Learning in the Global Education Agenda

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2015 Global Education Summit
@USAIDEducation   #LetGirlsLearn   #endpoverty

Background and aims

- Contention some have made that with MDG focus on access, learning has been neglected in global education agenda

- Questions:
  - What is status of learning in the global education agenda?
  - What explains patterns of attention to learning?
  - What are implications for raising its agenda status?

- Focus:
  - Global actors
  - With recognition that national and local actors are critical

Methodology

- Presenting preliminary results and emerging themes
  - Currently conducting analysis of collected information
  - Final report due April 2016
- Triangulation among data sources
  - Semi-structured interviews
  - Theoretical saturation rather than representative sample
  - Published scholarship and organizational reports

Organizational affiliations of sample of interviewees

Donors	UN agencies	NGOs	Research institutions	Governments and inter-governmental organizations
DFID	UNESCO, EFA Global Monitoring Report	Pratham	REAL Centre	European Commission
USAID	UNESCO, IIEP	Inter-American Dialogue	Brookings Institution	New Zealand Ministry of Education
World Bank	UNICEF	Education International	Harvard University	OECD
Hewlett Foundation		GPE	University of Pennsylvania	
		LMTF	Stanford University	

Theoretical background

- Multiple issues, scarce resources

- Agenda-setting as a phase in the global policy process

- Agenda-setting framework* (originally developed for global health):

  - Actor power

  - Ideas

  - Political contexts

  - Issue characteristics

*Jeremy Shiffman and Stephanie Smith. 2007. "Generation of Political Priority for Global Health Initiatives: A Framework and Case Study of Maternal Mortality," The Lancet 370 (9595): 1370-1379.

Three preliminary findings

- Disagreement on agenda status of learning
- Emergence of learning as stated organizational focus over past decade
- Unresolved debates shaping agenda status

Finding 1: disagreement on agenda status of learning

- Learning has never been neglected in any fundamental sense:

  – *"…at the level of international policy, learning has been a fairly integral part of the international education policy discourse probably for 25 years. Mostly it was subsumed under the issue of quality education."*

- Learning has been and continues to be neglected:

  – *"I'm not convinced the agenda has really shifted to learning as opposed to it shifted to some combination of global rhetorical discourse about learning…in favor of a quality school agenda, which isn't a learning agenda in my mind."*

- Learning was neglected, but recently emerged as prominent issue:

  – *"I would find it difficult for anybody to argue at this particular juncture that at least in terms of the post-2015 debate, learning is not central and a core element of the education targets to be adopted in September."*

Finding 1: disagreement on agenda status of learning

- Reflecting differences on:
  - Understanding of history
  - Meaning of 'learning'
  - How 'learning' should be measured
- Divergent perspectives:
  1. Learning always there: inherent; quality part of EFA goals
  2. Learning neglected: ongoing focus on inputs rather than outcomes; resources allocated
  3. Learning recently prominent: stated organizational priorities
- Is objective answer to its agenda status possible?

Finding 2: emergence of learning as stated organizational focus

- **Precursors (1990-2000s)**
  - 1990: World Conference on EFA, Jomtien
  - 2000: World Education Forum, Dakar – Commitment to EFA goals
  - 2000: UN Millennium Summit – MDGs

- **New organizational focus (2006-2012)**
  - Hewlett Foundation (2006; QEDC initiative launched)
  - Pratham (2007; Read India Campaign)
  - DFID (2009; DFID's education strategy)
  - USAID (2011; USAID's education strategy)
  - World Bank (2011; WB education sector strategy)
  - LMTF (2012; Convened)
  - GPE (2012; GPE's strategic plan)

Finding 2: emergence of learning as stated organizational focus

- **Recent developments (2015)**
  - 2015: World Education Forum, Incheon
  - 2015: UN SDG Summit

Finding 2: emergence of learning as stated organizational focus

- Some hypotheses:
  - Emergence of studies showing lack of learning
  - Accumulation of data from learning assessment tools
  - Access achieved so naturally turn to learning
  - Individual and organizational champions

Finding 3: ongoing debates in the learning agenda

- How they are resolved will shape prospects for the agenda
- Debates:
    - On content
    - On measurement
    - On prioritized groups
    - On decision-making power

The framework and the agenda status of learning

Category	Influence of factors in category
Actor power	• Individual and organizational champions • Questions surrounding efficacy of UNESCO • Influence of civil society initiatives such as Pratham's
Ideas	• Disagreements over whether to focus on foundational skills such as literacy • Disagreements over value of global learning assessments • Evidence on relationship to economic growth helps spark policy-maker attention
Political contexts	• Global goal-setting exercises (EFAs, MDGs, SDGs) focal points for learning debates • Competition for resources within education sector (such as with access) • Competition for resources with other sectors (such as with health)
Issue characteristics	• Assessments showing global learning crisis spark attention • Uncertainty over what works hampers agenda status

Reiterating preliminary findings

- **Emergence of stated priority** among global education actors in mid-to-late 2000s

- **Possibly driven by**:
    - studies showing lack of learning
    - emergence of measurement tools,
    - natural turn to learning given access agenda progress
    - individual/organizational champions

- **Trajectory** of this agenda will be **shaped by how debates unfold** (re: content, measurement, prioritized groups, decision-making power)

Next steps

- Consider more carefully how actors' prior assumptions shape their perceptions of the agenda status of learning

- Examine more carefully evidence for hypotheses around emergence of learning priority

- Consider strategic implications of present global developments for the future of the learning agenda