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Overcoming Inequality: why governance matters

Civil Society and Its Role in the Achievement and Governance of “Education for All”

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1. Introduction

What does civil society have to do with the achievement of education for all – particularly in poor countries where universal access to basic education has not been achieved?

Over the past two decades, reforms to the way in which educational systems are managed and governed have been attempted across a large number of countries. These reforms typically draw upon an “ideal” governance agenda that includes decentralization, the creation of public-private partnerships, and a variety of efforts to enhance participation and local-level oversight. Such governance reforms are rooted in the idea that local-level oversight of services enhances the efficiency of educational systems in producing skilled human capital, especially among the poorest. But alongside the efficiency agenda, contemporary development thinkers have placed rising emphasis on partnership and participation for the achievement of public accountability (“good governance”) and democracy. In education as in other sectors, the imperative of engaging civil society has become a central feature of the development community’s governance reform agenda.

The goal of this paper is to question a wave of governance reform prescriptions, and to explore what we know about their impact on education and on local, national and global forms of social democracy. The paper begins by exploring the idea of civil society as captured in the “official governance reform agenda” for Education for All (as set out primarily by the World Bank, the most powerful of international actor in the education for development arena, but also by other organizations such as DFID). To readers, it may seem obvious that governance reforms in education will have important implications for the functioning of citizenship and democracy at the national level. As I shall show, however, the official paradigm for engaging civil society in the education governance reform agenda focuses attention downward (from central state to local community), at a time when political scientists and sociologists of development have become increasingly interested in linkages across different scales or levels of civil society engagement, from local, to national and international. The paper introduces a series of related political and sociological literatures to question and enrich the view of civil society and governance offered in the official agenda for educational reform. It also reviews recent empirical efforts to assess the implications for civil society in education of both downward shifting (national to local) and upward expanding (inter-state to transnational) governance reforms in the developing world.

Drawing on these literatures, the paper argues that we need to revisit our definition of governance, paying greater attention to the relationships between educational systems and forms of collective action, democracy and social citizenship, both within developing countries and across key scales of political aggregation – local, national and transnational. This can be accomplished by conceptualizing civil society’s educational governance capacity as a series of nested social compacts operating across subnational, national and global scales, increasingly supported by globally-networked social citizenship regimes.
2. Education for All Governance Reforms: The Core Agenda

Although the past decade has seen the endorsement of a wide range of governance reforms to support Education for All, it is fair to say that the governance reforms that occupy the greatest space in officially sponsored programs and policies for educational development revolve around the call for greater local accountability mechanisms and the decentralization of governance. Since the 1990s, large-scale experimental projects and a substantial research literature emerged to support an expanded role for non-governmental and community schools, and for local, decentralized accountability structures within educational systems. The common sense view that emerged in the 1990s is typified in the following quote from DFID’s 2001 education sector policy paper:

Greater participation of parents and communities in education of their children...plays a central role in stimulating education at a local level, in building pressure for improving quality, and in developing accountability. (DFID 2001: 19)

As summarized in documents like the World Bank’s 2004 World Development Report “Making Services Work for the Poor” and the report of the United Nations Millennium Project’s Task Force on Education (2005), the governance reform agenda includes: decentralization of educational management and financing; the involvement of parents in school-based management; the provision of better information on school performance and student achievement to parents and communities; the introduction of choice mechanisms (including demand-side mechanisms); and, the expansion of NGO and public-private service provision to stimulate competition and system reach. To get a sense of the scale of support for such reforms, one only need look at the World Bank’s own lending portfolio, where a large majority of current projects in primary education include two reform goals: financial decentralization to local government (80%) and the introduction of school-level management mechanisms (90%) (World Bank/Independent Evaluation Group [WB/IEG] 2006: 43). It would be hard to find a single country receiving international support for EFA, where experiments with these governance reforms are not now in progress.

Several ideological assumptions, and many pragmatic concerns, have fed into this reform agenda. As Colclough (1991), Carnoy (1999), Bray (1999), Plank and Boyd (1994a, 1994b) and Rose (2003, 2005, 2006) among others have argued, the idea that centralized bureaucracies are not the best or most equitable providers of educational services was key to the initial framing of this reform agenda, as was a significant pragmatic interest in opportunities for local-level resource generation in situations of clearly deteriorating access to education. The governance reform agenda incorporates a theory of political change and political agency that stresses the value of giving individual citizens oversight in the management of local services, drawing heavily upon concepts popularized through rational choice theory and the literature on new public management. In this framing, political action at the local level is regarded as “good” political agency when forms of public choice are introduced to limit the potential for state corruption and maximize local incentives.

Politics at the national level, on the other hand, are widely viewed as negative or tainted. National-level collective action, and even government itself, are viewed as marred by elite capture; the state, its bureaucracy, and collective actors (as for example, teachers unions) are viewed as essentially undemocratic and unresponsive to equality issues. As a recent World Bank report concludes: “Public funding cultivates a large bureaucratic machinery and strong interest groups whose lobbying could result in inertia” (World Bank 2006). When the donor community calls for better strategic analysis of politics at the national level, it is often with an eye to circumventing actors that block their education governance
reforms. The question of how a local-level voice developed through decentralization policies will feed into national-level politics is rarely considered.

The World Bank’s 2004 World Development Report sets out perhaps the clearest articulation of this official paradigm on localizing governance reforms in education (see also the 2005 report of the Millennium Project Task Force). The WDR 2004 favors “short route” accountability as the key to education for all (see also, for example DeStefano and Crouch 2006). “Short route” forms of accountability emphasize the power of client-citizens as the main form for political agency in the education sector. “Long route” accountability mechanisms – which we would recognize as comprising both the aggregation of interests at a national level and operation of formal democratic politics (elections, legislative oversight of policies) – are marginalized or viewed as relatively impotent to the achievement of better services for the poor in the model. The promising possibilities for action, looking at the figure provided below, are to be found in the bottom right corner, in the relationships between clients and providers – even though there is often an acknowledgement that not enough research exists to support the positive outcomes idealized for local-level governance reforms (WB/IEG 2006: 43; Bray and Mukundan 2003).

**Figure 1**

Across international aid donors, the role envisaged for collective action at the national level in donor documents is usually captured in a hortative call for greater engagement with “civil society”. But engagement with civil society is usually either left quite vague or is carefully circumscribed (especially in contrast to local accountability relationships). Thus reference to civil society often excludes or marginalizes teachers unions, or presents them primarily as the “bad sort” of political agents, those

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1 See also, as examples, the recent evaluation of the Bank’s support for Primary Education (WB/IEG 2006), which calls for better pre-assessments of “the strength of political forces acting both in support of and against the change agenda” (p. 50). The Bank describes what is needed as “institutional-political analysis” (p. 42). Other reports sponsored by the Bank and major donors suggest that containment of bureaucratic corruption and of major collective actors in the education sector (teachers unions) is the primary focus of this type of analysis (Corales 1999; Stein, Tomassi, Echebarria, et al. 2006; DeStefano and Crouch 2006).

2 The Independent Evaluation Group report notes: “Decentralization of educational management is supported by an increasing share of Bank primary education projects, but the effects of this on educational access and quality, especially for the disadvantaged, have not been established. Consistent with its 1999 sector strategy, Bank support for decentralized management has increased… Evidence to date about the effectiveness of community management in improving the quality of instruction and student learning outcomes is thin” (WB/IEG: 43-44).
involved in elite capture and blockage of educational reform (cf. Corrales 1999; Stein et al. 2006; Grindle 2004; Kaufman and Nelson 2004). Beyond the exclusion of teachers unions, there is rarely much elaboration of the actors that belong to nationally-organized civil society or any discussion of conflicts or tensions among them. As an example, one Fast Track Initiative documents advises consultation with civil society, listing only “civic or indigenous groups, NGOs” (EFA/FTI Secretariat 2005: 13). Sometimes private providers and business leaders are included as part of civil society – though without any clarity concerning their specific interests or “stake” in EFA. Furthermore, the national role for civil society is rarely supported by research evidence. Thus, for example, the Millennium Task Force supports its Recommendation 2, “improve accountability through local control” with the citation of no fewer than 14 donor-funded empirical studies. Recommendation 5 (support civil society) receives no citations, in part reflecting a lack of donor funding for empirical research on this theme (UN Millennium Project Task Force 2005: 7-8).

Other limits on the official view of collective action at the national level are set out in the World Bank’s PRSP Sourcebook (2002), which tells us that:

> It is worth noting that participatory processes work best when they do not involve fundamental differences in value….

> Another basic lesson is that participatory approaches work best when they draw groups with relevant expertise into the consideration of technical design or implementation issues. Drawing communities into the identification of changes that would adapt curriculum better to local issues and priorities is likely to be productive; consulting communities on the design of a national student assessment system would likely not be. (World Bank 2002: 269)

In sum, the overall “theory of action” for civil society that is set out in key official donor documents on educational development focuses on using civil society for accountability and service delivery purposes at the local level. Technical expertise trumps deliberation at the national level; and teachers unions are typically viewed not as part of civil society, but as an oppositional force to be managed and contained. The concept of civil society is frequently used interchangeably with that of local-level participation, and local-level accountability mechanisms are generally identified as the optimal arena for civil society engagement in the education sector (World Bank 2002: 256, 259).

One final point. As the World Development Report figure above suggests, most of the official rhetoric on civil society and democratization of educational governance conceptualizes education as a domain for national and sub-national level politics. However, more recently there has been considerable mobilization around the idea of an international compact for achieving education for all (Sperling 2001; Sperling and Belu 2005; Birdsall and Vaishnavi 2005; Pritchett 2004; UNESCO 2004; Rose 2005; Mundy 2007; Bruns et al. 2003; Buse 2007). A typical description of this compact appears in the report of the Millennium Project Task Force on Education:

> Bold political leadership is needed in a compact between developing countries and donors…Under the compact each side is responsible for doing its part. Donors make a serious commitment to and respond to countries that are doing things right, assured that the external resources are being well used. Developing countries take on the tough political reforms\(^4\) in their

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3 In contrast to these reports, which question the legitimacy of teacher union interests, see the recent IIIEP report by Valliant (2005).

4 The tough political reforms, in this imagery, include decentralization of governance, use of private-public partnerships, and introduction of national testing schemes.
systems with confidence that they will have sufficient and predictable financial support to deliver on promises made to their own citizens. (UN Millennium Project 2005: 10)

As I have noted elsewhere, this new compact can be characterized as a rapprochement between the neo-liberal approaches to development endorsed by the World Bank and the IMF, and the more equity-focused approaches to development adopted by the United Nations (Mundy 2006, 2007; Ruggie 2003; Therien 2005). It also encompasses a compact between developing countries and aid donors. Here, international donor organizations promise to harmonize, pool and increase their development aid, through sector-wide approaches; and to focus aid on social sector development (Riddell 2000; Swift 2000; World Bank Education Notes 2005). For their part, developing countries promise to take the lead in developing a detailed and well-balanced national development and poverty reduction plan, usually through the preparation of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). For the compact to work, national ownership of sound development plans is essential; and ownership has increasingly been seen as involving the endorsement of citizens and organized non-governmental actors. Thus in this new aid architecture civil society is defined as playing two key roles: it legitimizes national plans and it holds governments accountable to commitments (ODI 2006; Lister and Nyamugasira 2003; Brock et. al. 2002; Gould and Ojanen 2003; Mcgee and Hughes 2002; Smillie and Lecomte 2003).

Descriptions of this new compact in the education sector rely heavily on the notion that local-level accountability mechanisms and decentralized governance will mobilize citizen voice in the achievement of Education for All. Limited attention is paid to national-level collective action or to the idea that local citizen voice needs to be aggregated in some way in order for the compact to work. Perhaps even more surprisingly – particularly given the path-breaking efforts of transnational civil society networks in recent years – descriptions of the new compact say very little about the link between national and transnational civil society actors in constructing citizen demands. In contrast, as we shall see below, the theories of action being mobilized by transnational civil society actors focus explicitly (although again with limited research evidence) on the efficacy of linking up citizens’ demands for fundamental rights across national boundaries.

3. Education, Governance and Social Citizenship

Clearly, the idea that we need to harness democratic participation and “the political” in order to achieve Educational for All has now been widely accepted across the international community. However, as I have argued above, the model of the political that underlies the officially sponsored agenda for governance reforms in education is too thinly drawn: it is too focused on citizen voice at the local level; lacks specificity and clarity about the nature of national-level politics and collective action; and provides mainly hortative (rather than analytically-grounded) attention to the transnational dimension of governance. Perhaps, by looking at how social scientists and social theorists have come to describe the relationship between political agency and the development of fundamental social entitlements more generally, we can gain insights that can enrich this rather thin and disconnected conceptualization of educational governance. Thus, in what follows, I look first at the origins of education as a fundamental social entitlement and the evidence we now have about how and why different types of democratic polities deliver and distribute such entitlements differently. I then turn to the literature on globalization.

5 The PRSP is novel in several ways (World Bank 2002). It requires governments to formally integrate social development goals with plans for macroeconomic stability, liberalization and debt repayment into a medium-term expenditure framework that bridges what had previously often been quite separate planning exercises with the World Bank, UN and IMF. It commits the IMF to a poverty and social development mandate and bridges the focus on growth, stability and equity that had previously divided donor organizations. It requires governments to conduct wider consultations about national plans than in the past, and to take more “ownership” of development planning. But it also works in the opposite direction, by providing a common set of targets and plans that can be used by donors and citizens to hold governments accountable.
and its effects on social citizenship. Finally, I look at governance reforms in developing countries through what I describe as a social citizenship lens.

### 3. a) Education and Social Citizenship

Political and social theorists have long argued that the development of mass systems of public education make an important contribution to the development of democracy – both through the socialization of citizens, and through the potentially redistributive function of equalizing educational opportunity. Yet despite its putative role in the formation of democratic polities, there has also been a significant reluctance on the part of educationalists and recent generations of social scientists to explore education as a legitimately political arena. What Plank and Boyd (1994b: 4587) wrote more than a decade ago remains true today “scholars and policy analysts of widely different persuasions find common ground in their aversions to the politicization of educational issues, on the ground that choices about the education of the young are too important to be made in the grubby and unpredictable arena of interest conflict and compromise.”

The origins and consolidation of mass systems of public education – and the normalization of the idea of education as a fundamentally public good – were clearly highly political processes. In some instances, (particularly European and Asia), mass schooling emerged as a top-down tool for state building independent of the introduction of formal democracy. Sometimes it was adopted by local capitalists – as a way of enhancing the skill and consumer base for commerce (de Swann 1988); it could also be driven by central state efforts to weaken the power of the church, or integrate linguistic minorities (Green 1990; Maynes 1985). In yet other countries (the USA and Sweden, for example), mass schooling spread more like a “social movement” – driven by the demands of local groups and populations who had developed elaborate ideas about the kinds of socialization needed for membership in their communities, often drawn from Protestantism (Tyack and Meyer 1979; Boli, Ramirez and Meyer 1985). In each case, a different constellation of political actors, often faced with quite specific demands for social integration by organized groups (collective actors), played a role in framing an institutional path for schooling that has had long-term effects on the educational system.

The fact that compulsory, state-sponsored schooling emerged from “extremely heterogeneous legal frameworks and initial conditions” meant that mass education systems tended to develop around quite different sets of governance arrangements and allocative/redistributive expectations (Benavot and Resnick 2004; Green 1990; Green, Preston and Gernen 2006; Heidenheimer 1981, 1997; Archer 1979). Educational systems emerged as more or less centralized (i.e., under central state control); and developed different organizational tiers or allocative “ladders”, often in response to initial political conditions and contests. In many instances, middle-class support for the expansion of equal access to schooling hinged on the opening up of additional levels of publicly funded schooling (de Swann 1988; Benavot and Resnick 2004).

Overtime, of course, the expansion of schooling also came to be deeply associated with the extension and development of the democratic polity. In his famous work, T. H. Marshall (1964) described the extension of free public education as part of a process through which democracies moved from the protection of civil and political rights towards the incorporation of social rights – creating a more extensive form of social democracy in which collective efforts were made to offset economic inequalities through redistributive measures. Few would dispute Marshall’s thesis, that education came to be seen as a fundamental (virtually taken-for-granted) entitlement and cornerstone of social citizenship in many industrialized democracies during the first half of the 20th century. Where mass compulsory schooling was not already in place, the extension of suffrage almost universally prompted rapid expansion of access to schooling in industrialized countries, and also led to the lengthening and widening of the educational ladder (Ansell 2006; Lindert 2004; Lipset 1959). In these contexts, the relationship between the state and
education – in terms of its provision, regulation, ownership and funding – became increasingly complete and taken for granted (Dale 2003; Ramirez and Boli-Bennett 1982; Fuller and Rubinson 1992).

Again, with time, schooling itself developed normative cultural status at the level of the world polity or world system (in part through its promotion by international organizations) (Boli et al. 1985). It came to be seen as one among a core of institutions that links citizen to state, integrating the individual into collective aspirations for economic progress and social justice. As Robertson notes, “education has been a key institution for nation states in constructing citizens, not only in terms of identity but also as potential workers and members of a polity” (2006:2). Education also became a major site for claims-making by citizens.

However, there remains considerable debate about how this extension of social rights occurred, in a practical, political sense. A large body of scholarship has portrayed educational expansion as a process of class imposition, an elite effort to extend social control (Bowles and Gintis 1976). Yet the extension of educational entitlement clearly also occurred as part of a response to popular and mass demand – and should probably be seen both as a mechanism of “legitimation” within capitalist societies (Ofé 1984; Dale 2003; Habermas 1976; Carnoy and Levin 1985); and as the outcome of the longer-term historical processes through which different constellations of political agents mobilized around social entitlements and institutionalized cross-class negotiations to support them (de Swann 1988; Lindert 2004; Green 1990; Heidenheimer 1997).

Recent research from political science and economics reinforces this idea, showing that educational spending is strongly affected by the existence of left-leaning political leadership (Ansell n/d); by the extension of the franchise (Lindert 2004; Stasavage 2004; de Swann 1988); and by the presence of various standard measures of democratic governance (Dabla-Norris and Gradstein 2004; Lindert 2004). Distinct differences in the educational entitlements offered across different types of industrialized welfare states reflect the historical organization and power of collective interests at the national level that shaped the broader organization of social entitlements in these countries (Esping-Anderson 1990; Myles and Quadagno 2002; Hokenmaier 1998; Hega and Hokenmaier 2002). Levels of educational expenditure and the organization of educational governance are not simply positively correlated to the level of formal democracy. They are also tied to the evolution of collective forms of action for economically weaker citizens; these collective agents have played a key role in the emergence of a national societal compromise or compact that extends social rights of citizenships.

In short, although established industrialized states all have mass systems of education, they “differ fundamentally” because they reflect very specific political settlements at the national level (Myles and Quadagno 2002). Existing literature allows us to draw out three “ideal types” of relationship between the state, polity, citizenship regime and the shape of educational entitlements.

1) Corporatist conservative state forms, in which there is a high level of collective bargaining between state, capital and labour at the national level, and an ongoing commitment to Christian conservatism, tend to have more centralized educational systems with greater stratification and differentiation in educational pathways (the typical example = Germany). Educational stratification and inequality, however, are offset by greater employment guarantees for those on different educational ladders, and larger expenditures on social insurance for families.

6 Political scientists have conceptualized the basis for these differences in the scope of the welfare state in terms of “power resources theory” (which argues that the scope of the welfare state is a function of the historical strength of the political left as mediated by alliances with the middle class); “neo-corporatist theory” (the scope of the welfare state is predicated on the organization of labour and its bargaining power and institutionalized relation to the state,); and more recently in a “varieties of capitalism,” an argument that revisits variation across welfare states by showing how employers and capitalists in different contexts have been socialized to support different levels and types of welfare state projects (Iverson 2006; Pontusson 2005).
2) **Social democracies** (primarily the Nordics), which have highly organized and secularized forms of collective political agency and well-developed leftist parties at the national level, have educational systems that are extremely well funded and, until quite recently, administratively centralized. These countries attain high levels of achievement and high equality of achievement in their educational systems, and they spend little on private provision. They also dedicate enormous resources to systems of income equalization and protection that limit economic inequality and guarantee a common standard of living.

3) Finally, **liberal states** (usually Anglo-American states), in which there is less in the way of nationally-organized popular collective agency, typically have more decentralized educational systems, strong traditions of local governance in education, and greater levels of private and local funding of schools (Manzer 2003; Green 1990; Archer 1979). In these contexts education is often heavily funded (i.e., at levels similar to those in social democracies), but is seen more as an “alternative” rather than a complement to other forms of social redistribution, preferred because it provides equality of opportunity without limiting the allocational role of markets (Hega and Hokenmaier 2002; Weir 2002; Castles 1989). These systems produce higher levels of inequality in educational achievement than either models 1 or 2 (Windzio, Sackmann and Martens 2005: 14).

This typology is, of course, a rather rudimentary one – no individual state conforms to all the dimensions of the relationships between social entitlements, educational governance and educational allocation as described above, and there are many additional distinctive cultural and historical factors that have contributed to national differences across educational systems. There are almost certainly many other, more nuanced typologies that could be developed to describe the relationships among education systems, the polity and citizenship. The literature reviewed above also leaves out the interesting experiences of Asian countries, where promises of educational entitlement and the extension of formal political democracy are much more weakly correlated (though see Green 1990, Heidenheimer 1997) – raising, for example, the question of whether universal education is as indelibly connected to political franchise as recent political science studies in other regions have suggested (Brown 1999; Ansell 2006; Stasavage 2004, 2005; Lake and Baum 2001). Many researchers also believe that the type of polity and societal

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7 As Weir (2002) points out for the U.S. case, the focus on education as a redistributive mechanism worked well during the period between the 1950s and 1970s, which saw a rapid expansion of well-paying jobs, both highly skilled and less skilled. In this context education provided social mobility without threatening the status of a broadly constituted middle class. In more recent years, education has come to play a more double-edged role: it widens the economic gulf between educated and less educated workers, and is less easily supported as a public good by the middle class. Old alliances that once supported the funding for public education – such as that between organized African American constituencies and teachers unions – have weakened leaving the field more open for an even larger pull back of funding for common public schooling (see also Nelson 2003).

8 A range of alternative efforts have been made to construct such a typology. Schneider (1982, cited in Benavot and Resnik 2003: 30), for example has posited three basic types of European education systems: the Scandinavian comprehensive school; the mixed systems of Britain, France and Italy; the traditional systems of Germany lander, Swiss Cantons, Austria, Belgium and Netherlands). Rama (1983, also cited in Benavot in Resnik 2003: 31), suggests that schooling systems in Latin America emerged in relation to three elements: state action, educational demand and degree of differentiation. Restrictive state policies with demand from upper and upper-middle classes produced exclusive models; where upper and middle classes faced integrative state policies, segmentary models emerged; while the merger of middle and popular classes could either result in a classist basis for allocation (where state restricted popular aspirations) or universalist models (where the state agrees to alleviate social inequalities). A more recent effort (Windzio et al. 2005), uses data on educational allocations and suggests six types of governance clusters, grouped primarily around the extent to which the system is organized around market-like governance forms, state/hierarchical forms of governance or network forms of governance that use associations and negotiating systems as their main coordinators. The six types of education governance, they argue, are: Anglo-Eastern, state-based, private governance (e.g., Netherlands and Belgium where religious providers are publicly funded), Scandinavian, South European and East Asian.

9 In Asia, there are many cases that contradict the idea that the equality of educational entitlements improves primarily with the introduction of formal political democracy. In many countries state-led educational expansion without political liberalization
compact is determined as much by the character of economic development within a country as by the type of collective agency institutionalized in national politics – an idea that makes intuitive sense when thinking about education, since its ability to play redistributive roles is conditioned by the availability of employment (Haggard and Kaufman 1997; Fuller and Rubinson 1992). Much more research needs to be done if we wish to illuminate the way in which different forms of polity and collective action at the national level come together to produce different types of educational entitlement and governance.

For the moment, however, I want to sketch out a set of simple lessons drawn from the existing research on educational entitlements and the evolution of social citizenship in established industrial democracies, in order to offer a counterpoint to the official view of ideal educational governance reforms being advocated in the international community.

1. Forms of educational governance and allocation are tightly linked to the evolution of different types of democratic politics – including different types of social democratic systems (Green 1990; Heidenheimer 1997; Hega and Hokenmaier 2002).

2. Social citizenship entitlements across democratic polity generally reflect the evolution of specific negotiated settlements among collective actors at the national level (Esping-Anderson 1990). Historically, the single most important factor in the expansion of socially redistributive capacities in capitalist welfare states has been the establishment of sustained forums for negotiating power in which working class/popular interests are represented. This has usually depended on the formation of unions, left-leaning political parties, and the development of working class or popular and middle class political alliances (Rueschemeyer, Huber-Stephens and Stephens 1992; Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens 1997). 10

3. The interests of collective agents are not primordial or fixed (though they can become “sticky” or “path dependent”). Such interests are socially and historically constructed and therefore evolve as part of the political process of institutionalization and re- (or de-) institutionalization of specific social settlements (Thelen 1999; Anderson 1983; Esping-Anderson 1990).

4. Sustained forms of socially redistributive policy rely heavily on state capacity to shape alliances between the working-class and middle-class alliances in support of specific state projects (Skocpol, Evans and Rueschemeyer 1985). The introduction of a legislated right to schooling and the institutionalization of a system of mass education has been a key pillar in state efforts to build such an alliance. Educational systems, in the words of Anderson, helped to construct an “imagined community” – lengthening social “chains of interdependence” (Anderson 1983; de Swann 1988; Boli, Ramirez and Meyer 1985; Weir 2002).

In short, collective action at the national level, although marginalized in current governance reforms, has played an enormous – and primarily positive – role in shaping the expansion, scope and organization of educational entitlements across established industrialized democracies. The shape and character of collective action yields different “types” of political compacts, which in turn shape variations in the governance and allocative structures of educational systems.

produced surprisingly high levels of equality in terms of educational outcomes and the labor market. In India, on the other hand, one of the oldest Asian democracies, political liberalization produced very limited equalization of educational opportunity. 10 Though as Iverson notes, “conceptualizing capitalist democracy as class compromise does not in itself take us very far in explaining variance of policies across countries… one of the most striking facts about capitalist democracies is the enormous cross-national variance in inequality, social spending, redistribution, and the structure of social protection” (2006: 603).
In this view of educational governance, politics and political mobilization matter – but not so much in the sense of strategic bargaining among elite actors with fixed interests, or in the sense of direct oversight by clients and consumers. Rather, and over the longer duration, it is the formation of a stable political compromise or compact, negotiated among formalized collective actors at the national level, that shapes the structure and redistributive capacity of educational systems – importantly influencing the extent to which citizens enjoy equitable educational (and other) social entitlements, and the legitimacy and strength of various forms of popular claims-making in the educational arena.

3. b) Social Citizenship Regimes, Educational Entitlements and Globalization

Almost any definition of globalization begins with the idea that the integration of human societies across pre-existing territorial units has sped up, assisted in part by the development of new technologies that compress time and space (Harvey 1990). For most authors, the main motor of integration is economic – the expansion of truly global chains of commercialized production and consumption. Others focus on the cultural and political dimensions of globalization as driving forces. Central to all theories of globalization is the notion that interregional and “deteritorialized” flows of all kinds of social interaction have reached new magnitudes in recent history (Held 2000; Mundy 2005).

The impact of globalization processes on social citizenship regimes has been hotly debated by both policy makers and researchers. Many initial analysts pointed out that the combination of a shift towards liberalization of economic markets and the rise of new forms of transnational market power (mobile multinational corporations) and new global institutions (e.g., the WTO), had significant impacts on the ability of governments, even in rich countries, to generate the tax resources needed to sustain their social welfare and redistributive policies. Researchers described the emergence of a new “competition state” (Cerny 1990), and the spread of a broad international consensus about what kinds of governance reforms might best respond to the globalizing economy, carried through the proliferation of intergovernmental networks (Slaughter 2005). As inscribed in what came to be called the Washington Consensus (Williamson 1993; Maxwell 2005), these reforms typically included downsizing, marketizing, and privatizing social welfare regimes (Colclough and Manor 1991; Mundy 2005; Green 1997).

Globalization also spawned a new kind of policy rhetoric about education – one increasingly focused on the creation of a competitive workforce (as opposed to the more traditional goals of equality, redistribution of opportunity, and entitlement); and on introducing decentralization and market-like incentives into educational systems (Mundy 2002; Carnoy 1999; Henry, Lingard, Rizvi and Taylor 2001; Dale 1997; Ball 1998; Jones 2005; World Bank 1995). As such reform endeavors became endemic to education systems and other core arenas of social citizenship, governments often experimented with new forms of voice and accountability – seeking a kind of legitimation from the citizen-client that moved beyond the traditional state-led granting of entitlements. These new legitimation strategies – focused on more direct forms of voice and exit – were frequently fed by new levels of diversity in parental expectations, and in many cases by social contexts in which new forms of identity politics were emerging alongside globalization to challenge the one-size-fits-all vision of the citizen (Fraser 1998, 2005; Plank 2006; Banting and Kymlicka 2006).11

It was gradually recognized, however, that the scope of actual changes to social citizenship regimes in individual countries varied enormously. Two groups of countries – the Asian tiger economies and the

11 Many social theorists, including Putnam (2005), have argued that there is a keen need to rethink the relationship between redistribution and recognition in contemporary capitalist societies. For Fraser (2005) and Kymlicka (2007), there is no trade off between the two, and there is a need to challenge injustice on both economic and cultural fronts – others are more skeptical of this approach.
Nordics—approached the challenges of economic globalization by both liberalizing their (already quite open) economies and by reinforcing state capacity in the social sectors. Only Anglo-American democracies experienced the deep “race to the bottom” predicted in the initial globalization research (Rodrik 1996, 1997; Pontussen 2005; Manzer 2003). Thus it became increasingly evident that the type of polity and its previous social settlement sharply influenced the shape of national adjustments to globalization (Evans 1997; Hall and Soskice 2001; Wade 1996; Yeates 2001). The broad shift towards a more globalized economy and globally-networked polity clearly forced a renegotiation of the social settlements achieved in established industrialized countries. But the outcomes of these renegotiations depend on specific political/collective actors, often with nationally distinctive identities and interests. These actors can shape globalization-led reforms in the direction of “race to the bottom” cost containment, or towards more expansive forms of social investment. The social meaning of decentralization and the move towards more direct participation look quite different in these different contexts, even when reforms are administratively similar.

Processes of globalization are also widely recognized to have opened up new spaces for collective action and the negotiation of political identity at a transnational scale. Recent history has seen an explosion of global social movement activism in response to the emergence of increasingly globalized forms of political and economic power (Scholte 2004; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Smith 1997; Gaventa 2002; Lipshtutz 1991, 2004). It has also seen the emergence of new state-led efforts to construct post-national social citizenship regimes, most notably within the European Union (Habermas 2001) and significant efforts by international organizations to forge partnerships with businesses aimed at engaging them in the construction of an international public sphere which accords greater attention to basic rights and social equality (Ruggie 2004; Lupin 2005; Pauly and Grande 2006).

While the absence of a centralized government-like authority limits the ability of these new actors to negotiate a “global social settlement”, they are proving important in two ways. First, transnational actors have been quite effective in leveraging changes of international policy on specific issues within individual nations and within intergovernmental organizations—probably the most famous being the reversal of negotiations on a Multilateral Agreement on Investment (Gready 2004; Keck and Sikkink 1998). Second (and perhaps more significantly) these new transnational actors help to construct an imagined global community in which the demand for basic rights and entitlements is universalized. In other words, these organizations advocate for a form of “global social citizenship” and for the means to realize social citizenship through both national citizenship and transnational citizenship regimes (Habermas 2001; Cornwall and Nyamu-Musemberi 2005; Kabeer 2005; Davies 2002; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Nelson and Dorsey 2003).\(^\text{12}\) The net result of these developments is the gradual (some might say “tentative”) construction of a global public sphere that is no longer easily “contained” by states and the formal pattern of interstate relationships that had structured world politics for most of the 20th century (Held 2005; Ruggie 2004).

The central place of educational entitlements in national social citizenship regimes and in the neo-liberal reform agendas of international organizations has led to new and overlapping forms of both intergovernmental and popular political engagement in educational issues (Mundy 2007b, 2007c; Mundy and Murphy 2001; Henry et al. 2001; Jones 2005; Robertson and Dale 2006). International organizations, especially the World Bank, the IMF, the OECD, and the World Trade Organization, are now a permanent and expanding feature of an increasingly multi-level (or what Dale terms “pluri-scalar”) arena for educational governance, wielding forms of influence that challenge previous patterns of sovereignty even

\(^{12}\) Fraser thus notes “globalization is changing the way we argue about justice...For many it has ceased to axiomatic that modern territorial state is the appropriate unit for thinking about issues of justice, and that citizens of such states are the pertinent subjects of reference. The effect is to destabilize the previous structure of political-claims making – and therefore to change the way we argue about social justice” (2005: 69, 71; quoted in Robertson 2006:1).
in some of the richest countries. While these organizations have often been criticized as the bearers of neo-liberal, market-friendly reform agendas, they have also functioned as institutional arenas within which competing approaches to educational reform, including those that emphasize equality and socially redistributive forms of citizenship, have been debated and advocated (Mundy 1998, 2007b, 2007c). Increasingly, international organizations also act as magnets for new forms of transnational protest, and here too, education has been a major focus.

The literature on global social citizenship provides at best an aspirational map for making sense of the burgeoning of transnational social movements that repeatedly turn to education as a venue for demonstrating the negative impacts of globalization and the need for more effective global governance (Mundy and Murphy 2001; Klein 2001). National systems of schooling have wide and often well-organized constituencies (think of parents associations, teachers unions, student unions and other professional associations), which have long challenged plans for educational reform. In addition, international non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”) have had a long interest in educational issues, and today rival many official organizations in their ability to mobilize resources for development and social citizenship. What is new is that both of these groups increasingly see their interests as linked transnationally, and utilize new information technologies to mobilize around them. For example, teachers unions and other collective actors have successfully blocked GATS negotiations on educational services in several countries; while INGOs have been particularly effective in promoting reform of the international regime for educational development – prompting (for example) the World Bank to rethink its policies for promoting user fees – or arguing for new taxes to support global social entitlements. These actions are sometimes incongruous (for example, Archer (1994) asks, do INGOs undermine national social citizenship regimes by directly providing educational services in place of government?)

We can summarize these developments and their implications for the governance of an “Education for All agenda” in three points:

1) First, improving education is a central feature of national efforts to adjust to globalization. But the approach to education reform (particularly the weight given to equality concerns), as well as the meaning of key governance reforms (such as decentralization or local participation), depends heavily upon the character of a nation’s negotiated regime for citizenship.

2) Second, the rise of transnational forms of collective political action suggest that a new avenue for political leverage and alliance is building around the idea of social citizenship entitlements – a form of collective action that transcends national borders. However, transnational citizens’ movements are clearly a long way away from negotiating a truly “global” social citizenship regime, in the sense of a negotiated settlement comprised of state-sponsored projects for redistributive justice.

3) Finally, the combination of neo-liberal governance reforms with a focus on education (advocated by intergovernmental organizations), and of transnational efforts to extend forms of global social citizenship, might be expected to produce an especially active era of multi-layered governance experiments around “Education for All”, especially directed at those countries where the right to education is farthest from realization. There is a keen need to look more closely at the articulation and effects of these new governance experiments in the developing world.
3. c) A Social Citizenship Lens on Governance Reforms in the Developing World

A series of challenges arise in any effort to transpose the problematic of “social citizenship” to the developing world – not least because the construct itself has deep historical roots in Western polities, and may further render local political processes “illegible” (Scott 1999). However, I begin with the idea that we can use what we know about the emergence of social entitlements (or social citizenship rights) in the Western world as a heuristic device to help us look a bit more carefully at the meanings and shortcomings of governance reforms in non-Western contexts. A social citizenship lens offers a corrective for the tendency, within current development thinking and practice, to make uncritical use of concepts like democracy, participation and good governance that are drawn from an idealized model of the Western liberal polity. Furthermore, we know that the evolution of the international aid regime itself has been shaped and influenced by the emergence of social citizenship regimes in the North – and that transnational civil society actors also draw on this same Western repertoire in their advocacy efforts (Lumsdaine 1993; Noel and Therien 1995; Mundy 1998: 454; Mundy and Murphy 2001; Noel 2005; Milner 2004).

What, then, do we know about the evolution of social citizenship as part of political democracy in the developing world? We can begin by pointing out that for many developing countries, independence and anti-colonialism struggles revolved not only around the demand for political rights and equality. The demand for self-rule also focused on livelihoods and economic equality (Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi 2005). Furthermore, both the character of a country’s colonial administration and the nature of a country’s anti-colonial struggle are likely to have left an indelible imprint in national politics (Brown 2000). How popular constituencies were organized for collective action, and whether armed conflict was part of that struggle, influenced independence policies, both in terms of the later extension of civil and political rights and the structure of formal politics in a country, and in terms of the allocation of social entitlements (Cooper and Therien 2004).

After independence, governments in many developing countries played a very weak role in social redistribution; they quite frequently circumvented formal procedural democracy and also denied basic civil and political rights. The debate over why this happened has engaged scholars of comparative politics and development studies for more than a generation. Rational choice theorists like Robert Bates (1981) pioneered the notion that predatory states emerged in the developing world when politicians and bureaucrats used their power-extract resources for their own benefit – often using patronage and clientelist networks to keep them in power.13 While other analysts criticized this explanation for being too thin and too focused on elite capture,14 the goal of reducing the opportunities for political leaders to engage in rent-seeking behavior became a preoccupation within official development efforts in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hyden 2006).

In the 1990s, a wave of democratic transitions in the developing world fed international interest in the question of how to structure new forms of accountability in developing states – not only to prevent elite capture but also to ensure a social foundation for democracy – leading to a rapid expansion of official

13 The term “patronage” refers to the use of favours by politicians to maintain their position. “Clientelism” implies more deeply institutionalized patronage relationships. These might be between large agriculturalists and government at the national level and through small-scale patronage favours in poor rural areas; or between politicians and supportive elites in contexts of primary commodity exploitation.

14 They bring into focus both institutional factors: the impact of indirect local rule and divide-and-rule colonialism; the existence of pre-colonial traditions of patronialism; or in the case of Asia, the ability of national elites to develop strong bureaucracies that work in concert with business elites in ways that build upon traditional notions of familial responsibility to provide collective goods (Hyden 1983; Bratton and Van de Walle 1997; Chabal and Daloz 1999; Bayart 1993; Evans 1997); and structural factors: dependence on raw commodities and enclave production, and on foreign loans and aid; each insulate governments from domestic demands and reinforce authoritarianism (Haggard and Kaufman 1997; Hyden 2006).
interest in mobilizing “civil society” (Blair 2000). Decentralization and local governance reforms – often initially motivated by a pragmatic interest in resource mobilization – increasingly came to be seen as essential to the construction of a social foundation for democracy. In one of the more carefully articulated statements of this, DFID’s “Accountability Key Sheet” notes:

Decentralization is rooted in notions of effective citizenship (civic engagement and social capital), self-government (community development), and sustainable livelihoods. It is often linked with pluralistic politics and representative government. It encourages democratization and reinforces governance by giving citizens more influence in policy making. It can help prevent the occurrence or recurrence of conflict. By empowering individual citizens and civil society, local governance alters the traditional modes of governance and the way politics is conducted. (DFID, November 2005)

Advocates of decentralization generally argue that it has “great potential to stimulate the growth of civil society organizations…. prevent widespread disillusionment with new policies from turning into rejection of the entire democratic process… [and] boost legitimacy by making government more responsive to citizen needs (Diamond 1999, quoted in Hiskey and Seligson 2003: 66). Governance and sector reform programs by donor agencies created “a profusion of sites in which citizens came to be enlisted in enhancing accountability and state responsiveness” (Cornwall and Coelho 2007: 4; Manor 2004b). This view of a link between decentralization and democracy, and between democracy and social citizenship, was also reinforced by international civil society actors, whose years of work in participatory approaches to local development led them to favor locally-controlled approaches to development (Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Conyers 2007).

However, an increasing number of researchers dispute the idea that decentralization of governance naturally leads to the effective mobilization of clients and citizens and the institutionalization of more equitable and effective social sector policies (Robinson 2007; Dagnino 2005; Gaventa 2002; Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Land and Hauck 2003). Empirical research has found that decentralization reforms are often shaped by mixed motives – for example, by governmental desire to offload responsibility, or (alternatively) by governmental resistance to cede downward control (Grindle 2007; Cornwall and Coelho 2007). There are also key administrative demands that make the institutionalization of good governance at the local level as difficult as at the national level. Opportunities for elite capture and patronage relations at the local level are often just as great (Grindle 2007; Ahmad, Devarajan, Khemani and Shah 2005). Local-level participation may be effective at extracting greater resources for access, but typically do not lead to greater accountability for the quality of services delivered (Grindle 2007).

Furthermore, a lack of clarity about new local governance roles and responsibilities (Grindle 2007) or, alternatively, the practice of tightly scripting what can be decided locally (Cornwall and Gaventa 2001) undermines any real democratization of decision-making practices. The tendency to introduce competing decentralization initiatives is also problematic. For example, the creation of user committees can sideline locally-elected councils (Manor 2004a) and fragment popular participation; privatizing reforms and targeted programs can also create winners and losers among the poor (Manor 2004a, 2004b). Finally, when decentralization reforms do not yield effective benefits, they can actually create greater levels of distrust and disillusionment with democracy among local citizens (Grindle 2007; Hiskey and Seligson 2003). Thus, in many instances, decentralization reforms actually undermine democracy itself. Cornwall and Coelho conclude that:

For all the institutional innovation of recent years, there remains a gap between the legal and technical apparatus that has been created to institutionalize participation and the reality of the effective exclusion of poorer and more marginalized citizens. (2007:3)
Overall, there is simply too little empirical research to tell us whether increased participation in decentralized local governance structures either improves services (Robinson 2007) or enhances democracy (Cornwall and Coelho 2007; Manor 2004a, 2004b) across different contexts. A tendency to merge prescriptive and empirical accounts of what is happening further blurs the debate. Thus there is a “need to unpack the category of civil society, to examine who comes to represent citizens…” (Cornwall and Coelho 2007:6).

But even more importantly, researchers are beginning to argue that what most determines the extension of social citizenship (as opposed to civil and political rights) in developing country contexts is not the introduction of localized governance experiments, but the character of collective action in the national polity and the manner in which local-level voice is articulated to national and international power arrangements. Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens (1997), for example, find that the existence of political parties with established organizational ties to subordinate classes, and of institutionalized collective actors at the national level (for example unions, established citizens groups or anti-poverty coalitions) has been crucial to the consolidation of democracies in Latin America. So too, they argue, is the existence of a central state that has a degree of autonomy from direct socio-economic interests and the capacity to implement a negotiated agreement over social citizenship entitlements with these collective actors. Structurally, integration within the international political economy must be favourable, allowing for the potential of new revenues so that public expenditures can be directed at collective demands for citizenship entitlements (Haggard and Kaufman 1997). Otherwise, in decentralizing contexts:

the political space left empty by weak popular organizations and the failure of political parties to establish organizational ties to subordinate classes has been filled by clientelistic networks.
These networks like lower class individuals and informal social groups to individual politicians; they serve at best as transmitters of temporary particularistic favors, not as channels to mobilize citizens into influencing policy formation. (Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens, 1997)

Heller’s study comparing the sustainability of democratic decentralization experiments in Kerala (India), South Africa and Porto Allegre (Brazil), confirms these insights. In Kerala and Porto Allegre, local social movement mobilization, was linked to national-level changes in competitive party politics and the development of alliances with left-leaning political representatives. In turn, a negotiated, state-led project produced sustainability in these cases. However, in South Africa, where strong popular forms of collective action were not sustained within national-level politics after democratic transition, the polity took a more centralized authoritarian turn (Heller 2001). Case studies on accountability in Cornwall and Coelho (2007), and the research presented by Goetz and Jenkins (2004) each recognize that the emergence of democratic accountability in developing states can only thrive where there are three conditions: democratic and strong national-level institutions; strong collective actors representing popular movements; and positive economic opportunities within an international political economy (see also Fung and Wright 2003).

These findings may seem unhelpful in contexts where collective agents representing the poor are few or weak at both the national and the local levels of governance, and where economic constraints limit the ability of governments to negotiate any kind of consistent “social settlement”. But they direct our attention to the need to think more carefully about how grassroots mobilization can be linked to new forms of collective action at the national levels. Even in African contexts, where society is socially segmented and operates through informal institutions, a social citizenship lens may stimulate us to reframe our thinking about governance and development – directing us, for example, to the potential for alternative forms of collective agency at the national level, including novel “co-societal” arrangements in which communities and ethnic groups might act as constituencies for representation (Hyden 2006; Ake
A social citizenship lens might also direct our attention, as many transnational civil society groups and scholars of transnational advocacy movements have suggested, to opportunities for linking transnational social movements to the revitalization of local engagement in the delivery of basic social entitlements. Where local citizens have limited leverage and voice in the national political arena, transnational social movements may influence the policies of developing states through international advocacy and pressure; and they may also provide protected incubators for national social movements (Oxfam 1999; Alexander 2002; Action Aid 2004; Edwards 2004; Keck and Sikkink 1998).

All of this, of course, returns us to the literature on social citizenship, with its argument that political rights can be translated into social rights, and procedural democracy to substantive democracy, only to the extent that popular or lower-class demands are organized and find effective representation in the social citizenship regimes institutionalized within the state (Heller 2001; Cornwall and Coelho 2007).

4. Social Citizenship Regimes and Education for All

Research on social citizenship in the West challenges us to think about development and democracy in two key directions. First, in normative terms, democratic development requires more than simply a formal set of institutions (civil and political rights, regular elections); it inherently demands both procedural equality (real opportunities for voice) and some promise of social-economic equality. Second, research on social citizenship helps us to understand the importance of distinct forms of collective agency to the achievement of social-economic equality. Collective action (as much as formal voting), and new forms of direct engagement between citizen and service provider in decentralized governance contexts, shapes and defines the processes of interest negotiation at the national level and the emergence of the redistributive policies and institutions that set out the terms of claims-making in any given society (Jenson 2007).

Using a social citizenship lens can help us to think about the realization of the achievement of educational rights in a way that moves beyond the official discourse for educational governance reform, which has been too heavily focused on the construction of purely local accountability politics. Conceptually, it suggests a need to think about a series of nested or embedded compacts operating at a variety of scales, from local to national and transnational. But what, exactly, would we be looking at and for? I propose that we begin by exploring the relationship between education and the construction of social citizenship regimes across three scales or levels of interaction.

4. a) A Social Citizenship Lens at the Community-School Interface

Most of us feel an instinctive affinity with the notion that local citizens and their voices matter in the shaping of educational services. We also know that a wide range of “democratic decentralization” experiments are underway in developing country contexts. For example, in recent field research in Africa we found widespread use of direct-user committees (primarily in the form of “school management committees”); devolution of system oversight to elected local authorities; and a myriad of cross-cutting experiments in citizen engagement in education through “social funds” or funds placed at the discretion of individual parliamentarians; and pilot projects focused on the creation of community “school report cards” (Mundy, Cherry, Haggerty, Maclure and Sivasubramaniam, 2007).

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15 Hyden (2006) notes that “informal institutions abound in Africa especially because of its rudimentary production structures and prevalence of kinship structures. Simple face to face reciprocities make more sense than the form of rights and obligations that arise in bureaucratic and corporate settings.”
A substantial body of mainly World Bank-funded research supports such experiments, by offering convincing examples of cases in which local-level citizen voice improves the quality of educational services. However, an equally large body of research argues against such policies exists – for many of the reasons noted in the section on democratic decentralization experiments above. Thus, for example, there is often tension or lack of clarity about how different decentralization experiments map onto one another, with the relationships between local elected authorities and school committees particularly unclear (Chapman et al. 2002; Mundy et al. 2007; Sayed 2002, 2005; de Grauwe 2004). Administrative challenges at the local level undermine the implementation of democratic decentralization efforts; or lead to the creation of highly scripted forms of engagement (Mukundan 2003; Gershberg 1999; Bray 1999, 2003; Caddell 2005).16 Efforts to introduce private providers or to mobilize local-level contributions to schools operate at cross purposes to the message of citizenship entitlement sent out by national promises of “free” education (Bray 1999; Chapman et al. 2005; Gershberg and Meade 2005; Barrs 2005; Miller-Grandvaux and Yoder 2002; Kendall 2004; Rose 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006). Parents typically view these types of resource-mobilizing engagement as temporary fixes on the path to state-led schooling in their communities (Mfum-Mensah 2004; Maclure 1994). Researchers also find that these reforms reproduce intra-community as well as inter-community inequality, limiting the redistributive scope of central government (Bray 1999; Pryor 2005; Dyer and Rose 2005; Hannum and Buchmann 2003).

What seems to missing, across all of these studies, is a sustained focus on the social citizenship effects of these experiments in democratic decentralization. We should be asking not only “does the experiment produce more effective services?” but also:

- Does it lead to new capacity and effectiveness in citizen-led claims-making?
- Are these capacities equally distributed?
- Do they scale up at the national level in the sense of consolidation of formal democratic polities?
- In what ways can such capacities be better supported?

4. b) A Social Citizenship Lens on “Civil Society” and the National Polity

In a wave of recent research, political scientists have shown convincingly that a movement towards free multiparty democracy reinforces promises of universal access to basic education and of increased spending for this purpose, at least in Africa and Latin America (Stasavage 2004, 2005; Brown 1999; Brown and Hunter 2004; Nelson 2003, 2006).17 To some degree, formal democracy seems to lock governments into greater spending on the needs of the median voter, for whom entitlement to basic education remains an extremely important component of citizenship. As Bratton’s research in Africa has shown, concerns about unemployment and health care regularly trump popular concerns about education, but in general, satisfaction with basic social services contributes mightily to opinions about democracy itself (Bratton 2007).

We also know that even across formal democracies, educational entitlements are surprising varied both in terms of the extensiveness and structure. A sharp institutional overhang from colonial policies seems to influence just how aggressively newly democratized societies pursue the later goal of universal basic

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16 As, for example, in our field research where school committees were told how many pencils and erasers they should purchase with the funds newly under “local” control (Mundy et al. 2007).

17 While the link between democracy and expenditures is highly correlated, the link between democracy and social outcomes is weaker and less consistent. Nelson concludes “a wide range of case and comparative studies, opinion surveys and other evidence suggest that the effects of democracy on reform are far more complex, contingent and variable than its impact on spending” (2006: 2).
education (Brown 2000), even when economic factors are held constant. The literature on social citizenship tells us that the character of the relationship between civil society and the state, and the way in which popular voice has been institutionalized in forms of collective agency vis-à-vis the state, may be the defining factors in such variation. To the best of my knowledge, however, there has been little in the way of either single-case or cross-national research on the changing nature of state-civil society relationships and their implication for the achievement of social and procedural democracy within the education sector in the developing world.

Nonetheless, there are a few useful studies on the evolution of national-level state-civil society relationships within the education sector. These studies are of varied types. The first are those that look at the way in which elite leadership at the national level has been able to push through equity-enhancing educational reforms in certain contexts, by either harnessing or circumventing traditional collective actors in the education sector (Grindle 2004; Kaufman and Nelson 2004; Nelson 2006; Gershberg 2004; Lowden 2004; Corrales 1999). These studies rarely relate such reforms to achievement of greater direct voice for citizens, nor do they look deeply at collective agency and its potential for enhancing reform processes at the national level in the manner suggested in social citizenship and welfare state research. Instead, they emphasize a transactional view of reform that, while thicker than the relationships described in official donor literatures, is nonetheless focused on elite leadership, alternative incentives and competing interests. They nonetheless provide detailed case studies documenting the policy processes that underpin reform efforts.

The second group of studies, generated in part by a recent wave of efforts to ensure that civil society actors are consulted in new national policy frameworks for education and poverty reduction, looks at the kinds of civil society actors who are at the education policy table in different developing country contexts (Mundy et al. 2006, 2007; Doftori and Takala 2005; Murphy 2005; Mia 2004; Lexow 2003; Miller-Grandvaux, Welmond and Wolf 2002; Kruse 2003; Kudor 2004; Swift 200). Some of these studies are undertaken by transnational civil society groups that have supported the development of civil society coalitions in the education sector (see for example, Commonwealth Education Fund 2005a, 2005b, 2007a, 2007b).

These studies provide a useful audit of the wide range of civil society organizations active in the education sector, including: faith-based or ethnicity-based organizations, parent/teacher associations, community-based organizations, national and international non-governmental organizations, teachers’ unions or associations, professional and parliamentary organizations, research organizations, organizations representing the rights of women or children, coalitions focused on debt relief or economic justice, as well as research and policy institutes, institutions of higher education and business associations. They show that civil society actors have gained an important seat at the national policy table in many countries in recent years; and have introduced important accountability innovations, such as civil society budget monitoring activities (Dyer and Paine 2004).

Our own research, on civil society engagement in the national educational policy arena in four African countries (Mundy et. al., 2007), also points out serious limitations in the engagement between governments and civil society. CSO participation in national policy settings is typically ad hoc and “by invitation”, and usually is most extensive during the issue formulation phases of education sector reform programs (“consultation”). Even where national CSO coalitions have emerged, these coalitions typically lack independent capacity for policy analysis, political engagement or evidence-based advocacy. They are often characterized by deep schisms and divided interests, with teachers unions often at odds with direct service-providing NGOs. Their work is generally concentrated in national capitals, with limited

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18 Brown (2000) shows that in Africa the impact of having been a French or British colony on educational enrollments has not diminished since independence.
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links to local communities, and they sometime face deep resistance from governments. More importantly, these organizations often have no formal strategy for engaging directly with citizens or with elected officials in a sustained or cumulative manner; and it remains unclear how they link to broader social movement politics in their given countries and whether they authentically represent popular voices in the policy process.

What seems to be needed here is a concerted effort to situate the evolving roles being played by civil society actors in the education sector within a broader analysis of politics across a number of countries. A social citizenship lens guides us to look more carefully at the limits and possibilities for national-level collective action in education and other social citizenship arenas. It reminds us to pay special attention to the opportunity for political alliances and institutional reforms that can amplify the voice of the median (poor) citizen at the national level. Ideally such research would be combined with research at the community-school interface, so that we can better understand how the political architecture for social citizenship at the national level conditions the effectiveness of democratic decentralization reforms in a variety of developing country contexts.

4. c) The Transnational EFA Interface from a Social Citizenship Perspective

It is especially difficult to translate existing research on the formation of social citizenship regimes at the national scale into a workable agenda for studying governance at the global scale. The interface among international actors (both state and non-state), and between these actors and national-level actors, is difficult to conceptualize using a social citizenship lens, precisely because there is neither a global state nor any real movement towards the construction of a state-like authority system at the world level. Instead, globalization has created a hybrid system in which sovereign states (and the myriad of international organizations they have created) compete with a range of non-state agents to influence what are still primarily domestic guarantees of citizenship (Robertson, 2006; Scholte, 2005; Pauly and Grande 2006; Smouts 1998). Claims-making for social rights in this context is understandably diffuse, often simultaneously operating across many levels.

A number of analytic studies have tried to capture the process through which citizen-led claims-making for EFA operate at the transnational level. One 2005 case study suggests that global-level civil society EFA efforts have been “captured” by key international organizations, like the World Bank; and that national-level CSO efforts are often led and shaped by international CSOs (Murphy 2005). Clearly, these are trends that do not fit “normatively” within the social citizenship agenda. On the other hand, a number of studies have praised international-level civil society actors for gaining a seat at the international EFA policy table (as for example, through seats at World Assemblies and the Fast Track Initiative). In the Fast Track instance, transnational civil society actors have helped to generate a new mode of citizen claims-making which links Northern citizens (holding their governments accountable) to the claims-making efforts of Southern citizens, both to their own governments and the international community (Mundy 2007; Mundy and Murphy 2001).

The achievement of a universal right to education is, at least in aspirational terms, likely to remain a key issue in any effort to build a form of global social citizenship. It makes sense to question global-level EFA efforts in the same way we might interrogate a national regime for social citizenship: in normative terms, to see how far EFA efforts presently or potentially support procedural and social equality necessary to the construction of a global democratic polity (Held 2005); and in analytical terms, to throw a spotlight on the character of collective action and the potential for alliances that support the expression of popular claims-making at a global scale.
5. Conclusion

In this paper I have suggested that more attention needs to be paid to the role of civil society in the achievement of Education for All — particularly in poor countries where universal access to basic education has not been achieved.

Most official donor discourse on civil society continues to support civil society participation for reasons of instrumental efficiency: as a way of enhancing educational service delivery or ensuring accountability for funding at the local level. Recently donors have also welcomed civil society participation in national-level policy dialogue, but this invitation is quite limited and de-linked from the mechanisms for local-level civil society participation being supported by donors.

As a corrective, I have suggested that a “social citizenship lens” can help us to evaluate and interrogate the contributions made by civil society to Education for All. A social citizenship lens prompts us to ask how far civil society engagement in EFA activities supports the procedural engagement of citizens (“voice”) and their social equality (conceptualized as a right of citizenship). Furthermore, I have argued that we need to look at social citizenship rights and citizen-led claims-making as processes that increasingly play out across local, national and international levels. By studying how opportunities for social citizenship claims at local, national and global levels are facilitated by organized civil society, we can move beyond the official donor discourses on participation, good governance and democracy to better assess both the character and potential for collective action and popular claims-making at a global scale.
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