Unit 1: Conceptualising Education Systems

Education systems are comprised of many actors and the relationships of accountability, feedback, and governance that bind them. Systems are effective if these relationships are aligned and if the various actors and components that make up a system work coherently to achieve the system’s goals. A systems approach to education reform aims to diagnose areas of system incoherence, and identify approaches that could improve system coherence for achieving the system’s goals. This unit contrasts a systems approach with other approaches to education reform.

After completing the unit, students should:

- Understand different system framework(s) in education (including education production function, SABER, RISE);
- Understand that systems are more than the sum of their parts;
- Have knowledge of the rationale for systems thinking in education, and be able to contrast it with other approaches to education reform;
- Have a high-level understanding of the different constituent parts of education systems (i.e., relationships between actors); and
- Have a high-level understanding of the multiple potential goals of education systems (i.e., learning, access, equity, selection), and the different potential interests these goals serve.

Lectures

1. Why a “system” approach? What is a “system”? (Lant Pritchett, RISE Programme, University of Oxford)
2. The RISE 5 by 4 system of accountability (Lant Pritchett, RISE Programme, University of Oxford)
3. Coherence is a characteristic of systems as systems (Lant Pritchett, RISE Programme, University of Oxford)
4. Empirical examples of incoherence (Lant Pritchett, RISE Programme, University of Oxford)

Required Readings

Further Readings


Supplementary Resources