Education For All (EFA) & Inclusive Education

A Renewed Discussion

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Reasons for redefining the EFA engagement

6 key reasons for redefining the EFA goals, as expressed by Nicholas Burnett, Assistant Director-General for Education:

1. **Insufficient attention to equity and quality issues**
   - Traditional concept of equity too narrow (mainly access-oriented; equal opportunities = homogenous education)
   - Downplay of the role of quality inputs and processes - may explain the vast numbers of out-of-school children

2. **Not enough attention to educational content and teachers**
   - Tendency to add new concepts (ESD, peace education…) to already overloaded and excessively subject-oriented curricula
   - Little emphasis on common curricular frameworks for lifelong learning
   - The role of teachers as co-developers of the curricula underestimated

Reasons for redefining the EFA engagement

3. No incorporation of higher education and research

- Key role in creating critical leaders and experts
- Way to strengthen societal "competitiveness", i.e. quality human resources and ability to address diverse challenges

4. Inability of society to respond to the renewed EFA agenda

- Linked to bad governance and management of the educational systems
- Caution about relying on 'blue prints', i.e. privatisation

5. Lack of recognition of political realities

- e.g. national demand for secondary/TVET education

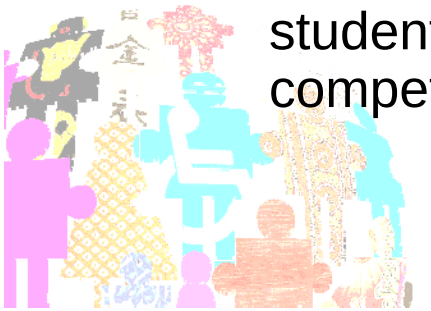
6. Lack of consideration/social acceptance about learning competencies, processes, and the changing characteristics of learners

- Cognitive-based education, ICT, "new millennium learner"

Repositioning of EFA goals to address those issues: a refined EFA agenda

1. Broader (more process and outcome-oriented) concepts of **equity and quality** are crucial
   - Evidence shows that high levels of equity and quality are interdependent (OECD PISA)
   - Allows education systems to respond more effectively to learners' diversity and, consequently, better sustain EFA in the long term

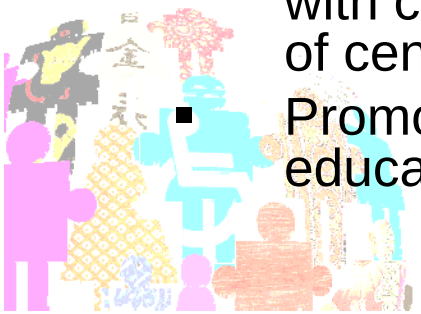
2. **Educational content** must be grounded upon **educational policy visions and objectives**, taking into account **teacher's role and profile**
   - Consider the expected student exit profile, the engagement of students in the learning process and the achievement of core life competencies



Repositioning of EFA goals to address those issues: a refined EFA agenda

3. Consider the challenging **implications of incorporating higher education** through a lifelong learning perspective into the EFA agenda
   - Tertiary institutions to support access and continuity for poorer students
   - Quality teacher education at the university level strengthens the education system as a whole

4. Focus on how to generate and sustain an adequate **balance between national and local levels in terms of responsibilities and roles**
   - The government must have a leading role in good governance, with close partnerships with civil society and a sound combination of centralized, decentralised and private activities
   - Promoting a common social understanding and acceptance of education as life-long learning opportunities for all



Repositioning of EFA goals to address those issues: a refined EFA agenda

5. Examining strong national demands, such as **secondary education and TVET challenges**
   - Providing diverse and connected higher secondary provisions entails major institutional, curricular and pedagogical changes

6. Take into consideration **new learning tools and learner's changing characteristics**
   - Heterogeneous learning environments provide better learning opportunities to socially disadvantaged groups – diversity is not a hindrance to learning (PISA)
   - Relevance and importance of providing lifelong learning opportunities in different settings (formal, non-formal, informal) starting with early childhood education and care
   - Diversifying modes of instruction (ex: ICTs, cooperative learning)

Developing Inclusive Education as the core of a refined EFA agenda

The build-up of more inclusive societies

Broadening the concept of inclusive education is key to address issues and challenges the repositioning of EFA would entail:

- An holistic way to globally address the transformation of the education system from visions to practices
- A key factor in democratising learning opportunities

Developing Inclusive Education as the core of a refined EFA agenda

Step 1: Laying the foundations of Inclusive Education

Jomtien (1990); Salamanca (1994); Dakar (2000)

1. Inclusive education began as a response to special education and integration/mainstreaming
   - Regular schools with an inclusive orientation, achieving education for all in a cost-effective way and encouraging inclusion of learners with special needs
   - Placement Paradigm: inclusive education is more than just a changing places for learners, it is also a service (Peters, 2004)

2. Related to the prioritisation of targeted excluded groups, linked to ethnic, gender, cultural, socio-economic and migrant factors
   - Access-based approach

Developing Inclusive Education as the core of a refined EFA agenda

Step 2: Broadening Inclusive Education

UNESCO's definition from 2005 onwards

"Inclusion is a **process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners** through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education.

It involves **changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision** which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the **responsibility of the regular system** to educate all children."

Developing Inclusive Education as the core of a refined EFA agenda

Step 3: A Common and Integrated Vision of Inclusive Education

UNESCO and the 48th ICE:

- **Strong endorsement** of a broader concept of inclusive education by 128 countries and over 900 participants in the ICE preparatory activities and by 101 Ministers / Vice Ministers of Education at the ICE

- "a broadened concept of inclusive education can be viewed as a **general guiding principle** to strengthen education for sustainable development, lifelong learning for all and equal access of all levels of society to learning opportunities" (Conclusions and Recommendations, November 2008)

- Build upon the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (article 24, 2006)

Key features of Inclusive Education as the core of a refined EFA agenda

- **Transversal approach to all dimensions and levels** providing access to lifelong learning opportunities from a rights-based perspective
- **Understanding, addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners** through the provision of quality, friendly and diverse learning opportunities
- **Personalised education and support** (i.e. a variety of learning opportunities and modes of instruction to engage learners; tutorial guidance; engaging families; ensuring high teacher expectations for all learners)
- Inclusive education aims to ensure the **presence (access and attendance), participation (quality learning) and achievement (quality outcomes)** of all students at all levels of education

Key features of Inclusive Education as the core of a refined EFA agenda

- **Understanding, identifying and removing barriers** to participation and factors of exclusion (from “blaming” and “penalizing” students’ profiles for low achievements…to looking at learning difficulties from the multi-dimensional perspective of the education system e.g. factors relating to cultures, communities, curricula)
- Inclusive education entails the restructuring the **cultures, policies and practices to respond to the diversity** of students (e.g. prioritization towards learners at risk of exclusion), while **providing equivalent learning opportunities** in all schools to targeted and non-targeted learners
- Understanding diversity in the classroom as **cost-effective** and a strong sign of **societal integration and cohesion**

Key features of Inclusive Education as the core of a refined EFA agenda

- **Various levels of intervention** across the education system:

1. Inclusive education guides a clear and unified **policy planning process**, the **allocation of resources** and the **impacts** pursued and attained

2. Inclusive education helps to better visualize the **interfaces and synergies between social and educational inclusion**

3. Inclusive education orientates the **design and implementation of inclusive schools and curricula** to address all learners' needs

4. Inclusive education promotes the **diversification of teaching practices** for engaging the students effectively in the learning process

An inclusive society based on diversity

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