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Education Learning and Development Module



**Diplomatic
Academy.**



EDUCATION SECTOR INTERCONNECTIONS

Practitioner Level
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ACRONYMS

DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
ECD	early childhood development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GRB	gender responsive budgeting
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	non-government organisation
OECD	Office of Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	The Programme of International Student Assessment
PNG	Papua New Guinea
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this module is to enhance the understanding of education sector staff on the structure of education systems in developing countries, the interconnections within the education sector, and the wider implications of policy reforms across education systems. It is recommended that staff complete the *Education Sector Interconnections: Foundation level* module as background information to this *Practitioner level* module.

2 WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW A COUNTRY'S EDUCATION SYSTEMS ARE STRUCTURED?

How are education systems in developing countries structured?

Education is a complex and varied sector. The sub-sectors include: early childhood development (ECD), primary education, secondary education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), non-formal education and lifelong learning, and higher education.

The way education systems in developing countries are structured is often rooted in their histories. Many of Australia's partner countries, for example, are former colonies. This legacy accounts for much of the variation in how the education systems of different countries are governed and managed.

Examples of education systems

Look at these three examples of the way different countries structure their education systems:

Indonesia, Laos, Papua New Guinea

In each example consider the:

- age of students at the different stages of education (e.g. ECD, basic, secondary, tertiary)
- length of each of these stages
- linkages/pathways between the various stages
- emphasis given to ECD
- emphasis given to employment, work and community education
- emphasis given to flexible, open and distance education.

Sources: Jalan & Sardjunani, 2006, 'Figure 13: School system in Indonesia'; UNESCO International Bureau of Education 2011, World data on education: Lao People's Democratic Republic; World data on education: Papua New Guinea.





Note: For an overview of education systems, see the *Foundation level* module on *Education Pathways*. For a deeper understanding of a particular sub-sector, look at the *Early Childhood*, *Basic Education*, *TVET* and *Higher Education* modules.

Who is responsible for education sub-sectors?

In some countries, all levels of education from early childhood programs through to lifelong learning are coordinated by a single national ministry. In other countries, sector policy may be implemented by a number of ministries. ECD may be managed by multiple ministries, the schools by the Ministry of Education, and TVET by a Ministry of Human Resource Development. In Indonesia, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs each have significant roles to play in managing school education.

In many countries, private and non-government providers play a very significant role too. Religious institutions, for example, often own and manage schools, sometimes with government assistance through the provision of teachers or teachers' salaries.

Increasingly, governments are decentralising the management of education, with governance responsibilities at state/province, regional, community and school levels.

Given the diverse and changing ways in which education is structured and governed, it is essential to be aware of these particular dynamics in each country. Who's in control? Who influences? Who decides? Who are the less influential but still important voices?

It is necessary to develop partnerships and dialogue with all the relevant stakeholders. In many cases, a sectoral relationship will need to extend beyond the national Ministry of Education.

3 HOW DO POLICY DECISIONS IN ONE SUB-SECTOR HAVE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE OTHERS?

Types of education policy

We can explore how policy decisions in one education sub-sector have implications for others by first looking at various types of education policy reform:

- expenditure policy
- financing policy
- management and institution policy
- professional and management policy.

Expenditure policy

Governments must decide where to focus their education spending – or how to cut the sector budget cake. A government may choose, for example, to restructure its sub-sector expenditures to reallocate spending from higher education to lower levels of education, or vice versa.



Reforms aimed at increasing the supply of schooling may focus on targeted spending or the expansion of coverage in specific geographic areas through a mix of public and private sector support, including public support for private education in low-income areas.

Financing policy

Governments decide the mechanisms for financing their services. There are many policy approaches involved here. The key ones are listed below:

- **Direct funding**
Government and non-government actors entirely finance the education system. No direct contributions are sought from students or families. Funding sources include the tax base, government revenues, private contributions, donor partner financing, and donations (e.g. for religious or NGO-run schools).
- **Cost recovery**
A government may choose to reform the financing of education by introducing user fees, for example at the TVET or higher education levels (cost recovery). In many developing countries there is formal cost recovery (e.g. school fees; purchase of uniforms and school materials; fees to participate in exams) or informal cost recovery ('voluntary' contributions; unofficial payments to the teacher or the school).
- **School grant schemes**
In a number of developing countries where DFAT works, primary school fees have been eliminated to encourage fuller participation in schooling, particularly by children from poorer families. In these cases, a school's budget is compensated by grant funds provided by the government (often supported financially by development partners). Such grants schemes are typically part of a move towards school-based management.
- **Community financing**
A related scheme is the introduction of community financing, whereby, for example, communities are largely responsible for the construction and maintenance of buildings.
- **Demand-side financing**
Financing schemes may include schemes on the demand side (i.e. those who engage in education). Funds are channeled directly toward the people who demand, or receive, education rather than being managed by those who supply it. The purpose of demand-side financing is to strengthen the recipient's power over the providers. Demand-side financing schemes may involve transfers to households or vouchers given directly to students who may submit them to the schools of their choice.

Management and institution policy

Governments decide how the public education system is governed and managed. A government may choose to decentralise the administration of education. This may involve a shift in responsibility from the central government to local governments, communities, or schools. The shift might include a simple delegation of tasks from the central government to local governments or a complete transfer of budget authority and decision-making power.



Decentralisation reforms are common in many of Australia's partner countries. The process is more than administrative adjustment. Education decentralisation may be a reform that fundamentally alters relationships of accountability and the way in which services are provided.

Professional management policy

Further types of policy decision-making concern elements within (or across) sub-sectors. Curriculum, teacher training, inclusive education or language policy would be examples.

Why is gender responsive budgeting important?

Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is important for ensuring the advancement of gender equality both within the education sector and across government expenditure. GRB is an approach designed to mainstream gender into all stages of the budget cycle. In general, it aims at analysing the different impacts of a country's national and local expenditure, as well as revenue policy, on women and men, and on girls and boys.

In addition to this, GRB comprises proposals to reprioritise expenditure and revenue according to the different needs and priorities of women and men, girls and boys. These are not separate gender budgets but rather government budgets that are planned and managed in a gender-sensitive way. GRB improves the overall effectiveness of government policy and service delivery and ensures that there are no unintended consequences which adversely affect one gender over the other.

4 IMPLICATIONS OF POLICY REFORMS

All policy decisions have implications across the wider sector. These are often recognised at the planning stage and implementation takes account of them. Sometimes, however, policy decisions bring unforeseen and problematic consequences.

A major policy shift in one sub-sector may impact on other sub-sectors in terms of available financial resources, human resource capacity, equity of access to education, system efficiency, and student performance. Some cases that exemplify the implications of policy decisions follow.

Sub-sectoral allocations

Comparisons of public expenditure per student as a percentage of GDP per capita

The World Bank conducted a comparison of sub-sectoral allocations across the Pacific, which illustrated how policy decisions in one sub-sector of the education system can have an impact across other sub-sectors. As their 2006 report [Opportunities to Improve Human Development in the Pacific Islands](#) showed, aligning government resources to priorities and outcomes in the Pacific Island countries is problematic because of inefficient resource allocation rather than an actual resource shortage. For instance, Table 1 below shows the public expenditure per student as a percentage of per capita Gross Domestic Product



(GDP) for four Pacific countries.

Source: World Bank 2006.

Public expenditure per student defined

Public expenditure per student is defined as the share of public expenditure on education that is devoted to a certain level (e.g. primary) of education.

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2018, Government expenditure per student in PPP \$.



Table 1 – Comparison of sub-sector allocations in four Pacific countries

	Primary %	Secondary %	Post-secondary %
Vanuatu	17	137	327
Samoa	12	9	236
Marshall Islands	61	156	547
Developing countries	14	21	n.a.
OECD countries	19	25	21

What Table 1 shows is that the costs of educating post-secondary students is disproportionately high compared with educating primary and secondary students in the Pacific Island countries.

“Per student expenditure on tertiary education is high. Given the unmet needs in basic education, to promote pro-poor development, ministries of education should consider reallocation of funds to interventions for improving education quality, equity and meeting secondary and primary education needs and find cost-effective ways of providing higher education, e.g. through regional collaborations and distance education opportunities.” (World Bank 2006, p. 35)

As the World Bank study above shows, equity in resource allocation is just as important as the availability of resources. To further illustrate this point, a 2014 study conducted by the OECD of countries participating in the Program of International Student Assessment (PISA) found that high-performing countries tended to allocate resources more equitably among socioeconomically advantaged and disadvantaged schools, which can translate into better performance of the education system as a whole. The report also noted that equity does not necessarily mean providing more resources, but rather a distribution of higher-quality human and material resources to disadvantaged schools.

Sources: World Bank 2006, Opportunities to improve social services: Human development in the Pacific Islands, p. 35; OECD 2014, How is equity in resource allocation related to student performance?, PISA In Focus 44.



Access, equity and...learning

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Over the last decade the global response to the Education for All and Millennium Development Goal (MDG) agendas, which focused strongly on increasing enrolment in primary education, has resulted in a massive increase in the number of children accessing primary school. However, many countries are unable to meet the growing demand for secondary school places and the focus of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) has set a target for universal primary and secondary completion by 2030.



Furthermore, lessons from the past 15 years have shown that progress in education cannot rely on increasing enrolment alone. Rapid increases in primary enrolment in developing countries around the world have not translated into better learning outcomes. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 is specific about providing an education that is inclusive, equitable and of good quality.

Source: United Nations 2015.

The Education Commission (2016) report [The Learning Generation: Investing in education for a changing world](#) claims:

“...despite the known and increasing benefits of education, the world today is facing a global learning crisis” (p. 9).

It reports that if the world continues on its current trend, less than 10 per cent of young people in low-income countries will be on track to gain basic secondary level skills and estimates that 1.5 billion adults will not have an education beyond the primary level by 2030. This will create further social and economic inequalities between the poorest and richest countries through rising unemployment, poverty and instability. However, the challenge identified by the Commission is not just getting children into schools and learning, but to adapt education systems to the fast changing demands of the global economy by creating a population with high-level skills, and the capacity to adapt to change and access technology. This can be achieved if all countries accelerated progress in line with the world’s 25 per cent fastest education improvers and commit to equitable education as a global goal. According to the 2018 [World Bank World Development Report](#), a commitment to learning for all requires three complementary strategies:

1. assess learning – to make it a serious goal
2. act on evidence – to make schools work for all learners
3. align actors – to make the whole system work for learning.

Source: Education Commission 2016; World Bank 2018, World Development Report: Learning to Realize Education’s Promise.



Note: The Education Commission’s analysis of the 25 per cent fastest education improvers includes a diverse set of large and small countries, from fast-growing economies to low-income countries. They are not ranked based on levels of access and quality, but on their relative rate of improvement.

An activity for you

Look at Table 2 below on primary and secondary education participation rates.

Which regions have the most primary/lower secondary/upper secondary school age children and youth out of school?



Table 2 – Primary and secondary education participation indicators 2014

	Adjusted net enrolment rate (%)			Out of school (millions)		
	Primary	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Children of primary school age	Adolescents of lower secondary school age	Youth of upper secondary school age
World	91	84	63	60.9	60.2	141.8
Low income	81	65	40	18.9	16.8	23.2
Lower middle income	90	80	52	30.9	34.9	91.7
Upper middle income	95	93	77	8.3	7.2	22.9
High income	97	98	92	2.8	1.3	4.0
Caucasus and Central Asia	94	96	84	0.3	0.3	0.6
Eastern and South-eastern Asia	96	91	77	6.2	8.2	19.5
Europe and Northern America	97	98	92	2.2	1.0	3.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	94	92	76	3.6	2.8	7.5
Northern Africa and Western Asia	89	86	67	5.5	3.6	8.5
Pacific	94	98	66	0.2	0.0	0.5
Southern Asia	94	80	50	11.4	20.7	68.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	80	66	43	31.4	23.6	33.1

Source: UIS database.

Source: Benavot & Quan (eds) & UNESCO 2016, Education for people and planet: Creating sustainable futures for all, Global Education Monitoring Report 2016, p. 182.

Of the children who are in school, it is estimated that 250 million of them in developing countries are struggling to read even basic words. This has consequences for learning achievement in the later years when reading ability is required to acquire other knowledge. There is an increasing focus on early grade reading to break the illiteracy trap. The example below illustrates the positive impact of an early grade reading intervention in Papua New Guinea (PNG).



Early grade reading in PNG

The Global Partnership for Education and the World Bank supported an early grade reading program in PNG which focused on improving literacy skills of elementary school students through teacher training, provision of innovative teaching and learning materials, and early grade reading assessments. The results showed that the program had a positive impact on children's literacy skills in some areas. In one school year, the average number of students who were unable to identify a single sound dropped from 22 per cent to 4 per cent in Madang province and from 35 per cent to 4 per cent in the Western Highlands. Highlights of the program can be found on the [World Bank website](#).



Source: World Bank 2015.

The quality of education at the primary level is inextricably linked with learning outcomes at the secondary level, and beyond. The education system is cumulative – system weaknesses at one level directly impact on the next.

For example, under-qualified or under-educated teachers may not have the full complement of skills to support the learning of their students. The teachers themselves may not have high levels of literacy or numeracy, as they are also products of the education system. In this way, higher education (teacher training) directly impacts upon ECD, primary and secondary education.

Fee free primary education – the access problem solved?

School fee abolition has been prioritised as one of the key strategies to improve enrolment and participation rates. Tuition fees and other private costs of schooling are viewed as a barrier to access and completion of primary education. Direct and indirect costs are especially burdensome in countries where poverty imposes tough choices on families and households: how many and which children to send to school, and for how long. Girls often suffer disproportionately from these choices.

Fee-free education policies must not only take into consideration the abolition of tuition fees but also the other costs for households such as textbooks, uniforms, transportation and other indirect costs for families.

Source: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning 2017.

Education for children with disabilities

Set out below are some activities and examples that illustrate the implications of policy decisions on education for children with disabilities.



Examples of policy implications

- ✎ To learn more about education for children with disabilities read through the [Guidance Note](#) from the Department for International Development (DFID).



Notice the example from Uganda, which adopted a Universal Education Policy providing free primary education to four children per family. The policy stated that at least two of the children should be girls (where there are girls) and any children with a disability.

- ✎ Now go to the link below to watch a video about a school for children with disabilities in Kiribati: [Kiribati – children with disabilities](#).

As you watch the video, think about this policy issue: This Kiribati school is a special school, where the children with disabilities are segregated and taught on their own in a separate school. An alternative policy is to be more inclusive by ‘mainstreaming’ disabled children in the schools everyone goes to. Think about the implications of these policies.

Source: DFID 2010; NTK Inc 2014.

5 HOW CAN DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS ENGAGE EFFECTIVELY IN POLICY DIALOGUE WITH GOVERNMENT PARTNERS?

Among the pre-requisites for a development partner’s successful engagement in policy dialogue is to have a good understanding of:

- the structure of an education system
- the wider implications of a proposed policy reform.

A case study on evidence-based policy making in Indonesia

To look more closely at how to be effective in policy dialogue, review the case study from Indonesia in the activity below. This study focuses on dialogue concerning poverty reduction and social protection issues, not education. However, the principles discussed – what it calls ‘the building blocks of policy dialogue’ – are generic and highly relevant to all sectors including education.



An activity for you

Focus on the building blocks section of the [Indonesia case study](#) and reflect on the status of education policy dialogue in your country program or a developing country known to you.



Agree on strategies to improve post performance in the five areas in **Table 3** below.

Table 3 – Building blocks for effective policy dialogue

The building blocks for effective policy dialogue	Education policy dialogue in your country program or a developing country known to you
1. Clarity of intent: The degree to which participants are clear about what they want to achieve through dialogue.	
2. Negotiating capital: The balance of power, knowledge and ownership between dialogue participants.	
3. Actors and their characteristics: The capabilities and characteristics of the individuals engaged in policy dialogue.	
4. Dialogue fora: The formal and informal spaces and opportunities to understand each other's values and interests.	
5. Evidence: The extent to which data, research and analysis inform policy dialogue, and who owns it.	

The case study is gender neutral. In which of the five areas would gender equity feature during policy dialogue?

Brown, Rudland & Bazeley 2012, Providing the environment for evidence-based policy-making in Indonesia: A case study of the Australian aid program's support to the national team for accelerating poverty reduction.



6 WHAT ARE THE MAIN INTERCONNECTIONS WITHIN EDUCATION?

The main interconnections within education are as follows:

Connections in policy

- Expenditure and financing in the education sector.
- Management and institutions.

Policy and reforms to education sub-sectors

- Greater investment in one area may impact on resourcing of others.

Quality

- Quality at primary school will impact on children's learning and their potential to transition to secondary school.

Equity

- Removing primary-level school fees may assist poorer families, but indirect costs still impact on access and participation in education.



7 TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE



Assessment questions

Answer the following questions by ticking 'True' or 'False'. Once you have selected your answers to all the questions, turn the page to 'The correct answers are...' to check the accuracy of your answers.

Question 1

With the massive increase in children completing primary education, expansion of secondary school systems has kept pace and most children today are able to complete their secondary schooling.

Is this statement true or false?

☐ True

☐ False

Question 2

'Mainstreaming' children with disabilities means placing them in the schools and classrooms that everyone goes to, rather than segregating them in separate institutions and units.

Is this statement true or false?

☐ True

☐ False

Question 3

Sub-sectoral financial allocations (e.g. for higher education) can have implications across the whole system.

Is this statement true or false?

☐ True

☐ False

Question 4

Some policies supporting fee-free primary school involve providing grants to schools, to replace fees from parents. This can enable school management to provide a better service for their community.

Is this statement true or false?

☐ True

☐ False



The correct answers are...



Question 1

With the massive increase in children completing primary education, expansion of secondary school systems has kept pace and most children today are able to complete their secondary schooling.

This statement is false. In many developing countries there are shortages in secondary school places. Even if there is a place, the financial and other costs, especially to poorer families, of putting a child through secondary schooling keep enrolment and completion rates down.

Question 2

‘Mainstreaming’ children with disabilities means placing them in the schools and classrooms that everyone goes to, rather than segregating them in separate institutions and units.

This statement is true.

Question 3

Sub-sectoral financial allocations (e.g. for higher education) can have implications across the whole system.

The statement is true. For example, disproportionately high spending on higher education may have a negative impact on primary and secondary schools and their students. Schools may be under-funded and under-resourced.

Question 4

Some policies supporting fee-free primary school involve providing grants to schools, to replace fees from parents. This can enable school management to provide a better service for their community.

The statement is true. School grants policies usually involve a move towards strengthened school-based management, with schools given autonomy to prioritise their own spending on school improvements.



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Learn more about...

- ✂ *The increasing challenges of providing secondary education in this article in The Guardian, 'Developing countries face growing secondary education challenge', Poverty Matters, weblog, 25 October 2011, found at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2011/oct/25/developing-countries-secondary-education-challenge?INTCMP=SRCH>*
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