

Session Notes

Session: (Workshop) Social Investing in Education Outcomes Alignment Consultation (June 7, 2:00pm)

Session Reporter: Thammika Songkaeo

Moderator: Srikrishna Sridhar Murthy (Krishna), Founder and CEO, Sattva

Speakers:

- Amitav Virmani, Founder CEO, The Education Alliance
- Namita Dalmia, Associate Director, Central Square Foundation
- Naghma Mulla, COO, EdelGive Foundation

Key Takeaways:

- Is it ethical and 'right' to assess children in 'buckets'?
- How do we scale and make sure that every single school and kid gets access to the development programs
- How do we align all stakeholders and design outcomes and indicators that as many people as possible agree on an intervention?

Amitav Virmani

- The Education Alliance (TEA) aims to help governments in India provide a quality education to every child, by facilitating effective partnerships between state and non-state actors.
- It has worked with the Rajasthan government, Chennai Municipal Corporation, Kolkata Municipal Corporation, South Delhi Municipal Corporation.
- More specifically, TEA does three activities:
 - Collate & Disseminate Evidence
 - Engage with Government;
 - Stimulate School Operator Pipeline.
- They monitor and evaluate the schools that they work with, measuring:
 - Academic performance (growth from base line and end line, comparing between treatment and control groups, i.e. schools that they work with and schools that they do not work with)
 - Organisational performance (which includes factors such as enrolment, safety and hygiene, and parent satisfaction)
 - Financial performance

Namita Dalmia

- Central Square is a 5-year old philanthropic foundation, working on K-12 education reform in India through research, grant-making, and government engagement.
- Its grants create a space for innovative solutions for education and funds the formation of organisations that can outlast the initial funding and have scalable impact.
- Its government engagement is not just about giving the government ideas, but also working with the many layers of governments on projects.
- When doing the M&E for grantees, Central Square sees that there is no one way to do it. The Foundation collaborates with the partner on building the focus and metrics:
 - In the first 6-12 months, the focus of M&E is on user-centricity of the program (measuring for Program/Product Effectiveness);
 - Between the 1st and 2nd years, the focus of M&E is on scalability potential (measuring for Operational Efficiency);
 - Between the 2nd and 3rd years, the focus is on strategy potential at thematic area level (measuring for Strategic Approach).

Naghma Mulla

- EdelGive operates from Mumbai, India. It gives grants in funds but also in skills to organisations that work for better livelihoods, women empowerment, and education.

- It has been working largely in semi-rural areas, to learn how grassroots really absorb and use resources given to them.
- It has been working with governments on school-level interventions, system strengthening, school preparedness, and community engagement.
- EdelGive recognises the great diversity within India (“India is many countries within a country”) and the fact that each community’s needs are different. It therefore concentrates on getting to know the local context and unique issues of different communities that it works with.
- EdelGive looks for greater enrolment, retention, and learning in the schools that they work with. They gauge learning outcomes from the child, using the child-wise competency test (focusing on competencies, not just the syllabus); this method enables a few benefits:
 - Engineering of student groups based on children’s competencies.
 - The principal can see the entire school performance through data (the principal can then understand which teacher needs to be focused on because the teacher, ultimately, is the one who matters most in the development of the students.)
 - Governments get birds-eye-view data, seeing which schools are weak where.
- The competency test is done twice a year, at the beginning at at the third quarter. 20,000 children in 4 districts of Maharashtra are involved. If this works out, then this will become a state-level test.

Discussion Groups (3 in total):

Amitabh’s group

- Collecting and using data are a challenge
- Teachers don’t know how to self-report/must be trained
- Parents and community should also be part of reporting (since competencies express themselves at home as well)
- Sometimes governments are not going to use the data (it’s too much real information that they don’t care about - they want to stay shallow)
- Government officials can be intimidated by data or cannot use data
- Schools don’ know what purposes they serve (existential crisis)
- Too much data
- Putting children in buckets - is that ethical?
- Parents and children’s aspirations regarding school and life are different

Damita’s group

- Teacher-training program evaluations are difficult
- What to evaluate and how to evaluate?
- Is practice in the classroom changing? Are classroom observations too subjective/do they even work?
- Students might not have safe environment to evaluate.
- How to do evaluations at scale?
- How to build a culture of evaluation and improvement?
- How to make it not unproductively hierarchical?
- How to make it transparent?

Naghma’s group: Varied questions.

- What’s the pipeline of teachers coming through?
- What local contexts are important to understand school attendance?
- There’s no shortcut to getting all competencies for the students

Conclusions

- Is it fundamentally right to measure a kid and say that this is where you stand? Is it right to keep assessing, and what is the philosophical thinking behind it and where should we draw the line ourselves?
- How do we scale and make sure that every single school and kid gets access to the development programs (‘focus on denominator thinking’)?
- Debates were rampant during the group discussions, and no single answer was right. So, how do we align all stakeholders and design outcomes and indicators that as many people as possible agree on? We need to look at the entire value chain of education (from students, to teachers, to parents, to the state). A common framework must be established- as much as possible.