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Introduction: emergence of new types of donors in international educational cooperation

- 1 The emergence of former recipient countries as donors is a significant factor that is transforming the ideas and structure of international educational development. For people who are used to the traditional donor community’s way of doing things, emerging donors look very different from, and sometimes even threatening to, the existing structure. Many traditional donors have commissioned research to grasp the current status and trends of assistance by these emerging donors (King, 2010; Manning, 2006; Rowlands, 2008; Humphrey, 2011). At first, “emerging donor” was used almost interchangeably with “non-DAC (Development Assistance Committee) donor”. However, 24 DAC memberships are limited to Europe and North America; exceptions are Japan (a member since 1961) and South Korea (which joined in 2010). This fact indicates that the DAC/non-DAC dichotomy is far short of grasping reality. Chun, Munyi, and Lee provide other categorizations, namely, OECD/European Union members; OECD/non-European Union members; European Union/non-OECD members; and non-OECD/non-European Union members (2010: 790–91). The more common categorization is by region – Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Middle East – and the most studied countries are the BRICs, namely, Brazil, India, China, and South Africa (reports which have conducted case studies of the BRICs include that of the

International Development Research Centre 2008). There are also studies on the operations of emerging donors approached from the perspective of recipient countries (Kassenova, 2009; Nordtveit, 2011; Sato *et al.*, 2011).

- 2 While there are diverse types of emerging donors around the world, the focus on Asia gives insight into the regionality that cuts across the national systems of bilateral donors. By comparing different national systems and practices in this region, one sees, regardless of the diversity of historical backgrounds, some common cultural roots in the philosophies and modes of operation for conducting programs of international educational cooperation. The national systems and practices in this region also hint at the limiting nature of applying the Western notion of development aid in making sense of these nontraditional donors, specifically in Asia.

Regional characteristics of donors in the Asia-Pacific region

- 3 One important characteristic of Asian philosophies for social advancement is the prime importance given to education or human resource development. In this sense, the education sector will serve to demonstrate the unique philosophical basis of aid provided by Asian countries. It resonates repeatedly in the policy statements of Asian donors, particularly Japan, South Korea, and China. At the same time, such philosophical constructs for the Asian donors' principles are mixed with Western justifications of the value of education in terms of human rights, neoliberalism, and the functionality of literacy. This is a strong basis with which to understand the contrast of priorities within the education sector between traditional DAC donors and Asian nontraditional actors. The former has concentrated a large part of its resources on basic education, particularly until the middle of the first decade of the 2000s. The latter, on the other hand, tends to emphasize training of technicians and specialists in various industries, school-based vocational education, and higher education, while basic education is also within the scope of assistance, particularly in terms of building infrastructure and purchasing equipment for schools.
- 4 The cases of Japan (Yamada, 2014) and South Korea (Chung, 2014) demonstrate how the Asian DAC members have been balancing the Asian philosophy of human resource development and the global agenda of Education for All (EFA). While Japan was the sole non-Western DAC member in 1964, South Korea joined the DAC donor community in 2010. Therefore, although Korea's emergence on the scene of development assistance is too recent for it to be called a traditional donor, it shares Japan's ambivalence. It is interesting to look at the Korean and Japanese cases side by side and see the similarities between the countries' domestic discourse on the alignment with global trends alongside their search for a unique Korean model or Japanese model. The desire to demonstrate uniqueness is closely linked with both countries' pride that they emerged from the state of developing countries, and have experiences to share with countries that are also aspiring to follow suit along similar paths of development.
- 5 India and China are often offered as symbolic cases of emerging donors. However, it is interesting to note that scholars and policymakers of these two countries often claim that their involvement in international development assistance is not a new phenomenon at all, and that their history of cooperation has an even longer history

than Western post-World War II aid (Tilak, 2014, Niu, 2014). The term “cooperation” over “aid” is largely preferred across Asian countries, which indicates an Asian attitude of supporting fellow countries that are pursuing their own development autonomously. The messages from Tilak and Niu add some flavor to this common trait by referring to the historical roots of cooperation by India and China as a form of solidarity with countries in the South.

- 6 The diversity of schemes and channels of foreign assistance among the countries also indicates that foreign assistance is not necessarily designed and implemented according to the logics and bureaucratic procedures that those of us familiar with traditional overseas development assistance would assume. It has been widely considered in the international development community that having a specialized agency or department for official development aid is desirable for improving the strategic consistency and efficiency of the aid programs. In Asia, Japan and South Korea have specialized agencies, namely, Japan International Cooperation Agency and Korea International Cooperation Agency. Still, one can recognize that it is inaccurate to contain the respective governments’ practices of cooperation within the framework of aid in the so-called education sector. As is clear in the cases of China and India, programs of educational cooperation are often implemented by different ministries and offices that do not closely coordinate among themselves. The history of Japanese educational aid in the past few decades has been characterized by Japan’s struggle to align with the norms and structure appreciated in the international aid community, which South Korea is also going through. Such a struggle to conform may be considered a donor’s lack of maturity. However, one would also need to see the reasons for such differences. Areas of priority and methods of assistance are determined by rationalities based on the organizational structure, historical relationship with the assisted countries, and philosophies of international cooperation. In cases where the origins and logics of assistance are different, the outlook of practices would be different too, regardless of the influence of global agendas. This issue links with my earlier argument that Asian ideas about education and human resource development tend to be broader than what would typically be classified under education aid. Investment in people may take the form of skills training in factories or scholarships for university students. While the former seems not to fit the category of educational aid, according to the Asian idea of cultivating people’s skills it can be a seamless intervention to prepare technicians and engineers for industrial development.
- 7 As we move toward the target year of achieving EFA goals, 2015, the field of international educational development is experiencing a rapid paradigm shift. The paradigm shift is not caused solely by the termination of the global agenda. It is also linked with the diversification of both state and non-state actors. If we would like to understand why and how traditional and nontraditional donors in Asia are involved in educational development cooperation, we need to see them in their own contexts, not through the lens of conventional ideas about international educational aid.

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