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Improving quality in education: A challenging task?

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Improving Quality in Education
A Challenging Task?

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PREAMBLE

> Mary sits on the floor of her first-grade classroom in the semi-rural school she attends in Sogeri, Papua New Guinea. She is working with a group of four on a picture, which is drawn and painted cooperatively, as there are not enough pencils for all children. Her young teacher walks around, addresses them in a friendly and informal way, most of the time in Pidgin English but switches when he wants children to attend to new English words. Next year when Mary moves to second grade she will no longer be comfortably seated on the ground as she does at home and now at school, but will have to share tables with others and observe a different style of interaction with her teacher.
>
> Mohammed also sits in a cross-legged position on the mat that covers the ground of his makeshift school near Gazipur in Bangladesh. He is one of the few boys in this third year of the BRAC[1] school and is lucky to have the opportunity to learn what is needed to get into the government primary school when he finishes this year. He has a pile of books in front of him as have all the other 30 girls and some boys. He lets me look at the books and when I return them he carefully takes one by one and orders them as they were before I disarranged them. They are precious to him.
>
> Gwendolyn (her name presumably was borrowed from TV by her parents) is a fourth grade Chilean pupil in a very poor neighbourhood in Santiago. Her school, however, has been favoured by the education reform with a good building and teaching materials. Gwendolyn´s parents sell produce in the market as I learn from her comments during the class. Her young teacher struggles to develop language skills among all of the 45 pupils in the class, but Gwendolyn always has something to say – generally, good questions and comments. Many others remain silent. They will be helped at some point by Katherine, their teacher, but minimally given the time she has available and the number of children she must attend to.

In all the above cases, I witnessed teachers and children engaged in education activities that had a meaning for them. In each one there were different pedagogic skills being used and different understandings of how to deal with contexts. And, inevitably I wonder, how did Mary face the transition to the structured and highly directive second grade even though presumably Pidgin would continue to be the language of instruction until she reached the fifth grade? How will Mohammed face the dullness of the primary school he will be attending next year? Will his books still be his most precious possession? Gwendolyn had a change of teacher this year: was she still allowed to express her views so openly, to question her teacher on the basis of sound judgements? These questions are just part of the issues relating to education quality.

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[1] Run by a well-known non-government organisation in Bangladesh that caters for out-of-school children. To be referred to later in the paper.

I. Introduction

Quality has two dictionary meanings. One refers to excellence as an absolute. The other meaning refers to what is being characterised and whether it is the same or better than others in its species. It is obvious from the examples above that only the second meaning is applicable to discussing the quality of education. Such discussion, therefore, requires understanding of the "nature of the beast".

The purposes of education may emphasise either a "utilitarian" end in the narrow sense of the word (education is precisely **for** this) or a "broad human development" goal. The utilitarian focus locates the purpose of education outside the individual being educated, while the human development view locates it in the person as such. The discussion underlines the tension reflected throughout the history of Western education between the individual and the citizen: the Socratic self or Quintilian's orator. The discussion also reflects the tension between the interests of each person and those of the State.

As nations became independent either in the early nineteenth century (the case of Latin America) or in the second half of the twentieth century a major concern fitting the utilitarian purpose was to link education to the goal of nation building. Education systems in Latin America all defined this as their purpose and the State became the major initiator and provider of education services through most of the twentieth century. National states in Asia and Africa that gained independence later were also committed to the goal of nation building, but being in fragile economic contexts their heavy demands for education could not be met without international aid and private providers.

In the current context of the twenty first century, in most countries education as a tool for "nation-building" is no longer the prevailing view. A stronger "utilitarian" perspective considers education as a tool for economic development and competitiveness and the individual to be educated as "human capital". The "human

capital" theory developed in the mid-nineties operates now within the neo-liberal economic policy framework that is a dominant feature of the "global" world. In this context many of the institutions that influence education policies and actions (national and international) offer package solutions to the problems of education such as privatisation, vouchers, incentives, presenting them as keys for the achievement of quality. The most important of these institutions are the OECD and the international Banks (Spring, 1998).

The goal of education as a process oriented towards human, personal and social development is part of the other pole of discussions on quality, also with a history and presence in ideas, policies and institutions. Paulo Freire's concept of "liberating" education (and education as "consciousness-raising") influenced not only the "popular education" movement in Latin America and Guinea-Bissau but also the formulation of national goals in a newly independent country[2]. International policy documents such as the Faure Report (1972) referred to the purpose of education as development clothed in the garb of human growth: "in all the richness of his personality, the complexity of his forms of expression and his various commitments –as individual, member of a family and of a community, citizen and producer, inventor of techniques and creative dreamer" (Faure, 1972, p. VI). The Jomtien Declaration on Education for All (Inter-agency Commission (1990) in turn offered an "expanded vision of education" in pro of human development for which appropriate policies and funding would be needed. The Delors Report (1996) in line with the Jomtien vision questioned the narrow view of economic

[2] Papua New Guinea's national constitution defined the country's goal of "integral human development", as allowing "every person to be dynamically involved in the process of freeing himself or herself from every form of domination or oppression .. [and] to develop as a whole person in relationship with others". The country's statement of a philosophy of education in turn expressed this goal as integrating and maximising "socialisation, participation, liberation, equality" (Ministerial Committee Report, 1986). This statement overtly rejected the notion of narrowing the scope of education to its purpose of employment, largely based on the recognition that has proved true to an extent, that most young people would not be involved in the modern economy for many years to come.

development as the goal for education and focused rather on how people learn: to know, to do, to be and to be with others. More recently, UNESCO and UNICEF have put the accent on human rights and the right to education (UNESCO, 2002; Chaubey, 2003).

Institutions and groups with unequal power support each of these two poles of tension around the purpose of education. The dominant view as we said earlier is embedded in the human capital and neo-liberal economists' tenets. Its advocates are persons and institutions with a strong voice and knowledge base. People and groups who have equity and human rights in the forefront support the second view. These groups are less powerful to influence decisions but nevertheless are forceful in their arguments and actions[3]. Their views cannot be ignored.

Wherever one stands between these two poles will mean a different interpretation of what is the meaning of quality in education and of what is needed for its improvement. There is no easy solution to this dilemma. Therefore, in what follows of this paper the issues I discuss, how they are dealt with and with what results, attempt to recognise these tensions.

II. A framework for the analysis

This section sets out the elements to be considered in the review. These elements include assumptions or taken for granted positions, a set of questions about education needs, key factors known to affect quality in education (specifically schooling), and hypothetical links between questions and factors

[3] For example, in Latin America there is a widespread network of critics of the neo-liberal focus of education policies that communicates via Internet. There are institutions and groups that check on educational policies; one such example being the Citizen Education Observatory in Mexico <www.observatorio.org>. EducationWatch (Campaign for Popular Eduction) in Bangladesh is another example. The Seattle protests at the World Trade Organisation meeting are often cited as an example of people power.

Assumptions

First of all, tensions are recognised and accepted throughout the discussions. Though they have an ideological origin tensions are part of living together in the same world. In the 1930s Bertrand Russell proposed that the tension between the individual and the citizen be resolved through the concept of "world citizenship" (1984). Today the equivalent to Russell's concept is globalisation in the best sense of the word: cultural and linguistic identities and global forms of equitable and sustainable development (Friedman, 2000; Singer, 2002; Arocena, 2000).

Secondly, in accepting tensions every effort is made to avoid middle points or the "neutral consensus" that governs the language of many educational policy documents (Brunner, 2002). In keeping people in mind, the choice is to favour education as a tool for personal development, social inclusion and participation rather than solely as a tool for human capital formation

Thirdly, every effort is also made to resist the temptation of providing "laundry lists" of what works for education quality because they minimise contextual differences and their effects on human and social development[4].

Questions

Below are questions that serve to organise the main contents of this paper.

1. What education processes best develop people's capabilities? This question that refers to the goal presented in the EFA Monitoring Report (2002, p. 31), has many responses. José Martí, the Cuban educator, provides a philosophical one: "give man the keys to the world, which are independence and love, and … the

[4] A recent book published in Chile titled *Ideas for Quality Education* (Sotomayor, 2002) seems to try to do just that. It contains a set of articles touching on various points of intervention in the education system that might make a difference, but in reality it points in one direction: school management, incentives to improve learning, and efficient resource allocation.

strength to journey on his own, light of step, a spontaneous and free being" (quoted in Nassif, 1994). Howard Gardner, from a psychological perspective, contrasts "basic skills" purposes with achievement of "performances of disciplinary (or genuine) understanding" (Gardner, 1991,p. 9).

2. What is needed to make education relevant to cultural contexts? Why is it important to consider cultural relevance in a world of global forces?

> … Education is not an island, but part of the continent of culture. It asks first what function 'education' serves in the culture and what role it plays in the lives of those who operate within it. Its next question might be why education is situated in the culture as it is, and how this placement reflects the distribution of power, status, and other benefits. Inevitably, and virtually from the start, culturalism also asks about the enabling resources made available to people to cope, and what portion of those resources is made available through 'education,' institutionally conceived. And it will constantly be concerned with constraints imposed on the process of education –external ones like the organization of schools and classrooms or the recruitment of teachers, and internal ones like the natural or imposed distribution of native endowment, for native endowment may be as much affected by the accessibility of symbolic systems as by the distribution of genes (Jerome Brunner, 1996, p. 11).

3. What kind of educational processes are needed to further a democratic political and social system? This question is relevant for the building or reconstructing of democracies as in the case of South Africa, Chile or East Timor. Countries emerging from war and counting on stopping future wars need answers to this question, as do also existing democracies that require the integration of its excluded populations.

4. Last but not least, is the question about what education for what economic growth is needed? Specific answers refer to the technological knowledge needed for production. More general responses centre on the "codes of modern society" (ECLAC-UNESCO report (1992, p. 149): people "who are capable of thinking about themselves, determining their needs and wants, forming an

integrated whole, reacting to a changing environment, and engaging in complex problem solving".

Factors affecting quality

Quality is affected by composites of factors that may be negative or enhancing ones. Negative factors slow down or impede the delivery or reception of quality education and may be described as external to education or located within the systems that support them. A number of external negative factors are outlined in the EFA Monitoring Report (2002): poor national economies, poverty, HIV/AIDS, wars and resulting displacement of people. Negative factors located within the educational systems are described as combinations of inefficient bureaucracies, inadequate cultural and educational background of teachers, depressed teaching conditions (salaries, crowded classrooms, lack of resources), policy inflation (multiplicity and heterogeneity of responses to problems), lack of autonomy in management and pedagogy (teaching methods and forms of relating to students).

Not surprisingly factors that enhance quality are often the reverse of the medal of the negative factors. Those that affect education from without are generally not in the hands of the educational policy maker nor even of single governments. Without economic growth some countries may not be able to afford quality education systems for all their population. Yet economic growth is not the simple effect of the country's efforts to grow. The well-publicised recent Cancun World Trade Organization conference helped to understand that without removal of certain trade restrictions it will be difficult for certain countries to grow out of poverty[5]. Among the internal factors that could improve education quality those most cited refer to teachers and their

[5] The role of globalised forces and international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in setting the terms for loans are the subject of many critics, including the policies set for education development. See for example Stiglitz (2002), Spring (1998) and Singer (2002).

education, to compensatory schemes for various forms of disadvantage, to stimulus for better performance and to the establishment of quality control systems. Inputs such as teaching resources, appropriate curriculum, and competent school management structures are also listed among these factors.

Hypotheses

On the basis of the elements discussed the following figure suggests what combination of schooling factors that are amenable to intervention could address the questions set out in the preceding section. The figure refers to combinations of factors presumed to have an effect on the goals presented in the left column. It hypothesises as to how strong their influence on quality might be, on the basis of what is known through research and experiences. Thus while it may be crucial to get some of these factors working in the appropriate direction (strong arrow), others (weak arrow) require more evidence about how they affect the quality of education although they are known to do so. Finally, the figure suggests a set of enabling processes that are the subject of current discussions and different interpretations.

The rest of the paper develops these elements on the basis of the four central questions about educational purposes.

Figure 1: What factors and processes achieve broad education quality goals (embedded in questions)

Quality Education Goals		**Enhancing Factors**
Developing people capabilities	←	Comprehensive culturally sensitive education system (language, heritage)
	←	Relevant and appropriate curriculum frameworks and syllabuses
Educating within the cultural context as well as opening to the world	←	Resources in appropriate combinations (time, materials, teaching & learning environment)
Building or reconstructing democracy and enabling citizen participation	←	Meaningful and affective pedagogical interactions (relations, strategies, management)
Preparing for economic and productive participation	←	Supportive administrative and management systems (in and out of the school)
	←	Targeted actions and inclusive education schemes
	←	Teacher / Educator knowledge and capability

Enabling Policies

Teacher Education
Measurement of Educational Results
Flexible and self-sufficient management
Control of Quality

III. Quality education goals: issues and experiences

1. Development of people's capabilities

From the perspective of schooling these capabilities often appear as goals in educational policy documents, or as statements about expected outcomes of educational reforms. In this paper, they are described as cognitive, social, emotional and as capabilities related to practical / moral judgment. Through a combination of relevant curriculum and teaching interactions, children are expected to develop these capabilities to levels of competence more or less precisely described. In the context of Education for All targets it is important to clarify what may be expected and how this may happen.

Cognitive skills

Basic skills such as reading comprehension, writing meaningful texts, numerical understanding and computational capacities are considered to be minimal achievements that four or five years of schooling should make possible for each child. But learning is not restricted to basic skills. "Higher mental processes" are involved in the continued capacity to learn that is repeatedly emphasised in policy documents.

Current theorising about learning centres on "understanding" and "meaning" as key higher order mental processes involved at any level of learning. Neuropsychological research explains learning as the processing of new information through the act of connecting with prior understanding or prior concepts. Learners construct meaning on the basis of activities that stimulate thinking, connecting and representing in visible forms. Given this view all learning is of a higher order. It is not a linear sequence that proceeds from basic skills to higher ones, on the assumption that "one must crawl before one can walk" Gardner (1991, p. 120). Rejecting the notion of basic skills as preceding understanding also calls into question the typical rote memorisation teaching.

According to these views the cognitive goals of an education system are better described as “increasing abstraction capabilities, increasing capacity to think in systems, increasing capacity to learn how to learn” (Cox, 1999). In practice this means that learning to speak and to use language, learning to count and learning to make sense of the world around you, are processes that occur in a continuum of growing capacity to make meaning and to show evidence of this through performance (Gardner, 1991).

Social skills

The ability to interact with others, to learn with others, to produce solutions that have a social impact is developed as much outside as inside the school. However, it is in schools that interactions, messages and experiences are integrated with new learning in ways that have personal and social significance. Dealing with situations related to poverty such as recognising what is or not safe water or managing highly demanding tasks such as becoming a family provider in an HIV/AIDS stricken situation are specific skills that schools may have to undertake, relying simultaneously on producing understanding and commitment to social responsibility. Thus like in the case of cognitive skills, social skills also involve concept growth within a broad rather than narrow understanding of their importance.

Practical / moral judgement capabilities

Development of moral behaviour is part of cognitive development because it involves deliberation and judgement as well as criteria provided by a value system, in order to act on the basis of such decisions. And it involves progression towards more complex understanding of what is appropriate behaviour in given circumstances. Children and young people require opportunities through home and school experiences to improve the basis for sound moral judgement and actions, particularly in contexts where social pressures around them require such decisions: violent behaviour or drug consumption.

How are these capacities developed through schooling?

Teachers hold a key role in this respect as does also the classroom and school environment where teaching interactions occur. What teachers know, how they organise the learning environment and decide on their teaching strategies remains an important question posed by research in both developed and developing countries (Buckingham, 2002; Cassassus, 2003; Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold, 2003). Equally important is the curriculum teachers have to teach and the degree to which it supports narrow or broader approaches to learning.

A teacher' knowledge base and understanding of the curriculum to be taught are accepted prerequisites for appropriate teaching (Murray, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1997), as is also teacher knowledge and acceptance of the children as potentially capable learners. There is ample evidence from studies on school attainment that poor learning outcomes are linked to inadequate teacher understanding of the curriculum or inadequate enactment of the intended curriculum[6]. Knowing pupils and respecting their potential for learning have long been recognised as affecting learning results. More recently, with cognition research focusing on how different background experiences and understanding interact with new learning, teacher knowledge of pupils is recognised as all the more important. Not just developmental differences are important but also pupil interests, approaches to learning, prior understandings as well as out-of-school experiences. In some societies the way in which knowledge is passed

[6] For example, researchers examining the effects of the primary education reform in Bangladesh (PSPMP, 2001) noting the unsatisfactory learning results of many children in the schools, identified two clusters of factors that were dominant in explaining variations in learning achievement: teaching-learning and school climate (correlation of 0.42 and 0.5 with learning). Amongst the indicators that resulted from classroom observations was the apparent knowledge or lack of knowledge among teachers of the existing curricular concepts. Similar results appear in a review of studies of learning achievement in South Africa (Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold, 2003).

on may be very different to what is the case in other societies[7], or even within a same society with different cultural groups. In these contexts, it is important to find ways of bridging traditional forms of transmitting knowledge with those proposed by cognitive research.

The expectations teachers have of their pupils' capabilities for learning continues to appear as a strong element in the composite of teaching-learning factors that affect pupil attainment (Avalos, 1986; Reimers, 2000). Research in South Africa (Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold, 2003) and in Latin America (Cassassus, 2003) show teacher positive attitudes to pupils as an important element in schools with higher learning results.

The kind of curriculum in place affects what teachers may or not be able to do. Prescriptive syllabuses and curricular materials linked to narrow listings of competences are often easily managed by teachers with insufficient knowledge and prior preparation, but limit the scope for conceptual understanding and capacity of children to use their knowledge in creative ways. On the other hand, open-ended curricular materials that require teachers to "fill in gaps" or provide content and meaning to broadly stated goals and approaches, can be inappropriate for teachers with limited background knowledge, and/or little experience in "curricular development" [8]. Finding the best match between teacher capabilities and learning goals in different contexts remains a matter for more extensive research.

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[7] Evidence from anthropological studies shed light on how knowledge is processed in some societies with forms that may go directly against what modern cognitive theories tell us and with school methods of teaching. For example, in a South Pacific society, learning coexists with a restricted concept of circulation of knowledge that limits the right to question (Cf. Lindstrom, 1990).

[8] A good example was the Outcomes Based Curriculum in South Africa that required teachers with highly inadequate preparation and experience to provide substance to what were open-ended orientations (Jansen and Christie, 1999). The curriculum has been modified and a more pertinent one to teachers's existing capabilities is being implemented. A recent modification of the curriculum for the first four grades of the Chilean Basic School has also been justified along similar considerations, given problems with the levels of language and mathematics learning.

The classroom environment is both a physical and a social /emotional one. From the physical side, scarcity of resources may affect how teachers design a suitable classroom environment. But even in the poorest of circumstances with some assistance teachers can improve the environment[9]. The development of social and affective environment is largely in the hands of teachers. The instruments at hand are simple: learning students names and recognising them as individuals, showing a sense of humour, being respectful even when having to reprimand and stimulating pupils' respect amongst each other. All these elements help to establish a positive climate for learning. They are factors correlating with good learning results (PSPMP, 2001; LLECE, 2002).

A much-debated issue is the extent to which class size and pupil/teacher ratios affect the establishment of favourable learning climates and the possibility for teachers to carry out appropriate teaching-learning activities. If the issue were to be discussed solely on the basis of common sense it would be easy to conclude that excessive numbers of pupils in a classroom or excessive numbers of pupils attended by the same teacher in different classrooms is not conducive to pupil-focused teaching. But the issue has financial implications and this explains the search for a threshold that allows minimal conditions for learning. Countries with successful EFA policies seem to have and average class size of forty. Other evidence suggests that the relationship is not linear: that very small classes and very big classes are not conducive to learning, but that somewhere between 15 and 25 pupils may be an appropriate number to achieve good

[9] Two projects in Bangladesh illustrate how this can be done. One is linked to the BRAC schools where teachers are provided with some materials for children to work on drawings and objects that in turn are used to decorate the classrooms. BRAC classrooms often appear as markedly different from the traditional government primary schools devoid of examples of children work on their walls (personal experience). The IDEAL project sponsored by UNICEF also provides teachers with some basic tools for preparing teaching materials and stimulating pupils to exhibit their work in the school (personal experience).

learning results[10]. The question remains open regarding what number of children in the small grades will allow teachers to explore their understandings, deal with differences in learning ability, manage the inclusion of disabled children or sustain an orderly environment.

The above discussion suggests that teacher education and policies that promote adequate learning conditions must of necessity be part of providing quality in teaching and learning processes.

2. Educating within the cultural context and as part of the global society

The coexistence of cultures and languages in countries around the world takes on various forms. If the languages and cultures have equal status in one country or among countries their learning is often encouraged and the needed resources are provided for the purpose[11]. On the other hand, unequal status relationships among linguistic groups means that the subordinate group is restricted to its cultural milieu and has less probability of getting education of reasonable quality (Albó, 1999; Schmelkes, 2000). Subordinate linguistic and cultural groups, especially indigenous populations, are often among the poorest in their countries and regions[12]. Indigenous people may be invisible to the mainstream population that lives and works in the modern world of big cities such

[10] Buckingham's (2002) review of developed country class size research points methodological flaws that make it difficult to establish the separate effect of smaller class sizes in relation to learning; other studies in Latin America show a non-linear relationship between class size and learning where classes with less than 15 pupils have lower levels of learning, classes with between 15 and 25 pupils have higher levels, while those with more than 25 show a decrease in learning levels (Cassassus, 2003). A similar finding for South Africa shows mixed results for the effects of class-size, though with more studies showing positive effects of lower pupil/teacher ratios (Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold, 2003).

[11] For example, for a Latin American learning a European language has traditionally been considered a necessity for the elite and today this need is transferred to English. Recently, the Chilean Minister of Education has declared as one of his strong policy commitments to facilitate the learning of English in all schools.

[12] Such is the case of the Mapuche Indians in Chile classified in higher percentages as being 'poor' or 'below the poverty line? (MIDEPLAN, 2000) as well as the case if indigenous groups in Brazil,

as Sao Paulo in Brazil or Santiago in Chile. They also tend to be invisible in the presentation of results of international studies of learning achievement[13].

In opposition to this reality of cultural identities, the dominant forms of globalisation tend to blur boundaries and set out the conditions for human development in terms of economic imperatives and dictated forms of education (Spring, 1998). It is therefore important to show other more humane views of globalisation linked, for example, to its potential for awakening moral responsibility of groups of people towards others. Peter Singer (2002, p. 214) recalls in this respect a fifth century BC Chinese philosopher's reflection on the effects of war: "What is the way of universal love and mutual benefit? It is to regard other people's countries as one's own". It might also be important to work towards giving as much relevance in the curriculum to the "narrative" (aesthetic) mode of thinking that is closer to individual cultures as to the "logical-scientific" thinking (oriented to physical tools) so strong in the human capital perspective (Brunner, 1996). The global emphasis on knowledge for production excludes as a valid goal for education the development of artistic and narrative thinking.

From the perspective of Education for All there is need therefore to signal ways by which people can develop both their cultural identity and respect for their values and those of the cultures with which they coexist, while at the same time learning to speak the language of global society. In developing countries with multiple cultural groups there are some experiences that allow for both purposes. Also in the developed world one encounters education projects that foster global awareness and responsibility. These experiences are either directly or indirectly fed by ideas and reflections

[13] For example, a presentation by ethnic groups would have been useful in the Latin American Laboratory of Evaluation of the Quality of Education about which there is an analysis of the effect of socio-economicfactors (Cassasus, 2002)

circulating through various means: the printed medium as well as numerous electronic networks.

The role of communities in providing culturally relevant education for their children is well exemplified in the "Tok Ples Preskul" experience that began over twenty years ago in the North Solomons' province of Papua New Guinea. In this country , unique for its cultural diversity and number of languages, English was the only medium of instruction in schools. As a way of preserving their cultural identity local communities began the "Tok Ples Skuls" to enable their children to become literate in their language and knowledgeable about their culture and customs. The villages recruited school leavers and other community members as teachers who in turn were trained for the purpose with assistance from the University of Papua New Guinea's language department. Evaluations in the mid eighties(Delpit and Kemmelfied, 1985; Delpit, 1995) and late eighties (Ahai, 1989) revealed benefits as well as problems that needed attention. But on the whole the success of the programme, not only in fulfilling its purposes but also in preparing children for school, led other language communities to begin such schools with the same successful results. Building on this experience, the education reform proposed in 1994 in PNG introduced a new structure: an elementary village school that covered pre-school up to grade two taught in vernacular languages , and the formal primary school extending to eight grades with English as the medium of instruction..

Bilingual intercultural education is a concept and a practice developed in countries with large indigenous groups (in numbers and importance). Proposing to achieve greater cohesion and understanding among the four main language groups[14] and other smaller ones in Bolivia, the education reform underway since 1994 is based on the concept of

[14] Aymara, Quechua, Guaraní and Spanish are the main languages but not exclusive to Bolivia. The Aymara and Quechua groups live around the entire Altiplano countries (Chile, Perú, Ecuador) while Guaranís are a major group in Paraguay.

bilingual intercultural education. It requires moving away from the traditional concept of bilingual learning (unconnected learning of two languages) towards cultural understanding amongst the different groups while teaching in the languages that the pupils speak. As in the case of Papua New Guinea the first years of the primary school use vernacular language learning followed by gradual introduction to Spanish as the modern, dominant language. Curriculum, textbooks and reading materials have been developed in all four languages and are used with varying degree of success. Three important conditions are recognised as important to succeed in this endeavour: the further preparation of teachers in the original languages, winning the confidence of parents who fear their children may not learn Spanish and find their place in the dominant society, and more targeted introduction of intercultural elements both for Spanish speakers and for the various indigenous groups (Albó, 1999). Intercultural bilingual education has now also been introduced in Mexico (Schmelkes, 2000).

The recent curriculum developed for primary education in Brazil recognises the dual need of the country to develop a national identity among its very different populations and at the same time respect for cultural diversity. However, the absence of a clear indication of how this can be achieved, led de Freitas Capanema (2000, p. 81-81) to propose what could well be part of any plan to encourage diversity within the context of a national curriculum:

- Provide schools with materials that illustrate the variety of cultures and groups in Brazil
- Encourage teachers to adapt curricular contents to local conditions through discussion of key concepts among pupils
- Stimulate schools to promote activities related to plural cultural contexts so as to develop capabilities for living with people who are different
- Value the aesthetic experiences of the different ethnic and cultural groups, stimulating the exchange of ideas and cultural products

- Bring teachers out from the isolation in which many work especially in the interior of Brazil providing them with opportunities for cultural, social, and economical interaction in order to help them to become truly "multicultural".

3. Educating for the construction of democracy and civic participation.

This is an important goal for societies that have emerged from undemocratic systems, wars and other upheavals with sustained violation of human rights. It is also a goal for countries with stable political systems that require educated citizens to build and sustain their institutions. In considering this topic I refer first to issues that surround the discussion of civic education and secondly to educational forms of dealing with them.

Issues

In the past decade and a half building or rebuilding democracy concerned countries that formed part of the Soviet Union as well as Latin American countries that became free of violent dictatorships. The social reconstruction involved in the transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa, or from life under an invading power such as East Timor, has added to the complexities of the task.

South Africa in one part of the world and Chile in another had a similar educational challenge to face when they regained democracy. Both these countries had deep-seated inequities in education provisions, more on the side of quality in the case of Chile, and of both quantity and quality in the case of South Africa. Both these countries needed to tread the difficult path of reshaping social life without creating unbearable tensions, meaning that former enemies would have to engage in new relationships. Both countries had to develop allegiance to new political and social institutions. In this context it was clear that changes in education, and an education reform would be required. There would be need for structural changes to remove barriers separating racial groups, as in the case of South Africa. A new curriculum and a different reading of history would to have to be provided in schools, and different pedagogical practices

would have to be put in place. In both countries the transition to democracy occurred within the world framework of market economy with pressures, on the one hand, to become competitive countries and educate their citizens in line with such demands[15] and on the other, to develop a moral stand on the side of equity and justice.

In these contexts, educating for human rights is an important educational goal. The experience of violations in the form of torture, forced disappearances and other similar actions, requires that teachers be prepared and that appropriate educational materials be produced to deal with these problems through the curriculum[16]. But also, in other situations with less experience of democratic disruptions the existence of gender, ethnic and socio-economic inequalities, as well as marginalisation of the disabled population requires a human rights' education able to stimulate awareness and attitude change.

In a globalised world with so much information being circulated, educational processes must also focus on the education of a world citizen. This entails a broader concept of civic education directed to world issues such as wars, environmental threats, poverty, hunger, and disease. This kind of knowledge and social awareness, incorporated into educational activities, should produce an invitation to examine, critique and engage in actions that are judged as possible and necessary.

Forms of educational response

Human rights and civic education

New or adapted curriculum is a sine qua non requirement in societies that have undergone profound political change.

[15] For a discussion on these issues from a policy perspective in South Africa see: Kallaway (1997) and Weber (2002). For an analysis of the demands placed on education reform in the context of the new democracy in Chile, see García-Huidobro and Cox (1999).

[16] Materials dealing the handling of the Human Rights issue by teachers in their classrooms were prepared in the early years of the democratic government in Chile but there is no evidence regarding the extent to which they are still being used.

To further a broad values education and include elements of human rights the Chilean curriculum framework uses the concept of Cross-Sectional Objectives. This is a detailed statement of objectives organised in four broad areas: personality development, capacity to regulate conduct, capacity to interact and show responsibility for others and cognitive skills linked to moral judgement. These objectives are embedded and taught through the different subjects of basic and secondary education. There no longer is a separate course to teach civic education but the importance of democratic institutions is highlighted in several content areas, while attitudes of respect towards them are developed cross-sectionally.

Despite the above efforts, key content areas that could contribute to a different view of the past and a new attitude towards people and institutions have been the object of controversy and conflict. This is the case, particularly, with history textbooks and history teaching[17].

Civic education is a broad objective in many national curriculum and educational systems as shown in the recent comparative international study on Civic Education (Steiner-Khamsi, Torney-Purta and Schwille, 2002). What is taught and how it is taught was the focus of attention of the study and produced an interesting analysis of country differences (On Lee, 2002). Building on the results of this study with reference to three southern cone countries with a past history of dictatorships, Cox (2003) considers commonalities and differences in the way they include citizenship education in their national curriculum. Argentina, Brazil and Chile all ground their programmes on justice, truth and common good. But more specifically use Human Rights as the

[17] In the mid-nineties the Chilean Ministry of Education had to alter its new secondary history textbooks on account of objections from the still powerful groups that supported the military government's view of events. The authors of a book for history teachers in South Africa faced a similar situation. The book focused on a different view of South African history suggested practical ways of handling its teaching (Bam and Visser, n/d). However, though a publishing firm got as far as printing multiple copies of the book, in the end it stopped its publication and distribution.

criteria for establishing how people should relate to each other and to the political order. Solidarity and dialogue are two other values strongly supported that include respect and tolerance of differences as the main form through which to resolve conflict. Responsibility as a condition for civic participation is recognised in the Chilean and Argentine curriculum but not in the Brazilian one, while personal freedom is strong in the Chilean documents and not in the others. The Brazilian curriculum also differs in its greater emphasis on what is called "social citizenship" (rights and obligations towards others)) while the other two curricula lay emphasis on "political citizenship" (allegiance to political institutions and processes). The difference is also strong in how each curriculum understands "participation". While the Brazilian curriculum lays emphasis on a critical form of social and political participation that denounces injustice and discrimination, the Chilean and Argentine ones are centred on responsible democratic participation.

Obviously it is difficult to know what effects on citizen attitudes and participation these different curricular emphases have, especially if, as noted in the Civics Education study (Steiner-Khmasi, Torney-Purta and Schwille, 2002), there is a distance between the written curriculum and the one enacted in classrooms by teachers. Case studies referred to these effects are needed.

Providing education to vulnerable and excluded populations

Dealing with social needs and inequities through education include major non-government initiatives and compensatory policies and programmes.

The BRAC schools in Bangladesh are one of the best-known non-government initiatives dealing with exclusion and gender discrimination in schooling. They were begun within communities with many excluded and dropout children and young people. These schools allow children aged 8 to 10 to "catch up" with the first three years of the

primary school and join the formal system for the next two years. Another programme addresses the same needs for those aged 11-16. The two main goals of the programme are literacy and social awareness. Teachers are trained in very short periods but receive constant support in their classrooms. They use books that are broadly based on the government schools' curriculum to ease the transition into the formal system. Evidence from tracer studies carried out by BRAC show that children learn enough to enter the government schools[18].

As important as knowing the effect of BRAC on school learning is the assessment of the social impact of its schools, as this is one of its main objectives. Findings from a recent study (Hossain, Nath and Chowdhury, 2002) show that:

- Graduates are more knowledgeable about universal immunisation that those who attended government schools or who never attended school.
- Over ninety percent knew at least one water purification option compared to 77 percent of those who never went to school.
- More than fifty percent showed low levels of political awareness, did not know the right voting age for males and females or who was the President of Bangladesh.
- Over ninety percent of mothers graduated from BRAC schools had used birth control procedures compared to around 80 percent of mothers from government schools or who never had attended school.
- Compared to families who had never enrolled in education, a higher proportion of BRAC households were sending their children to school, though lower than those from government schools.
- Though low in general, a higher percentage of BRAC women as compared to women who attended government schools were involved in income generating, activities.
- Women from BRAC and government schools had higher amounts of savings compared to those who were never enrolled in schools.

[18] A study of the 1997 cohort found that around 87% were enrolled in formal schools ten months after they left the BRAC schools (Nath, Imam and Chowdhury, 1998).

A number of Latin American programmes centre on compensating for inequalities produced by social or ethnic origins and poverty[19]. These programmes take different forms but in general they involve the provision of additional teaching resources, teacher preparation to assist children in their learning difficulties and in some cases, food to compensate for malnutrition. Evaluations of these programmes, however, do not show results in terms of learning levels of the participant children that are comparable to those found in the normal school systems. Reimers' (2000) explanation is that the programmes do not recognise sufficiently the strength of the effects of poverty and deprivation over the chances to learn. In his opinion projects that do not seek to emulate the learning of formal schools but rather offer different flexible curricula adapted to the needs of such children have a more important effect in the attainment of basic education purposes such as literacy, numeracy and broad understanding of the surrounding world. Reimers provides as an example the *Fe y Alegría* network of schools run by Jesuits in several Latin American countries.

Preventing conflict and violence

Several countries in the Latin American hemisphere have complicated situations of violence that stop children from attending school or that are reproduced within the school. This has led them to support or establish actions directed to prevention and conflict resolution. A number of these involve intersectorial arrangements at government level, non-government institutions and local community members. In Brazil, there is a federal programme to prevent violence in schools led by the Ministries of Education and Justice: *Paz nas Escolas*. It has been in operation since the year 2000 and covers 17 states in the country. It still has not been evaluated. In Colombia, deep-

[19] For example, the 900 School Programme in Chile addressed to schools with lowest results and greater vulnerability of students or PARE a Mexican initiative in schools of three of the poorest states of the country.

seated social violence (including the effects of guerrilla wars and drug traffic activities) affects school attendance of children located in violent regions, as well as inducing reproduction of violent behaviour at school. In response to this situation and mostly with the purpose of "learning to live to together", programmes have been established that are directed to schools. Municipal authorities, institutions such as the Red Cross, and community endeavours in one school or for transient populations manage these programmes (UNESCO/OREALC, 2000). Similar initiatives are found in Ecuador, Perú, Chile and Uruguay as well as Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador in Central America . They are just beginning to be evaluated so it is difficult to say what will be their effect in the long run.

4. Education for economic development

This objective presented as the last one in the paper is considered as most important in current discussions on educational policy and yet it is the most elusive and difficult to define. It is not by accident that I have placed it at the end as, in fact, it presupposes that attention be given to all previous objectives.

Taken in a very direct and almost naïve way, education for economic development implies preparing human resources with the capabilities needed to push a country forward economically. However, it is much more difficult to decide what is needed for this economic push. In the past, responses addressed the concept of "vocationalising" education, especially secondary education. Today, emphasis is on preparing the "human capital" considered essential for economic development. This preparation is described as developing cognitive capabilities, encouraging longer years of schooling, and providing flexible options for lifelong education. In other words, it means improving the quality of education and insuring that as many as possible have access to

it. For those left behind, it means establishing systems that allow for learning in non-traditional, formal ways.

The economic thrust of improving the quality of education and increasing the number of those who benefit from such improvement was worked out for the case of Chile in the following way (quoted in Brunner and Elacqua, 2003):

- If all workers in Chile finish twelve years of schooling, the proportion of the labour force that earns less that a US$ per day would be reduced to half.
- For the previous situation to occur, the mean years of schooling of the population would have to increase by two. Given its current growth rhythm Chile would take two decades to reach this goal.
- According to econometric simulations if Chile placed itself among the 10% of countries with higher results in education … economic growth would increase in 3 percentage points compared to the situation over the last fifteen years.
- If Chile reached the international mean in maths and science learning as measured by TIMSS, its productivity would increase in 0.7 percentage points.
- If education quality in Chile were matched to its per capita income the economy would grow up to two percentage points.
- In economies that are low in human capital the abundance of natural resources is a negative factor for growth, as it forces specialisation in sectors of low productivity. On the other hand, high levels of human capital not only compensate but also may revert such an effect.
- An additional year of secondary and higher education for the male population could generate a mean increase in GDP of around 0.44% a year.

These calculations may seem out of place given that not only in Chile but also in other similar economies goals such as raising to international standards the learning of maths and science are hardly possible in the short term. Nevertheless, they do point to the importance of greater financial investments in education and greater efforts to make education relevant to the capabilities and needs of the people in different contexts. Referring to African economies Tickly (2003) holds that "skills formation" requires the development of high and middle level skills for global competitiveness, but also of skills to deal with poverty and diseases. In fact, this understanding is behind the

ordering of objectives for improving quality in education presented in the paper. Human capital formation may be possible in Chile where the mean years of schooling of the economically active population is 10.3. Other countries with lower levels will need other ways of tackling this issue. The lack of flexible options to increase the educational levels of the population certainly works against the preparation of human capital. The same applies to the rejection or lack of recognition by governments of the contribution to learning made by non-government options such as BRAC in Bangladesh as they deny the implementation of feasible short-term solutions for incomplete education.

IV. Enabling policies

In this last section of the paper I turn to a set of policy instruments, some of which tend to be presented as panacea for the improvement of quality in education. Assuming that each one is important but not decisive for quality improvement, I prefer to regard them as "enabling " policies. They are not ends in themselves but levers to be used in pursuit of the broad educational goals discussed in the preceding sections. Teacher education in both its initial and in-service forms is one of the least developed policies in many education systems and yet its importance is paid lip service to. Measurement systems to inform on the performance of educational systems and activities are not always used productively. Concepts of decentralised, flexible, autonomous management tend to favour "private" over "public" options more than develop conditions for flexible management and parental involvement in whatever form of school ownership. "Quality control" a term borrowed from industry tends to move hand in hand with policies that stimulate competitiveness rather than collaboration. All these four policy areas need revisiting to see how they could assist, support or make possible the improvement of quality in schooling.

Teacher education

A teacher's knowledge base either of the curriculum or of how to recognise pupil needs and capacities is aptly considered important for meaningful learning. Yet this knowledge base is very weak among teachers in poor developing countries, and to a certain extent in others with a higher level of development. Research alerts us to the situation. Part of the difficulties of teachers in South Africa to manage the original version of Curriculum 2005 was insufficient content and pedagogical knowledge (Taylor and Vinjevold, 1999). Mexican primary teachers tried unsuccessfully to enact the constructivist curriculum of an innovative project without conceptual knowledge of the mathematics needed for the purpose (Tatto, 1999). The number of teachers who appeared unsure about their conceptual knowledge was higher in low achieving schools of Bangladesh than it was in the high achieving ones (PSPMP, 2000). These and other studies show also that teachers lack pedagogical strategies such as pacing, using available time for teaching, assessing pupils appropriately and providing constructive feedback.

Pre-service teacher education needs reform and policies to sustain changes and there are signs that this is being acknowledged in policy statements and discussions of international organisations (UNESCO, 2002) as well as in country experience such as Namibia's innovative Basic Teacher Education Diploma (See Zeichner and Dahlstrom, 1999).

But in general as the findings of the Multisite Teacher Education Research Project (MUSTER) in Africa (Lewin and Stuart, 2002) acknowledge "policy on primary teacher education is fragmented, incomplete and more often than not simply underdeveloped". In Chile recognition of the practical stagnation of initial teacher education programmes led to the funding of a five-year improvement project targeted at 17 institutions.

Though the results were encouraging (Cf. Avalos, 2002) no policy was derived from the process and no further funding to sustain these projects and extend their benefits to other institutions was considered. In Perú, a substantial modernisation of the teacher educational curriculum that had carefully been experimented over several years was overruled, and the old curriculum reinstated.

Measurement of educational results

Almost paradoxically given that inadequate attention is paid to teacher education measurement of learning is now a focal point of educational policies in many countries. All over Latin America there are national systems in place to evaluate school attainment. Influenced by international and regional organisations countries have participated in comparative studies of achievement (TIMSS and PISA), on the strength that knowing how one fares in relation to others stimulates improvement and could affect market competitiveness (Ferrer and Arregui, 2003). Eleven countries participated in the Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE) conducted by UNESCO. Twelve African countries participated in a similar study led by UNESCO and UNICEF and South Africa has also established a national system of measurement to be applied in grades 3, 6 and 9.

While it is possible to see value in national assessment systems and even in international ones, this value depends on how results are presented and discussed, and how clients (teachers, schools, and parents) use these results for improvement. For example, two recent books that analyse both the Latin American LLECE (Cassasus, 2003) and the South African experiences (Taylor, Muller and Vinjevold, 2003) provide useful information on the extent to which socio-economic background affect learning results in these countries. They also provide information on how school factors such as resources, class size, teacher attitudes, classroom climate, use of assessments etc.

explain learning differences. One of the most important findings from these studies is the extent to which differences occur between schools that have similar vulnerable school populations that can only be explained by particular configurations of within school factors (see Annex 1).

However, more often than not schools lack useful feedback regarding their performance on national measurement studies. On the contrary, fingers are pointed at poor performing ones and they become subjects of compensatory programmes that inadvertently label them as "losers".

Comparing national measurement systems in Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, Benveniste (2002) noted two types of rationale that govern these systems. The Chilean and Argentine systems use results as an instrument for holding schools and teachers responsible. The use of the test in Uruguay is symbolic as results are not publicised so that neither schools nor government can be held accountable as in the other two countries.

Participation in international tests practically has had no effect over policy changes and even less over curriculum changes in Latin America (Ferrer and Arregui, 2003). The exceptions are Cuba that has introduced some curricular changes on the basis of LLECE results, while Chile has launched a new basic skills programme in language and maths primarily for schools with poor results.

Consistent with the logic that produced the Chilean SIMCE which was to show the inefficiency of public education and produce a move to privatise schools[20] its results have consistently been presented in comparative terms: municipal (public) as inferior to private subsidised and private schools. However, several analysis of these results have

[20] The Chilean SIMCE originated during the Military government within the context of decentralisation and privatisation, with the intention that its results be used by parents to select the schools of their choice.

contradicted the crude version of "private is good" (McEwan and Carnoy, 2000; Mizala and Romaguera, 2000). More recently, analysis of results in the fourth grade mathematics test has shown that within-school differences (presumably due to teacher actions and pupil characteristics) are stronger than between-school differences (Ramírez, 2003).

The above considerations suggest the need to review policies on national testing and participation in international studies and insure that results are used in ways that benefit learning improvement.

3. Improving management structures and processes

This is an enormous field for improvement that is very forcefully recommended by international organisations, but that also has strong ideological connotations. On one side of the ideological field is the notion that one system of ownership is better than another (private versus public) and on the other side, that whatever the system of management learning the school should be at the centre of its improvement (Torres, 2003).

As with other tensions, there is need to unpack both poles and examine what kind of management system is appropriate in specific contexts, both cultural and economic. To sustain a private system of education that offers education for all, vouchers are proposed as tools. The latest World Bank report (2003, p. 125) suggests the use of client power to improve outcomes through three alternative ways: involve citizens directly in the operation of schools; use demand-side subsidies to increase access of the poor or to "have money follow students". All these forms assume that the demand-side is well informed and able to make choices or that it has the capabilities needed to administer the operation of a school. There are examples of both these alternatives working but also others that show they do not work. Another alternative is to provide from public

resources opportunities and materials to work in professional development contexts with teachers and administrators on issues relating to good management. Still another alternative is to provide schools with the needed autonomy and flexibility to improve their work, without necessarily privatising the school.

4. Controlling quality

Another radical turn of events is the manner in which "accountability" has become a heated topic for policy discussions. A number of the instruments proposed are directed to: stimulating competition for quality (teacher and school incentives), evaluating performance of teachers and schools, regulating the systems for certifying teachers and accrediting teacher education institutions. Unfortunately, they tend to be implemented in piecemeal fashion and little is known about their effects on quality improvement[21].

Rather than fragmented approaches, one could visualise policies that seek to establish a "supportive system for teaching and school quality" involving:

(a) Standards that (a) describe what teachers should know and be able to do in their teaching, and that (b) are appropriate for different levels of teaching (preschool, primary, secondary), and for differences in teaching experience. Standards serve to organize and assess initial and in-service teacher education opportunities and form the basis for monitoring and evaluating teacher performance.

(b) Incentives intended to affect teacher motivation to teach and improve, as well as willingness to work in difficult areas and with difficult groups of students. Incentives comprise salary structures as well as extra bonuses in the form of

[21] The System for Evaluating the Quality of Schools in Chile (SNED) uses the SIMCE test results to provide monetary rewards to teachers from well-performing schools. However, analysis of the patterns of awards over the years shows that schools that are rewarded in one instance may not be in the next, and that there are not very many obvious differences between schools with and without SNED rewards (Aravena, 2002).

monetary or non-monetary rewards for good performance. They may or not be part of a career structure.

(c) Monitoring and performance evaluation of duties expected from teachers and of their classroom performance, including interaction with students, other teachers, parents and the community.

(d) Teacher education opportunities, both initial and in-service that enable teachers to fulfil expected standards, that inform them of their shortcomings and assist them to improve in content knowledge and teaching competencies.

I conclude with the words of a teacher:

> No time is too long spent talking to a child to find out his key words, they key that unlocks himself, for in them is the secret of reading, the realization that words can have intense meaning. Words having no emotional significance to him, no instinctive meaning, could be an imposition, doing him more harm than not teaching him at all. They may teach him that words mean nothing and that reading is undesirable.
>
> Sylvia Ashton-Warner

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APPENDIX

Selected characteristics of schools outperforming what is expected given the education background of parents: Latin American Laboratory for Assessment of the Quality of Education (LLECE)[22]

[22] These are 35 schools from 7 of the 13 countries included in the LLECE (2002) study of learning achievement in Latin America. The schools were selected on the basis of having performed above expected results (but within the normal distribution) in the third grade mathematics' test and of low education background of parents in these schools. The schools were studied through observations, interviews and focal groups with teachers, parents and students. See: LLECE (2002). *Qualitative Study of Schools with Outstanding Results in Seven Latin American Countries*. Santiago: UNESCO/OREALC.

School-level management

- **These schools are very different one to the other: small, medium and large; urban and rural; private and public, religious and non-religious.**
- **In practice, these schools operate quite autonomously using what their authorities decide in ways that further the needs of the school.**
- **Parents and students have a key, active role as significant actors within the school; there is teamwork between teachers and head teachers.**
- **Individual student development is encouraged**
- **The schools are open to change and innovation**
- **There are norms that regulate both the social interactions and student work, but they essentially have a formative character. These norms are written in a document.**
- **Proportion of students to teachers appears adequate**
- **The schools do not have many teaching resources but the ones they have are efficiently used. In most of the schools resources are provided by the state with some contribution of parents.**
- **Schools are better managed when head teachers have time for reflection and analysis.**
- **Leadership is not just centred on the head teacher. Teachers are also important especially in more isolated schools.**

Classroom teaching

- **There is efficient use of physical space and of time. In some cases tables are arranged to facilitate group work, but in others the frontal alignment of tables and chairs is also effectively used.**
- **Classroom teaching often involves group cooperative work with teachers leading, motivating and coordinating activities.**
- **Teachers do not appear as if they possess knowledge and never make mistakes. In teaching, they use student errors in constructive ways, avoiding a punishing attitude.**
- **Play is used as an effective teaching strategy.**
- **Planning is considered essential to teaching. There are daily routines used by pupils and teachers that avoid breakdowns of discipline.**
- **Reading is considered important and teachers use reading in many of their teaching sequences.**
- **Giving homework is not the usual practice, but rather most of the learning work is done during school hours.**
- **Teachers, in their teaching activities, encourage pupil participation, communicate in straightforward manner and with clarity, are focused on the fulfilment of their teaching purposes, appear to know what they have to teach, plan their work and help students with difficulties.**
- **There is no preferred method of teaching that could be singled out, but a common element is that the classroom environment is warm and that there is respect among pupils and between teacher and pupils.**

- **Teachers show commitment to their work, despite sacrifices required from them in their daily life. Their professional commitment is also manifest in a high level of expectations regarding their pupils.**
- **Teachers in these schools are innovators, open to new ideas, in search for new methods to improve their teaching.**

School-community relationships

- There is evidence in these schools of good relationships with parents. Parents participate in school management and processes at different levels: a) attending events at the school; b) raising funds for school activities, c) as part of one of the structures of school management; d) involving themselves in classroom activities.
- Schools have good relationships with the community. Not only does the school benefit from such relationships but it also becomes part of the social and cultural capital of the community.

What Works and What Doesn't: Successful Approaches in Promoting Basic Education

Herbert Bergman[23]

1. *Project "islands" must be avoided.* But pilot projects and model experiments are necessary to facilitate education innovations. A good example is the development of the complete basic education curriculum in the Quechua and Aymara languages in Peru since 1976. The project was implemented experimentally in one district (Puno) and then successfully replicated in other regions with the same languages.

2. *Good teaching alone is not enough.* Projects limited to technical/pedagogical level of teaching but that ignore sector institutions, budget issues, policy and administration are seldom sustainable. An example is agriculture education in Tanzania. Despite functioning approaches it could not be sustainably incorporated into the education system.

3. *There is no 'one-factor' solution.* Success can be achieved only with systemic approaches, even where work is mainly focused on the technical education level. Experience in Indonesia has shown that science education cannot be improved just by providing good science kits. …. This goes with the nature of the learning process –in and out of school. Learning happens in a process organised by a teacher and uses various 'production factors': the knowledge and process skills of the teacher, the information provided by teaching aids and infrastructural conditions. … A competent teacher can compensate for a lack of teaching aids and inadequate quality to a certain point. However, if there are none at all, the teaching and learning process changes its character. It will run differently and mostly much less efficiently.

4. *No one can get around going to school.* Non-formal education is not an alternative to formal school education. In the sense of a second chance it can supplement formal schooling, for example for such target groups as teenagers and adults who have never been to school, drop-outs and child workers, but even then it should have a clearly defined connection to the formal education system to enable transition and the opportunity to take recognised examinations.

5. *You learn only what you understand.* First experts agree that teaching children to read and write should start in a language they understand, either their mother tongue or their regional lingua franca. … Second, there is often political opposition to the introduction of local languages in classrooms, sometimes as a result of the policy of the former colonial power, sometimes due to the business interests of textbook publishers in Europe. … Third, there is also opposition within developing countries' societies, which has to do with the prestige of their former colonial language, its value in seeking a job and fear of a loss of advantages. Fourth without changing the language used to teach h, basic education can be neither effective nor efficient.

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[23] Extracted from Herbert Bergmann's article in *Development and Cooperation*, (6,2002, pp. 14-17) reviewing lessons learned regarding German donor assistance to promote Basic Education.

6. The best basic education is a good general education. Time and again, attempts have been made to enhance the relevance of basic education by adding elements of vocational training. … The experiences in this field can be summarised as follows. First, the practical components added to the general subjects overtax primary school teachers. Second, well-qualified secondary school teachers are 'poached' (Peru). Third, the budget can finance neither investment nor running costs. Other sources of income are unreliable. Fourth, at the examination stage these added practical subjects count for less than general education subjects and, in cases of doubt, they are ignored.