



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

**CENTRE
FOR
GLOBAL
HIGHER
EDUCATION**

Challenging the “single story” in a multiplex world: Nuancing conceptualisations of aid and partnership in the higher education sector

Rebecca Schendel, Tessa DeLaquil, Lee Rensimer & Tristan McCowan

June 18, 2024



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

CENTRE
FOR
GLOBAL
HIGHER
EDUCATION

CONTEXT

Fragmentation of global governance factors → Multiplex world

- “Patchwork” of institutions (bilateral, regional, international, private, civil society)
- More interdependent, more participation, across issue areas (climate, security, economy etc.), including international aid, and higher education

(Acharya, 2017)

Changes in global aid world → Discursive shift to “shared prosperity”

- From “net flow of resources from the wealthiest to the poorest” to a self-interested “stimulus package” for donor private sectors

(Mawdsley et al., 2017)



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

CENTRE
FOR
GLOBAL
HIGHER
EDUCATION

STUDY RATIONALE

Lack of systematic analysis of the implications of fragmentation of actors & changes in global aid discourse for issue area of **higher education aid flows to lower- and middle-income countries** in a multiplex world

- Changes in discourse in higher education aid: Normative changes (aid effectiveness, partnership, mutuality); renewed recognition of HE in development (SDGs)
- Increased participation of a range of actors/recipients (UNESCO study - Galán-Muros et al., 2022), and better appreciation of scale/scope of international aid to HE & HE aid flows data reporting (and the limitations of our knowledge) (Rensimer & McCowan, 2023)
- Given this landscape, how do we understand the complex rationales that drive support, and implications for shaping assumed roles, adopted modalities, conceptualisation & changes in support?



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

CENTRE
FOR
GLOBAL
HIGHER
EDUCATION

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do the primary funders of higher education in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) engage with the systems and institutions they support?
 - i. What are the main *rationales* for supporting higher education?
 - ii. What *roles* within a higher education ecosystem do these actors assume?
 - iii. What *modalities* of support do they employ?
 - iv. How is funding for higher education *conceptualized*?
2. How have the rationales, roles, modalities and understandings of support changed over the past few decades? And why have any such changes occurred?



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

CENTRE
FOR
GLOBAL
HIGHER
EDUCATION

METHODOLOGY

- Analysis of the organizations providing highest level of funding to HE systems and institutions in LMICs (2011-2020)
- Two components:
 - Mapping exercise (broad overview of approaches taken by top funders of HE in LMICs - rationales, roles, modalities, aid conceptualisation)
 - Selection of “crucial case” studies of four individual organizations (analysis of how and why change has occurred)



Mapping exercise:

- Identified **top 15 donors**, providing “**non-scholarship support**” to HE in LMICs in the period 2011-2020 (identified via the OECD Creditor Reporting System)
- Documentary & discourse analysis of public-facing documents (e.g. websites, strategy documents, evaluation reports) (2008-2023)

Case studies*:

- Selected **top funder within each of four donor “types”**:
 - Multilateral organization = World Bank
 - Bilateral organization from DAC country = USAID
 - Bilateral organization from non-DAC country = Türkiye
 - Private sector organization = MasterCard Foundation
- Key informant interviews to supplement documentary analysis → additional insight/insider view into conceptualization(s) of support and change processes



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION



Top 15 funders to higher education in LMICs overall, 2011-20

Source: Author analysis of CRS data, 2023

Funder	Total HE aid (2011-2020)	Scholarship aid as % of total aid from donor
Germany	\$15,886 mil	90%
France	\$10,485 mil	96%
Japan	\$3,339 mil	65%
EU Institutions	\$2,401 mil	47%
World Bank	\$2,198 mil	0%
USA	\$1,690 mil	*0%
Austria	\$1,432 mil	97%
United Kingdom	\$1,216 mil	70%
Netherlands	\$898 mil	50%
Türkiye	\$831 mil	50%
South Korea	\$734 mil	59%
MasterCard Foundation	\$726 mil	47%
Poland	\$676 mil	100%
Saudi Arabia	\$618 mil	97%
Belgium	\$602 mil	27%



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION



Top 15 providers of “non-scholarship funding”, 2011-20

Source: Author analysis of CRS data, 2023

Funder	Total non-external scholarship funding	Funder classification
World Bank	\$ 2,198.3 mil	Multilateral
United States	\$ 1,690.1 mil	DAC bilateral
Germany	\$ 1,529.1 mil	DAC bilateral
EU Institutions	\$ 1,270.1 mil	Multilateral
Japan	\$ 1,153.1 mil	DAC bilateral
France	\$ 458.2 mil	DAC bilateral
Netherlands	\$ 447.8 mil	DAC bilateral
Belgium	\$ 437.4 mil	DAC bilateral
Türkiye	\$ 411.9 mil	Non-DAC bilateral
MasterCard Foundation	\$ 384.9 mil	Private organisation
United Kingdom	\$ 370.4 mil	DAC bilateral
African Development Fund	\$ 325.3 mil	Multilateral
Korea	\$ 304.4 mil	DAC bilateral
Norway	\$ 252.7 mil	DAC bilateral
United Arab Emirates	\$ 163.3 mil	Non-DAC bilateral



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

CENTRE
FOR
GLOBAL
HIGHER
EDUCATION

KEY THEMES FROM COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Conceptualization(s) of support

- None of the organizations used the word “aid”
- Instead “capacity development” and/or “technical assistance”
- Also dominant: “Partnership” and “mutuality”
 - Diversity in terms of who is the “partner”
 - Level of mutuality, i.e. “leading”, “advising” or “training” versus “extending a helping hand” and “building bridges of heart”
- Cooperation: Consistent, except for private sector organisation



KEY THEMES FROM COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Diversity of rationales, depending both on type of donor and individual organization particularities

- Development rationales present across all, but with different orientations
- Political rationales also present for bilateral donors
 - Explicitly political, e.g. “Tackling global challenges in the national interest” (UK)
 - Political, in terms of global positioning, e.g. “to raise Korea’s standing on the global stage”
 - Cultural political rationales, e.g. “to [carry] common history and cultural heritage” (Türkiye)



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

CENTRE
FOR
GLOBAL
HIGHER
EDUCATION

KEY THEMES FROM COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

- Significant diversity in modalities of support, including within donor types
- Two key examples
 - International scholarships
 - Collaborative research and/or other university partnerships

		DAC bilateral (excluding Japan and Korea)	Japan and Korea	Non-DAC bilateral	Multilateral	Private organisation
Conceptualisation of roles	<i>Language</i>	Abandonment or rejection of ‘aid’; adoption of “capacity development”, “technical assistance”, “partnership” and “mutuality”				
		Broadly position themselves as purveyors of “leadership” or “advice” and training	Position themselves as development “models” and “bridges”		All position themselves as “leaders”; EU also as “model” (with respect to system-wise harmonisation)	Broadly position themselves as purveyors of “leadership” or “advice” and training
	<i>Coordination</i>	Partnership varies: some with national governments, some with universities			Partnership strictly with national governments	Partnership with institutions (including universities, NGOs and civil society organisations)
		Cooperation with other donors within and across donor types; explicit reference to SDGs				Explicit operational independence from other donors
Rationale	<i>Developmental</i>	All articulate developmental rationales, although these vary in specific focus by individual donor				
	<i>Political</i>	Political with economic self-interest	Political with interest in expanding influence and reach		N/A	N/A
	<i>Other</i>	N/A	N/A	Cultural	N/A	N/A
Approaches	<i>Individual scholarships</i>	Scholarships for study in donor country; levels of study vary by donor	Mix of scholarships for study in donor country and scholarships for study elsewhere in donor region	Scholarships for study in donor country; levels of study vary by donor	N/A	Scholarships for study within recipient region
	<i>Collaborative research and/or partnerships between HEIs in donor and recipient countries</i>	Research collaborations, albeit with disciplinary foci varying by donor		None	N/A	N/A



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

CENTRE
FOR
GLOBAL
HIGHER
EDUCATION

CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS

- Documentary analysis shows **clear linguistic shift** in way donors describe their roles
- However, **discursive shifts often at odds with practice**, particularly among bilaterals (tension between ‘shared prosperity’ and self-interest, as discussed by Mawdsley et al, 2018)
 - **Higher education is increasingly instrumentalized as tool in geopolitical struggles**
=> “retroliberal” aid paradigm (evident throughout our analysis)
 - Multilaterals and private sector possibly more able to act independently of entrenched national interests – but other tensions affect these donors (e.g. lack of coordination on part of MCF)
- The intended audience of these documents is multiple and both internal and external



BOSTON COLLEGE

Lynch School of Education and Human Development

CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION

CENTRE
FOR
GLOBAL
HIGHER
EDUCATION

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- More understanding of how donor ranking changes over time, due to changes in political commitments
- More fine-grained empirical analysis of change in practice/funding flows over time
- Need to better understand the role(s), rationales of newer actors not represented in this study (e.g. China, India, Russia)

