

Unit 3: Politics of Learning

The political economy approach suggests that there are political dynamics to both supporting and hampering successful education reform and a sustained improvement in learning. This unit will focus on the political, social, institutional and historical environment in which education systems are embedded. Understanding the variation in successful adoption and delivery of reforms across countries - and within countries over-time across political regimes - requires a deeper understanding of the power relations among a broad range of interest groups - and priorities, incentives, and decisions of politicians, governments and policy makers.

The students will learn about the frameworks developed to understand the ways in which politics can impact education outcomes and the channels of impact. Political economy studies from different countries will be referenced.

After completing the unit, students should:

- Know how political dynamics impact adoption of reforms, and contribute to the same reforms having varied effects across different regions.
- Know how local stakeholder politics and interests play out - why are some reforms implement and others blocked by different stakeholders (including teachers, principals, grassroots bureaucrats, students, parents, community leaders).
- Be able to articulate the notion of political will and what that means in terms of the envisioning and achievement of the human development project, and understand the importance of leaders declaring education/learning a priority.
- Understand how politics plays a part in what gets financed.
- Learn about the politics of learning vs the politics of schooling.

Required Readings

Hickey, S., & Hossain, N. (2019). *Politics of education in developing countries: from schooling to learning* (p. 256). Oxford University Press.

<https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780198835684.001.0001/oso-9780198835684-chapter-1>

Levy, B., Cameron, R., Hoadley, U., & Naidoo, V. (2018). *The politics and governance of basic education: A tale of two South African provinces* (p. 320). Oxford University Press.

<https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/oso/9780198824053.001.0001/oso-9780198824053>

London, J. 2021. Outlier Vietnam and the Problem of Embeddedness: Contributions to the Political Economy of Learning. RISE Working Paper Series. 21/062.

https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2021/062.

Further reading

Cuban, L. 1990. "Reforming Again, Again, and Again." *Educational Researcher* 19, no. 1: 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1176529>

Fullan, M. 2016. The elusive nature of whole system improvement in education. *J Educ Change* 17, 539–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-016-9289-1>

Piper, B. 2016. International education is a broken field: Can "Ubuntu" education bring solutions? *International Review of Education*, 62(1), 101–111. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11159-016-9544-y>