

DFID consultation on 2010 education strategy: Young Lives submission

30 October 2009

Executive Summary

Young Lives welcomes the opportunity to contribute to DFID's public consultation on its draft strategy for education in 2010.¹ As a longitudinal study of childhood poverty, education is a key theme of Young Lives because of its importance to children's lives, to their futures and to national development strategies. This response is based on our research to date as well as ongoing thinking about how our work needs to develop as the two cohorts of children in our study go through school and confront opportunities, constraints and choices in their education and daily lives.

We are encouraged by DFID's shift towards a broader understanding of access to education, beyond just looking at enrolment. We also emphasise that access needs to be understood in terms of *access to quality education*. In each of our study countries our research reflects the global picture that despite progress on enrolment, there remain huge inequalities in quality. Although the power of the MDGs as an international call to action is widely acknowledged, the emphasis on enrolment has not created the incentives to engage with the quality imperative, nor has basic equity in access been achieved.

Quality of education

Intense debate over which dimensions of school quality are most important has tended to obscure three other key issues. First, the quality of schooling has an effect on children's learning and on their life outcomes. Second, it may be that there is no single universal definition of school quality as it depends on the flexibility of an educational system and its schools to respond appropriately to the needs and potential of the children they work with. Third, quality schooling, however defined and measured, is inequitably distributed across most societies. In the absence of simple composite indices of the overall quality of a school, overly simplistic proxies for school quality are often used, such as whether a school is public or private or the qualification levels of teachers. Young Lives advocates for a more holistic approach to both understanding and measuring quality.

We strongly endorse DFID's emphasis on early childhood intervention and the need to establish and protect cognitive function in early childhood. As with primary education, the quality of early years interventions is both important and often neglected, with evidence of the most disadvantaged children being least likely to access quality early childhood interventions.

Inequality of access

In addition to gender inequalities, Young Lives research speaks to acute disadvantages in education due to ethnicity, language and wealth in particular. Much research, including our own, indicates that the crisis in national education in many

¹ This submission has been written in consultation with team members in the UK and our study countries (Ethiopia, the state of Andhra Pradesh in India, Peru and Vietnam).

countries is overwhelmingly a crisis of the poorest sections of society, with both access and achievement significantly lower for the poorest 20% of our sample. We would therefore like to see DFID taking a more holistic approach that explicitly recognises the range of inequalities and the interplay of factors inside and outside the classroom, and ensuring that social protection strategies support education.

Specifically we urge DFID:

- To focus not only on education access measured through national averages but also on ensuring the most disadvantaged groups are included
- To avoid delinking access and quality issues and be explicit that access needs to be understood in terms of access to quality education
- In pursuing improvements in quality education to consider factors outside the classroom that affect children's education, as well as the quality of school resources, and what this means in relation to the role of social protection and linking education wider poverty reduction agendas.

Implications of a growing private sector on access and equity

Given its priority focus on issues of access and equality, it is striking that the DFID strategy has little to say about the implications of the growing private sector in education provision in many developing countries, and the enormous implications this has for equitable access to quality education. Our analysis confirms both the growing trend (particularly in Andhra Pradesh) and the extent to which this is reinforcing inequalities in access to quality education, from early childcare programmes onwards.

The links between education, skills and employment

On the basis of the Round 2 data collected when the older cohort of Young Lives children were 12 to 13 years old, it is already clear that education and work is by no means a linear transition, and that the majority of children are already combining work and school. Understanding that the relationship between education, skills and employment starts much earlier than post-school transitions into the labour market is very important, yet is missing from the DFID strategy.

Given that the majority of children already combine work and school, we argue that DFID's strategy needs to better reflect this reality, or risk assuming a linear education-to-work transition which is simply not the case in most countries, as well as exacerbating rather than addressing the challenges that working children face in juggling work and school.

Education and economic growth

In terms of the relationship between education and economic growth, our evidence of ongoing inequalities between groups of children suggests that while growth may reduce poverty for some children, it cannot be relied on to deliver for all children. We provide clear evidence that economic growth doesn't automatically reduce poverty, malnutrition and barriers to education, particularly for the poorest and most marginalised sections of society. Once again, tackling the systemic reasons why some children are particularly disadvantaged is of the utmost importance, especially when considering the role of education.

Targeting and using research and evaluation in DFID's work

While research projects have huge potential to support policymaking, communication at the end of the research process is often far less effective than engagement with

different actors right the way through. Researchers need to engage with policy actors in finding the right questions to ask, as well as interpreting the answers.

Our major insight from our interaction with policymakers to date is that more should be done to move beyond a heavy reliance on measures of (hard) infrastructure quality to examine the impact of the school environment and teaching styles on children's learning. We have identified four broad aspects of school quality: Infrastructure and facilities; School effectiveness and organisation; Opportunities to learn; and Quality of the learning process.

Introduction

Young Lives welcomes the opportunity to contribute to DFID's public consultation on its draft strategy for education in 2010. Core-funded by DFID Research, Young Lives is a longitudinal study of childhood poverty, tracking 12,000 children in 4 countries over 15 years.² The study design includes two cohorts of children, the older cohort born in 1994/5 (now aged around 14-15 years) and a younger cohort born in 2001/02 (now aged around 7-8 years). We use both survey and in-depth research methods to improve understanding of the causes and consequences of childhood poverty. We also examine how policies affect children's well-being in order to inform the development and implementation of policies and practices that will reduce childhood poverty.

Education is a key theme of Young Lives research and analysis because of its importance to children's lives, to their futures and to national development strategies. This response is based on analysis of existing Young Lives data. We are also in the process of planning a specific school-based component, which will collect data on some of the schools attended by our sample children enabling us to examine some of the drivers of school performance and educational success, and link this with broader child and household data.

We are encouraged by DFID's shift towards a broader understanding of access to education, beyond just looking at enrolment. We also emphasise that access needs to be understood in terms of *access to quality education*. In each of the four countries in the Young Lives survey our research reflects the global picture that despite progress on enrolment, there remain huge inequalities in quality. Although the power of the MDGs as an international call to action is widely acknowledged, the emphasis on enrolment has not created the incentives to engage with the quality imperative (UNESCO 2005), nor has basic equity in access been achieved. In this sense the three priority areas outlined in DFID's draft education strategy reflect wider international priorities for education and unlocking its transformative potential in the lives of individuals and whole societies.

Access and equality (section 4 of strategy)

4.1 Increasing access, delivering equality

The drive towards ensuring more equitable access to quality education goes hand-in-hand with tackling broader inequalities in society (UNESCO 2009) and meeting the educational needs of children from all sorts of backgrounds. Strikingly, DFID's strategy document presents a rather narrow perspective of the inequalities that exist in education, and while the focus on gender is necessary it is not sufficient. There are a wide range of often interacting drivers of inequality in education including wealth,

² See the Young Lives website at www.younglives.org.uk.

ethnicity, poor health caste, language, geographic location, levels of parental education and disability.

Young Lives research speaks to disadvantages due to ethnicity and wealth in particular. Young Lives analysis has highlighted other inequalities, for example the marginalisation of particular ethnic groups in Vietnam and also in Peru (Escobal et al. 2008; Le Thuc Duc et al. 2008). Much research, including from Young Lives, indicates that the crisis in national education in many countries is overwhelmingly a crisis of the poor, with both access and achievement significantly lower for the poorest 20% (Cueto et al. 2005; UNESCO 2008; Woodhead et al. forthcoming 2009). We would therefore like to see DFID taking a more holistic approach that explicitly recognises the range of inequalities and the interplay of factors inside and outside the classroom, and ensuring that social protection strategies support education.

Specifically we urge DFID:

- To focus not only on education access measured through national averages but also on ensuring the most disadvantaged groups are included
- To avoid delinking access and quality issues and be explicit that access needs to be understood in terms of access to quality education
- In pursuing improvements in quality education to consider factors outside the classroom that affect children's education, as well as the quality of school resources, and what this means in relation to the role of social protection and linking education wider poverty reduction agendas.

4.3 Question: How do we move beyond access to ensuring girls and boys receive fair and equitable treatment within the education system and as they progress into the workplace?

Tackling the ways in which inequalities persist and/or widen over time throughout the school system and into the workplace is an important priority for DFID. In seeking answers to this question, however, it is important that the scope is broadened to include a range of inequalities in education. The Young Lives evidence across all four countries points to key drivers of inequality in education including gender, ethnicity, language, rural/urban location, wealth and level of parental education (Cueto 2008). In India caste is also a key driver (Nair 2009; Sinha 2009). Furthermore, it is important not to see these inequality drivers in isolation from each other - a girl from a tribal community in rural India who comes from a poor family and whose parents are not educated will be at an acute disadvantage in the education system due to a convergence of all these factors.

Persistent inequalities in education

The Young Lives research has looked at some of the ways in which school systems are amplifying rather than reducing inequalities through differential access and quality within the education system. We have found that these drivers of inequality not only impact on children's access to education, but also on their learning outcomes over time (Cueto 2008; Cueto et al. 2009a; Nair 2009; Truong 2009). Comparing the younger and older cohorts we see that some of these inequality gaps widen as children get older. With regard to parental education, the gap found for the younger cohort gets larger for the older cohort, suggesting that the social system favours the development of cognitive skills for children with parents with more education. With regard to rural/urban location, the gap between the outcomes for rural and urban children gets larger for Ethiopia as the children age and smaller for

Vietnam. In the other two countries the gap remains about the same but was already large to begin with (Cueto 2008).

Young Lives data from Ethiopia shows higher maternal education levels are associated with lower educational drop-out rates (Woldehanna 2008) and in Andhra Pradesh lower parental education (together with the household's economic situation) seems to be one of the key explanatory factors in the apparent differences between children from scheduled castes and tribes and other children (Nair 2009).

Language is a hugely important factor in children's access to education, subsequent drop-out rates, and the quality of the education process and learning outcomes, yet it is a neglected area in policy terms (Save the Children UK 2008). Young Lives research confirms that language is one of the biggest drivers of inequality in education in Vietnam and Peru,³ both countries where minority groups speak a different language at home to the one they study in at school (Cueto 2008; Nguyen forthcoming 2010). It would therefore be encouraging to see the issue of language and ethnicity as a distinct priority area in DFID's strategy, both in terms of increasing access and equality for disadvantaged groups, and in terms of improving the quality of education.

With regard to gender, Young Lives data underlines the importance of not only looking at enrolment but also continued attendance. As a particular example, though primary enrolment has increased we have clear evidence of different patterns of withdrawal from education. In Ethiopia, Young Lives data shows that children in rural areas and girls were both more likely to be withdrawn from education (Woldehanna 2008). Likewise in India, while almost equal numbers of boys and girls start in school, girls, especially in rural areas, are more likely to drop out than boys (Galab et al. 2008). In terms of spending, there seems to be evidence that parents spend more money on their sons than their daughters. In Ethiopia, India and Vietnam, parents spend more on their sons for school-related expenses in both the younger and the older cohorts (Young Lives 2009a). In India, parents are also more likely to send boys to private schools that they believe will provide better quality education (Himaz 2009). However, there are some areas where boys do not fare so well. In Peru, 60% of 12-year-old children are over-age (older than they should be for their class), either because they started school late or because they have been kept back for poor achievement. This applies particularly to boys (Escobal et al. 2008).

Access and equity: the role of social protection and linking to wider poverty debates

Given the need to address the relationship between education and poverty more systemically, we urge DFID to consider the role that social protection can play in improving access and equality in education and to support children's overall development and well-being. Analysis of Young Lives data from Andhra Pradesh has shown found positive effects on children's weight for age (comparing Midday Meal Scheme recipients and non-recipients), with particularly large differences where drought had been experienced (suggesting the protective effect of the scheme). The same research also found receipt of the scheme was positively associated with better vocabulary scores (measured using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test), a finding the authors suggest could be explained either by a direct effect on learning through better nutrition or better concentration or by improved attendance (Porter, Singh and Sinha 2009).

³ Also true for sub-groups in Andhra Pradesh and Ethiopia.

As well as the benefits of nutritional programmes in supporting enrolment and cognitive attainment, wider social protection programmes also have effects on education. For example, analysis of one social protection programme in Ethiopia (the Participatory Demonstration and Training Extension System, PADETES) showed positive effects of reduced time spent on paid work and on household chores (with girls seeing the more substantive effects) and with increased time spent studying (though only the results for girls were significant) (Yablonski and Woldehanna 2008). Although it should be noted that another scheme (the Employment Generation Scheme) showed opposite results – with children spending more time working and less studying – highlighting the need for effectively designed social protection programmes that include a focus on children and their specific needs as a matter of course.

Implications of a growing private sector on access and equity

Finally, given its priority focus on issues of access and equality, it is striking that the DFID strategy has little to say about the implications of the growing private sector in education provision in many developing countries and the enormous implications this has for equitable access to quality education (Kingdon 1996; Kingdon forthcoming; Fennell 2007; Casely-Hayford forthcoming). Young Lives analysis confirms both the growing trend (particularly in Andhra Pradesh) and the extent to which this is reinforcing inequalities in access to quality education, from early childcare programmes onwards (Woodhead et al. 2009).

Improving quality (section 5 of strategy)

5.1 Improving the quality of education

While 94% of Young Lives children in the older cohort were enrolled in school in Ethiopia during the second round of data collection, 39% failed to read a simple sentence (Dercon 2008a).⁴ Unpacking this by asking the question *why*, reveals a whole range of factors that can be examined independently, but which more importantly need to be seen as connected in order to really grapple with the challenge of improving education quality and children's learning outcomes. As noted elsewhere in this submission, Young Lives is planning a school-based component to its work to collect additional data and to help extend analysis of what drives educational quality, including to capture a wider and more sophisticated range of information about what may be driving educational engagement and performance.

Intense debate over which dimensions of school quality are most important has tended to obscure three other key issues. First, it may be that there is no single universal definition of school quality as it depends on the flexibility of an educational system and its schools to respond appropriately to the needs and potential of the children they work with. Second, quality schooling, however defined and measured, is inequitably distributed across most societies. Third, the quality of schooling has some effect on children's learning and on their life outcomes. In the absence of simple composite indices of the overall quality of a school, overly simplistic proxies for school quality are often used, such as whether a school is public or private or the qualification levels of teachers.

⁴ Similarly in India, while 89% of children in the older cohort were enrolled in school in India in Round 2 of our research, 18% failed to read a simple sentence. An example sentence used in the tests was 'the sun is hot'. See Cueto et al. 2009b.

As discussed elsewhere in this submission, while Young Lives welcomes DFID's commitment to a 'greater focus on what happens in the classroom' in terms of teachers, teaching and learning, it is clear that there are multiple influences on school enrolment, learning, teaching quality and skills development, and that these factors are not only confined to what is happening inside the school. Furthermore, in taking a holistic approach, quality education becomes more than just about learning outcomes, and relates to a child's overall experience of learning and the school environment. Young Lives evidence points to the importance of tackling issues relating to exclusion and discrimination in the school, violence and punishment, and children's enjoyment or not of the school experience.

In addition to more usual questions about influences on children's educational attainment, the Young Lives school-based component will be able to examine the associations between school quality and other outcomes, such as self-esteem, psycho-social well-being and continuing education, as well as measures of poverty and social exclusion. In the long-term, Young Lives has potential to trace the impact of school quality variables on children's position in the labour market as young adults and their relative poverty, household circumstances, marriage and reproduction.

5.2 Questions: How do we effectively target and coordinate the appropriate suite of early childhood interventions?

We strongly endorse the emphasis on early childhood intervention and the need to establish and protect cognitive functions in early childhood. This section makes several key interlinked points, that early childcare programmes are now the norm in many countries, and so quality and access to these schemes is important, as too is the link between this tier and other stages of education. Our evidence also powerfully demonstrates that child development occurs within a context and so it is important to ensure effective linkages between different influences on childhood development, for example improved nutrition and better educational outcomes.

It is now widely acknowledged that children who face nutritional deficiencies in early childhood also face learning difficulties leading to lower educational attainment (Grantham-McGregor et al. 2007). *The Lancet* series on child development drew global attention to the fact that 200 million children in developing countries are not reaching their 'developmental potential' and that despite convincing evidence, which Young Lives research endorses, programme coverage for early childhood development remains inadequate (Engle et al. 2007). Young Lives data confirms the effects that nutritional deficiencies can have on cognitive abilities: our evidence from India and Vietnam indicates that children who are stunted at 1 year of age and 5 years old are more likely to have lower levels of cognitive ability than other children at the age of 5, regardless of their socio-economic background or their parents' own levels of education (Helmerts and Patnam 2009; Le Thuc Duc 2009). Cross-country analysis shows that, controlling for other factors, stunted children in our sample have lower levels of reading, writing and mathematical skills than other children at age 12 (Dercon 2008b). In Ethiopia, we find that stunted children in our sample are nearly one whole grade behind non-stunted children at age 12 (Dercon 2008b).

Young Lives welcomes DFID's commitment to taking a holistic perspective that recognises the inter-dependence of primary, secondary and tertiary education but point out that this perspective also needs to draw in the often neglected area of early childhood development. The potential of early childhood interventions is now widely recognised (Siraj-Blatchford and Woodhead forthcoming 2009). One review suggests ingredients for effectiveness include: ensuring poor children are included within schemes; having sufficient qualified teachers with enough time to spend on

children and also with parents; having a broad based curriculum which focuses on skills including cognitive, social and emotional as well as reading and maths; including some form of continuous assessment (with centres and programmes being supported to learn from their performance) (see Siraj-Blatchford and Woodhead forthcoming 2009)

Not only do early childhood experiences and conditions have consequences later in life, but early child programmes are widespread and in three out of four Young Lives countries the experience of some form of pre-school activities is now the norm. For the younger children in the Young Lives survey (aged 5 or 6 when the caregiver was interviewed), in three of the study areas (Andhra Pradesh in India, Peru and Vietnam) large majorities of the younger cohort of children interviewed had experienced pre-school activities (ranging from 84% in Peru to 94% in Vietnam). Though only a minority of children experienced these services in Ethiopia (25%), this masks a large differential between children growing up in urban and rural locations (58% and 4%) (Woodhead et al. 2009).

The aggregate findings also mask large poverty-related differentials in equity and quality. Young Lives data on Peru shows that though nearly all children with better educated mothers accessed pre-school before they enter primary school compared with two thirds where mothers had low levels of education. (Ames 2009; Woodhead et al. 2009). As with primary education, the quality of early years interventions is both important and often neglected, with evidence of the most disadvantaged children being least likely to access quality early childhood interventions (Woodhead et al. 2009). Young Lives research has, for example, looked at the benefits of pre-school activity in Peru, (the Wawa Wasi scheme which provides day-care services for children aged around 1 to 4 years of age). Our analysis indicates that though this scheme was popular with parents (most probably because it supported parental employment) there was no demonstrable cognitive effect from the programme, which the analysis suggested is due to the variable (and low) quality of the scheme, suggesting that improved investment and training of those running the Wawa Wasi centres would increase its impact (Cueto et al. 2009c).

5.3 Questions: What learning outcomes, measurements and approaches are most practicable in low resource contexts?

In terms of measuring educational achievement, in the past few decades several international testing programmes have been developed, including PIRLS (on reading), TIMSS (on math and science achievement),⁵ and PISA (on reading comprehension, math and scientific literacy).⁶ A few developing countries have participated in these studies, although none of the countries in the Young Lives sample have except for Peru's participation in PISA 2001. However, there have been regional attempts to measure achievement in Africa (SACMEQ)⁷ and Latin America (LLECE).⁸ From our own work, though we use 'standardised' tests, we are aware of

⁵ TIMSS is the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study and PIRLS is the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, both organised by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (<http://www.iea.nl/>).

⁶ The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is organised by the OECD (<http://www.pisa.oecd.org>).

⁷ The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality includes 15 countries, but not Ethiopia (<http://www.sacmeq.org/>).

⁸ The Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education is run by UNESCO and has organised two rounds of data collection, in which Peru has participated (<http://portal.unesco.org>).

the cultural and comparability problems (for example around culturally appropriate words or the extent to which children may be used to written tests) (Cueto et al. 2009b).

In the course of our own research on education Young Lives has reflected on appropriate methodologies, techniques and indicators, as well as ensuring joined-up data collection and analysis with governments and other national bodies. While Young Lives agrees that DFID should explore new ways of measuring learning outcomes to inform systemic learning improvements in developing countries, DFID also needs to be wary of approaching this in too narrow a way that places pressure on children and teachers, and at the same time fails to shed light on what the opportunities and barriers to learning are. For example, we know that language is a central factor in children's achievement at school, and that for a child from a minority background studying in a language that is not their mother tongue, test results can be misleading.⁹

Moreover testing can itself disrupt the learning process and have an impact on children's educational opportunities. Though it is important to evaluate education attainment, in order to be effective therefore, measuring learning outcomes must contribute to enabling children's development, and avoid becoming mechanistic or prescriptive. It also needs to be thought through at all levels of the education system, for example, if a child is tested at age 7 or 8, what is then done with that information? Testing carries with it the danger of labelling children early on, which could profoundly affect their educational opportunities and experience.

Employment and growth (section 6 of strategy)

6.1 The links of education, skills, employment and growth

As a longitudinal study tracking the lives of children over time, Young Lives is well placed to demonstrate the links between education, the skills children gain through different forms of education and learning, employment and individual pathways into or out of poverty. With the third round of data, currently being collected in each of the four study countries, and the older cohort between 15 and 16 years of age we will begin to see their experiences of post-school transitions.¹⁰ The fourth round of data will be collected in 2012 when the older cohort will be 18 to 19 years old, providing valuable evidence of the linkages between children's pathways through early childhood, basic and secondary education, and their opportunities later in life.

However, on the basis of the Round 2 data collected when the older cohort of Young Lives children were 12 to 13 years old, it is already clear that education and work is by no means a linear transition, and that the majority of children are already combining work and school. Understanding that the relationship between education, skills and employment starts much earlier than post-school transitions into the labour market is very important, yet is missing from the DFID strategy.

In terms of the relationship between education and economic growth, our evidence of ongoing inequalities between groups of children suggests that while growth may reduce poverty for some children, it cannot be relied on to deliver for all children. The pro-poor sample in Young Lives tells the story of persistent poverty in the context of

⁹ Young Lives has considered this in our own methodology and analysis of test scores. See Cueto et al. 2009b.

¹⁰ Round 3 of data collection is underway in late 2009 and will be available for analysis from mid-2010.

economic growth (in relation to the 'bottom 20%' of households, ranked by expenditure), especially in India, Peru and Vietnam. We provide clear evidence that economic growth doesn't automatically reduce poverty, malnutrition and barriers to education, particularly for the poorest and most marginalised sections of society. Once again, tackling the systemic reasons why some children are particularly disadvantaged is of the utmost importance, especially when considering the role of education.

6.3 Questions: How do we help make evidence-based decisions on improving the links between school and work?

The complex relationship between work, education and learning is much more complex than is often understood. Young Lives evidence shows that the assumed dichotomy between work and school is a false one and that the majority of children combine both (Boyden 2009; Camfield forthcoming 2010; Heissler and Porter 2009; Morrow and Vennam 2009; Orkin 2009). Furthermore the evidence shows that children can gain positive skills through work, both in terms of social and life skills and readiness for post-school transitions into the labour market and starting their own families (Boyden et al. 1998; Crivello forthcoming 2010; Orkin 2009; Young Lives 2009b). At the same time, the distinction between hazardous and non-hazardous work is clearly an important one, though children themselves have strong perceptions of what constitutes 'good' and 'bad' work and these are not always in line with national policies (Morrow and Vennam 2008; Orkin 2009; Woodhead et al. 1998).

It is clear that internal factors within the school, most notably the quality of education on offer but also the treatment of children and how children feel about school, can influence how much time children spend working rather than studying or going to school (Ames et al. 2009). If the education quality is poor, children and their families may decide that work experience will lead to better employment opportunities in the long-term than completing school (Heissler and Porter 2009). The flipside of this is that one of the key drivers of child work is children covering the costs of their own education (or the education of siblings) through paid work in the belief that this will lead to better employment and a higher standard of living in the future (Boyden 2009; Crivello forthcoming 2010; Young Lives 2009b).

Given that the majority of children already combine work and school, we argue that DFID's strategy needs to better reflect this reality, or risk assuming a linear education-to-work transition which is simply not the case in most countries, as well as exacerbating rather than addressing the challenges that working children face in juggling work and school.

Delivering our programmes (section of 7 of strategy)

7.3 Questions: better use of research

Issues related to education access, quality, achievement and outcomes have been central to recent policy research programmes, notably, the DFID-funded Education Research Consortia (CREATE,¹¹ EdQual¹² and RECOUP¹³). However, there are no

¹¹ Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (<http://www.create-rpc.org>).

¹² Research Consortium on Educational Outcomes and Poverty (RECOUP) (<http://recoup.educ.cam.ac.uk>).

¹³ Research Programme Consortium on Implementing Education Quality in Low Income Countries (<http://www.edqual.org>).

universally accepted measures of quality across disciplines examining education. Indeed, even outside of academia there is little consensus, as children, parents, teachers and education authorities can have quite different, even conflicting views about what constitutes a quality education and how to measure it.

Reflecting this complexity, Young Lives has experienced the importance of engaging a range of different actors in a consultative process for developing a Young Lives school-based component (referred to above). The varied insights of research and policy actors across different countries are invaluable in identifying what types of indicators to include for researching education and specifically school quality.

Our major insight from this process is that more should be done (as the Young Lives school-based component aims to do) to move beyond a heavy reliance on measures of (hard) infrastructure quality to examine the impact of the school environment and teaching styles on children's learning. Through this process we have identified four broad aspects of school quality: Infrastructure and facilities; School effectiveness and organisation; Opportunities to learn; and Quality of the learning process. We will now have detailed household and school data on a large scale over time with far-reaching implications.

We also point to the fact that national governments collect a great deal of data, and for education research to be effectively utilised it needs to be matched against this existing data (though this does raise ethical issues). We hope, for example, to link Young Lives data to existing databases on schools, as we are doing in Andhra Pradesh in India (linking with the District Information System for Education), which will place our findings within a broader national context.

Finally, while research projects can have huge potential for evidence-based policymaking, communication at the end of the research process is often far less effective than engagement with different actors right the way through. For education research to be targeted and well utilised, researchers need to engage with policy actors in finding the right questions to ask, as well as interpreting the answers.

Contact Details:

Helen Murray, Young Lives Policy Officer
Department of International Development,
University of Oxford,
3 Mansfield Road,
Oxford, UK
OX1 3TB
Tel: +44 (0)1865 281759
Email: helen.murray@qeh.ox.ac.uk

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