



# Towards a global leadership role in the work towards education for all?

Thematic analysis for Norad's contribution to the Post-2015 agenda on education quality and student learning as a new development priority for Norway

Tone Cecilie Carlsten  
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Rapport 36/2013

**NIFU**



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# Preface

The United Nations' 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have provided the basis for a significant effort in the work towards a world of equity, dignity and prosperity. The current debate on development challenges to be reflected in the Post-2015-agenda points to a consensus on the relationship between educational quality and student learning as a priority for global education. This has emerged as an expansion of the MDG-focus on enrollment due to reported low learning output in countries. Agreement on how educational quality and student learning is best improved in emerging and developing economies has not yet been reached.

This report presents a set of recommendations for how Norad may advise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on education quality and student learning as a new development priority in this situation. The goals of the study have been to explore strategies and activities aiming to enhance education quality and student learning related to the Post-2015 agenda; and to evaluate value-added interventions that have shown successful results in terms of relating aspects of teaching and learning. The work has been commissioned by the Norwegian Agency of Development Cooperation (Norad).

The Nordic Institute of Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) has carried out the study. The team has consisted of researcher Tone Cecilie Carlsten, Head of Research Vibeke Opheim and Deputy Director Kyrre Lekve. In finalizing the report, NIFU senior researcher Per Olaf Aamodt has provided input and advice.

NIFU has interviewed several key specialists from GPE, UNICEF, UNESCO, Brookings Institute, Save the Children Norway, Norad, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We would like to express our gratitude to all national and international organizations that generously provided time and invaluable input to make the report richer in detail, targeted in approach, and generally more grounded within education in a development context. NIFU extends thanks to Norad and contact person Vigdis Aaslund Cristofoli for the constructive cooperation.

Oslo, 11 December 2013

Sveinung Skule  
Director

Jannecke Wiers-Jenssen  
Head of research



# Contents

<b>Preface</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>13</b>
1.1 Background for the Norad study .....	13
1.2 Research questions .....	14
1.3 Analytical framework .....	15
1.4 Data and methods .....	16
1.6 Report outline .....	17
<b>2 Quality measures in education</b> .....	<b>18</b>
2.1 Norway's policy regarding quality aspects in education aid .....	18
2.2 Norad's policy regarding quality aspects in education aid .....	19
2.3 Mapping quality definitions .....	20
2.4 Definitions of quality in Norad's dialogue arenas .....	21
2.5 Summary and recommendations .....	24
<b>3 Key challenges for educational quality</b> .....	<b>26</b>
3.1 Post-2015 challenges: Teachers and project monitoring .....	26
3.2 Summary and recommendations .....	29
<b>4 Successful interventions for improving quality</b> .....	<b>30</b>
4.1 Determining successful interventions in educational practices .....	30
4.2 What successful interventions indicate impact of Norad's work through partners? .....	31
4.3 Coordinating successful interventions .....	32
4.4 Summary and recommendations .....	35
<b>5 Conclusions</b> .....	<b>37</b>
5.1 Norway and the Post-2015 agenda .....	37
5.2 Principles for work with education quality in a development context .....	38
5.3 Quality teaching as one possible field of priority .....	39
5.4 A national strategy for a global leadership role in education? .....	40
5.5 Final summary: Monitoring of development aid .....	40
<b>References</b> .....	<b>43</b>
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>47</b>





# Summary

The United Nations' 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have provided the basis for a significant effort in the work towards a world of equity, dignity and prosperity. The current debate on development challenges to be reflected in the Post-2015-agenda points to a consensus on the relationship between educational quality and student learning as a priority for global education. This has emerged as an expansion of the MDG-focus on enrollment due to reported low learning output in countries. Agreement on how educational quality and student learning is best improved in emerging and developing economies has not yet been reached. This fact is reflected in the approach and frames of this study, as well as in the recommendations.

This report presents a set of recommendations for how Norad may advise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the relationship between education quality and student learning as a new development priority. The goals of the study have been to explore strategies and activities aiming to enhance education quality and student learning related to the Post-2015 agenda; and to evaluate value-added interventions that have shown successful results in terms of relating aspects of teaching and learning.

The report presents analyses of data from research interviews with thirteen key specialist involved in work in multilateral and bilateral channels, and their recommended policy and research documents on the topic. Educational quality is a concept dependent on political strategy as the implementation of global standards is stakeholder-relative and context-sensitive. Discussions of key challenges and value-added interventions concerning the relationship between quality and learning should primarily be aligned with a national political strategy for Norad's work. Norad is involved with work on the MDGs in countries through participation in several priority channels without a formal political Norwegian strategy for this work. As the project was too limited to perform a thorough scientific review of the situation, the input from the interviews were essential in mapping the field.

In order to analyze the field reliably in the course of the 35 days available, NIFU contacted some of the most relevant partners to Norad in the work on education quality and student learning. The informants were selected by Norad, and Norad also requested to quality assure the interview guide before interviews were conducted in order to ensure relevance. The channels included in this study include Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, Brookings Institute, Save the Children Norway, Norad, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The document analysis included work from these and other organizations as suggested by partners.

The main conclusion is that there is a need to establish significantly clearer priorities for Norway as a partner in global education development, especially if Norway is to take global leadership. The analyses of documents from Norad, and of data from interviews show that Norad seems to lack the

strategy necessary for prioritizing between national and international channels and in and between current efforts of monitoring Norwegian development aid. The priorities of today is grounded in policy platforms on the level of political intentions and less in empirically grounded research on output of work done to enhance educational quality and student learning. The apparent lack of strategy makes it difficult for Norad to assess the quality of the work done through Norway's priority channels. There is ample evidence that both strategic changes of priority channels, as well as a quality assured selection of projects in countries and sector-plans could be possible had there been a strategy and output-reports available. While several partners represented in this study work with well specified and to a large degree data-driven political priorities, Norad's work giving advice on how the Norwegian government should spend and evaluate the national development budget is not based on a clear-cut comprehensive strategy. We strongly recommend that Norad considers to follow up on this finding by providing the necessary basis for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be able to follow up on their new goals of taking a clearer leadership role. The strategy will also make it easier to provide future research analyses based on valid scientific reviews, and to implement monitoring plans integrated in the practical work undertaken in countries and sector-plans.

In order to take leadership in the global agenda for more productive and meaningful learning for all, our data point to a strategic entry point for Norway to focus on qualities of fair and effective teacher instruction. This comes as an extension to structural efforts such as has been the case with the current MDG goal focusing on enrollment which has been well monitored. This recommendation is based on the only common advice that went beyond overall goals on monitoring learning output by informants in this study. These two priorities builds on earlier Norwegian strategies in development work, such as the UNESCO Teacher Task Force for *Education For All* (EFA) and current goals stated by organizations to work for a common approach to cooperation and quality assurance of data. Norway could aim to contribute with resources and competence through channels working to strengthen teacher education and teacher research related to student learning in a global context. What channels are to be chosen is a matter to be aligned with a new political strategy for Norway. Given the shift in focus on enrollment to instruction might require a new approach to work in Norad. While structural work related to educational enrollement can be performed by many occupational groups, work on core pedagogical changes should be planned, performed and assessed by those formally trained to understand instructional processes and products of classroom instruction within different fields of school content instruction and student skills development. We recommend that Norad consult the Minsitry of Education and Research to better be prepared for this crucial upcoming change on the international arenas if the aim is to be part of the global leadership.

To develop a formal quality assured knowledge base reflecting a multidimensional understanding of schooling, pedagogy and outcome indicators, Norad could coordinate their unique expertise of working in the intersection between education and development aid with the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU). In the work to increase coordination of knowledge from value-added studies on interventions relating teacher instruction and student learning, Norad could coordinate efforts with the Norwegian Knowledge Center in Education. To conduct a scientific review of the current state-of-the-art on the causal relationships between development aid input, global processes and country- and sector specific work on researching what specific aspects of classroom instruction lead to changes in student learning in subjects and competences is a task requiring a budget and number of researchers far beyond the scope of this 35-day-study.

The study is organized in three main parts to address the questions in Norad's Terms of Reference: a) What are current measures of quality in work on education and student learning? b) What are key challenges in advancing Norway's work on education quality in a developmental context? c) What value-added interventions in teachers' classroom instructional practices have shown successful results in terms of student learning?

### ***Impact measures of educational quality:***

The quality of teaching and learning for all as a global priority has gained increased attention in recent years. This focus has partly been grounded in the development and use of new direct measures aiming to assess the impact of schooling on student learning. Informants in this study also emphasize that reports on MDGs have shown that measures on input, process and output in development aid are not necessarily congruent. A common aspect in varied approaches to the topic is that quality learning in classrooms is a measure to be treated within educational policy and practice, while the element of development policy and practice is crucial in understanding the conditions for quality learning for all to be realized as a strategy. This report aims at reporting the pedagogical challenges and current evidence, not the administrative conditions and cultural-contextual issues around learning itself.

Educational quality is also high on today's political agenda as the international community is moving towards the Post-2015 agenda. Impressions from this short study indicate a general agreement that the MDGs have been effective as measures in the *Education For All* agenda. This is especially true when it comes to allocation of resources, mobilising global awareness, and to put pressure on accountability structures. Quality teaching and learning has been a highlighted topic politically both towards and beyond Post-2015 in a successor framework once the MDGs expire in 2015. According to the estimations of the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report, at least 250 million primary-school-age children around the world are not able to read, write or count well enough to meet minimum learning standards. This includes children who have spent at least four years in school, i.e. fulfilling part of the access or input measures. Based on the data in this study, there seem to be considerable differences in how to strategically work on a remedy to this challenge. This finding indicates a need to review the current frameworks for understanding educational quality for all, and to establish a more coordinated quality assurance system for calibrating baseline studies and impact reports with the development of reliable measures in Norway. The finding also shows the necessity of a strategy for Norad and Norway if a result-oriented approach to policy is a priority. If Norway does not operate with clearly defined priorities in this competing field of work, the question put to us from informants is which definition of quality is left to have impact on processes where Norad is involved: How does Norway ensure that development aid is distributed efficiently and fairly, when there is no strategy to enable feedback into the system on systematic results?

### ***Key challenges for advancing Norway's work on education quality in a developmental context:***

A key challenge is to develop a national strategy for Norwegian aid to enhance the relationship between educational quality, classroom instruction and student learning that is based on research. Our data confirm that there is no current single definition of educational quality available, and that this understanding of learning complexity is reflected in Norad's selected partners. The term is stakeholder relative, and may be interpreted as both an outcome of schooling and as an inherent property of educational processes. Even as a measure of outcome, informants describe implementation efforts of policies where output of education could be directed towards either goals, activities or the combination of both measures. A systematic review on how channels operate within this field is not yet available.

It is argued in this report that future priorities would benefit from more rigorous national monitoring systems of Norwegian participation in the global and development agenda, more or less in line with the recent 2013-UNESCO decision on a global standard-setting instrument on the recognition of higher education qualifications. Due to the lack of clear political priorities in primary and secondary education and the varied stakeholder quality definitions, Norad should consider to develop a research-based approach in the work on quality. The degree to which Norway needs to enhance the work on quality through teachers and teaching development, and which challenges to select or downplay within this field, depends on the level of ambition in a new political strategy. Taking the 2013 governmental decree as a guideline in the work ahead as described by partners, the work to take a global leadership role in education for all suggests a need for targeted priorities on what it takes to promote fair and effective teacher instructional practices in reading and mathematics in order to promote Norway as a more visible and ambitious partner globally.

### ***Value-added impact studies and their alignment to Norad's work:***

A valid scientific review was not possible to undertake due to the limited scope of this study. Also, there were no clear scientific selection criteria on which to base an evaluation due to the lack of a political strategy for Norad's work. As a solution, NIFU conducted a large number of preliminary free-searches on the internet for value-added studies labelled or tagged with educational quality and/or student learning in work referenced in Norad's own reports. This has been a way to determine whether Norad's work on educational quality builds on value-added impact studies, and on what basis these studies are selected. This method led to no clear picture of the situation. Most cost-benefit studies suggested by Norad focused on the current MDG goal on education: Enrollment and structural factors for educational quality. Value-added studies indicating which measures of teachers' classroom instructional practices is more effective for student learning over time than others were not found within this approach to the study. In order to expand the search, informants were asked to provide examples of value-added studies they were using or had knowledge of in their work towards the Post-2015 agenda. These studies should explicitly illustrate the sustainable relation between multidimensional instructional input and corresponding changes in student learning over time. Informants pointed to a large number of reports and articles describing and analyzing work on educational quality. There were, however, no completed studies that could assist in providing a scientific basis for such relations at this point. Without structured and quality-assured review systems, our data point to the fact that interventions highlighted by different stakeholders to a large degree reflect their own definition of quality as either input-oriented, output-oriented, systems-oriented or context-oriented. NIFU suggests that Norad considers developing a strategy for future work that includes a more systematic way of selecting work and disseminating results. This is also an approach that might increase public transparency into the international distribution of the Norwegian budget if the aim is to change the political priorities towards a supported global leadership role.

### ***Conclusions and summary of recommendations:***

Based on the options for data-selection available for the scope of this report, a key result is that we find indications of an international and national systematic monitoring of quality measures related to preconditions for teaching and learning. We find less evidence of systematic monitoring of results that may guide Norad in informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the effects of Norwegian participation in global, sector and country activities to support sustainable learning. We conclude that Norad would strongly benefit from developing a clear strategy for their work in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (development aspects) and the Ministry of Education and Research (pedagogical and content-related aspects that intersects with Norway's work on global education the past decade).

If the work to increase learning quality for all on the global agenda is to be sustainable, and the ambition to take a global leadership is to become a reality, there is a need for developing a stronger policy cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research on the topic of quality teaching. As the focus on teaching quality is a final empirical outcome of this limited study, we recommend a post-strategy study to align a new policy direction of quality teaching using a reliable scientific review.

In the initial Terms of Reference, Norad had developed eight research questions to be answered in this report. As these ToRs were adjusted towards a clearer focus on key challenges and value-added interventions, the outline of this report was adjusted correspondingly:

- In chapters 1-4, we provide a short description and analysis of Norway's policy regarding the quality aspects in education. This is partly based on documents and research publications, partly on interview data. The discussions include reflections of the work on education quality in the Post-2015 agenda, mainly through partners input on financing and dialogue structures with multilateral, bilateral partners and NGOs receiving funding through Norad. Recommendations are listed at the end of each chapter.

In chapter 3, we provide a brief overview of the main and most important arenas internationally where the dialogue around education quality and student learning is carried out, focusing on learning impact. Recommendations are listed at the end of the chapter.

*NIFU recommends that Norad develops a strategy to ensure that systematic work on pedagogical aspects of education quality is better grounded in a quality-assured research base.*

*NIFU recommends that Norad discusses a focus on teaching and teachers as a first strategic entry point for Norway.*

In chapter 2, we describe how to approach the current most consolidated definitions of education quality within the context of education and development and its key elements.

In chapter 3, we identify a set of key challenges that needs to be addressed in order to accompany the work on education quality and learning in countries. Due to the lack of a common definition of education quality in Norway's development work, suggestions to key challenges is a political endeavour more than a research job. This research question was therefore answered using data mainly from interviews with Norad and Norad's main partners.

In chapter 4, we apply the definitions of quality and the findings on key challenges in order to provide a map of key prerequisites for and key interventions which are important to improve quality in a development context. For the same reasons as above, we let the voices of Norad and Norad's partner guide the analysis.

*NIFU recommends that Norad reviews relevant positions on education quality among partners, and develop clearer priorities for Norway's development aid in order to advice the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in such a global leadership. Norad's advice to a strategy should include clear priorities and link priorities to specific contexts. In this work, the choice of channels should be reflected and clearly reasoned, and there should be a monitoring system for how channels work to distribute Norwegian aid according to the Norwegian strategy.*

- In chapters 2-4, we present future work international partners plan to undertake when accompanying the development of the education sector in a country.

*NIFU recommends that Norad considers to work on quality teaching as a national priority for the global work ahead, as this is reported to be the single most crucial issue reported by all informants in addition to monitoring systems. How this is to be related to work in countries and priority of channels will depend on Norwegian political ambitions and corresponding resource allocation.*

- In the report as a whole, we find that it is not reasonable to conclude on the most important research gaps in the area of education quality and learning due to the lack of precision in the research questions and weak systematic monitoring of value-added studies of related to measuring student learning in classrooms.

*NIFU recommends that Norad works to ensure clearer national priorities for quality teaching and quality teacher education as it impacts student learning when commissioning reviews that may identify possible research gaps within these areas. If the priority to focus on teachers and teaching quality is given priority by Norad, such as suggested by partners in interviews, the areas in need of more knowledge are related to measures of fair and effective teaching practices in classrooms. As there are no value-added studies combining the educational/developmental aspects to indicate what these changes should be on the level of the learner (e.g. the relationship between local curricula, mother tongue textbooks and student grades), there is a*

*general need to establish well-defined pedagogical measures before research gaps can be identified on a value scale of what is more or less important.*

*NIFU recommends that Norad's work on key challenges ahead includes a larger study on the topic of teacher and teaching quality and project monitoring with a broad and representative expert panel of private donors, policymakers and -advisors, researchers, and representatives from NGOs.*

# 1 Introduction

*Poor-quality education: Getting children into school is not an end in itself – it is a means to deliver the knowledge and skills that people and countries need to flourish. Stated bluntly, too many schoolchildren are learning far too little.*

Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO 2011, p 25)

*[The Norwegian government will]...take a global leadership role in the work towards education for all.*

(Norwegian government, October 2013)

## 1.1 Background for the Norad study

Acknowledging the emerging evidence of a crucial gap between new ambitions for education quality in development politics and the results indicating that children are receiving poor quality education led Norad to take the initiative of a short thematic study on this relationship in summer 2013. As the political ambitions of Norway's development work changed with a new government October 2013, this study received a new context in pointing out relationships between national ambitions and monitoring of international results.

Norway has an active role in international cooperation on education and development, including support for the Education for All movement and the education related Millennium Development Goals. As Norad mentions, Norway is known as a significant partner supporting education programs through UNICEF, the World Bank, UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), Agency for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the Inter Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE), and a large number of NGOs working on education.

The challenge in Norway's contribution on these arenas is similar to the overall policy development within education: There has been a focus on education quality without a similar attention to teaching quality related to learning outcomes both in policy and its reflected funding schemes (cf. the 2013 OECD's contribution on education to the Post-2015 framework: PISA for development).

Norad has recently addressed the need for new and clear measures on education Post-2015 (Norad 2013). Based on several studies, including the EFA Global Monitoring Report estimating

approximately 72 million children without schooling opportunities in 2015, Norad has advised the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to give priority to specified educational areas in upcoming development goals. These are related to the areas of gender equality, poverty and equity in education, instruction in fragile situations, and quality as a key aspect of all instruction and learning (ibid). The current commissioning of a study of education quality and student learning is considered a part of Norad's proactive agenda to ensure education for all is high on the Post-2015 agenda in Norway.

Norad specifically lists three items of Norwegian concern:

1. Maintain an international policy focus on education for all
2. Ensure a public debate on selected themes in the Post-2015 agenda: Multidimensional quality, youth and secondary education, inclusion and educational equity
3. Develop measurable indicators related to educational goals

The purpose of this study is to advance one step further in addressing education quality and student learning. It is emphasized that this initiative is viewed in light of the global development agenda beyond 2015 (e.g. UN 2010, 2012a, 2012b; OECD 2013). As stated in Norad's Terms of Reference, the objectives of this study are to:

- identify key challenges for education quality
- identify types of interventions showing most successful results in terms of learning

Norad states that the discussion and analysis emerging from the desk review and from interviews with key specialists should lead up to a set of recommendations for how Norway should engage in the policy dialogue and orient its investment in the education sector so as to constructively contribute to, and accompany, improved education quality strategies in cooperating countries. The goal of this assignment is therefore to provide a set of key guidelines to Norway, as a partner to education internationally, on how to best support education quality and learning as a national development strategy. This should be seen through the priority channels established by the Norwegian government.

## **1.2 Research questions**

The following eight questions were provided by Norad and constitute NIFU's mandate:

- Provide a short description and analysis of Norway's policy regarding the quality aspects in education, as well as the reflections of the same through financing and dialogue with multilateral, bilateral partners and well as universities/research institutions and NGOs receiving funding through Norad.
- Provide a brief overview of the main and most important arenas internationally where the dialogue around education quality and student learning is being carried out, focusing on providing learning to students.
- Describe, in a simplified version, the current most consolidated definition of education quality within the context of education and development and its key elements.
- Identify a set of key challenges that need to be addressed in order to accompany the work on education quality and learning in countries.
- With the definition of quality and key challenges in mind provide a map of key prerequisites for and key interventions which are important to improve quality in a development context.



- Identify best practices and the most value added of the interventions discussed that would be considered important to replicate in primary/basic- and secondary education in a programme and sector wide approach. Project and country examples and case studies may be used for explanatory purposes.
- Make suggestions for how issues can best be addressed including concrete suggestions for future work international partners in particular can undertake when accompanying the development of the education sector in a country. This should include issues that are relevant for the Post-2015 agenda and issues that are relevant for Norway's future policies as regard development aid and education.
- Identify the most important research gaps in the area of education quality and learning.

During the project period, Norad requested that NIFU would focus the work on key challenges and value-added interventions showing changes in classroom learning due to variation in instructional practices in primary education as a consequence of Norway's development aid, but no theoretical or strategic frame has been available to narrow the focus on certain aspects of that part of schooling.

### 1.3 Analytical framework

As Biseth, senior advisor to Save the Children Norway points out, "quality" is not self-evident (Biseth 2013). As she emphasizes, in some cases quality is "ascertained by measuring how much the learner knows and to what depth. A description of a standard is developed, making it possible to measure the level of achievement." She continues to suggest that in other cases, "quality is a policy issue where creating an education system that facilitates the realization of the learners' rights to education and development of their capabilities is achieved" (ibid).

This discrepancy is emphasized in the debate on the use of value added measures in development countries, as scholars disagree on what aspect of "quality" is actually measured (e.g. Hanushek 2013, Kapur and Crowley 2008). As clearly stated in a recent OECD Literature Review on the Value-Added Measurement in Higher Education based on the AHELO-study in 17 countries/economies:

*The complexity of developing or selecting the appropriate value-added model clearly indicates the results of value-added measurement should not be considered as the only source of indicators for making high-stakes decisions [...]. In some instances, the institution identified as 'best' based on a value-added assessment may not be regarded as 'best' with respect to other criteria, because the value-added model gives greater weight to standardised test scores and quantified information than to other indicators [...]. (Kim and Lalancette 2013).*

This caution against too simplistic understandings of educational quality, is pointed out by Nikel and Lowe (2010) as they operate with seven dimensions that they consider to define quality education: Effectiveness, efficiency, equity, responsiveness, relevance, reflexivity and sustainability. Still, educational researcher Biseth refers to Soudien 2012, when she claims that "though this provides us with more clues as to what "quality" in education is, too much of the ongoing debate is related to management issues while it should be focused instead on pedagogy." There are, however, few well tested and internationally comparable indicators and criteria for how quality of instruction related to student impact at the level of sustainable learning (KD 2012; Carlsten and Aamodt 2013).

One of the underlying themes in work on educational quality in all countries and across levels of schooling is therefore the concept of variation (Carlsten and Aamodt 2013). If a reality varies it is naturally different from the intention to which it is strategically compared, and these differences can obviously be either large or small depending on the situation. As a consequence variation can a) make educational planning and coordination unpredictable, and b) make measurements more prone to political interests than rigorous scientific determination. For these reasons it is seen as important to

have research-based political criteria for working on the agenda towards equity and quality for all (e.g. UN 2013b, Brookings 2013).

Based on the fact that there is no formal political strategy for the work in Norway (cf. ToR), the analytical framework in this report is not predefined, but allows for a multidimensional and inductive empirical understanding of educational quality. This is an attempt to capture to which degree informants' discussion on quality focus on management issues or on learning taking place in school. In addition, it is trying to capture whether informants' understanding of learning in school is clearly related to different aspects of teacher instructional practices in specific subjects and student competences in a sustainable perspective that includes learning as an effective and meaningful practice (cf. UN 2013b).

## 1.4 Data and methods

NIFU has chosen an empirical approach to the assignment that is opening for a discussion of key specialists' understanding of quality and learning outcomes on a continuum between process oriented, quality definition with limited measurability, and result-oriented and measurable quality definition.

An understanding of quality on the dimension between universal and contextual measures, will probably vary according to actors and institutions when it comes to aims and stakeholder interest in their work. It may involve complex understandings of how relevant a quality education is in fragile situations, in enhancing gender equality, youth development, as a frame for teacher qualifications, curricula and text books, or a guideline to test development, policy and financial strategies.

A complex conceptual understanding of quality entails a methodological approach allowing for the same. Methodologically we approach the assignment with a stakeholder-evaluation model (Vedung 2010) allowing a meta-approach to how key specialists internationally and in Norway work both explicitly and implicitly with the concept of educational quality. In this assignment, with no prior strategy to guide the work, NIFU has decided to empirically map out how quality is interpreted and put into play in documents and interviews data. The study is twofold when it comes to method; the first empirical part is inductive, while the second part is deductive, using the findings in the framework to probe the work on educational quality in a predefined direction when analyzing the value-added interventions suggested by informants. The aim is to create a dynamic relation between unique sector needs and the general knowledge-base on the topic allowing for well-established and realistic recommendations to Norad. This is especially important within a field where education politics cannot be observed apart from development politics.

Without clear scientific selection criteria due to the perceived lack of political strategy for Norad's work and the limited scope of this study to conduct a valid review, NIFU initially conducted a large number of free-searches on the internet for value-added studies labelled or tagged with educational quality and/or student learning in work referenced in Norad's own reports. This has been a way to determine whether Norad's work on educational quality builds on value-added impact studies, and on what basis these studies are selected. It was also a method for quality assuring the interview guide against the specified questions in Norad's Terms of Reference.

In order to analyze the field reliably in the course of the 35 days available, NIFU contacted some of the most relevant partners to Norad in the work on education quality and student learning. The informants were selected by Norad, and Norad also requested to quality assure the interview guide before interviews were conducted in order to ensure relevance. The channels included in this study include Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, Brookings Institute, Save the Children Norway, Norad, the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Interviews were conducted in person where possible (Norway) and via phone (France, USA). Where necessary, the phone interview was followed up with an email interview with the same semi-structured interview guide developed for the face-to-face interviews (see

appendix). The document analysis included work from these and other organizations as suggested by partners.

## **1.6 Report outline**

The report is organized according to three main questions that are categorized from the eight research questions in the ToR: In chapter 2 we present findings on the search for current measures of quality in education and student learning. In chapter 3 we apply these measures in our discussion of key challenges in advancing Norway's work on education quality in a development and global context. Chapter 4 presents a discussion on the current status of successful interventions aiming to improve the work on education quality. Chapter 5 summarizes possible conclusions and suggests some recommendations for work ahead.

Data from both informants and documents are presented according to organizations and not thematically, as organizations present different definitions of quality. Respective definitions of quality serve as foundation for informants' descriptions of key challenges ahead, and how documents are selected to explain these challenges.

## 2 Quality measures in education

This chapter provides a short description and analysis of Norway's policy regarding the quality aspects in education. The discussions include reflections of the work on education quality in the Post-2015 agenda as described by this study's informants from partners' receiving funding through Norad. Based on the findings we describe how to approach the aim of searching for a "current most consolidated definition of education quality within the context of education and development and its key elements" (cf. ToR). Recommendations are listed at the end of the chapter.

### 2.1 Norway's policy regarding quality aspects in education aid

Since this work was commissioned summer 2013, Norway has elected a new government. Three notable changes have occurred on the political level: The removal of the role of Minister of Development in Norway, new and clear ambitions towards a clearer global leadership role in education (where the previous government had given priority to other areas than a policy for work on educational quality according to our informants<sup>1</sup>), and political pressure for a result-oriented policy agenda for work on education (Norwegian government 2013a).

As of November 2013, it is still unclear what a "global leadership role" for Norway entails, and this report therefore has an open framing in order to adapt to this uncertainty. What seems to be clear from our informants is that to take a global leadership role in general entails a research based leadership strategy in order to negotiate and lead work along with strong donors and global partners of educational development, a clear plan for engaging in and assessing the strategic processes of change, and a resource evaluation to examine the possible gap between necessary pedagogical competence as intention and reality.

Recent changes are, however, not based on a discontinuation in Norwegian policy development. On the operative level, new political signals are based on a continuation of the former government's policy agenda on globalization and international development. White paper 25 (2012-2013) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) refer to education as an important mechanism for resource distribution, continuing the targeted approach of the MFA White paper 13 (2008-2009) that established a focus in Norwegian aid on basic education, girls in education, and education in fragile states and conflict-

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<sup>1</sup> In 2012, the Government presented Meld. St. 11 (2011-2012) Report to the Storting (white paper) Global health in foreign and development policy, which discusses perspectives up until 2020. Meld. St. 14 (2010-2011) Report to the Storting (white paper) Towards greener development: On a coherent environmental and development policy supplements the guiding principles set out in Meld. St. 13 (2008-2009) Report to the Storting (white paper) Climate, conflict and capital. These three white papers and the respective recommendations from the Storting form the basis of the Government's development policy.

areas. The policy priorities to channel resources to a considerable degree through multilateral organizations in situations where Norway did not have the competence necessary to execute the scale of work is also continued, not least by the extra resources allocated to the cooperation with Global Partnership for Education in the national budget 2014 (Norwegian government 2013b).

White Paper 25 (2012-2013) from MFA indicated a shift in priorities on development work traditionally targeted to differences between countries to differences within countries (MFA 2012). There is a need for research and analysis beyond the scope of this short report to align educational policy within the field of development policy to the priorities of the White paper.

## **2.2 Norad's policy regarding quality aspects in education aid**

As indicated, as there is no formal political strategy providing a direction for the "global leadership role" the recommendations will be aligned with this political reality. The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), as a directorate under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, plan and implement their work based on annual letters of allocation issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

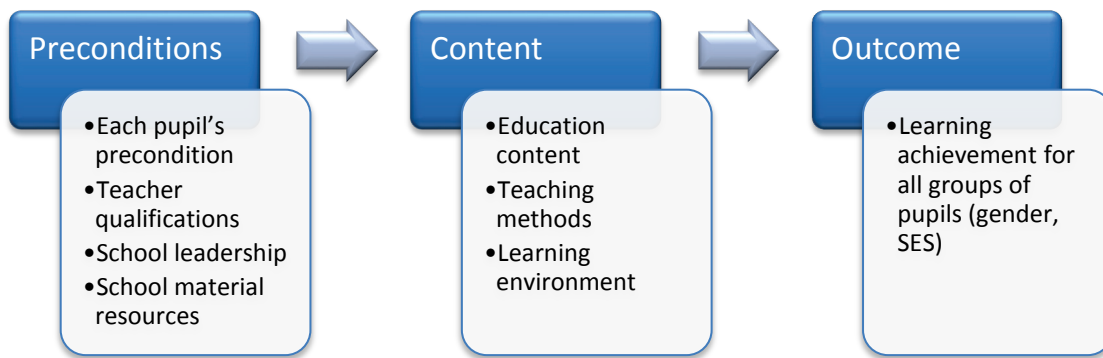
Norad lists six key elements related to quality in education on their webpages (Norad 2011): 1) Each pupil's precondition for learning, 2) Education content, 3) The teacher and teaching methodology, 4) Learning environment, 5) Learning achievement, and 6) Leadership in the school.

Similar elements are found in the definitions of quality used among Norad's partners and central stakeholders in global education (Barrett et al 2006). UNICEF highlights five dimensions of education quality: learners, environments, content, processes and outcomes (UNICEF, 2000). UNESCO coordinates the global drive towards Education for All (EFA) which identifies six goals to be met by 2015. Goal 6 addresses education quality in particular: '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' (UNESCO 2012).

The World Bank has developed several strategies focusing on specific target areas within the education sector. In 2011 The World Bank launched the Education Sector Strategy 2020: Learning for All. The strategy builds on previous education strategies of the World Bank Group – Quality education for all (2000) and Education for all and education for the knowledge economy (2005). In the 2020 strategy, the World Bank Group focus on three areas: 1) knowledge generation and exchange, 2) technical and financial support, and 3) strategic partnerships. The results framework of the strategy consists of a number of key performance, outcome, and impact indicators. The World Bank emphasize the conditions for monitoring these indicators regularly; this will require establishing baseline data and specifying a monitoring process for each indicator (The World Bank 2011:73).

Viewed within a traditional goal attainment model of policy administration, the elements are relating to different phases in the learning process, both conditions for learning, the content of learning and the learning outcome. This is illustrated in figure 1 below.

Figure 1 presents key elements for quality in educational politics, structured in three groups; preconditions for education quality, educational content and educational outcome in a political goal-attainment model. In addition to the six elements presented by Norad (2011), the figure also includes a seventh element; school material resources, among the central preconditions for education quality. School material resources includes both the schools' physical structure (classroom size and structure, indoor climate, etc.) as well as material resources in the forms of books and teaching materials, pencils and other school supplies needed to learn and used by both teacher and students.



**Figure 1: Key elements for quality in educational politics (based on Norad 2011)**

Although we have attempted to categorize Norad's political descriptions, the list presented by Norad does not indicate any system of priority nor are the different indicators linked to specific contexts. The items do, however, present Norad's work on education quality as a broad and multidimensional endeavour. This presentation of educational quality indicate a need to establish political priorities and link priorities to channels and countries/economies. Establishing political priorities is a political task. Instead NIFU, has tried to provide a short description of the experiences and judgments on Norway's contribution to education quality in the Post-2015 agenda from key partners to Norad. In order to provide a categorization that is related to the general list of quality aspects provided by Norad, NIFU presents an elaboration on Figure 2 in the following section.

## 2.3 Mapping quality definitions

The need for this study is based on the fact that there is no formal strategy available for Norad's work as national advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs towards the Post-2015 agenda. Based on the lack of agreement of how to best develop a framework for enhancing educational quality in a way that is valid within the field of educational research as well as relevant to the work in the development sector, NIFU has chosen an inductive approach to highlight some of the complexity in the field (cf. section 1.3). This is done to contribute to a discussion currently downplayed in several references in the field (UNESCO 2012a, b, Addie 2008, Fawcett & Israel 2010, Hungi & Thuku 2010, Genevois 2006, Biseth 2013).

As there is no formal baseline in Norad's work to compare findings on educational quality and student learning, NIFU applies a framework in the analysis aiming to capture the multidimensional reality of how quality is understood by informants in the study before they provide information on key challenges and value-added interventions. The framework is not designed to map key challenges and value-added studies, but rather to assist in understanding degrees of variations within the consensus on learning as a global priority in the Post-2015 agenda (cf. section 1.3).

Relevance/Quality	Indirect	Direct
Universal	Input measures; access, retention School leadership indicators	Instructional indicators International skills, competence-indicators
Contextual	Each pupil's precondition Learning environment	National content-indicators

**Figure 2: Framework for mapping variations in defining the relationship between educational quality and student learning**

Figure 2 above may be read as a framework for mapping variations in defining the relationship between educational quality and student learning. This framework allows for more complexity than the goal attainment model in Figure 1 that presents quality as a political indicator along the input-process-output line (cf. the discussion in section 1.3). Whereas quality definitions from informants may be mapped on the dimension from indirect and hard-to-measure indicators of quality to direct and standardized attempts to measure quality, relevance to the object of study is measured on a universal to contextual trajectory. The aim is to create an approach to Norad's search for a "current most consolidated definition of education quality within the context of education and development and its key elements" (cf. ToR, see section 1.2).

## 2.4 Definitions of quality in Norad's dialogue arenas

Norad's mission is to ensure the quality of development assistance through the established channels. Main channels for multilateral aid to education are UNICEF, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), and UNESCO. When it comes to bilateral cooperation in education, the main part of the development aid budget is allocated to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Tanzania. The main target of fund distribution is basic education, followed by resources to the higher education sector. Secondary education receives only a small part of Norad's fund. In 2012 the education sector (includes all levels of education and educational research) received 1.6 billion NOK, which equaled 6 per cent of the total Norwegian development aid budget that year (Norwegian aid statistics, Norad 2013). Since 2005 the level of funding to this sector has been relatively stable.

International targets set for the past decades to ensure equitable education for all children have had increased enrollment as its primary focus (Hewlett et al 2013, UNESCO 1990, 2000, 2010). Based on the overwhelming findings reported in policy and think-tank papers that education quality is considered to be poor in the meaning of successfully developing skills and producing learning in children has put education as a high priority on the Post-2015 agenda, cf. *Making Education a Priority in the Post-2015 Development Agenda* (UN 2013).

This new priority is important in order to understand the background for the current interest in global measures of effective teaching and learning in schools. The current trend is not only a part of the development agenda, but also evident in general trends in educational research and development e.g. *Ensuring Fair and Reliable Measures of Effective Teaching* by the Gates Foundation 2013, or *Schooling, Educational Achievement, and the Latin American Growth Puzzle* by Hanushek et al 2012.

As mentioned above, educational quality for all as a global/development priority has gained increased attention in recent years. In addition to the political development, this focus has also partly been grounded in the development and use of direct and universal measures of learning and competence (cf. Gates Foundation 2013, Hanushek et al 2012). This has allowed for measuring learning achievement on a global scale in addition to the contextual approaches (see Figure 2). The first indications of educational quality moving from indirect measures, such as access and retention, to

direct measures, such as learning achievement scores, have proven that measures on access and outcome are not necessarily congruent (cf. Kim and Lalancette 2013).

International cooperation efforts such as the Jomtien declaration (UNESCO 1990), the Dakar framework for action (UNESCO 2000), and UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) global movement (UNESCO 2010), however, also emphasize that there are both contextual and universal indicators that should inform policy decisions and practical interventions. International comparative studies on teaching and learning coordinated by the EU, OECD and IEA such as those mentioned above also provide us with insights into common issues, common agendas and common challenges concerning the local relevance of global quality measures (e.g. Vibe, Aamodt & Carlsten 2009, Hovdhaugen, Opheim, Sjaastad & Sweetman 2013).

Some of the main challenges in measuring the alignment of education quality and student learning are connected to the areas mentioned in the UNESCO Strategy on Teachers (2012-2015): How to develop and assess interventions that aim to bridge the teacher gap, improve teacher quality, and inform the global debate about teaching through research, knowledge production and communication (UNESCO 2012a). The Post-2015 agenda includes a range of areas that may influence measures of quality, covering out-of-school youth in developing countries (e.g. Fawcett & Israel 2010), basic skills development across developing countries (e.g. Hungi & Thuku 2010, UNESCO 2012b) as well as how to design and manage impact of cross-national studies of the quality of education (e.g. Ross & Genevois 2006, OECD 2013). These areas constitute important challenges when it comes to explore definitions of education quality as a basis for working with the new priorities in the Post-2015 agenda.

In the following we provide an overview of measures of quality such as they are highlighted in document and interview data with Norad and Norad partners in the relevant dialogue arenas. Partners are presented in alphabetical order:

#### **Brookings Institute:**

According to data from Brookings Institute, a think-tank based in USA, quality education is education that produces learning outcomes and prepares children and youth for life (both family and societal life), for further learning, and for work. When thinking about education quality, Brookings' focus is primarily on learning outcomes. There is an intentional focus on outcomes, rather than inputs, wherever possible. As global development policy has focused on access more than on outcomes, Brookings has worked with partners to push for a shift toward an access + learning agenda that would focus on learning outcomes. This was the central message of the *Global Compact on Learning Report* after consulting about 100 stakeholders (Brookings 2011). Based on the call in the report, one piece of policy uptake was that some of the stakeholders observed the need for the Learning Metrics Task Force. This task force was co-convened with UNESCO's Institute for Statistics to answer three main questions: What is learning? How is learning measured? and How can measures be implemented? The task force was formed to answer these questions over an 18 month period. The task force found, after extensive consultation and research, that learning should be defined as covering seven domains (with many sub-domains) across early childhood, primary and post-primary level. Although this does not fully define quality learning, it serves as a good example of a research-based strategy that defines the outcome that a quality education should deliver. As such, the clear-cut definition enables Brookings to be a central multilateral channel with great impact, according to sources. In order to achieve the Post-2015 goal of improving learning outcomes, Brookings also mentions several other factors to accompany the work on measurement, such as quality teachers, sound school management, proper incentives, good head teachers, and a good curriculum.

#### **Global Partnership for Education:**

The Global Partnership for Education is the only multilateral partnership devoted to quality education for all children, according to their own web-history. Quality education and lifelong learning are observed as key factors to sustainable development. Investing in education is the single most effective



means of reducing poverty (GPE 2012). Girls and boys who learn to read, write and count will provide a better future for their families and countries (ibid). The main objective of GPE's monitoring and evaluation strategy is the development of an impact evaluation methodology to assess the impact of the GPE at the local and global level. GPE emphasizes the empowerment issue in educational thought, that improved education has a direct positive impact on many other areas in life. In short, in the GPE-perspective, education and teachers have the power to make the world a better place.

#### **Ministry of Education and Research, Norway:**

The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research form a professional contribution to Norway's work on global education. A wide range of contributions are essential for a Ministry as opposed to a think-tank. The Ministry work in various areas of development education giving priority to basic education, as well as ensuring secondary education and relevant competence development for sustainable development in countries. Still, the work is bound by no overall strategy with clear national priorities. This could both be a result of the lack of a national strategy, as well as a consequence of complex national organization of development aid (Ministry of Education and Research—Directorate of Education and Training, Ministry of Foreign Affairs with 2 ministers at the time of data collection, and Norad). A possible solution could be to challenge and work with the concept of quality as a basis for a new strategy. Development of teachers is seen as an obvious priority when talking about education quality at the classroom level.

#### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway:**

The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs receives advice from Norad, and work with the Minister of Foreign Affairs (and up until October 2013 with a Minister of Development) on Norwegian political directions and strategies bridging work of education and development aid. There is no common framework for education quality, although the evidence on poor quality has led to an uptake signalling a need to work more closely on issues related to learning as an important factor. Development of teachers is seen as crucial, as well as aligning aid given to education quality with an overall plan for the budget. So far there is no plan for working directly on issues of quality, except the new signals to take a global leadership role in education. Given the direction of the Post-2015 agenda on education quality and student learning, the focus on teachers seems relevant to future work. Also, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is signalling an approach to politics in this area that acknowledges the change in receiving countries from low-income to middle-income, and the change of focus from between-lands to within-lands.

#### **Save the Children, Norway:**

As a non-governmental organization with a high status in Norway (Killengreen Revold 2013), Save the Children are working mainly from a pedagogical perspective. In their work on education, the ambitions of quality is naturally incorporated. This work on quality has been overlooked at the political level (cf. UN 2010). There has been a focus on indirect measures such as school structures and teacher recruitment – less on how relevant the pedagogical program is to student learning. Save the Children seem to be observing the shift from a broader view on education towards a narrow, outcome-oriented measures as foreign to the traditional ways the organization works. Even though all partners seem to agree that quality is important, the difference in how "important" is measured might be critical. Working on quality in education demands a higher investment in academic competence, and extra effort in work with receiving countries. To answer to this challenge, Save the Children Norway has developed a diagnostic system called QLE – quality learning environment – also measuring literacy, but outcome is placed within the frame of educational processes where teacher competence is considered crucial.

#### **UNESCO:**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, a specialized agency to the United Nations, does purposely not operate with a specific definition of quality education but see

teacher development as crucial in the Post-2015 agenda. The reason is the acknowledgement that the field is complex, and should be seen in the perspective of each country and each context. UNESCO's work to support research in comparative education suggest an alternative to working with universal indicators, and finding a way to assist countries with diagnostic tools to develop their own definition of quality. One example is the report *Cross-national studies of the quality of education: Planning their design and managing their impact* (Ross and Genevois 2008).

#### **UNICEF:**

In a working paper *Defining Quality in Education*, UNICEF suggests quality education to include indicators on learners, learning environments, content, teachers instructional methods and relevant educational goals (UNICEF 2000). A current definition of quality would come from the child friendly school (CFS) approach (UNICEF 2009a) This is both a model (there are 580 000 CFS's) and an approach (83 countries have adopted standards based on CFS). One of the key pillars is quality/school effectiveness is the teacher. The 2009 CFS evaluation found that although the CFS approach had a positive impact on many aspects of a child's experience of education (safer schools, water and sanitation, better understanding of protection issues, teacher training etc. i.e. better quality learning environments), it has been difficult to ascertain a measureable impact on student learning (UNICEF 2009b). This is not to suggest that student learning has not happened, but rather to suggest that the impact of UNICEF's interventions on learning have not been measured. This finding is in keeping with various other global pieces of evidence that suggest that whilst certain inputs are necessary, the correlation between inputs and student outcomes is not particularly strong.

#### **World Bank:**

The World Bank is an international financial institution providing loans to develop countries to reduce poverty. Analyses of cost-benefit of education have a long history in the economics literature. A focus on the teacher has been emphasized since the Hanushek 1971 article analyzing teacher characteristics and gain in student achievement (Hanushek 1971). Studies have established that spending on education is an investment with a return. Conclusions about education's contributions to productivity are well established. The literature counts hundreds of studies that estimate the economic benefits of investments in education. The link to growth is especially critical. After establishing the link between education and growth in the 1960s, the causal association came under attack in recent years. Adding the dimension of quality seen as students' cognitive ability has been judged to re-establish the link between education and economic growth (Hanushek and Woessmann 2007). The World Bank is working on educational quality through programs such as the SABER Systems Approach for Better Education Results. Even though the focus on the teacher is present, the main focus on quality is not methodologically linking specific subject-related and pedagogical aspects of teaching to the same indicators on learning (World Bank 2011a).

## **2.5 Summary and recommendations**

There are clear variations as to how the different informants and their organization consider and approach the discussion on the concept of quality: Some have a substantial and well-developed definition setting a global agenda, some consciously do not want to define it as they see it relative to each context and each member of the organization, while some would probably have had a definition if political signals had been clarified. Figure 3 below attempts to map out some of the variations with the framework presented in section 2.3.

Relevance/Quality	Indirect	Direct
<b>Universal</b>	<i>Input measures; access, retention</i> <i>School leadership indicators</i> Save the Children, Norway UNICEF	<i>Instructional indicators</i> <i>International skills,</i> <i>competence-indicators</i> World Bank Brookings Institute
<b>Contextual</b>	<i>Each pupil's precondition</i> <i>Learning environment</i> UNESCO	<i>National content-indicators</i> GPE Ministry of Education and Research Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Figure 3: Partners' variations in defining the relationship between educational quality and student learning that may influence Norad's strategy work for Norway taking a global leadership role in the work towards education for all**

According to the estimations of the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report, at least 250 million primary-school-age children around the world are not able to read, write or count well enough to meet minimum learning standards. This includes children who have spent at least four years in school, i.e. fulfilling part of the access or input measures (UNESCO 2012). The question is which part of "quality" may be most efficient in improving this situation. What seems to be clear from our informants is that to take a global leadership role in general entails a research based political strategy in order to negotiate and lead work along with strong donors and global partners of educational development, a clear plan for engaging in and assessing the strategic processes of change, and a resource evaluation to examine the possible gap between necessary pedagogical competence as intention and reality (cf. section 2.1).

Although all the organizations included in this analysis comprise work that may be categorized as both universal and contextual relevance as well as indirect and direct quality measures, figure 3 main point is to illustrate that there is a great deal of variation in the way Norad's partners work with the topic. Therefore, Norad's request for obtaining a "current most consolidated definition of education quality within the context of education and development and its key elements" is not a valid research question for such a short study before there is a clear political and institutionalized plan for international aid ahead on the relationship between education quality and student learning.

*NIFU recommends that Norad reviews relevant positions on education quality among partners, and develop clearer priorities for Norway's development aid in order to advice the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in such a global leadership. Norad's advice to a strategy should include clear priorities and link priorities to specific contexts. In this work, the choice of channels should be reflected and clearly reasoned, and there should be a monitoring system for how channels work to distribute Norwegian aid according to the Norwegian strategy.*

## 3 Key challenges for educational quality

The aim of this chapter is to identify a set of key challenges that need to be addressed in order to accompany the work on education quality and learning in countries. This aim was initially meant to build on the former chapter which should “describe, in a simplified version, the current most consolidated definition of education quality within the context of education and development and its key elements.” As shown, although there is an agreement that quality deserves a wide definition and that both productive and meaningful learning is the main outcome, “quality” is not self-evident when it comes to implementation efforts (cf. also Biseth 2013). This caution against too simplistic understandings of educational quality pointed out in section 1.3 led NIFU to use the inductive mapping generated in Chapter 2 as a deductive framework for this chapter. Recommendations are listed at the end of the chapter.

### 3.1 Post-2015 challenges: Teachers and project monitoring

All organizations we have gathered data from highlight teacher recruitment, development and attainment as the single most crucial factor for enhancing quality in student learning towards the post-2015 agenda. In one way this is not surprising, as research clearly indicate that the teacher is the single most important factor to student learning (e.g. Gates Foundation 2013). The element of surprise is still there, however, as working with teachers, teaching and instructional development is a priority that is very demanding in many ways, not least financially. First, the costs are high both in terms of training teachers according to the current level of knowledge of effective instruction (depending on what the strategic aim is for teacher development in each context). Also, in order to train teachers there is a need for sufficient qualified pedagogical teacher training personell. In order to ensure a research-base for teacher effectiveness so as to monitor if development aid has lead to changes (as mentioned by several to be part of the Post-2015 agenda) research personell with pedagogical competence is needed. Also, pedagogical competence will be a crucial factor in the development and implementation of political strategies as the shift in the Post-2015 agenda is not only to “count heads”, but involves interpretations of the deep pedagogical processes of how instruction and learning affect each other in the classroom. To guide and support such advanced work in a sustainable perspective a national strategy is crucial to set a research-based direction, uphold a momentum and measure new results. As of today, Norway does not have such a strategy developed according to our informants. This was seen as challenging for Norway’s work with low- and middle income countries/economies even before the new governmental decree with the ambition to take a global leadership role.

The following presentation of findings goes one step further in illustrating that operating with a clear awareness of different definitions of education qualities (Figure 3) may enhance Norad’s capacity to assess and work more efficiently with partners on key challenges in the Post-2015 agenda, as well as

advise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a national strategy that is sensitive to the monitoring need global leadership entails. Partners are presented in alphabetical order.

#### **Brookings Institute:**

The Brookings institute emphasize the challenge to track global progress on education and learning, and developing corresponding actions to improve such measurements. Ensuring education in conflict-affected areas will continue to be a key challenge Post-2015, as half of children out-of-school continue to be in conflict-affected areas. The first challenge for these children is getting them into school. As they come into overburdened school systems, issues related to quality naturally need to be addressed from the bottom up. This includes basic efforts, such as ensuring provision of basic materials. Education for disaster-affected children will become more of an issue based on projections related to climate change. This is already an important issue, but is likely to be an increasing issue that merits greater attention. Post-primary education for girls in many African countries and in some countries outside of Africa is another key challenge. On the face of it, this seem to be issues related to participation and cultural barriers. According to Brookings, however, this is also linked to school quality. Poor school quality, and school environments that are not gender sensitive, fail to create a sufficient incentive for families to keep girls in school. How to ensure and track universal education, such as explained in Brookings definition of quality in chapter 2 under such conditions is a key challenge ahead.

#### **Global Partnership for Education:**

The key challenge related to the Post-2015 agenda is to contribute to an increase in basic skills, especially reading and writing. Global Partnership in Education is a member of the Learning Metrics group, that contribute to develop direct and universal indicators for student learning. When it comes to measures the aim is to increase the number of children learning and demonstrating mastery of basic literacy and numeracy skills by Grade 3 by 2015. Another key challenge is to coordinate good quality education for all children in a systematic way everywhere, so they fulfill their potential and contribute to their societies. This view on key challenges is aligned with GPE's own description of how they view quality education, cf. chapter 2.

#### **Ministry of Education and Research, Norway:**

Some of the key challenges ahead in the work towards the Post-2015 agenda may be to define the concept of quality in education in order to have clearer political priorities in Norway. Key challenges vary on different levels: There are reasonably good knowledge on early childhood success criteria – children who attend Kindergarten and receive a meal-plan do well in school. However, if they live in an area where the input quality is good, e.g. where there are good pre-school programs, then maybe they have a good school as well. It is difficult to do an added-value analysis to see if the aid from Norway is the single factor contributing. It is a key challenge ahead to establish systematic quality assurance of Norway's contributions. Another challenge is to clarify the priority areas between basic education and a worklife model. There might be a conflict between quality and relevance in educational aid – or between quality as transformation and quality as fitness for purpose in Figure 4. It seems unclear if there is a priority to focus on basic skills in basic education, or lifelong learning measures, or if there should be a priority between the two. The third key challenge is to recruit well qualified teachers, teachers who are trained in using student-centered instructional methods. Political and financial frames to meet this challenge is crucial. One example is Botswana, where 30% of the workforce are estimated lost due to HIV/AIDS each year.

#### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway:**

As there is now a broader and more informed understanding of educational quality than some years ago, the key challenge ahead seems to be to increase the level of student learning in partner countries. Access and the focus on basic education has been a Norwegian priority that has matched

the international dialogue, just as the qualitative elements of education have received less attention. To work with learning ahead on the political agenda seems to involve clearer priorities on what learning is – in its context, and how it may be measured. This is related to teacher training. The signals seem to go in the direction of the new government ambitions for Norway, that a global leadership role entails that Norwegian aid should have a better knowledge-base to assess results of input factors in different channels: What kind of value does the education produce for the learners? Selection of appropriate channels for Norway's priorities need to develop according with and in relation to the agenda of the international and national debate on education and foreign affairs as a whole. Cooperation with multilateral partners has been a priority recent years. Schooling must have an effect, and it cannot be measured only indirect and contextual, as numbers of access and retention. In cooperation with multilateral partners there is a need to understand the challenge to measure learning outcomes and relevance. In other parts of administrative work, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has formal documents indicating how to work on key challenges ahead. As education was not a priority in the Post-2015 process in Norway the past few years, no formal (public) documents exists on the topic of Norway's strategy in working with global and/or development education.

### **Save the Children, Norway:**

When there is a need to prioritize, Save the Children Norway has a strategy of using instruments that are already developed and tested. Save the Children UK/USA has a focus on instruments measuring learning achievement, while Save the Children Norway has a stronger focus on the QLE (Quality Learning Environment) framework, which is more holistic in terms of the quality concept (e.g. Save the Children 2011). Save the Children's strategy towards the Post-2015 agenda is to tackle the key challenge of improving learning more indirect than with learning measures alone. The approach still has the element of measurement as part of the diagnostic tool. When Save the Children Norway works in receiving countries, there is an analysis of learning environment, learning outcomes, and assessment of measures. General well-being, health, relevance and quality are interconnected measures. A key challenge seems to be to monitor, assess, and apply common indicators of quality, and ensure that the qualifications to perform this pedagogical research and development work is present at the local level in countries.

### **UNESCO:**

A key challenge is to hold a focus on the tradition of democracy and civic education as part of quality education for all. There are examples that a single focus on literacy measures contributes to children dropping out of the school system. This is a real challenge ahead in situations where literacy tests are taken in another language than the students' mother tongue. Especially when combined with learning challenges in groups of children from linguistic minorities. When they have realized that there are other skills at stake than the more practical that they master, they may drop-out. It seems this perspective is considered in the PISA for development instrument, but not in all value-added models where the teacher and school may pay the price for unreliable instruments. To coordinate this work is challenging. There are different understandings of quality between UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank in terms of working with Post-2015. The main disagreement is if there is to be one global education plan or a framework for contextual contributions. The positive aspect of the challenge is the clear message that education is receiving great attention (UN 2010). There are more key challenges – but the main one is concerned with how to recruit enough qualified teachers. This is the area where Norway has made contributions on the international agenda earlier (cf. Teacher Task Force.) In this work the Ministry of Education and Research played an important professional role in addition to the expertise on development work by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **UNICEF:**

The key challenges for work ahead is knowing what works, and to build up the evidence base on education quality. The education development partner community including UNICEF is now working together to improve the robustness around education evidence. There is a need for greater

accountability and transparency in country discussions on the reality of learning, within education systems and between schools and communities (cf. Harry Patrinos 2013). A third key challenge is recognising the importance of early childhood and early intervention (nutrition and stimulation) and programming effectively for this. However, all data we have gathered in this study point to the fact that all three challenges are underpinned by one key challenge: Systematic quality assured data-driven policies for learning. UNICEF has co-chaired the learning metrics taskforce, where a priority challenge has been to keep the momentum of this work going, at the country level and at the global level to influence Post-2015.

#### **World Bank:**

The World Bank is a strong supporter of the Global Partnership for Education goals, and co-funded the Educational for All Fast Track Initiative in 2002 (leading to the GPE establishment in 2011). The Bank supports the GPE-approaches as the primary vehicle for accelerating progress toward quality, universal primary education, and other GPE goals. The World Bank also supports GPE through specific operations in almost 90 countries worldwide through multidimensional efforts to uphold the millenium goals and meet the challenge to improve primary school access and equity, educational quality and learning outcomes; to improve the dropout and retention rates of girls, as well as their learning outcomes; to help education systems cope with HIV/AIDS, to promote early childhood development; to protect GPE prospects in fragile states. Another challenge is to strengthen support for nonformal education, which helps young people develop the skills necessary to improve their opportunities and transition to the labor market.

### **3.2 Summary and recommendations**

With organizations having their own interests in quality development (cf. chapter 2) the link between definitions of quality and key challenges becomes apparent in the context of identifying key challenges ahead. One example is an organization like the World Bank that we suggested had a definition of quality oriented towards universal and direct measures. In this chapter, we see that this organization define Post-2015 challenges as a financial agenda relating formal and non-formal learning in the labor market. To choose an organization from another suggested category focusing on contextual and indirect measures, UNESCO emphasizes the maintenance of focus on the tradition of democracy and civic education as part of quality education for all as a key challenge.

These two challenges belong to different educational perspectives, and we suggest that it is essential for Norad to map out such tensions and contradictions explicitly in work on education quality. In this sense, the thematic list mentioned in section 2.2. (Norad 2011) is not sufficient to provide public transparency (cf. Killengreen Revold 2013), nor to set a direction for advising the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on a global leadership role towards Post-2015 (Norwegian government 2013a; 2013b). Our findings, with the restriction of being based on a short study and limited data base, indicate a somewhat fragmented Norwegian policy field, where efficiency may be downplayed due to the complex organization around Norad from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (two ministers<sup>2</sup>) and the Ministry of Education and Research.

*NIFU recommends that Norad's work on key challenges ahead includes a larger study on the topic of teacher and teaching quality and project monitoring with a broad and representative expert panel of private donors, policymakers and -advisors, researchers, and representatives from NGOs.*

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<sup>2</sup> The minister of development will cease to be a separate position as of October 2013 with the change of government.

## 4 Successful interventions for improving quality

The topic for this chapter is successful interventions for improving quality in education based on Norad's work with partners distributing Norwegian development aid. Recommendations are listed at the end of the chapter.

### 4.1 Determining successful interventions in educational practices

Determining successful interventions in educational practices indicating impact of Norad's work requires a national strategy to measure the impact against when the topic is evaluation of governmental aid (cf. Vedung 2010). This study does not have the prerequired conditions for obtaining such an analysis, as a national strategy on educational quality and student learning is not formulated (cf. section 2.1).

Determining successful interventions indicating impact of Norad's work through partners also requires information of the situation in a given context before and after the intervention. The method for identifying successful interventions share similarities with other methods often used in educational research, in particular value-added analysis that aims to isolate "best practices" (cf. section 1.3). For this study Norad specified a need to "identify best practices and the most value added of the interventions discussed that would be considered important to replicate in primary/basic- and secondary education in a programme and sector wide approach." (cf. Terms of Reference by Norad 2013).

Value-added analysis is a method used in educational research in order to isolate the contribution, or value added, to students learning outcome provided by a specific teacher, teacher methodology in a given subject or within a school's instructional regime. The method is considered to be fairer than simply comparing student's achievement scores without considering potentially confounding context variables like past performance or parental socio-economic status (SES). The crucial element in the value-added method is that students' test scores or other comparable measures of students' learning outcome have to be measured at least at two different points in time. The value-added method is increasingly used both in educational research and among school leaders across various countries and school systems (i.e. Hattie 2009, Hægeland & Kirkebøen 2008, Opheim et al 2013, Hanushek 1971; 2013). However, recognizing successful interventions for improving quality in education through comparison of the situation before and after intervention is challenging and seems to be less common.



As emphasized in chapter 1, the complexity of developing or selecting the appropriate value-added model clearly indicates that results of value-added measurement should not be considered as the only source of indicators for making high-stakes decisions (cf. Kim and Lalancette 2013). Citing Braun et al 2010, they link value-added to best practices by stating: “In some instances, the institution identified as ‘best’ based on a value- added assessment may not be regarded as ‘best’ with respect to other criteria, because the value- added model gives greater weight to standardised test scores and quantified information than to other indicators” (ibid). Other reports may also be used to determine the impact of system input, i.e. the effects of Norad’s work through partners. In order to conduct such a review, a political strategy is required or a research design that allows for generating data on practices.

The need for better quality assurance and a clear strategy (narrative) to drive work was also emphasized in a Post-2015 context where Norad was participating last Fall. At the MDG seminar where Norad, Fafo and UNDP were presenting, Jon Pedersen discussed the general problems with measuring MDGs across countries (Pedersen 2012). He cautioned about the problems of low reliability in such projects, and underlined that in Post-2015 the challenge will be to be more accurate in impact studies, but also to learn how to choose the right target of measurement at the outset (e.g. through strategy evaluation). At the same seminar it was acknowledged that there are several challenges related to manipulation of data, as presenters at the MDG seminar had all heard of cases where data has been manipulated (ibid).

Key specialists leading Norad’s partner organizations that NIFU has interviewed seem to agree that there is a need not only to set strategic goals (cf. chapter 2), but that if they are to be achieved there is a need for systematic independent monitoring over time (cf. chapter 3). The fact that none of these elements are present in today’s system indicates that the potential for identifying best practices and value added for how partners to Norad work in distributing Norwegian development aid is impossible.

## **4.2 What successful interventions indicate impact of Norad’s work through partners?**

The statistics on Norwegian development assistance from 1960 until today provide information of Norad’s financial support divided by country, sector, partner and year. The educational sector is one of eight sectors specified. It is further divided in five subgroups: Education and research; Education in general; Basic education; Secondary education; Post-secondary education. Partners are divided in six subgroups: Multilateral organisations; Norwegian non-governmental organisations; International and local non-governmental organisations; Public sector in Norway/other donors; Public sector in recipient country; and Private sector. Quality assurance in grant management is described in several documents and guidelines developed by Norad. The publications describe procedures and standard working methods for quality assurance, and are based on international policies and strategies. In this sense they can be used as important tools for results management. The main purpose of the guides and guidelines are to make the Norwegian support more efficient in contributing to Norad’s Partners’ development results (Norad 2011a). While Norad has developed written documentation for quality assurance in grant management, similar guidelines for ensuring quality in education is not developed. To what extent the key elements for quality in education (Norad 2011, cf. Figure 1) are followed up through outcome measures from each development project is therefor less clear.

We have still asked all informants for input on this topic. All organizations we have gathered data from highlight the great efforts done in the field, and have several examples of “good practices” in countries and within sector-programs (see sections 3.1 and 4.3). Not surprisingly different partners to Norad offer documentation that aligns “evidence” with their own definition of quality as a possible indication on the way ahead for solving what they themselves see as key challenges in the Post-2015 agenda. This is not to claim that the field is completely relativistic, but that this is not an usual outcome of a study that has an inductive approach as its starting point. If there had been a national strategy to mirror data up against, the result might have provided a more stringent impression more readily

available to global analysis and strategy development. In light of the discussion in chapter 2 and 3, interventions to be disseminated could be analyzed and quality assured, at least to assess what kind of “quality” they are advocating and how these studies may inform a Norwegian political strategy. This seems yet unclear and will demand much more rigorous work than this study allows for within a frame of 35 days.

### **4.3 Coordinating successful interventions**

Informants seemed to agree that there is a need to develop a better systematic approach for quality assuring interventions before giving them a status of scientific “best practice” and disseminate them in the field. As seen in the previous chapter partners are currently taking initiatives to build databases on education quality in a developmental context. So far the challenge is to get constructive examples on quality like the examples on enrollment like “Schools as Zones of Peace” in Nepal (Save the Children international) into a format that can be classified within a common framework.

Quality assurance in grant management is described in several documents and guidelines developed by Norad. The publications describe procedures and standard working methods for quality assurance, and are based on international policies and strategies. In this sense they can be used as important tools for results management and coordination of successful interventions. The main purpose of the guidelines is to make the Norwegian support more efficient in contributing to Norad’s Partners’ development results (Norad 2011a).

In the following we provide an overview of work done to coordinate successful interventions mentioned by Norad partners in the relevant dialogue arenas. Partners are presented in alphabetical order.

#### **Brookings Institute:**

A number of strategies for coordinate interventions to address the learning crisis are laid out in the Global Compact on Learning Report (Brookings 2011). All but one of these strategies was taken up in the UN Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative concept note. One of Brookings’ nonresident fellows, Jenny Perlman Robinson, is currently working on a study entitled Millions Learning. This is a study which seeks to identify approaches to producing learning outcomes for children and youth, especially the marginalized, which are working at scale or have the potential to be scaled. This study will be based on case studies and will utilize an international advisory board. The process will be important so that the stakeholders involved can together build knowledge in this area. This study responds to findings from a survey conducted in the Global Impact on Learning donor network. The network consists of 60+ multi- and bi-lateral organizations, corporation, and foundations that the Center for Universal Education facilitates. The study found that the greatest information need of the network was related on how to effectively go to scale to produce learning outcomes.

#### **Global Partnership for Education:**

When it comes to successful interventions, there is not yet a systematic clearinghouse structure enabling a collection and dissemination of best practices or other important interventions across work in organizations. The types of successful interventions that can be measured are the goal attainment of the millenium goals. Global Partnership for Education is working on developing better systems for monitoring changes in outcomes (e.g. GPE 2012).

#### **Ministry of Education and Research, Norway:**

Similarly to Norad, the Ministry of Education and Research has a long experience in working with countries. There are several successful interventions mentioned in countries, many of them from Nepal which is a country receiving a large percent of development aid from Norway. In Vietnam the basic education has proven very high at a general level, the children have learned to learn. Such stories are examples leading to arguments of global learning measures. Then there are several other

“good examples” indicating that a more contextual approach could be more effective in other settings. There is not much to inform on successful interventions, as the Ministry of Education and Research does not have a mandate or a budget to actually do developmental work, which is UNESCO’s and OECD’s role to a certain degree. The ministry is cooperating with Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at an administrative level, e.g. in preparations for GPE or UNICEF meetings. There has also been cooperation of efforts for the Global Monitoring Report. Cooperation with the University of Oslo and the Norwegian Refugee Council are also ways of learning from interventions. However, there are limitations to assess the value of transfer of knowledge in this context, as there is no research concluding which quality measures are possible to disseminate to a development context. The context of development is also changing itself. One example mentioned in another setting was to look closer at the East African Community, which would probably ensure more relevance to some agencies in certain situations. There is little knowledge if the multilateral channels (or the bilateral cooperations) yield the largest outcome in terms of quality – at least as long as quality remains decoupled from any national strategy. Norad’s expertise to translate academic insight to a development expertise is unique. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is contextualizing it within the general political priorities, and as such this could be a good platform for working with a clear national strategy on how Norway is to take a global leadership role in education.

### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway**

There is no systematic work on a database of successful interventions, but if there was evidence the channels were not meeting Norway’s expectations it would be possible to change the priority of channels. One example is the assessments in the fields of teacher education, gender and quality. There is a wide agreement that a high-stake involvement in education entails working on content quality and the conditions around. There is, however, a need to get better advice on the quality of the Norwegian work. There is a need for better research-based baseline reports. The reason why Norway is cooperating with multilateral partners, is because it is a political priority at the moment. The multilateral partners are more efficient than one country alone, and channels are chosen when it is obvious that they can perform development aid in a more efficient and sustainable way than Norway alone. When it comes to Norway’s coordinating work on a global scale, there is also cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norad and the Directorate for Education and Training. One example is the current intervention based on the OECD study *PISA for Development*. In this context, the political-administrative divide between education and development politics is bridged, because PISA for Development is about curricula and pedagogical quality in developing contexts. Based on our data, it seems there is room for a more flexible discussion on priorities ahead when it comes to quality. When it comes to gender and quality education, the priority channels of UNICEF seems to be functioning well. On the theme of education quality in fragile situation, the NGOs seem to be acknowledged resources for Norway abroad. Quality is a small part of the UNESCO work, and the budget is very low. It has been mentioned that there are small chances for an intervention budget on quality in itself according to current strategies. Such work is usually done within UNESCO and the Ministry of Education and Research. To increase the work on teacher education may be a more concrete way into the work on education quality Post-2015. It is also a measure of quality generally agreed upon between partners. Still, the priorities on Norway’s work must come from the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is a political priority.

### **Save the Children, Norway:**

In order to find models for interventions, Save the Children offices often visit each other to learn directly from each others cases. The Uganda and Zimbabwe offices is one recent example, where neighboring case-models are used as an intervention-design rather than universal measures of successful classroom instruction. Interventions that are especially valued are intervention programs aiming to improve pedagogical integration of disabled children in these contexts. Another country that provide good cases is Nepal, but there is no systematic overview of how cases are quality assured, what indicators they provide evidence on in terms of classroom learning, nor how these interventions

are transferred and coordinated on a global scale. There are many meetings between partners like Save the Children, Plan, World Vision where case studies are presented. Someone suggested that if collected and coordinated, all the comparative knowledge presented in these fora would have been a unique databank for work on successful interventions. The work on structuring knowledge and experiences and spreading ideas is not well structured. It is very demanding to keep the overview of this field. To learn from other partners' interventions, Save the Children also look to the UNICEF-system. When it comes to strategic coordination efforts, they could improve the cooperation with other NGOs. It is possible to use the Save the Children diagnostic tool QLE (mentioned in chapter 3) as a search portal based on indicators. In each rubric there could be links to best practices as they accumulate. It is, however, work that would need a lot of resources to accomplish. If there is a new intervention, the baseline-report must be externally evaluated. Self-evaluation is not enough to quality assure baselines. A lot of baseline-reports are academically weak in this field, while demands for quality are increasing. Interventions related to quality in learning outcomes is a complicated academic task requiring formal training. Save the Children arrange for many discussions on what constitutes quality in interventions. One example of an intervention is the text-book project in Uganda. As there are no authentic reading material in their mother tongue, Save the Children help teachers write down local stories, have students illustrate, and then they print them up. Interventions always seem different, because the measures are local, not universal. Another example of a country case responding to the QLE-framework, is Cambodia where schools are moving together with the students when students have to look after the cows. Then the content of education has to involve that topic to make it relevant. The indicators of psycho-social and physical in the QLE-tool must be met.

#### **UNESCO:**

UNESCO promotes access to good-quality education as a human right at the level of the learner and at the level of the learning system. UNESCO interventions on democratic skills and citizenship are challenging to measure with global indicators at the level of the learner, which is the focus in this report. There are more interventions measured at the level of the learning system. At the moment, donors tend to support channels where they can observe outcome, and the focus has been on measures not necessarily aligned with UNESCO's qualitative conceptualization of quality instruction and learning. There are several interesting initiatives that seem to be possible to coordinate with the UNESCO ambition. One is the QLE-model developed by Save the Children that attempts to capture quality of broader activities, proving both the pitfalls and benefits of indicator-measurements. There are, however, no formal coordination between the larger actors in the field that allows for a qualified analysis of how successful interventions can be assessed on context-specific indicators.

#### **UNICEF:**

It is difficult to measure success, because of the general lack of learning data. In UNICEF's perspective identifying success means being serious about measuring what is valued (learning) rather than proxy quality indicators. This is why UNICEF is supporting the 'Learning Metric Task Force' work. When it comes to successful interventions, UNICEF has discussed whether to conduct a portfolio review, serving as a capacity building tool at the same time. In such a review it would be possible to identify promising examples of interventions that are making a difference (if there is data to support this). The assumption from UNICEF visits and reports so far is that there are many good practices; e.g. teacher mentoring in Uganda, reading at the right age campaigns in Latin America, work on equity and quality in Eastern Europe, support to strengthening learning assessments in many countries. There is, however, only a small piece of work to consolidate this and embed shifts in terms of better use and generation of robust evidence. There is no agreement whether this is the right approach, but the initial suggestions seem to go in the direction of a) agree on an overarching framework – something like the one in the UK Department for International Development's recent position paper, including looking at the strength of the evidence; b) review the portfolio against the framework; c) help country programmes – and the organisation – adopt key recommendations as relevant in each context. The other key piece of work UNICEF is doing which relates to gathering evidence on

education quality, is a new approach to innovation in education. This is under development and discussion internally and with some externals. The basic approach is one in which UNICEF scan for good ideas, assess them, incubate the best ideas and share results. It does not just refer to improving learning outcomes, although this is central. It could also look at things like system strengthening through use of technology for example, or new ways of supporting rural teachers. This is not formalized as yet. In such work, Norway would be a welcome partner in the implementation of the Learning Metric Task Force recommendations at various levels, for example in the development of a portfolio review, working with UNICEF on a wider innovation approach.

#### **World Bank:**

The World Bank has developed online databases for searches on impact evaluations. The focus on results is at the heart of their approach to delivering programs and policy advice with partners in low-income and middle-income countries. Spring 2010 The World Bank's Open Data Initiative was established. The primary goal was to make existing datasets freely available and accessible. In 2012, the Open Data initiative consisted of over 8000 development indicators with project activities geo-coded. Although significant in interface and scope, the indicators are not specifically designed for measurements of pedagogical quality of teacher instruction linked to student achievement, nor for the need to explore how different instructional regimes work to improve student achievement. To research this part of the Post-2015 agenda would require multilevel methods to validate causal inferences on a complex data set over a long time period (Roe and Klette 2010).

## **4.4 Summary and recommendations**

In this chapter we have argued that it is impossible to determine what is a successful intervention as a measure of the impact of Norad's work for Norway through partners. The reason is that there is no national strategy to measure the data against, and that this study does not have the design necessary to conduct an examination of practices over time to establish pre- and postanalyses. In that sense, it is also difficult to provide a recommendation to where the research gap might be, as it is to be located on a non-existing map.

A number of strategies for coordinate interventions to address the learning crisis are laid out in the Global Compact on Learning Report.

Key specialists to Norad seem to agree that there is a need not only to set goals for the Post-2015 agenda to enhance learning output, but that if these goals are to be achieved there is a need for systematic independent monitoring. All organizations we have gathered data from highlight the great efforts done in the field, and have several examples of "good practices" in countries and sector-programs. The reason they are not elaborated is that they are 1) not scientifically quality assured in practice as value added (e.g. Save the Children's QLE diagnostic tool 2013); 2) not focusing directly on the pedagogical processes of learning in school clearly related to different aspects of teacher instructional practices in specific subjects and student competences in a sustainable perspective that includes learning as an effective and meaningful practice (e.g. the World Bank's SABER studies (2011) seen in relation to e.g. the MET-study sponsored by the Gates Foundation 2013); 3) not tested for model dissemination side-effects across a variety of contexts and scales (e.g. Brookings Learning Metrics or UNICEF's Child-Friendly Schools project) or 4) not put into practice yet (e.g. OECD PISA for development).

*NIFU recommends that Norad develops clearer priorities for commissioning research on quality teaching and quality teacher education as it impacts student learning, or for commissioning reviews of research. If the priority to focus on teachers and teaching quality is selected, such as suggested in interviews, the areas in need of more knowledge is fair and effective measures of effective teaching. As there are no value-added studies combining the educational/developmental aspects to indicate what these changes should be on the level of*

*the learner (e.g. the relationship between local curricula, mother tongue textbooks and student grades), there is a general need to establish well-defined pedagogical measures before research gaps can be identified on a value scale of what is more or less important.*

## 5 Conclusions

As we move forwards towards the United Nations' Post-2015 agenda, there is a need for Norway to take a position when it comes to the lack of a formal agreement on how educational quality and student learning is best improved in low- and middle income countries. In this report this unclear situation is reflected in the approach of study, as well as in the recommendations. The report presents a set of recommendations for how Norad may advise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on education quality and student learning as a new development priority. The given goals of the study have been to explore strategies and activities aiming to enhance education quality and student learning related to the Post-2015 agenda; and to evaluate the state-of-the-art of value-added interventions that have shown successful results in terms of learning.

### 5.1 Norway and the Post-2015 agenda

Measures related to the instructional efforts to enhance student learning is judged by all informants to be central in the Post-2015 agenda. The Post-2015 agenda will therefore represent a marked shift from priorities of preconditions in favour of a priority of content (cf. Figure 1), and a corresponding shift from indirect to direct measures (cf. Chapter 2).

In order to take leadership in the global agenda for more effective learning for all, our data inform us that Norad should take more control of their placement in an unclear situation where the Post-2015 agenda is moving towards a clearer pedagogical emphasis on what happens in classrooms, rather than on the structural aspects. What channels are to be chosen is a matter to be aligned with a new political strategy on education. In order to be in control of Norway's contributions to this Post-2015 priority, core pedagogical changes should be planned, performed and assessed by those formally trained to understand instructional processes and products in classrooms. We recommend that Norad consults the Ministry of Education and Research to better be prepared for this crucial upcoming change on the international arenas, including work in countries, if the aim is to be part of the global leadership.

Our data are clear on another aspect of this work: Working to develop quality assurance systems for education quality will be a high priority in the Post-2015 agenda. Up until now there has been a significant focus on input measures such as enrollment strategies, teacher salary studies etc. The work ahead will demand a rigorous determination to generate knowledge on measures of quality schooling (e.g. OECD TALIS indicators) and measures of student learning (e.g. PISA for development indicators). As this project was too limited to perform a thorough scientific review of the situation, the input from the interviews were essential in determining the Post-2015 work ahead.

As shown in chapter 3, there is no current single definition of education quality as it is stakeholder relative. In order for Norad to develop or contribute to develop systems of systematic monitoring of content and outcome indicators that may inform us on the effects of Norwegian participation in global, sector and country activities it is a necessary prerequisite to develop a definition (or a set of definitions). In order for Norway to take a leading role in developing quality assurance systems, it is necessary to develop a strategic framework of quality.

## **5.2 Principles for work with education quality in a development context**

Our informants give us very scarce information about value-added interventions that were successful in improving the quality of education (See chapter 4). The main reason is a pronounced lack of studies with a defined and quality assured baseline study that focus on student learning. Value added assessment in education aims to measure e.g. teacher contribution in a predefined period by comparing student test scores in a prespecified area of study with the scores of the same students in previous school levels. To isolate what aspects of a teachers work that contributes to systematic changes in the same group of students on a yearly basis is not only difficult to perform without a research background (which several of the people writing baseline reports lack according to our informants), but it requires stability in a group of attending students over year. In several school settings in low- and middle-income countries this precondition for performing value-added studies is not present, our informants tell us.

When our informants try to assess the effect of interventions they do so without knowing very little about the status of conditions before the intervention. Most cost-benefit studies suggested by Norad and other partners to Norad still focused on the current MDG goal on education of enrollment and structural factors for educational quality, and in general there seemed to be little insight into the scientific demands for this way of measuring instructional impact on student learning. That there is a weak empirically grounded basis is not surprising in itself as research is not the main job of many of the leaders we talked to. It is, however, still an important indication that much of the decisions taken on a systematic basis in this field is based more on experience and shifting political ideas than in other parts of the education sector. It could suggest a need to better combine Norway's knowledge and competence between Ministries, in the sense that Norad's expertise on development work is better informed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but that the Ministry of Education and Research is the better partner for grounding work on educational quality and student learning in an environment where the competence is higher on these issues.

Even when confronted with a definition of what such a study would look like at the level of classroom instruction, informants continued to point to former studies of structural factors which belong to the current MDG on educational enrollment or on systems perspectives rather than evidence at the classroom level. There was no valid knowledge base to perform an analysis on which measures of classroom activity is more effective for student learning over time than others, although some international organizations are currently developing this.

In order to expand the possibility to ensure a wider data-base, all informants were asked to provide examples of value-added studies they were using or had knowledge of in the work of their organization that explicitly showed the relation between instructional input and student learning. Informants were able to determine a large number of reports and articles that we had found through the desktop review, describing and analyzing input-oriented work on educational quality. There were, however, no systematically selected studies based on well-established criteria for what quality "is" that could assist in providing a scientific basis for an answer to what education quality would look like at the classroom level in developing countries. All other examples of work we found and heard about were impressive, moving and interesting, but should – according to Norad's goal of value-added status – receive no other status than "good examples" of effort. They do not tell us much of results in light of a scientific method. Due to this lack of research-based quality assured baseline studies it is also



impossible to point out in any robust manner which interventions will be most successful on the actual project level. Our informants shared this belief (Chapter 4).

Without structured and quality-assured review systems, our data point to the fact that interventions highlighted by different stakeholders to a large degree reflect their own definition of quality. NIFU suggests that Norad considers developing a strategy for this work that includes a more systematic and valid way of selecting work and disseminating results to the public, in order to make the process less subject to trends and political negotiations. This is also a method that will increase public transparency in the international distribution of the Norwegian budget if the aim is to change the political priorities towards a global leadership role.

Norway could aim to contribute with resources and competence through channels working to strengthen the validity of data and data control. What channels are to be chosen is a matter to be aligned with a new political strategy. Such a priority change as what is internationally given through the shift in focus on enrollment to instruction will require a new approach to work in Norad. While structural work related to education can be performed by many occupational groups, the core pedagogical changes should be planned, performed and assessed by those formally trained to understand instructional processes and products in classrooms. We recommend that Norad consult the Ministry of Education and Research to better be prepared for this crucial upcoming change on the international arenas if the aim is to be part of the global leadership.

### **5.3 Quality teaching as one possible field of priority**

If an ambition to take a global leadership role in the work towards education for all is to be a reality, there is a need for developing a stronger policy cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research at the governmental level, as well as with their respective subordinate agencies and with other national stakeholders. Such a strategic process to develop clearer priorities may lead to different foci. Based on this study, however, a strategic entry point for Norway in order to take leadership in the global agenda for more effective learning for all, seems to be through the work on quality teaching. This priority may build on earlier Norwegian contributions to the UNESCO Teacher Task Force for *Education For All*, where the effects of former contributions should be evaluated to assess which aspects of the work is deemed relevant in the current political setting. Norad has started to look into this part of educational quality in earlier advice to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but needs to move beyond the level of description and develop a much clearer strategy for ensuring a focus on teacher work to take a leadership position.

Norway could aim to contribute with resources and competence on teacher education, and teacher research related to student learning in a global context. To develop a knowledge base reflecting a multidimensional understanding of schooling, pedagogy and outcome indicators in basic education, we recommend that Norad coordinate their unique expertise with agencies associated with the Ministry of Education and Research. The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU) is one such agency set up to carry out cooperation on education. Furthermore, in the work to increase coordination of knowledge from impact studies on interventions relating teacher instruction and student learning, a potential agency for Norad to coordinate its efforts is the Norwegian Knowledge Center in Education.

NIFU recommends that Norad initiate work to assess what aspects of quality teaching should be prioritized in Norway's work ahead, as there is a sufficient high quality research available on this topic both in Norwegian and international educational research institutions. If there is not sufficient competence or resources in Norad to establish such basic research-based guidelines that enables a clear shift in priorities, Norad should consult national and international stakeholders and experts to ensure a comprehensive and consensus-based approach to new ways of spending the Norwegian budget on projects where there not only is a clear sense of the intentions but also a plan for ensuring results. As of today, our data suggest that Norad has a higher focus on work with intentions and

follow-up on projects, rather than on taking a determined stakeholder stance in ensuring a research-based evaluation of projects Norway contributes to.

## **5.4 A national strategy for a global leadership role in education?**

A review of literature, as well as an analysis of interviews with national and international partners to Norad, confirms that there is no current single interpretation of educational quality available, but that it is stakeholder relative. There seems to be a consensus on learning as a common denominator, but that each stakeholder has their own take on what this work on learning should look like. Brookings interprets the consensus as an agreement to measure progress with global indicators, while UNESCO points to an agreement to focus on a comprehensive and context-sensitive alignment of efforts. Norad has no clear standing on the agreement. In the work on this study Norad's partners claimed that future priorities would benefit from more rigorous national monitoring systems of Norwegian participation in the global agenda. The degree to which Norway needs to enhance the work on quality depends on the level of ambition. Taking the 2013 governmental decree as a guideline, the work to take a global leadership role in *Education for All* suggests a need for clearer priorities in order to put Norway as a more visible and ambitious partner globally.

It is challenging to determine the optimal level of necessary prerequisites and interventions in high-quality education without clarified political priorities for Norway's work. The definition of quality is not only a challenge in educational research, but also a shifting political priority as we see in the current shift of focus in the Post-2015 agenda. Based on the data available for this report, we find evidence of a systematic monitoring of quality indicators related to preconditions for learning. We find less evidence of systematic monitoring of content and outcome indicators that may inform us on the effects of Norwegian participation in global and country activities.

We conclude that Norad would benefit from allocation of national resources to advise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research in developing standardized documentation routines for the management of quality in education, for example as part of systematizing best practices developed with aid from Norway or Norway's partners.

## **5.5 Final summary: Monitoring of development aid**

Based on the options for data-selection available for the scope of this report, a key result is that we find indications of an international and national systematic monitoring of quality measures related to preconditions for learning. We find less evidence of systematic monitoring of results that may guide Norad in informing the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the effects of Norwegian participation in global, sector and country activities. We conclude that Norad would strongly benefit from developing a monitoring strategy for their work in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (development aspects) and the Ministry of Education and Research (pedagogical and content-related aspects).

If the work to increase learning quality for all on the global agenda is to be a reality, and the ambition to take a global leadership is to become a reality, there is a need for developing a stronger policy cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research on the topic of quality teaching. As the focus on teaching quality is a final empirical outcome of this limited study, we recommend a post-strategy study to align a new policy direction with the aspects of teaching and instruction needs to be highlighted based on a thorough scientific review. This is also dependent on the fact if the new political strategy will be receive a global or development emphasis.

In the Terms of Reference, Norad had developed eight research questions to be answered in this report:

- In chapters 1-4, we have provided a short description and analysis of Norway's policy regarding the quality aspects in education. This was partly based on documents and research

publications, partly on interview data. The discussions included reflections of the work on education quality in the Post-2015 agenda, mainly through partners input on financing and dialogue structures with multilateral, bilateral partners and NGOs receiving funding through Norad. Recommendations is listed after each chapter.

In chapter 3, we provided a brief overview of the main and most important arenas internationally where the dialogue around education quality and student learning is carried out, focusing on learning impact. Recommendations were listed after the chapter.

*NIFU recommends that Norad develops a strategy to ensure that systematic work on pedagogical aspects of education quality is better grounded in a quality-assured research base.*

*NIFU recommends that Norad considers to focus on developing more effective teaching practices as a strategic entry point for Norway.*

- In chapter 2, we described how to approach the current most consolidated definitions of education quality within the context of education and development and its key elements.

In chapter 3, we identified a set of key challenges that needs to be addressed in order to accompany the work on education quality and learning in countries. Due to the lack of a common definition of education quality in Norway's development work, suggestions to key challenges is a political endeavour more than a research job. This research question was therefore handled by using data from documents and interviews with Norad and Norad's main partners.

In chapter 4, we applied the definitions of quality and the findings on key challenges in order to provide a map of key prerequisites for and key interventions which are important to improve quality in a development context. For the same reasons as above, we let the voices of Norad and Norad's partners guide the analysis.

*NIFU recommends that Norad reviews relevant positions on education quality among partners, and develop clearer priorities for Norway's development aid in order to advice the Ministry of Foreign Affair in such a global leadership. Norad's advice to a strategy should include clear priorities and link priorities to specific contexts. In this work, the choice of channels should be reflected and clearly reasoned, and there should be a monitoring system for how channels work to distribute Norwegian aid according to the Norwegian strategy.*

- In chapters 2-4, we presented suggestions for future work international partners plan to undertake when accompanying the development of the education sector in a country.

*NIFU recommends that Norad considers further work on quality teaching as a national priority for the global work ahead, as this is reported to be the single most crucial issue reported by all informants. How this is to be related to work in countries and priority of channels will depend on the ambitions in the strategy.*

- In the report as a whole, we suggested that it is not reasonable to conclude on the most important research gaps in the area of education quality and learning due to the lack of precision in the research questions and weak systematic monitoring of value-added studies of related to measuring student learning in classrooms.

*NIFU recommends that Norad develops clearer national priorities for commissioning research on quality teaching and quality teacher education as it impacts student learning, or for commissioning reviews of research. If the priority to focus on teachers and teaching quality is selected, such as suggested in interviews, the areas in need of*

*more knowledge is fair and effective measures of teaching practices. As there are no value-added studies combining the educational/developmental aspects to indicate what these changes should be on the level of the learner (e.g. the relationship between local curricula, mother tongue textbooks and student grades), there is a general need to establish well-defined pedagogical measures before research gaps can be identified on a value scale of what is more or less important.*

*NIFU recommends that Norad's work on key challenges ahead includes a larger study on the topic of teacher and teaching quality and project monitoring with a broad and representative expert panel of private donors, policymakers and -advisors, researchers, and representatives from NGOs.*

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In addition to the references in the text, several data analyses, papers and reports have been the basis of the study along with the interview data:

<http://www.norad.no/en/>

<http://www.brookings.edu/research/topics/education>

<http://www.globalpartnership.org/>

<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd.html?id=586>

<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud.html?id=833>

<http://www.unicef.org/>

<http://en.unesco.org/themes/education-21st-century>

<http://www.worldbank.org/>



## Appendix I

Semistructured interview - the NORAD study on Education Quality and Student Learning 2013

- 1) How would you define education quality in your work on developing global education?
- 2) What do you (or your institution) see as the key challenges for enhancing education quality Post-2015?
- 3) How do you work on identifying interventions that have shown most successful results in terms of student learning in your work?
- 4) In your opinion, what is the best input Norway may contribute with in the work to enhance education quality for all?
- 5) Other comments or suggestions?

## Appendix II

Norad Terms of Reference, posted June 2013

### - **Terms of Reference, Norad Study:**

# International Development, Education Quality and Student Learning

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## *Consultancy Terms of Reference*

### - **Background to the Study**

The Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (GMR) preparation team estimates that there are approximately 1 out of 3 primary school-aged children not learning to read and to write. A large proportion of these are going to school. Schooling doesn't necessarily provide quality education or produce expected learning results. The international targets set for the past decades to ensure equitable education for all children have had increased enrollment as a prime focus. Retention and achievement of the primary or basic education cycle has to some extent figured in the dialogue, but education quality in the meaning of developing skills and producing learning in children has had a much lower focus in these investments over the past years. The right to quality education has been central in the work of nations, but goals and targets have not to the same extent been established and monitored. The post 2015 era calls for a more deliberate effort on international partners' programming in the area of quality education so that children achieve their education with acquired relevant and appropriate skills.

Defining quality in education is an increasingly steep challenge. There are many different understandings to this effect as there are many different expectations to what an education should provide. The subject has been discussed for as long as education as an institution has existed. The current demand for improved education quality and learning results has furthered a strong international drive that is much appreciated. However, we must not derive from the fact that a generic standard for all must be created in such a fashion that it is adjustable to the local and national cultural and political particularities and contexts. In the context of international development we often refer to the Jomtien era and the Education for All Conference in 1990 and the then well-known UNESCO Jacques Delors report: "Learning: The Treasure within". There has been a silence around the discussion of defining education quality for a certain time, but today we experience an increased mobilization, particularly in connection with the post-2015 dialogue, the Global Partnership for Education and through the broad based effort on A Global Compact on Education and the Education Learning Matrix where a wide range of international and national partners are engaged.

In the context of the increased mobilization for defining education quality, today, we have tended to refer to the Education for All ***Global Monitoring Report of 2005 "Understanding Education Quality"***. Access to good-quality education is a human right where learning is

perceived to be affected at two levels. At the level of the *learner*, education needs to seek out and acknowledge learners' prior knowledge, to recognize formal and informal modes, to practice non-discrimination and to provide a safe and supportive learning environment. At the level of the *learning system*, a support structure is needed to implement policies, enact legislation, and distribute resources and measure learning outcomes, so as to have the best possible impact on learning for all. Cognitive development and the accumulation of particular values, attitudes and skills are important objectives of education systems in most societies. Their content may differ but their broad structure is similar throughout the world. This may suggest that in one sense the key to improving the quality of education – to helping education systems better achieve these objectives – could be equally universal. Given the diversity of understanding and interpreting quality in education in different traditions and contexts, it requires a dialogue between the stakeholders. One should begin by thinking about the main elements of education systems and how they interact. To this end we might draw up a framework for understanding, monitoring and improving education quality with the five following dimensions (ref. GMR 2005):

- ***Learner characteristics dimension*** including elements such as aptitude, school readiness, barriers to learning, etc;
- ***Contextual dimension*** including a broad range of economic and socio-cultural factors, educational knowledge, the teaching profession, governance, parental support, national standards, expectations, labor market, globalization, etc. ;
- ***Enabling inputs dimensions*** including resources made available to support the process and the direct way in which these resources are managed;
- ***Teaching and learning dimension*** comprises the learning time, teaching methods, assessment, feedback, incentives, and class size;
- ***Outcomes dimension*** involving literacy, numeracy and life skills, creative and emotional skills, values, social benefits.

The Norwegian development policy has been actively involved in international education and development, since after the Jomtien in 1990. Since 2000 the Norwegian development policy has focused on supporting the Education for All movement and the education related Millennium Development Goals, notably 2 and 3. Norway has been particularly concerned with supporting a movement that ensure education for all with a specific eye on the right to education for excluded groups, girls largely, but also the poorest groups, and children living in fragile situations and in situations of conflict and crisis. Norway has been a significant partner supporting education programs through UNICEF, the World Bank, UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), Agency for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the Inter Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE), and a large number of NGOs working on education. These have all a focus on education quality but the challenges on being targeted on a large scale on learning has been prominent as described in the above. Since 2008 Norway made a specific move toward their interest in quality education by targeting the teachers by initiating the UNESCO housed International Task Force on Teachers for Education for All. In 2012 the Norwegian budget to the education sector was 1,6 billion NOK with the biggest share allocated to the basic education sector. Of the entire development budget, the education sector's share is 7 percent. More than 50 percent of the funds were channeled through multi-lateral agencies and global initiatives. The other 50 percent consists of support to bi-lateral state-to-state support and support to education institutions in Norway largely for research collaboration and support through non-governmental organisations. It is against this background that Norad would like to

commission a study on the theme of Education Quality and Learning Achievement. Norad would like to get a clearer understanding of how Norway, as development cooperation partner to education, could best contribute to the realization of quality education and learning achievement in countries of collaboration.

### - **Study Purpose**

In light of the urgent need in the “post 2015” agenda in particular, to further address education quality and student learning, the main purpose of this study is to identify key challenges for education quality and types of interventions that have shown the most successful results in terms of learning. The discussion and analysis will lead up to a set of recommendations for how Norway should engage in the policy dialogue and orient its investment in the education sector so as to constructively contribute to and accompany countries improved education quality strategies.

The goal of this exercise is to provide a set of key guidelines to Norway, as a partner to education internationally, on how to best support education quality and learning. This should be seen through the priority channels established by the Norwegian government.

### - **Scope of Work**

Based on an analysis of key documentation (research reports, studies, programme reports, policy documents, and best practices) on the issue of education quality and learning as well as 2-3<sup>3</sup> interviews with key partners on education quality, the consultant should:

- Provide a short description and analysis of Norway’s policy regarding the quality aspects in education, as well as the reflections of the same through financing and dialogue with multilateral, bilateral partners and well as universities/research institutions and NGOs receiving funding through Norad ;
- Provide a brief overview of the main and most important arenas internationally where the dialogue around education quality and student learning is being carried out, focusing on providing learning to students;
- Describe, in a simplified version, the current most consolidated definition of education quality within the context of education and development and its key elements;
- Identify a set of key set of challenges that need to be addressed in order to accompany the work on education quality and learning in countries;
- With the definition of quality and key challenges in mind provide a map of key prerequisites for and key interventions which are important to improve quality in a development context.
- Identify best practices and the most value added of the interventions discussed that would be considered important to replicate in primary/basic- and secondary education in a programme and sector wide approach. Project and country examples and case studies may be used for explanatory purposes;

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<sup>3</sup> Indicated are a limited number of interviews. The consultant may find it necessary to increase the number.

- Make suggestions for how issues can best be addressed including concrete suggestions for future the work international partners in particular can undertake when accompanying the development of the education sector in a country. This should include issues that are relevant for the “post 2015” agenda and issues that are relevant for Norway’s future policies as regard development aid and education. ;
- Identify the most important research gaps in the area of education quality and learning.

### - **Expected Outcome**

The outcome of this study will be a report on covering the aspects described in the above. The report should not be more than 25 pages including a short executive summary and excluding annexes.

### - **Working Modalities**

The study is mainly a desk study/review of reports and documentation produced in regard of the relevant theme and interviews with key specialists currently active in the dialogue on education quality and student’s learning. The role of the consultancy team will be to identify and propose the relevant documentation. Further to develop a short interview guide and carry out interviews with a limited numbers of experts.

The timeframe of this consultancy is set to a total of 35 working days which should include:

- Review of relevant documents as well as interviews with experts.
- Preparation of a draft report.
- Finalisation of the report based on feedback from Norad.
- Preparation of a presentation and discussion of the final report at a seminar in Oslo.

An inception report should be presented after 10 days of work. A draft report should be presented and Norad should comment within 15 working days of reception of the report. A presentation and discussion will be held in Norad once the report has been finalized.

### - **Qualifications of Consultants**

We are looking for a consultant or consultancy team to carry out the described assignment with the following qualifications:

- Expertise in conducting education studies and reviews as well as in report writing;
- Good knowledge of research within the education field in general and specifically within the areas of education quality, student learning, teachers, equity and curriculum in particular;
- Good knowledge of and experience in participating in the international dialogue on policies and agendas for development cooperation within the field of education;
- Knowledge of Norway’s policies and strategies for development cooperation in education.

## **Appendix III**

Norad's reference to ToR in competition basis posted June 2013

# **COMPETITION BASIS FOR PROCUREMENT OF CONSULTANCY SERVICES 1. FOR A STUDY ON EDUCATION IN FRAGILE SITUATIONS**

**CASE NO. 1301206**

**CLOSING DATE OF TENDER: 20.06.2013 AT 12:00 NOON (NORWEGIAN TIME)**

The procurement will be carried out as an open competitive tender in accordance with Part I of the regulations of 7 April 2006 No 402 relating to public procurements. There will be no negotiations between the parties and the providers must therefore present their final tender within the deadline. The estimated value of the assignment is less than NOK 500 000, and Norad is therefore not obliged to publish the competition in Doffin or TED. We have nevertheless chosen to publish the competition in Doffin and TED, to reach as many candidates as possible.

### **1. GENERAL**

The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), c/o Department for Global Health, Education and Research/Education Section, hereafter called Principal, invites to competition without negotiations for the purchase of consultancy services in connection with a study on education with a focus on education quality and student learning.

### **2. ABOUT THE PRINCIPAL**

The Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) is a directorate under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). Norad aims to be the centre of expertise for evaluation, quality assurance and dissemination of the results of Norwegian development cooperation, jointly with partners in Norway, developing countries and the international community. Norad is also ensuring that the goals of Norway's development policy are achieved by providing advice and support to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Norwegian foreign service missions. More information about Norad can be found at [www.norad.no](http://www.norad.no)

### **3. ON THE PROCUREMENT**

In light of the emerging need to further address education quality and student learning currently and in the "Post-2015 agenda", the main purpose of this study is to analyze and assess the evidence base that exists on achievements, best practices and emerging issues related to the topic. In addition, the study will include a description of Norway's development policy regarding the quality aspects in education, higher education and research as well as the

reflections of the same through financing and dialogue with multilateral, bilateral partners and well as universities/research institutions and NGOs receiving funding through Norad and a mapping of current initiatives internationally that address the theme of education quality and student's learning. Based on the findings the study should also provide recommendations with regards to how Norway could continue our support to education with a reinforced focus on the quality and learning acquired.

### **3.1 Timetable/scope for carrying out the service**

The total time frame is set to maximum 35 working days including desk review of relevant documents as well as interviews with experts working on the relevant topic. The consultant(s) should also make a presentation of the final report to relevant stakeholders in Oslo.

The assignment can be carried out by one consultant or a team of consultants. It is desirable that the consultancy will start in beginning of August, 2013 and be completed at the latest by October 15, 2013.

Please refer to the TOR for more information on the scope of work.

## Appendix IV

Inception Report, revised 04.09.2013

### *1. NIFU's understanding of the assignment*

Norad has contracted the Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education (NIFU) to conduct a study on education quality and student learning. The work will be carried out from August 1st to October 15th 2013, with a presentation of the findings at Norad before the end of November 2013. According to Norad's competition basis, the purpose of this study is to take one step further in addressing education quality and student learning. It is emphasized that this initiative is viewed in light of the global development agenda beyond 2015 (e.g. UN 2010, 2012a, 2012b; OECD 2013).

As stated in Norad's Terms of Reference, the objectives of this study are to:

- identify key challenges for education quality
- identify types of interventions that have shown the most successful results in terms of learning

Norad states in the Terms of Reference that the discussion and analysis emerging from the desk review and from interviews with key specialists should lead up to a set of recommendations for how Norway should engage in the policy dialogue and orient its investment in the education sector so as to constructively contribute to, and accompany, countries improved education quality strategies.

Norway has an active role in international cooperation on education and development, including support for the Education for All movement and the education related Millennium Development Goals (cf. Norad's TOR). As Norad mentions, Norway is known as a significant partner supporting education programs through UNICEF, the World Bank, UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the UN Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), Agency for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the Inter Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE), and a large number of NGOs working on education.

The challenge in Norway's contribution on these arenas is similar to the overall policy development within education: There has been a focus on teacher quality without a similar attention to teaching quality related to learning outcomes both in policy and its reflected funding schemes (cf. the 2013 OECD's contribution on education to the post-2015 framework: PISA for development).

NIFU understands Norad's terms of reference as a wish to achieve a clearer understanding of how Norway, as development cooperation partner to education, could best contribute to the realization of quality education and learning achievement in countries and areas of collaboration through this particular study. The goal of this assignment is therefore to provide a set of key guidelines to Norway, as a partner to education internationally, on how to best support education quality and learning. This should be seen through the priority channels established by the Norwegian government.

The study shall result in a report not exceeding 25 pages, including a short executive summary and excluding annexes. The report «Study on Education Quality and Student Learning» will be written in English, and be made available to Norad's Department for Global Health, Education and Research October 15. Within a week post-delivery NIFU will publish the report on NIFU's public web. A preliminary report outline has been discussed with Norad September 4th, and is presented in section 2 of this revised inception report.



## 2. *Report outline*

### Executive summary

#### 1 Introduction

1.1 Background for the study

1.2 Defining educational quality and relevance for student learning

1.3 Data and method

1.4 Report outline

#### 2 Context

2.1 Overview of main perspectives on educational quality and relevance for student learning in Norway's dialogue arenas

2.2 Norway's policy development, financing structure and Norad's organization for supporting educational quality and student learning

2.3 Summary and recommendations on Norad's support strategy through priority channels

#### 3 Key challenges for educational quality

3.1 Key challenges to education quality in a development context

3.2 Description and discussion of context-sensitive and universal measures of student learning

3.3 Summary and recommendations on Norad's work ahead with educational quality

#### 4 Successful interventions for improving quality

4.1 Relevance of best practices and value added interventions - overview and discussion

4.2 Summary and recommendations on Norad's work ahead with educational relevance

#### 5 Conclusion

#### 6 References

#### Appendix

• Norad's Terms of Reference

• NIFU interview guide

### 3. Conceptual framework

How do we approach an empirical understanding of how Norad can pursue its advisory work

on educational quality in cooperation with key partners? Acknowledging the complexity of both the academic and practical work on the measures of quality, education and measuring student learning, NIFU will build a conceptual framework based on findings from both the desktop review and interviews with key specialists.

#### 3.1 Measures of quality

When it comes to the purpose of discussing measures, we follow Norad's recent address of need for new and clear measures on education quality post 2015 (Norad 2013). Based on several studies, including the EFA Global Monitoring Report estimating approximately 72 million children without schooling opportunities in 2015, Norad has advised the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to give priority to specified educational areas in upcoming development goals. The current study of education quality and student learning is part of Norad's proactive agenda to ensure education for all is high on the post 2015 agenda in Norway.

Norad specifically lists three items of Norwegian concern:

1. Maintain an international policy focus on education for all
2. Ensure a public debate on selected themes in the post-2015 debate: Multidimensional quality, youth and secondary education, inclusion and educational equity
3. Develop measurable indicators related to educational goals

The approach to this study considers education quality and relevance for student learning to be a complex field, encompassing all three elements. Identifying key challenges within the field of education is judged to be both an elusive and contentious task (Lageman 2000, Caspersen et al 2011). As Caspersen et al point out, quality is a key concept in education policies since the latter part of the 1980s «often associated with a shift from an input-oriented focus in higher education, to more output and results-orientations among policy-makers» (ibid). Quality in education is related to quality in learning in and across learning arenas; it is associated with various theoretical perspectives on learning outcomes and how these are empirically measurable (Stensaker 2008, Karseth 2008, Opheim 2004, Carlsten et al 2006, Vibe, Aamodt & Carlsten 2009, OECD 2009, 2012, Gates Foundation 2010, Carlsten, Klette & Grossman 2013, Opheim, Gjerustad & Sjaastad 2013). Quality is therefore understood as a political and academic concept, and there is a resonance between the definitions found in the general educational debate and the discussions related to educational quality in low and middle income countries (Riddel 2008, UN 2010, 2012a, 2012b; OECD 2013, Norad 2013 a, b, c, Fredriksen & Fossberg 2013). As Norad emphasizes, international targets set for the past decades to ensure equitable education for all children have had increased enrollment as its primary focus: *Retention and achievement of the primary or basic education cycle has to some extent figured in the dialogue, but education quality in the meaning of developing skills and producing learning in children has had a much lower focus in these investments over the past years* (Norad TOR 07062013).

This discussion is important as a background for assessing the value of universal and context-sensitive indicators on education quality, and for viewing quality as access and as pedagogical resources (Hewlett et al 2013, UNESCO 1990, 2000, 2010).

### *3.2 Measures of quality related to relevance*

In terms of observing quality as both stable and temporary characteristics of the teaching-learning dynamics (i.e. relevance at different levels), empirical studies have shown that these are both hard to identify and to align with a common knowledge-base (cf. Klette 2010, Klette & Carlsten 2012). Still, international cooperation efforts such as the Jomtien declaration (UNESCO 1990), the Dakar framework for action (UNESCO 2000), and UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) global movement (UNESCO 2010) emphasize that there are both contextual and global indicators for relevance available aiming to inform policy decisions and practical interventions. International comparative studies on teaching and learning coordinated by the EU, OECD and IEA such as mentioned above also provide us with insights into common issues, common agendas and common challenges concerning education quality and student learning (e.g. Vibe, Aamodt & Carlsten 2009, Hovdhaugen, Opheim, Sjaastad & Sweetman 2013). In a working paper «Defining Quality in Education». UNICEF suggests quality education to include indicators on learners, learning environments, content, teachers instructional methods and relevant educational goals (UNICEF 2000). In this report quality and relevance are analyzed within an empirical model described in section 3.2 below.

### *3.2 NIFU's empirical approach*

As such, NIFU aims to apply an empirical approach to the assignment, opening for a discussion of key specialists' understanding of quality and learning outcomes on a continuum between process oriented, wide and general quality definition with limited measurability, and result-oriented standardized and measurable quality definition. This will be discussed within a theoretical perspective aligning learning and learning outcomes in terms of both process and product (cf. Caspersen et al 2011). We consider this a valuable approach, as it is a discussion currently downplayed in many references in the field (UNESCO 2012a, b, Addie 2008, Fawcett & Israel 2010, Hungi & Thuku 2010, Genevois 2006).

An understanding of quality as a continuum between process and result will vary according to actors and institutions when it comes to aims and interests in their work. It may involve complex understanding of how relevant a quality education is in fragile situations, to enhance gender equality, youth development, teacher qualifications, curricula and test development or policy and financing strategies. In this assignment, we therefore wish to empirically map out how quality is discussed in general in documents and interviews, before we conclude on how to define it for the goal of this assignment «providing a set of key guidelines to Norway, as a partner to education internationally, on how to best support education quality and learning. This should be seen through the priority channels established by the Norwegian government»

### *3.3 Working hypotheses*

We assume as a working hypothesis that the understanding of educational quality, and accordingly how Norway should best support education quality, will vary less when it comes to the need to support vulnerable groups, learning efficiency at large and explicit learning theoretical differences. We expect the definitions to vary more when it comes to the focus on basic skills or worklife competences, how quality should be measured and which actors should measure and develop indicators (global partners or local experts), as well as the emphasis on volume, sectors, channels, receiving countries and policy strategies. These working hypotheses will guide our search for literature and inform the interview guide. They are built on our understanding of Norad's own goals for the assignment in the Terms of Reference when it comes to identifying key challenges and interventions considered successful in driving learning outcome - either as process or as product. Where the emphasis will land is an empirical question to be presented in the final report in October.

#### 4. Tasks and methods

A complex conceptual understanding of quality entails a methodological approach allowing for the same.

##### 4.1 Methodology

Methodologically we approach the assignment with a stakeholder-evaluation model (Vedung 2010) allowing a meta-approach to how key specialists internationally and in Norway work both explicitly and implicitly with the concept of educational quality. Findings from the interviews are used as a filter when performing the desk review. The aim is to create a dynamic relation between unique sector needs and the general knowledge-base on the topic allowing for well-established and realistic recommendations to Norad.

##### 4.2 Tasks related to methods

Norad's Terms of Reference lists 8 areas to which substantiated answers should be provided to reach these recommendations. Table 1 below lists Norad's tasks and suggested methods.

No	Norad task	Method
1	Provide a short description and analysis of Norway's policy regarding the quality aspects in education, as well as the reflections of the same through financing and dialogue with multilateral, bilateral partners and well as universities/research institutions and NGOs receiving funding through Norad	Desk review and interviews with key specialists in Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education
2	Provide a brief overview of the main and most important arenas internationally where the dialogue around education quality and student learning is being carried out, focusing on providing learning to students	Desk review
3	Describe, in a simplified version, the current most consolidated definition of education quality within the context of education and development and its key elements	Desk review
4	Identify a set of key challenges that need to be addressed in order to accompany the work on education quality and learning in countries	Desk review and interviews with key specialists in Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education
5	With the definition of quality and key challenges in mind provide a map of key prerequisites for and key interventions which are important to improve quality in a development context	Desk review and interviews with key specialists in Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education
6	Identify best practices and the most	Desk review and interviews with key

	value added of the interventions discussed that would be considered important to replicate in primary/basic- and secondary education in a programme and sector wide approach. Project and country examples and case studies may be used for explanatory purposes	specialists in Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education
7	Make suggestions for how issues can best be addressed including concrete suggestions for future the work international partners in particular can undertake when accompanying the development of the education sector in a country. This should include issues that are relevant for the “post 2015” agenda and issues that are relevant for Norway’s future policies as regard development aid and education	Desk review and interviews with key specialists in Norad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Education
8	Identify the most important research gaps in the area of education quality and learning	Desk review

**Table 1: Overview of Norad tasks and related methods**

#### 4.3 Methods related to data

Some of the main challenges in global development of aligning education quality and student learning are connected to the areas mentioned in the UNESCO Strategy on Teachers (2012-2015): Bridging the teacher gap, improving teacher quality, and inform the global debate about teaching through research, knowledge production and communication (UNESCO 2012a). The post-2015 agenda includes a range of areas, covering out-of-school youth in developing countries (e.g. Fawcett & Israel 2010), basic skills development across developing countries (e.g. Hungi & Thuku 2010, UNESCO 2012b) as well as how to design and manage impact of cross-national studies of the quality of education (e.g. Ross & Genevois 2006, OECD 2013). These areas constitute important challenges when it comes to explore definitions of education quality in the desk review. The reference list at the end of this document may serve as a first overview of document data.

When it comes to interviews, NIFU agreed in the contract to perform 4-6 interviews. In discussions with Norad NIFU has agreed to focus in particular on the international key specialists from UNICEF, GPE and Brookings Institute. Also, NIFU will perform interviews with key specialists from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education, Save the Children Norway (NGO) and a focus group from Norad. As mentioned, the interviews are considered central to lay the empirical foundations for solid recommendations to Norad in the final report. The selection of informants is based on information from Norad as to who is considered central partners. Interviews will help define the work on education quality and relevance for student learning in different countries, sectors, areas and on a global level.

When analyzing interview data and aligning them to the working hypotheses, it will be possible to identify more specific areas of concern – e.g. quality definitions with large agreement among specialists and documents; concerns mainly found in the Norwegian context or a certain international/global context; quality and learning issues lacking in the Norwegian discussions; quality definitions where there is less agreement and less clear thoughts about accountability and/or developmental concerns.

#### 4.4 Interview guide

The semi-structured interview guide is developed on the basis of a preliminary document analysis, and is aligned with Norad's Terms of Reference. The interviews with international specialists will be undertaken by phone in September, and the interviews with Norwegian agents face to face the same month. All interviews will be taped and transcribed by the researchers responsible for the study. All recordings will be deleted at the completion of the assignment. Interviews will be performed according to ethical guidelines for data collection.

The themes of the interview guide are as follows:

**1 Introduction.** Aims to document the formal role and main responsibilities of the key specialist to be interviewed related to work on educational quality and student learning.

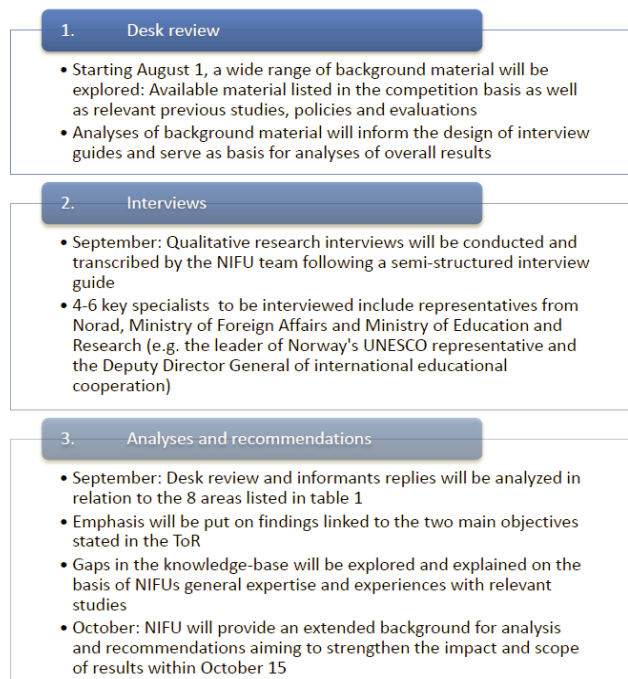
**2 Background.** Aims to identify the need for defining educational quality in informants work, as well as how this work is pursued. Is there a common understanding, or is there a gap in the work done nationally and internationally?

**3 Context.** Aims to identify how work on educational quality and student learning is currently supported by Norway. Which priority channels are used, and for what purposes? Who is the decision-maker in these support and advisory processes, and how are successful and/or challenging interventions documented?

**4 International dialogues and research.** Aims to identify main arenas of dialogue on educational quality and student learning, as well as informant's experience within the same. What are the similarities and deviances in dialogues within these arenas as experiences by informant? What is the most common knowledge-base used for assessing successful interventions? Aims to identify the relation between global and context-sensitive measures of quality education and relevant learning outcomes.

**5 Challenges and work ahead.** Aims to identify what informant considers to be the key challenges to educational quality in a development context - in general, and in a Norwegian policy context. Given the differences in MDG-ETA, what does informant consider to be most important aspects on Norwegian work ahead regarding educational quality in education (e.g. system level work, teacher education, tests development and analysis, curricular work, content relevance and educational language, qualified personell, gender, fragile situations...) Includes opportunity to add free comments to the topic.

#### 5. Tentative timetable



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