

Development partnership in the education sector

Mokoro Seminar

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Perspectives on engagement

- Perspectives on **how** development partners can best engage in education sector to facilitate sustainable improvement in education outcomes
- Drawn from UNICEF evaluation and other recent work
 - Evaluation incomplete: presentation covers generalised lessons observed for working in partnership with countries
- Important not to conflate use of country systems and working upstream
 - Useful distinction between working through national systems and actors changing policies and strengthening systems rather than delivering education outputs and services directly ↔ channelling funds through systems for whatever intent
 - Second could build the core systems of the recipient partner (HR, budgeting, FM, M&E) or at least minimises harm to these systems
 - Both are components of a partnership approach: are there tradeoffs/risks?

Success factors in policy advocacy, system strengthening

- **Country alignment:** value of developing policy platforms that are unique to countries supported by country evidence, rather than integration of global initiatives, donor-defined approaches
- **Capacity for effective policy advocacy that is country specific:** mix of leadership/relationship, technical policy, education content skills and country knowledge
- **Country-based evidence works:** policy changes that are not in alignment with country priorities can occur, but needs country-specific evidence / piloting / demonstration
- **Relationships :** being able to engineer education outcome improvements through working with governments factor of history between institutions and engagement between individuals .
 - Issues of consistency, trust, credibility of mandates
 - Basis of playing role of convenor to mobilise forces for reform
 - Money counts too, but sustainability?
- **Ability to respond to unfolding situation and take up opportunities for reform:** adjusting country programmes and approaches to changes in country context and actors instead of applying one size fits all approaches
- **Need to engage with country budgets and expenditure:** but policy changes with donor support for implementation better than latter without policy change

Measuring 'upstream' work

- Despite decade or more of understanding value of ownership, alignment, harmonisation etc, insufficient progress in accepted ways of measuring results of development assistance provided in ways that value these principles
- Return of bilateral donors to visible aid and demonstrable (short term) outputs and results by unit of aid provided
 - Significant risks to sustainability of education improvements if true partnership approaches no longer funded
- Need to generate commonly understood, accessible (for donor constituencies) means of measuring whether upstream work is having an effect
 - Country specific, but within common framework so it is accessible
 - Evaluation used typology developed by Jones (2011) to map out intermediate policy and system strengthening results
 - They are observable, but not always easy to measure

Conclusion

- No automatic link from providing funds to policy influence, to sustainable outcome improvement
- Are partnership horizons long enough / nuanced enough?
 - Do development partnerships effectively identify when country context is right for partnership-like engagement for (sustainable) policy and practice reforms, and when funding should be channelled not to ever improvement, but protecting the gains from the past?
- Are donor institutions set up in ways that will have most results at country level?
 - Donor practice has changed in last decade: better understanding of ownership and alignment as key factors. But have donor organisational structures and incentives changed sufficiently?
- Is there sufficient understanding of need for balanced country programmes?
 - Presence in the field and at the policy table
 - Working towards government priorities and supporting government approaches, introducing new priorities and approaches
- If agreed that working through national systems and actors important, then need to understand how best to measure effectiveness of this approach critical
 - Common approaches, but country specific
- How well do we understand interplay between policy influence and education system strengthening, and UCS?
 - Risk of UCS for policy influence
 - UCS on own does not equal policy influence; importance of history, trust, credibility