

RECOUP-CREATE MID-TERM DISSEMINATION EVENT

The mid-term dissemination event of RECOUP India, the *National Seminar on Education: Access, Exclusion and Outcomes*, was held at the India Habitat Centre on 3-5 December 2008. The seminar was planned jointly with CREATE India, the education RPC based at the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), Delhi.

The objective of the event was to disseminate the preliminary findings of RECOUP research in India among stakeholders in the education community, the civil society and policy makers. The event was planned as a joint dissemination with the following purpose in mind: 1) To leverage NUEPA's strong network in the Education community and among policy makers. 2) To forge a link between the Access and the Outcome RPCs in India by sharing the findings on a common platform.

The two-and-a-half day workshop was divided into 10 sessions, including the inaugural, with 2 presentations per session. Typically, CREATE and RECOUP sessions were alternated in a day. The concluding session was a panel discussion on "Access, Exclusion and Outcomes".

Invitees

The list of invitees included representatives of national and international NGOs working in the fields related to RECOUP research, representatives of the relevant state and central government departments, members of the planning commission and the national commission on the unorganized sector, members of educational research and training institutes, researchers and experts in the field, and students and faculty from some of the major universities and research institutes and representatives of donor agencies.

A total of over 70 participants (excluding CORD and NUEPA members) attended the workshop over the three-day period. However, representation from the central or state government departments was minimal. All other target groups were well represented.

Inaugural and Introductory Session

The inaugural session was chaired by Prof Ved Prakash, Vice Chancellor of NUEPA. The workshop was inaugurated by A K Rath, Secretary, School Education and Literacy, Government of India. Mr Rath drew attention to the fact that out of the states chosen for the two RPCs, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh (a CREATE state) are states with the least developmental progress. Therefore, extrapolations based on findings in these states would not constitute a fair assessment of the status in the country. He was curious to see how the research captured the ever-changing ground realities and the wide variance based on location, community and state. He was hopeful that once the Right to Free and Compulsory Education bill is passed, the entire elementary education scenario will change.

The overviews of CREATE and RECOUP were presented by Keith Lewin and R. Govinda, and Christopher Colclough and Claire Noronha, respectively. While

Christopher focused on the research questions and objectives of RECOUP, Claire delineated the key aspects of RECOUP research in India. Some of the points that came out in the discussion on the overview were: Do we need UK to guide us in such research? Research is not ideology neutral – will that be taken into account? Poverty and deprivation are two different things that seem to be used interchangeably.

The presenters responded to the questions, assuring that the ideological perspectives and socio-political dimensions would be kept in mind.

Papers presented

Six presentations from RECOUP and seven from CREATE were made at the seminar. In addition, on the last day, the findings of another CORD project, Revisiting Education for All, were presented, as this presentation complemented a CREATE paper on revisiting schools after 18 years. This report focuses on the RECOUP presentations made at the seminar and a summary of the discussions and feedback on them.

Day 1

1. The School Governance Environment in Uttar Pradesh: Implications on Educational Outcomes by Geeta Gandhi Kingdon

This paper examined the school governance environment in Uttar Pradesh, exploring in particular the extent to which this was influenced by teacher unions and teacher politicians. It attempts to investigate the implications for teacher salaries, teacher accountability, teacher effort and student achievement.

Discussion

Discussant: Janaki Rajan, Professor, Department of Education, Jamia Milia Islamia

Janaki Rajan started by saying that the paper was of enormous interest to her, though her views might be on the other side of the spectrum. She shared some suggestions/comments:

- She questioned the relevance of an empirical statistical method to look at the complex and intricate relationship between a teacher's political activity and their participation in a public institution, the school.
- The paper mentioned that of the two categories of teachers in government schools, para teachers and regular teachers, it dealt with the latter. Therefore, it might be better, she felt, to separate the data in these two categories.
- Another point made was that the reasons why teachers would approach Members of the Legislative Councils were missing – often these are legitimate activities that relate to demanding their rights. So, to treat all such activities as 'politicization' may be misleading.
- It was also not clear from the paper why pay rise for the teacher is to be regarded as a problem. Linking salary increase to voting a politician into power is a point that could be reconsidered – pay increase is determined by the pay commission and not the central government.

- The terms ‘politicization’ and ‘engagement in political activities’ were perhaps used interchangeably.
- Some disaggregations might be useful – gender and caste – to get a more complete picture. Are women teachers a part of the teachers unions? If so, what has been their experience?

The discussant said she did agree with the conclusions and that teachers should not be doing polling booth duty, but teaching.

Questions/Comments

Women are much less likely to have political connections or be part of unions. So data on unionization and political participation here is unlikely to include women.

When talking about issues of teacher accountability one needs to also look at teacher education, professionalization, etc.

Geeta Kingdon’s response:

High pay for teachers is not the problem – the problem is despite being highly paid, they do not teach. Also, in UP, pay revisions are not clear-cut and are accompanied with agitations and political manipulations.

2. *Why Aid for Education to India?* By Christopher Colclough and Anuradha De

The paper argues that aid to education in India provides a classic paradox of aid practice, and an example of a central dilemma presently facing the international aid community. India remains a country with a predominantly low-quality primary education system, and high rates of non-attendance. The government has assigned high priority to securing universal enrolment and better quality in the primary sector over the next few years. The paper shows that domestic policy and international priorities in education are thus strongly aligned. India is also a country which scores highly on aid effectiveness criteria, making it, in the context of the new aid modalities, a preferred target for aid support. However, India’s continued wish to accept aid for education – and for other sectors – is more puzzling, given its small proportionate size relative to government spending. The paper argues that it is because India has been able to use aid to serve its own objectives that the relationship with donor agencies continues to be a productive one. Yet, notwithstanding the high incidence of poverty and shared policy objectives, India’s strong economic growth is set to reduce its attraction to donors sharply, and the flow of external aid will fall over coming years. There is the paradox: the interests of both donors and recipient suggest that aid should continue, but India’s skewed development pattern (which maximises growth but so far has not made great inroads into poverty) provides the reason why it will end.

Discussion

Discussant: AK Shiva Kumar, Development Economist and Advisor, UNICEF

- If one were to look at the amount of aid, along with the per capita income in the country, instead of absolute figures or percentages, then it would show a substantial decline.

- The paper talked about a lot of benefits from aid. However the shortcomings of aid have not been focused upon.
- The two perspectives that might be important are – the perspective of the child, and that of the tax payers in donor countries.
- He suggested five evaluative questions/points in relation to aid to India for education – 1) to what extent has aid helped in making progress on the EFA declaration? The emphasis has been more on essential learning less on values outlined in the MDG. 2) Early childhood education is another neglected area 3) To what extent has aid been able to bring in global knowledge and expertise? 4) Has aid been able to enrich India's education policy? 5) Are donor agencies substituting domestic resources or augmenting them?

Therefore, aid agencies need to ask themselves what are their comparative advantages and what is it that they are doing or want to do in India.

Questions/comments:

Though the national component of aid has gone up, the state component has decreased, which has not been discussed. Anuradha explained that the earlier background paper has looked into this, which has not been integrated into the present paper.

Day 2

1. Variations in Labour Market Outcomes: Preliminary Findings from the RECOUP Household Survey.

This presentation from the quantitative survey was based on the analysis of the differences in education levels, learning achievements and labour market outcomes of education for different groups, e.g. rural vs. urban, male vs. female, across social groups and economic classes. The paper also attempted to explore linkages between labour outcomes and education, and between labour outcomes and cognitive achievements. This was an initial exercise where analysis was confined to wage/salary earners.

This very preliminary analysis suggests several findings of interest: The majority of rural females are either unpaid family labour or out of the labour force, and almost 3/4th of urban females are out of the labour force. (Thus when we talk of labour market outcomes we must remember we are talking largely about males). In addition, wages for females are much lower than those for males. Second, in terms of returns to type of cognitive skills acquired, earnings are sensitive to numeracy, knowledge of English and literacy in decreasing order. Third, the rate of return is quite low for primary education and starts increasing at above middle level, more so for urban areas. Fourth, disparities in returns for different levels of education are much higher in urban areas; in rural areas even regular jobs are quite low paying. Finally, in terms of work status as well as wages, returns to the same level of education are far higher for Other Castes than for SCs thus suggesting different education quality/access channels.

Discussion

Discussant: Jeemol Unni, Professor of Economics, Gujarat Institute of Development Research

- She questioned the apparent low returns. A part of the explanation lies in the sample characteristics and the choice of the region. Both states are low-performing in terms of GSDP. The environment and the demand factor do play a role for outcomes.
- The sample has an unusually large proportion of muslims, particularly in the urban areas, who tend to be more self employed and hence skilled – this may have a bearing on their rates of return but may not be an outcome of education.
- The different rates need to be compared against national rates or overall rates of Rajasthan and MP.
- There is a methodological issue while taking a big age group of 15-60 years. It might be useful to break them up in smaller age-cohorts.
- Learning skills need to be separated by self-employed and wage-employed, since learning achievements are affected by choices available.
- Regarding the Mincerian earning functions, the calculations have been done only for wages; incomes for the self-employed also should have been used. Moreover, it could be further categorised by the different types of activities that these persons are performing.
- Questioned using learning outcomes – can it be run on a mincerian scale? Also, wanted details about occupations in these areas.

Questions/Comments

- There is a problem in comparing returns to years of schooling versus returns to literacy, Numeracy skills. A direct comparison would not be an appropriate one.
- The finding that the majority of the population attains literacy at grade 8, numeracy at grade 10, is a major finding of this study. One should further investigate into this.
- The paper has used dummy variables for literacy, numeracy and English skills on the basis of a cutoff score – what was the basis to set the cut-offs?
- If the majority of the population gets literate by grade 8, a large chunk would have already dropped out, presumably illiterate. This may have influenced the results.
- Not using a particular skill can lead to forgetting it. Thus not having literacy, numeracy or English skills does not necessarily mean that the person had never achieved it.
- Presence of the rural rich among the never enrolled is another important point to be noted and looked into.
- Between test scores and earning, there can be correlation, rather than causation, as those with high test scores and high earnings may be concentrated in better off households.
- It would be interesting to separate out the explanatory factors for earning, like education and demand for labour.

The presenters responded as follows:

- Rajasthan and M.P were chosen because of the governments' proactive role in education in the recent years. Areas for the study fall on the Mumbai-Delhi-Ahmedabad Highway, thus giving them scope for economic activity. So, stronger education employment linkages were expected.
- That the poor were at the lower education level and the richer at the higher education level was quite expected. The class VIII cut-off worked quite well, though quite preliminary.
- Age-group wise analysis on education-learning linkages has been made though not presented. Surprisingly, the younger age groups show weaker linkage than the older ones. The quality of education may be one of the factors behind this. Though very preliminary, there wasn't any sharp trend found between different age-groups.

2. *Education, Training and Work Outcomes* by Claire Noronha, Tanuka Endow and Aparajita Bhargarh. Presented by Claire Noronha and Tanuka Endow.

The work histories of the 76 young people all from our 4 qualitative research sites in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan reflected their struggles to negotiate a universe in which training opportunities and work opportunities were limited and erratic, and financial returns were low. Both financial resources and social networks were important even to access on-the-job training. Gender norms worked against women when it came to job training. Skills training appeared to offer more scope for diversifying family earnings than as a way of 'escaping' poverty. Even those at the highest levels of schooling/education and formal training – were getting low returns and were unable to transfer to 'permanent' employment in the formal sector.

Globalization and casualisation as well as over supply of skilled workers appeared to be important factors affecting employment.

Policy implications included the need to have a greatly augmented and supply-demand adjusted system of skills training, with different skill levels and certification mechanisms. At the same time, there was an enormous need for other changes in the 'enabling environment' including better provisioning of loans and more transparency in the training and job market. Social security for the informal sector in which almost all respondents worked is another major concern. Many of these issues are already in the policy makers' field of vision and the research is a small and, it is hoped, useful contribution.

Discussion

Discussant: Elizabeth Hill, Lecturer, Department of Political Economy, University of Sydney.

The discussant said that the paper left her highly skeptical of the draft national policy on skills development. While the policy acknowledges many of the difficulties in improving skills development and training for the work force, it needs suggestions, and there are lacunae along the lines discussed in the paper. History shows that workers in the informal sectors, especially women, have been historically neglected by mainstream unions. Due to this lack of unionization of the informal sector, workers have no voice in the debates

around economic development, skills training, etc. There are a range of reasons why skill development in this area is tough.

Some of the highlights brought out in the paper:

- The paper challenged the orthodox notions of pathways to economic development. The paper tells that the pathways are not neat and smooth for a variety of reasons.
- The other interesting finding was that even though decent work was not available, respondents and their parents maintained a positive attitude towards education.
- The length of training and apprenticeship was another interesting point. New workers are locked out of the work market for a considerably long time during training.
- Does poor education and training lead to a diversified livelihood strategy or a mixed strategy is what makes workers tolerate lower quality training and apprenticeship conditions – important for training policies.
- Finally, the comment on age and access to decent work. What is worrying here is the length of the transition period from low income to a decent income for a trained worker.

Questions/Comments

Is unemployment rare amongst the skilled youth, as the nature of the demand is segmented? Is it that those who are trained and cannot find employment migrate?

Tanuka Endow said there was an over supply, specially in case of drivers. Training is not a choice for them.

CN's reply to the unemployment question was that many of the respondents marry early and have children early, so they have to put up with low returns. Unemployment is seen more in the case of the ITI graduates as they have more aspiration and expectations from their training.

3. Exploring the Outcomes of Schooling for Young People with Disabilities by Nidhi Singal, Roger Jeffery, Neeru Sood and Aanchal Jain. Presented by Neeru Sood.

The paper focused on the advantages of schooling as experienced by the visually impaired, the physically impaired and the hearing impaired respondents, 30 in all, belonging to the 18-30 age group. The presentation focused particularly on the economic benefits in terms of improved livelihoods, and the social and cultural capital acquired through schooling.

Although most respondents placed high value on being able to work, only 4 of the 30 respondents were able to secure employment. Another 9 had been able to go into small self employment. While the little schooled (0-7 years of schooling) felt that society placed little faith in their capacity to pick up skills, those with more schooling tended to blame a corrupt system for their predicament. It was interesting that in all cases the family was the main support in getting employment. One respondent pointed out that the

time for focusing only on access to schooling was gone. It was time to look at access to work.

Even though the schooling-livelihood transition was not smooth, respondents did say that schooling increased status, enabled them to make friends and gave them a support group in the form of teachers who helped them access their rights. However, although the more schooled showed greater awareness of rights and benefits due to them, even they could not access all their rights.

The research suggested that policy should ensure that there was a smooth transition to the workplace for our respondents and procedures for accessing livelihoods were transparent. In changing times it was no longer wise to be dependent on family networks alone.

Discussion

Discussant: Meera Pillai, Senior Consultant, Institute of Social Studies Trust, Bangalore

For any issue involving exclusion or any groups that have been marginalized, invisibility is a major issue. This was especially true of young people with disabilities. In that context, the efforts of the kind that the RECOUP researchers have undertaken are particularly valuable.

The children that are studied here are really those who somehow made it into the system. But, our official, formal systems of gatekeeping are such that very few of them would even make it into the system.

The big question this paper needs to focus upon is the nature of the schooling these children received of which these were the outcomes. Inclusive education is the only context in which we can hope to reach any significant number of young people.

Questions/Comments

- There are still serious issues of exclusion and access for the disabled. How are we going to really make them inclusive?
- Education's important outcome is to reshape the self concept of these children so that they feel they are actually capable of doing things. This needs to be highlighted.
- Often disabled children in private schools feel neglected despite the facilities, but those in government schools feel warmth and attention.

4. *Declining Fertility Rates – Is it an Outcome of Schooling?* By Claire Noronha, Sharmishtha Basu, Anuradha De and Roger Jeffery. Presented by Claire Noronha and Anuradha De

In this paper, the findings from the qualitative research work have been triangulated with the data from the quantitative household survey. Health and fertility data from NFHS 3 for Rajasthan and MP was also studied.

The RECOUP quantitative data showed that 80% of the young mothers in the sample with over 10 years of schooling belonged to the highest wealth quintile in both rural and urban areas. This suggests that education is not the only factor at work for these young mothers. Other similarities with the qualitative sample included 1) little say in choice of spouse, though with more schooling there is a greater chance that girls will at least be consulted and 2) preference for small families whether among the more schooled or the less schooled. However, again with more schooling, the family size reduced till it fell below replacement level for the most schooled (1.88). An important insight from quantitative data was that young married women with little schooling tended to rely on health workers and on relatives and friends for information about contraceptives. With more schooling there was exposure to multiple sources of information particularly newspaper and TV. When it came to contraceptive use for starting or spacing a family 2/3 of the least schooled used no method at all as compared to around half of the most schooled. Again, of those who did use contraceptive methods there was most reliance on female sterilization for the least schooled and more varied use of different contraceptives with more and more schooling.

The quantitative data for child immunization showed that the record was poor for all levels of schooling but poorest for those with the least schooling and somewhat better for those with increased levels of schooling. Among the least schooled 42% had immunized their child less than 3 times as against 14% for those with over 10 years of schooling. The situation reverses for those who had given all 6 immunisations with 44% for those with over 10 years of schooling as against 18 % for those with least.

The greater success with which female sterilization has been pushed for those with least schooling and the lack of success with which child immunization has been pushed on the whole and particularly for the least schooled shows up important directions for the health care programmes for the disadvantaged. Public health propaganda needs to target the wider family and the community and ensure that the accent moves away from a female sterilization focus to a family welfare focus in fact as well as in name.

Discussion

Discussant: Sreela Dasgupta, Population and Reproductive Health Specialist,
International Council for Research on Women

Ms. Dasgupta stated that she would like to discuss the issue from an interventionist perspective. The relationship between education and fertility she explained was well established. The richness of the study lies in that while reiterating this understanding, it echoes the voices of the people. There are a number of factors that are not only complexly intertwined but are also in a linear continuum. Ms Dasgupta then quoted the findings of several other studies, all of whom have highlighted the positive correlation that exists between schooling and higher access to health education. The question remains as to whether or not we have the resources to replicate such interventions and what is the critical mass required to do so. When looking at choices related to fertility, marriage, etc, one needs to bear in mind that women's ultimate identity in patriarchal

societies, lies in marriage and children – even a woman who attends national and international universities, who may have other identities sees herself as settling down with children. Even when discussing conditional cash transfers, she urged, it was important to ask questions regarding whether exploring livelihood identities results in differing identities. In conclusion, she emphasised the need to focus on good education, and to ask questions regarding whether schools are imparting reproductive health education.

Questions/Comments

- Was the issue of reproductive health analysed from the angle of son preference? It would be an interesting way to triangulate data.
- Was the relation between education and reproductive health analysed from the perspective of class, did class have any role to play.
- Did the study analyse the role of spouses to isolate the role of women's education?
- From the tables presented, it seems that the study found very little difference between the schooled and the less schooled. Therefore, the conclusions need to be clearly stated.
- It is important to keep in mind cultural specificity; in Rajasthani society they follow village exogamy, whereas in the south they practice endogamy.
- Was any disabled women (or men) included in the sample?
- It seems that there is a trend emerging that more schooled are opting for institutional deliveries? Could it be an impact of the government scheme for safe motherhood?

Response:

Anuradha De: 'In our quantitative sample there is not so much as an economic or class bias as far as the more schooled are concerned, but there could be an urban bias and thus an impact of easier access to schooling. Health and contraceptive knowledge – not significantly more in the more schooled.

Claire Naronha: 'With respect to the disability question, we did not have any disabled respondents because we only took up one theme with one family. However, if we have the time, we would like to do some disabled mothers, though it is difficult to get respondents.

We did not investigate the role of spouse's education.

The conclusion is that it is a nuanced picture. The more schooled have better maneuverability and are respected more within the family. However, as far as decision making is concerned, there seemed to be not much difference.

Day 3

1. CORD presentation on *Revisiting PROBE: Findings from a Field-Based Study on Elementary Education* by Meera Samson

(should we put details – since we have stated in the beg that it is only RECOUP?)

2. Panel Discussion on *Access, Exclusion and Outcomes*

Panelists: Jean Dreze,

Ratna Sudarshan

Angela Little

Chair: Andre Beteille

The first panelist, Jean Dreze focused primarily on the presentations made by R Govinda and Meera Samson on the schooling situation in the areas revisited in the course of their studies. He emphasized that the picture in the surveyed states may not depict that in other states or in India as a whole, which may even be more positive. He also emphasized the need to acknowledge the improvements that are visible in certain aspects of the government schooling system especially in rural areas, which have come about through government reforms and through government officials who have delivered. The time has not come yet to give up on the public sector. Instead, make efforts to push for change in other areas.

The action points suggested were: 1) effort to improve classroom activity by improving systems of inspection and incentives for teachers 2) Push for 6% of GDP for education, which now would translate to substantial resource for bringing about improvements in the required areas 3) special incentives and facilities for marginalized groups like the tribal communities 4) passing of the right to education bill – which will create new standards and expectations. 5) focus on children under six as part of universalizing education.

The second panelist, Ratna Sudarshan, started her presentation by emphasizing the need for using mixed methods in research, and not relying entirely on a quantitative analysis, based on official data. More than a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, she stressed on the need to look at the social environment and norms that affect education as well as its outcomes. Norms have indeed changed vis-a-vis schooling, especially for girls. But social norms that have not changed. There is, therefore, a need to look outside of education at the sociological aspects, the complex social factors that govern people's choices.

The third panelist, Angela Little started by mentioning that she was an “outsider”, as her own field based research has been largely in Sri Lanka. She felt that the conference provided a “broad brush” picture of the education situation, clearly bringing out the positives and the areas of concern. She was surprised by the difference in the picture that the policy-makers paint and that which is clear from the field based research done by the presenters at this conference. She expressed concern about teacher inactivity, low attendance and declining achievement. She felt that the lack of teaching activity is a waste of human and material resources. There was a need to focus on this issue and ask

what kind of training are they receiving? What kind of curriculums are being developed and what are the authorities doing to equip them with the right resources and training. She emphasized the need to focus on the need for the right pedagogy, which can benefit both small and large schools.

Angela pointed out some of the positive aspects of the research designs of the two programmes. In RECOUP, testing achievement and not relying on years of schooling was an element she appreciated. The focus on non-cognitive outcomes is a very significant aspect of the research. Also, the emphasis on context and contingency enriches the design.

To conclude, Angela mentioned that there was a need to look at the patterns of exclusion. Also, if we were to connect Access and Outcomes, it is not enough to look at skills but also qualifications – and the institution called examination and certification – which is what links the education received to what one is able to achieve with it at the formal labour market, the sector everyone seem to aspire for.

Angela ended her presentation with a question... why has it taken so long for the right to education bill to come about?

Discussion: The question that arose from these sharings is one on methodology. The limitations of rigid questionnaires in capturing the full picture, while being aware of the implications of loose-ended ones on data analysis. Also, what indeed constituted data?

It is not enough to collect data outside of the official machinery, but there is a need to engage with the problem of unreliability of official data by finding ways to embed our research within that.

There was a considerable discussion and concern over teacher accountability and classroom activity. Why do teachers not teach?

There was a question and a brief discussion on Sri Lanka and its high achievements in the field of education. The state has a strong commitment to education and allocates substantially towards it. However, education is highly stratified and there are three mediums that run in parallel – English and the two vernaculars. Private coaching is also widespread across class, as is political interference in selection, recruitment and transfer of teachers.

The new policy on reserving seats in private schools for low-income students is something that needs some attention and deliberation.

Advices for the future – Write up the studies

Formulate sharp messages and disseminate not only to policy makers, but also to communities and all others working along these issues

Some focus should move to more positive states, in order to draw a less dismal picture
Focus on classroom activities and teaching/learning as it impacts both access and outcomes
More voices of junior researchers

Concluding remarks

R Govinda closed the conference with a vote of thanks to all participants. He expressed his gratitude to all participants for attending this rather different seminar whereby they were invited only to listen and comment. He thanked them for their rich inputs and feedback. He mentioned how fruitful the collaboration between NUEPA and CORD has been. He also thanked the discussants, chairs and panelists for taking time out for the conference – he acknowledged that this was a seminar where there were no defaulters in this regard, which was very special! He also mentioned the hard work put in by the RECOUP and CREATE researchers, and those who were involved in organizing the workshop. He concluded by saying that the conference ends on an encouraging note that all is not lost by way of education in India – one needs to focus on the positives and direct effort towards similar improvement in other areas.