

# Global Partnership for Education

## Major achievements and significant challenges for Commonwealth members

Luis Crouch<sup>1</sup>

The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), formerly known as the Education for all – Fast Track Initiative, works as a ‘global compact’ between low-income and donor countries. Established in 2002, its mission is to help low-income countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on education and to accelerate the Education for All (EFA) goals. The GPE is comprised of 46 developing countries, and more than 30 bilateral, regional and international agencies, development banks, the private sector, teachers, and local and global civil society groups devoted to ensuring that all children everywhere have access to quality education.

Using a set of key indicators, this paper compares the achievements of Commonwealth countries in the GPE to those of other countries in the partnership (see Table 1), and also to the achievements of countries that are eligible but not (yet) in the GPE. The focus of the analysis is on primary schooling, a priority of the partnership since its inception. All the comparisons use internationally comparable data available online from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and were sourced specifically for this paper<sup>2</sup>.

### Methodology

The chosen indicators (part of the partnership’s Results Framework as described in its forthcoming first monitoring and evaluation report<sup>3</sup>) are as follows:

- Gross intake ratio into primary schooling.
- Gender parity index for gross intake ratio into primary schooling.
- Gross enrolment ratio in primary schooling.
- Gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio in primary schooling.
- Net enrolment rate in primary schooling.
- Gender parity index for net enrolment rate in primary schooling.
- Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary schooling.
- Gender parity index for gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary schooling.
- Percentage of repeaters in primary schooling, all grades.

All the comparisons estimate the trends over the 2000s as well as the average level in this decade. So as to avoid the influence of outliers on the results, the median is calculated for each group. The medians are not weighted by enrolment – small countries count as

much as large ones. The data therefore typify countries’ experiences, and not the experience of the typical child across all the countries. Since the aim of the report is not to single out particular countries and their successes or challenges, only central tendencies are presented and, where case studies are used, the names of the countries are not identified.

### Basic results

The results of the analysis (summarised in Table 1) show that, on key indicators such as the primary school proxy completion rate (the gross intake into the last year of primary), the Commonwealth countries do better than, or about as well as, the partnership countries as a whole (2.66 versus 2.17, and 2.08 versus 2.08, respectively). In a few indicators, the Commonwealth countries appear not to have improved as much, such as gender parity in school intake, but that is often because for the Commonwealth countries such indicators are already high (0.99, in the case at hand). One important indicator on which the Commonwealth partnership countries do not do as well as others is the percentage of repeaters. Over the decade, these countries made only little progress in reducing the percentage of repeaters, yet this figure was as high in the Commonwealth partnership countries as in the partnership as a whole. Thus, there was plenty of room for improvement.

The most important point to note from the results, however, is how much better the partnership countries perform relative to countries that are eligible but not yet in the partnership, regardless of Commonwealth status. Again, in some cases, this is due to the fact that these particular countries already had higher values often because they had higher income at the outset. The positive message here is that the partnership countries are catching up fast to the eligible countries that are not part of the partnership.

It is important not to assign too much causality to the ‘event’ of entry into the partnership, or indeed into the Commonwealth. The countries selected for early entry into the partnership were countries that, while showing great need, were also poised to plan and execute better than others, and were entrepreneurial in seeking entry (or responded with alacrity to the global community’s overtures). Thus, there is considerable selection effect. Countries that had great need and therefore great scope for improvement, and were specifically chosen because they were likely to make progress, did in fact make more progress. Whether they would have made as much progress had they not entered the partnership is difficult to say. But in some ways, this causality issue is somewhat

# National Education Union of Zimbabwe

*Social Solidarity, Economy, Education, Entrepreneurship and Development*



The National Education Union of Zimbabwe (NEUZ) strives to protect the violation of its members' interests by representing members in cases of unfair labour practices mostly arising during salary and conditions of service disputes. NEUZ deals with teachers and support staff in the education field, notably ZIMSEC, ZIPAM, ZIMDEF, research institutions, and training institutions, school development associations and colleges.

## Objectives

- To regulate the relationship between members and their employers
- To promote and further the interests of members
- To educate its members in industrial relations, labour law and economic affairs internally and externally
- To promote social and cultural interests of its members
- To encourage the settlement of disputes by conciliatory methods
- To promote, support or oppose through lawful methods any proposed legislative or other measures by the state or employers affecting the interests of members
- To promote or establish provident and other mutual benefit schemes for members
- To promote social and cultural interests of its members
- To associate with organisations with similar objectives in Zimbabwe and other parts of the world

## Mission

To be the champion of the worker consciousness in education, research and related institutions in line with the Union's goals and objectives as well as advocating for solidarity amongst the industry, country and world at large in labour matters from an education perspective.

## Operations

The Union promotes the welfare of its members through subcommittees. The committees currently in place include:

- **EDUCATION AND RESEARCH** to cater for a quality approach to industry expectations and human capital development
- **PADARE/ENKHUDLENI MEN'S FORUM** deals with male social issues
- **TOURISM DESK** promotes social and cultural interests of its members
- **HIV/AIDS** to promote health and safety
- **SPORT'S DESK** provides for both male and female NEUZ selected teams
- **WOMEN'S DESK** to cater for redress of historical imbalances on gender and allow their empowerment
- **ARTS AND CULTURE** to allow show-casing of various skills.
- **DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL NEEDS** to accommodate the physically disadvantaged

## Vision

To be the leading education union for educationists and support staff in serving, advising, advocating, and championing the worker cause.



**NEUZ believes in the quality of education which prepares learners to participate meaningfully and effectively in the development of the nation as a whole.**

## Aims

- Promoting organisational rights
- Union capacity building
- Safeguarding individual and collective rights
- Collective bargaining, conciliation and arbitration
- Advocating for member and worker respect

## Challenges

Challenges in education remain providing free and compulsory education which implies a heavy financial, material and human resources burden to the state.

- Quantitative expansion was achieved at the expense of quality education.
- Shortages of books, laboratory equipment and furniture persisted especially in rural schools.

## Recommendations

- Funding for research in education is vital with unions playing an important role in this set up.
- With the collapse of some global markets, unions should strengthen their economic base by being transformed into business units with the blessing of the international community.
- Zimbabwe should return as soon as possible to ensuring the policy of primary education for all, and should follow the SADC policy of providing free basic education for all up to Form 2.
- There is a need for the provision of subsidised housing for union members and education-related workers in both rural and urban areas. Such accommodation should include both mortgage and rental schemes. Union organisation should play centre stage in such mechanisms.
- There is a need for public and private partnership in the production of teaching and learning materials and work-related assets.
- The unions should be provided with the necessary funding for retraining its members in matters pertaining to statutory instruments and current work-related issues.
- The Business community should play a more active role in supporting education-related activities in consultation with union leadership.



*Mr H.T.C. Mangwadu,  
General Secretary*

*Lameck Tendengu,  
Deputy Chairperson  
Education and Research*



## Linkages

The Union interacts, relates and links with other organisations advocating recognition of worker interests. In Zimbabwe, these education unions are ZIMTA, ZESSCWU and PTUZ. The Union has launched, together with other local education unions, an Education Coalition group to advance the interests of the global Education For All campaign with particular attention to indigenous group. NEUZ is an affiliate member of Education International.

NEUZ has participated in HIV/AIDS crusades with the National Aids Council of Zimbabwe. NEUZ plays an important role in addressing gender issues and works with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, Gender and Community Development.

## The way forward

- To revive fully its projected membership through a massive recruitment drive.
- To strengthen its legal desk for handling of technical disputes.
- To acquire assets such as computers, vehicles and other related machineries for all its branches.
- To operate fully the subcommittees with the goal to allow active participation of members even after disengagement at their full time workplace.
- To officially launch the HIV/AIDS policy for the industry.
- To harmonise all Union functions.

## Contact

**Mr Isaiah Martin Dembure, President**

Tel: + 263 773 67 1979

**Mr Headman T.C. Mangwadu, General Secretary**

Tel: +263 772 21 2807

ZIMTA House,  
190 Hebert Chitepo Ave, Room No. 2  
Ground Floor, P.O. Box 10911,  
Harare, Zimbabwe.

Tel: +263 476 4230

Fax: +263 476 4231

Email: [nationaleducationunionofzimbab@gmail.com](mailto:nationaleducationunionofzimbab@gmail.com)

irrelevant: the partnership was actually designed to assist precisely such countries. The data thus does not necessarily show the partnership's causal effect as much as it demonstrates the fact that the countries chosen did perform as they and the global community had intended and hoped. Thus, in the face of great initial (and ongoing) need, these countries are indeed catching up to eligible countries not yet in the partnership.

### A significant challenge – weak foundations

In this section, we highlight one significant challenge, or a set of inter-related challenges, that can be summarised as a really serious 'weak foundations' problem, which creates (or exacerbates) what Keith Lewin has called a sort of 'hidden exclusion' in his work with the CREATE project<sup>4</sup>. We have chosen to focus on this challenge not so much because it is the only significant challenge that remains, but because it is related to, and therefore could undermine the success of, the primary school access indicators noted above. Despite this challenge, there is some evidence that the average level of school-based skills provided to all children seems to be increasing, except in a very few countries whose quality problems are most acknowledged and have become almost canonical examples for the dangers of putting access before quality education. But these skills are not increasing fast enough, and are still abysmally low.

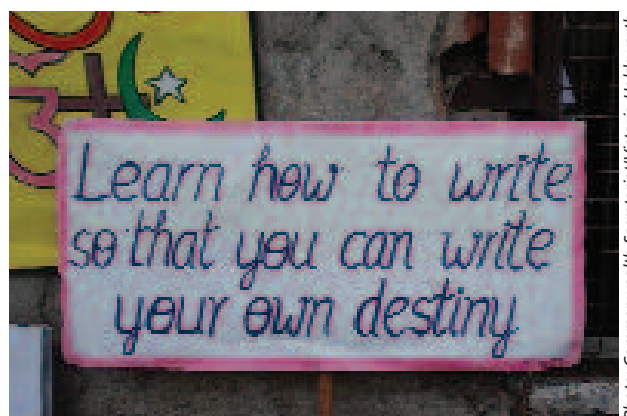


Photo: Commonwealth Secretariat/Victoria Holdsworth

The list of indicators, or clues, that something is wrong is a set of inter-related facts. These facts do not, by any means, apply to all countries in the partnership or to the 'partnership plus Commonwealth' countries. But they apply to a worryingly large proportion of the countries. The set of related facts are shown in Box 1 (opposite). All these clues, together, constitute a 'weak foundations', or a 'crisis in the early years' problem. They call for attention and more research, though the evidence already seems strong enough to call for policy action. However, a few specific case studies can be noted, almost all from countries that are both in the partnership and in the Commonwealth.

**Table 1 Key indicators by country grouping, 2000s**

Indicator	Rate of improvement 2000 to present				Average in the 2000s			
	Partnership	Partnership, in the Commonwealth*	Partnership-eligible, not yet members	Partnership-eligible in Commonwealth, not yet members	Partnership	Partnership, in the Commonwealth*	Partnership-eligible, not yet members	Partnership-eligible in Commonwealth, not yet members
Gross intake ratio into primary schooling	2.17	2.66	0.16	0.16	110	110	104	108
Gender parity index for gross intake ratio into primary schooling	0.0041	0.0030	-0.0003	-0.0005	0.95	0.99	0.98	0.98
Gross enrolment ratio in primary schooling	1.79	2.24	-0.17	-0.38	100	106	105	105
Gender parity index for gross enrolment ratio in primary schooling	0.0073	0.0074	0.0014	0.0013	0.94	0.97	0.96	0.97
Net enrolment rate in primary schooling	1.37	0.80	-0.10	-0.15	77	85	90	93
Gender parity index for net enrolment rate in primary schooling	0.0085	0.0048	0.0008	0.0005	0.98	1.01	0.98	0.98
Gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary schooling	2.08	2.08	0.79	-0.34	66	66	96	100
Gender parity index for gross intake ratio to the last grade of primary schooling	0.0125	0.0139	0.0014	-0.0009	0.90	0.93	0.96	0.98
Percentage of repeaters in primary schooling, all grades	-0.55	-0.14	-0.12	-0.06	11.8	12.4	6.4	3.7

\* Cameroon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guyana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zambia

Source: calculated for this paper from UIS data

## Reasons for optimism

The battle for access and enrolment is increasingly being won, though there remain important gaps. The 'crisis in weak foundations' noted above, as both cause and as a case in point for overall low quality, is alarming and represents a larger gap between rich and poor than the access gap. However, it is important to warn against pessimism, especially as there are two main reasons for optimism.

1. The first is that the average level of children's skills is improving, albeit very slowly. Two South African researchers, using the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) database, are currently carrying out research that can be used to argue that, adjusting for population, the skills of the 'average' child in

almost all countries in which the SACMEQ assessment operates have increased<sup>5</sup>. This is because even in countries where the average assessment scores (in literacy and maths) of the children reaching grade 6 have decreased, this drop is small relative to the increase in the numbers of children reaching grade 6. In other words, if one classifies children as functionally illiterate by grade 6 (those in the lowest two ranks in the SACMEQ assessment) or functionally literate by grade 6, then in all countries examined, except Malawi, the numbers of the literate children have increased by more than the numbers of illiterate children. That said, it is important to remember just how low the average skills levels are in low-income countries: the median child in the poorest-performing SACMEQ countries is at best around the fifth percentile of the OECD countries<sup>6</sup>.

### Box 1 Evidence of 'weak foundations' in early years education

- In 11 partnership countries (about a quarter of the total), including 5 Commonwealth countries in the partnership, the ratio of enrolment in grade 1 to the target population is higher than 1.5 in the last few years. In a few cases, this ratio is around 2 – there are about 100 per cent more children in grade 1 than there are in the target population. In all these cases, the problem has persisted for at least a decade. It is clear that, if such a ratio is mostly due to the take-up of previously unenrolled overaged children, the backlog would have been absorbed in a few years. Yet, as noted, the over-enrolment persists, sometimes for decades. Thus, these numbers are either a misreporting of the enrolment or, more likely (because the figures are confirmed by household surveys) an under-reporting of re-entrants into the same grades.
- In 13 partnership countries, intake into the first grade has been more than 130 per cent in the past few years, and in 12 of these, the intake was already 100 per cent at a baseline drawn 15 years ago. Thus, these numbers also cannot represent true intake of overaged children.
- A case study can be used as illustrative extreme case. In a given country, the officially reported repetition rate decreased from around 25 per cent to between 5 and 10 per cent in just a year or two in the mid-2000s. In that country, the ratio of enrolment in grade 1 to the target population is now 175 per cent: there is 75 per cent over-enrolment. The enrolment ratio increased by 20 percentage points (from about 150 per cent to 170 per cent) at precisely the same time as the officially reported repetition rate also decreased by 20 percentage points. Yet, in the mid-2000s, that ratio had already been at least 130 per cent for a decade, so the increase could not be due to an increase in the enrolment of overaged children (and, in any case, it would have been odd that such an increase would happen precisely as the repetition rate decreased).
- In many of these countries, the ratio of enrolment in grade 1 to enrolment in grade 2 is very high – around 130 per cent on average (or 75 per cent as much enrolment in grade 2 as in grade 1). This creates the appearance of a high drop-out rate between these two grades, and tends to cause concern among donors and within governments. Yet the ratio of enrolment in grade 2 to the target population is still above 100 per cent, so the appearance of early drop-out is only appearance. The problem is over-enrolment, and this is mostly due to unofficial repetition, since the backlog of overaged children would have been absorbed a long time ago.
- The problem of overaged children is real enough and has been powerfully noted by Keith Lewin in various writings associated with the CREATE project. However, the issue seems to be not just that children are overaged, but that the system actively overages the children. Using UNICEF's Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), it is possible to illustrate this using a few countries as case studies. The results show that in three countries (all three Commonwealth members) chosen as case studies in this area, the proportion of children who appear to age two years in just one grade (grade 1) were 60 per cent, 78 per cent and 44 per cent. This implies that the repetition rates in these grades were around 50 per cent – much more than officially reported. But the problem does not stop there. The proportion of children aging two years in grade 2, within the same countries, was 15 per cent, 48 per cent and 41 per cent respectively. This is a very serious issue – children may or may not enter overaged, but whether they do or not, the education system appears to be overaging them through repetition.
- These results are related to non-learning, as both cause (mostly) and effect. The data showing that there is very little learning (essentially none) in the early grades is accumulating fast. Results of various early-grade reading assessments now show that around half of children in grades 2 to 4 in the poorest countries typically cannot read anything at all. Some of these results are from poor regions rather than nationally representative, but nevertheless are worth noting. In the same three countries whose 'active overaging' data is noted above, relatively recent studies show that the percentages of children who can read no words at all were 59 per cent, 42 per cent and 80 per cent in grade 3. After two, three or four years of schooling, it is worrying that there are so many children who cannot read a single word.

# Knowledge, Food and Security

MICHAEL OKPARA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE,  
UMUDIKE



*Vice-Chancellor  
Professor Hilary  
Odo Edeoga*

## Vice-Chancellor, Professor Hilary Odo Edeoga hosts Professor Uche Godwin Nzuko Anazodo Memorial Lecture

The first memorial lecture instituted by the College of Engineering and Engineering Technology in honour of the late Professor Uche Godwin Nzuko Anazodo, a renowned Agricultural Engineer, was held in June 2011. This momentous occasion, with the theme 'Machinery Manufacturing Industry in Nigeria', was organised to honour lecturers as well as other personalities who have made outstanding contributions to national development through Engineering and Technology.

The lecture for the day entitled Endogenous Technological Capacity for a Robust Machinery Manufacturing Industry in Nigeria: An Imperative for Vision 20:2020 was delivered by Professor A.P. Onwuaju, CEO/Director-General of the Raw Material Research and Development Council, Abuja. The highlight was the presentation of a posthumous award to the late Professor Anazodo as well as awards for excellence in engineering to some deserving engineers in Nigeria. The Vice-chancellor was the chief host.

### Vision

The vision of the University is to be the foremost institution for producing highly-rated graduates in Agriculture, Science and Technology and to be a vehicle for the attainment of the primary goals of the Nigerian Agricultural Policy of self-sufficiency in food and fibre production.

### Mission

To provide high quality, practical training to students to become professionally competent and confident persons capable of self-employment to develop environment-friendly and people-sensitive technologies and to enhance the well-being of the people through extension and other interventions.

### Introduction

Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU) was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1992. The University is located in the south-eastern part of Nigeria.

### Colleges and Schools

- > College of Agribusiness and Financial Management
- > College of Agricultural Economics, Rural Sociology and Extension
- > College of Agriculture and Science Education
- > College of Animal Science and Animal Production
- > College of Crop and Soil Sciences
- > College of Engineering and Engineering Technology
- > College of Applied Food Science and Tourism
- > College of Natural and Applied Sciences
- > College of Natural Resources and Environmental Management
- > College of Veterinary Medicine
- > Postgraduate School
- > School of General Studies

### Directorates and Centres

- > Directorate of Research and Development
- > Directorate of University Advancement
- > Directorate of Information and Communication Technology
- > Centre for Molecular Biosciences and Biotechnology
- > MOUUAU Extension Centre
- > Centre for Continuing Education
- > Centre for Entrepreneurship Studies

### Centre for Molecular Biosciences and Biotechnology

On 7 January 2011, the Vice-Chancellor inaugurated the Centre. The Centre is designed to serve as a centre of excellence in the country that will promote research in all aspects of molecular life sciences and biotechnology, leading to improvement in agricultural products/technologies, healthcare and environmental management in a trans-disciplinary format.

### Students and staff

Currently, MOUUAU has 14,830 students, 609 of whom are postgraduates, pursuing different degrees and diplomas on full and part-time basis. Total staff strength is 1,432. MOUUAU is a gender sensitive institution with a passion for community development.

### Corporate social responsibility

Through the MOUUAU Extension Centre, the University runs youth development programmes that train youths in different technical skills including crop and animal production, resources management and information communication technology. The University runs free courses for adults in a host community aimed at literacy acquisition at home, business and environmental management.

PMB 7267, Umuahia,  
Abia State, Nigeria  
Tel: +234 803 548 1333  
Email: [vc@mouau.edu.ng](mailto:vc@mouau.edu.ng)



[www.mouau.edu.ng](http://www.mouau.edu.ng)

2. The second reason for optimism is that, as noted by Nick Burnett, remediation in early and basic skills is one area where good evidence is now available on how to improve things<sup>7</sup>. Countries as varied as Liberia, Egypt, Mali, Cambodia, The Gambia and Mozambique, often working in partnership with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs), or the Partnership Secretariat, have recently produced impressive results in improving reading skills. Key NGOs and CSOs, such as Pratham in India or Save the Children, seem to have been able to institutionalise skills in reading improvement, and this knowledge should be transferable to governments. These experiences are not always perfect, and there are still obstacles to overcome in sustainability or scale-up, but the results are some of the most hopeful seen in recent years.

While there is reason for optimism, the results show that, if learning levels are to improve, higher levels of fidelity and rigour in implementation of reading programmes are necessary<sup>8</sup>.

## Conclusion

What the results from the analysis show is that, *within* the partnership, Commonwealth countries generally perform as well as the other countries. When they do not, it is often because the indicator in question is already at a high level and cannot easily be increased further. Countries in the partnership, in turn, perform considerably better than countries that are eligible but not members. However, the positive trends in the indicators hide certain serious problems that need to be addressed, especially with regards to the early or foundational years of the education systems, and are related to both learning outcomes and a churning of enrolment and overaging (extremely high repetition, officially reported or not) in those early years, representing a crisis in the foundations of the systems. The challenges are also important in that they are often unrecognised, precisely because some of the more obvious indicators are so positive.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The opinions and results presented here are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the position of the Global Partnership for Education Secretariat, or of any other institution with which the author is or has been affiliated.
- <sup>2</sup> [http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=136&IF\\_Language=eng&BR\\_Topic=0](http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=136&IF_Language=eng&BR_Topic=0), accessed on 23 June 2012.
- <sup>3</sup> Global Partnership for Education Secretariat, First Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report, 2012.
- <sup>4</sup> See for instance [http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf\\_documents/Keith lewinBangladeshconference2011.pdf](http://www.create-rpc.org/pdf_documents/Keith%20lewinBangladeshconference2011.pdf), accessed on 24 June 2012.
- <sup>5</sup> Various personal communications, Stephen Taylor, Department of Basic Education, South Africa and Nicholas Spaul, University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, April 2012.
- <sup>6</sup> Filmer, D., Hasan, A. and Pritchett, L., *A Millennium Learning Goal: Measuring real progress in education* (August 2006). Center for Global Development Working Paper No. 97. Accessed at [http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=982968](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=982968) on 24 June 2012.
- <sup>7</sup> 'From the GMR to UNESCO to Education Results for Development', in *NORRAG NEWS, Value for Money in International Education: A New World of Results, Impacts and Outcomes*, No.47, April 2012, pp. 20-21, accessed at <http://norrags.wordpress.com/2012/06/13/from-the-gmr-to-unesco-to-education-results-for-development/> on 24 June 2012.
- <sup>8</sup> Some of these results can be accessed in various web sites. See the workshop materials at <http://www.globalpartnership.org/support-we-offer/early-grade-reading/all-children-reading-workshops/>, and also materials at [http://www.basiced.org/wp-content/uploads/Briefings/June\\_17\\_2011/Sylvia\\_Linan-Thompson\\_6-17-11.pdf](http://www.basiced.org/wp-content/uploads/Briefings/June_17_2011/Sylvia_Linan-Thompson_6-17-11.pdf) and or <http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMG14E/b.7084483/>, accessed on 24 June 2012.

**Luis Crouch** is the Global Good Practice Team Coordinator and Lead Education Specialist at the Global Partnership for Education. He is an education economist specialised in policy, decentralised finance (e.g. funding formulas) and decentralisation, political economy of reform, education statistics and projections. He has become interested in early grade reading and quality as the key entry point to improve education systems' response to the quality imperative. He has worked closely on South Africa's funding reforms and more recently Egypt's decentralisation experiments, and has been an opinion-maker in the area of using early skills as a possible international goal.