Factors Related to Children’s Successful Transitions Between Age 3 and Grade 3 in Low-Income Countries:

AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
Extensive evidence is found in the minority world on effective measures ensuring children’s successful progress and smooth transition into and through the early years of formal education. A good recent example, reviewing the research, is Reynolds, Magnuson, and Ou (2010)\(^1\). In the majority world, however, it remains necessary to piece together relatively scanty evidence from different kinds of sources, and the research on many fronts is either patchy or nonexistent. While an argument can certainly be made for extrapolating from minority world evidence, doing so is risky. There are a lot of areas of shared concern—pupil-teacher ratios, age at entry, effective pedagogy, and parental involvement, to name just a few. But too often the context surrounding these terms is so different that attempts to build on this evidence are questionable and can even become misleading.

This annotated bibliography focuses on work published since 2007 that contributes to an understanding of factors that are relevant to children’s transition to school in the majority world. Most of these studies do not, in fact, specifically address children’s transition into school, but they relate to the context of this transition, and have relevance, more in some cases, less in others, for school entry and success in the early years of primary.

The selection of material here included all relevant papers from the International Journal of Educational Development—the single most useful source—as well as the International Journal of Educational Research and the International Journal of Early Childhood. This selection was followed by a database search by topic, using various combinations of relevant descriptors (e.g., primary education, access, achievement, disability, gender). It cannot be assumed that this is a comprehensive list of all relevant peer-reviewed papers over this period, but a point of diminishing returns is reached when the same papers turn up repeatedly. Of the more than two hundred papers initially identified and screened, those included here were judged to be the most useful. This search was followed by an exploration of the grey literature, focusing primarily on the outputs of organisations that belong to the Consultative Group network, but also going beyond this. It can in no way be considered a comprehensive presentation of organisational outputs, however. It includes very little on the programmes and projects supported by these organisations, focusing instead on the research and reports they have underwritten.

Over these recent years, some topics stand out for the amount of attention they are receiving. Research on the mother-tongue debate is one of these. Others are notable for how very little attention they have been receiving; for instance, given the acknowledged and fundamental importance of what goes on in the classroom, there is remarkably little research comparing different approaches.

The papers reviewed here are grouped into broad categories, but many of these categories overlap, many papers are an awkward fit, and many belong in more than one category. Many papers have been cross-referenced. They are also coded by location, type of publication, and, to a lesser degree, the kind of research, and keywords have been added. Organisation, coding, cross-referencing, and keywords could all be much improved and all ideas are welcome.

---

Categories

Geographical:
CEE/CIS = Central Europe, Central Asia
EPA = East Asia and Pacific
G = global
LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean
MENA = Middle East North Africa
SA = South Asia
SSA = Sub-Saharan Africa

Source:
Gr = Grey literature
PR = Peer reviewed journal

Approach:
AR = action research
CrS = Cross-sectional study
RCT = Randomized controlled trials
QE = Quasi-experimental
DP = discussion paper
GP = good practices
PP = pre-post
Q = qualitative
R = review
S = survey based

Topics
Access, enrolment, retention
Age at entry
Alternative teachers
Child health and nutrition
Class size, pupil-teacher ratios, ability tracking, multigrade classrooms
Disabilities and inclusion
ECD
Equity and disparity in the system
Factors associated with achievement
Family and community characteristics
Financial supports and cash transfers
Gender
Head teachers
Learning materials
Monitoring and evaluation
Mother tongue, bilingual education, ethnicity
Pedagogy, curriculum, classroom interaction
Policy
Repetition and promotion
School factors and school governance
Teacher incentives
Teachers’ training, mentoring, induction, assignment, Transition into primary
Summaries

**CHILD HEALTH AND NUTRITION** .......................................................... 9
Impact of early childhood health and nutrition on access to education in developing countries ........................................ 8
Weight gain in the first two years of life is an important predictor of schooling outcomes in pooled analyses from five birth cohorts from low- and middle-income countries ........................................ 8
Can preschool improve child health outcomes? a systematic review ................................................................. 8
Developing a nutrition and health education program for primary schools in Zambia ................................................. 8
Raising clean hands: advancing learning, health and participation through WASH in schools ........................................ 9
Investing in school health and nutrition in Indonesia .................................................. 9
Effects of a school feeding intervention on school attendance rates among elementary schoolchildren in rural Kenya ........................................ 9
Educational impact of a school breakfast programme in rural Peru ................................................................. 9
Educational and health impacts of two school feeding schemes: evidence from a randomized trial in rural Burkina Faso ........................................ 10
Rethinking school feeding: social safety nets, child development, and the education sector ................................... 10
Impact evaluation of school feeding programs in Lao PDR .................................................................................... 10
School building design for feeding programmes and community outreach: insights from Ghana and South Africa ................. 11
Malaria and primary education in Mali: a longitudinal study in the village of Donéguébougou ............................................ 11
Fever, malaria and primary repetition rates amongst school children in Mali: combining demographic and health surveys (DHS) with spatial malarialogical measures .......................................................... 11
Realist review to understand the efficacy of school feeding programmes .................................................................. 12

**DISABILITIES AND INCLUSION** .......................................................... 12
Child disability screening, nutrition, and early learning in 18 countries with low and middle incomes: data from the third round of UNICEF’s multiple indicator cluster survey (2005–06) ................................................................ 12
Promoting the rights of children with disabilities ........................................................................................................ 12
Developmental disabilities and behavioral problems among school children in the Western Cape of South Africa ........................................................................................................ 13
Local special education administrators’ understanding of inclusive education in China .............................................. 13
Approaching the measurement of disability prevalence: the case of Zambia ......................................................... 13
Parental awareness of hearing impairment in their school-going children and healthcare seeking behaviour in Kisumu district, Kenya ........................................................................................................ 14
Inclusion in education: a step towards social justice .................................................................................................. 14
Working towards inclusion: reflections from the classroom .......................................................................................... 14
Effects of inclusion on students with and without special educational needs reviewed ............................................. 14
Inclusive educational practices in Kenya: evidencing practice of itinerant teachers who work with children with visual impairment in local mainstream schools .................................................................................. 15

**GENDER** .............................................................................................. 15
What policies will reduce gender schooling gaps in developing countries? evidence and interpretation ....................... 15
Teacher absence as a factor in gender inequalities in access to primary schooling in rural Pakistan ............................ 15
Gender in the early years: boys and girls in an African working class primary school .................................................. 16
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>16</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth order and schooling: theory and evidence from twelve sub-Saharan countries</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family stress: safeguarding young children’s care environments</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of neighbourhoods in child growth and development: does ‘place’ matter?</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community well-being and growth status of Indigenous school children in rural Oaxaca, southern Mexico</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving commitment to basic education for the minorities in Botswana: a challenge for policy and practice</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young children in cities: challenges and opportunities</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges for schools in communities with internal migration flows: evidence from Turkey</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life chances in Turkey: expanding opportunities for the next generation</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity and quality? challenges for early childhood and primary education in Ethiopia, India and Peru</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty alleviation and integrated service delivery: literacy, early child development and health</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FINANCIAL SUPPORTS FOR HOUSEHOLDS (MICROCREDIT, CASH TRANSFERS, SCHOLARSHIPS)</th>
<th>19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Can financial incentives enhance educational outcomes? evidence from international experiments</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects on school enrollment and performance of a conditional cash transfers program in Mexico</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash transfers, behavioral changes, and cognitive development in early childhood</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding the perils and fulfilling the promises of microfinance: a closer examination of the educational outcomes of clients’ children in Nicaragua</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do girls’ scholarship programs work? evidence from two countries</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving the education component of conditional cash transfers in urban settings</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ECD</th>
<th>21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood stimulation interventions in developing countries: a comprehensive literature review</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of early childhood interventions across the world: (under) investing in the very young</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does early childhood care and education affect cognitive development? an international review of the effects of early interventions for children from different social backgrounds</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to avoid the loss of developmental potential in more than 200 million children in the developing world</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa’s future, Africa’s challenge: early childhood care and development in Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education for sustainable development in early childhood education: a global solution to local concerns?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The effect of pre-primary education on primary school performance</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving children a better start: preschool attendance and school-age profiles</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early academic performance, grade repetition, and school attainment in Senegal: a panel data analysis</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood education in Mexico: expansion, quality improvement and curricular reform</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of a preschool intervention on cognitive development among East-African preschool children: a flexibly time-coded growth model</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating an improved quality preschool program in rural Bangladesh</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The effect of preschool dialogic reading on vocabulary among rural Bangladeshi children</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investing in early childhood development: benefits, savings and financial options</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE TRANSITION INTO PRIMARY SCHOOL</th>
<th>25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact of school readiness program interventions on children’s learning in Cambodia</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From home to school: bridging the language gap in Mauritian preschools</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood and primary education</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting the basics right: contribution of early childhood development to quality, equity and efficiency in education</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuity and respect for diversity: strengthening early transitions in Peru</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop with Indigenous leaders about home–school transitions in Indigenous communities</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AGE AT ENTRY 27
School entry age and reading achievement in the 2006 programme for international student assessment (PISA) 27
Household characteristics and delayed school enrollment in Malawi 27
Age in grade congruence and progression in basic education in Bangladesh 28
Anecdotal evidence based on interviews in Kenya 28

ACCESS, ENROLMENT, RETENTION 28
Effects of household- and district-level factors on primary school enrollment in 30 developing countries 28
Who goes to school? School enrollment patterns in Somalia 29
The returns from reducing corruption: evidence from education in Uganda 29
Back to school in Afghanistan: determinants of school enrollment 29
Who is out of school? evidence from the Community Survey 2007, South Africa 29
Learning from migrant education: a case study of the schooling of rural migrant children in Beijing 30
Why are there proportionately more poor pupils enrolled in non-state schools in urban Kenya in spite of FPE policy? 30
Determinants of schooling for boys and girls in Nigeria under a policy of free primary education 30
Obstacles to school progression in rural Pakistan: an analysis of gender and sibling rivalry using field survey data 30

REPETITION AND PROMOTION 31
Does taking one step back get you two steps forward? Grade retention and school performance in poor areas in rural China 31

MOTHER TONGUE, BILINGUAL EDUCATION, ETHNICITY 32
Enhancing learning of children from diverse language backgrounds: mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years 32
Costs and benefits of bilingual education in Guatemala: a partial analysis 32
A study of early literacy classroom interaction in rural Tanzania: cases of Ruvuma and Coast regions 32
Language proficiency and language policy in South Africa: findings from new data 32
Workshop with Indigenous leaders about home–school transitions in Indigenous communities 33
Local community perspectives and language of education in sub-Saharan African communities 33
Classroom interaction: potential or problem? The case of Karagwe 33
Teachers’ strategies of teaching primary school mathematics in a second language: a case of Botswana 33

ETHNICITY 34
Supporting Roma children through a parent–school partnership project 34
Building bridges in central rainforest of Peru 34
Local solutions for improving the quality of care and education for young Maasai children in Tanzania 34
Working towards quality and equity in Latin America 34
The achievement of Indigenous students in Guatemalan primary schools 35

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ACHIEVEMENT 35
Differences in pupil achievement in Kenya: implications for policy and practice 35
The effect of primary school mergers on academic performance of students in rural China 35
Factors influencing the academic achievement of the Turkish urban poor 36
Transforming public schools: impact of the CRI program on child learning in Pakistan 36
What determines basic school attainment in developing countries? evidence from rural China 36
School quality and learning gains in rural Guatemala 36
Experiences of violence and deficits in academic achievement among urban primary school children in Jamaica 37
Factors influencing student achievement in Vietnam .................................................. 37
Extra tuition in southern and eastern Africa: coverage, growth, and linkages with pupil achievement .................................................. 37
Harsh corporal punishment of Yemeni children: occurrence, type and associations ........ 37

CLASS SIZE, PUPIL-TEACHER RATIOS, TRACKING, MULTIGRADE ......................... 38
Peer effects, pupil-teacher ratios, and teacher incentives in Kenya ................................ 38
Teaching large classes: the international evidence and a discussion of some good practice in Ugandan primary schools ............................................. 39
Relationships amongst cultural dimensions, educational expenditure and class size of different nations ................................................................. 39
Multigrade schooling in Turkey: an overview .......................................................... 39
The preparation of teachers for multigrade teaching .................................................. 39
Investing in multi-grade teaching in Indonesia ......................................................... 40
Peer effects and the impact of tracking: evidence from a randomized evaluation in Kenya ................................................................. 40
TEACHERS’ TRAINING, INDUCTION, MENTORING, ASSIGNMENT ......................... 40
Educating the teacher educator: a Ugandan case study ............................................. 40
The problems of the beginning teacher in the Arab schools in Israel ......................... 41
Mentoring beginning teachers: what we know and what we don’t ................................ 41
ATLAS active teaching and learning approaches in schools: report of the pilot conducted in Zambia 2008–2009 .............................................................. 41
Working as partners for classroom reform .............................................................. 42
How newly qualified primary teachers develop: a case study in rural Eritrea ............... 42
Capturing the difference: primary school teacher identity in Tanzania ....................... 42
Reconsidering the evidence base, considering the rural: aiming for a better understanding of the education and training needs of Sub-Saharan African teachers ................................................................. 42
Educational production and the distribution of teachers in Uruguay ............................ 43
The effectiveness and distribution of male primary teachers: evidence from two Mexican states ................................................................. 43
Teachers for rural schools: experiences in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda ................................................................. 43
ALTERNATIVE TEACHERS ...................................................................................... 44
The role and status of nongovernmental (‘daike’) teachers in China’s rural education ........ 44
Alternatively certified elementary school teachers in Turkey .................................... 44
“Free primary education” in Lesotho and the disadvantages of the highlands .............. 44
Contract teachers: experimental evidence from India ................................................. 44

TEACHER INCENTIVES ............................................................................................. 45
Teacher incentives in the developing world .............................................................. 45
Teacher performance pay: experimental evidence from India .................................... 45
Monitoring works: getting teachers to come to school .............................................. 45
Primary education, teachers’ professionalism and social class about motivation and demotivation of government school teachers in India ......................... 46

HEAD TEACHERS .................................................................................................. 46
School leadership and social justice: evidence from Ghana and Tanzania ................. 46
Democratizing school authority: Brazilian teachers’ perceptions of the election of principals ................................................................. 46
The role of school principals in enhancing teacher professionalism ............................ 46
Do principal-educators have the ability to transform schools? a South African perspective ................................................................. 47
PEDAGOGY, CURRICULUM, CLASSROOM INTERACTION ...................................... 47
The cultural politics of constructivist pedagogies: teacher education reform in the United Republic of Tanzania ................................................................. 47
Challenges of applying a student-centered approach to learning in the context of education in Kyrgyzstan ................................................................. 47
Curriculum change in Uganda: teacher perspectives on the new thematic curriculum ............................................. 48
Curriculum reform in post-1990s Sub-Saharan Africa .......................................................................................... 48
Child-centred education and the promise of democratic learning: pedagogic messages in rural Indian primary schools .... 48
Challenging common sense: cases of school reform for learning community under an international cooperation project in Bac Giang Province, Vietnam ................................................................. 48
Free but inaccessible primary education: a critique of the pedagogy of English and mathematics in Lesotho .................. 49
Pedagogical renewal: improving the quality of classroom interaction in Nigerian primary schools .................................. 49
Beyond chalk and talk: experimental math and science education in Argentina ................................................. 49
The state of numeracy education in Latin America and the Caribbean ............................................................... 49

LEARNING MATERIALS ......................................................................................................................... 50
Many children left behind: textbooks and test scores in Kenya ...................................................................... 50
Pocket school: exploring mobile technology as a sustainable literacy education option for underserved Indigenous children in Latin America. .......................................................... 50
Experimental assessment of the program “One Laptop per Child” in Peru .................................................. 50

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ........................................ 51
School governance and teachers’ attitudes to parents’ involvement in schools .................................................. 51
The construction of parents and teachers as agents for the improvement of municipal schools in Chile .......... 51
School improvement plans and student learning in Jamaica ........................................................................ 51
Popular educational innovations in the hierarchical world of Mexican policy .................................................. 51
The Child Town project: quality assessment in practice .............................................................................. 52
Project description of a Peruvian intervention under CIDA’s improvement of basic education category ................. 52
Managing for results in primary education in Madagascar: evaluating the impact of selected workflow interventions. .......................................................... 53
Pitfalls of participatory programs: evidence from a randomized evaluation in education in India. ...................... 53
MONITORING AND EVALUATION ........................................................................................................ 53
Benchmarks for early childhood services in OECD countries ................................................................. 53
Good governance of early childhood development programmes in developing countries: the need for a comprehensive monitoring system ............................................................................. 54
Examining early child development in low-income countries: a toolkit for the assessment of children in the first five years of life ......................................................................................... 54
Where is the learning? measuring schooling efforts in developing countries .............................................. 54
Do monitoring and evaluation tools, designed to measure the improvement in the quality of primary education, constrain or enhance educational development? ........................................ 54
Lesson observation and quality in primary education as contextual teaching and learning processes ................. 55
Measuring beginner reading skills: an empirical evaluation of alternative instruments and their potential use for policymaking and accountability in Peru .................................................. 55
Timor Leste: an analysis of early grade reading acquisition ...................................................................... 55

POLICY .................................................................................................................................................. 56
Providing better education services to the poor: accountability and context in the case of Guatemalan decentralization .... 56
Decentralization’s effects on educational outcomes in Bolivia and Colombia ................................................. 56
Measuring education quality in Brazil ........................................................................................................ 56
Care and learning together: a cross-national study on the integration of early childhood care and education within education .......................................................... 56
Abolishing school fees in Africa: lessons from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Mozambique .................. 57
The economic impact of school violence
CHILD HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Impact of early childhood health and nutrition on access to education in developing countries

G, PR, R health, nutrition, enrolment

This paper reviews research on the numerous ways in which poor health and nutrition in the early years undermine children’s chances of attending school. In most cases these conditions are preventable and treatable. Jukes presents copious evidence for the value of nutritional supports, whether through feeding programmes or micronutrient support, both in school and before school, for improving enrolment, attendance, and achievement. He argues for a life cycle approach, beginning with maternal child health programmes and the integrated management of childhood illnesses during infancy and continuing with supports available through ECCE programmes to ensure children will be able to enrol in primary school and benefit from the growing number of school health programmes.

Weight gain in the first two years of life is an important predictor of schooling outcomes in pooled analyses from five birth cohorts from low- and middle-income countries

G, PR, PP weight, school achievement

Drawing on data from cohorts in five countries, this paper assesses the importance of birth weight, weight gain in children under two years of age, and weight gain between two and four for subsequent school outcomes. While weight gain in the older group had little effect, both children’s weight at birth and their weight gain in the first two years were strongly associated with school outcomes. One SD increase in birth weight (about .5 kg) was associated with 0.43 y more schooling and 12% decreased risk of failing. The authors point out that it is not weight gain per se that contributes to cognitive development, but rather that growth failure in early childhood is a marker of lack of nutrients at the cellular level, which has systemic effects on growth and development in general, and also on brain development. They stress that nutritional supports for pregnant mothers and very young children is a critical component in achieving educational goals.

Can preschool improve child health outcomes? a systematic review

G, PR, R health, ECD

This systematic review of the English-language literature from 1980 to 2008 examines the longer-term population health effects of centre-based preschool intervention programmes for healthy 4-year-olds. The interventions included ECD programming alone, but also parenting programmes and health services. Most of the studies reviewed focused on disadvantaged populations in the USA. While some benefits were found for mental health and social competence, as well as for childhood obesity during primary school, there was little evidence of the potential of early childhood interventions to improve population health. The authors point, however, to the shortage of robust research in this area. (Nor can it be assumed that the same findings would emerge from a review of low-income country outcomes, if sufficient research existed to make such a review possible.)

Developing a nutrition and health education program for primary schools in Zambia

SSA, PR, PP nutrition, health, curriculum, behaviour change, parental involvement

This paper, which draws on evidence from the Zambia Nutrition Education in Basic Schools (NEBS) project, looks at the extent to which a school-based health and nutrition education programme can contribute to improving the health practices
and nutritional awareness of school children. The use of programme materials in grades 2 and 4 were tested in 8 and 12 schools respectively to determine their appropriateness and effectiveness. Materials focused on such topics as variety in the diet, hygiene, and the avoidance of malaria. Findings indicated that, even in the absence of health and nutrition services in school, a well-implemented awareness programme with trained teachers could result in gains in knowledge on the part of children and their families, which translated into a number of changed practices. A homework approach was effective in involving parents—whose response, according to the study, was “overwhelming”—and included sending more nutritious food to school, digging rubbish pits, encouraging hand washing, and stimulating family discussion at home. There were also unexpected benefits related to children’s academic work.

### Raising clean hands: advancing learning, health and participation through WASH in schools

UNICEF and partners (2010)

**G, Gr learning, health, sanitation, participation**

In a group of 60 surveyed developing countries, only about half had data on water and sanitation in schools. In those countries with data, less than half the primary schools had access to safe water and just over a third to adequate sanitation facilities. The implications are far reaching. WASH—or the provision of water, sanitation, and hygiene education in schools—has proven effects. It significantly decreases hygiene-related diseases and worm infestations, increases attendance and learning achievement, and improves gender equity. WASH also has ripple effects in communities. This brief reviews the literature on the implications of both the presence and the absence of adequate facilities in schools, and it draws on examples from various WASH interventions.

### Investing in school health and nutrition in Indonesia


**EAP, Gr nutrition, health**

This report describes the situation with regard to health and nutrition for school-age children in Indonesia, and makes the case for school-based health and nutrition (SHN) interventions. It looks at both stunting and obesity, helminth infections, micronutrient deficiencies, and access to water and sanitation as major health risks. It describes the range of SHN in the country, supported both by government and various donor agencies. It recommends that SHN be targeted where education outcomes are low, that collaboration between health and education ministries be strengthened, that water and sanitation in schools be a priority, and that SHN models take into account the differences among urban, rural, and coastal/island contexts.

### Effects of a school feeding intervention on school attendance rates among elementary schoolchildren in rural Kenya


**SSA, PR, RCT nutrition, school feeding, attendance**

A randomised, controlled school feeding programme was conducted with 554 grade 1 children in 12 rural schools. Although children receiving one of three different nutritional regimes had statistically better attendance rates than those in the control group, the authors raise concerns about school-based interventions in socioeconomically marginalised communities, pointing to continued wasting and stunting for these children. Success with these limited interventions, they argue, is possible only where basic needs are not a concern. Children in conditions of drought or displacement are likely to require more intensive and holistic interventions.

### Educational impact of a school breakfast programme in rural Peru


**LAC, PR, PP nutrition, school feeding, achievement**

An evaluation of the educational impact of a school breakfast programme in rural schools in Peru looked at effects for short-term memory, achievement in standardised tests of arithmetic and reading comprehension, school attendance, and
school enrolment. It showed positive effects on school attendance and dropout rates, although no effect for enrolment. Some positive effects for short-term memory, arithmetic, and reading comprehension were found in multiple-grade schools, but not in full grade schools. The authors attempt to explain the low achievement results by noting two factors: (1) since teachers had to allow for breakfast preparation and consumption time, the programme resulted in some loss of classroom instruction time; (2) since the breakfast programme was helping to retain the poorest and lowest-performing students, this would change the composition of schools and would have brought down the means in the achievement tests. The authors suggest that these negative factors might have been more evident in full grade schools, located in villages where there were more opportunities for work, which might have resulted in the loss of the more high-achieving students.

---

**Educational and health impacts of two school feeding schemes: evidence from a randomized trial in rural Burkina Faso**


**SSA, Gr, RCT school feeding, impacts**

The prospective randomised trial reported on in this paper assessed two school feeding schemes in rural Burkina Faso for their impacts on health and school enrolment for children. One of these programmes provided children with lunch at school each day; the other gave girls 10 kg of flour each month, provided they attended 90% of the time. After one year of the programme, both programmes resulted in an increase in girls’ enrolment of 5 to 6 percent. There was no significant impact on achievement. The home rations programme had a significant effect for younger siblings in both weight for age and weight for height; the benefits for young children would have cost 9 times as much had they been provided as a direct transfer. The impact for attendance was counter intuitive (and also counter to the findings of much other research on this topic); children who were involved were absent more often, especially in households with a low child labour supply, a finding that probably relates to the lack of impact on learning outcomes.

---

**Rethinking school feeding: social safety nets, child development, and the education sector**


**G, Gr, R school feeding, modalities, impacts**

This review, undertaken jointly by the World Bank and the World Feeding Programme, provides guidance, based on their learning, on the development and implementation of effective school feeding programmes. The authors point to strong evidence regarding the impact of school feeding programmes for children’s attendance, cognition, and achievement, especially when feeding is accompanied by deworming and micronutrient supplementation. What is currently less clear is the relative effectiveness of different approaches to school feeding—whether in-school meals, fortified biscuits, take-home rations, or some combination of these. There are important trade-offs depending on modality, which has to be carefully selected based on local considerations. The authors stress the importance of not allowing these programmes to compete with nutrition programmes for younger children. In discussing the long term sustainability of school feeding programmes, the authors point out that the trend is generally toward a transition to government-supported programmes, and they discuss the preconditions for this transition, supplying case studies. The book includes checklists—one to support the initial design of school feeding programmes, and the other to help update existing programmes, along with various assessment tools.

---

**Impact evaluation of school feeding programs in Lao PDR**


**LAC, Gr, PP school feeding, evaluation**

This paper evaluates a school feeding programme that was implemented in three districts in the north of Laos. There were three different delivery modalities: on-site feeding, take-home rations, and a combination of the two. Little evidence was found, however, for improved enrolment or nutritional status related to any of the three delivery schemes. The authors found serious evaluation challenges due to inconsistent implementation and selective uptake on the part of different villages. They suggest that a threshold level of social capital is required for these programmes to be effective, and that villages most in need may be least likely to participate, discouraged by the requirements. Authors suggest that the programme might have been more successful had it been explicitly targeted at the more disadvantaged villages that have the most to gain.
School building design for feeding programmes and community outreach: insights from Ghana and South Africa


**SSA, PR, Q** school feeding, school infrastructure, community involvement

This paper points to the wealth of evidence on school feeding programmes and their benefits for children, but also to the gaps in this research, among them the dearth of information on the demands these programmes make on school buildings and infrastructure. Field research was conducted on this aspect in a small sample of schools in Ghana and South Africa which had feeding programmes. The research attempted to establish not only the degree to which school design affected delivery of these programmes, but at the same time to explore how the relevant buildings and infrastructure were being more widely used for broader community development. The paper points to the natural synergies in this regard, arguing for a new school design model. While school feeding programmes address one aspect of local poverty, facilities adequate for supporting these programmes can also become local development hubs for such activities as healthcare and vocational education, leading as well to the increased local ownership and involvement in children’s schooling that can affect children’s adjustment and achievement.


**SSA, PR, S** HIV/AIDS, enrolment, progression

This study, drawing on the 2002/2003 Uganda National Household Survey, looks at the relationship between HIV/AIDS orphan status and children’s enrolment and progression through school. Findings indicate that being an HIV/AIDS orphan has no significant impact on school enrolment, unless income is also taken into account (since orphans tend to be taken in by more affluent households.) They are, however, likely to lag behind in age, with orphans from 6 to 12 being about a year and a half behind, and the gap increasing with age. However, this is true for orphans regardless of the cause of parental death.

Malaria and primary education in Mali: a longitudinal study in the village of Donéguebougou

Thuilliez, Josselin, Mahamadou S. Sissoko, Ousmane B. Toure, Paul Kamate, Jean-Claude Berthélemy, and Ogobara K. Doumbo (2010) *Social Science & Medicine* 71, 324e334

**SSA, PR, PP** health, malaria, achievement

This paper assesses the impact of malaria on children’s academic achievement and attendance in a small village in a malaria-endemic area in Mali. Data were collected over a full school year, 2007/8, with children receiving monthly clinical examinations and cognitive testing. Interviews were also conducted with household heads. Findings showed that children with clinical malaria (and to a lesser extent with asymptomatic malaria) had significantly lower achievement test scores, and that clinical malaria was the major cause of school absence. The probability that a child had slept under a mosquito net the night before testing was positively correlated with higher achievement results. Causal connections cannot be clearly established (for instance, use of a mosquito net may simply be a proxy for better parental care generally). However, the evidence points to the lasting effects of malaria on academic performance and educational achievement, and the importance of prophylactic measures.

Fever, malaria and primary repetition rates amongst school children in Mali: combining demographic and health surveys (DHS) with spatial maliariological measures

Thuilliez, Josselin (2010) *Social Science & Medicine* 71, 314e323

**SSA, PR, S** health, malaria, repetition, DHS

This paper, related to the one above, draws on Demographic and Health Survey data to relate children’s primary repetition rates to the effects of both fever and malaria, also taking into account various household and community characteristics of the DHS clusters in question. The study’s main finding was that high malaria presence in a cluster was a strong determinant
of primary repetition rates. Fever was shown not to be a reliable proxy for the presence of malaria, and the author argues that it should be carefully used as a variable, recommending instead the use of spatial measures of the burden of malaria in given areas, which are not year or season specific.

Realist review to understand the efficacy of school feeding programmes

G, PR, R school feeding programmes, effectiveness
This paper, providing an analysis of 18 studies, points to the multiple strands in any feeding intervention and provides some general, although tentative, guidelines. Feeding programmes are best focused on children with documented nutritional deficiencies; they are more likely to be effective when piloted and undertaken in partnership with the community. Where there is severe poverty, feeding programmes may be insufficient and may cause children to be fed less at home.

See also:
Engle, P L, M M Black, J R Behrman, M Cabral de Mello, P J Gertler, L Kapiriri, R Martorell, M E Young and the International Child Development Steering Group (2007), Strategies to avoid the loss of developmental potential in more than 200 million children in the developing world, The Lancet 369, 229-242

DISABILITIES AND INCLUSION

Child disability screening, nutrition, and early learning in 18 countries with low and middle incomes: data from the third round of UNICEF’s multiple indicator cluster survey (2005–06)

G, PR, S disability, nutrition, achievement
UNICEF’s third round of MICS included the Ten Questions Screen for disability. This paper examines the results of this screening and the association of disability in children with nutrition and early learning in 18 countries. An average of 23 percent (with a range of 3 to 48 percent) of 2- to 9-year-olds screened positively for disability or were determined to be at risk for disability. Children were more likely to be screened positively if they had not been breastfed, if they were malnourished, if they had not received vitamin A supplementation, and if they had restricted access to early learning activities or school.

Promoting the rights of children with disabilities

G, Gr, DP disability, rights
Although prevalence varies considerably from one country to another, approximately one child in ten is estimated to have a disability, whether moderate or severe. This is a significant issue around the transition to school. Children with more severe disabilities are among those most likely to be excluded from school, in many cases because the stigma attached to their condition may discourage families from even making them known to health or education services. Those with only moderate disabilities may remain unrecognised until they reach school, and even then many problems are not identified or responded to. This broad review of the rights of children with disabilities considers some of the barriers to inclusive and appropriate education for these children, including the low priority this has among decision makers; the lack of community awareness; the lack of appropriate training for teachers; the lack of buildings, materials, and curricula adapted to special needs; and the lack of targeted funds. It also describes some of the innovative approaches to inclusion, many of them in poor countries and
communities. These include not only targeted interventions, such as, for instance, a national resource centre that supports schools to be more inclusive, or the training of community members to identify disabilities and work with parents, but also more spontaneous responses in many countries where inclusion of all local children in school appears to be taken for granted.

**Developmental disabilities and behavioral problems among school children in the Western Cape of South Africa**


**SSA, PR, CrS disability, screening**

This paper describes a study screening children (a sample of 174 out of a total of 800) in the kindergarten and first grade classes of a large rural primary school in South Africa and attempting to determine the numbers with either developmental delays or behavioral problems. Teachers identified which children fell into one of these categories through the use of simple screening tools designed for use in the context of scarce professional resources and heterogeneous culture in developing countries. For the entire sample, 42% screened positive for one or more developmental disabilities, and 39% for behavioral problems. In many cases, those with developmental problems were the same children as those with behavioral problems. Close to 20% of the students in these two grades had been formally designated as having special needs and were either attending special education classes or receiving help from some special needs service, such as language therapy or occupational therapy. Yet this study reports a far higher proportion of children actually experiencing problems and potentially benefiting from services, and points to the need for both expanded services and improved teacher preparation. (Note: This study used the same Ten Questions screen for disabilities that was employed in MICS 3, the results of which for 18 countries are described above in Gottlieb et al. The prevalence of disability found in this South African study are at the high end of the range found in the Gottlieb study.)

**Local special education administrators’ understanding of inclusive education in China**


**EAP, PR, Q inclusive education, administrators**

This paper describes a qualitative investigation into the understanding of inclusive education in China and the implementation of the Learning in Regular Classrooms initiative. Participants were principals from urban and rural areas who had been involved in the administration of this initiative over a period of time. Although all believed in the rights of children with disabilities to inclusive education, they acknowledged that it was a difficult goal to realise, especially given the absence of a tradition of special education in the country, and the highly competitive education system which is geared to winnowing out those least equipped to excel. Many teachers felt that special schools would in fact be a better solution, but this is not a choice in most parts of China. All participants stressed the importance of political will and adequate financial support, as well as fundamental changes in social attitudes toward the principle of universal education.

**Approaching the measurement of disability prevalence: the case of Zambia**


**SSA, PR, GP disability, measurement**

This paper discusses the multidimensionality of disability and the challenges around definition and measurement of prevalence. Within this context it describes a functional approach to the measurement of disability in the Zambia that focuses not on causes or labels, but on how a person’s life is affected. The authors argue that this approach is better geared to the practical purposes of measurement, that is, assessing the level of functioning within a population, providing adequate services, and assessing the equalization of opportunity. This approach would allow relatively minor and easily correctable problems to be more directly dealt with, for instance, providing glasses for children with correctable vision impairments so that they can start school.
Parental awareness of hearing impairment in their school-going children and healthcare seeking behaviour in Kisumu district, Kenya


SSA, PR, CS hearing impairment, identification, parental awareness

This study focused on 33 parents of hearing impaired children, randomly selected from a screened sample in Kisumu district. Of the screened children, 2.48% had hearing impairments in one or both ears. While about 70% of parents had already been aware of these impairments, generally they did not detect them until children were 5 years of age. Over 80% of these parents also reported other disabilities in their children, mostly convulsions. Awareness of children’s problems was a poor measure of the extent to which they sought out or used the available services, especially for the lower-income groups. The authors call for research into reasons for late identification and low use of care.

Inclusion in education: a step towards social justice


SSA, PR, GP, AR disability, inclusion

Of the estimated 150 million disabled children in the world, only 2–3% of those living in low-income countries go to school. Changing attitudes among school professionals and the wider community, however, is critical to making inclusive education happen in low-income countries. This paper, building on Martha Nussbaum’s capabilities approach, describes the development of an Index for Inclusion in Tanzania as part of an effort to support the inclusive schools. The process uses ongoing participatory action research, drawing on the views of local education officials, school staff, parents, and children to assist schools in a process of self-review. Participants in this initial phase of an interesting process identified barriers to inclusion and began a process of reflection and discussion that will ideally lead to change toward more inclusive school policies, cultures, and practices.

Working towards inclusion: reflections from the classroom


SSA, PR, Q inclusion, school culture

This paper discusses the move toward inclusive education in some schools in India. Using classroom observations and interviews with teachers and special educators working in the schools, the study looks at classroom practices and experiences and their implications. Although the schools had provided access to children who would generally not have enrolled because of their disabilities, these children remained excluded in a number of ways, both academically and socially. While teachers made some efforts to support these children by sitting them at the front of the class or pairing them with the more capable students, they made little attempt to change their pedagogical practices, and were inclined to leave the work of teaching these children to supplemental special educators. Most teachers continued to believe that special schools made more sense for children with special needs. The author concludes that genuine inclusion cannot simply be a matter of policy but has to involve fundamental changes to school culture, and provides the opportunity for India to critically reexamine its more general failings in this regard.

Effects of inclusion on students with and without special educational needs reviewed


G, PR, R inclusion, achievement, social effects

This review of the literature looks at the effects, both cognitive and socioemotional, of inclusion on students with and without special needs. While the evidence overall generally points to neutral to positive effects for academic achievement and supports inclusive education for children with mild to moderate special educational needs, more research is clearly needed. Inclusion, for instance, may affect high and low achieving children without special needs in different ways, and since few studies make this distinction, it is possible that positive effects for some and negative effects for others may be canceling each other out. More research is also needed on the social effects of inclusion. Studies generally indicate that
children without special educational needs in inclusive classes have fewer prejudices about children with special educational
needs, but also that those with special needs have a less favourable social position than other children.

Inclusive educational practices in Kenya: evidencing practice of itinerant teachers who work with children with visual impairment in local mainstream schools
Lynch, Paul, Steve McCall, Graeme Douglas, Mike McLinden, Bernard Mogesa, Martha Mwaura, John Muga, and Michael

SSA, PR, GP inclusion, visual impairment

This article describes the work of 38 specialist itinerant teachers in Kenya who support the educational inclusion of children with visual impairment. These teachers kept journals over a 2-month period, recording details about their work with these children. The teachers, all of whom had or were receiving training in special education, performed this itinerant function in addition to their regular work at a base school, and had caseloads that varied from 1 to 26 in number. Most of the children involved had low vision, although some were blind. Specific tasks included preschool vision assessments at children’s homes and providing advice in schools on such practical issues as students’ seating position, lighting provision, and various learning supports. These teachers also performed large-scale vision assessments and in-service training for other teachers. The paper raises questions about the barriers to learning for visually impaired Kenyan children and the adequacy of this important service.

See also:

**GENDER**

What policies will reduce gender schooling gaps in developing countries? evidence and interpretation

G, PR, R policy, gender

This review of the literature considers the effects of policies on gender gaps in education. It draws a distinction between those policies that explicitly target girls and those that are gender neutral. The evidence indicates that many ostensibly gender-neutral policies have significant effects for girls in particular, including public investments that increase the supply of local schools (thereby affecting the distance to school) and measures to reduce costs. A number of measures that specifically target girls’ schooling have been found very effective, including financial incentives to both households and schools to enrol girls. Having female teachers and establishing girls-only schools are also effective measures. Other interventions that show strong potential have not yet been subjected to the kind of rigorous evaluation that is the standard for this review; these include the provision of separate toilets for girls, flexible scheduling, teacher training focusing on attitudes toward girls, and campaigns for girls’ education. In general, interventions targeted at girls appear to be most effective, although this could be because they diminish the support provided by families to boys. There is apparently little research comparing the cost-effectiveness of different interventions.

Teacher absence as a factor in gender inequalities in access to primary schooling in rural Pakistan

SSA, PR, CrS gender, teacher absence

This paper, drawing on data collected from different parts of rural Pakistan, considers the gender implications of teacher absence. The study looked at absence among female teachers in girls’ government schools, male teachers in boys’ government schools, and all teachers in private co-educational schools. The study found that absence was more common
in government schools, and was higher among women than men. Women teachers living in the village where they taught were less likely to be absent, reflecting the greater challenges to mobility for women. Girls, in other words, were more seriously affected by teacher absence than boys; in the course of this study, one of every four girls was found to have no teacher available on the day of the school visit. This results in less instructional time, or in more time in larger classrooms, as classes are combined. The study did not look at the impacts for achievement. Policy options include increasing the supply of local teachers, providing safe transport, and gaining a better understanding of the range of other reasons that may be contributing to teacher absence.

**Gender in the early years: boys and girls in an African working class primary school**

SSA, PR, Q gender, violence, early grades

This small-scale qualitative study of boys and girls between the ages of 7 and 8 years in an African working-class primary school in South Africa looks at children's interactions to explore the role played by gender. The study found that both boys and girls are heavily influenced by dominant gender norms, and that sexuality, even at this age, is a major factor in how gender identity and relations are negotiated. Although cross-gender friendships were not uncommon, they were prevented from being equitable by the violence of the boys, verbal and physical. These early interactions lead to the violent behaviours that make so many South African schools unsafe places for girls. They are also the antecedents of sexual risk and disease. Girls in this study were outspoken in denouncing boys' violence. The authors argue for a better understanding of gender-related interaction in the early years of formal schooling to contribute to the development of better strategies to end gender violence.

**See also:**


**FAMILY AND COMMUNITY CHARACTERISTICS**

**Birth order and schooling: theory and evidence from twelve sub-Saharan countries**

SSA, PR, S enrolment, birth order

This paper, drawing on data from Demographic and Health Surveys in 12 countries, finds that first-born children in poorer households are less likely to attend school than their younger siblings, but that first-born children in wealthier households are more likely to receive an education than their younger siblings.

**Family stress: safeguarding young children’s care environments**
Bernard van Leer Foundation (2009) *Early Childhood Matters* 112

G, Gr family, stress

This issue of *Early Childhood Matters* includes 10 articles on the subject of family stress, its implications for young children, and some effective ways to deal with it. As the editorial points out, a caring, stable home environment is critical to children’s capacity to handle the challenges they face as they grow up and move into the world—and this is as relevant to the transition to school as it is to other aspects of children’s lives. After a theoretical overview by Ted Wachs on the impacts of family stress for children, the volume moves into examples of interventions, both at the local level and in terms of larger policy and budget implications. Among the local examples are one from South Africa about women chosen by their communities and trained to run parenting programmes, visit vulnerable households, and support savings groups, and one
from Kenya looking at how Indigenous knowledge systems can be harnessed to address caregivers’ stress. There are also two examples from Mexico focused on enhancing resilience and strengthening bonds between parents and children.

Role of neighbourhoods in child growth and development: does ‘place’ matter?

SA, PR, CrS disparities, household, community, child development

This study attempts to relate socioeconomic status and neighbourhood to children’s growth and psychomotor development. In a cross-sectional study in both rural and urban communities in Sindh, Pakistan, a sample of 1244 children under 3 years of age were assessed during home visits with Bayley’s Infant Developmental Scale, and economic and demographic information was collected on their households. The study demonstrated that socioeconomic inequalities influenced children’s outcomes at both household and neighbourhood level, both independently and in combination. While children’s nutritional status is closely tied to the family’s socioeconomic status, which has the capacity to buffer the negative influences of neighbourhood, psychomotor development can be influenced by the broader community context and the level of neighbourhood deprivation, even when the family’s resources are adequate.

Community well-being and growth status of Indigenous school children in rural Oaxaca, southern Mexico

LAC, PR, CrS indigenous, growth status, community

This study, focusing on 158 villages in rural Oaxaca, explored the relationship between community well-being, measured by an index of marginalization, and the growth status of community children. The variables used to measure marginalization were focused primarily on living conditions including drainage, sanitation, electricity, piped water, earth floors, and crowding. Children from villages rating lowest in terms of their marginalization and remoteness were found to be significantly shorter and lighter than those from higher-rated communities. This relationship, however, accounted for only about 22% of the variance in children’s growth status, and household-level factors also clearly need to be taken into account.

Improving commitment to basic education for the minorities in Botswana: a challenge for policy and practice

SSA, PR, Q remote areas, ethnicity, teachers

This paper discusses the many related challenges faced by schools in remote areas in Botswana, which are generally occupied by ethnic minority groups and separated from the mainstream in terms of the educational level of parents, infrastructural development, and poverty. Teachers in these areas tend to be younger, less experienced, and less well trained than the average in the country, and most neither speak nor understand the local language. These younger teachers were also found to have less commitment on the whole to supportive partnership with school management committees. The situation is especially difficult in boarding schools, which are very poorly equipped and where communications with families and communities are very weak. Corporal punishment in these situations is rampant and student achievement is low. The paper does not report on enrolment or progression in these areas. The difficulties in these remote areas are serious policy matters that call for attention to more effective and equitable strategies.

Young children in cities: challenges and opportunities

G, Gr urban poverty, ECD, education, community

Rapidly growing poor urban populations and the accompanying deterioration of living conditions is a crisis that affects perhaps one of every four young children in the world. While children in urban areas are in theory better served, this seldom extends to those living in poverty. As some of the authors in this issue point out, these concerns are going to become more and more important. This issue includes a number of articles describing initiatives to address these urban challenges for young children—whether through access to ECD or safe local play spaces or preschool curricula designed for early learners in slums.
Some of these articles also describe the complementarity between initiatives for children and grass-roots efforts to address the problems of urban poverty, from sanitation to street violence.

**Challenges for schools in communities with internal migration flows: evidence from Turkey**

**MENA, PR survey data**

This paper describes the many challenges faced by schools in the informal squatter settlements in urban Turkey in which most internal migrants settle. These schools tend to be resource poor, overcrowded, and challenged with a diverse population. Students tend to have poor language skills, low levels of support and are frequently malnourished, and are at high risk of academic failure. The author makes a number of policy recommendations to address this situation, calling in general for much more intensive attention to the educational problems of the urban poor in Turkey.

**Life chances in Turkey: expanding opportunities for the next generation**

**MENA, Gr policy, budget**

This book draws describes the deep disparities in opportunity for different groups in Turkey and the implications for children’s odds of success in life. A girl from a poor family in the east of the country, for instance, is ten times more likely to be stunted than an urban boy from the western part of the country born into a middle-class family, and one fifth as likely to finish school—let alone go on to college. But there are also astonishing disparities between the country’s investment in young children and adults. About four times more is spent on a middle-aged or elderly adult than on a child under six. The authors calculate the implications of additional investment in children, especially those in marginalised groups.

**Equity and quality? challenges for early childhood and primary education in Ethiopia, India and Peru**

**G, Gr, Q ECD, quality, equity, children’s voices**

The working paper is based on interviews and observations carried out as part of Young Lives, a longitudinal study of children growing up in poverty in diverse contexts. The research for this paper focused on 6,000 6-year-old children in three of the countries in the study—Ethiopia, India, and Peru—looking at their ECCE experiences. What communities in these three countries appear to share in common is an awareness of the significance of education as a route out of poverty. But the findings also point to significant differences in the programmes available to children according to their circumstances, with a growing private sector available primarily to the well-to-do, as well as a strong rural–urban divide. Even where government services are geared to be pro-poor, they generally fail to put that goal effectively into practice, all too often reinforcing ethnic and class differences. And even where there are well-developed early childhood programmes, the continuity between them and primary school is usually poor and stressful.

**Poverty alleviation and integrated service delivery: literacy, early child development and health**

**SSA, PR, GP integrated services, ECD, poverty**

This paper, using Senegal as its point of reference, argues for an approach to adolescent and adult literacy that is integrated with ECD and health interventions as an effective way to combat poverty and ensure children’s readiness for school. This approach would make it possible to coordinate EFA and MDG goals. While the makes a strong case for such an approach, it offers no specifics and does not point to effective precedents.

**See also:**
FINANCIAL SUPPORTS FOR HOUSEHOLDS (MICROCREDIT, CASH TRANSFERS, SCHOLARSHIPS)

Can financial incentives enhance educational outcomes? evidence from international experiments


G, PR, R policy, cash transfers

The early success of the PROGRESA conditional cash transfer (CCT) programme in Mexico spawned widespread interest in this approach and the idea spread rapidly, not only in the majority world but also in some high-income countries. This paper reviews the available evidence on the impacts of some of these CCT and other financial incentive schemes for a range of educational outcomes. The most consistent effect, under certain well-defined conditions, has been an increase in attendance in secondary schools. Little effect has been seen overall for primary schools because enrolment rates are already generally high at this level. The authors question the utility of cash transfers as an approach to getting children into school, arguing instead for the elimination of school fees and provision of free books and transport, as occurs in higher-income countries. They also suggest that, given the generally low quality of primary schools in the majority world, the large investment required for cash transfers might more effectively be spent strengthening schools and teachers. They conclude that, while incentives may make some difference in poor countries, the literature does not on the whole see this approach as leading to a breakthrough in the education of disadvantaged children.
Effects on school enrollment and performance of a conditional cash transfers program in Mexico


LAC, Gr, RCT enrolment, cash transfers

This randomized controlled study investigated the effects of the Mexican PROGRESA cash transfer programme for enrolment and performance at school in 506 randomly selected communities. The study found that the programme had a strong positive effect on children’s continued enrolment in school at all levels. Its effect on performance was mixed. In primary school it resulted in about a 6% improvement in children’s performance, even for children in grades 1 and 2 who were not directly affected by the cash grants, but for whom the grants existed as an incentive for coming years. In secondary school, the programme had a negative effect on performance. Because the grants were terminated in the third year of secondary, they resulted in higher rates of repetition, since children wanted to stay in the programme.

Cash transfers, behavioral changes, and cognitive development in early childhood


LAC, Gr, PP cash transfers, developmental impacts for children

Children's cognitive, social and language capacities play an important role in their successful transition to school. This paper analyses the impact of a randomized cash transfer programme in rural Nicaragua on these capacities. Households involved in the programme increased their expenditures on nutritious food for children, provided higher levels of stimulation, and made better use of preventive health care. After only 9 months, the programme was found to have a substantial effect on a range of developmental indicators for children, with particular gains in language development for the older under-fives. Parents, in other words, appeared to allocate the additional funds in ways that optimised gains for their young children. The authors point to the need for more research to understand what features of programme design resulted in these changes in behaviours and expenditure patterns.

Avoiding the perils and fulfilling the promises of microfinance: a closer examination of the educational outcomes of clients' children in Nicaragua


LA, PR, Q microfinance, educational outcomes

Microfinance is generally assumed to have a positive effect on children's education. Drawing on qualitative research conducted in Nicaragua, a country characterised by low educational attainment and high levels of microfinance activity, this paper explores both the promises and drawbacks of microfinance programmes for children's schooling. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 23 microfinance clients, as well as informal discussions with personnel of ADIM, the microcredit programme they were borrowing from. While the paper stresses the methodological complexities of relating loans to children's education, the evidence does point to benefits of microcredit in giving parents greater flexibility to fulfill their aspirations for children, especially in the early years of schooling. There were also noneconomic benefits related to empowerment and the greater community solidarity that came from being part of the programme. But repayment schedules often conflicted with school fee payments and could cause difficulties. There was also evidence of inequities within families taking out loans - children tended to work more and some were at greater risk of dropping out among these families. There were also rural areas where loans could not compensate for the sheer lack of access to school. While loans helped families make school a reality, they were also clearly at the mercy of larger economic swings. The authors point to the need to upgrade the practices of microfinancers and encourage closer attention to their impacts for a household's children in ways that can strengthen the links between schooling and credit.
Do girls’ scholarship programs work? evidence from two countries

SSA, PR, Q gender, financial aid
Based on evidence from Sierra Leone and Djibouti, these authors conclude that while scholarship programmes can be very successful, there are important community factors to be kept in mind. Financial aid needs to be allocated locally in ways that do not end up undermining the motivation of the students who are not selected for support.

Improving the education component of conditional cash transfers in urban settings

LA, Gr conditional cash transfers, enrolment, urban
This paper explores the relative lack of success of urban, as compared to rural, conditional cash transfers in the Mexican Oportunidades programme in stimulating school enrolment for children. Using simulation models, the research described here explored the effects of transferring all grant funds to children in secondary school, and finds that this would substantially increase the enrolment effect of the transfers. However, the authors urge caution on this front, pointing out that at this point, not enough is known about how the grants to younger children affect nutrition, school performance, or the quality of school programmes, and that in addition this move would go against established knowledge regarding the overall effectiveness of early interventions for long-term change.

ECD

Early childhood stimulation interventions in developing countries: a comprehensive literature review

G, Gr, ECD, stimulation, outcomes
This review of the literature considers what kinds of programmes and interventions work best for the early stimulation of children under 3 in developing countries, how these interventions work, and who benefits most. It covers 45 journal articles describing 26 studies of early stimulation interventions for young children from 11 developing countries; only studies that used acceptable designs for comparison were considered. In the area of early infancy, there are too few studies to draw any strong conclusions, although the evidence points to benefits for parenting behaviours. There is robust evidence for the short-term benefits of stimulation interventions with disadvantaged children both for children’s mental development and mothers’ behaviour, but insufficient research and evidence regarding long-term outcomes. Interventions for malnourished children, and stimulation both alone and in combination with nutritional supplementation also have robust outcomes for children’s mental development in the short term, and these are sustained over time; the evidence is less strong regarding maternal outcomes in this category. Interventions for children at risk for health problems show good short-term outcomes for mental development. Overall, most of the studies showed strong results for children’s short-term mental development, with fewer studies showing evidence for benefits to motor development, behaviour, or later school outcomes, and very few or none showing benefits for nutritional status or health. There was also strong evidence that maternal behaviour is affected by interventions, but insufficient evidence as to whether maternal life course was affected. Only 7 studies reported on longer-term outcomes for children, and all of these showed benefits. Most of these studies focused on small-scale interventions with extensive training for those delivering the intervention. However, a few examples point to the benefits of programmes taken to scale. The most effective programmes have tended to be those with higher intensity and longer duration and started at a younger age, although more research is needed to determine optimal age for maximum cost effectiveness. While active involvement of the mother was important, discussion and information sharing have not been proven to be effective, especially for disadvantaged mothers.
Benefits of early childhood interventions across the world: (under) investing in the very young

G, PR, R ECD interventions, impacts
This review paper analyses 56 quasi-experimental and randomised studies reporting on the impacts of 30 ECD-related interventions in 23 countries for children's cognitive and health gains, behavioral changes and subsequent schooling. Types of interventions examined included cash transfers, nutritional programmes, educational programmes, and mixed interventions. The findings were broadly consistent with those of studies in the USA. Children from different countries were found to receive substantial benefits across all dimensions; interventions that provided care and education were more effective, especially for cognition. Those studies that evaluated effects at older ages found that benefits were sustained over the long term. Effects, especially around health, were smaller in less economically developed countries, a puzzling finding; the authors hypothesise that intervention effects may depend on other supports in the environment less likely to be present in less developed economies—a topic worthy of further research. Authors note that attention to the costs of programmes is neglected in the research.

How does early childhood care and education affect cognitive development? an international review of the effects of early interventions for children from different social backgrounds

G, PR, R ECD, cognitive development
This paper reviews the literature on the effects of various preschool programmes on children's cognitive development and on the degree to which their effects were related to children's socioeconomic background. The findings show that most of the assessed ECD programmes gave children a better start in school, endowing them with a range of capacities that helped them tackle the challenges presented by school. Although there is evidence of persistent effects over subsequent school years, short-term effects on children's cognitive development were more significant than the longer-term effects. Although some studies showed larger gains for children from disadvantaged families, other studies showed just that these children could benefit equally. However, the programmes were not able to compensate completely for the deficits related to disadvantage. The programmes with the most consistently strong results were those providing services for parents and requiring parent involvement.

Strategies to avoid the loss of developmental potential in more than 200 million children in the developing world

G, PR, R child development, effective programming
This paper, the third in a series and already a classic, reviews available research to determine the most effective routes to maximizing children's development and opportunities. They conclude that the most effective strategies include programmes that target younger and more disadvantaged children and that last for more, rather than less, time. Interventions that involve direct learning for children and families are most successful, but especially when they are integrated with health and nutrition programmes, family support, and coordination with school systems.

Africa's future, Africa's challenge: early childhood care and development in Sub-Saharan Africa

SSA, Gr policy, ECD, budget, trends
The authors of this collection of articles include academics and practitioners, government officials, and representatives of NGOs and other organisations. Focusing primarily on the macro-level, the book covers ECD policy trends, the importance of investment in young children, the history of ECD policies in Sub-Saharan Africa, the impact of programmes in different countries, implementation issues, best practices, shared challenges, and emerging threats.
**Education for sustainable development in early childhood education: a global solution to local concerns?**


G, PR, GP sustainable development, ECD

This paper discusses two parallel trends: the globalization of early childhood programming and the growing attention to the importance of local cultural values in early childhood education. It argues that the field is poised to take on new global frameworks for ECD that respond better to the contextual nature of successful programming, and describes the concept of education for sustainable development (ESD) and the belief that formal education should be instrumental in promoting more sustainable approaches to development through attention to local social and cultural concerns as well as environmental education and protection. Although this paper does not specifically address the links between ESD in pre-primary and primary, it does provide a potentially useful framework and reference point for coordination between local schools and ECD centres.

**The effect of pre-primary education on primary school performance**


LA, PR, CrS ECD, primary achievement

Taking advantage of differences in provision for ECD across different parts of Argentina, Berlinski and colleagues estimate the effect of expanding pre-primary school facilities on subsequent achievement in primary school. They find that one year of pre-primary school improved children’s performance in third grade by 8% as well as affecting measures of classroom attention, effort, discipline, and participation. In terms of cost, providing a year of pre-primary was estimated to be comparable to reducing class size in grade 1 by 10 students.

**Giving children a better start: preschool attendance and school-age profiles**


LAC, Gr ECD, retention, survival

This retrospective investigation from Uruguay of the effect of preschool on children’s subsequent school outcomes finds small gains in terms of retention and progress through school that increase as children grow older. When compared to siblings who had not been to preschool, children by the age of 15 were almost a year ahead in their schooling and 27% less likely to have dropped out.

**Early academic performance, grade repetition, and school attainment in Senegal: a panel data analysis**


SSA, Gr, PP repetition, survival, performance

This study draws on a Senegalese data set that includes children’s second grade test score data as well as information from a follow-up survey seven years later on their progression through school since second grade. There was a strong correlation between the two, with children who scored well being more likely to stay in school. Children who repeated a year were more likely to leave school before completing primary. The authors hypothesize that parents are more likely to keep children in school when the returns are good, and they point to the need for early year remedial interventions to prevent drop out.

**Early childhood education in Mexico: expansion, quality improvement and curricular reform**


LAC, Gr, DP ECD, quality, curriculum

This paper discusses three ECD policy initiatives in Mexico that were established between 2000 and 2006: (i) a mandate requiring all 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds to attend preschool; (ii) a quality improvement initiative providing supplemental funds to selected public preschools and schools; and (iii) a new nationwide preschool curriculum. The first initiative resulted in rapid increases in preschool enrolment, with the greatest increases for 4-year-olds. There has been slower progress in the
enrolment of 3-year-olds, due primarily to parental reluctance. In the course of preschool expansion, there was not a great average increase in class sizes, given the increase in the number of preschools, but the proportion of preschools with more than 30 in a class increased. The quality improvement initiative was found to affect relatively few preschools, and these tended to be larger and to have more resources to start with than other preschools. But in these preschools, evidence has pointed to improvements in quality. The national curricular reform, which involved input from teachers and officials, resulted in a flexible, child-centred curriculum requiring high levels of teacher initiative in responding to the specific needs of their classrooms. The curriculum also focused on continuity between preschool and primary, identifying a core set of competencies that children should acquire for entering primary school. There have been challenges around implementing this curriculum, especially around the need for reflection on the part of teachers and the lack of parent involvement. The authors recommend more funding for ECCE services in disadvantaged communities and in preschools with especially large classes; more supports for teachers; and better national monitoring and evaluation of quality, coverage, equity, and children's development. They also suggest alternatives to centre-, education-based systems for 3-year-olds.

Effects of a preschool intervention on cognitive development among East-African preschool children: a flexibly time-coded growth model


SSA, PR, QE preschool, cognitive gains

This study looked at the effects of the Madrasa Resource Centre preschool programme in East Africa on children’s cognitive gains, comparing programme and comparison children at roughly the beginning, middle, and end of their preschool experience. Children were tested with instruments pretested for validity in the East African context, and preschools were assessed using a revised version of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS). Findings showed a positive effect of the programme on children’s cognitive development, with the quality of the preschool leading to higher results. The effect of classroom quality was greater in the MRC classrooms than in the comparison classrooms. There were relatively larger cognitive gains earlier in children’s preschool experience.

Evaluating an improved quality preschool program in rural Bangladesh


SA, PR, QE preschool improvement, impacts, ECERS

Although a number of studies have found significant benefits for children attending preschool programmes in the majority world, few of these studies have focused on the quality of the programmes. This study compared the impacts for children of six preschools which had undergone improvements to quality, at a cost of approximately $35 a year, with six regular preschools. The improvements consisted of extra materials and teacher training. Programme quality was assessed and compared using the ECERS (R) and children's school readiness skills were assessed using a range of instruments measuring cognitive and social gains. Pilot preschools improved significantly in quality, and this was reflected in greater gains for pilot school children in some, but not all, cognitive and social outcomes. In addition to showing the benefits of low-cost improvements for preschool quality, this study demonstrates the value of ECERS as a valid instrument for use in assessing majority world preschool programmes.

The effect of preschool dialogic reading on vocabulary among rural Bangladeshi children


SA: PR QE preschool, dialogic reading, impacts

This paper reports on a quasi-experimental study looking at the efficacy of a four-week interactive reading programme for children in five preschools in Bangladesh. These children and comparison children from five other schools were read illustrated storybooks in Bangla, but in the case of the programme children, their verbal participation was encouraged through the use of a number of questions about the stories. The teachers using the dialogic approach had been briefly trained with a video and some coaching, and examples of appropriate questions were placed on the back of the story
books. A few weeks before the intervention and one week afterwards, randomly selected children from programme and comparison schools were tested for expressive vocabulary. The mean scores of the programme children increased significantly, from an average of 26 percent to 54 percent. The scores of the comparison children did not change. The study demonstrates the impact of even minimal interventions in low-resource preschools.

**Investing in early childhood development: benefits, savings and financial options**

Hyde, Karin (2008) ADEA Working Group on Early Childhood Development

SSA, Gr ECD, investment, costs, benefits

*(This summary is taken verbatim from the ADEA website, since its publications are not available on-line.)*

“Early childhood development (ECD) has been recognised as a key factor underlying positive outcomes in school and in adulthood. However, questions remain as to its cost-effectiveness and financial sustainability in the African context. This paper tries to answer some of these questions by reviewing the potential benefits of ECD programs in three areas: education, health and adulthood. The review is supplemented by summaries of cost-benefit studies and an in-depth discussion of the costing and funding issues involved in expanding ECD services in Sub-Saharan Africa.”

**See also:**

D’Onise, Katina, John W. Lynch, Michael G. Sawyer, and Robyn A. McDermott (2010), *Can preschool improve child health outcomes? A systematic review*, Social Science & Medicine 70, 1423e1440


Kools, Marco and Virginia E. Vitiello (2010), *Good governance of early childhood development programmes in developing countries: the need for a comprehensive monitoring system*, Innocenti Discussion Paper No. 2010-02

Gertsch, Liana (2010), *Getting the basics right: contribution of early childhood development to quality, equity and efficiency in education*, GTZ, Eschborn, Germany

Mooznah, Ambarin and Auleear Owodallya (2010), *From home to school: bridging the language gap in Mauritian preschools*, Language, Culture and Curriculum 23(1): 15–33

**THE TRANSITION INTO PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**Impact of school readiness program interventions on children’s learning in Cambodia**


**EAP, PR, QE school readiness programme, achievement**

This paper looks at the impact of a school-based readiness course that took place in 2004 in Cambodia. The course was piloted in 544 grade one classrooms, reaching 25,000 children in the first two months of grade 1. Designed to orient children to school and increase their confidence, the course included attention to basic language skills, number concepts, time and space, and hygiene; it focused on fine and gross motor skills, songs, games and role playing rather than more formal academic activities. A comparison of children in 10 randomly chosen programme schools and 10 comparison schools found that children who had participated in the course performed significantly better in both school readiness skills and their subsequent achievement in the formal curriculum. The effect size was not large (about a quarter of a standard deviation) but children maintained this advantage after a year. The authors conclude that this sort of programme can be an effective surrogate for preschool attendance in countries where the availability of preschool is still low.
From home to school: bridging the language gap in Mauritian preschools

While most Mauritian children speak a creole French at home, the language of instruction in primary school is English. This exploratory study, involving observations and interviews at 7 preschools, looks at the role of preschool in bridging this gap, and finds that English language instruction is hesitant, limited, and lacking in direction. Its use is limited to singing and ritual interactions, providing children with little more than an awareness that English exists. This leaves them unable to meet the language challenge when they make the transition to school, especially since oral proficiency is critical to the capacity to become literate in English. The authors stress that more extensive and systematic research is needed, but point to the need to revisit the government’s policy guidelines and provide more explicit objectives on this front.

Early childhood and primary education
Woodhead, Martin and Peter Moss, editors (2007) Early childhood in focus 2: transitions in the lives of young children The Open University

This collection of brief contributions on the issues surrounding children’s transition into school focuses on the concept of readiness, pointing out that the exclusion of many children from school has been framed in terms of the child’s readiness rather than examining the readiness of the school system to deal with all the challenges that face children in poverty. Instead, a definition of readiness is proposed here which involves a match between children and the institutions serving them, and which includes the participation of families and communities as well as schools. One of the emerging issues, as preschool programming becomes more common, is the fact that “transition” begins to refer less to the move from home to school than to a lack of continuity between preschool and school. Some of the other ideas explored in this collection include the Vygotskian perspective on the child’s maturation as a process of growing into the intellectual life that surrounds and stimulates them, the oversimplistic relationships drawn between poverty reduction efforts and parents’ capacity to support their children’s success, and the self-perpetuating cycles of failure involving a whole constellation of school deficits. Practical and policy implications are discussed.

Getting the basics right: contribution of early childhood development to quality, equity and efficiency in education
Gertsch, Liana (2010) German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Eschborn, Germany

This GTZ review of literature on the contribution of ECD to a good primary education system dedicates a chapter to the transition into school. The chapter points first of all to the high degree of inefficiency in the early grades and the costliness of this inefficiency. It identifies a number of risk factors that undermine children’s effective transition, including poor nutrition; poverty; low parental education levels; inconsistency of care; residence in an urban slum or remote rural location; environments marked by conflict, violence, pandemics, substance abuse; instruction in an unfamiliar language; corporal punishment; large classes; and inadequate teacher training and commitment. It also provides a good summary of the evidence pointing to the cost effectiveness of preschool and its impact on children’s successful transition, their movement through school without repetition, and their completion of primary.

Continuity and respect for diversity: strengthening early transitions in Peru

The research underlying this working paper is part of the international Young Lives project, which has been taking place in Peru and three other countries. Using qualitative data gathered from 28 children in 4 Peruvian communities, as well as from teachers, parents, and others in these communities, this paper explores the experience of moving into primary school.
The communities covered a range of circumstances, both rural and urban, with different levels of poverty and different proportions of Indigenous people, thus representing some of the diversity in children’s experience. A number of challenges are identified and discussed here, including the availability of and access to preschool (although most had attended), with often hidden costs on this front; the lack of bilingual and culturally appropriate education; the lack of continuity and coordination between preschools and primary; the persistent reality and impact of physical punishment for children; and the social implications at home for children of having entered school. The paper proposes four ways to enhance children’s experience of transition: (1) strengthening continuity and collaboration between preschool and primary in ways that build on the strengths of the former, rather than ‘schoolifying’ preschool; (2) focusing at a policy level on curriculum and pedagogy that supports easier transition; (3) improving teacher training to focus on better relationships with families and more respect for diversity; and (4) addressing children’s rights around issues of violence, both in and out of school.

Workshop with Indigenous leaders about home–school transitions in Indigenous communities

LAC, Gr, GP ethnicity, mother-tongue, home-school transitions

This week-long workshop was planned as a chance to identify relevant issues in the context of the kinds of challenges faced by Indigenous communities and their children in the Latin America and Caribbean region and to develop programme proposals for education authorities. It involved a range of presentations, many of them describing ongoing experiences and innovations, by professionals and experts from around the region, most of them also members of Indigenous groups. The meeting resulted in a declaration with 12 recommendations, including the need for use of mother tongue and the assignment, wherever possible, of properly trained Indigenous teachers, facilitators, and administrators, with adequate training where needed for those who are not Indigenous. They also pointed to the need for active attention and responses to discrimination against Indigenous children, especially in urban areas, and for sufficient education and awareness around ethno-diversity in the region.

See also:
Guerra, Rosangela (2008), The Child Town project: quality assessment in practice, Early Childhood Matters 110: 49–52

AGE AT ENTRY

School entry age and reading achievement in the 2006 programme for international student assessment (PISA)

G, PR, S age at entry, reading instruction, achievement

Many theorists and practitioners are advocating for an earlier beginning to reading instruction as a response to poor international reading achievement. Given the international variation in school entry age, the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of student achievement provides an opportunity to assess the validity of this recommendation. An analysis of the 2006 PISA results, however, taking into account social and economic factors, finds that school entry age is not a significant predictor of later reading ability. However, those countries where reading instruction is started earlier show a greater variance in reading achievement. It should be taken into account, however, that virtually no low-income countries participate in the PISA assessment, and that age at entry raises very different issues in low-income countries. This paper also provides an overview of the current literature on the relationship between early skills and later reading ability, almost all of it from high-income countries.

Household characteristics and delayed school enrollment in Malawi

SSA, PR, S age at entry, household factors

Many children in Malawi enter school after the official entry age. This study draws on data from over 3000 households to identify the characteristics associated with delayed school enrolment. It points to several factors: Children from female-headed households are more likely to start school on time, and the mother’s survival is important to school enrolment. The
more children under 5 there are in the family, the less likely a child is to start on time. The more educated the head of the household is, the more likely it is that children will start on time. Children in rural areas also had a greater probability of starting late, although this was not a significant finding. The author argues that more research is needed to determine the impact of planned vs. unplanned settlements in urban areas. More research is also called for on the factors within schools that tend to delay enrolment.

**Age in grade congruence and progression in basic education in Bangladesh**

Hossain, Altaf (2010) Create Pathways to Access Research Monograph No. 48

SA, Gr age at entry, retention, achievement

Bangladesh, like many other countries, has a significant mismatch between the official age at entry for school and the actual age at which children participate, as indicated by the gap in gross and net enrolment rates. This is a problem that ends up affecting children's retention and achievement in school. This study, drawing on data from over 6000 children in 6 study locations, explores the extent of the age mismatch, finding that it affected almost 70% of children between the ages of 6 and 15. Over 80% of the children were overage when they enrolled in grade 1 and among them 23.3% were overage by more than 2 years. These children tended to come from more disadvantaged groups, their level of achievement was lower and they dropped out in larger numbers. The authors argue for the importance of enforcing the law regarding birth registration and paying better attention to the health and nutrition of children in the early years so that they do not appear to family to be too small to send to school.

*See also:*

Verdisco, Aimee and Marcelo Pérez Alfaro (2010), *Measuring education quality in Brazil* IDB Education, Briefly Noted No. 6

**Anecdotal evidence based on interviews in Kenya**

Bartlett, Sheridan (2010)

SA, A age at entry, exclusion

During a visit to Kenya, it was not uncommon to see children in grade 1 anywhere from 6 to 14 years of age. Invariably teachers spoke of how slow the older children were—and the general assumption was that they had been sent late because they were less able. They repeated in higher numbers and dropped out after a few years. Talking to a 15-year-old in class 4 shed more light on the issue. She spoke about how hard it had been to start school as an older child, that she felt lonely and left out even though there were others her age. She and the other children felt stupid and sad, awkward, hesitant, shy about everything, and like they were being left behind by the younger children. Some other girls she knew in the same position dropped out by about class 3. They felt so big by then, and they didn't like being in class with small children.

**ACCESS, ENROLMENT, RETENTION**

**Effects of household- and district-level factors on primary school enrollment in 30 developing countries**


SA, Pr, S enrolment, household factors, district factors

This study draws on Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) from 27 countries as well as PAPFAM surveys from three MENA countries to look at the effects of household- and district-level factors on primary school enrolment for over 220,000 children. Parental education and household wealth remain critical factors. Children from extended families are more likely to attend school than those from nuclear families, probably because there is less need for children’s labour in these families. At the same time, having more siblings lowers the chance of enrolment, as does birth order, with lower enrolment rates especially for elder daughters. Distance from school, the presence of female teachers, and the number of teachers available per child also make a difference, although class size apparently does not affect parents’ decisions. Given the difficulty of changing some household factors, the authors conclude that policies to reduce the costs of schooling remain central, and that supports for transportation and educational infrastructure are especially important for girls.
Who goes to school? School enrollment patterns in Somalia
SSA, PR, S enrollment, exclusion

Somalia’s educational system was seriously undermined by years of conflict and neglect, and it continues to face formidable challenges. This paper draws on UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey data to understand recent enrolment patterns in the country. Access to school remains limited, with little more than half the eligible children attending school. Thirty seven percent have never been to school; many others dropped out early after enrolling. There are large differences in access, with girls, the poor, nomads, and Central South residents being the most disadvantaged. Koranic schools account for over a quarter of all those in school, but they lack qualified teachers and are completely dependent on local resources. Even government schools, which are extremely poorly funded, depend heavily on parent support. Two of the country’s three sectors lack formally recognised governments, adding to the financial challenges in terms of donor support.

The returns from reducing corruption: evidence from education in Uganda
SSA, GR, S corruption, enrollment, achievement

In Uganda a newspaper campaign provided schools and parents with information to make it possible for them to monitor local officials’ handling of a large education grant programme. This study, drawing on survey and administrative data, indicated that the campaign was successful, making more resources available for use within local schools. The reduction in misuse of funds had a positive effect on children’s enrolment and on girls’ achievement. The authors suggest that innovations in the governance of social services may yield higher returns than a number of other cost-effective interventions.

Back to school in Afghanistan: determinants of school enrollment
MENA, PR, S enrollment, factors

Although almost 4 million children have been brought back into the school system in Afghanistan in recent years, as of 2008 enrolment remained very low. This paper, drawing on both school and household data, looks at the effect of various factors on enrolment. There is still a massive gender gap, although this becomes less noticeable in the 6- to 7-year-old cohort. Children from large households are significantly less likely to attend, as are Pashto speakers and those with less educated parents. Security remains a critical consideration, and proximity is highly correlated with enrolment. Despite the fact that 30% still have no schools available, reconstruction of schools has not appeared to have a significant effect. Children are more likely to attend non-government-run schools, although there are so few of these that it does not much affect the overall situation. Household income does not play an important role.

Who is out of school? evidence from the Community Survey 2007, South Africa
SSA, PR, S enrollment, access, disability, poverty

This assessment of patterns of access and enrolment in primary school in South Africa finds, based on community survey data, that the numbers of children out of school may be higher than government figures suggest. At the same time, more 6- and 7-year-olds are in school than was true 10 years ago, the result of phasing in a reception grade. The authors point to four broad and interrelated factors interfering with access: disability, not living with biological family, failure to make use of the social grants for which children are eligible, and isolated location. Disability is especially striking as an exclusionary factor, with 22% of those with disabilities not attending school. The 4.3% of excluded children in the country are those who are most expensive and challenging to reach, and more assertive campaigns are called for.
Learning from migrant education: a case study of the schooling of rural migrant children in Beijing

**EAP, PR, Q migrants, exclusion**

This paper describes the constrained access to school for migrant children in Beijing, as well as other towns and cities in China. Despite China’s emphasis on the importance of education to economic growth, this very sizable section of the population faces seriously exclusionary policies. Although the central government has encouraged the enrolment of migrant children, the effects of decentralization have made it possible for local authorities to ignore or flout central recommendations. City authorities in Beijing have allowed state schools to charge uncapped extra fees for these children, while at the same time making it very difficult for privately run schools established by migrant communities to meet standards, resulting in frequent forced closures. Responsibility does, however, lie with central government as well, since it has failed to respond to the situation or to allocate the necessary resources to allow local authorities to cope with very large influxes of migrants from rural areas.

**Why are there proportionately more poor pupils enrolled in non-state schools in urban Kenya in spite of FPE policy?**

**SSA, PR, Q enrolment, private schools, FPE**

This paper discusses the mushrooming of private schools for poor pupils in urban Kenya, despite the provision of FPE (free public education). The authors explain that this is because of the lack of public schools in urban slums. Those who are involuntarily excluded from the public sector are then forced to turn to other alternatives. While in non-slums those who use private schools are those who prefer private education, in slums it has not been a matter of choice. The number of these non-state schools is an indication of how seriously the urban poor take their children’s education.

**Determinants of schooling for boys and girls in Nigeria under a policy of free primary education**

**SSA, PR, S enrolment, costs, FPE**

This study explores the influence of gender, school costs, family wealth, and other factors on access to primary school in Nigeria, the country with the greatest number of out-of-school children. Although an extensive literature has examined the relationship between child, family, and school characteristics and the level of enrolment and attainment, there is not much work that factors in the actual cost of schooling. This, as the author notes, is especially important in countries where free primary education is accompanied by resource constraints. Despite national policies outlawing fees and tuition in state schools, only 15% of Nigeria’s children actually benefited from free schooling and one-third are not enrolled at all. The author concludes that free primary education policies do not necessarily eliminate school costs, and that even when access is truly free, this is not enough to ensure universal education, which can remain out of reach for both cultural and economic reasons.

**Obstacles to school progression in rural Pakistan: an analysis of gender and sibling rivalry using field survey data**

**SA, PR, CS school progression, obstacles**

Through field observation and econometric analysis, the authors explore the educational investments of families in some rural Pakistani villages, drawing on a data set that includes information on the retrospective history of children’s education and household background characteristics in these villages. A number of factors were related to children’s entry into primary school and their retention there, including household resources; health shocks; father’s education (mother’s education is more telling at the secondary level); and number of older sisters (who bear a larger burden of domestic work). Gender remains a critical variable, with considerably fewer girls starting school. A striking finding, however, is the high educational
retention of girls once the decision has been made to enroll them. Although the authors acknowledge the difficulty for government of influencing household choices, they recommend interest-free loans for girls’ education and an increase in the supply of girls’ schools.

See also:

Jukes, Matthew (2007), Impact of early childhood health and nutrition on access to education in developing countries, Paediatrics and Child Health 17(12): 485-491


Singal, Nidhi (2008), Working towards inclusion: reflections from the classroom, Teaching and Teacher Education 24: 1516–1529

Zhao, Meng and Paul Glewwe (2010), What determines basic school attainment in developing countries? evidence from rural China, Economics of Education Review 29: 451–460

REPETITION AND PROMOTION

Does taking one step back get you two steps forward? Grade retention and school performance in poor areas in rural China


EAP, PR, PP repetition, achievement

This paper looks at the effect of grade repetition on educational performance in a poor province in rural China. Data came from a survey undertaken in 36 schools, with the sample of 1653 students who were just starting 6th grade. The survey was designed to capture school performance of students before and after they were retained. The retention rate was highest in grade 1 (11%) and fell with each succeeding year to 3% in grade 5. Girls repeated grades consistently less often than boys. The study found no positive effects of repetition on children’s academic performance (as measured by standardised test scores) and, in fact, for some students, especially those retained in grade 2, there was a statistically significant negative effect. The authors suggest that grade repetition might have a more positive effect if it were accompanied by counseling, tutoring, or other measures to reduce the stigma associated with repetition.

See also:

Thuilliez, Josselin (2010), Fever, malaria and primary repetition rates amongst school children in Mali: combining demographic and health surveys (DHS) with spatial malarialogical measures, Social Science & Medicine 71, 314e323
MOTHER TONGUE, BILINGUAL EDUCATION, ETHNICITY

Enhancing learning of children from diverse language backgrounds: mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years
Ball, Jessica (2010) UNESCO, 2010/ED/BAS/ECCE/PI/1

G, Gr, R mother-tongue, bilingual education, review
This is a comprehensive review of the accumulating global evidence on bilingual education, covering concepts and definitions, theories and approaches, programme models, challenges, good practices, and lessons learned. While Ball points to the need for more research, she says that people in the field are able to draw some tentative conclusions: that use of children’s mother tongue (L1) is important for their overall language and cognitive development as well as their academic achievement; that children need support to become highly proficient in that language before engaging in academic work in L2; and that this level of proficiency generally takes 6 to 8 years of schooling. Some educators, she says, feel that the EFA goals are unlikely to be achieved in countries where children’s L1 is not the language of instruction.

Costs and benefits of bilingual education in Guatemala: a partial analysis

LAC, PR, CS policy, bilingual education
This study finds that disadvantaged Indigenous Guatemalan students at bilingual schools (part of the PRONEBI programme which has operated since the 1980s) have significantly better attendance and less repetition and dropout than those in regular schools. They also have better scores in all subjects, including Spanish. Their greater mastery of Spanish is crucial in Guatemala, where Spanish is key to further education, access to jobs, and higher incomes. A simple cost-benefit analysis suggests that bilingual education in this context leads to significant savings within the school system. If it were made available for all Indigenous students, it would result in annual savings estimated at $5 million, or the cost of primary education for 100,000 students in Guatemala. Barriers to full expansion of the bilingual programme include the shortage of trained bilingual teachers and the potential need to make more secondary school places available for successful Indigenous graduates.

A study of early literacy classroom interaction in rural Tanzania: cases of Ruvuma and Coast regions

SSA, PhD thesis abstract: literacy, classroom interaction, language of instruction
In Tanzania, where Swahili is the medium of instruction in primary schools, not all students come to school competent in Swahili. This thesis, focusing on grade 1 students, compares schools in areas where Swahili is and is not children’s first language. Where Swahili is a second language, classroom interaction was found to be minimal. By contrast, in the classrooms where children were fluent in Swahili, interaction was lively and children made far more progress in achieving literacy.

Language proficiency and language policy in South Africa: findings from new data

SSA, PR, S policy, language proficiency, earnings
This paper, drawing on 2008 data and relating language proficiency to earnings, finds that the economic returns for English-language proficiency are considerable for most South Africans. Those who read and write well in English earn more and have a steeper earning trajectory. This explains a general reluctance to switch to the use of African languages in school. However, the data also show that those South Africans who are proficient in their home language are also more likely to be proficient in English. This finding points to the value of bilingual education and to using mother-tongue education as the basis for the acquisition of English.
Workshop with Indigenous leaders about home–school transitions in Indigenous communities

LAC, Gr, GP ethnicity, mother-tongue, home-school transitions

This week-long workshop was planned as a chance to identify relevant issues in the context of the kinds of challenges faced by Indigenous communities and their children in the Latin America and Caribbean region and to develop programme proposals for education authorities. It involved a range of presentations, many of them describing ongoing experiences and innovations, by professionals and experts from around the region, most of them also members of Indigenous groups. The meeting resulted in a declaration with 12 recommendations, including the need for use of mother tongue and the assignment, wherever possible, of properly trained Indigenous teachers, facilitators, and administrators, with adequate training where needed for those who are not Indigenous. They also pointed to the need for active attention and responses to discrimination against Indigenous children, especially in urban areas, and for sufficient education and awareness around ethno-diversity in the region.

Local community perspectives and language of education in sub-Saharan African communities

SSA, PR, Q policy, mother-tongue, community involvement

Although numerous national policies in Sub-Saharan Africa encourage the use of mother tongue in primary school instruction, these policies are not always successfully implemented. Trudell discusses the perspectives of local people from communities in Cameroon, Mali, and Kenya on the issue of mother-tongue instruction, finding similarities but also important differences in language attitudes. She concludes that an understanding of these perspectives is essential to the formal inclusion of local languages in academic curricula, and that implementation must be based on locally supported decisions, not just mandates by national policy.

Classroom interaction: potential or problem? The case of Karagwe

SSA, PR, Q pedagogy, classroom interaction, mother-tongue

In Tanzania, where Swahili is the required language for classroom use, many children who speak another language do not understand what is going on. A common response in this situation is for children’s failure to be hidden in a call-response approach to teaching, an approach that is commonly seen as hindering learning. Wedin argues that this approach, relating as it does to local practice, could in fact be more productively used to enhance children’s success rather than masking their lack of understanding, if it took place in the local language.

Teachers’ strategies of teaching primary school mathematics in a second language: a case of Botswana

SSA, PR, Q pedagogy, mother-tongue

This paper reports on a study exploring the strategies used by early-grade primary teachers for teaching mathematics in bilingual and multilingual classrooms in northern Botswana. The study included an in-depth review of the mathematics curriculum as well as questionnaires and semistructured interviews with teachers from monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual classrooms. The findings highlight the challenges facing teachers, especially those in large classes who do not share a language with their students. While teachers drew on a number of teaching strategies to overcome difficulties, the general tendency was to privilege English as language of instruction for mathematics, limiting many children’s opportunities to participate productively. Teachers felt strongly that the burden was on government to provide adequate preparation for children in English in the course of preschool.

See also:

Mooznah, Ambarin and Auleear Owodallya (2010), From home to school: bridging the language gap in Mauritian preschools, Language, Culture and Curriculum 23(1): 15–33
ETHNICITY

Supporting Roma children through a parent–school partnership project

CEE/CIS, Gr, Q inclusion, transition, parent involvement, Roma, preschool

According to this report, fewer than 32% of Roma children in Bosnia complete primary education, the result of pervasive racism as well as the poverty of the Roma. This report describes an initiative attempting to break the cycle by reaching out to Roma parents. The goals of the initiative were to improve children’s readiness for school, promote better school–family relationships, and encourage more positive expectations amongst parents and teachers. The parenting education programmes that were the focus provided child development information, worked on communication between parents and children, and promoted parent–school partnerships. To avoid a childcare problem, children were invited to attend sessions with their parents, a strategic move that had the unexpected consequence of children insisting that parents attend. Although there have been no formal measures for assessing the programme’s success, teachers have noted the greater comfort of children as they enter school, and the programme is expanding beyond the initial handful of schools that were involved.

Building bridges in central rainforest of Peru

LA, Gr, Q inclusion, transition, parent involvement

This paper describes the Niños de la Amazonía (Amazon Children) project run by the Faculty of Education at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú and supported by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, which has been working in native communities in Peru’s central rainforest to improve the children’s learning and support their transition into school. This has involved attention to community expectations about the kind of education their children will receive, support for teachers to develop more culturally relevant teaching practices, and regular information for parents about their children’s learning and development. Project partners, including parents, teachers, and the municipality, have defined roles and sign cooperation agreements.

Local solutions for improving the quality of care and education for young Maasai children in Tanzania

SSA, Gr, Q inclusion, ECD, parents involvement, continuity

This paper describes the Monduli Pastorlaist Development Initiative in Tanzania, which used the establishment of ECD centres as a means not only to prepare children for school, but more importantly to bridge the cultural divide between the Maasai community and the formal school system. The child-rearing culture and knowledge of the Maasai were used as an entry point for ECD programming, and the centres have become an important platform for the development of better partnerships and more relevant school programmes.

Working towards quality and equity in Latin America

LA, Gr, Q policy, transition, inclusion

This paper describes a project carried out by the Organisation of American States in Latin America looking at policies affecting children’s transition into preschool and then into primary school among rural, Indigenous, and border communities in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, and Venezuela. Information regarding trends and policies was collected from all four countries, leading to analysis and findings (some of them on the dearth of relevant information) that have highlighted shared problems and that have the potential to contribute to advancing the quality and fairness of care for the region’s most vulnerable children.
The achievement of Indigenous students in Guatemalan primary schools

LAC, PR, QE ethnicity, achievement, school quality

Drawing on data from Guatemala’s 2001 PRONERE survey, this paper describes differences in academic achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children who attend rural primary schools in Guatemala. Indigenous students are doing significantly worse, with the gap in achievement (between 0.8 and 1 standard deviation in Spanish, and about half that in Mathematics) being one of the largest in the western hemisphere. This is explained here by both family and school factors. Analysis of the data indicates that a relatively small portion of the gap can be explained by socioeconomic family factors, and that most of the difference can be attributed to differences in the quality of schools and teachers. (See also the paper by Marshall, Jeffrey (2009), School quality and learning gains in rural Guatemala, Economics of Education Review 28: 207–216, which concludes that school quality did not explain the gaps.)

See also:
Mooznah, Ambarin and Auleear Owodallya (2010), From home to school: bridging the language gap in Mauritian preschools, Language, Culture and Curriculum 23(1): 15–33

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ACHIEVEMENT

Differences in pupil achievement in Kenya: implications for policy and practice

SSA, PR, CrS achievement, age at entry, SES, class size, repetition, homework

This study was designed to identify the key pupil, classroom and school-related factors contributing to differences in mathematics and reading achievement among Grade 6 pupils in Kenya. At the individual level, lower SES and older age at school entry were key predictors of lower achievement. In mathematics, girls also did less well than boys. Within schools, children performed better if they were in classes with lower pupil–teacher ratios, if they had not repeated grades, and if they were assigned homework that was subsequently corrected.

The effect of primary school mergers on academic performance of students in rural China

EAP, PR, PP school mergers, achievement

There is considerable debate in China over the benefits and drawbacks of a primary school merger programme; with some arguing that it improves quality through economies of scale, and others cautioning that the number of teachers and the improvement in facilities are not sufficient to make up for the drawbacks of larger schools. This study finds that on average these mergers do not have any effect on overall average performance of children followed from grade 1 to grade 5. However, when results are disaggregated by age, a different picture emerges. The grades of children in grade 4 or higher tend to improve after mergers, but the grades of younger children fall. A number of other questions remain unexplored—for instance the psychological effect for children of being forced into boarding schools in some cases, or the added responsibility for parents of taking and fetching children who have to attend schools at a distance from home.
Factors influencing the academic achievement of the Turkish urban poor

**MENA, PR, CrS urban poverty, achievement**

The research reported on in this paper examined the individual and combined effects of various family, child and school characteristics on the academic achievement of a sample of primary-school students from squatter settlements in Turkey. Findings indicated that family characteristics, especially fathers’ education, had a significant role. Mother’s education did not contribute significantly to variation in achievement—possibly, say the authors, because of lack of much variation in the educational level of poor urban mothers. Family income was significant, but not family size. Students’ sense of well being contributed significantly to achievement—including their perceptions of their relationships with teachers and schoolmates and their opinions regarding school rules. Expected factors boosting achievement included level of attendance and number of hours spent doing homework; less expected was the fact that parental help with homework was associated with lower performance.

Transforming public schools: impact of the CRI program on child learning in Pakistan

**SA, PR, QE achievement, child-friendly approaches**

This paper reports on the impact of a nondidactic, child friendly approach to student learning in public primary schools in Pakistan. The goals of the intervention in question, supported by Children’s Resource International, were to establish an open-ended child driven learning process starting in kindergarten and continuing through the early years of primary. Findings of a quasi-experimental comparison involving 986 matched children from 46 schools demonstrated a significant positive improvement in grade 4 programme children’s test scores in Urdu, English and mathematics. The authors relate the positive findings to the cumulative effect of four years of exposure to the programme, as well as to the fact that the introduction of the intervention early in their schooling prevented the children from becoming dependent on rote learning approaches.

What determines basic school attainment in developing countries? evidence from rural China

**EAP, PR, S nutrition, maternal education, household income, school attainment**

Drawing on household survey data from Gansu province in Northwest China, this paper points to factors associated with the number of years of schooling that children complete. Child nutritional status (measured by height-for-age Z-scores) and household income had strong positive effects, as did mothers’ education and attitudes toward children’s education. Children of mothers with 6 years of primary education attended school for approximately one and a half years longer than those whose mothers had no education. (At secondary level the presence of science labs and the extent of teachers’ experience appeared to have the most positive impacts.)

School quality and learning gains in rural Guatemala

**LAC, PR, CrS achievement, pedagogy, Indigenous students**

This paper reports on findings from detailed data collected in 2002 in 58 rural Guatemalan schools. The students were part of a cohort initially tested as third graders the previous year by the PRONERE assessment project. The study found a number of variables to be robust predictors of children’s achievement. Student attendance rates made a difference, as did the number of scheduled school days and the amount of actual teaching time in a day. The more effective classes were those that limited group work and stressed teacher-student interaction, teacher-centred lectures and explanation, and teachers’ checking of student work. Indigenous students scored much lower than ladino students, and according to this analysis, the gap is not explained by school quality variables. The teachers’ use of Indigenous languages in class made a difference to mathematics scores, but the author claims that the results are inconclusive for bilingual education. (Note that the paper by McEwan, Patrick and Marisol Trowbridge (2007) *The achievement of Indigenous students in Guatemalan primary*
school quality explained the majority of the difference in the achievement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.)

Experiences of violence and deficits in academic achievement among urban primary school children in Jamaica

LAC, PR, CrS violence, achievement
This study in Kingston, Jamaica, looked at the relationship between primary school children's experiences of violence and their academic achievement. Achievement in mathematics, reading, and spelling was assessed in 1300 5th-grade children and related to their experience of three types of violence: aggression among peers at school; corporal punishment at school; and community violence. All three types of violence were independently associated with the three areas of achievement, with the highest levels of violence being associated with the poorest achievement. Boys had poorer academic achievement than girls and experienced higher levels of aggression around school-related violence.

Factors influencing student achievement in Vietnam

EAP, PR, S achievement, SES, head teachers, teacher qualifications, teacher feedback
This paper, drawing on data on the year 5 achievement of 59,000 students in Vietnam, examines the factors contributing to reading and mathematics achievement. The findings show a strong link between achievement and family SES, as measured by parents’ education and household possessions. Also important was the involvement of head teacher in classroom observation. Teacher qualifications were not a determining factor, and the data did not allow for an assessment of teachers’ subject knowledge. However, the level of teacher feedback made a positive difference, as did longer school days and more school resources.

Extra tuition in southern and eastern Africa: coverage, growth, and linkages with pupil achievement

SSA, PR, R extra tuition, achievement
This paper reviews data from 6 African countries, looking at the incidence of extra tuition, the profile of the children receiving it, and the relationship to student achievement. It found a strong association between extra tuition and slightly higher SES groups, but the academic outcomes of extra tuition have been “surprisingly varied,” in the authors’ words. In some countries, extra tuition results in higher achievement and in other countries not. This seems to point to differences in motivation: In some cases those receiving extra tuition are high-achieving students wanting better results for moving through the system; in other cases, they are students who are having trouble with school.

Harsh corporal punishment of Yemeni children: occurrence, type and associations

MENA, PR, Q corporal punishment, school achievement
This study, based on parent and teacher reports, discusses the very high prevalence of corporal punishment for children in Yemen and points to implications for school achievement. Four family factors were found to be associated with corporal punishment: rural area; male gender of the child; low maternal education; and large family size. The study also showed that children with behavioral and emotional disorders were two to three times more likely to be those who experienced harsh corporal punishment. Maternal reports of harsh physical punishment were associated with teacher reports of poor performance in school. Different explanations of this relationship are possible: poor performance could lead to harsh discipline; harsh discipline could equally contribute to poor performance; or both punishment and poor performance could be related to family deprivation. Based on other literature, however, the authors argue that harsh discipline at home may be contributing to children’s achievement in school.
See also:


Suggate, Sebastian (2009), *School entry age and reading achievement in the 2006 programme for international student assessment (PISA)*, *International Journal of Educational Development* 48: 151–161


### CLASS SIZE, PUPIL-TEACHER RATIOS, TRACKING, MULTIGRADE

**Peer effects, pupil-teacher ratios, and teacher incentives in Kenya**


**SSA, Gr, RCT class size, achievement, ability tracking**

A randomised controlled study from Kenya points to the strong positive effects of reduced class size in the early grades, where classes are large. World Bank funds made it possible to split 140 grade 1 classes of close to 100 children each on average. Children remained in these split groups through grade 2, and were then compared to children from control schools, where class size had not been reduced. Children in the reduced-size classes scored significantly better (0.22 standard deviations) than the control children on externally administered tests. This was especially the case in classes that had been ability grouped or, interestingly, in classes with contract rather than regular teachers. Classes in the treatment schools were also found to be more interactive and participatory.
Teaching large classes: the international evidence and a discussion of some good practice in Ugandan primary schools

G, PR, R, GP large classes, pedagogy

O’Sullivan challenges the assumption that reducing class size should be considered a fundamental step in improving children’s school achievement. While classes of 20 or 30 are indisputably easier to teach and preferable for children, it is unrealistic, given resource constraints, to aim for this as a panacea. Instead, the author recommends that resources be put into a more rigorous investigation of classroom techniques and strategies that make teaching in large classes as effective as possible. Some teachers clearly do this more effectively than others, and their strategies should be emulated. The author believes it is important not to take a disparaging attitude toward large-class teaching. The focus of teacher training, the content of curriculum, and the deployment of teachers within schools can all have an effect on improving children’s school achievement.

Relationships amongst cultural dimensions, educational expenditure and class size of different nations

G, PR, CrS class size, expenditure, culture

This is a discussion of the relationship between two cultural dimensions and national expenditures on education. The cultural dimensions, defined by Hofstede, are together referred to as PDI (power distance and individualism). Power distance is a measure of inequality with regard to the distribution of power within a society; a higher score implies a greater discrepancy in equality between the authorities and most people. Countries with a higher power distance score spend a lower percentage of the GDP on education and have a higher pupil-teacher ratio in classrooms. The opposite is true for measures of individualism in a country. These authors suggest that an increase in expenditures on education may be more than a function of the available resources in a given country, and may be rooted also in cultural values, which need to be actively addressed in the attempt to improve opportunities for children.

See also:

Multigrade schooling in Turkey: an overview

MENA, PR, GP multigrade classes, policy

Although multigrade classes are a reality in Turkey, and the only way for many primary students to access an education, they are not a focus for either government or research attention. Instead, efforts have been made (for instance, through support for transportation and boarding schools, and through subsidies to private schools) to eliminate multigrade classes. This paper argues that, given the inevitability of this solution for many children in the context of scarce resources, more attention should be given to providing adequate supports to multigrade teachers, who often work with too many children, in very poorly equipped schools, and without adequate training in effective multigrade teaching strategies.

The preparation of teachers for multigrade teaching

G, PR, GP multigrade classes, teacher training

The author points out that teacher training is inevitably limited in its capacity to train teachers for all possible eventualities. However, given the large proportion of teachers in the world who are required to teach in multigrade classrooms, greater emphasis needs to be given in a routine way to the kinds of adaptations these teachers will need to make. They require all the skills that single grade teachers require, and there is nothing to be gained from providing separate teacher training
programmes. However, special attention needs to be given to the kinds of planning, classroom organisation, material use, and learning approaches that will be appropriate. The diversity of types of multigrade classes also needs to be taken into account, with attention given to class size, the age and grade range of students, and the resources likely to be available. It is important, at the same time, to avoid an overemphasis on techniques and tricks, which are likely to lead to unreflective teaching.

**Investing in multi-grade teaching in Indonesia**


EAP, Gr multigrade, policy, pedagogy

Despite the fact that 30% of school children worldwide are in multigrade classrooms, multigrade teaching (MGT) continues to be considered a second-class solution. This 30% does not include the many children who experience de facto MGT due to high rates of teacher absence. This brief describes the situation in Indonesia, and argues that MGT has some inherent benefits when it is managed well, given that it calls ideally for a whole child and whole school approach, with an emphasis on flexibility, on the teacher as a facilitator and resource person, and on active parent and community involvement. In addition, it is a cost-effective approach to viable student–teacher ratios. The brief makes a number of recommendations for the expansion and enrichment of MGT in Indonesia, including better data on the extent of the practice and more rich description of existing models; more explicit policy on MGT, including a clear regulatory framework setting MGT as the approach of first choice, especially for small schools; better teacher training and support for MGT; and revision of curricula and materials to support MGT.

**Peer effects and the impact of tracking: evidence from a randomized evaluation in Kenya**


SSA, GR, RCT ability tracking, achievement

This study is one of the few providing evidence from a randomized controlled study on the benefits of tracking children by ability. In 140 schools, extra teachers were hired in order to be able to split grade 1 and 2 classes into two (sometimes three) smaller classes. In half of these cases, children were assigned to a class based on achievement prior to that time; in the other half children were randomly assigned to one of the two classes. All tracked children benefited, regardless of ability level, scoring on average 0.13 standard deviations higher than those in the nontracked classes, with the higher-achieving children showing the greatest benefit. The children in the middle of the range benefited regardless of whether they had been placed in the lower or higher group, thereby pointing to not even modest peer effects for these children.

**TEACHERS’ TRAINING, INDUCTION, MENTORING, ASSIGNMENT**

**Educating the teacher educator: a Ugandan case study**


SSA, PR, Q teacher training, teacher educators

In Uganda, despite the enrolment successes of UPE, half of all children entering primary school fail to complete it, and of those children still in school at the end of third grade in 2008, learning achievement was low, with only 47% reaching expected literacy levels and 46% expected numeracy levels. Fundamental to addressing this situation is the training and capacity of teachers. In this paper, O’Sullivan examines the training of teacher educators in Uganda, who are required to complete a 2-year diploma after acquiring experience as a teacher. Her study revealed a minor emphasis on pedagogy (as opposed to subject knowledge). Not all student teacher educators had teaching qualifications or experience at the primary school level. Instructional materials and resources were very limited. No attention was given to research skills, to opportunities to develop skills as reflective practitioners, or to the mentoring of these potential teacher educators. O’Sullivan points to the critical need for improvement in all these areas if Uganda’s children are to have adequately prepared teachers.
The problems of the beginning teacher in the Arab schools in Israel

MENA, PR, Q culture, teacher training
This paper, although not from the majority world, highlights some of the pressures faced by beginning teachers in other contexts as they try to negotiate their role and identity in the context of a tension between their cultural background and the expectations of their work. This paper focuses on the induction issues for new Arab teachers in Israel, who, because of a more traditional, collectivist cultural background, may have trouble internalizing the Western educational methodology to which they were exposed in the course of formal training in Israel. The first year of teaching in particular may leave them feeling caught between two worlds, expected to act as agents of change among their own people, but not confident themselves in this role nor finding support for these new values within the school or local community. Semistructured interviews with beginner teachers revealed problems with didactic and disciplinary competence, with teacher overload, with understanding and coping with the organisational culture of the school, and with differences among pupils in their willingness to accept alternatives to passive modes of learning.

Mentoring beginning teachers: what we know and what we don’t

G, PR, R mentoring
This review of the English-language international research on mentoring points to a range of benefits for mentors, mentees, and the educational system, arguing in many cases that mentoring is the most effective way to support and facilitate the development of beginning teachers, responding as it does to the levels of stress, isolation, and unfamiliarity that face beginning teachers. At the same time, there is evidence that mentoring encourages critical reflection on practice for mentors themselves. Where the strong potential for mentoring is not realised, this generally appears to result from a failure to ensure that basic conditions for successful mentoring have been met, especially around mentor selection, preparation, and time allotted to the practice. The authors also point out, however, that the copious literature on mentoring is, for the most part, limited to the accounts of mentors and mentees, and that there is little evidence on some critical factors, including the cost effectiveness of mentoring relative to other approaches, the impacts for student learning, and the impacts for the retention of mentees in the teaching profession.

ChildFund (2009) International Reading Association and ChildFund International

SSA, Gr, PP pedagogy, mentoring
This research report describes a pilot project that was a joint venture between ChildFund and the International Reading Association. ChildFund’s education activities in Zambia have generally focused on school infrastructure, access to school, and capacity building in communities through participatory school governance. This laid the groundwork for the ATLAS pilot, conducted in 2008–9 and designed to improve teacher quality. Building on reports of successful experiences elsewhere in the world, ATLAS was designed to help teachers recognise and diagnose problems and come up with alternative solutions. Support for teachers took place through an iterative process that included regular and ongoing supervision, feedback, and coaching. The pilot took place in 5 schools, reaching 36 teachers and over 2000 children. Through pre- and post testing, it was found to result in substantial changes in 17 out of 21 objectives for better student engagement, teacher practices, and classroom environment. (Student achievement was not tested.) The cost per student was about $40. This report adds to the growing literature stressing the significance of strong ongoing mentoring for a successful transition to effective active teaching methods. It also points to some key challenge for efforts of this kind, the need for adequate teaching materials to support more active approaches, and the importance of addressing logistical difficulties (like transport) that keep district officials from functioning in a support capacity.
Working as partners for classroom reform

SA, PR, Q teacher support
This paper reviews the effects of a collaborative partnership between three teachers and a teacher educator (the first author) in a Pakistani school. While the intent, in theory, was to establish a “co-learning” partnership, this concept had to be adapted to the realities of the situation. Many teachers in Pakistan lack not only professional support, but also adequate knowledge of their subject and the habit of asking for help. These constraints were obstacles to a process of shared reflection and called for a revisiting of the underlying assumptions. Without solid knowledge of mathematics and teaching skills, reflection would not have enabled these teachers to move beyond their routinised practices. It was important to focus on explicit instruction in mathematics and pedagogy. This situation may require the teacher educator to take more of a leading role than anticipated, responding sensitively to the circumstances and supporting teachers’ self esteem.

How newly qualified primary teachers develop: a case study in rural Eritrea

SSA, PR, Q teacher support
This paper reports on a study following a small group of newly qualified teachers in Eritrean primary schools over their first four years in the profession as a way to determine the quality of support that would be most useful in this context. These young teachers had no formal supports and only their own peers to rely on for guidance. Some of these teachers developed professionally over these years, but others did not. Both “developers” and “statics,” as they were labeled, reported on similar problems, for instance, long journeys to get to school, a lack of materials, and the heavy teaching load, but they referred to and dealt with these problems differently. Developers would speak, for instance, of the lack of materials for making teaching aids, while statics complained just of the lack of teaching aids. The developers saw their profession as a complex array of challenges to be solved, rather than an impossible situation. The authors conclude that those providing in-service support to these schools need to walk a delicate tightrope, allowing teachers to articulate their personal experience, and building on their differences with tact and respect.

Capturing the difference: primary school teacher identity in Tanzania

SSA, PR, Q teacher identity
The paper discusses the continuities and differences between different generations of primary school teachers in Tanzania as they negotiate their professional identity. Semistructured interviews were conducted with 34 teachers in a range of more and less remote schools, and with between 1 and 38 years of experience as teachers. While all teachers took seriously the notion that they were role models for children, there were differences between generations, with younger teachers more focused on personal fulfillment than on relations with the local community, and on a more contractual than vocational model of professionalism. The author points to the importance of attention to teacher identity and intergenerational differences in the attempt to understand teachers’ responses to donor-driven changes to pedagogy, and to an acceptance among donors and the organizations they fund that innovations will necessarily be modified and indigenised.

Reconsidering the evidence base, considering the rural: aiming for a better understanding of the education and training needs of Sub-Saharan African teachers

SSA, PR, Q remote areas, teacher support, policy
This paper considers the pervasive lack of attention given to the professional development of teachers in remote areas in Sub-Saharan Africa and the challenges they face. It argues that large-scale statistical evidence often tends to mask rather than highlight these disparities, and suggests that focused qualitative work on teachers’ lives can be a healthy supplement for better understanding. Throughout Africa, qualified teachers struggle to avoid being posted in remote areas where school
facilities are poor, suitable housing is difficult to find, cultural gaps may make it difficult to relate to local communities, professional support is limited, and, especially for young women, the situation may feel unsafe. Teachers’ voices, argues Buckler, must be taken into account in the development and implementation of policy in these areas.

**Educational production and the distribution of teachers in Uruguay**

LAC, PR, S teacher assignment, achievement

This paper calls into question some of the research pointing to the relationship between various teacher characteristics and student achievement. It discusses the more often overlooked role of teacher placement, arguing that the best teachers are most likely to be assigned to the best schools. This study looks at the situation in Uruguay, drawing on national data. If teachers are assigned randomly, the paper argues, then various teacher attributes that are positively associated with students’ achievement (for instance, female gender, experience, qualifications) should also be randomly distributed. Instead this study finds that these teacher attributes are systematically concentrated in schools with higher average socioeducational context and student achievement. Despite being a relatively equitable society, Uruguay has policies around the assignment of new teachers and the transfer of practicing teachers that increase existing inequities. Presumably, in countries with even greater disparities, this tendency might be still more extreme. This research points to a potentially important policy area for improving the chances of disadvantaged children.

**The effectiveness and distribution of male primary teachers: evidence from two Mexican states**

LAC, PR, S male teachers, effectiveness, assignment

This study makes use of large administrative data sets in Mexico to analyse the relationship between male teachers and student achievement. This analysis confirms other research indicating that students achieve better with female teachers. However, when the characteristics of the schools are controlled for, the proportion of male teachers is not statistically related to test scores. The analysis finds that male teachers are disproportionately assigned to more “difficult” areas with lower-achieving schools and higher repetition and dropout rates, both in rural areas and in municipalities with higher levels of poverty. Qualitative evidence suggests that this is because education officials find these schools inappropriate for women teachers. These findings have important implications for a country like Mexico, where over a third of primary teachers are men, and it suggests that there may in fact not be a tradeoff between quality and having male role models in schools.

**Teachers for rural schools: experiences in Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda**

SSA, Gr teachers, recruitment, remote areas

One of the significant problems in achieving quality education in the early years, especially in remote rural areas, is the challenge of providing teachers, who are often unwilling to relocate to these areas. Differences in language and ethnicity can also hamper teachers’ integration into these more remote areas. There are particular difficulties for female teachers, which means that rural areas may have mostly male teachers—an issue that has particular repercussions for the enrolment of girls. The small size of remote rural schools also has implications for the effective use of teachers. Isolated schools also present challenges around teacher supervision and support. This report draws on experiences in 5 countries to discuss various promising initiatives and policy options for addressing these problems. Teacher incentives are most commonly used, and important among these is the availability of safe housing, especially for women teachers. Hardship allowances and bonus payments, sometimes tied to distance from the nearest tarred road, have also been useful. Recruitment of local teachers is another approach, one that in general leads to a more stable but less qualified pool of teachers. Multigrade teaching and the establishment of clusters of schools are promising approaches to effective use of teachers, and more decentralised approaches to teacher monitoring and support are also discussed here.
### ALTERNATIVE TEACHERS

**The role and status of nongovernmental (‘daike’) teachers in China’s rural education**

EAP, PR, S, Q teacher qualifications, equity, remote areas

The shortage of qualified teachers in many countries has led to the widespread use of paraprofessional, alternatively trained, or contract teachers to fill the gap, especially in remote rural areas where qualified teachers are reluctant to go. This paper draws on a survey and interviews to report on China’s version of this phenomenon, assessing the situation with its alternative ‘daike’ (community appointed and paid) teaching force. The assumption, according to the authors, was that these alternative teachers were unqualified, and were hired, in the context of a teacher shortage, to work short term at lower pay, generally as assistants to government teachers, to be replaced over time by newly qualified teachers. In fact, they found that two-thirds of daike teachers were qualified to teach and were working a full load, generally in primary schools in undesirable professional backwaters. They were paid on average one-fifth of the formal government salary and with no benefits, generally out of noneducation budgets. It was not uncommon to find equally qualified daike and regular teachers in the same school working for very different rates of pay. Rather than a temporary solution, this dual track practice appears to be becoming an accepted, low-cost approach to staffing schools, especially in poor remote areas.

### Alternatively certified elementary school teachers in Turkey


MENA, PR Q teacher qualifications, alternatives

In many countries, where the demand for teachers exceeds the supply of those who have been formally trained and certified, alternative routes have been explored. This paper explores the experiences and perceptions of ACTs (alternatively trained teachers) in primary schools in Turkey. These teachers, already graduates in a different field, received intensive shorter-term training for teaching. These teachers experienced greater difficulty than regular teachers. They had problems with planning, managing large classrooms, and dealing with children of different abilities, and they felt they were lacking in communication skills. In general, women ACTs were more satisfied with the job than men, but almost all felt that exposure to full formal teacher training should be a prerequisite to teaching.

### “Free primary education” in Lesotho and the disadvantages of the highlands


SSA, PR, Q FPE, equity, teacher qualifications

This paper discusses the issue of geographical equity in schooling in Lesotho, where improved access for children in more remote highland areas has not translated into equity in quality. Qualitative research in 10 schools revealed, among other things, marked differences in teachers’ professional qualifications, which appeared to be closely related to their level of motivation and commitment. In the poorer highland area, there was a greater reliance on untrained teachers in order to implement FPE. While these teachers were gradually trained and certified, their training was never on a par with that of teachers in more desirable locations. The author points to the need for a better balance between local and central control and responsibility; while the improvement of school facilities would benefit from more local involvement, the recruitment of teachers would benefit from a higher level of central intervention.

### Contract teachers: experimental evidence from India


SA, Gr, RCT contract teachers, achievement, teacher absence

There has been considerable controversy in the developing world over the practice of hiring teachers, not professionally trained, who are paid considerably less than regular teachers and given only limited contracts. This paper discusses the
potentially positive aspects of this practice, describing evidence from a programme in which the provision of an extra contract teacher resulted in significant learning gains for children. In 100 randomly chosen government-run rural primary schools in the state of Andhra Pradesh, where one extra (contract) teacher was provided, students outperformed those in control schools by 0.15 and 0.13 standard deviations in math and language tests respectively. The gains were especially notable for children in grade 1. This was most likely because most schools chose to use these extra teachers to split the first grade class. Contract teachers were significantly less likely to be absent from school than other teachers (16% vs. 27%) and were no less effective in improving student learning outcomes. The authors suggest that expanding the use of contract teachers could be a highly cost-effective way of improving education outcomes in developing countries, and an especially effective policy for addressing the problems of the first year of school.

TEACHER INCENTIVES

Teacher incentives in the developing world

This unpublished review paper looks at a range of policies that attempt to improve the quality of schooling in developing countries by providing incentives for teachers. These include direct payments to teachers based on their attendance or their students’ performance on tests, policies to improve working conditions, the provision of information on school and student performance to the local community, and the hiring of contract or para-teachers. While the authors find it is not possible to draw strong generalizations from the available research, there does appear to be evidence that teachers will attend more reliably when there are strong, well-monitored incentives to reduce absence rates. There is mixed evidence on the success of differentiating teachers’ pay based on student performance. Providing information about school and student performance to communities seems to have limited effect. But giving communities the resources to hire extra teachers on a short-term contract basis can have a significant impact. This might appear to imply that no teachers should be given long-term contracts, but this is not a politically viable solution. Instead the authors point to evidence supporting the potential for teachers to work for some years on a contract basis before moving into civil service positions.

Teacher performance pay: experimental evidence from India

Evidence on the impact of payment incentives for teachers has been mixed. This paper offers some positive evidence. It reports on a randomized controlled evaluation of a teacher incentive programme implemented across a large sample of rural primary schools in Andhra Pradesh, in which teachers were given a 3% bonus of their annual pay based on the average improvement of their students’ test scores as determined through independently administered assessments. After two years, students in the incentive schools performed significantly better than those in control schools in math and language tests. The tests focused not only on curricular material but on more conceptual skills, indicating that teachers were not simply teaching to the test.

Monitoring works: getting teachers to come to school

This paper reports on a randomised experiment to determine whether monitoring and financial incentives can reduce teacher absence and increase learning. In rural India, in 57 randomly selected one-room schools, para-teachers’ salaries were made dependent on their attendance rate, with another 57 schools serving as controls. Attendance was monitored and verified by means of cameras with a tamper-proof date and time function. A child photographed the teacher and class at the beginning and end of each school day. Teacher absentee rates dropped by half to an average of 21% in the treatment
schools, remaining at 42% in the comparison schools. The improved teacher presence was accompanied by test scores for
the children that were 0.17 standard deviations higher than in the comparison schools.

**Primary education, teachers’ professionalism and social class about motivation and demotivation of
government school teachers in India**


**SA, PR, Q teacher motivation, government schools, private schools**

This paper points to a fundamental paradox in India underlying a widespread lack of motivation in government school
teachers, with its obvious effects for children’s achievement. On the one hand, there has been broad acceptance of
the importance of education in the country, but on the other, government school teachers, functioning in a critically
underresourced system without support or adequate pay, feel they are held in low esteem. The tension between the focus
on high expectations around education in the absence of resources has led to numerous undesirable practices. The growing
demand for private education in the country has resulted in a cleavage in the system that reproduces class differences in the
country. Government school teachers send their own children to private schools, and often expect little from the children
they teach. They are, according to the author, not only the product of a class structure, but complicit in reproducing it.

**See also:**

Ghuman, Sharon and Cynthia Lloyd (2010), Teacher absence as a factor in gender inequalities in access to primary
schooling in rural Pakistan, *Comparative Education Review* 54(4): 539–554

**HEAD TEACHERS**

**School leadership and social justice: evidence from Ghana and Tanzania**


**SSA, PR, AR school leadership, equity, poverty**

This paper reports on an action research project involving 33 primary school head teachers in Ghana and Tanzania. This was
part of a larger project involving school leadership and the capacity of school heads to bring about changes in educational
quality in their schools. The teachers first attended workshops on participatory action research techniques, where they also
identified the specific issues they would like to work on in their schools. Close contact was maintained after the workshops
with face-to-face visits among participants where possible. The issues addressed by these head teachers all had a strong
social justice component and, over time, involved creative and persistent efforts to improve access and the context for
children’s learning. The study points to the potentially pivotal role of head teachers in tackling the significant challenges
around equity in education in the context of serious poverty.

**Democratizing school authority: Brazilian teachers’ perceptions of the election of principals**


**LA, PR, Q head teachers, election participation**

This small qualitative study explores the experiences of seven Brazilian teachers with a democratic reform process through
which teachers, parents, and students elected their head teacher. Teachers felt that this process created a more democratic
school culture, encouraging them to experiment with more participatory approaches in their classrooms. This process also
made head teachers more answerable to teachers, making teachers more willing to express concerns and lessening conflict,
with productive outcomes for all.

**The role of school principals in enhancing teacher professionalism**


**SA, PR, Q school leadership, models, teacher support**
This paper reports on four case studies from Karachi, Pakistan, exploring the effects of different models of school leadership in government schools in supporting professionalism among teachers. In all four cases, the head teachers delegated responsibility to teachers, involving them constructively in decision making and leadership, and in the articulation of school values. This involvement appeared to help teachers gain confidence, enhanced their professional capacities, and encouraged greater levels of collaboration. The positive outcomes of these experiences support the findings of other research pointing to the relationship between positive school reform and the capacity of head teachers to involve teachers as team members in implementing change. The author stresses that this process involves training for head teachers that includes gaining understanding of how their managerial styles can encourage teachers’ emotional commitment to their work.

Do principal-educators have the ability to transform schools? a South African perspective

SSA, PR, DP head teacher role, school quality, democracy

Despite the post-apartheid changes to the educational system in South Africa that, in theory, turned schools into sites for democratic practice, these authors contend that not all head teachers have the ideals necessary for implementing reflective democratic principles. Although head teachers may be conscious of their responsibilities in this regard, they may lack the capacity for the necessary managerial changes. The authors describe some of the avenues that they feel might effect change, including a greater emphasis on arts and sport, and the involvement in school affairs of local leaders and officials.

PEDAGOGY, CURRICULUM, CLASSROOM INTERACTION

(Notable in the recent literature on this topic is increasing questioning of the assumption that the majority world should be moving toward more constructivist, child-centred pedagogy in primary schools.)

The cultural politics of constructivist pedagogies: teacher education reform in the United Republic of Tanzania

SSA, PR, Q teacher training, learner-centred, educational reform, policy

This discussion is the product of ethnographic research in a teacher’s college in Tanzania where there is an emphasis on learner-centred, constructivist pedagogies. The author examines the challenges facing these teachers in a country where rote learning is still the norm and explores the basic disconnect between the educational approaches that are pushed by the international educational development world and the realities on the ground in most low-income countries. In most cases, if these reforms are being practiced at all, it is the form rather than the substance that is actually being implemented, a fact that is inevitable where full implementation is constrained by a wide range of practical factors. The author suggests that educational policy reform might be more successful if it included practical experience in Tanzanian classrooms for those responsible for its formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

Challenges of applying a student-centered approach to learning in the context of education in Kyrgyzstan

CEE/CIS, PR, DP curriculum reform, learner-centred, top-down

These authors argue that the student-centred educational reforms undertaken in Kyrgyzstan in the years since independence do not give adequate weight to the history and influence of Soviet education in the country. The highly structured, top-down approach to education characteristic of the Soviet system still exerts a pull on many parents, teachers, and policy makers, and this approach confuses and undermines the numerous donor-supported efforts to introduce more student-centred approaches. As a result of this tension, argue the authors, the educational system has become increasingly “chaotic and inefficient.” For more progressive approaches to be effective in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia generally, more resources, more consensus, and concerted efforts on the part of those advocating for such changes are required.
### Curriculum change in Uganda: teacher perspectives on the new thematic curriculum


**SSA, PR, Q curriculum reform, teacher perspectives**

Uganda recently developed a new primary curriculum which takes a theme-based approach and stresses the use of mother-tongue, child-centred, and child-directed learning; group work; and frequent assessment. This curriculum was implemented starting in 2007. This study, which focused on 8 schools and drew on classroom observation and teacher interviews, describes some of the challenges with implementation. Teachers found the training for the new curriculum to be inadequate, too brief, and too theoretical, with little attention to practical techniques and practices. Materials were inadequate, and the recommended approaches were hard to implement in large classes, especially given the range in students’ ages and abilities. Teachers had difficulty using group work effectively and were overwhelmed by the challenges of doing continuous assessment.

### Curriculum reform in post-1990s Sub-Saharan Africa


**SSA, PR, DP curriculum reform, donors, child-centred education**

This paper discusses the widespread adoption in Sub-Saharan Africa of certain educational concepts: learner-centredness; outcomes- and competency-based education; and national qualifications frameworks. Although these practices appeared to be an attractive alternative to colonial-era practices, in fact, they have been driven by progressive donor-driven ideologies that do not actually reflect local conservatism or the realities around resources and teacher capacities.

### Child-centred education and the promise of democratic learning: pedagogic messages in rural Indian primary schools


**SA, PR, Q child-centred education, quality, reform**

Sriprakash questions the emphasis that has been placed on child-centred education in many majority world countries over recent decades, arguing that this may not always be the most effective means for providing “quality” education for all. The paper focuses on a rural primary school in Karnataka state in India, where a pedagogic reform project (Nali Kali, or Joyful Learning) was implemented in 4000 schools in the 1990s. The project sought to encourage a sympathetic, child-centred approach on the part of teachers. The approach ideally involved giving greater control to children over the pace of their own learning. However, at the same time, teachers were expected to complete a set section of the curriculum each month. Sriprakash observes and analyses the interactions of one teacher and her students, pointing to the ways in which assumptions about children’s affective needs led to frequent absence from the classroom on the part of the teacher and legitimised her lack of involvement in lessons. Rather than stimulating more effective learning, the approach undermined teacher-student interaction and encouraged a more performance-oriented approach.

### Challenging common sense: cases of school reform for learning community under an international cooperation project in Bac Giang Province, Vietnam


**EAP, PR, Q child-centred education, teacher support, donor**

This paper describes the challenges in a Japanese-funded school reform project in Vietnam. The project, which focused on the establishment of collegial “learner communities” of teachers, was designed to improve the capacity of primary school teachers to implement the child-centred teaching practices encouraged by the Vietnamese government. In-service training was conducted by Japanese consultants (the authors) who kept notes on about 200 teacher meetings held for this purpose. There were numerous frustrations, and teachers tended on the whole to be dissatisfied with the approach and argumentative about it. Although there were some mixed successes, the authors note how difficult and time consuming it is to change teachers’ beliefs. The paper, perhaps unwittingly, highlights some of the inherent problems around imported approaches that may be considered faddish and unrealistic by experienced teachers in a very different context.
Free but inaccessible primary education: a critique of the pedagogy of English and mathematics in Lesotho
SSA, PR, Q language, class size, teacher preparation, pedagogy
Despite the great success of drives for universal FPE, many children drop out and fail once they are in school. This paper examines classroom practices around the teaching of English and mathematics, highlighting the ways in which these practices limit children’s exposure to genuine opportunities for learning. Class size, poor preparation of teachers, and teachers’ lack of confidence result in restrictive pedagogic choices. This situation is complicated by the use of English as the medium of instruction, with teachers themselves not proficient in the language and with few opportunities for oral work. Students’ lack of competence in the language becomes a barrier to all their other learning.

Pedagogical renewal: improving the quality of classroom interaction in Nigerian primary schools
SSA, PR, Q classroom interaction, teacher perceptions, teacher practices
One of the main challenges facing Nigeria is the improvement of its primary education system. The national enrolment rate is one of the world’s worst, and almost half of all girls never enroll. While the quality of education in primary classrooms is considered to be a major reason for this situation, relatively little has ever been published on primary classroom practices. This study of classroom interaction, drawing on video recordings and teacher questionnaires from primary classrooms in the north of Nigeria, shows that interaction was primarily teacher centred and focused on a one-way transmission of knowledge, with little encouragement to children either to contribute or to extend their contributions when they were elicited. There were discrepancies between teachers’ perceived use of various strategies and their actual classroom practices, with teachers greatly underestimating the extent to which they relied on direct repetition and choral responses from students. The authors argue, with support from the literature, that teachers’ practices reflect their theories of learning and their personal experiences. More participatory teaching calls for professional development based on classroom observation, critical reflection, and coaching, helping teachers to consider the implications of their practice and alternatives to it.

Beyond chalk and talk: experimental math and science education in Argentina
LA, Gr pedagogy, math, science, inquiry based
This paper describes a 2009 pilot initiative in two provinces in Argentina, designed in response to the low scores of primary students in international assessments, especially in math and science. Initial evaluations found that teachers lack both interest and content knowledge in these subjects, that children lack interest in math, and that parents lack interest in their children’s education. Teachers were also found to have a low opinion of their students’ analytical skills and capacity to focus. The pilot seeks to identify pedagogical approaches that will address these problems, and has been testing three guided inquiry-based models. Two are focused on improving science education (Science and Technology through Creativity, or CTC, a Brazilian approach, and the Scientific Literacy Program, or PAC, from France). The third, Mathematics for All, is a play-based approach to mathematics. All of these approaches are very different from the traditional teacher-led transmission of material, and they share a focus on reasoning, experimentation, group work, and dialogue; all involve about 80 hours of training for teachers, half of it in class. Currently only baseline evaluations have taken place, but the controlled assessment that is planned should yield interesting results on the relative strengths of the three approaches.

The state of numeracy education in Latin America and the Caribbean
LAC, Gr numeracy, pedagogy, policy
In the LAC region, children’s achievement in the areas of mathematics and science are well below international averages. This report indicates that numeracy goals and standards are out of step with current global needs; it discusses some promising new approaches to numeracy and the policy implications. It stresses the importance of complementarities
between math and science curricula; the use of materials and resources other than textbooks; explicit attempts to engage girls; more sophisticated efforts to address teachers’ weaknesses and learning needs; and better attention to rigorous evaluation of numeracy interventions.

See also:


LEARNING MATERIALS

Many children left behind: textbooks and test scores in Kenya

SSA, Gr, RCT textbooks, achievement, curriculum, inequity

This paper reports on a randomised controlled study on the effectiveness of a programme supplying textbooks to rural primary schools in Kenya. At least one book per child was provided in grade 3 classrooms. Test scores went up for children who were already high achievers, but there was no impact on the scores of average students, nor did the programme reduce repetition or increase attendance. Researchers argue that the textbooks, which were in English, benefited stronger students who were able to make best use of them, but for those with less command of English, the books were difficult to understand and less likely to make a difference. These results, argue the authors, are evidence of both a mismatch between the curriculum and the needs of most students and of a system still oriented toward the elite.

Pocket school: exploring mobile technology as a sustainable literacy education option for underserved Indigenous children in Latin America

LAC, PR, R, DP mobile technology, remote areas

This paper reviews the available research exploring the use of mobile technology for marginalised Indigenous children in Latin America, many of whom lack access to schools. It discusses issues around cultural appropriateness, practical usability, economical scalability, sustainability, and children’s specific learning needs, concluding that there is potential to this innovation, but that much work needs to be done before it can be realised.

Experimental assessment of the program “One Laptop per Child” in Peru

LA, Gr, Q technology, pedagogy, achievement, teachers, parents

This research explores the effects of introducing laptop computers in multigrade rural elementary schools in poor areas in Peru. These laptops are, in theory, available for children to use at home and at school according to their own interests. Laptop use in school happened somewhere between 3 times a week and daily, although use had fallen off considerably
since they were introduced, possibly a result of inadequate support for teachers. The majority of children did not take
laptops home, either because the school did not allow it, or because their parents were concerned about possible damage.
Those children who did take them home used them between one and two hours a day for both academic and recreational
purposes. Both teachers and parents were enthusiastic about the initiative, although teachers felt they needed more training
on their use. Children with laptops tended to be more critical than control children, both with regard to their schools and
their own performance, a finding that needs to be investigated further. There was little difference between the groups of
children in terms of learning achievement, most likely a function of the brief duration of the intervention to date.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS,
COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

School governance and teachers’ attitudes to parents’ involvement in schools

MENA (Israel) PR, Q school governance, parent involvement, teachers

This Israeli study, although not from the majority world, is included because of the dearth of research in this area and
because it includes some insights that would most likely be applicable in other settings (based on anecdotal evidence from
the majority world, pointing to tensions between parents and teachers in many settings.) This study involved over 300
teachers in 11 primary schools serving primarily low-income students, seeking their views on parent involvement in school
governance. The findings indicated strongly that teachers’ attitudes depended on the form of governance. In cases where
parents had more control than teachers, there was an imbalance of power which teachers felt undermined their work. A
balance of empowerment, involving collaboration and partnership between parents, teachers, and school officials, appeared
to be more productive. These authors point to the role of head teachers in creating the frameworks and avenues for
communication that can foster such partnerships.

The construction of parents and teachers as agents for the improvement of municipal schools in Chile

LAC, Q participation, school improvement

Since 2005, schools in Chile receiving state subsidies have been required to form school councils that include representatives
of various stakeholder groups in order to implement a “System for Quality Assurance of School Management.” This paper
argues that the kinds of quality improvement sought in this initiative necessarily go beyond better technical expertise and
involve levels of trust and social capital in the larger school community. The study reported on in this paper explored the
extent to which a group of schools had improved on this front and described two categories of schools. In the first, which
were more oriented toward improvement, teachers functioned in more trusting and collaborative ways, parents were seen
as active participants, and there was a general sense of partnership and responsibility. Issues of poverty were seen in terms
of social justice as a set of conditions that the school should help to change. In the other schools, there was a far more
antagonistic and less trusting relationship between groups. Teachers saw parents as lazy and lacking in commitment, and
regarded families’ poverty as inevitably resulting in children’s academic failings. School improvement, according to this
argument, is a process by which the school community constructs a mutual identity rooted in a sense of belonging and
responsibility.

School improvement plans and student learning in Jamaica
Lockheed, Marlaine, Abigail Harris and Tamara Jayasundera (2010) International Journal of Educational Development 30:
54–66

LAC, PR, QE school improvement plans

In Jamaica, 72 schools with school improvement plans (SIPs) were compared after 7 years to comparison schools. Despite
improved inputs into the school as a result of the plans, there was no significant difference in children’s scores in math or
language. Schools with school improvement plans did not outperform comparable schools without these plans. Possible
reasons, according to the authors, are the lack of sensitivity at the lower end of the scale of the tools used to measure improvement; the availability of similar kinds of inputs through other programmes in schools that did not have SIPs; and the growth in enrolment in the programme schools, which could have resulted in lowering achievement and thus diluting the effects of the SIPs. These findings point to the need for more carefully designed research rather than to the utility or otherwise of SIPs.

**Popular educational innovations in the hierarchical world of Mexican policy**


**LAC, PR, GP community, policy, innovation**

Large-scale central reforms in education in Mexico over recent decades have proven disappointing, failing to deliver on promises around EFA and the MDGs. This paper documents some of the grass-roots responses on the part of the rural and urban poor, operating on the margins of official provision, that provide interesting homegrown solutions to the larger systemic deficits. Most of these solutions are not alternatives to the formal system but attempts to transform and enrich what exists. Functioning with scarce resources and driven by often charismatic local activists, many of these initiatives last and create networks, despite the many challenges to their sustainability. Some are driven by independent public school teachers’ associations and focus heavily on teacher training; others are community-based NGOs working on developing materials, curricula, and more participatory styles of school organisation, with a leaning toward interculturalism. Some, but not all, work to develop alliances with other groups. While there has been some international and academic interest in these efforts, the government has shown little openness to them. The author suggests, nonetheless, that these efforts could well become a new model, based on a network of local educational centres, responsive to the needs of local and often marginalised groups, and joined by a national framework of guidelines.

**The Child Town project: quality assessment in practice**


**LA, Gr, Q monitoring, participation, community**

The Child Town (Cidade Criança) project in Brazil, run by the NGO the Popular Centre for Culture and Development, is a platform that integrates a range of actions, programmes, and services for young children in the municipality of Aracauá in Minas Gerais, one of Brazil’s poorest regions. Among other things, the project encourages local residents to treat all community spaces as places where young children can explore opportunities safely. This paper describes the system the project has evolved for monitoring and evaluating both children’s progress and the various Child Town activities (including the family-to-school transition process for children). The monitoring process, involving a range of quality indicators, is carried out monthly and involves discussion groups with community members representing all participants (educators, children, community education agents, care assistants, mothers, and other members of the community). This monitoring process, according to the author, has been fundamental in guaranteeing constructive attention to children in the transition between home and school.

**Project description of a Peruvian intervention under CIDA’s improvement of basic education category**

CIDA (2010)

**LA, Gr, project profile, PP achievement, school plans, mentoring, parent participation**

Although not a full research report, this project profile includes the outcomes of research carried out to evaluate a school improvement effort in northern Peru. The project, which involved a new literacy model (not described here), also included community participation and capacity building for teachers, principals, and education authorities. Six rural districts developed district education strategic plans and created multisectoral committees for improving local education. In 2009, 50% of the students in the target areas were able to read, compared to 7% in 2003—more strong evidence for the importance of integrated and sustained supports to weak schools. More details on this project would be helpful.
Managing for results in primary education in Madagascar: evaluating the impact of selected workflow interventions


SSA, Gr accountability, school systems, school performance

This paper describes a results-oriented intervention in Madagascar to streamline and improve poorly managed workflow processes at various levels in the primary school system (schools, sub district, and district). Although not aimed specifically at the first few grades, it targeted processes that disproportionately affect children during their transition years. A package of intensive supports geared toward more accountability and more efficient completion of essential management tasks resulted in better job performance at all levels and, for children, in significantly improved attendance and reduced drop out. Test scores were also improved, although this result did not yet reach significance after these first few years of the programme. Authors suggest that this is an effective use of resources for improving school performance in low-income countries.

Pitfalls of participatory programs: evidence from a randomized evaluation in education in India


SA, Gr, RCT participation, school system

In India, committees composed of locally elected leaders and school children's parents have power over school resource allocation, monitoring, and management. This paper assesses three different interventions to encourage participation: providing information; training community members in a testing tool; and training volunteers to hold remedial reading camps for illiterate children. None of these interventions had an effect on community involvement in the schools or on learner outcomes. However, the third of these interventions encouraged considerable activity outside of school, with local youth volunteering with children, whose reading skills improved substantially. The authors conclude that there are constraints in improving the public education system, even though there is clearly interest in improving education.

See also:


MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Benchmarks for early childhood services in OECD countries


G, Gr, DP monitoring, quality

Although Innocenti’s Report Card 8 presents benchmarks primarily designed for OECD countries, it is globally important in its acknowledgement of the necessity for calling attention to the basic conditions that underlie good processes and outcomes for young children and the need to monitor these conditions to allow for accountability. The 15 benchmarks that were originally developed were grouped into 4 areas: child health and family support; the governance of early childhood programmes; children’s access to programmes and services; and programme quality. These benchmarks were then revised due to concerns that they were too diverse and qualitative to be backed up by sufficiently convincing evidence, and 10 new benchmarks were settled on. Most of these benchmarks are extremely relevant for poor countries, too, although they may set the bar too high. The most relevant benchmarks for the majority world include the need for a national plan giving priority to disadvantaged children; a minimum level of childcare provision for under-3s; a minimum level of access for four-year-olds; a minimum level of training for all staff; a minimum staff-to-children ratio; and a minimum level of public funding. Bennet identifies a number of “next generation” issues for OECD countries that give greater attention to the quality of interventions and the level of children’s outcomes.
Good governance of early childhood development programmes in developing countries: the need for a comprehensive monitoring system

Kools, Marco and Virginia E. Vitiello (2010) Innocenti Discussion Papers 2010-02

Although there is growing evidence of the significance of the early childhood years both for individual development and for social welfare and poverty reduction, there are significant challenges in many countries in implementing ECD policies; these include the splitting of responsibility among different ministries and the shortage of resources that cause governments and development partners to prioritise other areas. There are a number of factors to be addressed in promoting the kind of strong, informed governance that can ensure coordination on this critical set of issues across a range of stakeholders. This paper discusses one of these factors—the importance of a strong, comprehensive ECD monitoring system in order to allow for evidence-based decisions around policies and programming for young children’s health, education, and social protection. A number of practical aspects of developing such a system are discussed, including the selection of good, measurable indicators that serve the needs of those who will use the system; the use of existing data sources; the disaggregation of data to reflect critical categories; the “ownership” of the monitoring system; the importance of confidentiality; and the appropriate utilization of data.

Examining early child development in low-income countries: a toolkit for the assessment of children in the first five years of life


This review discusses the issues affecting the measurement of early development and describes the range of tests used with children under 5. It provides guidelines for selecting tests for use in low-income countries, taking into account such constraints as budget, copyright issues, ethical concerns, training, and language and cultural differences. Most tests need to be modified and adapted, and advice is given on accurate translation of tests, adaptation of both content and implementation procedures to the local context, the conducting of pilot tests, and the process of iterative assessment. The review also discusses the issue of developing new tests to reflect locally agreed-upon norms and standards.

Where is the learning? measuring schooling efforts in developing countries


This report addresses the implications for educational quality of the drive for universal access, with the focus on out-of-school children compromising quality for those already enrolled. It focuses on the current shift in attention from just enrolment to the quality of learning and reviews global efforts to measure learning outcomes. Most international measures of achievement measure learning for 15-year-olds and also set the floor too high to adequately reflect actual learning in low-income countries, thus providing little practical guidance. One encouraging development on this front is the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), which assesses skills in grades 4 and 8 and is aimed at countries where students in upper primary are still struggling with basic reading skills. The paper makes three basic recommendations—changing the paradigm from inputs to outcomes; addressing the lack of timely educational sector data; and supporting national assessment systems—and suggests the steps that are needed to focus global education policy more firmly and explicitly on quality learning.

Do monitoring and evaluation tools, designed to measure the improvement in the quality of primary education, constrain or enhance educational development?


This paper discusses the challenges of assessing educational quality in primary schools, noting that the majority of efforts to do so focus on inputs, outputs, and outcomes rather than on process. It then describes a monitoring and evaluation exercise...
undertaken in a sample of 15 primary schools in Cambodia that were involved in EQIP (Educational Quality Improvement Project). The goal of the exercise was to gain an understanding of qualitative changes that had taken place in these schools as a result of various supports for learner-centred teaching and school improvement plans. The exercise consisted of a series of visits by provincial and international project staff for the EQIP project, during which a specific set of tools were used to assess the strategies employed by teachers. While the authors acknowledge the limitations of these tools and the often poor quality of the resulting feedback to schools, they suggest, based on interviews with teachers and directors, that the very act of monitoring activity in the schools was positive. Teachers’ attendance and punctuality improved as a result, and they made more effort to prepare lesson plans. The process also led to a growing awareness and consensus among stakeholders about what “quality” in schools consists of.

Lesson observation and quality in primary education as contextual teaching and learning processes

G, PR, DP quality, classroom interaction, classroom observations

O’Sullivan argues that, despite the growing emphasis in recent years on quality in primary education, only a very narrow conceptualization of quality, as being around inputs and outputs, currently influences policy. O’Sullivan argues here for the following definition of quality: “the effective use of teaching and learning processes by teachers, which can be implemented within the realities in which they work, and which lead to children acquiring basic numeracy, literacy and life skills.” She argues that it is critical to focus attention on what is happening in the classroom and to use lesson observation as a means to this end. Lesson observation, she argues, takes into account the contextual nature of learning and allows for a focus on what can reasonably be done with the resources and capacity available. O’Sullivan argues that, despite the glorification of learner-centred pedagogy, what matters most is what practices are best able to support teaching and learning in specific contexts, and this is best determined through classroom observation.

Measuring beginner reading skills: an empirical evaluation of alternative instruments and their potential use for policymaking and accountability in Peru

LAC, Gr assessment, reading, policy

This research report presents the analysis of data on reading performance from 475 third grade children in Peru. Two approaches to testing were used: an individual test of oral reading fluency; and a group-administered written comprehension test. Test results indicated that children’s reading fluency was somewhat below the expected level and comprehension still further below the national standard. Children who were more fluent readers were more likely to have good comprehension. According to this analysis, the strength of the relationship between fluency and comprehension depended on both the level of the child’s fluency and the difficulty of the comprehension questions. The authors stress the benefits of using these tests to supplement one another and discuss the multiple ways in which results can be used: to track progress, establish standards, strengthen accountability, communicate with parents, and mobilise the education system.

Timor Leste: an analysis of early grade reading acquisition

EAP, Gr assessment, reading

An assessment of reading skills in Timor Leste’s primary schools was carried out in 2009 as part of the global EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) initiative measuring how well children are learning to read in the early grades. Over 900 grades 1, 2, and 3 students were assessed in 40 randomly selected primary schools using tests adapted to language and expected reading ability. When asked to read a simple paragraph, more than 70% of students at the end of grade 1, 40% at the end of grade 2, and 20% at the end of grade 3 were unable to read a single word. However, more positively, about one-third of the grade 3 students were able to read about 60 words per minute, considered the minimum standard for achieving reading comprehension. Children in grades 1 to 3 represent more than half of all students in the country, and this report concludes that investment and action need to be focused at this level.
POLICY
(There are many recent studies on the impacts of decentralization from different countries, with these two serving as a sample of the difference in opinion. There is little that indicates what the impacts are for the youngest students — effects are discussed for school systems more generally.)

Providing better education services to the poor: accountability and context in the case of Guatemalan decentralization

LAC, PR, Q decentralization, parent involvement

The argument in favor of decentralization has been to bring decisions closer to the people. However decentralization has also been noted to degrade local services when local governments and communities, especially those in poverty, lack sufficient capacity to follow through on their efforts. This qualitative study of four rural Guatemalan primary schools examines two different community-based models for administrative change and points to difficulties in adapting reform frameworks to local realities. Especially in the model which gave extensive control to parents, including the hiring and oversight of teachers, there were significant challenges related in part to parents’ limited time and commitment.

Decentralization’s effects on educational outcomes in Bolivia and Colombia

LAC, PR policy, decentralization, enrolment

There have been mixed reviews on the outcomes of decentralization for primary schooling, but in the cases of Bolivia and Colombia, the effects for young children from the poorest areas appear to be indisputable. In Bolivia, public investment became more responsive to real local needs. In Colombia, decentralization markedly improved school enrolment. In both countries, small, marginalised communities disproportionately benefited.

Measuring education quality in Brazil
Verdisco, Aimee and Marcelo Pérez Alfaro (2010) IDB Education, Briefly Noted No. 6

LA, Gr policy, ECD, age at entry, achievement

In Brazil in recent years, early childhood education has been integrated into the basic education cycle, and the age of entry into primary school has been changed from 7 to 6. Undertaken in response to these policy changes, this research in 6 large cities investigated the effects of the changes for preschool and crèche quality, and the impacts for primary school performance. Results indicate that considerable work remains to be done in the area of early childhood education in Brazil. The crèches and preschools evaluated were, on average, considered “inadequate” or “basic”—none of the cities reached the “adequate,” “good,” or “excellent” category on average. In general, centres scored better on interaction than on the quality of the activities made available. The salaries of principals, the age of teachers, and the type of institution explained most of the variation. Primary school performance was defined by a national second grade literacy test. Only 3% of the difference in performance was related to preschool attendance. However, if children had attended a high-quality preschool, this made a considerably greater difference. Also significant was children’s age in grade 2. Those who were 8 years old scored considerably better than those who were 7 or younger, indicating that the change in official entry age could be problematic.

Care and learning together: a cross-national study on the integration of early childhood care and education within education

G, Gr policy, ECCE, education

The multisectoral nature of early childhood programming has resulted, in many countries, in systems that are split between ministries of education and those of social welfare. With their different approaches to “childcare” and “early education,” these split systems can result in confusion around programme goals and approaches and in the separation of policies and...
services for children under and over 3. Some countries have worked to establish better coordination between ministries, others to transfer responsibility to one ministry. This research focuses on the transfer of responsibility for the sector to education ministries, drawing on the experience of 6 countries that have opted to take this route, and comparing the outcomes to some countries that have maintained a split system. Unfortunately, only 2 of these countries, Brazil and Jamaica (both of which chose the education route), fall within the majority world. Nonetheless, the results are informative for majority world practice. The outcomes of integration within education have been positive, especially for the younger group of children and those who work with them. Access to services has risen, curricula have been integrated, and the status and training of those working with younger children has improved. There has been no evidence (except in Sweden) of an increase in the “schoolification” of services for young children. At the same time, there is also little evidence that ECCE has influenced practices within schools. The study provides a number of broad policy recommendations around making this move, but acknowledges that they may not extend to lower-income countries.

**Abolishing school fees in Africa: lessons from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Mozambique**


SSA, Gr school fees, access, quality

By the 1990s, it was clear that school fees introduced in response to structural adjustment were having a negative effect on school participation, and some countries began to move in the direction of abolishing fees. The country studies described in this book explore the process and outcomes of the School Fee Abolition Initiative (SFAI)—a joint project of the World Bank and UNICEF launched in 2005 to help ensure that EFA commitments were met. In two of these countries (Ghana and Kenya), this was a second attempt to abolish fees, but in both cases the effort was undermined by the lack of financial sustainability and then reversed. More recent efforts were better planned, and while Malawi was unable to manage its enrolment surge, it appears that outcomes will be more positive in the other countries. However, of the general SSA average of 90% who enter school, only two-thirds complete the primary cycle, and only half of these master basic skills. Those children who remain excluded, whether from school entry, completion or adequate achievement, are the poor and disadvantaged—mostly girls, those with disabilities, and those orphaned by war, drought, and HIV/AIDS. Fundamental to universal access is clearly a focus on these disadvantaged groups, with attention to both the supply and demand sides. While the case study countries differ in many respects, including the processes through which they abolished fees (“big bang” or a phased approach), there is a shared concern with declining quality following on fee abolition in every case. The measures employed to respond to the enrolment surge, including multishift teaching, larger class size, recruitment of untrained or retired teachers, and use of temporary facilities, all took their toll, although more so in some countries than in others. The experiences of all five countries point to the need for strong political leadership and careful planning, and for fee abolition to be part of a larger package of reforms. Some of the suggested responses include the use of targeted school grants and capitation grants, better management at all levels, the empowerment of local communities, and the use of multigrade classes to reduce variation in class size (which most often means disproportionately large grade 1 classes).

**The economic impact of school violence**


G, Gr, DP school violence, corporal punishment, discrimination, economic impacts, policy

When children themselves are asked about the challenges of starting school, corporal punishment and bullying around discrimination are high on the list. This report, which includes attention to sexual violence as well as these other forms of violence, addresses the economic implications of the problem. It draws on 5 country case studies to indicate how the economic impacts can be estimated using country-specific data. These case studies also highlight preventive strategies that have been effective and their costs. The analysis leads to two sets of policy recommendations. The first has to do with raising awareness in ways that reach all stakeholders; these would include codes of conduct for schools, the inclusion of relevant topics in school curricula, child protection systems that go beyond schools, and the creation of safe child spaces within communities. The second involves more and better research, with the integration of school violence indicators into existing data sets and cross-sectional surveys.
See also:


Kools, Marco and Virginia E. Vitiello (2010), Good governance of early childhood development programmes in developing countries: the need for a comprehensive monitoring system, Innocenti Discussion Papers 2010-02


Glick, Peter (2008), What policies will reduce gender schooling gaps in developing countries? evidence and interpretation, *World Development* 36(9): 1623–1646


Hentschel, Jesko, Meltem Aran, Raif Can, Francisco H. G. Ferreira, Jeremie Gignoux, and Arzu Uraz (2010), Life chances in Turkey: expanding opportunities for the next generation, World Bank


World Bank and others (2010), Investing in multigrade teaching in Indonesia, World Bank Policy Brief


A large number of the papers listed here refer to issues of equity and disparity in the educational system. See in particular the sections on gender, disability, family and community factors, financial aid, teacher training and induction.
This publication was prepared for the
Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development
by Sheridan Bartlett and Mimi Howard
with financial support provided by the UBS Optimus Foundation.