



FORUM SECRETARIAT

PIFS(01)FEDA.06

FORUM EDUCATION MINISTERS MEETING

Auckland, New Zealand

SESSION ONE PAPER

BASIC EDUCATION: SOME DEFINITIONS

The attached paper, prepared by the Department For International Development (DFID) in collaboration with the Forum Secretariat, presents some working definitions of key terms which will be used in the meeting. This paper is presented for information purposes only.

Basic Education: Some Definitions

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to outline working definitions of basic education and other terms for use in discussions.

Basic Education

2. Basic education meets people's basic learning needs prior to people making critical "future of life" decisions in terms of going directly into the (formal or informal) labour market or furthering their education through higher formal qualifications prior to entering the job market later in life. It enables them to acquire a basic level of essential knowledge, values and skills (including literacy) necessary to further their personal and social development, and to play a meaningful role in society and it provides the foundation for a lifelong learning journey i.e. Basic learning needs of ALL groups (children, young people, adult women and men). This is the meaning behind Education For All (EFA Jomtien 1990, Dakar 2000).

3. This comprises combinations of the following elements

- Early childhood education;
- Both formal and non-formal primary education and Junior secondary education. In the Pacific, "basic" formal schooling is often perceived as lasting approximately nine years (e.g. 6 years primary + 3 years junior secondary), to ensure basic knowledge, skills and values are adequately embedded;
- Adult education for specific groups;
- Alternative ways of learning for out-of-school children and youth;
- Technical and vocational education and training (TVET both formal and non-formal);
- related components include Teacher training, Curriculum, materials, advisory and inspection services, management, funding systems.

Formal Education

4. Education provided in a system of schools, colleges, universities and other formal institutions (labelled primary, secondary and tertiary institutions) that normally constitutes a continuous "ladder" of full time education for children and young people, based on a national system of recognised qualifications.

Formal Basic Education

5. Primary education plus lower secondary education where it is considered by a country to be “basic.”

Universal Primary Education (UPE)

6. Full enrolment of all children in the primary school age group (as defined in WCEFA 1990 Jomtien).

7. There is a danger of equating enrolment with a quality education. The above definition has been broadened now (Dakar Framework for Action 2000) to include not just enrolment but completion, equity and quality. The International Development Target (**IDT**) relating to **UPE** is to ensure that

by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to - and complete - free and compulsory primary education of good quality.

8. This involves:

improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence for all, so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

9. The International Development Target (IDT) relating to **gender** aims at:

eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to, and achievement in, basic education of good quality.

Non- Formal Education (NFE)

10. Any organised and planned educational activity that is outside the system described above.

11. The purposes of NFE include:

- provides compensatory education for those who missed or failed in the formal system (e.g. adult literacy, basic education for out-of-school children (i.e. doing the job of formal education);
- can complement formal education. i.e. providing additional learning not available in the formal system. e.g. A secondary school student having music tuition in the evenings;
- supplementing formal education by adding on later in life to what you learnt in school.

12. NFE is outside the “ladder” system of formal education and is often not part of the government system (i.e. it has a variety of private and NGO providers). It does not usually lead to qualifications and is often responsive to local needs in a way the formal system cannot be.

13. It may be organised in a great variety of ways, e.g. in terms of

- target group (age, educational background, content) -
length of training
- costs to student
- content of training
- qualification of trainers
- mode of training (ODL, face to face learning at the very local level etc).
- with or without certification
- physical location and facilities

APPENDIX A

A Glossary of Other Terms

1. **Early Childhood Education** implies the recognition of the importance of broadly nurturing children from birth (providing sound nutrition, physical and emotional care, a developmental environment etc.) as a vital basis for beginning formal education and lifelong learning.

It is implemented in varied ways through government and non-government provision of facilities and expertise (creches, nurseries, kindergartens, pre-school classes etc.), often through structured programmes for children from about 3 years old to primary entry.

2. **Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET):** An all inclusive term that covers both formal (e.g. a national technical college) and non-formal (e.g. a small, local rural skills training centre).

3. **Open and Distance Learning (ODL):** This umbrella term covers both distance learning (where the teacher and learner are generally physically separated at a distance) and open learning which might not be at a distance but is organised in such a way as to provide flexibility and choice in both the pace at which a student works and the way they study.

4. **Informal Education:** This includes the largely incidental, often unplanned and unsystematic teaching and learning that happens to all of us from childhood onwards (e.g. learning family and cultural values, learning to talk, learning social skills). This can be both a negative and a positive force (e.g. learning “ bad habits” from peers).

Informal education works through various means – through our direct interaction with people (including meetings, groups) but also through a range of media (books, newspapers, film, TV, radio, internet etc.).

5. **Literacy:** The ability to read and write with understanding a simple statement related to one’s daily life. It involves a continuum of reading and writing skills, and often includes also basic arithmetic skills i.e. numeracy. (EFA definition).

A broader definition would include the ability to read and understand instructions, newspapers, and forms encountered in daily life; and to write and be understood for communication and functional purposes.

There are issues in the Pacific to do with literacy in mother tongues or in other languages of instruction used in schools.

6. **Literacy Rate:** The number of literate adults expressed as a percentage of the total population, 15 years of age and older.

7. **Automatic Promotion:** All pupils are promoted to the next grade every year, regardless of achievement.

8. **Equity:** Fair treatment for all.
9. **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER):** The total enrolment of pupils in a grade or cycle or level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the corresponding eligible official age- group population in a given school year.
10. **Net Enrolment Ratio (NER):** The number of pupils in the school-age group as a percentage of the total population in that group. e.g. the percentage of eligible children who initially enrol in a school or grade.

Enrolment figures are a measure of access (places available and initially taken up). These can be misleading, particularly when focusing on a particular year group, hiding drop out, poor attendance and repetition. They need to be read in conjunction with:

11. **Completion Rates:** The percentage of children who complete a given cycle of education (e.g. 6 years of primary education) or grade (e.g. children who complete Grade 1).

12. **Drop Out Rates:** The percentage of pupils enrolled in a given grade (or cycle of education) who are not enrolled in any grade the following year.

Neither enrolment nor completion rates tell us anything (directly) about the quality of children's learning and achievement. Children may drop out of school for a variety of reasons (some internal to the school, some external).

13. **Push Out rates:** The percentage of children who reach the next stage of formal schooling but are prevented from continuing. e.g. competitive selection, lack of facilities available, availability of a place but reasons that prevent enrolment (e.g. prohibitive school fees).

14. **Out of School Children:** Those in the official school age group who are not enrolled in school.

15. **The Formal Economic sector:** This is organised, paid work, and can include employees, employers and the self-employed (e.g. owner-operator registered taxi driver). This normally involves registration, taxation and employment legislation.

16. **The Informal Economic Sector:** Where a worker is operating unofficially, outside the formal, centrally regulated system. e.g. selling vegetables on the roadside.