imply for pedagogic classroom practice, language policy, curriculum, introduction of ICTs, school leadership and teacher development?
3. Is it possible to establish universal indicators of effectiveness, equality, relevance and sustainability? What might they be? What principles might be applied to identify relevant indicators of quality for a particular context?

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