

The University of Chicago

**A Penny for Your Thoughts: The Influence of World Bank Education Aid Programs on  
Attitudes**

By Oliver Keimweiss



Submitted for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Public  
Policy Studies and a Master of Arts Degree in International Relations

MA Readers: Dr. Alan Zarychta, Dr. Burcu Pinar Alakoc

BA Readers: Dr. Maria Bautista, Daniel Sonnenstuhl

04/15/2024

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the question of World Bank influence over children's attitude formation through its K-12 education programs in the Global South. It aims to uncover the mechanisms through which the World Bank can drive changes in attitudes towards its ideology and the extent to which World Bank programs accomplish that task. This thesis uses a mixed methods approach combining qualitative case-study analyses of four World Bank education programs from Latin America and North Africa and a quantitative difference-in-differences analysis of data from the World Values Survey focusing on attitudes related to democracy, secularism, and competition. The qualitative evidence demonstrates considerable variation in the extent to which education programs could plausibly influence attitude formation, and the quantitative evidence does not show support for a relationship between World Bank interventions and attitudes that align with World Bank ideology. These findings, though limited, challenge assertions of global influence over attitudes made across comparative education and global development literature.

## Table of Contents

<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b><i>The World Bank and Attitude Influence: Background and Definitions</i></b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b><i>Literature Review</i></b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b><i>Theoretical Argument</i></b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b><i>Methodology</i></b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b><i>Qualitative Case Studies</i></b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>PROMER</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>REACT</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>PARSEM</b> .....	<b>23</b>
<b>ECEEP</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b><i>Quantitative Analysis</i></b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>Data</b> .....	<b>32</b>
<b>Method</b> .....	<b>35</b>
<b>Results</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b><i>Discussion</i></b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b><i>Limitations</i></b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b><i>Conclusion</i></b> .....	<b>45</b>
<b><i>Bibliography</i></b> .....	<b>47</b>

## Introduction

Transnational organizations like the World Bank, OECD, and IMF are involved in thousands of K-12 education aid projects around the world. The World Bank particularly stands out as the world's largest education lender with billions of dollars invested yearly.<sup>1</sup> Critics and supporters of the Bank alike regularly assert that World Bank K-12 education programs influence children's attitude production towards more Western, neoliberal ideologies. This thesis will explore how, and if, these programs accomplish that task. The paper proceeds by developing a theory of potential influence and then drawing on qualitative and quantitative evidence to assess four programs' likelihood of influence. The primary objectives of this inquiry are to describe the major features of these programs, identify pathways through which they might influence attitudes, and consider evidence to determine whether that influence occurs.

Western-dominated transnational organizations constitute a significant part of Western soft power efforts in the Global South. In the modern era, most actors involved in education aid outwardly project predominantly altruistic intentions, but the structure of aid could allow a self-interested actor to utilize aid regimes for gain.<sup>2</sup> A preliminary understanding of the World Bank's influence on childhood attitude production contributes to the discussion of transnational organizations' impact through education. If the Bank has influenced attitude formation, then arguments of overreach gain support. If not, then perhaps researchers have overstated the impact of World Bank interventions.

---

<sup>1</sup> Steven J Klees, "Beyond Neoliberalism: Reflections on Capitalism and Education," *Policy Futures in Education* 18, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 9–29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210317715814>.

<sup>2</sup> Francine Menashy, *International Aid to Education: Power Dynamics in an Era of Partnership* (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2019).

From a perspective of transnational organizations' power, this research contributes to an understanding of micro-level outcomes. In these programs, most of the World Bank's power is structural or productive.<sup>3</sup> In other words, rather than direct coercion, the Bank's status as perceived experts and ability to define the terms of success give it power. This power could theoretically reach the classroom level and lead students to view the World Bank's ideology as "correct" due to its source's positionality. This inquiry explores the mechanisms through which this power acts and seeks to understand whether or not barriers exist between the Bank and classrooms that dilute its power.

With notable limitations, this thesis demonstrates that World Bank programs differ greatly in their likelihood of influencing children's attitude formation, and initial quantitative evidence of influence is lacking. This finding, which is intended to be analytical and not normative, does not imply that critics are wrong to critique the World Bank's disproportionate power over global policymaking in education, but it suggests that in the case of certain education programs, that power reaches children in no more than a limited fashion, if at all.

## **The World Bank and Attitude Influence: Background and Definitions**

Many (if not most) World Bank education aid programs include policies that undeniably and unashamedly embrace neoliberal features such as privatization or the promotion of competition within schools. Schools are widely considered a primary avenue for the cross-generational transmission of culture and attitudes, so when transnational organizations push an ideological

---

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

agenda, some scholars expect that agenda to reach the classroom and influence children.<sup>4</sup> Before diving into the evidence, it is important to define the context.

The World Bank is a large institution with a diverse array of perspectives, but it has traditionally been mostly staffed by Western-trained economists aligned with a specific approach to policymaking.<sup>5</sup> The Bank's core tenets, funding sources, and leading figures have historically been dominated by neoliberal policy prescriptions (fiscal austerity, for example), Western approaches to social problems (like valuing equality over equity), and a generally globalist outlook. This ideological school's domination held particular power within the World Bank from 1990 to 2010, an era which encompasses much of scholars' attention and makes up most this paper's evidence.<sup>6</sup> This dominant system of beliefs, hereafter "World Bank Ideology," situates the Bank (which of course is a bank) well to handle economic development efforts, but its application to public education aid is more dubious. Supporters claim that an economic-minded approach is necessary for sustainable education in the modern globalized economy, but detractors argue that essentially individualistic World Bank Ideology is fundamentally incompatible with the inherently collectivist, redistributionist institution of public education.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these arguments, the World Bank is incredibly active in the global education space. Since the 1980s, the Bank has lent more money in education aid than any other funder.<sup>8</sup> The Bank has initiated thousands of education projects with funding reaching \$5 billion per year in 2010, 7% of the Bank's overall budget.<sup>9</sup> World Bank programs typically feature conditional loans or grants and

---

<sup>4</sup> Martin Carnoy, "Education as Cultural Imperialism: A Reply," *Comparative Education Review* 19, no. 2 (1975): 286–89, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1187773>.

<sup>5</sup> Klees, "Beyond Neoliberalism".

<sup>6</sup> Steven J. Klees, Joel Samoff, and Nelly P. Stromquist, eds., *The World Bank and Education: Critiques and Alternatives* (Rotterdam: SensePublishers, 2012), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-903-9>.

<sup>7</sup> Klees, "Beyond Neoliberalism".

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> "Learning for All: Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development - World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020 : Executive Summary (English).," PDF (Washington, DC: World Bank Group), accessed January 11, 2024, <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/685531468337836407/Learning-for-all-investing-in->

policy assistance. Since the turn of the millennium, some of the Bank's most common education interventions are education for all, universal standardized tests, teacher training courses, and physical infrastructure investments.<sup>10</sup> This thesis uses evidence from four programs to explore the relationship between some of these practices and changes in children's attitude production.

For this research, attitudes are defined as the political and economic lens through which people see the world. Put another way, attitudes are culturally and ideologically aligned ways of thinking. A person whose attitudes are influenced by World Bank Ideology might view competition as enviable and redistribution as suspect. Increased secularism, cosmopolitanism, and support for democracy would also be associated with this basket of values. This thesis is particularly interested in attitude formation through childhood. During childhood, attitudes are neither fully developed nor measurable with existing data, but children's experiences and partial-attitudes contribute to the production of that child's attitudes as an adult.<sup>11</sup> A World Bank intervention which influences attitudes (even for a limited time) during childhood can maintain its influence through to adulthood.

The possible influence that this research investigates can be categorized into the overlapping categories of direct, mediated, or indirect. Direct influence occurs when actions or interactions change attitudes without mediators. An example of this would be classroom instruction in explicit or implicit support of World Bank Ideology. Direct influence of adult actors can occur when the World Bank works closely with adult stakeholders and in doing so influences their attitudes. Mediated influence occurs through mechanisms wherein World Bank Ideology is passed through these directly influenced actors. For example, if the Bank operates a teacher training program that directly

---

[peoples-knowledge-and-skills-to-promote-development-World-Bank-Group-education-strategy-2020-executive-summary](https://the docs.worldbank.org/en/doc/deddc b43 bddd1 db90 cb39 a96 c4909 c2c-0090012021/original/INT-FY10-Annual-Report.pdf); "Integrity Vice Presidency Annual Report - Fiscal 2010" (World Bank Group, 2010), <https://the docs.worldbank.org/en/doc/deddc b43 bddd1 db90 cb39 a96 c4909 c2c-0090012021/original/INT-FY10-Annual-Report.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Klees, "Beyond Neoliberalism"; "Learning for All."

<sup>11</sup> Carnoy, "Education as Cultural Imperialism."

influences teachers' attitudes, the ideology's subsequent influence over those teachers' students would be mediated. Lastly, indirect influence occurs when the World Bank modifies the larger cultural themes through which people derive their attitudes. Rather than the identifiable paths of interaction that characterize direct and mediated influence, indirect influence occurs when policies change the overall culture of a community and alter attitudes. None of these three types of influence necessarily occur intentionally, but all could plausibly be present in World Bank education aid programs.

## Literature Review

The debate around international education aid's influence over attitudes has largely focused on the normative merits of that influence. In the 1970s, Martin Carnoy targeted education aid agendas as "cultural imperialism", claiming that the West intentionally used education aid programs to maliciously spread capitalist ideology.<sup>12</sup> Carnoy saw education aid programs as arms of a larger Western effort to subjugate the rest of the world. Robert Koehl similarly accepted education's ability to be a tool of colonial power, but he saw education aid's character as more fluid. To Koehl, education aid programs like the World Bank's can be a source of good despite their risks, and at least some of the minds behind them have altruistic intentions.<sup>13</sup> The debate between the two resembles the debate today. The question is not if education aid can be used to spread Western attitudes. Instead, researchers debate the character of that spread.

---

<sup>12</sup> Carnoy, "Education as Cultural Imperialism."

<sup>13</sup> Koehl, Robert. "Cultural Imperialism as Education: An Indictment." Edited by Martin Carnoy. *Comparative Education Review* 19, no. 2 (1975): 276–85. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1187772>.



The academic conversation around international education aid’s cultural power is not limited to the World Bank. As one scholar put it, global organizations are the “primary carriers of world cultural models.”<sup>14</sup> Transnational organizations hold expert status among diverse populations around the world, and they have the legitimacy required to influence policy. Policy feedback theory suggests that policy can shape a population’s attitudes by influencing the way people see themselves as citizens. This effect has particular strength within large scale, visible, long-lasting, and directly administered policies.<sup>15</sup> Put together, policy feedback theory and the status of transnational organizations suggest that those organizations should be expected to have a significant impact on attitudes.

Some supporters of Western-led education aid point to a positive side of Western ideologies. For example, Kwame Anthony Appiah sees education initiatives that foster cosmopolitanism, an attitude sometimes lumped into that basket of values, as normatively good because cosmopolitanism encourages humanitarian pluralism while respecting diversity.<sup>16</sup> Whether World Bank programs constitute cosmopolitan efforts likely depends on the program, but Appiah’s and similar arguments defend Western attitudes’ insertion into global education policies. The World Bank itself, not necessarily a trustworthy source on the topic, also produces a mountain of scholarship to defend its work, but it focuses heavily on outcomes and rarely addresses cultural influence.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Patricia Bromley et al., “Education Reform in the Twenty-First Century: Declining Emphases in International Organisation Reports, 1998–2018,” *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 19, no. 1 (January 1, 2021): 23–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2020.1816159>.

<sup>15</sup> Andrea Louise Campbell, “Policy Makes Mass Politics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 15, no. 1 (2012): 333–51, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-012610-135202>.

<sup>16</sup> Kwame Anthony Appiah, “Chapter 6: Education for Global Citizenship,” *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* 107, no. 1 (2008): 83–99, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-7984.2008.00133.x>.

<sup>17</sup> Klees, Samoff, and Stromquist, *The World Bank*.

Many disagree with Appiah. Most of those who write about the World Bank's education aid programs are critical.<sup>18</sup> Nationalists and pluralists alike fear the erasure of identities by education aid schemes. Pakistani scholar Hazir Ullah, for example, worries that when schools promote Western attitudes, it can diminish national and local identity.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Steven Klees, perhaps the most outspoken critic of World Bank education policy, grants the Bank the nickname "MOB (Monopoly Opinion Bank)" for its promotion of World Bank Ideology at the expense of alternatives.<sup>20</sup> Leon Tikly further criticizes the World Bank as an extension of Western nations which forces children "into a Western way of thinking."<sup>21</sup>

Eleftherios Klerides separates comparative education scholars into three International Relations-aligned camps. Each of the camps has something to say on the topic of influence over attitudes. Realists such as Tikly believe that powerful nations shrewdly use education to "gain international position" and build favorable national identities.<sup>22</sup> Realists generally ascribe power to nations, with organizations like the World Bank functioning as mechanisms for that power. Rationalists like Appiah see education as a potential instrument to decrease ethnocentrism and spread cosmopolitanism without the zero-sum-game angle of realists. Rationalists view the global system more fluidly, with power in the hands of an increasingly liberal, multilateral global order. The third group, revolutionists, see education as "a tool for radical transformation" currently wielded maliciously by neo-imperialists.<sup>23</sup> Unlike realists' power-based approach and rationalists' more

---

<sup>18</sup> Michele Schweisfurth, Matthew A. M. Thomas, and Amy Smail, "Revisiting Comparative Pedagogy: Methodologies, Themes and Research Communities since 2000," *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 52, no. 4 (May 19, 2022): 560–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2020.1797475>.

<sup>19</sup> Hazir Ullah, "Cultural Imperialism through Education in Pakistan and the Loss of National Identity" 12 (January 1, 2012): 215–22, <https://doi.org/10.5829/idosi.mejsr.2012.12.2.1670>.

<sup>20</sup> Klees, Samoff, and Stromquist, *The World Bank and Education*.

<sup>21</sup> Leon Tikly, "Education and the New Imperialism," *Comparative Education* 40, no. 2 (2004): 173–98, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4134648>.

<sup>22</sup> Eleftherios Klerides, "Comparative Education and International Relations," *Comparative Education* 59, no. 3 (July 3, 2023): 416–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2023.2216045>; Tikly, "Education and the New Imperialism."

<sup>23</sup> Klerides, "Comparative Education."; Appiah, "Education for Global Citizenship."

passive angle, revolutionists like Klees see education as a manipulable tool for social change that has been coopted by the Western establishment.<sup>24</sup> Notably, all three of these camps assert that education aid is capable of influencing attitudes. Further, most scholars appear to claim (or at least strongly imply) that World Bank education aid already does so. This thesis investigates the extent to which that may be a mistake.

## Theoretical Argument

I propose a model in which World Bank Ideology influences attitudes through a series of mediated paths. Figure 1 outlines this model in more detail. The figure shows how World Bank programs operate tangentially to the corridors through which attitude formation is influenced. Attitude production is driven by school-level factors and community and family values – the elements of this puzzle which children actually interact with. Community values and government

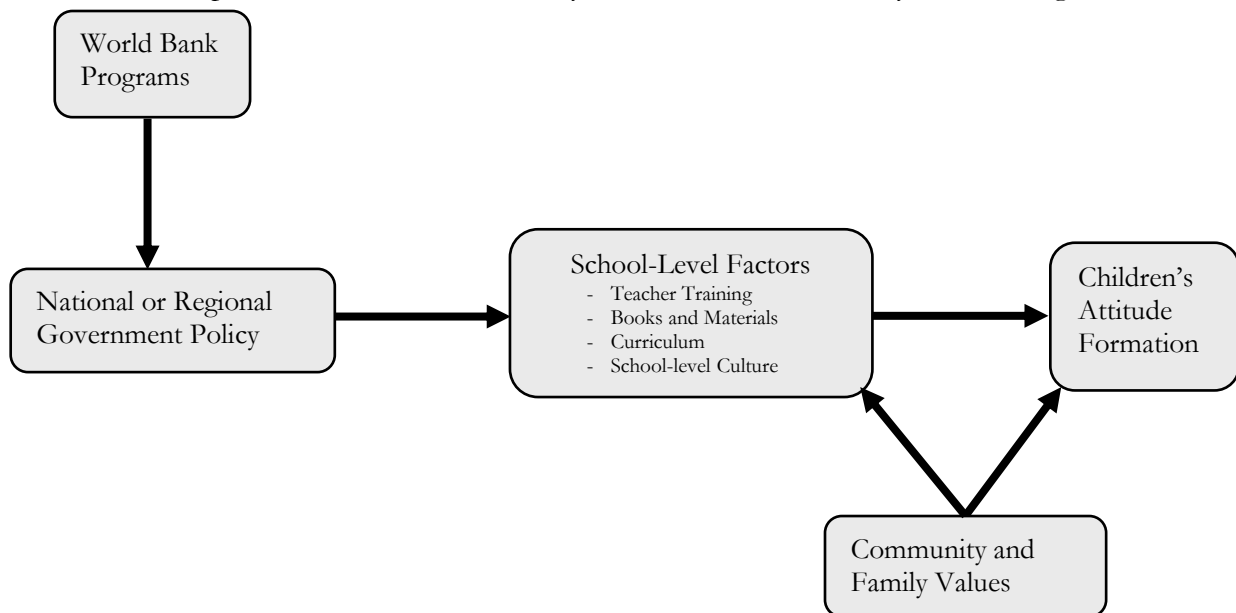


Figure 1: A Conceptual Map of World Bank K-12 Education Programs' Potential Influence on Children's Attitudes

<sup>24</sup> Klerides, "Comparative Education."; Klees, "Beyond Neoliberalism."

policy together form the school-level factors. For the most part, the Bank's role is consigned to influence over government policy. Outside of the figure, the World Bank also has the potential to indirectly influence attitudes via more overarching cultural power. Figure 1 is by no means a complete picture of the issue. Closed boxes cannot fully capture the complexity of each of the elements to this larger process, and this figure makes no attempt to determine the relative weights that each arrow could represent. Nonetheless, this simplified model is useful to conceptualize the factors that drive World Bank influence over attitudes. The primary focus of this research is on the extent to which World Bank Ideology is transferred through the pathways illustrated in Figure 1 from World Bank programs to children.

During the colonial era, Western nations' international education aid often included building a school, staffing it with their own citizens, and actively pushing propaganda.<sup>25</sup> Today, the World Bank does no such thing. Most World Bank programs focus mostly on provincial or national policies and basic infrastructure, with the Bank operating as an expert body invited to assist.<sup>26</sup> Every step of the way, local government is involved. Children rarely see World Bank staff. The Bank's power remains mostly limited to the policy level. Policymakers are financially incentivized and structurally directed to listen to Bank advice, but they make the final decisions.<sup>27</sup> Teachers may go through World Bank trainings, but their core teacher education still occurs in their home country. The alignment of policymakers' and teachers' attitudes with World Bank Ideology depends on the context more than the policy. This is not to say that World Bank programs do not include any policies which influence classroom practice, but a gap, visualized in Figure 1, exists between the policy level where the World Bank exercises its power and the classrooms where children's attitudes

---

<sup>25</sup> Philip G. Altbach, "Servitude of the Mind?: Education, Dependency, and Neocolonialism," *Teachers College Record* 79, no. 2 (December 1, 1977): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146817707900201>.

<sup>26</sup> Klees, "Beyond Neoliberalism".

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

are shaped. The closest that the Bank gets to colonial-era influence over attitudes is by promoting policies which affect the school-level factors listed in Figure 1: teacher training, classroom materials, curriculum, and school-level culture.

World Bank teacher training focuses mostly on practical pedagogical skills.<sup>28</sup> Even if those trainings are tinged with World Bank Ideology (in the extreme, one could imagine instructing teachers to encourage competition between students), teachers themselves are still likely directly influenced by their own, local backgrounds. In this way, a teacher's existing attitudes may mediate World Bank Ideology's spread towards children. These attitudes themselves are highly contextual. Most teachers' attitudes will be a result of their own upbringing, the local community in which they live, the institution in which they studied to become a teacher, and other personal factors. The most extreme version of World Bank Ideology's influence over teachers' attitudes would be if the training course contains direct influence on teachers, if the structural power of the World Bank intervention has indirectly influenced local community attitudes, and if the teacher training institution ascribed to a version of World Bank Ideology.<sup>29</sup> In this extreme hypothetical case, one might expect World Bank Ideology to be present in teachers' practice and influence students' attitudes. Such a case may exist, and that level of extremity is unnecessary for a training program to allow for World Bank Ideology to reach children. That said, a more common example might be one in which the teacher training course contains sparse ideological components (if any), the local community sees slight, indirect influence from the Bank but not enough to change classroom behavior, and the teacher training course does not ascribe to a Western ideology.

---

<sup>28</sup> "Argentina - Rural Education Improvement (PROMER) Project (English)" (World Bank Group, June 26, 2014), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/361911467998184724/Argentina-Rural-Education-Improvement-PROMER-Project>.

<sup>29</sup> An argument could be made for this last element that the World Bank program in question *did not* influence attitudes towards World Bank Ideology as they had already been influenced in that direction.

Providing classroom materials is also unlikely to allow for World Bank influence over attitudes. This is dependent on what classroom materials are provided, but even the most influential material for attitudes, books, may have limited potential for influence. Despite the World Bank's structural power due to their position as experts, most states, schools, and parents do not take kindly others deciding what their children learn.<sup>30</sup> For the most common classroom materials initiatives wherein the Bank provides the physical infrastructure necessary to conduct class (pencils, computers, and buildings), avenues for influence over attitudes are nearly nonexistent as these initiatives contain no ideological components. The World Bank also provides more substantive materials like library books or textbooks. In those cases, however, local governments by and large select the books in question.<sup>31</sup> A relevant possible path for influence in this case would be if local governments turned to the Bank for advice on those selections, but they could just as easily turn to the national ministry of education or another stakeholder.

Similar to the case of classroom materials, most states would be remiss to let a foreign entity decide their children's curriculum. World Bank funds might help develop a new curriculum, but rarely do they alone decide what it will be.<sup>32</sup> This is an important point. More than any other classroom factor, curriculum has the potential to broadly change a generation's attitudes.<sup>33</sup> Infrequently, the Bank retains some decision-making power over curriculum, and in those cases attitude influence might be expected.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, under the current understanding of World Bank power in the curricular space (as well as World Bank power over teacher training and

---

<sup>30</sup> Klees, Samoff, and Stromquist, *The World Bank*.

<sup>31</sup> Menashy, *International Aid*.

<sup>32</sup> Klees, Samoff, and Stromquist, *The World Bank*.

<sup>33</sup> Davide Cantoni et al., "Curriculum and Ideology," *Journal of Political Economy* 125, no. 2 (April 2017): 338–92, <https://doi.org/10.1086/690951>.

<sup>34</sup> Klees, Samoff, and Stromquist, *The World Bank*.

classroom materials), World Bank Ideology rarely overcomes the overwhelming force of existing national education priorities or familial and community attitudes.

School-level cultural influence constitutes a final school-level factor for potential World Bank influence over children's attitude formation. In this scenario, a culture indirectly influenced by World Bank Ideology would seep into classrooms and reach children. For example, a World Bank push for more standardized testing with an individualistic focus on student performance might create a more competitive school environment. This push would in turn indirectly influence children's opinion of competition, with children seeing competition with their peers as normal or good. Though indirect influence could modify community and family values as well, the strength of local cultures to not be changed by mere interaction with the World Bank should not be discounted. Any influence would be contextual. Students struggling under a World Bank-backed competitive school culture might come to resent that element of World Bank Ideology. Because of this variability, further investigation into the specifics of World Bank policies is necessary.

The model visualized in Figure 1 demonstrates the crux of my hypothesis. World Bank Ideology is at least three steps removed from influence on attitude production, with government policy and local culture mediating. The following analysis examines both the mechanisms through which World Bank Ideology might influence attitudes and the effectiveness of my model at explaining the reality on the ground.

## **Methodology**

To assess this question of World Bank Ideology's influence over attitude formation, I pair a qualitative analysis of four World Bank programs in Argentina, Peru, Morocco, and Egypt with a

quantitative analysis of World Values Survey (WVS) data. Together with the theoretical argument above, these analyses help derive preliminary conclusions about my hypothesis.

The qualitative analysis utilizes elements of my model (Figure 1) to track the possibilities of and limits to World Bank influence. Further, an examination of the mechanisms through which these policies are enacted reveals the extent to which the model can apply to each policy. For each policy within the larger programs, I seek to understand its feasibility as a pathway for World Bank Ideology to reach children.

For the quantitative portion, I conduct a difference-in-differences analysis of WVS attitudinal data from people who received and did not receive World Bank education programs at different times. The WVS is the ideal survey for this task. It asks the same, relevant questions in every region, allowing for comparability. Specifically, I use WVS variables for Democracy, Secularism, and Competition as my dependent variables.<sup>35</sup> My hypothesis of limited influence will be supported if we observe no tangible difference between people who received World Bank programs and those who did not. This analysis is limited in its causal power due to small sample sizes and a temporal gap between program implementation and when children can be surveyed, but it serves as a helpful complement to the qualitative analysis and the theoretical argument.

The evidence outlined below helps build a clearer understanding of if and how World Bank Ideology influences children's attitude production. It points to variation between programs and challenges assumptions of universal influence in the literature.

---

<sup>35</sup> R Inglehart et al., "World Values Survey: All Rounds - Country-Pooled Datafile." (Madrid, Spain and Vienna, Austria: JD Systems Institute & WVSA Secretariat, 2022), <https://doi.org/doi:10.14281/18241.17>.



## Qualitative Case Studies

The four World Bank programs selected for this inquiry are Argentina’s Rural Education Improvement Project (PROMER), Peru’s Results and Accountability Development Policy Loan Series Project (REACT), Morocco’s Basic Education Reform Support Program Project (PARSEM), and Egypt’s Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project (ECEEP). These programs were chosen in part for their comparability with two from southern Latin America and two from North Africa, in part for data availability with all four countries participating in every WVS survey round since 2000, and in part because each exemplifies a different type of World Bank education program. PROMER is a regional initiative with an infrastructure focus. REACT focuses exclusively on competition through standardized testing. PARSEM is an example of a program where the World Bank had little non-financial power. ECEEP is both a partnership and a rare World Bank program which includes curriculum change. All four programs began their implementation between 2004 and 2008. This range is ideal because it encompasses the peak of an era of World Bank domination of

<u>Table 1: Comprehensive overview of case studies</u>				
<b>Program</b>	<b>PROMER</b>	<b>REACT</b>	<b>PARSEM</b>	<b>ECEEP</b>
Region	Larin America	Latin America	North Africa	North Africa
Country	Argentina (Rural)	Peru	Morocco	Egypt
Program type	Infrastructure	Targeted	Financial	Partnership
Target grade range	Whole School, Primary focus	2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade	Whole school, Junior High focus	Kindergarten
Implementation years	2005-2013	2007-2011	2005-2009	2005-2014
Potential for influence	Low	High	Low	Medium
Possible mechanisms for influence	- <i>Libraries</i> - <i>Teacher training</i> - <i>Standardized testing</i> - <i>School-level culture</i>	- <i>Standardized testing</i> - <i>Media campaign</i> - <i>School-level culture</i>	- <i>Standardized testing</i> - <i>Teacher training</i> - <i>School-based projects and culture</i>	- <i>Learning materials</i> - <i>Teacher training</i> - <i>Curriculum</i> - <i>School-level culture</i>

the education aid space and one in which the Bank's ideological positions remained mostly consistent.<sup>36</sup>

### *PROMER*

In 2005, the World Bank began an extensive education intervention in rural Argentina. The program, PROMER, cost \$240 Million (USD) and aimed to reach Argentina's most remote, impoverished schools. According to the Bank, the program was a success.<sup>37</sup> The Bank claimed to have decreased the number of unenrolled sixth graders by 80%, built 2500-book libraries in every single rural school, trained 6,043 teachers, extended standardized testing to rural students in grades three and six, and completed 473 infrastructure projects. Overall, the program is estimated to have reached 868,540 students across rural Argentina.<sup>38</sup>

Four potential lanes for World Bank Ideology to influence children's attitude formation stand out in PROMER: the content of the libraries, the teacher training programs, the cultural influence of standardized testing, and the overall cultural influence of the Bank on schools.

6,168 schools in rural Argentina, every qualified small rural school, received World Bank-constructed libraries. One could imagine the scale of influence such a program could have. However, consistent with this paper's theory, the Argentinian Government held ultimate power in selecting books. According to the Bank, "The Directorate of the rural education modality in the Federal Ministry of Education in coordination with Directorates of each educational level selected and developed all of the didactic materials."<sup>39</sup> The World Bank's involvement came through procurement and financing, not selection.<sup>40</sup> That said, the Bank could have directly or indirectly influenced the directorates who selected the books. No formal evidence of such influence exists, but

---

<sup>36</sup> Menashy, *International Aid*.

<sup>37</sup> "Argentina - Rural Education Improvement."

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

informal conversations between government and World Bank employees that later influenced book selection cannot be ruled out. Absent evidence of such interactions, we cannot conclusively claim that the libraries are not a potential avenue of World Bank influence, but the arrangement described by the Bank certainly appears that way.

PROMER's large teacher training initiative, which included more active World Bank involvement, similarly fits as a potential avenue for World Bank Ideology's influence. This influence would be mediated, with teachers directly influenced and instructed to use classroom tactics that in turn influence children. The trainings consisted of 40 hours split into five eight-hour monthly sessions. These trainings, which reached 6,043 teachers (though less than 3,000 completed the whole course), had a very specific focus: multi-grade classrooms.<sup>41</sup> Many rural schools in Argentina are so small that they cannot separate classes by year. Teachers in these schools must handle children of different ages at the same time. World Bank training programs taught unique pedagogical tactics for such classrooms.<sup>42</sup> This setting makes it difficult but not impossible for World Bank Ideology to reach children through teachers. The trainings were conducted by 246 professors who themselves were trained in 47 Argentinian teaching institutions by the Argentinian National Directorate of Information and Educational Quality Evaluation, and regional governments cleared all training materials.<sup>43</sup> While regional governments do not necessarily prevent World Bank Ideology from reaching teachers in this context, the mere fact that the PROMER agreement contains safeguards to prevent too much World Bank influence suggests that Argentina took the maintenance of its education system's cultural integrity seriously. Unfortunately, the training materials themselves were not preserved. Even if the training did include elements of neoliberal ideology, it would have made up only a small portion of the training program, which itself at 40 hours is only a tiny drop in the

---

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

bucket compared to the 3 years of training needed to become a teacher in Argentina at the time (increased to 4 in 2009), not to mention access to further, state-provided professional development.<sup>44</sup> This minimal influence over teachers, if it exists at all, would be further filtered in those teachers' interactions with their students. Like the libraries, we cannot conclusively rule out World Bank Ideology's influence through this mechanism, but given existing evidence, it appears unlikely and at most marginal.

The universal standardized testing element of this program rapidly expanded testing coverage to a representative sample of eligible rural students, but it did not include any mechanism for the transfer of World Bank Ideology to children. The test in question, *Operativo Nacional de Evaluación* (ONE), had previously been administered only in urban parts of Argentina. It measures 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade student achievement in a number of subjects on a scale of low, medium, and high.<sup>45</sup> Argentina found the expansion to be an overall success, with results indicating progressive improvements across the board for rural students.<sup>46</sup> When the World Bank gets involved with a standardized testing expansion, it often aims to make the exam as competitive as possible by attaching high stakes to the outcome. The idea is to drive increased effort in schools by pairing their students' performance with outcomes like funding, bonuses, or job security.<sup>47</sup> As a side effect of this, competition becomes an established ideological norm for children. Contrary to this model, PROMER's ONE expansion did not include high stakes, so its expansion did not contain a clear

---

<sup>44</sup> Ina V S Mullis et al., eds., "TIMSS 2015 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Mathematics and Science - Teachers, Teacher Education, and Professional Development in Buenos Aires, Argentina" (Boston, MA: Boston College, TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2016), <https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss2015/encyclopedia/benchmarking-participants/buenos-aires-argentina/teachers-teacher-education-and-professional-development/>.

<sup>45</sup> "Argentina - Rural Education Improvement."

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> "Learning for All."

mechanism for the influence of World Bank Ideology on attitudes.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the exam's contents were not influenced by the Bank in any of the 2007, 2010, or 2013 administrations.

The final potential lane of influence for World Bank ideology within PROMER is indirect influence by changing the culture of the schools involved. Unlike other potential mechanisms, this one is harder to assess without qualitative, on-the-ground evidence gathering. Nonetheless, the structure of the programs suggests that any such influence would be limited. The World Bank's interactions predominantly stayed at provincial and national levels, so influence would need to flow through numerous parties before reaching children.<sup>49</sup> The interventions that did reach the school level were uncontroversial and focused on improving capabilities. Beyond the interventions discussed earlier in this section, the Bank conducted large scale infrastructure development and helped restructure school days to improve attendance.<sup>50</sup> In the small, rural schools that PROMER focused on, potential for influence is higher because of the size of the community, but whether that influence extends beyond general appreciation of the World Bank for its role in improving capabilities into something more ideological is unclear. If such an influence did occur, it likely happened inconsistently and in a limited fashion.

PROMER forms an intriguing case of World Bank influence in an infrastructure-focused program. The program included a number of policies which appear potentially influential for attitudes, but upon closer inspection those mechanisms are likely to have limited influence, if any at all. The libraries funded by the World Bank did not include Bank-selected books, teacher training programs relied heavily on local experts and focused on a specific pedagogical technique, and the expansion of the ONE standardized test was only used to collect diagnostic data. A further in-depth

---

<sup>48</sup> "ONE | Buenos Aires Ciudad - Gobierno de La Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires," accessed March 22, 2024, <https://buenosaires.gob.ar/nacionales/one>.

<sup>49</sup> "Argentina - Rural Education Improvement."

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

study that features interviews with recipients of the program may be able to more clearly identify whether school-level culture changed with PROMER, but a current understanding of the program suggests that World Bank Ideology's pathways to influence over attitudes were limited.

### *REACT*

Unlike PROMER, which was an explicitly educational program with a wide range of policies, the World Bank's REACT program in Peru only had one educational policy intervention, with the rest of its policies situated in the health and social services spaces. In REACT, the Bank hoped to tackle the highly specialized issue of second grade literacy. This decision was made because of an established link between literacy and outcomes, as well as a lack of change in Peru's early primary literacy rate between 1990 and 2005.<sup>51</sup> The mechanism chosen for this task was a large-scale standardized assessment. The World Bank, working with the Peruvian Government, hoped that by pushing parents to press their children's schools about reading scores, schools would be incentivized to hyperfocus on literacy and informed parents of struggling children would improve reading at home.<sup>52</sup> The program saw impressive results. Over four years (2007 – 2011), the percentage of second graders reading at the target "level 2" comprehension level nearly doubled from 16% to 30%.<sup>53</sup>

World Bank Ideology's potential to influence children through REACT is limited by the small size of the program, but the policies pursued by the Bank packed a punch. While the Peruvian Government co-opted the test itself which likely limited the content's chances of influence, the Bank's attempts to get parents actively involved is a prominent potential mechanism for influence,

---

<sup>51</sup> "Peru - Results and Accountability Development Policy Loan Series Project (English)" (World Bank Group, n.d.), <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/573751467987872023/peru-results-and-accountability-development-policy-loan-series-project>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

and the introduction of new competition into school cultures further solidifies REACT’s ability to drive children “into a Western way of thinking.”<sup>54</sup>

Originally, the World Bank hoped to create a competitive atmosphere between Peruvian primary schools in which second graders raced to a “fluency standard” 60-words-per-minute reading pace.<sup>55</sup> Because of the difficulty of designing a universal standardized test that measures reading speed, the Peruvian Government instead changed the project into a paper and pencil reading comprehension exam.<sup>56</sup> The Ministry of Education developed the exam without World Bank intervention. From World Bank documents, it seems that the Bank was frustrated by the Peruvian Government’s handling of the change in plans and the new test.<sup>57</sup> In the end, to the Bank’s chagrin, the Bank exerted little influence over the development and content of the reading comprehension exam, so the test itself cannot be a definitive pathway for the Bank to influence children’s attitude formation.

The World Bank’s attempts to disseminate REACT standardized testing results to parents likely has more influential implications than the exams themselves. According to the Bank, a “media campaign was organized [from 2009-2010] to advise parents to request their child’s scores and to encourage schools to discuss their results and plan future improvements.”<sup>58</sup> The content of that media campaign, elaborated on

<u>Table 2: World Bank description of 2009-2010 media campaign in Peru (“Peru - Results and Accountability Development Policy Loan Series Project (English).”)</u>			
3. Education - standardized tests results dissemination	2 videos, 1 radio spot, 1 flyer, and 3 handbooks.	Videos and radio spots were disseminated through mass media (Television and radio). Flyers and handbooks were targeted to schools, teachers, and parents. All were disseminated countrywide.	Videos promoted the use of standardized test results to inform discussions among school representatives and parents on ways to improve educational outcomes. Radio spots and flyers announced that results were available and incentivized parents demand for this information. Handbooks explained results and presented comparative statistics and tips on how to improve weak results.

<sup>54</sup> Tikly, “Education and the New Imperialism.”

<sup>55</sup> “Peru - Results and Accountability Development Policy.”

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

in Table 2, hoped to convince parents and schools of the necessity of sharing student’s results. One video, for example, followed the following format:

“This video demonstrates poor education quality by showing children who cannot read or struggle to read. These scenes are followed by images of high-quality education—poor rural children of the same age who can read fluently... The video challenges parents to find out how well their children are reading and tells them that they have the right to demand a good education.”<sup>59</sup>

The media campaign was operated by the Ministry of Education, but the World Bank consulted heavily on all aspects. While the stated goal of the media campaign was to “improve parental understanding,” a clear secondary goal was to modify Peruvian childcare culture.<sup>60</sup> Specifically, the Bank hoped to encourage parents and schools to be more competitive and engaged on reading education. This changed culture would have put pressure on students at home and at school to perform better on the reading assessment, and as a side effect it would have influenced their attitudes in favor of the individualistic, competitive, and outcome-oriented World Bank Ideology. This mediated influence, which operates through families and schools, would only be a small fraction of the factors that influence children, but it nonetheless should be expected to have some impact.

As with PROMER, more evidence is needed to assess REACT’s influence over children’s attitude production via a school-level cultural change. The imposition of a new exam on schools had two concrete impacts with regards to school culture. First, it explicitly aimed to create “a culture of results at the school, subnational, and national levels.”<sup>61</sup> While the World Bank does not elaborate on what “a culture of results” entails, it can be inferred from supporting documents that “school-level accountability” would create an environment in schools where results are shared and taken

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.



seriously.<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, despite this push, the stakes of the exams remained low. While schools did receive pressure to release scores from parents, no concrete incentives were tied to the exam scores.<sup>63</sup> Fostering a competitive testing environment for students constitutes the second angle through which the exam could influence attitudes via the mechanism of school culture. While this remains a possibility, it is complicated by school environments at the time. Peru had no national primary school assessments prior to 2007, but multiple new tests were implemented that year in addition to REACT's.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Peru began participating in the PISA and TIMSS international assessments in 2009, just two years into implementation.<sup>65</sup> This influx of assessments would have created more competitive atmospheres at schools, but the source of that changing culture was the Ministry of Education, not the Bank. In this way, World Bank Ideology likely did influence attitude formation via the mechanism of school-level cultural change, but the Peruvian Ministry of Education played a role in that change as well.

Despite operating in the same region and with a similar educational budget as PROMER, REACT's potential to drive World Bank Ideology's influence over attitude production is more substantial, if mediated. The new standardized test created by the Ministry of Education could not have included novel attitude influence, but the associated media campaign and impact on school culture both offer potential lanes for influence. Notably, the A in REACT stands for accountability, and the program clearly aimed to foster an accountability-oriented culture in Peruvian schools and homes.<sup>66</sup> In the case of the media campaign, that cultural change was a result of World Bank imposition – reminiscent of the worst fears of some of the Bank's biggest critics. For school culture,

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> "Evaluaciones censales," UMC-Oficina de Medición de la Calidad de los Aprendizajes, accessed March 23, 2024, <http://umc.minedu.gob.pe/evaluaciones-censales/>.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> "Peru - Results and Accountability Development Policy."

the real influence came from the Ministry of Education. The Ministry may be ideologically aligned with the World Bank in some respects, but the increase in standardized testing could have happened with or without the Bank's involvement. Together, these factors bring together a complicated picture wherein the Bank helped further an attitudinal change that was already occurring, and that influence on attitudes was mediated through parents, schools, and the Ministry of Education.

### *PARSEM*

PARSEM, a program operated by the World Bank in Morocco from 2005-2009, is perhaps a strong example of some World Bank critics' theoretical arguments against World Bank involvement in education policy: it is really just a bank.<sup>67</sup> In PARSEM, the Bank acted as a bank first and an aid agency second. The Moroccan Government set up PARSEM with the express intention of securing World Bank funding, but almost all of the operating initiatives were handled by the Moroccan Ministry of Education.<sup>68</sup> The World Bank was not happy about this arrangement and lamented in its "Implementation Completion and Results Report" that it feels it focused too much on finances over policy.<sup>69</sup> Implementation issues stymied PARSEM's success, though it did meet some goals. Access to middle school in rural areas and general ministry capabilities were greatly improved, but attendance goals (the Bank's primary measure) were not met, and a number of smaller scale initiatives had trouble getting off the ground.<sup>70</sup> Expansion of global assessments, a teacher training program, and local, school-based projects, the three potential pathways for World Bank Ideology to influence children's attitude formation, all fit into this last category.

---

<sup>67</sup> Klees, "Beyond Neoliberalism."

<sup>68</sup> "Morocco - Basic Education Reform Support Program Project (English)" (World Bank Group, n.d.), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/794141468120548182/Morocco-Basic-Education-Reform-Support-Program-Project>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

PARSEM was the first Middle Eastern expansion of the World Bank's Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) programs.<sup>71</sup> SWAp programs cover the entire education sector, with the government and Bank creating one plan for all funding.<sup>72</sup> The novelty in the region caused some issues. According to the Bank, "The Government interpretation was that a SWAp is implemented entirely using country systems, while the Bank team expected this to be the case only if the specific government procedures provide an equivalent level of fiduciary risk as that expected using the Bank's procedures."<sup>73</sup> In other words, the Bank expected to have more power over implementation than it actually did. The Bank's reduced power in implementation relative to the Ministry of Education limited the likelihood of World Bank Ideology influencing attitudes.

Like PROMER and REACT, PARSEM included a standardized testing component. In this case, World Bank funding helped Morocco extend testing for TIMSS and PIRLS, international assessments that assess math and reading respectively.<sup>74</sup> Had this been a new intervention, the imposition of a testing culture centered around a globalist exam would constitute a significant lane for intervention. Instead, this expansion of existing tests to new regions not only did not add to the Moroccan testing landscape, but it had limited success. According to the Bank, local governing entities lagged on expansion and implementation, so many schools never took the tests.<sup>75</sup> TIMSS data from the first assessment after PARSEM began (2007) supports this allegation. Morocco was the only country in the TIMSS 2007 dataset that did not have a representative sample for all years.<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Abby Riddell, "Education Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAps): Background, Guide and Lessons" (UNESCO Digital Library, 2007), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000150965>.

<sup>73</sup> "Morocco - Basic Education Reform Support Program Project (English)" (World Bank Group, n.d.), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/937831474652717066/Morocco-Basic-Education-Reform-Support-Program>.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ina V S Mullis, Michael O Martin, and Pierre Foy, "TIMSS 2007 International Mathematics Report: Findings from IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study at the Fourth and Eighth Grades" (Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College, 2008), <https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/TIMSS2007/mathreport.html>.

Even if Morocco had fully participated, the assessments are not intended for the entire population. Only 226 Moroccan schools were chosen to participate in TIMSS in 2007. Of those, 184 successfully participated, with 3894 students taking the assessment – not much of an increase over pre-PARSEM levels.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, in those 184 schools, the exam’s only role was diagnostic.<sup>78</sup> With low participation, minimal change to existing structures, and no stakes, it is hard to see a way for World Bank Ideology to influence students through these exams.

In addition to testing, PARSEM echoes PROMER with a novel teacher training course. Unlike PROMER, the World Bank had a minimal role in the course, and the course barely got started. The course was designed by the Moroccan Ministry of Education in cooperation with the European Union. Its specific goal was to provide in-service training for teachers who teach more than one discipline. The course only reached the pilot stage but nonetheless was partially implemented in 5 regions.<sup>79</sup> The Bank’s involvement in this initiative was entirely financial, and it appears to have had no role in the design or implementation of the teacher training course.<sup>80</sup> Though the EU’s ideology is likely somewhat aligned with the World Bank and could theoretically have found its way into the course, the course’s small scale, short time frame, and inability to advance past the pilot phase suggests that its potential for influence is too minimal to warrant much more consideration.

The most likely avenue for World Bank Ideology to influence attitudes through PARSEM is the Bank’s school-based projects and their impacts on school-level culture. School-based projects, which covered 90% of Morocco’s schools, aimed to “delegate responsibilities” to local school

---

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> “Morocco - Basic Education Reform Support Program Project”  
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/937831474652717066/Morocco-Basic-Education-Reform-Support-Program>.

<sup>79</sup> “Morocco - Basic Education Reform Support Program Project”  
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/794141468120548182/Morocco-Basic-Education-Reform-Support-Program-Project>.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

administrations.<sup>81</sup> The rationale behind this push was to decentralize the Moroccan educational bureaucracy, but despite widespread implementation, the Bank found that, on completion, the Ministry's decentralized structures remained exceptionally weak.<sup>82</sup> Decentralization of bureaucracy could change school cultures by empowering administrators, which in turn may realign schools towards individualistic values. The relevance of such a realignment to World Bank Ideology and its ability to indirectly influence children's attitude formation is debatable. Given that the World Bank acknowledged that these projects failed to increase decentralization, it appears that even if decentralized local bureaucracies can indirectly influence children towards World Bank Ideology, such influencing did not occur in Morocco.

PARSEM serves as an interesting case study of World Bank K-12 education as it highlights a struggling program where the Bank's role is greatly diminished. Every element of PARSEM was originally proposed by the Moroccan Government, which already limits the likelihood of attitudinal influence on the part of the Bank. Its status as a SWAp program created confusion between the Ministry of Education and the World Bank, and that disconnect hampered both World Bank power over implementation and the success of that implementation. Though the program had some successes, all of the potential lanes for the transmission of attitudes (expanded international testing, in-service teacher training, and decentralizing school-based projects) failed operationally. Had they been successful, they each contained only questionable, heavily mediated mechanisms for World Bank Ideology to reach students. PARSEM therefore emerges as a strong example of a program in which the Bank's likelihood of influencing attitudes was minimal.

---

<sup>81</sup> "Morocco - Basic Education Reform Support Program Project"  
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/937831474652717066/Morocco-Basic-Education-Reform-Support-Program>.

<sup>82</sup> "Morocco - Basic Education Reform Support Program Project"  
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/794141468120548182/Morocco-Basic-Education-Reform-Support-Program-Project>.

## *ECEEP*

The World Bank spearheaded ECEEP, an early-childhood education program in Egypt that spanned 10 years from 2005-2014 and could not have been more different from PARSEM. ECEEP's express goal was "to improve Egypt's global competitiveness."<sup>83</sup> The mechanism for this improvement was a restructure and expansion of Egypt's kindergartens. The idea was that better early childhood education would improve children's readiness for primary school, in turn improving their learning and, eventually, their workforce impact.<sup>84</sup> ECEEP was a success. By 2014 Egypt had doubled kindergarten availability, with 1,342 new classrooms serving a total of 35,000 additional students annually.<sup>85</sup> This success came in spite of numerous funding delays and a substantial political crisis in 2011. The program was initially viewed as unsuccessful, but after a restructure in 2010 to include national curricular change and more in-depth assistance, that assessment changed. In the end, ECEEP served 400,000 students and set up Egypt's kindergartens for sustainable success in the future.<sup>86</sup> ECEEP's structure as a partnership complicates the potential for World Bank Ideology to influence attitude formation, but elements of the ideology appear to be substantial in some of the program's policies.

Unlike the other programs discussed in this paper, ECEEP appears to have been a true partnership. ECEEP's main operations were handled by a specialized "ECEEP Unit" run out of the Ministry of Education's headquarters.<sup>87</sup> That team, staffed by the Egyptian Government, worked closely and actively with the Bank on most parts of the program in an interaction described by the Bank as "positive cooperation."<sup>88</sup> In addition to the World Bank, two other international

---

<sup>83</sup> "Egypt - Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project (English)" (World Bank Group, n.d.), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/452151468233952618/Egypt-Early-Childhood-Education-Enhancement-Project>.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

organizations provided funding and direct support to the program and the ECEEP Unit. The World Food Program provided millions of dollars for meals to disadvantaged kindergarteners.<sup>89</sup> More actively, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) contributed to a number of the program's substantive elements. To further complicate the equation, CIDA only provided funding, with the rest of the Canadian element of the program being handled by Agriteam Canada (now Alinea International), a privately-run consultancy.<sup>90</sup> The complex nature of this partnership hit roadblocks almost immediately. CIDA's funding was delayed for two years, which delayed most non-ministry activities to a 2007 start date.<sup>91</sup> This partnership is emblematic of today's development landscape. While the World Bank dominated 2000's education aid programs, partnerships have become more common since.<sup>92</sup> In part, this change was an active effort by the international community to dilute World Bank power, but the Bank continues to retain substantial structural power within modern education partnerships as the primary funder and an established expert body.<sup>93</sup> That World Bank structural power likely permeated through ECEEP, and it could have allowed World Bank Ideology to influence children.

The potential lanes for World Bank Ideology's influence are complicated by the Canadians' active involvement, but likely paths still exist. The World Bank was most financially involved in the proliferation of learning materials and large-scale infrastructure projects.<sup>94</sup> The learning materials in particular constitute a potential lane for influence over attitudes. The Bank also retained an advisory role in an expansive teacher training and incentivization policy that included noteworthy elements of World Bank Ideology including a national competition between teachers. The Canadians and

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Matthew Heibert, "Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project," Agriteam Canada, August 19, 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170819192607/http://www.agriteam.ca/en/projects/profile/early-childhood-education-project/>.

<sup>91</sup> "Egypt - Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project."

<sup>92</sup> Menashy, *International Aid*.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> "Egypt - Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project."

Egyptians handled the revised national kindergarten curriculum without World Bank involvement, but given the importance of curriculum in developing attitudes, it also warrants analysis. Lastly, as with the other programs, ECEEP also had the potential to alter school-level culture.

The Bank-funded classroom materials consisted of 1,762 “learning packets” distributed to 88% the new classrooms in underserved regions of Egypt.<sup>95</sup> These packets were developed by the ECEEP Unit with World Bank input. Notably, this initiative was considered one of the largest failures of the project. In a project where almost every target was eventually exceeded, 1,762 comes in well under goals for learning materials.<sup>96</sup> Unfortunately, no information about the content of those packets was recorded. Given the small (and failed) scope of these materials, any influence over attitudes via changes to classroom practices would be limited. Without more information about the packets themselves, it is difficult to assess their potential to serve as conduits for World Bank Ideology’s influence, but such a role cannot be ruled out.

ECEEP’s teacher training initiatives had impressive reach – and very clear World Bank Ideology influence. The Bank was not involved in the funding of these teacher training programs (CIDA provided all the funds), but it remained involved in an advisory role. The core of the teacher training policy was eleven Canadian- and Egyptian-operated in-service training courses aimed first at reaching existing Egyptian Government standards and later at preparing schools for implementation of the new curriculum. Those courses reached an astounding 35,000 teachers and nearly 30,000 administrators and staff.<sup>97</sup> The likelihood that those courses had a mediated influence on children through teachers is dependent on the extent to which elements of World Bank Ideology were prevalent in the new curriculum which, as shown later, is mixed. Besides the courses themselves, the Bank aided in “the establishment of an ongoing ‘Effective [kindergarten] Teacher Competition’

---

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.



which highlighted [kindergarten] teachers who successfully implemented the [kindergarten] standards and effective [kindergarten] practices.”<sup>98</sup> This competition is a classic example of a neoliberal teacher performativity intervention. Teachers are pitted against each other to manufacture a high-intensity environment where individual success is rewarded. This market-based approach is central to World Bank Ideology, and its presence in ECEEP’s teacher training programs likely contributed to changes in school-level culture. The extent to which kindergarten-aged children are aware of competition between teachers probably depends on each context, but the normalization of competition and the endorsement of market-based approaches to classroom management likely shaped students’ perceptions of those concepts.

Beyond the competition between teachers, ECEEP’s curriculum component had the potential to influence attitudes, but the World Bank’s involvement was minimal. Curriculum is the most powerful of the school-level factors that influence attitude production, with changes capable of shifting a generation’s attitudes.<sup>99</sup> ECEEP’s new national Egyptian kindergarten curriculum was created by Canada’s Agriteam in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (who had final authority). The partnership settled on a play-based curriculum.<sup>100</sup> Perhaps not coincidentally, a play-based curriculum was similarly implemented in Ontario in 2010. Play-based learning leans on child autonomy, with longer days structured around allowing kids to experiment in a playful, guided setting rather than beginning full instruction on topics like reading.<sup>101</sup> The ideological implications of play-based learning are contentious. Some scholars argue that play-based learning promotes a discourse of individualism and imposes “neoliberal biopedagogies” wherein children are taught to

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Cantoni et al., “Curriculum and Ideology.”

<sup>100</sup> Heibert, “Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project.”

<sup>101</sup> Patrick Jachyra and Caroline Fusco, “The Place of Play: From Playground to Policy to Classroom Well-Being,” *Sport, Education and Society* 21, no. 2 (February 17, 2016): 217–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2014.896331>.

compete in their level of physical activity.<sup>102</sup> On the other hand, play-based learning runs counter to most World Bank practices as it focuses on intangibles like socioemotional development instead of hard outcomes like standardized tests.<sup>103</sup> Despite its attitudinal implications, tension between play-based learning and other pedagogical structures which uphold World Bank Ideology suggests that the influence on attitudes of ECEP's curriculum component was likely mixed.

School-level cultural influence is another potential lane of influence for World Bank Ideology within ECEP. As discussed before, the creation of a competition between teachers likely changed school cultures in ways aligned with World Bank values, but other school-level cultural changes may have indirectly influenced children's values. To evaluate the changes to kindergartens, the ECEP Unit relied on first grade teachers who were asked to assess success of the program in improving student quality.<sup>104</sup> Though small, this ask could have contributed to creating a culture of judgement in some schools, which plays into the same elements of World Bank Ideology that a competition would. Furthermore, the Bank's general structural power as a lender and expert should not be discounted. The World Bank could have indirectly influenced attitudes just via its presence in such a transformative program. Evidence for such an influence would be difficult to isolate, but it remains a distinct possibility. Lastly, with thousands of new kindergartens developed at the direction of the Bank, those classrooms could have incorporated elements of World Bank Ideology into their cultures at founding. Any such influence is speculative, but it very well could exist.

In some ways, ECEP is an exemplar for the partnerships that characterize education aid today, but two factors point to its uniqueness. First, the project included a curricular change developed in part by a foreign entity. This opened a powerful, exceedingly rare avenue for influence on attitudes. Second, a political crisis in 2011 both interrupted children's educations and altered

---

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> "Egypt - Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project."

attitudes across Egypt. Shockingly, the crisis had little impact on ECEEP. The new Egyptian Government not only embraced the existing organizational structure implementing ECEEP, but it also codified the right to early childhood education into the new 2013 constitution.<sup>105</sup> When it comes to the likelihood of World Bank Ideology's influence on children's attitude formation through ECEEP, the partnership structure mitigates the findings. World Bank-operated policies like the dissemination of learning materials have some potential for influence, but most of ECEEP's likely influence over kindergarteners' attitude formation comes from Canadian-led teacher training and curricular policies. The competition element of teacher training and attitudinal implications of a play-based curriculum stood out as lanes where World Bank Ideology might have had a notable influence on attitudes.

## **Quantitative Analysis**

The quantitative portion of this analysis uses the World Values Survey (WVS) to conduct a difference-in-differences analysis of the impact of the World Bank on attitude formation. This section aims to statistically assess whether World Bank attitude influence occurred in the four cases explored in the previous section. Results show that any impact is small and may be counter to World Bank Ideology.

### *Data*

The WVS is uniquely suited to the task of measuring attitudes. The survey, administered in 80 countries, asks the same questions to more than 90,000 adults. Conducted in 7 waves from 1981 to the present, the WVS is an ideal candidate for identifying changes in attitudes over time.<sup>106</sup> While

---

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Inglehart et al., "World Values Survey."

some questions remain about the data collection strategy and its application (discussed further in the limitations section), the WVS is the best existing survey for the task of assessing the impact of World Bank programs on children’s attitude production.

For the following analysis, a subset of WVS data was taken to isolate the change in attitudes as a result of the four programs in the previous section. Observations were collected from the 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> WVS waves to capture attitudes before and after program implementation, and respondents were organized into treatment and non-treatment age cohorts. The treatment groups are adults in the 7<sup>th</sup> wave survey who were children of an affected age range during program implementation and adults in the same age range from the 5<sup>th</sup> wave for comparison. The non-treated comparison group

is a similarly sized but slightly older (pre-program) age range for each wave with slight gaps to account for implementation delays.

Table 3 describes the data in more detail. Rather than use the raw number of observations for calculations, I use a WVS-provided weighted version that accounts for discrepancies between actual and surveyed within-population demographics. In sum, this analysis uses 1474 observations

Country	WVS wave	Treatment (0 = No, 1 = Yes)	Number of observations (weighted)
Argentina	5	1	23 (29.32)
		0	23(29.32)
	7	1	26 (31.67)
		0	8 (10.52)
Peru	5	1	119 (120.94)
		0	83 (83.65)
	7	1	89 (88.15)
		0	68 (64.25)
Morocco	5	1	312 (312.00)
		0	150 (150.00)
	7	1	168 (168.00)
		0	146 (146.00)
Egypt	5	1	6 (4.41)
		0	137 (128.46)
	7	1	61 (61.00)
		0	55 (55.00)

(1482.659 weighted). Differences in number of observations between countries are due to age range size (Peru and Egypt’s ranges are smaller because their programs only reached WVS’s 7<sup>th</sup> wave’s 18- and 19-year-olds). Further, all observations from Argentina are from rural regions of 5000 residents

or less due to PROMER’s rural focus. Other differences are likely due to variance in the WVS sample and survey implementation methods.<sup>107</sup>

The dependent variables used in this analysis are Democracy, Secularism, and Competition. For Democracy, I use responses to the question “How important is it for you to live in a country that is governed democratically?”, scored on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 representing respondents who believe democratic governance is important.<sup>108</sup>

Variable	Mean	Scale	Range
Democracy	8.44	1-10	1-10
Secularism	3.08	0-10	0-9.22
Competition	7.88	1-10	1-10

Democracy is an affiliated value of World Bank Ideology, and this framing of the value highlights proliferation of the Western conception of the transcendent importance of democracy.

For Secularism, I use the “Welzel Overall Secular Values” variable, a weighted score of the overall secularism of a respondent as judged by answers to questions related to skepticism, relativism, disbelief, and defiance on a scale of 0 to 1.<sup>109</sup> I have transformed the variable to a scale of 0 to 10 for comparability, with 10 representing a more secular individual. Secularism is not a core tenet of World Bank Ideology, but its conception in WVS includes a globalist lean that embraces modernity over tradition, a perspective interlaced with World Bank Ideology.

Lastly, for Competition, respondents were asked to rank competition generally on a scale from “Good” to “Harmful”.<sup>110</sup> I have transformed it from its reversed scale so that 10 represents “Good”. Competition directly connects to World Bank Ideology, which promotes the neoliberal view that competition is preferable in most settings. As shown in Table 4, the mean respondent in this sample believes democracy is important and competition is good, but they are not particularly secular.

<sup>107</sup> The reason for particularly low 5<sup>th</sup> wave participation for Egypt’s 18 to 19-year-olds is unknown. It may be due to in-person surveying and the lack of people of that age group at the heads of their households.

<sup>108</sup> Inglehart et al., “World Values Survey.”

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

## Method

The difference-in-differences analysis conducted here examines the difference between the change in attitudes of the age group that received the World Bank programs and the age group that did not. Keeping age ranges consistent between waves confirms that the only notable difference between the control and treatment cohorts is the Bank intervention.<sup>111</sup> This method reveals the extent that treated age cohorts' attitudes change compared to untreated age cohorts' change. I conduct this analysis using three models with varying controls and subsets.

In Model 1, I do not separate observations by country. For each of the three dependent variables, I apply the following equation:

$$\widehat{Dependent\ Variable}_i = \widehat{\beta}_0 + \widehat{\beta}_1 period_i + \widehat{\beta}_2 treatment_i + \widehat{\delta}_1 ATT_i$$

$period_i$  is coded 1 for 7th wave observations and 0 for 5th wave observations.  $treatment_i$  is coded 1 for treated populations and 0 for the control group.  $ATT_i$ , or the Average Treatment Effect on the Treated, is the interaction effect, or  $period_i * treatment_i$ .  $\delta_1$  is therefore our primary variable of interest as it shows the expected increase for treated individuals in the 7th wave over that of untreated observations.  $\widehat{\beta}_0$  is the constant.

For Model 2, I expand on Model 1 by adding in country dummy variables. The resulting equation is as follows:

$$\widehat{Dependent\ Variable}_i = \widehat{\beta}_0 + \widehat{\beta}_1 period_i + \widehat{\beta}_2 treatment_i + \widehat{\beta}_3 Argentina_i + \widehat{\beta}_4 Peru_i + \widehat{\beta}_5 Egypt_i + \widehat{\delta}_1 ATT_i$$

All variables are the same, but  $Argentina_i$ ,  $Peru_i$ , and  $Egypt_i$  have been added as dummy variables coded 1 for observations in each country and 0 for others. Morocco was left out of the model to serve as the comparison because its qualitative analysis expects the smallest attitude influence of the four. As with Model 1,  $\delta_1$  is our primary variable of interest.

---

<sup>111</sup> The possibility that other factors contributed to a divergence between the age cohorts should not be discounted, but design of this study allows for the only differences observed to be variations in the gap in attitude between the two age cohorts, which are separated by no more than 3 years and only by program implementations.

Model 3 uses the same equation as Model 1, but it separates the data by country. This allows us to clearly see the differences in attitudes between countries. Model 3 is divided into models 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 for the dependent variables of Democracy, Secularism, and Competition respectively. As with Models 1 and 2, the coefficient of  $ATT_i$  is the variable most relevant to the analysis as it conveys the treatment effect on treated cohorts.

*Results*

Results from the three models show no conventionally statistically significant values for  $\delta_1$ , with two exceptions. This suggests that the null result of no influence over attitudes cannot be rejected. Furthermore, for all statistically significant treatment effects, the observed change was in the negative direction. No statistically significant values show an influence of World Bank programs towards World Bank Ideology.

In Model 1, both Democracy and Secularism had negative values for the treatment effect while Competition's was positive. Democracy's ATT coefficient was weakly significant with a confidence interval that did not include zero. This

Table 5: Model 1 – Simple Difference-in-Differences Analysis

	<b>Model 1: Two-Period Difference-in-Differences Analysis</b>		
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Democracy (1)	Secularism (2)	Competition (3)
Period	0.279 <sup>+</sup> (0.150)	0.765 <sup>***</sup> (0.133)	0.274 (0.201)
Treatment	0.099 (0.133)	0.305 <sup>**</sup> (0.116)	-0.189 (0.179)
<i>ATT (Period*Treatment)</i>	-0.383 <sup>+</sup> (0.202)	-0.152 (0.179)	0.208 (0.272)
Constant	8.780 <sup>***</sup> (0.098)	2.638 <sup>***</sup> (0.086)	7.500 <sup>***</sup> (0.131)
Observations	1,422.668	1,470.983	1,399.592
R <sup>2</sup>	0.003	0.044	0.007
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.001	0.042	0.004

Note: <sup>+</sup>p<0.1; \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

suggests that World Bank interventions might decrease opinions on the importance of democracy. Without conventionally significant values, the null result of no influence remains a possibility.

Table 6: Model 2 – Difference-in-Differences Analysis with Country Effects

<b>Model 2: Two-Period Difference-in-Differences Analysis</b>			
	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Democracy (1)	Secularism (2)	Competition (3)
Period	0.291 <sup>+</sup> (0.151)	0.647 <sup>***</sup> (0.121)	0.408 <sup>*</sup> (0.200)
Treatment	0.182 (0.141)	-0.056 (0.111)	0.147 (0.188)
Argentina	-0.570 <sup>**</sup> (0.203)	1.148 <sup>***</sup> (0.162)	-0.777 <sup>**</sup> (0.273)
Peru	-0.456 <sup>***</sup> (0.121)	1.223 <sup>***</sup> (0.098)	0.308 <sup>+</sup> (0.162)
Egypt	0.187 (0.146)	-1.016 <sup>***</sup> (0.117)	1.076 <sup>***</sup> (0.195)
Morocco			
<i>ATT (Period*Treatment)</i>	-0.422 <sup>*</sup> (0.206)	0.097 (0.165)	-0.073 (0.275)
Constant	8.858 <sup>***</sup> (0.119)	2.632 <sup>***</sup> (0.093)	7.116 <sup>***</sup> (0.158)
Observations	1,422.668	1,470.983	1,399.592
R <sup>2</sup>	0.021	0.233	0.039
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.017	0.229	0.035

Note: <sup>+</sup>p<0.1; \*p<0.05; \*\*p<0.01; \*\*\*p<0.001

Model 2 controls for country-level variation in the data. Within ATT coefficients, one (Democracy) is statistically significant. This finding and its notable confidence interval reinforce the suggestion that belief in the importance of Democracy *decreases* in populations who receive World Bank

programs compared to those who do not. Notably, the high R<sup>2</sup> value of secularism is substantially higher than any other model. That said, the impact is very small, at 0.097, and the confidence interval includes 0, so the possibility of no impact exists. The high R<sup>2</sup> is likely due to the countries' explanatory power, not the treatment. By including country fixed effects, Model 2 shows no evidence of World Bank attitudinal influence towards World Bank Ideology and, for Democracy, evidence of influence away from traditionally Western values.

Model 3's split by country reveals between-program differences in attitudinal impact. Model 3.1 shows that, for Democracy, World Bank programs in Argentina and Morocco may have had moderate negative impacts, and programs in Peru and Egypt may have had minor positive impacts. None of the ATT coefficients are conventionally statistically significant and only Morocco's (-0.565) is weakly significant. Nonetheless, this structure, limited to Model 3.1, mirrors the expectations in the qualitative analysis of variation due to program characteristics.



**Model 3.1: Two-Period Difference-in-Differences Analysis**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Democracy			
	Argentina (1)	Peru (2)	Morocco (3)	Egypt (4)
Period	-0.022 (0.940)	0.488 (0.317)	0.212 (0.227)	0.361 (0.236)
Treatment	0.485 (0.698)	-0.096 (0.271)	0.294 (0.199)	-0.412 (0.704)
<i>ATT (Period*Treatment)</i>	-0.722 (1.157)	0.058 (0.414)	-0.565 <sup>+</sup> (0.292)	0.002 (0.755)
Constant	8.333 <sup>***</sup> (0.499)	8.361 <sup>***</sup> (0.209)	8.856 <sup>***</sup> (0.164)	9.065 <sup>***</sup> (0.128)
Observations	96.12943	352.66260	726.00000	247.87614
R <sup>2</sup>	0.017	0.019	0.006	0.013
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.024	0.010	0.002	0.001
<i>Note:</i>	<sup>+</sup> p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001			

**Model 3.2: Two-Period Difference-in-Differences Analysis**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Secularism			
	Argentina (1)	Peru (2)	Morocco (3)	Egypt (4)
Period	1.694 <sup>*</sup> (0.656)	-0.545 <sup>*</sup> (0.234)	1.251 <sup>***</sup> (0.172)	0.366 (0.225)
Treatment	0.362 (0.476)	-0.075 (0.203)	0.025 (0.147)	1.674 <sup>*</sup> (0.677)
<i>ATT (Period*Treatment)</i>	-0.701 (0.808)	0.100 (0.307)	0.090 (0.223)	-1.652 <sup>*</sup> (0.726)
Constant	3.344 <sup>***</sup> (0.337)	4.386 <sup>***</sup> (0.156)	2.340 <sup>***</sup> (0.121)	1.720 <sup>***</sup> (0.123)
Observations	99.50398	347.60326	776.00000	247.87614
R <sup>2</sup>	0.141	0.029	0.156	0.036
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.107	0.021	0.153	0.024
<i>Note:</i>	<sup>+</sup> p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001			

**Model 3.3: Two-Period Difference-in-Differences Analysis**

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Competition			
	Argentina (1)	Peru (2)	Morocco (3)	Egypt (4)
Period	-0.786 (1.136)	0.976 <sup>*</sup> (0.410)	0.471 (0.304)	-0.051 (0.344)
Treatment	0.905 (0.853)	0.829 <sup>*</sup> (0.350)	-0.077 (0.269)	-0.426 (1.018)
<i>ATT (Period*Treatment)</i>	0.422 (1.409)	-1.028 <sup>+</sup> (0.534)	0.209 (0.393)	0.439 (1.093)
Constant	6.238 <sup>***</sup> (0.603)	7.019 <sup>***</sup> (0.269)	7.159 <sup>***</sup> (0.220)	8.429 <sup>***</sup> (0.187)
Observations	93.52635	347.63740	715.00000	243.42816
R <sup>2</sup>	0.037	0.022	0.014	0.001
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	-0.004	0.014	0.010	-0.011
<i>Note:</i>	<sup>+</sup> p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001			

As with Model 3.1, Model 3.2's ATT coefficients are mostly not statistically significant with confidence intervals overlapping zero, pointing to no evidence of a change in secularism. The notable exception to this is Egypt. The significant effect of treatment on secularism in Egypt is notably larger than all Secularism effects in all models combined. Though one could argue that some element of ECEEP must therefore have pushed Egyptians away from secularism, a likelier story is that some element of Egypt's 2011 revolution had a different effect on 2018's 18-19-year-olds than its 22-23-year-olds.

Model 3.3, like Model 3.1, has no statistically significant values with all confidence intervals including 0 except, surprisingly, Peru. Though only weakly significant, the bottom range of Peruvian influence (also the only one with a negative expected value) is a half-point below zero which would suggest that Peruvian students in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade for REACT's implementation may speak less positively about competition than their counterparts. This again shows no evidence of influence towards World Bank Ideology and slight evidence of influence away from traditionally Western values.

Together, the three models build an intriguing picture. The evidence here does not show that World Bank programs clearly push attitudes in any one direction, and variation remains strong between programs. All of the significant values are negative, suggesting that, when World Bank Programs impact attitudes, that impact is counter to World Bank Ideology.

## **Discussion**

The quantitative and qualitative evidence collected in this thesis push back on the prevailing assertion of attitude influence on the part of the World Bank via K-12 programs. The evidence is not strong enough to unequivocally confirm a lack of influence, but it suggests that highly limited and mediated influence is the most likely reality.

Table 10: Summary of findings							
Example		PROMER	REACT	PARSEM	ECEEP	All (no controls)	All (with controls)
Program type		Infrastructure	Targeted	Financial	Partnership		
Potential for influence		Low	High	Low	Medium		
Statistical influence	Democracy	-0.722	0.058	-0.565 <sup>+</sup>	0.002	-0.383 <sup>+</sup>	-0.422*
	Secularism	-0.701	0.100	0.090	-1.652*	-0.152	0.097
	Competition	0.422	-1.028 <sup>+</sup>	0.209	0.439	0.208	-0.073

The qualitative analysis reveals that World Bank programs vary greatly in their potential for influence. For PROMER and PARSEM, the Bank’s primarily advisory role limited the chance of influence over attitude formation. A program’s regional location did not appear to mold program design, as both REACT and ECEEP looked organizationally distinct from the other program in their region. REACT’s large-scale media campaign constitutes the most prominent potential lane for influence, although the overall program contained other lanes as well. For ECEEP, the partnership structure allowed disparate influence, including a play-based curriculum whose connection to World Bank Ideology is hard to decipher. Despite those differences, a common line connects all four. Teacher training and standardized testing were each included in three of the four programs, and all programs had the potential to indirectly influence attitude formation by changing school-level culture. Analysis of implementation mechanisms suggests that the likelihood of ideological influence is particularly contingent on the nature of the Bank’s involvement.

On the quantitative side, the three models applied in this thesis suggest that any influence is small and possibly negative. While the country specific effects were evenly split between negative and positive, all of the effects greater than a half point and all statistically significant values were negative. Substantively, this means that World Bank programs seem likely to push people away from World Bank Ideology if anything. Given the lack of statistical significance and small R<sup>2</sup> values, the primary takeaway from this difference-in-differences analysis is that asserting unequivocal influence towards World Bank Ideology is a mistake.

The two conventionally statistically significant values ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) warrant further analysis. First, Model 2 shows that, when accounting for between-country differences, the effect of treatment on democracy's importance is negative. This suggests that children in school during these interventions grow up to hold democratic values in a *lower* regard than they might otherwise. Second, Model 3.2 shows that, in Egypt, children whose kindergarten classrooms were modified by ECEEP are much less secular than their counterparts. Given Egypt's upheaval during this time period, it is hard to put too much stock into this finding, but the size of the effect does suggest its notability.

At first glance, the quantitative and qualitative analyses do not appear to fully support each other. An exception to this is Model 3.1, which supports a theory that PROMER and PARSEM differed from the more-involved programs of REACT and ECEEP, with the latter programs marginally increasing opinions on the importance of democracy and the former decreasing opinions. Given that the pattern is not present in Models 3.2 or 3.3, one should not make too much of it, but it is nonetheless a promising lead worth further inquiry.

Though they do not agree, the quantitative and qualitative analyses do not discount each other either. Data collection limitations mean that deviations between the two should be expected. The qualitative analysis describes the programs and plausible mechanisms for influence, concluding that influence may exist in some cases, but it would be heavily mediated. The quantitative analysis explores if those pathways resulted in identifiable change in attitude formation, finding (with weak significance) that influence is unlikely to be strong if it exists at all, and it may be negative. Together, the two analyses show that unmarred influence, as suggested by some scholars, is likely not the reality on the ground.

The pathways of influence shown in Figure 1 hold up mostly well throughout this analysis. The case studies confirm that governments mediate (and in many cases alter) implementation of World Bank programs, with the Bank's influence remaining tangential. This occurs even when the

government seems to agree ideologically with the Bank, as was the case with Peru. That said, the Bank's involvement in Peru and Egypt, particularly in the form of Peru's media campaign, at times circumvented the government in ways not well captured in Figure 1. The quantitative analysis unsurprisingly backs up Figure 1's claim of the importance of local context in attitude formation. The difference between North African and South American examples, seemingly nonexistent in Model 3, is highly prominent in Model 2, and between-country differences exist prominently as well. Figure 1's simplicity allows its continued validity, and tracing individual policies along the figure helps describe relative potentials for influence.

The analysis completed in this thesis questions the assumption that World Bank involvement in K-12 education policies means influence on children's attitude formation towards World Bank Ideology. Evidence shows that programs are disparate in their potential to drive changes in attitude production, and the imposition of a World Bank program may even push attitudes away from World Bank Ideology. This does not mean that influence in favor of World Bank Ideology does not exist. Any findings here are limited in explanatory power by a number of factors, elaborated below. Further research is needed to determine the true nature of the World Bank's attitudinal influence.

## **Limitations**

This thesis shows that the World Bank likely does not invariably influence attitude formation through its K-12 education programs, but substantial limitations prevent a causal conclusion. These limitations include issues of sample size, data availability, and confounders.

The World Bank has operated more than 1500 education programs. While I tried to choose a set of four different programs to cover the breadth of World Bank policies, that sample size should not be extrapolated to all World Bank programs. For example, the Bank is often criticized for

pushing privatized education, but none of these programs included that element.<sup>112</sup> The four cases explored in this thesis are case studies of some of the ways that World Bank education programs operate, but they constitute neither an exhaustive list nor a representative sample of the World Bank's education corpus.

Data availability limits this thesis's explanatory power. For the case studies, I relied heavily on World Bank documentation and available government resources if there were any. Unfortunately, most government records were neither well-kept nor publicly available. This extends to other sources as well. Agriteam Canada's ECEEP webpage, for example, was shuttered in 2023.<sup>113</sup> The World Bank's extensive documentation of their efforts helped fill in many gaps, but relying heavily on the Bank's account could have biased my findings.

For the quantitative analysis, data availability also posed limitations. Data limitations prevented testing for parallel trends. Due to variance and the door-to-door nature of the survey, some survey groups were very small. As a result, findings in regard to Argentina (rural responses only) and Egypt (small 5<sup>th</sup> wave treatment group) should be approached cautiously. The timing of WVS waves posed two further problems. WVS's seventh wave occurred too early to capture most recipients of REACT and ECEEP. While 7<sup>th</sup> wave 18- and 19-year-olds did study in World Bank-influenced classrooms, the recipients of Peru's 2009-2010 media campaign and Egypt's 2010 new curriculum are not represented in the data. Given the importance of those policies to those program's expected influence, one might expect all results for those programs to be higher than they appear in the data. Furthermore, WVS's 5<sup>th</sup> wave overlapped with the beginning of the programs. In Morocco, some of the first period respondents may have worked as teachers or had children in schools and therefore could have been influenced by PARSEM. It is unlikely that this would have

---

<sup>112</sup> Klees, Samoff, and Stromquist, *The World Bank and Education*.

<sup>113</sup> Heibert, "Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project."

had an effect outside of Morocco, as none of the other first period observations are old enough to have been affected by the programs. The WVS was not designed for this thesis and therefore poses limitations, but the suggestions of the data warrant consideration nonetheless.

Only country-level differences for the whole sample were used as controls, but other confounders could exist. Differences in attitudes due to gender or other demographic incongruencies in the sample are possible. Similarly, other influences could have changed the size of attitude gaps between age cohorts. Egypt in particular underwent large-scale upheaval which could have had any number of consequences. A further possibility is reverse causation wherein the World Bank chose regions to implement programs because of their existing attitudinal landscape.

A handful of other potential limitations may further restrict the findings. The WVS itself is a predominantly door-to-door survey, which could lead to a sampling bias particularly against the skepticism element of secularism.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, infrastructure discrepancies may have biased the WVS sample towards more urbanized, cosmopolitan populations. None of these interventions were the Bank's only education programs in each respective country, and while none of the observed populations received more than one program, the remnants of previous programs could have biased the sample and changed the way communities interact with the Bank. Further, it is possible that other aid organizations implemented programs that overlapped in their coverage with those in the sample or control cohorts.

The limitations discussed above do not discount the main takeaways of this thesis, but they do point to bounds of extension. At a basic level, this thesis examines four World Bank programs and makes a claim about the lack of clear evidence towards attitude influence within those programs and the high degree of variability in potential mechanisms for influence. The thesis demonstrates that influence on attitude formation is not a universal characteristic of education aid programs.

---

<sup>114</sup> Inglehart et al., "World Values Survey."

## Conclusion

This thesis describes the World Bank's K-12 education programs, their potential mechanisms of influence over children's attitude formation, and the degree to which that influence actually exists. Though limitations bound the scope of the argument, initial conclusions show a high degree of variability between programs and no initial evidence of attitude influence. A conclusion based on these results is that assertions made in the literature need to be challenged. Specifically, the claim that the World Bank engages in "cultural imperialism" and is promoting a "monopoly opinion" which pushes children "into a Western way of thinking" does not appear to be universally true, raising the question as to why this assertion is so common in the first place.<sup>115</sup>

The research presented here also points to a need for further inquiry. This could take a number of forms. First, collection of data for the WVS's 8<sup>th</sup> wave begins this year. A repeat of this inquiry to address missing data could help fill in gaps. A more in-depth analysis with interviews and a larger dataset of potentially influenced individuals would help as well. Furthermore, a larger collection of World Bank programs should be analyzed in the form of a typology of interventions organized by their influence on attitudes. This would help develop a clear understanding of the specific policies and contexts needed for a program to have an effect on attitude formation. In order for this research to extend beyond the World Bank to other transnational organizations, examples and data from other organizations like the OECD or IMF should be examined. These further efforts will hopefully unveil the influence that education aid has over attitude formation globally.

As policymakers design education aid programs, they should keep in mind their power over attitude production. Though this inquiry demonstrates the varying, unclear nature of attitudinal

---

<sup>115</sup> Carnoy, "Education as Cultural Imperialism."; Klees, "Beyond Neoliberalism."; Tikly, "Education and the New Imperialism."



influence in education aid, it also points to instances where that influence was very likely present. Organizations like the World Bank are often laser focused on measurable outcomes, but attitudes also matter. The normative benefits and drawbacks of a program that influences attitudes should be considered in policy design. This thesis shows that programs vary in their ability to influence children's attitude formation, and while we should not discount the premise of international aid as a mechanism for global attitude change, assertions in the literature of universal influence must be challenged.

## Bibliography

- Altbach, Philip G. 1977. "Servitude of the Mind?: Education, Dependency, and Neocolonialism." *Teachers College Record* 79 (2): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/016146817707900201>.
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 2008. "Chapter 6: Education for Global Citizenship." *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* 107 (1): 83–99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-7984.2008.00133.x>.
- "Argentina - Rural Education Improvement (PROMER) Project (English)." 2014. World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/361911467998184724/Argentina-Rural-Education-Improvement-PROMER-Project>.
- Bromley, Patricia, Lisa Overbey, Jared Furuta, and Rie Kijima. 2021. "Education Reform in the Twenty-First Century: Declining Emphases in International Organisation Reports, 1998–2018." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 19 (1): 23–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2020.1816159>.
- Campbell, Andrea Louise. 2012. "Policy Makes Mass Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15 (1): 333–51. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-012610-135202>.
- Cantoni, Davide, Yuyu Chen, David Y. Yang, Noam Yuchtman, and Y. Jane Zhang. 2017. "Curriculum and Ideology." *Journal of Political Economy* 125 (2): 338–92. <https://doi.org/10.1086/690951>.
- Carnoy, Martin. 1975. "Education as Cultural Imperialism: A Reply." *Comparative Education Review* 19 (2): 286–89. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1187773>.
- "Development Projects : Nigeria State Education Sector Project - P096151." n.d. Text/HTML. World Bank. Accessed December 9, 2023. <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P096151>.
- "Egypt - Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project (English)." n.d. World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/452151468233952618/Egypt-Early-Childhood-Education-Enhancement-Project>.

- “Evaluaciones censales.” n.d. UMC-Oficina de Medición de la Calidad de los Aprendizajes. Accessed March 23, 2024. <http://umc.minedu.gob.pe/evaluaciones-censales/>.
- Heibert, Matthew. 2017. “Early Childhood Education Enhancement Project.” Agriteam Canada. August 19, 2017. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170819192607/http://www.agriteam.ca/en/projects/profile/early-childhood-education-project/>.
- IEG Review Team. 2016. “Peru - Results and Accountability (REACT) Development Policy Loan Project (English).” World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/257451468066830281/Peru-Results-and-Accountability-REACT-Development-Policy-Loan-Project>.
- Inglehart, R, C Haerper, A Moreno, K Welzel, K Kizilova, J Diez-Medrano, M Lagos, P Norris, E Ponarin, and B Puranen. 2022. “World Values Survey: All Rounds - Country-Pooled Datafile.” Madrid, Spain and Vienna, Austria: JD Systems Institute & WWSA Secretariat. <https://doi.org/doi:10.14281/18241.17>.
- “Integrity Vice Presidency Annual Report - Fiscal 2010.” 2010. World Bank Group. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/deddc43bddd1db90cb39a96c4909c2c-0090012021/original/INT-FY10-Annual-Report.pdf>.
- Jachyra, Patrick, and Caroline Fusco. 2016. “The Place of Play: From Playground to Policy to Classroom Well-Being.” *Sport, Education and Society* 21 (2): 217–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2014.896331>.
- Klees, Steven J. 2020. “Beyond Neoliberalism: Reflections on Capitalism and Education.” *Policy Futures in Education* 18 (1): 9–29. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1478210317715814>.
- Klees, Steven J., Joel Samoff, and Nelly P. Stromquist, eds. 2012. *The World Bank and Education: Critiques and Alternatives*. Rotterdam: SensePublishers. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-903-9>.

- Klerides, Eleftherios. 2023. "Comparative Education and International Relations." *Comparative Education* 59 (3): 416–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2023.2216045>.
- Koehl, Robert. 1975. "Cultural Imperialism as Education: An Indictment." Edited by Martin Carnoy. *Comparative Education Review* 19 (2): 276–85. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1187772>.
- "Learning for All: Investing in People's Knowledge and Skills to Promote Development - World Bank Group Education Strategy 2020 : Executive Summary (English)." n.d. PDF. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. Accessed January 11, 2024. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/685531468337836407/Learning-for-all-investing-in-peoples-knowledge-and-skills-to-promote-development-World-Bank-Group-education-strategy-2020-executive-summary>.
- Menashy, Francine. 2019. *International Aid to Education: Power Dynamics in an Era of Partnership*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- "Morocco - Basic Education Reform Support Program Project (English)." n.d.-a. World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/794141468120548182/Morocco-Basic-Education-Reform-Support-Program-Project>.
- "———." n.d.-b. World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/937831474652717066/Morocco-Basic-Education-Reform-Support-Program>.
- Mullis, Ina V S, Michael O Martin, and Pierre Foy. 2008. "TIMSS 2007 International Mathematics Report: Findings from IEA's Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study at the Fourth and Eighth Grades." Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College. <https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/TIMSS2007/mathreport.html>.
- Mullis, Ina V S, Michael O Martin, Shirley Goh, and Kerry Cotter, eds. 2016. "TIMSS 2015 Encyclopedia: Education Policy and Curriculum in Mathematics and Science - Teachers, Teacher Education, and

Professional Development in Buenos Aires, Argentina.” In . Boston, MA: Boston College, TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center.

<https://timssandpirls.bc.edu/timss2015/encyclopedia/benchmarking-participants/buenos-aires-argentina/teachers-teacher-education-and-professional-development/>.

“ONE | Buenos Aires Ciudad - Gobierno de La Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires.” n.d. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://buenosaires.gob.ar/nacionales/one>.

“Peru - Results and Accountability Development Policy Loan Series Project (English).” n.d. World Bank Group. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/573751467987872023/peru-results-and-accountability-development-policy-loan-series-project>.

Riddell, Abby. 2007. “Education Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAps): Background, Guide and Lessons.” UNESCO Digital Library. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000150965>.

Schweisfurth, Michele, Matthew A. M. Thomas, and Amy Smail. 2022. “Revisiting Comparative Pedagogy: Methodologies, Themes and Research Communities since 2000.” *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 52 (4): 560–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2020.1797475>.

Tikly, Leon. 2004. “Education and the New Imperialism.” *Comparative Education* 40 (2): 173–98. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4134648>.

Ullah, Hazir. 2012. “Cultural Imperialism through Education in Pakistan and the Loss of National Identity” 12 (January): 215–22. <https://doi.org/10.5829/idosi.mejsr.2012.12.2.1670>.