Unit 2: Goals of Education Systems

Education systems pursue many goals including preparing young people for employment, civic participation and broader human flourishing. Central to these goals is the development of knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to defined curricula and expectations. In particular, skills such as basic literacy and numeracy are often considered foundational.

In many LMICs, however, actual performance, including in terms of basic skills, is very far from expectations, contributing to a ‘global learning crisis’.

Increased attention globally and in many LMICs to the ‘learning crisis’ in recent years has drawn attention to the potential trade-off between access (expansion) and quality and to the need to ‘pivot’ towards learning where outcomes are weak.

Low levels of learning at any particular point in a child’s educational career are the result of a trajectory or ‘learning profile’ in the years prior to that point and are often linked specifically to poor learning progress in the early years. Learning profiles are an important tool for analysis and diagnosis of a range of systemic issues which contribute to low levels (and shallow trajectories) of learning.

The notion of a learning profile plays a key role in empirical analysis of educational quality including in relation to ‘learning productivity’ and school or teacher ‘value-added’. These analytic approaches offer an alternative to ‘input-based’ conceptualization and analysis of school quality.

After completing the unit, students should:

- Be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the nature and extent of the ‘global learning crisis’ and its connections to SDG4
- Be able to demonstrate understanding and basic application of the concept of a ‘learning profile’ as an analytic and diagnostic tool in relation to education system analysis
- Be able to demonstrate understanding of educational quality in relation to ‘learning productivity’ or ‘value-added’
- Be able to interpret and evaluate studies employing concepts including ‘learning profiles’ and ‘learning productivity’ or ‘value-added’ in relation to analysis of education systems and the ‘learning crisis’
- Be able to demonstrate understanding that equity goals are of central importance for education systems and be able to identify key trade-offs that systems may face when pursuing access, quality and equity.

Required Readings


**Further Readings**


