Planning towards 2015

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Educational planning and finance have changed over the last four decades. IIEP's professionals have contributed to the shifts in emphasis and the development of new approaches, identifying some of the new challenges generated by the changing context for educational investment in low- income countries. Two challenges are highlighted below.

First, national planning systems with limited capacity have become preoccupied with a narrow agenda for development which has stressed investment in universal primary schooling and gender equity at the expense of other educational investment needs. It is important to remember that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education For All (EFA) objectives are lists rather than recipes for development. If achieved, they provide no guarantee that development will take place in a sustainable way.

If either had been generated in 2008 they might have looked very different. Perhaps there would have been more emphasis on investment in secondary and higher education, on regulated partnerships with private providers, and environmental issues and the educational investment needed for sustainable economic growth.

Though there have been notable EFA successes where access to basic education has improved, there are also too many counter examples where growth in participation has stalled, quality has fallen dramatically, demand side failure has appeared alongside continued difficulties with the supply of educational services and scarce financial resources have been wasted. A major challenge for planners is to step outside the straight-jacket of the EFA objectives and the MDGs, revisit these with the benefit of hindsight, learn from the experience of what has happened since they were adopted, and contribute to more nuanced approaches to goal setting in context.

Second, financing educational provision at secondary level and above has become a new preoccupation of policy-makers in low-income countries. Universal participation to the end of primary requires transition rates into secondary to at least keep pace with expanded numbers of primary completers. Gender equity at secondary level is rarely achieved in poor countries where gross enrolment rates are less than 50 per cent. Increasingly, lower secondary, and sometimes upper secondary, are regarded as part of the basic education cycle. And economic growth is widely linked to the proportions of the labour force that have completed secondary level education and above.

However, in sub-Saharan Africa and much of South Asia, the public costs of secondary

Further Reading

Lewin, K. M. 2008. *The Global Monitoring Report 2008 – Eleven Reasons to Revisit the EFA Agenda*. Paper presented at the UK national launch of UNESCO's *Education for All Global Monitoring Report. EFA by 2015 – Will We Make It?*, Institute of Education, London. http://ioewebserver.ioe.ac.uk/ioe/cms/get.asp?cid=16528&16528_0=18924

Lewin K.M. 2008. *Seeking Secondary Schooling in Sub Saharan Africa; Strategies for Sustainable Financing*. Secondary Education in Africa Series: Study Number 1, World Bank, Washington DC pp150 http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFRREGTOPSEIA/Resources/Study1_Fi

Lewin K.M., Caillods F. 2001. *Financing Secondary Education in Developing Countries; Strategies for Sustainable Growth*. IIEP, www.unesco.org.iiep....

schooling are on average at least four times as much per child as at primary. This alone means that without reform, universal access would require more than half of the education budget – a level which is unlikely to be financed. Most secondary systems remain fee paying and the poorest households continue to be excluded by the direct costs of attendance. Reforms are needed to reduce public costs per student, transfer costs to those who can afford to pay, subsidise those from poorer households, which maintain and improve learning achievement. Without this, the legacy of EFA could well be disappointing.

These two concerns – how to build beyond and escape from the constraints of the EFA objectives and MDGs; and how to finance expanded participation at secondary and above – will be important through 2015 and beyond. As a new period of global recession and austerity approaches, planning the more efficient use of scarce financial resource will become critical for development. ■

The future for educational financing

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The 2008 Symposium provided an opportunity to reflect on how the main concerns in educational financing have shifted over recent decades.

Twenty years ago, discussions at the seminar marking IIEP's 25th anniversary focused on the effects of the economic crises at that time on educational financing. Concerns then were mainly on how to make the best use of resources available, reduce costs and share them with families and communities, and how to redefine the state role prioritizing basic education and disadvantaged groups. These have remained the focal points of attention over the past two decades.

But has this context changed? Participants in the 2008 IIEP Symposium "*Directions in educational planning*" noted that interest in education systems has not waned. On the contrary, Education for All (EFA) objectives now encompass basic education (a larger sector than primary) and more attention is paid to quality issues than post-primary levels. In his presentation, Keith Lewin underlined that the main challenge now was to see how the expansion of secondary education could be financed.

Partnering has become a key word incorporating parents and communities, public and private sectors as well as external partners. Providing schooling for disadvantaged groups has led to new ideas regarding school fees and whether they should be abolished for basic education.

But what is currently the most worrying concern is how international development aid mechanisms are evolving, becoming more sectoral in their approach and changing budget support methods. The Symposium contributions of Iris Uyttersprot (UK Department for International Development, DFID) and Linda Lehmil (UNESCO)[1] showed how these mechanisms have to be adapted to specific country situations and that it was important to avoid being dogmatic. Whether transaction costs are less with these new methods is not yet clear and needs to be further investigated.

Strategic planning seems to have made significant progress over the last two decades. Most countries now produce planning documents, sometimes too many, and these documents are often accompanied by quantitative scenarios and cost implications. However, new aid mechanisms, and in particular budget support methods, require good management skills in national administrations. Consequently, strengthening national capacities is still a major challenge for both developing states and their partners.

It was also noted that the information on real costs of an education system is very often incomplete and, in most countries, limited to only government expenditure. The situation has changed very little in this respect, regardless of the fact that information on costs is fundamental to any policy aiming to redistribute funds from different sources to different levels of education for different types of expenditure. ■

[1] Iris Uyttersprot. *Financing education systems*
Linda Lehmil. *Working towards aid effectiveness: recent policy reforms and practices in education.*
Both papers can be downloaded at: www.iiep.unesco.org