



Post-2015 Global Thematic Consultation on Education

Summary Report of the e-Discussion on Governance and Financing of Education

Background

The fourth and last e-discussion of the Education Global Thematic Consultation dealt with the governance and financing of education and ran from **10 February to 3 March 2013**. It is noteworthy that issues related to governance and financing of education was raised a number of times by the contributors of the previous e-discussions and were fully reflected in the summary reports. In total, **58 contributions** were received in this discussion from individuals, civil society, (regional) networks, working groups and the private sector, including the co-moderators from UNICEF, UNESCO, Open Society Foundations, GIZ/BMZ, and the Global Partnership for Education. The experiences shared referred to a variety of countries such as Niger, Ghana, the Philippines, Brazil, Norway, Cameroon, Bangladesh, Pakistan, India and Guatemala.

Participants were asked to discuss strategies, policies and interventions that would improve governance in the education sector, key challenges to financing education and the contributing factors to these challenges. They were also asked to reflect on who should be held accountable for ensuring that children receive a good quality education and how. The discussion further focused on recommendations for addressing governance and financing of education in the post-MDG development agenda as well as on what actions civil society and the media can take to effectively lobby their governments for a better targeting of education

resources, especially towards the poorest children, and for improvements in education.

Why improving governance and financing of education is important?

Since 1999, faster economic growth, better revenue generation, increased aid levels and stronger political commitment have all helped increase real spending on education in low income countries by an average of 7.2% a year. Despite increased financial allocations from national governments to education, many of the poorest countries still face major shortfalls in the resources needed to achieve education goals. Just as the numbers of children out of school are stagnating, there are worrying signs that donor contributions may also be slowing down. Total aid decreased in real terms in 2011 for the first time since 1997. Inequitable spending is an increasing concern too. Due to the disparities in terms of access, the individuals from the poorest quintile benefit significantly less from public spending on education than those from the wealthiest quintile.

In terms of governance in education, the overall problem is an inefficient and ineffective public service system. On the one hand, challenges like fragmented institutional structures, centralized systems, lacking linkages between planning and budgeting or weak accountability systems reinforce the lack of funding in education

because the money is not spent in a meaningful way (“value for money”). On the other hand, more funds couldn’t even be absorbed due to weak governance structures and capacities. Increasing funds without improving governance therefore bears the risk of adding to the level of corruption.

Challenges in governance of education and strategies and interventions to address them

“Governance and financing of education should take into account the sustainable inclusive participatory development of society along with the human resource potential. The guiding principles should be equity, inclusiveness, accessibility, permissiveness, participation, justice, transparency, responsiveness, and collaboration.” **Asutosh Satpathy**

Many discussants argued that **accountability** is a key challenge, with **corruption** as the major hurdle to

increasing efficiency for better service delivery in the education sector. According to several contributors, all stakeholders, including government authorities, donors, multi-lateral organizations, civil society, teachers, parents and students as well as the private sector, academia and the media should be accountable and hold others accountable for every child to receive a good quality education.

At the local level, best practices with regard to improving governance and strengthening accountability mentioned by the contributors are: **promotion of decentralization through school-based management and participation of local stakeholders** (e.g. via school management committees) as well as mechanisms of **increasing access to information and transparency** such as citizen report cards. As was mentioned by one contributor, *“Giving more authority to head teachers, continuous training provision on school management, more involvement of parents who are highly motivated, and much more frequent supervision should be the keys to strengthen school management, which is surely led to more*

efficient use of resources and higher learning outcome.” (Daisuke Kanazawa)

At the national level, it was mentioned by the participants that **public expenditure tracking surveys** can help identify where the bottlenecks are. It was argued that the **involvement of the civil society** and other stakeholders like **the media** is helpful to increase the pressure on governments to perform better and direct resources to where they are needed. Several contributors pointed out that civil society should play an advocacy role in various dimensions: promoting education as a basic human right; facilitating policy debate and dialogue; disseminating results; interacting with local actors, including governments, education stakeholders, teachers and schools; and lobbying with the national governments for more equitable resource allocations. As was rightly noted, civil society *“[...] must use case studies which show us the negative influence of limited resources and access to education and promote debates with the decision makers and politicians. The media disseminates information and conclusions to all stakeholders.” (José Chaleca)*

It was also mentioned by some contributors that improving governance of education should entail **improving teachers’ conditions**. *“There is increasing evidence that beyond wages and working conditions, the feeling of being part of national development – having a job with a moral purpose – can drive teacher motivation and further professionalization, and attract high performers into the profession.” (Oliver Liang)*

Capacity development of stakeholders at both national and local levels, administrators, educators, communities and parents, is perceived as a prerequisite for making services work. A concrete example shared was about civic and moral education as a compulsory subject in order to build capacities with regard to democracy, governance and citizenship at an early stage. In this context, the significance of **youth empowerment** programs, including **bottom-up initiatives** was emphasized by different contributors.

At the global level, it was proposed that **more coherent policies** on inclusive education need to be developed. *"If, as a global human rights community we believe that education is a right for all then we cannot stand by while all children are not able to realize this right. Therefore the role of international actors - donors, religions, multilateral agencies, UN, governments, is to design protocols, for all, including the North to sign up to; to be accountable to the Paris agreement and its successors, to provide funds to enable governments to provide education; and to reinforce education through their other policies."* (Susan Durston) It was emphasized, however, that while identifying educational aims of universal applicability, 'international governance' should not be a 'cultural imposition' but allow for the national and local needs, diversity and context.

Challenges in financing education and strategies and interventions to address them

Many contributions highlighted that the financing of education strongly depends on the **political will** and **ownership** of national governments and the donor community alike **to allocate adequate resources for education**. Consequently, it was argued that spending on education needs to be increased on both sides, with regard to the percentage of GDP/GNP allocated to education and in the countries as well as in terms of percentage of ODA earmarked for education. In addition, *alternative ways* of generating funds for education can be considered, such as **debt relief, pro-development trade or tax policies**, as well as context-specific and innovative **fiscal policies and strategies**.

As in the comments on improving governance in education, **equity and inclusiveness** were seen as both the challenge and solution for financing

education. Several contributors noted that financing education should be more targeted towards the poorest and most marginalized (e.g. girls, children with disabilities, rural population, emergency situations etc.).

According to some discussants, resources should be channelled into the implementation of **evidence-based best practices in education** in order to improve the impact effectiveness of budget expenditure. In this context, it is considered to be crucial to move from an input-

"Input measures of effort (share of GDP, share of budget, even expenditure per student) tell managers, donors, teachers or parents NOTHING about the effectiveness of government and/or donor funds. Inputs need to be linked to quantitative improvements (especially Net Enrolment Rate by gender, Primary Completion Rate by gender, and Transition Rate to secondary by gender) PLUS substantive improvements in student literacy and numeracy. **Geoff Howse**

to an output-focused approach linked with the establishment of proper monitoring and

evaluation mechanisms based on high quality data.

A number of discussants also pointed out the necessity of **more effective and predictable aid** through the donor community. In addition, a stronger involvement of and coordination with the private/business sector and NGOs alike will strengthen public services in education that help deliver on the promise of quality education for all children. Again, the importance of participation of all stakeholders (e.g. teachers) in the relevant development processes is emphasized. The **key role of teachers** for progressing in educational outcomes and the need to address all issues related to them through appropriate governance strategies was emphasized in various comments. *"Ensuring more effective aid isn't a question of a public or private financing, but of working smarter and more collaboratively to bring the lessons of what works and what doesn't in both the public and private systems to the poorest of the poor, to places where neither government nor market approaches on their own are solving the education crisis."* (Allison Anderson & Amanda Gardiner)

Cross-cutting issues

There were a number of cross-cutting issues raised during the discussion. One aspect covered was the importance of **inter-sectoral planning for education for sustainable development (ESD)**. Contributors noted the need to refocus the understanding between unsustainable growth and sustainable development. ESD is considered as a pathway to the educational goal that links a sustainable future with individual well-being.

Furthermore, a few contributors indicated the significance of investing in **sexual and reproductive health and rights, including voluntary family planning**, as it would help to reduce the pressure on education systems and budgets. Thus, population dynamics should be a focus of educational planning. This is also inter-related with sustainable development where population growth influences consumption.

Separate or integrated goals?

A number of contributors suggested that governance and financing of education should be addressed through separate goals in the post-MDG development agenda: *“Having a separate goal for financing and governance will focus attention on this currently poorly managed area. Targets should have national specifications based on the country’s circumstances and include the percentage of GDP that should be directed towards education as well as annual amounts of funding to be received from bilateral, multilateral, and private institutions.” (Irene Pritzker)*

Other contributors, however, advocated that education policy areas should be integrated as a cross-cutting issue into the post-2015 agenda or in other words, they *“should be addressed and highlighted within all goals” (Isabelle Turmaine).*

DISCLAIMER: The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this discussion summary are those of the discussion participants and do not necessarily reflect the policies or views of UNESCO, UNICEF and the United Nations.