

Achieving transparency in pro-poor education incentives

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Introduction:

This book assumes that different models of design, targeting, and management of pro-poor incentives can prove more or less successful in maximizing efficiency, transparency, and accountability, and in minimizing the likelihood of errors, fraud, and corrupt practices. To make its case, it compares different models of educational incentives.

Some Key Points:

- It shows that some models may pose greater challenges to transparency and accountability than others (i.e. targeted, in-kind, locally managed, or community-based).
- At the same time, these models may be the most adequate for local needs, especially if there are budget constraints, a vast and diverse territory, or demand for food at school.
- It further argues that deliberate actions taken to address corruption risks are of greater importance than adopted incentive models.
- A wide variety of such actions are described in the book, including: simplified targeting; legal definition of responsibilities; benchmarking and robust evaluation frameworks; frequent and publicized reports; simple, straightforward, and auditable administration systems; disclosure of programme resources; information of parents and students; appeals mechanisms; informal whistleblowing; social audits; among others.
- The creation of local transparency councils is also presented as a possible way to institutionalize the process of continuous programme monitoring and accountability, and to ensure greater adequacy in local contexts.
- Within this framework the book reflects on the adequacy of different 'accountability systems'. It underlines the pertinence of top-down approaches in applying the concept of accountability with regard to weak capacity of local government, while at the same time bringing issues of upward accountability to the forefront.
- It concludes on the importance of mutual accountability systems', whereby all actors are mutually accountable and subject to checks and balances.

Each model is characterized using the following variables:

- (i) universal versus categorical targeting*
- (ii) conditional versus unconditional transfers*
- (iii) cash versus in-kind transfers top-down versus community-based approaches.*

More specially, it reviews seven pro-poor educational incentive programmes on the basis of these different variables, namely:

- the quintile ranking system (South Africa),*
- the CESSP Scholarship Programme (Cambodia),*
- the universal Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme (India),*
- the Primary Education for Disadvantaged Children programme (Viet Nam),*
- the Opportunity NYC (New York City) programme (United States),*
- the National School Feeding Programme (Brazil), and*
- the Juntos programme (Peru).*

Read the full report at the official website: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002269/226982e.pdf>

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