DeliverEd

Building knowledge for leaders on how to deliver education reforms

The challenge of delivering for learning

We are just 10 years away from the 2030 deadline to meet the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 of ensuring inclusive, equitable, quality education for all – but over 800 million children and youth are not on track to learn the skills needed to thrive now and in the future.

The Education Commission's *Learning Generation* report provided an explicit agenda for action to make faster progress towards SDG 4 centered around the education workforce, 21st century learning and skills, education financing, and delivery of results. Addressing these and other recommendations to dramatically improve learning outcomes requires that governments implement policies effectively and continually reassess and recalibrate their approaches to ensure they are achieving desired outcomes. There is a crucial gap in knowledge amongst policymakers on how to do this.

Across the sector, there is a lack of best practices to turn policy agendas into results. A recent evaluation of the Global Partnership for Education's work found that while education sector plans have strengthened through its efforts, the quality of sector planning does not guarantee strong implementation and both implementation needs, and how to monitor implementation of the plan, are not sufficiently considered in sector plan development.

Now, the COVID-19 pandemic is worsening the learning crisis as nearly 1.6 billion children and youth have had their education disrupted. Budget tightening globally will heighten pressure on education leaders to justify spending and demonstrate impact. Without effective policy responses, the World Bank estimates that $10 trillion in lifetime earnings could be lost for today's students. It is more critical than ever for governments to deliver results for education.

Meeting the needs of leaders taking action on the learning crisis

With support from the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, the Education Commission and Oxford University's Blavatnik School of Government are working with the University of Toronto, as well as leading local research organizations in five countries, to build evidence on delivery approaches to address this pressing gap in knowledge.

Delivery approaches, including multi-year *delivery units* or shorter, problem-solving focused *delivery labs*, have been promoted in the past two decades as solutions to rapidly boost state capacity to achieve policy goals. Some of the most commonly cited examples of such approaches used for education include the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit in the UK, Big Results Now! in Tanzania, the Chief Minister's Special Monitoring Unit in Punjab, Pakistan, the Pernambuco state *learning pacts* in Brazil, and PEMANDU in Malaysia.

While these approaches may differ in design, they share a common aim to rapidly improve how the bureaucracy executes policy, often from the center of government (whether at a national or sub-national level) all the way down to the local level. To accomplish this, delivery approaches combine a

The International Commission   @educommission
on Financing Global Education   info@educationcommission.org
Opportunity   educationcommission.org

government's existing managerial functions of delivery – such as monitoring, problem-solving, and communication – in a new way which represents a shift from the status quo. Put simply, they are solutions which governments adopt to get things done better.

Yet despite being used in over 40 national and subnational governments, there is a dearth of evidence on when and where delivery approaches might be beneficial, or even what they are and are not able to achieve. There is also no agreed framework for contextualizing when a delivery approach, or what type of delivery approach, is best suited to a government's goals, and when another approach to improving policy execution may be more appropriate. As a result, policymakers are making choices with insufficient evidence, leading to concerns that delivery approaches have been designed inappropriately or adopted because leaders must "do something," rather than as the best-fit solution.

What DeliverEd will achieve for policymakers

By building a greater evidence base on how governments can achieve their policy priorities, DeliverEd will strengthen the ability of governments to implement reforms which could improve learning outcomes and enable the world to meet SDG 4 by 2030. Over the next two years, DeliverEd will produce a series of four papers and a minimum of six policy briefs, which build a conceptual understanding of delivery approaches, capture the use of delivery approaches across the world today, and empirically evaluate five real-life approaches in Pakistan (in Punjab and Sindh), Ghana, Jordan, and Tanzania.

In Ghana, the case study will evaluate a delivery approach actively in use by the current leadership. This will provide valuable information to help decision-makers understand if their approach is achieving the desired impact at the center of government, district, and school levels, and if their policies are actually reaching teachers and students. The research teams will also support immediate needs on the COVID-19 education response in Ghana, providing guidance to leadership on how to structure a response that will help them build back better.

Intersecting with this research, DeliverEd will also mobilize and engage a community of practice around policy implementation to build awareness on the need to develop more effective global efforts to achieve SDG 4. The initiative will engage with national and global stakeholders on how practitioners and policymakers are confronting implementation challenges and what information they need to empower decision-making and tackle obstacles to policy delivery, including confronting the new constraints and challenges which COVID-19 has raised. A high-level advisory group will support this engagement by providing feedback on the research agenda and by connecting DeliverEd to other relevant initiatives and partners, particularly policymakers in developing countries.

If you are interested in learning more about the research or in engaging with the initiative, please email deliver.ed@educationcommission.org.

The International Commission
on Financing Global Education
Opportunity

@educommission
info@educationcommission.org
educationcommission.org