NORRAG Cluster Meeting in Switzerland

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Reference


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of language and relevance apply to NORAG in the same way that they do for education and training policies.

Drawing on the first observation, the NORAG strategy group decided to elaborate a policy brief for each issue of NORAG NEWS (starting with n°37). The policy brief, prepared originally in English by the editor, is conceived as a synthesis for readers to capture the main points of convergence and divergence emerging from the topic dealt with. It offers a glimpse into the rich and diverse content of NORAG NEWS and it is a useful tool to disseminate better the work of NORAG. To tackle the under representation of the network in some regions, policy briefs are now being translated into French, Spanish, German, Arabic and Chinese. Adding a translation into Russian in the near future has also been suggested.

To download the policy briefs, it is necessary to be registered in NORAG and to log in (with your email address) before going through the whole list of NORAG NEWS. At present, the policy briefs are unfortunately not accessible without log in.

In addition to the efforts made by the secretariat to publicize the work of NORAG through national cluster meetings, emailing and the sending of printed copies of NORAG NEWS in under represented regions, it is hoped that the availability of policy briefs in different languages will facilitate access to research findings for policy debate. However, the content issue still needs to be addressed, with a better coverage of the experience of different countries and regions.

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NORAG Cluster Meeting in Switzerland

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This first NORAG Clusteri workshop of the NORAG membership in Switzerland was organized by the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, on 21st April 2008. The topic of this workshop “Poverty, inequalities, exclusion: what cooperation policies in the field of education and training?” was already analyzed in NN37. We could draw from that special issue three essential points, which correspond to possible strategies to adopt: firstly, it is necessary to take care of education quality for all; secondly, we need to support a holistic vision of the development of education; and thirdly, we should go beyond a strategy centred on education by developing a favourable macro-economic environment.

The objective of the workshop was to put in the same room more than 70 persons who do not speak enough each other! It was a successful bet since this diversity of participants coming from NGOs, co-operation agencies, foundations, companies, and the academic
world, shared their experiences and insights and presented throughout the workshop their prospects, of which we can present the principal points.

First of all, Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) presented the new tendencies of the global policies which correspond to a desire to help the disadvantaged populations through innovative methods; on the other side, public-private partnerships can also be an instrument for these policies. It is worth recalling that the State cannot act alone in the fields of education and training.

Second, the prospects for research consisted of a very valuable reflection and debate on the question of inequalities in access to education in Vietnam. We understood that the policies of aid did not manage to reach the most disadvantaged populations. There is thus a need to target these people.

Third the roundtable on the prospects for nongovernmental actors mainly left the impression that a greater investment in the private and non-state sector is necessary, but also the fact that there exists a multiplicity of private actors and thus of visions and actions in international cooperation.

From this workshop, two principal questions came out of the synthesis:

1) Is education an instrument of employment creation or is it an instrument to make equal citizens?
2) Is the school a mission which concerns principally the public authorities, including all their regulations or is it an hunting ground of a highly diversified market of suppliers?

The most positive point of this workshop is that it illustrated very persuasively the point that we have already made: that the Switzerland-based actors in the field of co-operation education and skills in the countries of the South are extremely diversified. But it was also obvious that they could dialogue together effectively. The tendency to compartmentalization of all these actors was recognised, but it was acknowledged as the comparative advantage of NORRAG to be able to bring them together around such a key topic.

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1 NORRAG Cluster Workshops are an innovation. They are designed to invite the NORRAG membership in a country to come together around a key theme, including possibly around a particularly salient issue of NORRAG News. There are no fewer than 130 NORRAG members in Switzerland. [Editor]