**Transitions and Educational Development:**

**Realising Rights and Realities**

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This presentation is in five parts. First it discusses how different patterns of access and transition are shaping education systems in low and middle income countries. Second a model is presented to conceptualise and manage different *Zones of Inclusion and Exclusion.* Both these research based insights point to methods of improving the management of education and training systems. Third the discussion turns to a consideration of the basic arithmetic of youth unemployment that shapes the transition from education and training systems into the labour market. Fourth, the critical issues that surround high stakes assessment and selection, and their implications for relevance and well being, are highlighted. Lastly the plenary reflects on the steps necessary to enhance the prospects for sustainable educational development that is more inclusive and manages transitions more effectively. In discussion examples will be drawn from low and low middle income countries that are recipients of external assistance with emphasis on those in Sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia.

Each of these five issues is elaborated in turn below.

**1. Patterns of Access, Inclusion and Exclusion**

There are five characteristic patterns of educational enrolment, progression, drop out and completion in low and low middle income countries. These determine the flow of students from pre-school to graduation and shape the numbers of school leavers at different levels entering different parts of the labour market. The five patterns of enrolment by grade are *(1) convex low enrolment, (2) highly convex / high drop out, (3) linear attrition mid drop out, (4) concave, low drop out and (5) linear full enrolment.*

In Type 1 countries about the same number of children enter grade 1 as there are in a single year age group. Not all are enrolled because many are over age. Drop out starts in grade 1 and results in fewer than 50% completing grade 6. Completion rates may be below 40% at primary, and are less than 20% for lower secondary. Development at secondary level is strongly constrained by the output from primary. In contrast Type 2 countries have very high rates of over enrolment in the early grades of primary. Enrolment in grade 1 may exceed 200% of the number of children in the age group. High drop out means that less than 70% of the age group complete grade 6 and less than 50% reach grade 9. Over-enrolment arises from many children entering who are over age, and from high rates of repetition. In some countries this inefficient pattern has persisted for more than two decades.

In contrast Type 3 countries have full but not over full enrolment in grade 1. Enrolments decline linearly with increasing grade. Although most children are enrolled in school no more than 75% of children in an age group reach the end of primary school. There may be serious issues with over-age children and drop out such that fewer than 50% complete lower secondary. Primary completion rates constrain expansion of secondary school. Type 4 countries have enrolment rates that indicate they are close to achieving universal completion of grade 6 but have less than 50% completing grade 9. Most of those who start primary finish at the right age. The biggest attrition occurs in lower secondary and less than half of all children succeed in entering upper secondary. Type 5 countries have full enrolment with similar numbers of children enrolled in each grade as there are in the relevant age cohort. Enrolments track the population growth of single age cohorts of children. Most of these systems are in high income countries.

These patterns are important as they have radically different implications for investment in education and training. They show how different countries have very different needs. The patterns signal different development priorities at different levels, especially if the flows are coupled indicators of labour market demand. A taxonomy of types of education system helps begin to map where intervention may be most cost effective. It is a counterpoint to the use by default of global goals that are not embedded in different country system realities.

**2. Mapping Zones of Inclusion and Exclusion**

Zone mapping is a pre requisite for understanding and appreciating the causal relationships that result in low learning levels, over age progression, and drop out. Systems evolve with different mixes of enrolment and participation, silent exclusions that conceal inappropriate levels of learning, and highly inequitable patterns of progression to higher level that exclude those with less cultural capital and fewest material assets. Zone Zero includes all those who never attend school, Zone 1 those who enter primary school, Zone 2 students who drop out of primary school, and Zone 3 those enrolled in primary but not learning and silently excluded. Zone 4 defines those who leave education after completing primary. Zone 5 includes those who drop out of secondary, and Zone 6 students who are enrolled but not learning whether in education or training.

Each Zone is populated by children and young learners who have different reasons for transiting from inclusion to exclusion. The factors which push and pull individuals across the thresholds vary but have to be understood if interventions are to respond to needs. Children out of school may be sporadic or permanent drop outs, they may be settled or unsettled by being excluded, and they may include not only the most marginalised but those with other characteristics that lead to educational exclusion. Zone mapping provides a topography of inclusion and exclusion, and helps unpack the significance of transitions in the education system for participation and learning. It is also a reminder that it may be much more attractive to intervene before transition from inclusion to exclusion than afterwards.

**3. The basic arithmetic of youth unemployment**

In many low and middle income countries the basic geography of the interface between the labour market and the outputs of the education system are not known by many decision makers and remain unsupported from an evidence base. Employers have limited understanding of what schools can and cannot do to enhance the employability of school leavers and may only stress that which is relevant to specific jobs. Schools and colleges often have little idea of the destinations of their graduates and how this is changing. Teachers and careers advisory services have limited understanding of the chances of individual students gaining access to different careers. Parents aspire for their children but have little information on which to make measured choices which balance distant rewards with current opportunities. The consequence is that many children and young adults aspire to a few high status occupations. These require the highest grades that few will actually achieve. Curricula focus on the needs of those who will continue in education rather than those who will enter the labour market when they leave school.

The simple arithmetic of labour markets is critical to national development strategies on both the supply and the demand side. If the output of competent secondary school leavers is too small economic growth will be starved of the human capital it needs to increase employment and create wealth. If the supply of new entrants to the labour market exceeds demand high levels of youth unemployment and social conflict become more likely. Even if the numbers are broadly in balance if the knowledge and capabilities of school leavers does not match the skill sets in demand in the labour market absorption of new entrants may be slow and costly mismatches frequent. The starting point is to map likely numbers of new entrants to the labour market at different education levels and develop projections that can anticipate imbalances between supply and demand. Where there is a demographic dividend this needs to be anticipated. So also do changing patterns of employment resulting from the political economies of popularism, evolution of globalisation, the anticipated “fourth industrial revolution”, and the emergence of China and India as global super powers.

**4. High stakes assessment and learning outcomes**

All stable societies devise methods of social and occupational selection that allocate different roles to different individuals. Increasingly educational qualifications determine “who gets what” and as countries develop inequalities grow and competition becomes fiercer. The consequences of greater emphasis on assessment and selection can lead to a narrowing of the curriculum, massive diversion of resources to private tuition, and a range of perverse outcomes. High stakes examinations focussed on selection to the next level of education encourage teachers to teach to the test and focus on high achieving students. Learning to get a job becomes more important than learning to do a job. Academic knowledge is valued over employment related skills. Those students who succeed and are selected may feel a sense of entitlement to modern sector jobs as a result of their experience as instrumentally motivated learners competing for scarce opportunities. Creativity and curiosity are unlikely to survive years of examination cramming. Those who fail academic selection tests enter the labour market with a final educational experience of failure and exclusion. They may lack motivation to learn further and may under value curiosity and creativity just as much of their school experience may have done. Societies that do not make the use of the talents of all their children are likely to lag behind those that seek to develop and reward a wide range of intellectual, affective and psychomotor skills at secondary school level.

New approaches are needed to revisit the system level impact of high stakes national and international assessments. If all learners are to be included assessment cannot be organised that excludes those with average and below average achievement. Educational institutions will need to adopt pedagogies that seek to reduce the difference in performance between the highest and lowest achievers and celebrate both norm reference and criterion reference excellence. The challenge is to manage learning differently for different learners and give all students opportunities for meaningful learning in education systems that are sustainable where formative assessment receives as much investment as summative.

**5. Takeaways**

The plenary concludes with a discussion of ways forward. These include:

* Analysis of flow data on students to establish bottlenecks, transitions associated with drop out, and inequitable patterns of participation that waste capability
* Development of Zonal Maps that profile patterns of exclusion from education and training and collate insight and data on causal relationships that may explain crossing thresholds from inclusion to exclusion
* Charting the basic arithmetic of youth unemployment to establish signals of mismatches in supply and demand at different educational, training and employment levels and now and in the proximate future
* Auditing high stakes assessment systems to establish if they remain fit for purpose in terms of labour market relevance, predictive validity, social impact especially on mental health, and their effects on levels of achievement across the full range of students
* Investing in systems to manage learning more efficiently in ways that reduce differences in achievement arising from inequitable access, encourage a wide range of capabilities, and promote formative assessment tailored to context and pedagogic efficacy.

**Some Key Questions**

1. How do children and young people flow through different education systems in low and low middle income countries? What are the patterns of progression and drop out and how are they associated with educational transitions? What are the characteristics of different Zone of Inclusion and Exclusion that determine how much educational investment different groups receive?
2. What are the labour market destinations of different secondary school graduates (girls and boys, rich and poor, urban and rural, those with disability) and what is the basic arithmetic of youth unemployment and labour market entry at the end of secondary school for each group?
3. What value do employers in different sub-sectors place on different types of knowledge and skill derived from education and training and what are the implications of this for curriculum reform?
4. How do education systems determine who gets what in the labour market, how do employers use educational qualifications to select employees?
5. To what extent is the value of education and training determined by its importance for high stakes selection examinations and how does this have an impact on learning outcomes for different groups of students?
6. How can assistance contribute more to the development of sustained educational development in ways that that recognise different needs in different systems and which adapt to changing priorities and anticipate likely transitions in labour markets?

Selected Publications:

1. Lewin K M (2015) **Educational Access, Equity and Development: Planning to Make Rights Realities**. Fundamentals of Educational Planning Serial Number 97. International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, Paris
2. Global Partnership for Education (GPE) 2016-17 – Lewin K M The educational challenges of transition: Key issues for 2030 <https://www.globalpartnership.org/content/educational-challenges-transition-key-issues-2030>
3. Lewin K M, Cameron S, (2015) **Equity, Educational Access and Learning Outcomes in the Middle East and North Africa.** UNICEF, Middle East and North Africa Region, Amman published by UNICEF New York