Report 3rd meeting Education Agenda 2015

Monday 18 June 2012
De Witte Vosch
Utrecht

The main content of the presentations are included in this report.

Welcome

Jos van Beurden - facilitator

Due to serious train service disruptions at Utrecht Central Station, many people had not been able to come to the meeting. Facilitator Jos van Beurden welcomed the forty participants in the foyer and observed that various sectors were represented: ngo, private initiative, educational institute, university, educational union and government. Jos van Beurden invited all to exchange briefly their 'exit-strategies': what does your organisation do to make itself redundant in educational aid?

Strengthening quality in education

Dr. Auma Okwany – Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus Universiteit

Education is the key route to social and economic advancement, a human right and a bridge to other rights. It is now three years before the 2015 goalpost of universal primary education. Still, most attention is given to *access* to education over the *right* to education. There is a focus on numbers and quantitative gains, e.g. on enrolment numbers, instead of universal school completion. Quantitative gains have been achieved by free primary education policies, in terms of increased spending, expanded access to schools, increased ratios for pupil-teacher, for pupil-classroom and for pupil-textbook. But progress is slow: still 56 million children will be out of school by 2015.

Reconceptualise quality

Besides enrolment, it is a significant challenge to enhance *quality* of education. We should reconceptualise quality. Quantity and quality are commonly seen as two separate things and sequenced: children are first to be enrolled and only then quality is addressed. Instead, quantity and quality should be seen as complementary.

Symptoms of qualitative shortcomings are generally described in quantative terms, e.g. low achievements, much repetition, absenteeism, high drop out rates and low transition rates. But for a broader conception of quality it is needed to look beyond these quantifiable indicators. Quality of education is also defined by aspects of:

- the learners: are they ready to learn, healthy, well nourished and supported by their families and communities, are there barriers in language and culture;
- the environment within the school: is it safe, responsive to differences, are there adequate resources and facilities like teaching materials or meals;
- the environment outside school: are the family and community in support, how about socio-cultural norms;
- the content of the teaching: are curricula relevant, including practical and life skills;
- the processes of teaching: are professional teachers using student centered methods, is management capable, are the teaching processes non-discriminatory, ...;
- the outcomes: is education transformative, does is offer the learners opportunities to participate in society and for future learning, ...

Factors that have an impact on quality

EdQual, a research programme on quality of education in low income countries, identified a number of factors that have a positive impact on quality of education:

- having pens, exercise books, a chair and a desk in school;
- having a permanent classroom building;
- attending a school with access to a computer or television;
- attending a school that has a safe and disciplined environment.

Factors that have a negative impact on the quality of education:

- the neighbourhood effect: attending a school with a large proportion of disadvantaged pupils;
- eating fewer than two meals a day;
- not having lights and a table at home;
- learners being over-aged, living on their own, missing school in order to work;
- not having the opportunities to use the language of instruction outside school.

From her own research Auma Okwany adds two other factors that have a negative impact:

- lack of community involvement
- failure to extend downwards, outwards and upwards

Extending downwards

Auma Okwany shows a table presenting gross enrolment rates in various African countries divided by pre-primary, primary and secondary education. (Note: the net rates for primary school count children from age 6-13; gross rates include under-aged and over-aged and may therefore add up to over 100%). It clearly shows the emphasis on primary schooling in several countries.

There is a large body of global research that shows marked disparities in readiness at the entrance of primary school. This is generally the result of poor quality early childhood development, shaped by parental education, household income, location and home language. High Achieving Countries

(HACs) that show good results at the primary level, appear to pay due attention to the quality of early childhood care and education.

Extending outwards

This refers to the inclusion of vulnerable groups, defined by gender, income, location, ability etc. Numbers on inclusion rates are often about enrolment and don't show drop outs during the school period. Numbers generally also present national averages, whereas there are often substantial regional disparities. E.g. the average number of years of schooling in Nigeria is 6.7. But divided by sex, background and region, the numbers vary between 0.3 years for poor rural Hausa girls to 10.3 for rich urban boys.

With respect to extending outwards, HACs pay attention to:

- a high and consistent budget for inclusive education and to fair allocation of resources;
- internal efficiency (low drop out rates and repeating rates) and external efficiency (high completion rates);
- teacher training;
- the quality of teaching and learning materials;
- differences and special needs.

Another factor is the division between public and private schooling. In some cases, increased access to education has lead to poorer quality, inducing parents from middle and upper middle class to take their children into private schools. In some countries there is an extensive system of poor quality non-formal education. 'Education for All' then becomes 'Education for those who can afford it'. HACs have limited or no private schooling, to enhance social justice and equity.

Extending upwards

In HACs primary and secondary education are not separate systems, but are both part of a Basic Education system.

Strengthening quality in education

How to enhance quality of education to include all?

- Target all children within a universal programme and within this, pay attention to those that are most vulnerable to exclusion.
- Strengthen school, teaching and learning resources and environments; support teachers and support innovations at school level.
- Create supplementary programmes, e.g. to bring out of school children back into public schools or enable them to attend vocational training.
- Support job oriented skill training for youths, with special attention to girls.
- Think about whose needs are central, whose agenda? Understand that education is a right and that the government is the key duty bearer.
- Strengthen the links between the school and the community so that they can join in holding the government accountable for universal education: education from a life cycle perspective of good quality at all levels.

Aid effectiveness

Aid for education has not been as effective as it could have been, because of various reasons:

- Aid to basic education has remained static over the last decade. The focus has been on higher education, e.g. on aid in the form of scholarships for African students to study in Japan.
- The financial crisis world wide.
- Population growth increased rhe number of out of school children.
- Private foundations and new partners in aid are not focussing on basic education but have other priorities.

To increase aid effectiveness and quality of education, more resources can be mobilised:

- Human resources: potential learners, teachers and facilitators, local teachers and influential personalities, indigenous knowledge, technical skills, intellectual expertise and cultural heritage, community wisdom and input.
- Organisational resources: government commitments; institutional support, both governmental and non-governmental.
- Infrastructural resources: physical environment, existing material facilities, transportation, communication.

Civil society and advocacy for Education for All. The role and impact of the Global Campaign for Education in the South.
Jeanne Roefs (coordinator GCE-Netherlands)

Jeanne Roefs replaces dr. Antoni Verger from the University of Barcelona in this presentation, as he was held up in Barcelona. She goes through the presentation he had sent in advance.

Together with colleague Mario Novelli, mr. Verger coordinated a research project on the strategies and results of civil societies in developing countries in their campaigns to achieve Education for All. The research was conducted within the framework of the IS Academy Education and Development, a partnership between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the University of Amsterdam. The report has just been published: 'Campaigning for Education for All; histories, strategies and outcomes of transnational advocacy coalitions in education.

As Auma Okwany just pointed out: the government is the key duty bearer for education. This research project on seven national GCE-coalitions (Brazil, The Philippines, Zambia, India, Ghana, Ecuador and Indonesia) shows that civil society is a key actor in stimulating governments to take up their responsibilities.

The Global Campaign for Education was constituted in the context of the World Education Conference in Dakar in the year 2000. The initiators were several INGO's like Oxfam and Action Aid, the Indian initiative Global March against Children's Labor, and Education International. GCE advocates

for international organisations, donors and governments to meet the EFA-goals. They pushed for an ambitious action framework:

- Inclusion of the wording 'free' education
- Endorsement of the idea of national educational forums
- Expanded conception of education, including early childhood education and adult literacy
- Commitment to annual high-level EFA review meetings

In 2009 there were 65 national coalitions, in Southern as well as Northern countries, three regional offices (Africa, Asia and Latin America) and an international head office operating at a global scale.

As for compositions, coalitions are mostly joined by ngo's, teachers unions and grass-roots movements – and occasionally by scholars, media and international organisations. Their form can vary from a nebula of hundreds of organisations to an umbrella of a few large organisations. Strategies vary from public campaigns to training courses and lobbying of decision makers.

The coalitions may show a wide variety in composition, agenda's, strategies and funding, but they all share at least two core principles:

- education is a human right;
- It is the government who is primarily responsible for education.

A common issue in all coalitions is the demand for an increase in public spending in education.

The research aimed to identify the impact that has been achieved, with respect to:

- substantive impact: effects on public funding, introduction of articles in laws and plans on education;
- procedimental impact: presence and representation in relevant assemblies and consultations
- symbolic impact: influence on public opinion.

Coalitions appear to be successful if their internal cohesion is strong, favoured by conditions as:

- shared core beliefs;
- a common history of struggle within the country;
- membership of ngo's and of teachers unions;
- coordination of the coalition as a skilled broker;
- procedures for information circulation.

Another factor influencing the amount of impact is the 'political opportunity structures':
- The division of power;
- connections with elite groups;
- progressive governments and governments with an economic competitiveness agenda.

Progressive governments engage better with the rights approach, but there is also the risk

of co-optation of member organisations. This is what has been happening in The Netherlands during the reign of progressive governments that held development cooperation in high regard. There has been criticism that especially the larger development ngo's that are co-funded by government have not been critical and indepent enough.

The same development could be seen in Ecuador, one of the countries under study, where a successful national education coalition lost influence after the progressive government of Rafael Correa came into power in 2006.

The 'Contrato Social por la Educación' (CSE) was promoted in 2002 by elite groups concerned about the lack of education quality. Ngo's and the largest teacher union joined, but the latter soon left the coalition due to an internal conflict. The education movement operated in an unstable political environment with ten different presidents in ten years time. The education system itself was also unstable as there was no state strategy on education and donors interfered.

The CSE managed to make 'education' an issue in the 2002 elections with a strong slogan: "If your candidate does not know how to change education, change your candidate".

Rafael Correa, who won the elections in 2006, put education at the center and developed a new regulatory framework with very ambitious education goals. There was a considerable increase in education funding, a large number of new teachers were recruited and teachers salaries were doubled.

Although there always is a problem of attribution (who can claim which successes) the CSE played an important role in improving the education system in Ecuador:
- Most political parties endorsed the CSE agenda in 2002
- 80% of their proposals on education were accepted in the new Constitution
- CSE was one of the two main contributors to the new Education Law
- Education got back to the public agenda

Preliminary conclusions of the study:

- Civil society can make a difference in education at many levels: procedimental, symbolic and substantive.

- Many national education coalitions are not yet making use of the 'political opportunity structures' (PSOs), especially on a regional or international level.

- Civil society organisations can play with PSOs to define their strategies and can even alter them. This influence is two-sided: POSs may also alter coalitions' constituency and agenda.

- It would be interesting to have further research on countries where civil society is less active.

Finally we have to keep in mind that the national education coalitions described in this study operated within an international context that was favourable to education. Times have changed. International donor contributions to basic education have stagnated since 2008 and less funding is available

to strengthen civil society movements like the national education coalitions. We need to find new ways and means to support these coalitions in their struggle to keep education high at the political and public agenda.

Comments and questions

A former teacher from Uganda brings forward that 'free' education may lead to poorer quality. He saw how the concept of 'free education' was not explained properly to parents and communities. They refused to buy books and sent their children to school hungry, assuming the school would take care of teaching materials and meals.

A participant from Africa states that quality of education for the deaf would be greatly advanced if sign language was supported by the Consitution.

Working groups

Central question for all groups: how can we make sure that results of interventions and programmes are sustainable; in other words: what are our exit-strategies?

Working group 1 with Auma Okwany – lead and report: Nicole Metz (Oxfam Novib)

Key questions:

- How would you translate Auma's presentation into practice, in your own work environment? E.g. her position on quality education and on the inclusion of marginalised children.
- What would you do to promote sustainability of your interventions?

Discussion

The dilemma of Dutch organisations with a funding role is whether or not to invest in private schools and in boarding schools. A participating Dutch ngo feels tempted to react positively to funding proposals from private (for-profit and not-for-profit) schools, e.g. when the government's education response is too slow. Another ngo representative recognised the dilemma, and said it would be possible to finance private schools if you convince them they should open up to all children. Other participants preferred public schools, and teacher training courses for the whole population of teachers; they fear that private schools concentrate on profit making only. Auma: while we may have a preference for public schools, we need to remind ourselves that we should not use one blueprint for every situation.

We may discuss the sustainability, the long-term, but in some countries the question is: where to start? E.g. in Chad, there are multiple needs: advocacy, civil society training, teacher training. Participants stressed the need for donor coordination and harmonisation; this may also help dividing roles between actors which leads to better focus and effective use of scarce resources per actor. The IOB evaluation of 10 years of education funding by the Dutch government also included this recommendation to ngo's to focus more.

Discussion about quality of education. All participants subscribe to the importance of quality education and appreciated the different dimensions of quality, which Auma had presented earlier.

Linked to education quality, is the dimension of inclusive education. Inclusiveness should be promoted through better access to education for all including marginalised groups such as children with a disability, girls, ethnic minorities, the poorest groups; but it should also be promoted within the school system, e.g. the curriculum should be cognisant of diversity. The UN convention for inclusive education is there, but it doesn't really work well (e.g. in Zambia and Tanzania); governments don't follow it. Parents can advocate for the rights of their children; and organisations could support parents therein.

Governments often have poor monitoring practices.

Funding of the education system as a whole: several governments say they don't have sufficient funding for education. But that is not an excuse, as it may be because of the political decision to only spend a small percentage of the budget to education.

Working group 2 – lead and report: Jeanne Roefs (GCE-Netherlands)

Key question: what kind of support can we give to civil society organisations in the South?

Discussion

One of the participants challenged the principle that government is the key duty bearer in providing education for all. What about the parents' responsibility? Those of other stakeholders? An example from Nigeria was given where public schools are of very poor quality. As a consequence many private schools have been established, run by foundations, private companies etc. These schools however are not accessible for children from poor families. We agreed upon the principle that the government is responsible for providing for the infrastructure and means to make education of good quality accessible for all children. However other stakeholders should play an active part as well to secure access to good quality education for all children. Parents, children themselves, school leaders and other stakeholders like companies in whose interest it is to have an educated workforce, have an important role as well.

There was a common understanding that national education coalitions can be very effective, as was illustrated by the Verger-study. The stronger they get, the more influence they can have. An example was given from Zambia where the national and regional GCE-coalition (Ancefa) is a serious partner in national debate on education policy and has a real impact. They are however not invited to take part in education policy discussions with international institutions like the World Bank. According to the Verger study many national education coalitions are not (yet) connected with regional or international networks, and therefore are not making use of global political opportunities.

A problem of many national education coalitions seems to be that they depend on external financing and don't ask or receive contributions from their own members. During the last decade many national GCE-coalitions received financial support from the Dutch government or the Fast Track Initiative (now the Global Partnership for Education). However at this time less funding for capacity building or strengthening networks is available.

We agreed about the need to support national educations coalitions. The question is how? Options mentioned ranged from - temporary - financial support to working together in lobbying international institutions like the World Bank.

Next to support for national coalitions, support for network and advocacy activities at a local level can be provided within education programmes at grass-root level. Partners in developing countries can be stimulated to build local networks so that more local partners become involved. In strengthening a culture of engagement, involving teachers, parents and other stakeholders, social pressure will be built from bottom-up, holding governments accountable for removing inefficiencies from the education system. In this way support for top-down and bottom-up advocacy initiatives could be combined and investments in both strategies would complete and strengthen each other.

Working group 3 – lead and report: Evert-Jan Brouwer (Woord & Daad)

Key question: given the facts that international donors are withdrawing from the education sector, and that developing countries need to become more self-reliant, how can we support actors in the South to make sure that progress is being made in the education sector?

Discussion

In our discussions, the need was stressed to create

- *a culture of engagement*
- *a culture of accountability*

With a 'culture of engagement' we meant the need to involve more and more the communities in the provision and management of education. Parents and Teachers Associations need to be activated and strengthened. This will contribute to ownership.

National governments have an obligation to guarantee the right to education. A culture of engagement on community level, will help engender a 'culture of accountability'. Citizens need to build strong coalitions, both on local and on national level, to hold governments accountable for delivering on education targets. They need to create an awareness among policy makers and politicians that it is also in their own interest to invest in equitable, good quality education for all.

As much as possible mutual incentives should be created, to ensure that all actors involved work towards the same aim. Communities need to take responsibility for taking care that children do really and regularly attend school. They need to contribute to the maintenance of the school. Teachers in public schools will only get their salary if they show up daily, which can be monitored by the communities. Citizens should advocate for more public investments in education, but also for removing inefficiencies from the education system - e.g. ghost schools. Improved public management of the education system would be a great leap forward. Budget tracking/monitoring and other advocacy instruments are available to assist communities to speak out to the government and ask for what has been promised.

An unanswered question in our group was whether the goal of 'free education for all' is still feasible. One way or another, education systems need to be financed, and if external donations are dwindling,

domestic resources need replace them. Broadening the tax-base and asking a contribution from parents are options to be explored.

To sum up, making a step forward in access to and quality of education is not just a matter of (more) money from abroad. Organisations from the Netherlands need to focus increasingly on supporting and advising partners and communities in developing countries, in order to create the culture of engagement and accountability. Only such a culture can be the basis for more sustainable progress in education.

Working group 4 – lead: Karel Roos (Impulsis); report: Anneloes van Kuijk (GCE-NL)

Key question: how to define exit strategies? Are exit strategies only a euphemism for cut backs? Or are we willing to invest in international partnerships and exchange of knowledge?

Discussion

Exit strategies are a new theme: until recently the political atmosphere has been favourable to aid for education; intensive partnerships have been established, developing long term strategies. With the financial crisis and the changing perceptions on aid, both Northern and Southern parties are considering ways to increase independency. All participants of the working group agree that exit strategies should be restricted to financial sustainability: the collaboration and exchange of knowledge between partners is highly valued and should be maintained.

Participants described how their respective organisations are working towards sustainability. Strategies mentioned:

- *building networks and alliances within the South:*
    - *with similar organisations and knowledge platforms to share experiences and to increase capacity;*
    - *with universities to intensify the scientific base, e.g. of educational methods for the deaf;*
    - *with organisations that are better able to lobby for education, especially for excluded groups;*
    - *with government bodies.*
- *up scaling successful projects; a project for street children by one of the participating ngo's developed into a vocational training centre for teenage mothers.*
- *looking for multiple donors to decrease dependency on one donor;*
- *looking for income generating activities that complement the goals of the project, e.g.: TVET institutes perform paid odd jobs for the people in the community and for companies; students are subsidised by companies; the teaching materials that were developed for a project are sold to other organisations;*
- *making clear from the start that the financial funding of the project will end at a certain date, so that the partner organisation has time to look for ways to become financially sustainable.*
- *A representative of the educational union states that development projects are only taken on if there already is a partnership with the organisation involved. Preconditions for all pro-*

jects are that the partner organisation involves the local community and related organisations; and that the government and the community are in favour of the project.

- *A representative of a network of organisations in the South intends to appoint local coordinators in each country to strengthen contacts between the national Southern organisations and to increase local ownership.*
- *A representative of a private initiative asks if the government should be involved if it is corrupt? All agree that the government should be involved to enhance social sustainability, but that it is better to avoid financial transactions.*

Comments and questions

To one participant it was an eye opener that lobbying should not only focus on the Minister of Education but on other ministries as well: finance, health, labour.

There was a discussion on the role of Southern governments along the following lines:

- One of the participants claimed that if aid for education is given to governments, it will not reach the schools. It's better to have private parties to allocate the funds.
- Education is the responsibility of governments, so they should be the one to keep the budget. If control is a problem, civil society can monitor the expenditures.
- But monitoring is a problem if governments are not obliged to keep a transparent budget.
- Still, *local partners* like ministries and unions are responsible to keep track of the national expenditures.
- This can be difficult in post conflict areas. If the educational system has not been operative for a long time, it will be a long process to start things up again.
- Even in these situations, the government is the key duty bearer for education. Governments can also operate on a much larger scale than any ngo

Most participants agreed that education is a human right, to be negotiated with the government. The strategy should be: how can we get communities to hold their government accountable?

A participant concluded: instead of talking about exit-strategies, we should discuss which new roles all parties involved can, or should, take on.

Appendix: participating organisations

- African Sky
- Algemene Onderwijsbond
- Edukans
- Euroclio - European Association of History Educators
- free man management consultants
- GCE
- Haagse Hogeschool, universiteit Leiden
- HE Space Childrens Foundation
- Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Utrecht
- Impulsis
- Inca Educa
- Koninklijke Kentalis International
- Lilianefonds
- MDF
- Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken
- Nuffic
- Oxfam Novib
- Patandi College / Chavita, Tanzania
- Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
- Save the Children
- SLO
- SOS Kinderdorpen
- Steunstichting Inca Educa
- Stichting Fondsenwerving Pacung Bali
- Stichting HoPe Nederland
- Stichting Vrouwen en Arbeidsmarkt
- Stichting Welzijn Wajir
- Stichting Yojana Projecthulp
- UNAD, Uganda
- UnieNzv
- Universiteit Utrecht
- Universiteit van Amsterdam
- WEF
- Wilde Ganzen
- Woord & Daad
- ZAMISE/ZNAD, Zambia
- ZOA