

Title: *What is the role of information on access and assessment in ensuring equitable learning in Ethiopia?*

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Abstract

Ethiopia faces a twin challenge of low levels of primary school completion together with low levels of learning, with children from marginalised backgrounds most likely to face these twin challenges. In response, the government's recent nation-wide education reform package - the General Education Quality Improvement Programme for Equity (GEQIP-E) – seeks to improve learning outcomes and focuses on girls, children with disabilities and children from pastoralist areas in particular. Moreover, GEQIP-E represents a shift from the input-focused approach of previous government reform programmes, to one centred on performance in four key areas: quality, efficiency, equity and capacity development. Supported by funding from donor agencies, 'payment by results' has been introduced as a mechanism for the government to receive these funds.

These new approaches present new challenges for information needed to ensure the Ethiopian system is coherent for equitable learning. Notably, it will require reliable, meaningful and timely data collection to help to inform decision making, monitor progress within the system, hold the system accountable, and enable the government to show progress in order to receive payments based on results.

In this paper we explore the role of data and information within the education system in Ethiopia to help to answer the question of why, despite considerable political will, learning outcomes in Ethiopia are still very low. It will further consider whether and how improved data availability and quality will support the success of GEQIP-E. Our analysis draws on findings from our system diagnostic of the education system for RISE Ethiopia, which involved document analysis and key stakeholder interviews (donors, development partners and federal and regional government officials) in December 2017 and February 2018. We employ Pritchett's (2015) conceptual framework which emphasises the importance of coherence across accountability relationships within an education system (e.g. compact, management) and within accountability relationships (delegation, finance, information and motivation) (see Appendix for example of analysis framework). We consider what data and information is available (e.g. EMIS, regional and national assessments and inspection data) and how it is used to inform the system. More specifically we consider:

1. The role of data and information in guiding the selection, design and implementation of the GEQIP reform programmes.
2. The successes and challenges faced in terms of education data during previous reform programmes (GEIQP I & II).
3. New demands for education data in guiding and monitoring future reforms (GEQIP E).

The findings presented seek to highlight the existing gaps and incoherence in the system with respect to data and information on equitable access and learning and provide insight into how education data will need to be strengthened in order to provide information needed to achieve coherence for equitable learning.

Appendix: Example of Analysis Framework

1. Delegation to Finance (wages and resources) in/coherence

Problems identified in the system

- Insufficient resources available to implement activities.
- Out-dated technology – the paper-based questionnaire that schools have to complete are lengthy and time consuming and there is no up-take of technology within the system.
- Lack of capacity at lower levels of government - difficult to hire and retain adequately trained staff.

Impact on system

- EMIS cannot sufficiently perform tasks delegated
- Insufficient and poor quality information/data
- Information/data not provided on time

2. Delegation to Information in/coherence

Problems identified in the system

- EMIS directorate is established as the institution responsible for collecting, processing and disseminating educational statistics, however the level of integration within the education system is not good and there is a lack of coordination across different organisations/agencies within the MoE i.e. EMIS, Inspection, Assessment
- No EMIS framework - There are no laws, frameworks or policies that set out the roles and responsibilities of EMIS, the tasks of EMIS are not clearly defined and there is a lack of capacity within the system.
- ‘Thin’ information i.e. focused on narrow indicators such as enrolment
- Lack of sufficient information on equity issues – in particular special needs.
- Lack of follow up information i.e. information on textbook distribution but not usage, teachers trained but training not implemented.
- There is no verification agency for the data – there will be for GEIQP E.
- All data are quantitative, no qualitative data is collected.

Impact on system

- Insufficient and poor quality information
 - Does not capture students’ experiences
 - Learning and equity issues cannot be addressed
 - ‘Process compliance’ (Pritchett, 2015) i.e. actors focus on what is measurable rather than what is meaningful.

3. Delegation to motivation in/coherence

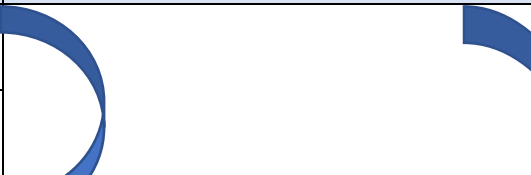
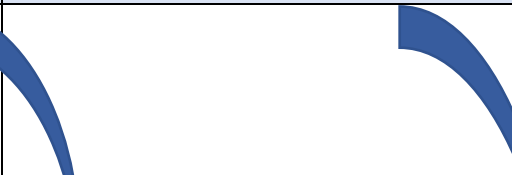
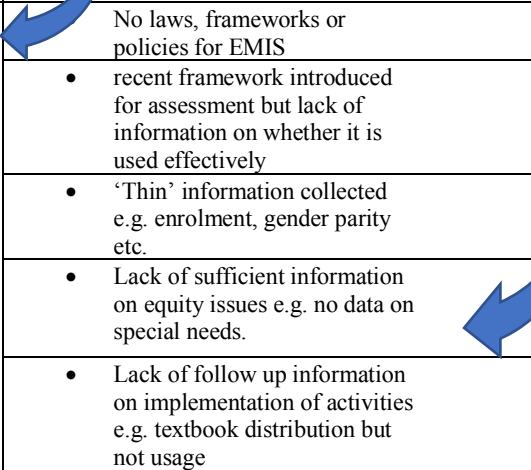

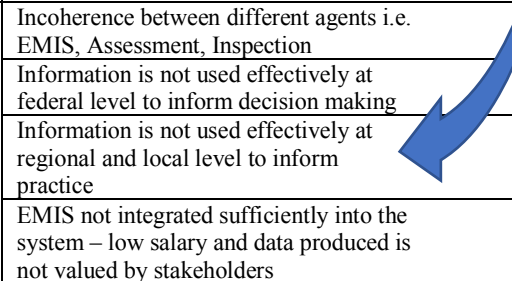
Problems identified in the system

- Information not used effectively - Information from EMIS is used to some extent but it is not prioritised and many stakeholders seeks information from other sources.
- Information collected at local and regional level but not used.

Impact on system

- Insufficient and poor quality information
- Lack of motivation of stakeholders at various levels of the education system.

Figure 1: Analysis Framework

MANAGEMENT	Delegation to Finance coherence	Delegation to information coherence	Delegation to motivation coherent
Finance: Resources that P provides to A (either in advance or contingent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient resources available to collect, analyse and manage education data Lack of capacity at lower levels of government to collect, manage and analyse data 		
Information: P collects information on performance of A		 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No laws, frameworks or policies for EMIS recent framework introduced for assessment but lack of information on whether it is used effectively 'Thin' information collected e.g. enrolment, gender parity etc. Lack of sufficient information on equity issues e.g. no data on special needs. Lack of follow up information on implementation of activities e.g. textbook distribution but not usage 	
Motivation: how is A's wellbeing contingent on performance? Change to motivation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intrinsic Extrinsic Exit (Force out) 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incoherence between different agents i.e. EMIS, Assessment, Inspection Information is not used effectively at federal level to inform decision making Information is not used effectively at regional and local level to inform practice EMIS not integrated sufficiently into the system – low salary and data produced is not valued by stakeholders 
Performance of Agent (Impact)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant agencies cannot perform tasks effective Insufficient and poor quality information/data Information/data not provided on time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient and poor quality information Data fails to capture students' experiences Learning and equity not captured 'Process compliance' (Pritchett, 2015) i.e. actors focus on what is measurable rather than what is meaningful. Weak 'feedback loop' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient and poor quality information Lack of purpose and motivation of stakeholders at various levels of the education system.