Comments on

Facing Forward

Schooling for Learning in Africa

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Significance of *Facing Forward*

◆ Provide comprehensive picture of the “Learning Crisis” in Africa

◆ Introduce conceptual framework: from service to service delivery

◆ Propose in-depth policy recommendations
Why Basic Education in Africa?

Figure 0.1 The structure of Sub-Saharan Africa’s population is different than that in other regions

Source: Based on United Nations 2011.

Dion and Fox. 2014. *Youth Employment in Sub-Saharan Africa*
There is strong evidence that the cognitive skills of the population – rather than more school attainment – are powerfully related to individual earnings, to the distribution of income, and to economic growth (Hanushek and Woessmann 2008).

Why Learning Matters?

**Figure 1.5 What matters for growth is learning**

Annual average per capita growth in GDP, 1970-2015, conditional on test scores, years of schooling completed, and initial GDP per capita

- **a. Test scores and growth**
  - (conditional on initial GDP per capita and years of schooling)
  - \( y = 0.00 + 1.59x \)
  - \( t = 7.39 \)
  - \( R^2 = 0.55 \)

- **b. Years of schooling and growth**
  - (conditional on the initial GDP per capita and test scores)
  - \( y = 0.00 + 0.07x \)
  - \( t = 0.82 \)
  - \( R^2 = 0.02 \)


Whether an intervention, program, or policy that works in one context will work in another will depend, to a large extent, on the contextual factors as well as implementation capacity. ...

In short, good ideas alone are not enough to improve student learning. Capable individuals and institutions are also required to navigate the complex process of implementing both ongoing “regular” programs and new interventions and approaches.

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What Can We Do?
Immediate and Long-Term Challenges

Immediate Challenges: accommodate countries’ limited capacity
- Make learning a serious goal
- Strengthen literacy and numeracy in early years
- Ensure children stay in school

Long-Term Challenges (10-30 years?): enhance counties’ whole capacities and ownership
- Improve teacher management and support
- Strengthen budget process
- Strengthen institutional and technical capacity
- Improve secondary and pre-primary education, etc ...
Immediate Response
An Example in Niger

Recent studies suggest that community participation alone is not so effective for improving children’s learning, but given the limited government capacity, the role of the community can be a key. Our experience suggest that community participation works by providing communities and parents with information and right avenues to affect children’s learning.

The graph illustrates the impact of community participation, information, and math workbook intervention on test scores. The scores are the percentage of right answers.

Impact of community participation, information, and math workbook intervention on test scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before intervention</td>
<td>After intervention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: The result is comparison between pre and post tests, and is not based on a rigorous impact evaluation. 170,000 children in Tillabéri region of Niger participated in the program and survey. The tests were designed to measure pupils’ numeracy skills at their grade levels. The scores are the percentage of right answers.
Long-Term Challenges and Response
An Example in Zambia
Building Human Capital: A Project for the World

Join Bill Gates, Jim Yong Kim and Parley Mombaunt as they discuss the urgent and critical importance of investing more and more efficiently in people to prepare countries for the economy of the future. They will highlight the powerful link between these investments and economic growth, stability and security. Shining a spotlight on human capital as a project for the world, this