

Chapter 2: Evaluation Highlights

- Primary education commitments increased dramatically with the EFA movement in 1990, especially in low-income countries.
- A growing share of lending for primary education has been managed outside the Education Sector.
- Projects managed by other sectors focus mainly on increased enrollment.
- Only one in five primary education projects has learning outcomes as an explicit objective.
- A large share of analytic work in education covers primary education, but little of it focuses mainly on learning outcomes.



Trends in World Bank Support to Primary Education

New financial commitments to primary education jumped dramatically in the early 1990s as the World Bank embraced the EFA movement. Total lending for primary education for the 27 years leading up to 1990 was about \$1.7 billion.¹

Evolution in Lending for Primary Education

In the five years after the 1990 EFA conference and the *Primary Education Policy Paper* (World Bank 1990), the number of projects supporting primary education roughly doubled and commitments more than tripled (figure 2.1). During the five-year period beginning in 2000, the year of the second EFA conference, the number of projects continued to climb, but new financial commitments leveled off. In 2005, the first year in the current five-year period (not shown in the figure), the number of projects continued to increase, but the commitment levels remained flat.² In all, between 1990 and 2005, lending for primary education increased sevenfold above previous years, to about \$12.3 billion. Thus, around 88 percent of all Bank commitments for primary education have been approved since 1990.³

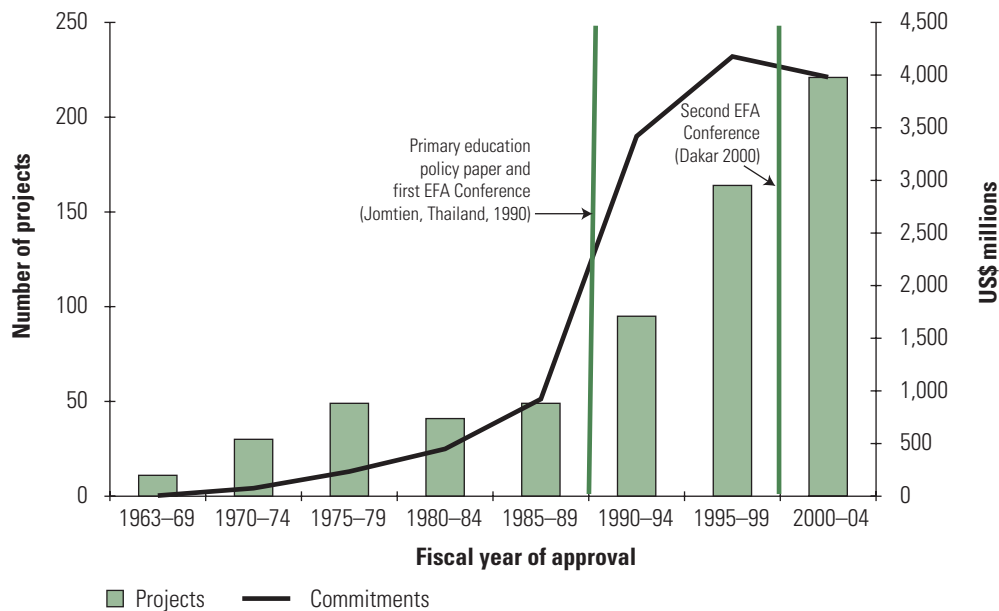
The share of primary education commitments going to the countries accounting for the poorest 40 percent of the global population has also more than doubled, from 26 to 54 percent, consistent with the Bank's strategy (IEG 2004d).⁴ About two-thirds of projects that

provide any support to primary education have been in the form of International Development Association (IDA) credits, rising from 59 percent before 1990 to 74 percent in 2000–04. *Education for All drove primary education commitments to new highs in the 1990s.*

Primary education commitments rose in all Regions, most noticeably in Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa (figure 2.2). Lending for primary education did not increase significantly in Europe and Central Asia until 1995–99, following the break-up of the former Soviet Union, while it initially declined in the Middle East and North Africa before recovering in 2000–04. Latin American and South Asian countries have borrowed the most for primary education (\$4.4 billion and \$3.6 billion, respectively), followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (\$2.6 billion), but Sub-Saharan Africa had the largest number of projects financing primary education (table 2.1).

A growing share of lending for primary education has been through projects

Figure 2.1: Increase in World Bank Commitments to Primary Education, 1963–2004



Source: World Bank database of projects managed by the Education Sector.

Notes: a. The World Bank fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30; for example, fiscal year 2000 covered July 1, 1999, to June 30, 2000. b. This figure includes projects in all sectors with any primary education expenditure—half of commitments coded as general education were assumed to be for primary education. c. The entire commitment for a project is allocated to the year the project was approved. d. In fiscal 2005 a total of 70 projects with an estimated US\$818.4 million in commitments to primary education was approved.

Much of the growth in primary education lending has been in projects managed by sectoral units other than the Education Sector.

managed by other sectors and for development policy lending (DPL).⁵ For the most recent five-year period, 31 percent of all commitments to primary education were from components of projects managed by other sectoral units (see figure 2.3). In fiscal 2005 the share reached 53.5 percent.

Projects managed by the Education Sector that were approved in fiscal 2000–04 remain predominantly traditional investment projects, as in previous periods.⁶ However, among the 31 percent of commitments managed by other sectors, nearly half

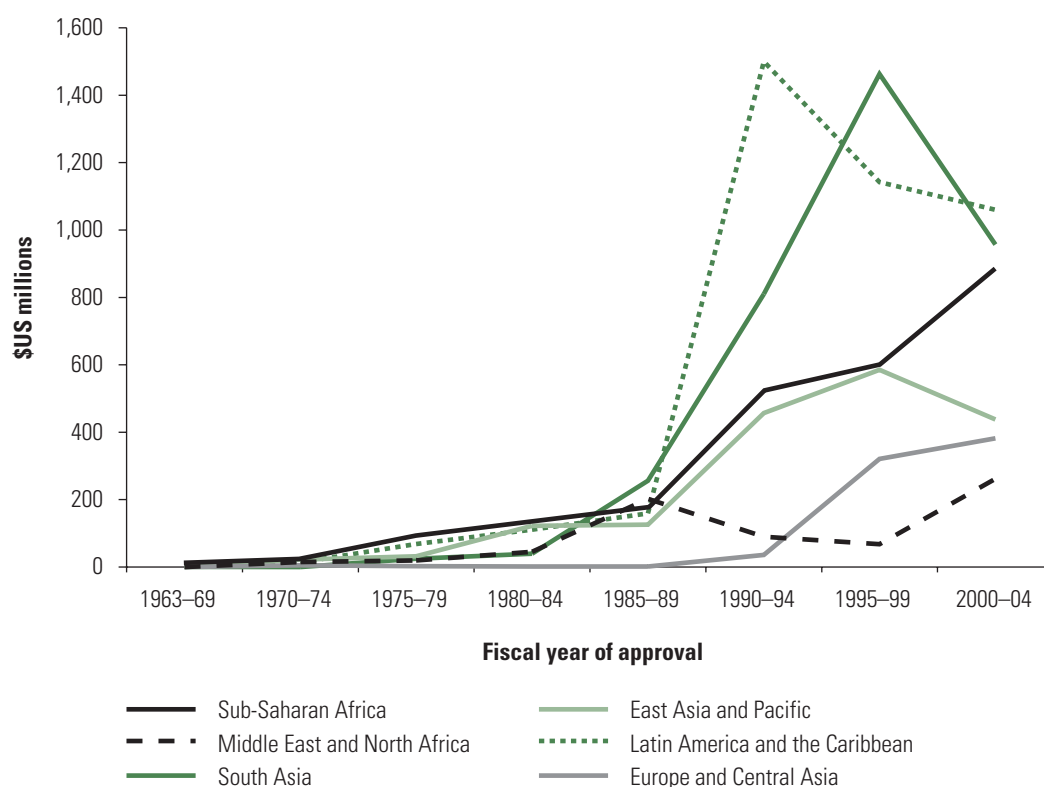
Many of the projects from other sectors have small primary education components.

(15 percent) are development policy lending (including PRSCs [3 percent]),⁷ 11 percent are for social funds or community-driven-type

projects, 4 percent are for other investment projects, and 1 percent for emergency lending.⁸

The dramatic increase in primary education commitments managed by other sectors is due to a proliferation of projects with relatively small primary education components. As can be seen in figure 2.3, the number of newly approved projects with primary expenditure managed by the Education Sector has stabilized at about 70 per five-year period, while the number managed by other sectors has increased every period since 1990. That accounts for more than two-thirds (69 percent) of projects with any primary education spending in 2000–04.

The projects managed by other sectors committed, on average, \$8 million to primary education, while those managed by the Education Sector had primary education commitments of about \$40–\$55 million each.⁹ Only 2 percent of the 343 projects with any primary education expenditure managed by other sectors since 1963 allocated half or more

Figure 2.2: Increase in New Commitments for Primary Education, by Region

Source: World Bank databases, one for projects managed by the Education Sector and a second for projects managed by other sectors.

Notes: Includes projects in all sectors with any primary education expenditure; half of commitments coded as general education were assumed to be for primary education. The entire commitment for a project is allocated to the year the project was approved.

of project commitments to primary education. Among projects with any primary expenditure managed by the Education Sector, however, the figure was 49 percent.

The shift in the composition of the portfolio from primary education investment projects managed by the Education Sector to smaller

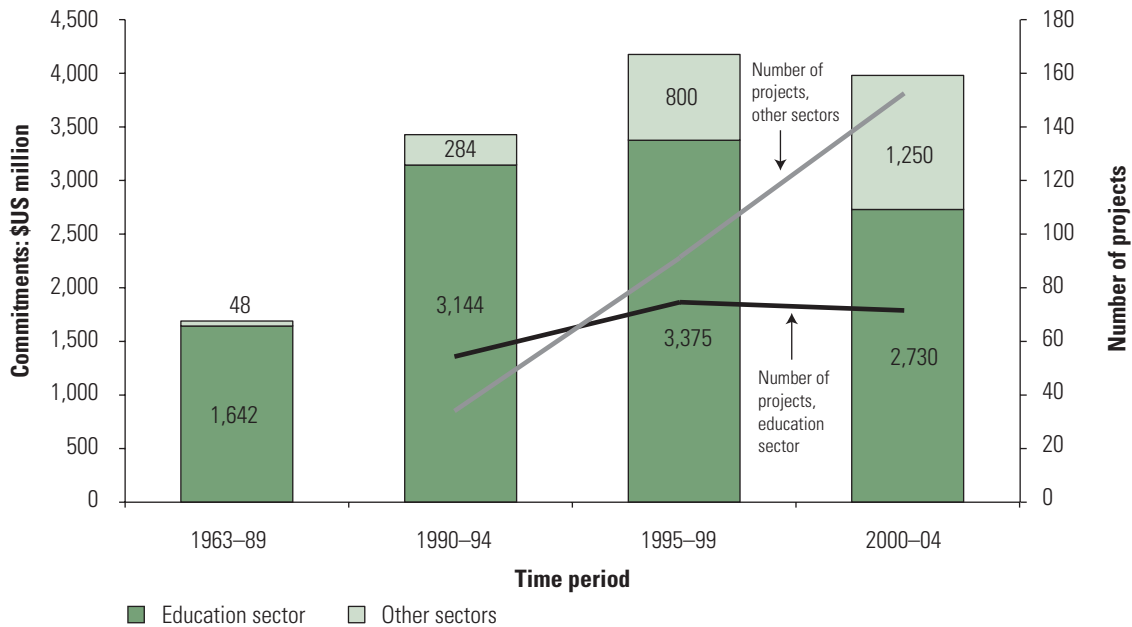
primary education components managed by other sectors and to policy-type lending has potential implications in several areas: the relevance of primary education lending to sector policies and strategies; the adequacy of supervision, monitoring, and evaluation; and the effectiveness and impact of primary education lending.¹⁰

Table 2.1: Cumulative Projects and Commitments for Primary Education, 1963–2005, by Region

	Sub-Saharan Africa	Latin America and the Caribbean	South Asia	East Asia and Pacific	Middle East and North Africa	Europe and Central Asia	Total
Number of projects approved	280	176	65	84	57	68	730
New commitments (millions of nominal US\$)	2,619	4,356	3,649	1,886	760	814	14,084

Source: World Bank database.

Figure 2.3: New Commitments to Primary Education by Managing Sector



Source: World Bank databases, one for projects managed by the Education Sector and a second for projects managed by other sectors.
 Note: Includes projects with any primary education expenditure; half of commitments coded as general education were assumed to be for primary education.

However, many of the projects approved in the most recent period are still active, and few of the completed policy-type lending operations have been independently assessed.¹¹ Thus, this evaluation has not been able to assess fully and systematically the relative advantages and disadvantages of these different approaches, the management of primary education lending by other sectors, or the differential impact of various kinds of projects on learning outcomes.

Also, in recent years an increasing number of countries have begun to integrate their education reform efforts through sectorwide planning and program support (as opposed to project support) from donor agencies. A sectorwide approach (SWAp) to financial assistance has become a growing feature in the Bank

Lending for primary education grew, while that of other education subsectors fluctuated or fell.

education portfolio—for example, in its support to primary education in Uganda and in India (not yet evaluated). However, there is no particular Bank instrument for this

approach. In some places the approach consists of a mix of adjustment and investment instruments. See box 2.1 for a description of the Bank’s sectorwide approach in Uganda.

Since 1990 the share of Bank education lending allocated to primary education has increased, while that to some other subsectors, particularly vocational education, has diminished. Figure 2.4 shows the funding commitments over five consecutive five-year periods. Most striking is the strong growth of funding for the sector as a whole, until the downturn in 2000–04.

Concerning subsector support, until 1990 education lending was predominantly for tertiary and vocational education, a reflection of the Bank’s focus on manpower planning and technical skills development. The early 1990s saw a massive shift to primary education (already under way in the late 1980s), reflecting the growth of the poverty-alleviation agenda and the Bank’s support for the EFA movement.

This continued until 2000–04, when its

Box 2.1: Sectorwide Lending Support in Uganda

In 1996 Uganda's President Museveni made a pre-election commitment to eliminate primary school fees for up to four children in each family as of the new school year, ushering in what is now called the *big bang approach* to universal primary education. The policy almost doubled primary school enrollments in 1997.

To help the Ministry of Education and Sports cope with this enrollment explosion, the government and the Bank quickly prepared a sectorwide program in 1988, called the Education Sector Adjustment Credit (ESAC). The project aimed to improve the efficient use of public resources and the availability of quality inputs, and to strengthen sector management. ESAC funds, combining an IDA credit of \$80 million and a Highly-Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) debt-reduction grant of \$75 million, were disbursed annually in the form of budget support. The ESAC acted as a catalyst for a group of funding agencies working together in budget support to the sector.

An IEG evaluation of ESAC found that the project was successful in partially mitigating the effects of the explosive expansion on education quality. Ultimately, however, ESAC targets for reducing pupil:teacher and pupil:textbook ratios were not met, largely because of unanticipated, continuing growth in enrollments. From the

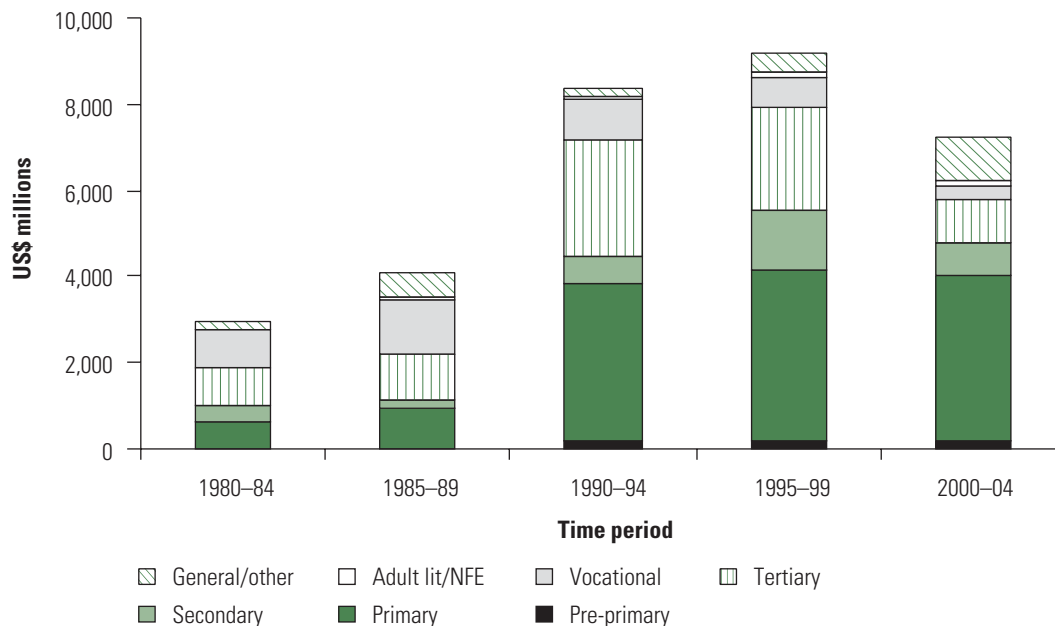
evidence available, the rapid expansion of enrollments led to a deterioration in both education quality and learning outcomes.

A more conventional Bank investment project, the Primary Education and Teacher Development Project (PETDP), had already been under implementation for five of its seven years when ESAC was launched. With the new sectorwide project, PETDP was re-energized and reoriented to the new universal primary education effort.

In the end, ESAC and PETDP became mutually supportive. ESAC is highly regarded for its role in improving sector planning and budgeting functions, but PETDP was considered essential as a source of innovative ideas and training.

Rapid expansion of inputs, financed through ESAC, depended on development over time through PETDP of systems for teacher development, textbook procurement, classroom construction, and some capacity to further develop and manage these systems. *It has not yet been demonstrated in Uganda that capacity and institution building needs in the sector can be sufficiently addressed through budget support alone* (IEG 2004c, p. 28).

Figure 2.4: Education Commitments by Subsector and Time Period



Source: World Bank databases, one for projects managed by the Education Sector and one for projects managed by other sectors.

Note: This covers education lending from the education and other sectors; half of commitments coded as general education were assumed to be for primary education.

commitments stabilized, compared with all other subsectors, except general education, in which they fell. Commitments to vocational education fell steadily from 1990 onward; those to secondary and tertiary have waxed and waned. Commitments to general education increased, as a reflection of the above-mentioned increase in lending from outside the education sector.

Government financial commitment to primary education has also increased in many countries, often influenced by Bank policy development support. Among the 12 countries where IEG conducted field studies, half increased primary education's share of total public education expenditure between 1995 and 2003. Three of them—India, Mali, and Niger—

Government financial commitment to primary education has also grown.

did so by 15–35 percentage points. In three countries the proportions stayed the same, and in two others the proportions declined.

During the late 1980s and 1990s, government financial commitment to primary education became one of the focal points of World Bank adjustment (development policy) lending in many countries. In all four African countries studied—Ghana, Mali, Niger, and Uganda—adjustment projects were launched in which lending conditions included moving or holding expenditures in primary (or basic) education to a relatively high level (40–60 percent of total). All four countries met or exceeded their adjustment targets, despite political and economic challenges, which shows how seriously these conditions were taken.¹²

Evolution of Objectives, from Expansion to Learning Outcomes

Investment projects managed by the Education Sector that were mainly concerned with primary education had multiple objectives. Table 2.2 presents the most

Almost all projects address sector management and education quality.

frequently cited objectives of 30 randomly selected projects that allocate at least half of commitments to primary education, among those that had closed since fiscal 1995 or that were still active as of the end of fiscal 2004.

For the purpose of this evaluation, the term *primary education project* refers to investment projects managed by the Education Sector that allocate at least half of all commitments to primary education. The 20 closed projects in table 2.1 were approved during the period 1988–96, and the 10 active projects were approved roughly a decade later, from 1998 to 2004.

The objectives most frequently cited—found in virtually all primary education projects—were to improve sector management or governance and to improve the quality of education. Whereas in completed projects, quality of education was mostly indicated by increases in inputs (books and materials) and outputs (trained teachers), ongoing projects have also included learning outcomes as indicators of quality improvement.¹³ In addition, roughly two-thirds of all projects aimed to expand enrollments and improve equity with respect to gender, urban-rural residence, the poor, the disabled, or otherwise disadvantaged children.¹⁴ A little more than half attempted to improve the “internal efficiency” of primary education systems by reducing repetition and dropout rates.¹⁵ These objectives were remarkably stable across both completed and active projects.

Only one in five primary education projects had an explicit objective to improve learning outcomes or basic skills. This was equally true for both completed and ongoing projects. A separate review of appraisal documents covering the 23 primary education projects managed by the Education Sector and approved in fiscal 2005 and most of fiscal 2006¹⁶ found, again, that only about one in five projects (22 percent of the total) had an explicit development objective to improve learning outcomes.

Adjustment and development policy lending projects that support primary

Table 2.2: Objectives of Education Investment Projects That Allocate at Least 50 Percent of Expenditure to Primary Education (percent of projects with objective)

Stated objective	Projects completed since		
	fiscal 1995 (n = 20)	Active projects (n = 10)	All projects (n = 30)
Improve sector management or governance ^a	95	100	97
Improve educational quality ^b	90	100	93
Increase enrollment	65	70	67
Improve equity ^c	60	65	62
Increase internal efficiency ^d	60	50	57
Improve learning outcomes	20	20	20

Source: IEG 2004d, table 4, and project appraisal documents.

a. Includes sector governance, management capacity, monitoring, and evaluation.

b. Usually expressed in terms of inputs and outputs.

c. Equity with respect to gender, the poor, rural, ethnic minorities, disabled, and otherwise disadvantaged.

d. Reduced dropout and repetition.

education pursued a somewhat different mix of objectives.¹⁷ Unlike investment projects, these projects all focused on increased enrollment, and only about 60 percent covered sectoral management. However, they were similar to investment projects in that almost all covered improved quality (again, mostly inputs and outputs), about 60 percent equity improvement, and about half improved educational efficiency.

Also, as with investment projects, few (20 percent) had learning outcomes objectives. A growing number of DPLs are multisectoral PRSCs, of which 28 in 18 countries (some having multiple PRSCs) had a basic education focus approved by the Bank during fiscal 2001–05.

Among these projects, about 61 percent covered quality improvement or service delivery. About 45 percent covered improving access and increasing or maintaining funding for education (or primary education). In only two countries, Nicaragua and Uganda, were learning outcomes emphasized.

Investment projects containing primary education managed by other sectors were almost entirely focused on improved enrollment and equity objectives. Sixty percent of these had equity improvement as an objective, and half cited increased enrollment.

Only 30 percent had an objective of raising educational quality; and just one in five aimed to improve sector management. None had learning outcomes objectives.

Primary education projects since 1990 allocate less to “hardware” and more to “software.” In the

1960s, 1970s, and into the 1980s, the Bank emphasized “hardware” (civil works and goods, including distribution of textbooks).

In response to research showing the influence of curriculum reform, better teaching, good management, and community involvement (Lockheed and Verspoor 1991; Fuller 1987),¹⁸ emphasis in the 1990s shifted to software (services and management) and, within hardware, from civil works to textbooks. Civil works and textbooks were financed in 93 percent of the projects, but the share of hardware in

Only one in five projects aims to improve learning outcomes.

Projects managed by other sectors aimed to increase enrollments and equity, but not learning outcomes.

Education infrastructure now gets only slightly more than curriculum, teaching, management, and community involvement.

overall project expenditures has declined from 82 percent before 1990 to 53 percent in fiscal 2000–04. The share for textbooks increased from about 2 percent before 1990 to about 11–12 percent in the early 1990s and has been maintained, while the share of civil works in primary education commitments has declined by half, from 45 percent to 22 percent.

Bank-Supported Analytic Work

Analytic work related to primary education and financed by the Bank’s Education Sector stabilized during fiscal 2000–05 at about 17 products per year (see table 2.3).¹⁹ This covers roughly two-thirds to three-quarters of all analytic work managed by

A large share of education analysis is on primary education.

the Education Sector during those years. Much of this work was conducted in the context of sectorwide reviews. A few studies (14 of 103 in this 6-year period) focused exclusively on problems arising in primary

The analytic work is rarely focused primarily on learning outcomes.

education—either in a specific country or in the context of regional or global primary education papers.

Bank-sponsored analytic work on primary education has rarely put its main focus on learning outcomes. Among the 14 studies delivered in fiscal 2000–05 that focused exclusively on primary education, only three contained in-depth assessments of learning outcomes.²⁰ The others focused on primary education strategy, finance, curriculum, and enrollments. The 89 studies touching on primary education as part of the overall education agenda covered topics such as national education strategies and reforms, finance and cost-effectiveness, teacher training and incentives, private education, decentralization, textbook quality, community involvement, education management, and girls’ education.

Only three of these sectorwide papers, all managed by the Latin America and Caribbean Region, had as their major focus learning outcomes and achievement.²¹ In the Africa Region, the Human Development Sector has sponsored more than a dozen Country Status Reports (CSRs) in education and health as inputs into debt-reduction decisions, sector plans, PRSPs, and PRSCs.

Initially (1999–2000) the CSRs did not cover learning outcomes, but they subsequently did showcase some student achievement measures in relation to funding levels and, in some cases, school and socioeconomic status. However, using these measures in planning

Table 2.3: Analytic Work on Primary Education Managed by the Education Sector, Fiscal 2000–05

Fiscal year delivered	Analytic work exclusively on primary education		Analytic work on education, including primary		Total analytic work with any primary	Total analytic work	Percent of total exclusively primary	Percent of total w/any primary
	Country level	Regional or global	Country level	Regional or global				
2000	3	0	9	7	19	24	13	79
2001	0	0	9	0	9	13	0	69
2002	1	2	13	4	20	25	11	74
2003	1	2	12	0	15	23	13	65
2004	1	0	15	4	20	33	5	61
2005	4	0	11	5	20	26	15	77
Total	10	4	69	20	103	146	10	71

Sources: World Bank 2002a, 2003a, 2004a, 2005a, and the Education Sector Web site (<http://education.worldbank.org>).

still appears to be problematic: in Madagascar, Mozambique, and Rwanda, which have completed CSRs that addressed learning outcomes and which subsequently launched new PRSCs, there is no mention of learning outcomes in the PRSCs.

Much analytic work sponsored by other sectors of the Bank also is relevant to primary education—for example, in public expenditure reviews, country economic memoranda, and poverty assessments, generally sponsored by the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network. When this work is added to the Education Sector work, the volume of analytic work relevant to primary education during 2000–05 more than doubles.²² However, here too there is little work with direct relevance to learning outcomes. Likewise, this evaluation’s case studies in Mali, Pakistan, Peru, and Romania (see box 2.2) showed little explicit coverage of learning outcomes in the Bank-supported analytic work related to primary education.

Performance Ratings of Primary Education Projects

All Bank-financed projects are subject to self-evaluation shortly after they are completed. These evaluations are then validated by IEG. Projects are rated on their outcomes in relation to their objectives, sustainability, and institutional development impact.²³ Table 2.4 summarizes the ratings for primary education projects.²⁴

Overall, the outcome of 82 percent of primary education projects was rated moderately satisfactory or better. These ratings are above the average for the rest of the

education sector (78 percent) and substantially higher than the average for all sectors (72 percent). Ratings for sustainability were lower, with 62 percent rated

Eighty-two percent of primary education projects have been rated moderately satisfactory or better on outcomes.

Box 2.2: Analytic Work in Case Study Countries: Where Are the Learning Outcomes?

The case studies for Mali, Pakistan, Peru, and Romania all found that the Bank had supported useful analytical work relevant to primary education. They were, however, generally light in their treatment of learning outcomes.

Mali. Several studies have been undertaken emphasizing access (especially gender equity), but a comprehensive sectorwide review has yet to be done. The use of the results of analytic work has added to the credibility of the Bank team and has helped the government adopt a pattern of planning based on data. However, the Bank sector work has not focused on learning outcomes (except in a bilingual education pilot) or on the constraints to the delivery of goods to its resource-starved schools.

Pakistan. The Bank supported a sectorwide review in 1988 that set the stage for subsequent policy dialogue and lending, but this is out of date. It also supported some influential studies on specific themes, such as demand for girls’ schooling and devolution of educational management. Overlooked have been studies of institutional capacity and institutional incentives. Also, the quality and accuracy of ministry data, and how to improve them, need to be studied.

Peru. Two large diagnostic studies were undertaken in 1993 and

1999 that helped to build consensus on sector improvements. The improvements subsequently appeared in Bank-supported investment and adjustment projects, emphasizing better infrastructure, bilingual education, school autonomy, teacher policy, equity, and accountability. While Bank support also built strong research and assessment capacity in the government, it did not press for a longitudinal analysis of student learning outcomes or for impact assessments of project interventions (both within the competence of local researchers).

Romania. The Bank supported sector work related to the country’s economic transition, which was fed into its Education Reform Project. In 2000 a World Bank Institute case study was conducted on education decentralization, and in 2002 an Education Policy Note was released. Capacity has been built for solid student assessments, but little attention has been given to mining the outcomes data for findings related to improved policy and practice. Also, education has not been included in public expenditure reviews (except for the most recent) and is almost absent from country economic memoranda, indicating incipient but still underdeveloped intersectoral linkages and planning.

Table 2.4: IEG Ratings of Completed Primary Education Projects, by Year of Approval

	Outcome (% moderately satisfactory or better)	Sustainability (% likely or highly likely)	Institutional development impact (% substantial or high)
Fiscal year approved			
Before 1990	76	50	20
1990–94	89	66	19
1995–99	85	76	38
All primary education projects	82	62	25
(Number of projects)	(117)	(104)	(106)
All education projects excluding primary	78	66	46
All Bank-supported projects	72	50	36

Source: World Bank database, as reported in IEG 2004d.

Note: *Primary education projects* are defined as those managed by the Education Sector and that allocated at least half of total commitments to primary education. IEG introduced sustainability and institutional development impact ratings more recently than the outcome rating, so early projects were not rated in these dimensions. The comparison ratings for all education projects and all Bank-supported projects are for those projects that closed in fiscal 1990–2001.

likely or highly likely to be sustainable over the whole period, somewhat below the average for other education projects, but above the Bank-wide average for 1990–2001.

Over time, the sustainability ratings for primary education projects have steadily improved—about three-quarters of the most recent projects are rated likely or highly likely on sustainability. This is in contrast with the ratings for institutional development. The overall average of 25 percent of projects with substantial or high institutional development impact is well below that for the Education Sector (excluding primary) and the Bank-wide average for recent years.

The considerable improvement in institutional development ratings (to 38 percent substantial or high) in the late 1990s is encouraging, but the ratings are still lower than for other education projects. They are also low in an absolute sense, particularly given that institu-

tional objectives figured in virtually all projects managed by the Education Sector.

These IEG ratings convey the extent to which projects achieved their overall objectives. In virtually all cases, however, there was more than one objective, and many of the projects included objectives for other subsectors.

The next two chapters take a closer look at the extent to which the Bank's primary education support has successfully met individual objectives having to do with better outcomes, such as expanded enrollments and learning achievement (chapter 3) and improved governance and institutions (chapter 4). They draw on findings from both the portfolio review and field-based project assessments, case studies, and an impact evaluation to point to successful and unsuccessful strategies, lessons learned, and the value added by the Bank's involvement.

