

What Education Policies and Programs Affect Learning and Time in School in Developing Countries?

Methodology for Review of Academic and Aid Agency Evaluations

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- ▶ A main challenge: credible causal identification.
- ▶ Strategy: limit our synthesis of the evidence to 114 high quality studies that were conducted from 1990 to 2014.
- ▶ To identify evaluations that have produced credible impacts of education programs or policies, the following four-step selection process was implemented.

Review Steps

Table 1– Steps Used to Select Papers Reviewed in This Report

Review Step	Procedures Used	Number of Papers
1	Search EconLit and ERIC databases.	13,437
	Review abstracts to eliminate duplicate papers and papers that did not estimate the impacts of school or teacher characteristics for a developing country.	1,017
2	Review full papers, eliminate papers based on lack of relevance or lack of quantitative analysis.	320
3	Exclude papers that are not “high quality” (RCT, RDD, DD).	115
4	Number of high quality studies that are RCT studies	76

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 - ▶ Studies based on matching methods were also excluded

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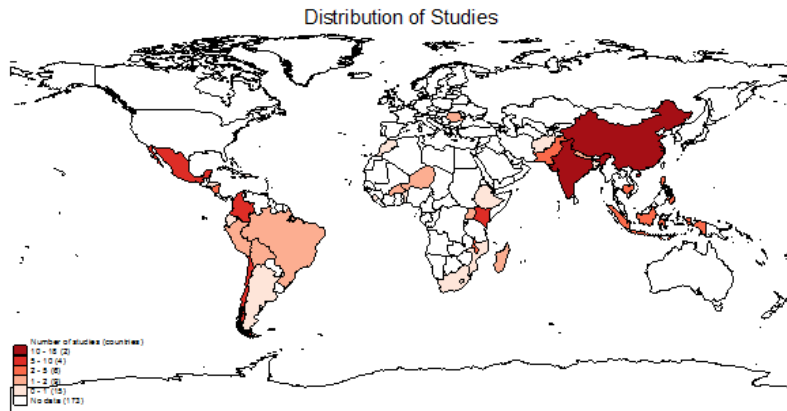
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- ▶ The set of papers that were retained 114 high quality studies

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- ▶ The 114 high quality studies are from 36 different developing countries; most studies from China & India



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- ▶ Of the 114 high quality studies, about two thirds (75) were RCTs

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 - ▶ written by international aid agencies (both governmental & non-governmental) or by the consulting firms that those agencies hire

Grey Literature

- ▶ To find high quality evaluations in the grey literature, we searched the websites of, and/or directly contacted, the following organizations:

Table 2. Summary of Grey Literature Search

Grey Literature Source	# of Education Related Studies or Reports	# of Quantitative Studies on Education	# of Additional High Quality Quantitative Evaluations
Mathematica Policy research	67	5	1
Save the Children Fund	66	5	1
Millennium Challenge Corp (MCC)	51	2	0
USAID	0	0	0
SIDA	75	0	0
DFID	0	0	0
Norway Agency for Devel. Cooperation	0	0	0
Oxfam	17	0	0
UNICEF	230	26	1

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- ▶ Increasingly NGOs and bilateral aid agencies are interested in rigorously evaluating the impact of their programs in order to efficiently and effectively direct their limited resources
- ▶ The more rigorous evaluations we have on diverse topics in the education sector, the clearer the answers will be for important policy concerns

Intervention Effectiveness

Table 3. Rubric for Categorizing the Effectiveness of Studies.

What works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires 3+ studies with positive and significant outcomes May include a few non-significant or negative estimates, but most are significantly positive.
What often works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence that the intervention often works, but sometimes does not work. Before implementing, policy makers should carefully consider whether conditions in their countries are similar to those in the countries where the policy appears to have worked. . Requires 3+ studies Relatively equal mix of positive and significant estimates with negative and/or nonsignificant estimates.
What is promising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promising evidence that the intervention works, but needs additional evidence. Requires: 1-2 studies. If 2 studies, 2+ positive and significant estimates are required; may include a limited number of non-significant estimates. and even 1 negative estimate. If 1 study, only positive and at least 1 significant estimate
What does not work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence that the intervention works Requires 2+ studies Most estimates are negative or insignificant
What we don't know and needs more research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No evidence that the intervention works, in part due to too little evidence on the intervention effectiveness, needs further evaluation. Requires: 1-2 studies

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 2. Increasing student learning as measured by test scores.

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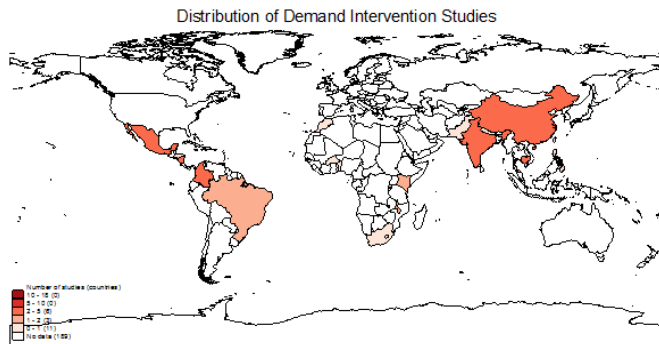
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 3. Even if parents choose the optimal level of education, they are unlikely to take into account the social benefits from their child's education. From society's viewpoint, they may under-invest in education

Challenge 1: Low Household Demand for Education

- ▶ Studies on interventions that are intended to increase households' demand for schooling are distributed across 20 countries. Most studies are from: China, Colombia, India and Mexico



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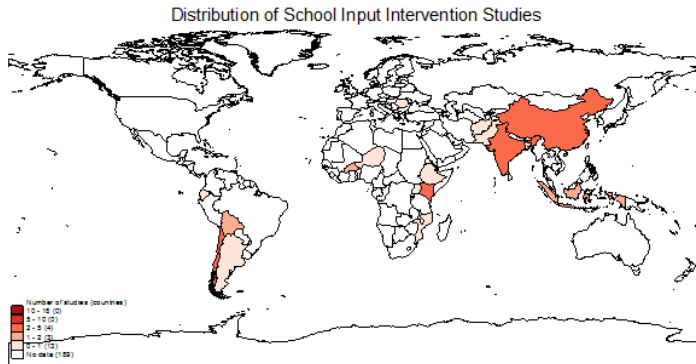
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 - ▶ the fact that most inputs are easier to measure than other factors that affect education outcomes. Thus data on inputs are more likely to be collected.
- ▶ In some cases it may be that a combination of different inputs are required for effective learning. Here, the marginal effect of any one input on educational outcomes will vary according to the levels of other inputs

Challenge 2: Inadequate School Inputs

- ▶ Studies on the impacts of school input interventions are from about 20 countries. They are concentrated in Chile, China, India and Kenya.



Challenge 3: Ineffective Pedagogy

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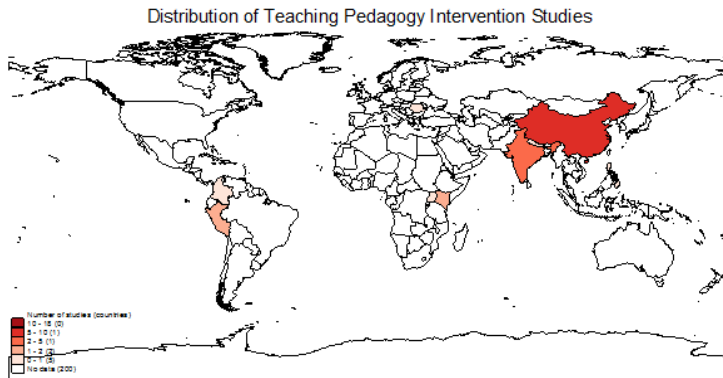
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- ▶ Teaching effectively may be particularly challenging in many developing country contexts because of the high variation in the initial preparation of children when they enter school

Challenge 3: Ineffective Pedagogy

- ▶ Studies on the impacts of teaching pedagogy are limited to 9 countries and most are from China or India



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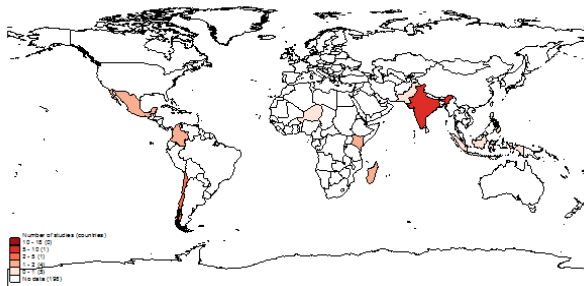
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 - ▶ Governance also includes: decentralization, the extent of choice and competition in school “markets”, and the regulatory structure for private schools

Challenge 4: Low Quality School Governance

- ▶ Of 24 studies in 11 countries, about 1/3 were conducted in India while none were conducted in China.

Distribution of School Governance Intervention Studies



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- ▶ SIDA & EBA have an opportunity to be leaders in widening the scope of understanding around these creative interventions by investing in more “proof of concept” programs that are both creative as well as implemented in a way that is amenable to evaluation.
- ▶ While we have made headway in understanding the effectiveness of popular interventions, we still have much to learn to improve the education outcomes for many children around the world.