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 literacy and numeracy are often considered foundational.

In many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), actual student performance, including in terms of foundational skills, is far from expectations. In recent years, increased attention to the learning crisis in many LMICs and in global discourse has highlighted the need to pivot towards learning where outcomes are weak.

Low levels of learning at any point in a child's educational career are the result of a trajectory of learning in the years prior. Low learning outcomes are often linked specifically to low learning trajectories in the early primary school years. Learning trajectories are an important tool for analysis and diagnosis of a range of systemic issues contributing to poor outcomes.

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 trajectory 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 trajectories and learning productivity (or value-added) in relation to the analysis of education systems and the learning crisis; and

- 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.

Lectures

1. The learning crisis (Michelle Kaffenberger, RISE Programme, University of Oxford)
2. Learning trajectories (Michelle Kaffenberger, RISE Programme, University of Oxford)
3. What have we learned from learning trajectories? (Michelle Kaffenberger, RISE Programme, University of Oxford)

Required Readings

- Crouch, L., Rolleston, C., and Gustafsson, M. 2021. Eliminating Global Learning Poverty: The Importance of Equalities and Equity. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *82*, 102250. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2020.102250

- Kaffenberger, M. and Pritchett, L. 2020. Aiming Higher: Learning Profiles and Gender Equality in 10 Low- and Middle-Income Countries**.** *International Journal of Educational Development*, 79, 102272. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2020.102272

- World Bank. 2019. Ending Learning Poverty: What Will It Take? https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/395151571251399043/pdf/Ending-Learning-Poverty-What-Will-It-Take.pdf

Further Readings

- Allen, D., Fraenkel, C., Meier, D., DeGraff, M., Satz, D., Almagor, L. Snyder, J. A., Stanczyk, L., Reich, R., and Smith, C. 2016. 'What Is Education For? [Forum]'. *Boston Review*, 26 April 2016. https://www.bostonreview.net/forum/danielle-allen-what-is-education-for/.

- Biesta, G. J. J. 2010. Good Education in an Age of Measurement: Ethics, Politics, Democracy. London: Taylor & Francis Group. https://archive.org/details/goodeducationina0000bies/

- Crouch, L., Kaffenberger, M., and Savage, L. 2021. Using learning profiles to inform education priorities: An editors' overview of the Special Issue. International Journal of Educational Development, Volume 86. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2021.102477.

- Kaffenberger, M. 2022. The Role of Purpose in Education System Outcomes: A Conceptual Framework and Empirical Examples. RISE Working Paper Series. 22/118. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISEWP_2022/118

- Silberstein, J. 2021. Measuring, Visualising, and Simulating Solutions to the Learning Crisis: New Evidence from Learning Profiles in 18 Countries. 2021/029. https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2021/029

Supplementary Resources

- UNESCO Learning Trajectory Overview and Data Explorer (GEM Report SCOPE website). https://www.education-progress.org/en/articles/trajectories (webinar recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Axb9bLxxIw&ab_channel=GEMReportUNESCO)

- The RISE Podcast: Denis Mizne on Transforming Brazil's Education System to Deliver Learning. Podcast: https://riseprogramme.org/podcast/denis-mizne

- The RISE Podcast: Sharath Jeevan OBE on the Need to Put People, Mindsets, and Motivation at the Centre of Education Systems: https://riseprogramme.org/podcast/sharath-jeevan