

Mention of ASER

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002322/232205e.pdf>

MONITORING THE PROGRESS TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR ALL 2015 – CHAPTER 6 – PAGES 191 AND 192

Citizen-led assessments gain ground

Increasing use of assessments is supported by a wider movement towards evidence-informed policy and practice in education and in other fields (Wiseman, 2010). Academic and media freedom, the development of civil society and the stability and openness of political systems are important factors in whether, and how much, evidence can be gathered, assessed and communicated to influence policy-making (Sutcliffe and Court, 2005). Research restrictions are increasingly being overcome in some countries, leading to more evidence-based policy in the education sector (Best et al., 2013).

Government action has not been the only route to effective assessment systems for informing national policy. Citizen-led, household-based assessment initiatives began in India in 2005 and have been adapted in Pakistan (since 2008), Kenya, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania (2009), Mali (2011) and Senegal (2012). Together, they reached more than a million children in 2012 (ASER Centre, 2014a).

Civil society organizations in these countries have initiated assessments of children's basic reading and arithmetic abilities. In India, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) reported that, while India's education system succeeded at enrolling many more children, there were wide disparities in students' achievement of basic skills across states, a finding validated in the official National Achievement Survey of grade 3 students (Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2014). ASER further noted a small decline in reading outcomes in recent years, and a larger one in mathematics (ASER Centre, 2014b).³ The ASER findings have been used to inform policy. For example, they were cited in the education chapter of the government's 12th five-year plan, which emphasized basic learning as an explicit objective of primary education as well as the need for regular learning assessments to make sure quality goals are met (Banerjee et al., 2013).

Recent ASER results in rural Pakistan provide a stark illustration of the challenge to equitably enable all children to acquire basic skills (Figure 6.3). In 2014 in Balochistan province, only 33% of grade 5 students could read a story in Urdu, Sindhi or Pashto, whereas in the wealthier province of Punjab, 63% could do so. In Balochistan, only 24% of fifth-graders could do a division exercise, compared with 50% in Punjab.

PAGE 95

Box 6.1: PISA for Development

A recent initiative, at the pilot stage, is PISA for Development, which began in 2013. It has three objectives: First, as the experience of low income countries participating in 2009 showed, PISA instruments could not accurately measure the performance of students scoring at the lower end of the performance range. The project will try to increase the instruments' sensitivity yet still produce results consistent with the international PISA scales.

Second, unlike citizen-led household assessments of learning outcomes, such as **ASER** – which survey the learning achievement of all children, whether in school or not – regional and international learning assessments only test children in school. The assessment process is too complex to organize easily elsewhere. However, this leaves a big gap in the knowledge of children who have been to school but have left, especially in poorer countries with large proportions of out-of-school youth. The project will try to identify ways to assess the skills of 15-year-olds who are not in school and raise their profile among education policy-makers.

Third, background questionnaires will need to be adjusted to capture the characteristics of youth in poorer countries who may be out of school.

The countries currently expected to take part are Cambodia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Senegal, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Results are to be published by the end of 2017.

Source: OECD (2014).

Mention of Pratham

GOAL 3: YOUTH AND ADULT SKILLS –PAGES 124 AND 125

Education alternatives are needed for youth and adults who are no longer in school

Beyond the expansion of formal schooling, goal 3 is a reminder that countries have committed themselves to meeting the education needs of out-of-school youth and of adults whose formal education opportunities were cut short. An array of alternative, ‘second chance’ and nonformal programmes can be cited as examples of progress in this area (Duke and Hinzen, 2008). Prominent examples can also be seen in Bangladesh, India and Thailand (**Banerji, 2015**). In Bangladesh, BRAC programmes aim to bring out-of-school children into the primary education system and prepare them for the secondary level. More than 97% of BRAC primary school graduates continue to formal secondary school. However, many BRAC graduates cannot complete their secondary education due to poverty. Therefore, BRAC representatives conduct regular follow up meetings with children, guardians, teachers and school committee members, and BRAC provides financial support to poor primary school graduates. BRAC graduates are encouraged to join clubs where they have opportunities for reading, sports and cultural activities, and where they receive life skill and livelihood training. BRAC also has a new initiative, Skills Training for Advancing Resources, in which adolescents who dropped out of school are helped to gain skills and enter the job market.

In India, the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) was established in 1990 with ‘authority to register, examine and certify students registered with it up to pre-degree courses.’ NIOS offers ‘open basic education programmes’ for those aged 14 and older. Courses and certification are geared for levels that are equivalent to grades 3, 5 and 8 in the formal system (Banerji, 2015). Learners also have access to vocational courses and life enrichment programmes that lead to secondary and higher secondary certification examinations. For senior and secondary levels, NIOS allows choices of academic and vocational courses and flexibility in sitting examinations, with up to nine chances over five years. For academic courses beyond the basic level, there are close to 4,000 study centres run by accredited institutions and just under 2,000 accredited vocational institutions. Enrolment figures and the number of

certified learners have risen steadily over the years. As of 2011, NIOS statistics indicate a cumulative total of 2.2 million students. Since 2007, the number of females has been significantly higher than that of males. NIOS is often called the world's largest open school.

Also in India, the Pratham Open School of Education (POSE) aims to reach young girls and women who have been marginalized from the mainstream education system and give them a second chance to complete their schooling. Started in 2011 as a residential programme, today it has expanded to seven states and provides a three month condensed foundation course to bridge the gap between basic concepts and the secondary school curriculum. This is followed by an examination to shortlist candidates for the second phase of classes, where students prepare for the state board exams. POSE also addresses aspects like personality development and focuses on enhancing soft skills such as articulation, confidence and self-expression. The larger goal is to better equip students to enter the workforce and be well placed in society. POSE leverages its students to increase its outreach, requiring them to teach basic math and language to children at the primary level in their villages and communities. So far, POSE students have taught 20,000 primary school children.

ASER Centre/Pratham studies cited

ANNEXE – REFERENCES – PAGE 417

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