Global Preparatory Meeting
Report on the MDG-NET Forum E-Discussion

CLOSING THE GAP:
QUALITY , ACCESS AND INNOVATION

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Background and Rationale

- Opportunity for practitioners and advocates around the world to contribute to debate

- Moderators
  - Mmantsetsa Marope, Director - Basic to Higher Education and Learning, UNESCO
  - Nicholas Alipui, Director of Programmes, UNICEF
  - Nicholas Burnett, Managing Director
    Results for Development Institute

- Organised and facilitated by UNDP

- Over 100 participants from 29 countries, between February 1 and March 4

Quality - Issues

- Given that the quality of teaching is critical to students' learning, how can the training and working conditions of teachers be improved in contexts with resource constraints?

- Which interventions are most effective for retaining secondary-age students in school by preparing them with a foundation for lifelong learning and for labour market participation?

Quality - Conclusions

- Quality teaching is not determined by resources **alone**. Making effective use of resources is a critical starting point for improving results.

- Creativity can be more valuable than funds, and mastery of learning tools (learning how to learn) has a greater impact on learning achievement than acquisition of structural knowledge.

- Teacher motivation is crucial to quality learning for children. Mentoring programmes, teacher support mechanisms, and continuous refresher trainings for teachers are all cost-effective strategies that can improve the quality of teaching.

- Various cultural barriers affect school retention at both primary and secondary levels, and need to be addressed.

Quality - Recommendations

- Improve governance of education systems that set common standards for continuous teacher training and appoint committed and strategic leaders to head education systems and teacher training colleges.

- Reform teacher training methods (i.e through the use of ICT) to scale up teacher training programs.

- Encourage partnerships between schools, technical and vocational training institutions, local trades, industries and employers.

- Ensure local schools are accountable to the communities they serve by encouraging demand-led accountability measures and as much as possible, recruit teachers from local communities and engage teacher unions and parent-teacher associations (PTAs).

Access - Issues

- How can we make ECE a reality for those children that are the most disadvantaged or excluded? What is needed at the global policy level to advance the ECE agenda?

  Where have we made progress on girls' education and why? How can we ensure greater traction in our efforts to secure the full participation of girls in school?

Access - Conclusions

- Many useful approaches shared, e.g. of the self-help, community-based school in Pakistan that not only got girls into school but expanded to adult education, that can be adapted and adopted to respond to varying country contexts. For this to happen, we need to continue to evaluate what works, where and why/why not and share experiences.

- Progress is being made though the pace is slow and still limited in scale. It is not enough for some children to have access. From an equity perspective, more strategic investment made and special efforts must be deployed for those who are excluded and face multiple deprivations.

- We know what the policy and technical solutions are. The challenges lie in implementation, monitoring and evaluation, requiring greater attention to a systems approach.

Access - Recommendations

- Develop community based models for ECE--Ensure programs are sensitive to the local context, are based on local evidence and meaningfully engage members of the local community.

- Train and build the capacity of relevant professionals and community members, but also professionals in other sectors, as well as community leaders and proprietors who tend to not be equipped with the necessary technical skills and expertise needed to adequately operate and sustain ECE programmes.

- Make long-term investments in education that establish clear time-lines and milestones that are monitored and evaluated regularly.

- Use more socio-economic data, local area mapping of ECE services, and cost-benefit analyses to assist policy-makers in selecting more effective and efficient investments in education.

Innovation - Issues

- Education is often seen as unimaginative, boring, conservative and not innovative resulting in limited non-technical involvement and (financial) support.

- How can non-state actors (including civil society organizations, faith-based groups, private philanthropies and the private sector) best contribute to the achievement of education and learning for all?

- What innovations, including through the use of technology and through new financing arrangements, are needed to make education appropriate for the modern world?

Innovation - Conclusions

- A lot of innovation is occurring, within the sector and outside. We need to seek out such innovations, not currently known, determine wider applicability and ensure broad dissemination within the sector.

- The policy framework for fostering innovative approaches and stimulating greater involvement of the the non-state sector needs to be developed.

- There is need for a more direct linkage between innovative financing and innovation in education.

- Since there is broad agreement about the importance of innovation, there is equally a need for broad endorsement, within the sector, of the need for change, of the unsustainability of present approaches in the face of the global learning crisis and the shift towards knowledge economies and societies.

- We need to be careful not to be smug or we will again be overtaken by other sectors in the global competition for attention and funding.

Innovation - Recommendations

- Develop a national policy framework in which governments ensure overall coordination, coverage and responsibility for large-scale impact, while civil society and the private sector ensure quality and sustainability in implementation.

- Build a better evidence base on innovative education strategies by bringing together experts from diverse disciplines to address gaps in knowledge.

- Employ Education strategies that aim to promote the empowerment of children, women and those from other marginalized groups such as non-formal strategies and multi-grade schooling.

- Integrate the use of high-quality learning resources through affordable ICT platforms for both students and teachers in order to improve the learning process.

- Shift the focus of innovation from teachers to learners.

Moving Forward!

- Education is a useful indicator *and* a determinant of equity in society. It is a way out of poverty, a status changer and a means of empowerment and social cohesion in a community.

- Given that some 67.5 million children in the world do not attend school - all of them subject to multiple deprivations, half of them girls and over 28 million of them in countries are affected by social conflict - the need to provide equitable access to education is crucial.

- We know good quality education induces enrolment and participation, as well as facilitates learning achievement. Thus, our goal is to ensure that existing education services *and* new education opportunities are *both* of good quality , removing the distinction between access and quality in policy dialogue and programming.

- To achieve quality with equity, we need to further explore and marshal evidence about innovation, to reach out to non-state actors, and to maintain a specific focus on the marginalised and excluded.

Thank You!