Realizing the Promise of Education for Development

Themes and Emerging Messages
• Education is **central to the SDGs** and the twin WBG goals of ending extreme poverty and promoting shared prosperity

• Global **momentum** (e.g. Education Commission)

• There has never been a WDR devoted to **education**

• WDR 2018 will be released in late 2017
Main themes

The promise of education

Education is central to **individual welfare** and can drive **national well-being**

The learning crisis

School participation rates have soared around the world—but countries struggle to ensure that **students learn and acquire relevant skills**, even as jobs and the demand for skills are changing

Innovations and evidence for learning

The **knowledge base** on how to improve learning has mushroomed—and this helps identify “**know-do**” gaps

Making it work at scale

Countries need to go beyond interventions to **align education systems** and tackle the **political challenges** of delivering learning and skills

→ The why, what, and how of delivering on education’s promise
Main messages

Countries need to address the learning crisis by acting as if learning matters to them

A serious commitment to learning means:

1. Systematically **measuring** and tracking learning and skills
2. Making better use of what we’ve learned about the **how to improve learning**
3. Taking on the **system-level technical and political barriers to change**
Part 1: The promise of education

Education is a human right, is a critical component of human capabilities, and enables individuals to live richer lives.

Education is foundational to the political and social development of nations and communities.

Education is the most effective tool for eliminating poverty sustainably and promoting shared prosperity.
**Theme 1: The promise of education**

- Education can have **high returns** in many dimensions

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<tr>
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<th>Individual/Family</th>
<th>Community/Societal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pecuniary</strong></td>
<td>Employment, earnings, productivity, poverty reduction</td>
<td>Productivity, growth, long-run development</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Non-pecuniary</strong></td>
<td>Health, resilience, inter-generational human capital, life satisfaction</td>
<td>Better institutions and service delivery, civic engagement, social cohesion, reduced negative externalities</td>
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- Education **multiplies the effects** of many other investments and policies
But higher levels of schooling do not guarantee rapid growth and development

- Education can’t deliver on its own
  - Poor investment climate reduces value of skills
  - Laws and social norms (e.g., gender) block education’s positive impacts

- Education can deliver “social bads”
  - It can perpetuate and deepen social inequalities
  - It can be abused through political manipulation

- Education must lead to more learning and skills if it is to raise individual productivity
What matters for growth is learning

Test scores and growth

Years of schooling and growth

Source: Adapted from Hanushek and Woessmann 2008; WDI data
Theme 2: The learning crisis

• Progress towards the MDG goal of universal primary completion has been impressive by historical standards
• But too often, schooling has not led to learning: the “learning crisis”
  • Early Grades:
    • In Uganda and Mali, over 60% of third graders can’t read a single letter
    • In India, 25% could not perform a two-digit subtraction
Learning deficits start in early grades

Percent of Grade 2 students who could not read a single word of a short text

Source: http://www.earlygradereadingbarometer.org/
PASEC Math 2014: Proportions of End-of-Primary students scoring at each level—at “Level 1” students can perform only the most basic operations and are considered below “sufficient” for continued schooling.

Source: Malpel et al. 2015
Learning in MICs falls short of even low performers’ in OECD

In Colombia, Indonesia, and Peru, the 75th percentile on PISA performs below the 25th percentile in the OECD average.

Skills beget skills, and strong foundational skills are required for all subsequent skill acquisition

• Rates of return to early investments are highest
Rates of return to early investments are highest. 

Source: Heckman and Carneiro 2003
Skills beget skills, and **strong foundational skills** are required for all subsequent skill acquisition

- Rates of return to **early investments** are highest
- ...and gaps emerge very early
Rich-poor gaps in child development grow with age

Proportion of children (by age) who recognize 10 letters of the alphabet

**Central African Republic**

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<th>Proportion</th>
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**Kazakhstan**

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**Tunisia**

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Theme 2: The learning crisis

• The learning crisis becomes skills gaps and mismatches
  • Secondary and tertiary education systems are ill-adapted to dealing with these weak foundations

• As the nature of jobs changes, the skills required for employment and productivity are also changing
  • Socio-emotional/behavioral/non-cognitive skills are increasingly important
  • STEM and digital skills may also be important for global engagement
Theme 2: The learning crisis: Proximate causes

- Children and parents (preparation and effort)
- Teachers (preparation and effort)
- School inputs (infrastructure and materials)
- School governance (Leadership and community involvement)

Learning
Theme 2: The learning crisis: Proximate causes

Teachers lack ability or incentives to teach effectively

Children come to school unprepared

Focus on inputs that do not improve classroom learning process

School governance (Leadership and community involvement)

Directors & inspectors don’t offer accountability & guidance

Children and parents (preparation and effort)

School inputs (infrastructure and materials)
Service Delivery Indicators in SSA: Teacher absence

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* Nigeria is 4 States

Legend:
- Classroom absence rate
- School absence rate
Service Delivery Indicators
Teachers reaching ‘minimum thresholds’ of performance on knowledge assessments

‘Minimum threshold’ defined as 80% correct on test

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<td>61</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41</td>
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<td>82</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>31</td>
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* Nigeria is 4 States
Evidence has grown rapidly

• Cognitive neuroscience: how learning happens
• Innovations in pedagogy, professional development, new technologies, accountability
• Evaluations of these innovations
In 2000 there were only 32 rigorous studies of impacts of interventions on learning outcomes; by 2014 there were 227

Source: Evans and Popova 2015
Theme 3: Interventions to improve learning—closing the know-do gap

• How we make sense of all this evidence
  • Focus on why interventions work
  • Prioritize based on the “know-do gap”

• Think of evidence as a possible starting point
  • In any particular context, use it as inspiration for innovations
  • No universal solutions or “silver bullets”
Theme 3: Interventions to improve learning—closing the know-do gap

• **Prepared learners:** Some of the best investments in primary come before primary school, and for training come before training
  • Demand-side incentives; ECD; preparation for training

• **Effective teaching:** Teacher skills and effort both matter—but policy typically ignores that
  • Effective professional development; motivation and incentives; teaching to the level of the students

• **Classroom-focused support:** The focus of school investments should be to facilitate students learning from teachers
  • Inputs and infrastructure; technology; school-based decisionmaking

• **Adaptive skills programs:** Preparing young people for jobs requires dynamic systems that link them to employers
  • Demand-driven; flexible; effectively integrated with employers
Theme 4: Working at scale is not just a matter of “scaling up”

Working at scale is not as simple as taking an intervention that has shown promise in an “experiment” and implementing it widely

• **Technical Complexity**
  • Systems are opaque, sticky, and ill-equipped
  • Components do not align towards learning

• **Political economy**
  • Misalignment is not random
  • Multiple actors have competing objectives
  • Systems are stuck in low-accountability equilibrium
Theme 4: Working at scale is not just a matter of “scaling up”

Opportunities for **strategic change**

- Start where the political and the technical meet
- Create “sweet spots” through
  - **Information and metrics**—data for political salience and for monitoring
  - **Coalitions and incentives**—aligning incentives, building trust, and fostering cooperation
  - **Innovation and agility**—iterative and adaptive approaches
Key takeaways

• Education can **unleash the potential** of individuals and nations

• Realizing that promise requires **tackling the learning crisis**:  
  • **Measure** and track learning  
  • Deploy the **growing set of evidence-based tools** to improve learning  
  • Take on the **technical and political challenges** to align systems towards learning
Thank You