

Section 3: Terms of Reference

Programme Directorate for the Effective Education Systems Research Programme (RISE)

1. Introduction and Objectives

- 1.1. The Department for International Development (DFID) is seeking to contract an organisation to establish a Programme Directorate that will manage and implement the large scale, multi-country research programme on Effective Education Systems. This work will form part of a broader 8 year research programme to answer the question: “what works to improve education systems to deliver better learning for all at scale in developing countries?”
- 1.2. The objective of the Effective Education Systems research programme is to provide decision makers with an evidence base to make informed policy and programming decisions that can increase learning for all in developing countries. The programme aims to produce new world class evidence on education systems. In addition it will review and synthesise existing evidence across a range of education domains. It will publish the research in leading journals and international publications. It will work with and through other stakeholders to promote the use and uptake of research findings.
- 1.3. This new research will include a focus on:
 - Learning from successful and less successful education reform efforts;
 - Assessing and analysing the performance of education systems in different contexts in up to five countries, including measuring learning across cognitive and non-cognitive domains;
 - Understanding how to effectively implement reform policies to deliver equity and inclusion in education;
 - Evaluating the impact of large scale education system reforms, including education financing, on improving learning outcomes for all.
- 1.4. This Terms of Reference outlines the requirements for the Programme Directorate aspect of this programme. The Research Director and Intellectual Leadership Team have been already contracted through a separate procurement process. The aim is to secure the best global academic expertise alongside top management talent to deliver world class research.
- 1.5. In summary, the Programme Directorate will have overall responsibility for programme and research management, including management of a £21m research fund for the country research teams to be commissioned later in the programme, and the communication and uptake of research. The Programme Directorate will also be responsible for managing and implementing the vision and research agenda of the Research Director and Intellectual Leadership.

2. Recipient

- 2.1. Whilst the programme is funded by DFID, the outputs and outcomes are for governments and policy makers in developing countries outside of the EU, with the ultimate beneficiaries being those using education systems in developing countries outside of the EU.
- 2.2. All outputs from the research will be global public goods. The research outputs and primary data will be made publicly available in accordance with DFID’s Open Access

3. Background

- 3.1. The Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have provided a compelling, powerful focus for education policies and strategies over the past 15 years. They have helped sustain both international investments and national funding commitments for basic education. As a result millions more children are in school across the developing world. Numbers of out of school children are down from 105 million in 1999 to 57 million in 2013 and there are significantly more schools, trained teachers, textbooks and teaching and learning materials than ever before. Yet despite these successes, many students, both girls and boys, lack a solid foundation in the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy needed to support more advanced learning. Estimates of at least 250 million children unable to read or count, even if they have spent four years in school, point to a severe learning crisis in the developing world, and the recognition that more must be done urgently to boost effective teaching and successful learning for all.
- 3.2. DFID has invested and continues to invest heavily in education; recognising the significant personal, family, community and national returns and benefits that good quality education can offer. Our purpose has been, and continues to be, to ensure access to, equity in and quality of education both as a human right and as a vital contributor to poverty reduction, social inclusion and equitable economic development and growth. Between 2010/11 and 2014/15 DFID has committed £2.7 billion to support education programmes in partner countries, enabling 9 million girls and boys to get into and stay in primary school, 2 million in secondary school and training 190,000 teachers.
- 3.3. Of the total funding committed by DFID, £1.9 billion is for work with and through partner governments. We work at the system level to support institutional strengthening, improved governance, efficiency gains and improved effectiveness. We work with partner governments to maintain a focus on delivering improvements in the quality of education and boosting learning outcomes for all across the education life cycle, including early childhood education, primary, basic, secondary and non-formal education.
- 3.4. Robust research evidence suggests that simply investing more resources into unreformed education systems and institutions does not drive better learning outcomes.¹ Emerging evidence suggests that teacher effectiveness and a range of institutional and political economy factors are critical components of successful education systems.
- 3.5. The existing evidence base in education is insufficient, unable to provide reliable data to enable policy makers, planners and decision makers to analyse education reform options or offer dependable guidance on reforms most likely to result in improvements in learning for all children. There are a range of fields where understanding of structural, institutional and individual changes, and their impact on teaching and learning, is limited. Examples include pedagogical change and the role and efficacy of private and not for profit schooling providers. DFID is commissioning this large-scale, multi-year research programme to build the evidence base for these and a wide range of themes and issues linked to effective education systems, successful reform and improved learning outcomes.
- 3.6. A full discussion of the evidence base and rationale for this programme can be found in the business case.

4. Overview of Research Programme

- 4.1. This research programme will produce cutting edge research that explores what works well and what works less well to reform education systems to concentrate resources and efforts on improving learning processes and outcomes in developing countries. To support accelerated progress at improving learning, this research programme will investigate what works to reorient systems to improve learning outcomes in developing countries. It will develop and use:

- **Conceptual frameworks** and empirical evidence that supports a rigorous analysis and understanding of education systems in their country context;
- **Theories of change** for education system strengthening and improving learning outcomes;
- Evidence based **diagnostic tools** that support policy makers to identify key entry or pressure points in the system to boost effective system functioning;
- Qualitative and quantitative **research methods** and strategies with standards of rigour set across the countries, to understand the impact of system wide change on outcomes of interest with a focus on learning. The programme must build on existing country education and learning data systems where robust, or develop sample surveys to ensure robust longitudinal education data and learning assessment data to track impact on key outcomes of interest over a ten year cohort of students and to assess changes in learning outcomes at grade level over time.

- 4.2. **Learning from past research** the programme will:

- Focus on problem-driven, operationally relevant research that seeks to address complex and critical education questions at scale;
- Learn from the experience of health and other systems research, adapting where appropriate;
- Gather primary data and support the development of affordable, robust tools and systems to collect and analyse data linked to assessment and educational outcomes;
- Support the use of new methods in education research.

- 4.3. The research programme will be developed by the Research Director. Examples of the overarching research questions that we envisage will be answered through this research are listed below:

4.3.1. What works to reform education systems?

- How can we learn from other contexts, including middle income and OECD countries where relevant, about what works to reform education systems in resource poor settings?
- What are the institutional factors that explain differences in performance across systems?
- How do systems change?

4.3.2 Is education system X operating according to stated intent? Why or why not?

- How do we measure the performance of an education system? What are the critical indicators, including value for money metrics, and how can we standardise them?
- How do we ensure robust measurement of changes in student achievement levels over time?
- Why does a particular system function in the way it does?

4.3.3 What are the impacts and cost-effectiveness of reforms of an education system X on equity, learning and system performance?

- What might work in education system X to improve learning?
- What are the critical bottlenecks to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system?
- How does change happen in system X?

5. Scope of Overall Programme

- 5.1. The research is expected to take place in up to 5 focus countries (all of which should be core DFID partner countries¹), allowing an intensive research effort to understand change at scale. The exact countries will be selected following a scoping exercise by the Research Director and Programme Directorate in the Inception Phase to assess supplier markets, political economy, policy-maker demand and research feasibility. This will include engagement with DFID Country Advisers, in consultation with the DFID Education Research Team. The Programme Directorate will manage the procurement of Country Research Teams. Country selection will be based on evidence from the feasibility studies, the quality of incoming bids and the selection committee as defined during the procurement process.
- 5.2. This research will focus on three types of countries- though the exact countries are unknown at this stage:
 - Countries of central importance in the medium-term to DFID programmes and policy (e.g. Pakistan, Kenya, Malawi, Ghana, Rwanda)
 - Fragile and conflict afflicted state (Afghanistan, South Sudan, DRC, and Syria *Lost Generation* refugee education programming in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey)
 - Emerging country/region that will offer strong lessons on successful reforms at scale to improve learning (Latin America or East/South-East Asia)
- 5.3. This research will focus on countries with the greatest opportunity for significant learning about what works to reform education systems to deliver learning outcomes. The intensive investment in researching single education systems over several years should allow a greater integration of research with the education system of that country and incentives to help shift academic focus into a new field of research.

6. Structure and Governance of the Programme Contract

- 6.1. Procurement of the research work was split into 2 phases. Phase 1 was the procurement of the Research Director and Intellectual Leadership Team (ILT) and Phase 2 was procurement of the Programme Directorate. The competition for the Research Director and ILT was completed in July 2014. The initial contract for the Research Director and ILT will be managed by DFID for 6 months, at which stage it will transfer to the Programme Directorate to manage.
- 6.2. The Research Director and Intellectual Leadership Team will be responsible for the overall intellectual vision of the research programme, the scientific integrity of the programme outputs, and the overarching conceptual framework and research frameworks for this programme. They will provide guidance to the country research teams to ensure they are researching key issues in comparable ways, and will collaborate with the research uptake team in the Programme Directorate to produce

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/departement-for-international-development/about>

evidence syntheses and case studies. The RD and ILT will be responsible for representing the programme to high profile academic and policy audiences. Details of the role are found in the separate Terms of Reference.

- 6.3. In order to ensure the Programme Directorate maintains ultimate responsibility for the effective delivery of this programme, the Research Director and ILT contract will be subsumed as part of the winning bidder's contract after the first six months (the inception period). The budget, roles, responsibilities and deliverables of the Research Director and ILT will then be managed by the Programme Directorate for the remainder of the programme. The ability of the Research Director and the Programme Directorates to collaborate effectively will be critical to the success of the programme and ensuring that an effective working relationship (both contractually and operationally) has been established will be a key factor for DFID when considering whether to proceed to implementation period of this programme.
- 6.4. The Programme Directorate will have responsibility for overall research programme management. This will include the country research teams, outreach, communication and support for uptake of research.
- 6.5. The Steering Committee (to be re-named as the Delivery Board during project inception), set up by DFID but convened by the Programme Directorate, will provide a key governance function. It will provide independent quality assurance of the technical quality and policy relevance of the research products and overall research portfolio. Therefore there will be academic figures that are able to provide strong technical skills to assess the quality of research. The Steering Committee will provide an overarching advisory function and also contribute to mediation of any disputes between key parties. The committee will include the Programme Director, Research Director, senior representatives from DFID, , as well as experts in education in developing countries who will help assess the policy relevance of research products and overall research portfolio.
- 6.6. Payments under this contract are strongly linked to performance and delivery of outputs.

7. Programme Directorate Role

7.1 The Programme Directorate is responsible for the following high level outputs:

Task	Sub-task	Anticipated Outputs to include (at a minimum) [Bold : to be done during Inception Phase <u>Underlined</u> : to be done in consultation with RD/ILT]
Programme Management	Project Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An eight year costed programme work plan, including inputs from the RD/ILT and Country Research Teams - <u>Annual Workplans</u> including inputs, deliverables and timelines for the RD/ILT, CRTs (and SC/SAG) - <u>Inception Report</u> (after six months)
	Procurement Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supplier market engagement plan - Up to 8 <u>feasibility 'mappings'</u> in countries long-listed by RD/ILT as possible foci (this is part of the overall task of feasibility analysis for country selection, which the RD will start with selection criteria and country scoping visits) - Up to two well-advertised and subscribed calls for proposals for country research teams, with public scoring criteria - Signed contracts and grant agreements with successful applicants in up to five countries

	Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual budgets, with demonstrated cost efficiency - Quarterly financial reports using agreed template, with invoices for agreed milestone payments - Annual independent audits of PD and CRTs
	Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk matrix and mitigation strategy, to be reported against in quarterly reports (see financial above) - Due diligence assessments for grantees - Ethics policy
Programme Governance	Internal coordination & communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Way of Working Strategy (to cover all aspects of Programme Governance, including quality assurance with SAG and SC) - Annual conferences
	Country engagement and outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Country Engagement Strategy (i.e. 'way of working' in each research country, and in other non-research countries, supporting the country research teams and reaching out to government, local donor group and other stakeholders)
	'Crowding in' partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>No output is recommended for any financial partnerships established to complement this research programme but such collaboration is strongly encouraged</i> - <i>Similarly, no output is recommended for the improvement of the capacity of local research teams through mobilisation of donors' existing programme, but such partnership is encouraged</i>
Research Impact	Getting findings (of research & on methods) into policy debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research Outreach Strategy, including guidance for CRTs - <u>A database of the key champions of change in each country and at international level for systems reform</u> - <u>Policy and evidence briefs from vision documents and working papers produced by ILT</u> - <u>Publication strategy for RD/ILT and CRT research in world class peer reviewed journals</u> - <u>Synthesis products, as findings from CRTs and on methods emerge</u>
	Community of Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - [No specific output recommended, but suggest that indicators included in the monitoring strategy]
Monitoring and Reporting	Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programme logframe - Monitoring and reporting strategy, including tools and indicators for use by all programme functions (financial, process, outputs, disaggregated as required)
	Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual Reports, reporting against the logframe - Inputs into DfID programme Annual Reviews (coordinated by DfID Education Research Team)

7.2 Programme Management

7.2.1 The Programme Directorate will provide overall **programme, financial, procurement and risk management** of the 8 year programme. It will develop tools and systems for effective programme management. Therefore the Programme Directorate will demonstrate excellence in all aspects of programme management, including technical,

analytical, human resource and logistical management. The Programme Directorate will also demonstrate expertise in procuring and contracting, ideally in a research context.

7.2.2 The Programme Directorate will develop a **comprehensive workplan** for the 8 year programme, across all function areas. **Annual work plans** will also be developed, for all functions – the RD and ILT, the Programme Directorate, the Country Research Teams, and Steering Committee. They will monitor implementation, manage budgets and ensure key policies and safeguards are in place and being followed including anti-corruption, fraud and risk management and value for money.

7.2.3 The Programme Directorate will have lead responsibility for considering how the work will contribute to reducing inequality, in line with the requirements of the March 2014 International Development (Gender Equality) Bill, across all phases of the programme and aspects of the work. This will include working with Steering Committee to develop a **gender, equity and social inclusion strategy** during the inception phase of the programme.

7.3 Procurement Management

7.3.1 The Programme Directorate will be responsible for procurement management, including **supplier market expansion** for country research, including supplier engagement activities.

7.3.2 A set of robust selection criteria for country selection will be developed by the Research Director and Intellectual Leadership Team before January 2015. These will be used to develop a long-list of countries in which this research may be undertaken, taking the DFID list of priority countries as the starting point. The RD and ILT will also undertake a first stage of feasibility analysis of these countries, on the basis of the selection criteria. The PD will undertake a second phase of feasibility analysis, which should involve at minimum political economy analysis and the mapping of national research institutional capacity, existing education data accuracy and availability, and relevant research programmes.

7.3.3 The Directorate will manage the **procurement process** of the country research teams and **delivery** of the overall country research programmes, including grant management, supervision, day-to-day communications and facilitating outreach opportunities for country teams. The research will take place in up to 5 countries, with 3 anticipated to be selected in the first round of procurement in year 1, and a further two in a second round of procurement in year 3. It is expected country teams could comprise of a lead investigator, senior academic with oversight roles, post-doctoral students/graduates, research assistants and experienced data and field managers. Funding proposals could comprise of impact evaluations and qualitative research including ethnographic and political analyses, as well as longitudinal education and learning data collection and analyses to assess the performance of an education system. The final composition of country research teams and scale and scope of their work will be discussed and agreed during the programme inception phase.

7.3.4 The programme directorate is expected to **disburse approximately £21m of research grants** on DFID's behalf. This is likely to require the Programme Directorate providing advance funds to grantees before seeking reimbursement by DFID. Parallel to this procurement, DFID will explore with HM Treasury whether we can provide advance funding (through a bank account where funds can be withdrawn on a just in time basis), however bidders should clearly outline any pre-financing charges should this not be an option. Consideration should also be given as to whether country research teams necessarily require advance funding. Final decisions on country grant financing methods will be made prior to contracting.

7.3.5 The Programme Directorate will have responsibility for management and supervision of world class research production by the country teams. An emphasis on the quality and rigour of the research is essential, ensuring country research teams are aiming for the highest impact and highly rated academic journals. The PD will be responsible for managing and **quality assuring the work of the country research teams**. The ILT will peer review the work of the Research Directorate and ILT members.

7.3.6 The PD will work closely with the Research Director and Intellectual Leadership to develop detailed Terms of Reference for the country research teams, using the overall research framework to guide the requirements and compositions of the team. Management support will be required during each phase of the country research, for example ethics advice, sign off and methodological support; and during the output phase.

7.4 Financial and Risk Management

7.4.1 The Programme Directorate will be responsible for **accurate forecasting** of budgets as well as **rigorous accounting**. Annual budgets will be developed and agreed with DFID. Quarterly financial reports will be provided to DFID, with quarterly invoices based on agreed milestone payments with actual and forecasted expenditure.

7.4.2 The Programme Directorate will support ICAI or other independent assessment/reviews during the programme's lifetime. It will commission **independent annual financial audits** and be included in DFID's independent evaluation plans for the Effective Education Systems research programme.

7.4.3 The Programme Directorate must have excellent procedures and systems in place to minimise the risks of **fraud, corruption and other downstream delivery risks**. The Programme Directorate will also be responsible for all due diligence on sub-contractors e.g. the country research teams.

7.5 Programme Governance

7.5.1 The Programme Directorate will be headed up by a Programme Director with a proven track record leading, managing and delivering a multi-year, multi-country, large-scale research programme on time, to agreed quality standards and timeframes. The Programme Director could either be a researcher with proven leadership and management skills or an experienced manager with a robust understanding of the research process and how to ensure excellence in research production.

7.5.2 The EESR programme is a complex and ambitious programme incorporating a wide range of partners in different locations and components at different levels. The Programme Directorate will need to consult the Research Director on preferred and most effective ways of working and propose strategies of their own to establish clear lines of communication, reporting and responsibility with all elements of the programme (including the RD, ILT, country research teams, Steering Committee, and the DFID Education Research Team). Regular communication and collaborative ways of working will need to be maintained with internal and external stakeholders, including where individuals and/or institutions are physically located at a distance and with different components of the EESR programme. The success of the 'way of working' strategy devised by the PD will be a key criteria for the decision to extend past the Inception Phase.

7.5.3 The Programme Directorate will need to establish and ensure an effective working relationship with **DFID** including the Education Research Team, Evidence in Action team and others in DFID HQ London.

7.5.4 The Programme Directorate will work in **close collaboration** with the Research Director and Intellectual Leadership Team responsible for the overall strategic and technical direction of the research programme. The Programme Director and senior team members will engage on a technical level with the research work cooperatively with the Research Director to translate the vision for the programme into effective implementation and the timely production of deliverables. Feeding up information on research outputs coming out of country teams and offering guidance on what information would be available for synthesis products.

7.5.5 The Programme Directorate will manage the secretariat for the **Steering Committee** which will have executive oversight of the programme. The Steering Committee will agree the terms of reference and evaluation criteria of the competition for country research teams and following will endorse the selection of grants.

7.5.6 During the Inception Phase the Programme Directorate should develop a **country engagement plan**, in consultation with the RD and ILT. It is expected that the duration and breadth of the research programme will enable research teams to establish close integration with country education systems and stakeholders as well as provide the opportunity to study longitudinal changes in outcomes of interest. The Programme Directorate will support active links between research or planning units in Ministries of Education, the country research teams and local education group. Effective and appropriate use of national decision making platforms will be critical to ensuring the success of the programme in terms of access to data and policy makers as well as its sustainability.

7.5.7 The Programme Directorate will work with the **country teams** to encourage and support the development of country team communication strategies and provide guidance and oversight of effective country consultation at all levels of the education sector, ensuring country ownership of the research agenda (including but not limited to education and other Ministers, civil servants, academic institutions, development partners, teacher unions, private sector, civil society). Through close communication with DFID's research team the Programme Directorate will lead on engaging with DFID's regional **research hubs** where appropriate and network of country offices, which will be an important link into policy dialogue.

7.5.8 Building productive **partnership agreements** with external research stakeholders will be an important role, including with the World Bank, UNICEF, CIFF and USAID. In co-ordination with DFID, and the Building Evidence in Education network, the Programme Directorate will support efforts to crowd in **additional funding** and support to expand research efforts, either by increasing the amount of research in a given country or expanding to a new focus country, where this adds value to on-going activities and does not detract from achieving agreed objectives funded by DFID.

7.6 Research Impact

7.6.1 The Programme Directorate will ensure that all research complies with DFID's Open Access Policy, including public access to data collected and open access to articles published.

7.6.2 The Programme Directorate will have responsibility for research outreach. It will support the Research Director to convene education systems researchers and practitioners to build a **community of practice** and other coalitions around education systems research. In order to do so it will prepare a detailed **research outreach strategy**, in consultation with the RD & ILT. This will draw on the mapping of stakeholders, and the development of outreach objectives, and will include communication of knowledge for policy understanding together with publication in high-impact peer-reviewed journals. The Programme Directorate will support the country research teams to develop outreach

strategies for their contexts and will monitor their implementation. They will work where appropriate with DFID funded programmes on research outreach and other institutions that might provide strong channels for dissemination. A DFID research uptake manager will review the overall outreach strategy and individual country outreach strategies.

7.6.3 The Programme Directorate will have responsibility for oversight and supervision of research communications and outreach work carried out by country research teams, ensuring high quality, branded research outputs and products.

7.6.4 The Programme Directorate will be responsible for the overall communications of the programme outcomes, building relationships with key audiences and using a wide range of communication tools. They will be expected to identify **forums for debate** ideally linking into existing high profile international and national events and conferences. The Programme Directorate may also convene seminars and workshops in order to build on the existing research efforts in terms of both ongoing or planned data collection and capacity building efforts in country research. The Programme Directorate will work in close collaboration with DFID and the Research Director in agreeing the scope and agendas for these meetings. DFID spending control guidance provides important guidance and rules in this respect. Please see the following link for details: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/285923/spending-control-guidance-research-progs.pdf. The Programme Directorate should also use a range of online and other value for money platforms to convene interested researchers and policy makers globally around this area of research.

7.6.5 The Programme Directorate will have overall responsibility for the synthesis and communication of research funded by this programme. The Programme Directorate will produce a number of **evidence and policy briefs** to be agreed during the inception phase and in co-ordination with the RD and ILT.

7.6.6 The Programme Directorate will **facilitate and coordinate the publication of articles** by RD, ILT and Country Research Teams in peer reviewed journals, and manage the quality assurance process.

7.6.7 The Programme Directorate will have sufficient in-house capacity to synthesise existing research, to publish where appropriate in high impact peer reviewed journals and engage at an intellectual level with the research agenda. The Programme Directorate will be responsible for producing and disseminating **synthesis and evidence papers and articles**, as research findings and cross-cutting themes emerge.

7.7 Monitoring and Reporting

7.7.1 The Programme Directorate will produce **quarterly reports** (including financial forecasts) for DFID, reporting progress against key performance indicators and objectives in the logical framework (logframe), as well as providing updated six monthly financial reporting for all aspects of the programme. The Programme Directorate will lead the finalisation of the **logframe** during Inception Phase, working with the Research Director, Intellectual Leadership Team and DFID.

7.7.2 The Programme Directorate will produce an **Annual Report** for DFID, assessing progress against the logical framework as well as other notable achievements or difficulties faced by the programme. Templates for and contents of annual and other reports will be discussed and agreed during the inception phase.

7.7.3 The Programme Directorate will monitor the activities of the country research teams, ensuring **strong links** across countries, to regional DFID research hubs. Regular monitoring including through field visits will ensure best practice is followed, including

DFID established policies on research processes, data gathering and management, gender equality, procurement, financial management, anti-corruption and fraud.

7.7.4 The Programme Directorate will publish, disseminate, support and monitor the use of evidence products by the research and policy community

8. Programme Monitoring and Evaluation

- 8.1. The Effective Education Systems programme will be subject to rigorous annual reviews.
- 8.2. In addition DFID and partners may wish to undertake a more detailed independent evaluation of the programme. The Programme Directorate will support all independent assessments and reviews during the programme's lifetime.

9. DFID co-ordination and management

- 9.1. All of the deliverables required to achieve the aforementioned outputs will require close working relationships with DFID and strong collaboration and communication with the Research Director and Intellectual Leadership team.
- 9.2. All key deliverables including TORs, strategic plans, strategies and budgets will require approval from the Steering Committee. A senior DFID technical expert will be represented on the Steering Committee.
- 9.3. The Programme Directorate must maintain close contact with DFID programme leads to discuss progress and issues on a regular basis and as requested by DFID. The DFID programme manager for the EES will have the day-to-day oversight of the Programme Directorate. The DFID Education Research Team will also provide technical inputs (consisting of 10% the Team Leader, 40% of the Lead Adviser, 10% of the research outreach adviser).
- 9.4. The DFID team will work alongside the Programme Directorate in the contract negotiation stage to consider what input is required, by whom and at what times to ensure technical advice is on hand at the right time.
- 9.5. PD must produce a workplan with sufficient detail to enable the DFID team to monitor operational and financial progress and raise any issues that require attention to DFID senior management and Ministers as necessary.
- 9.6. The Research Director and Intellectual Leadership Team will set the intellectual agenda for this programme. At the same time they will be contractually managed by the Programme Directorate and so there needs to be strong lines of communication and a very good working relationship developed. Serious issues that may impede the implementation of the programme and that cannot be resolved in the first instance by DFID will be taken to the Steering Committee for conflict mediation. DFID holds responsibility for decision and action.

10. Timeframe

- 10.1. The inception period will cover 6 months from the start of the Programme Directorate contract. It is envisaged by the end of the inception period that full Terms of Reference and a clear process for procuring the country research teams will have been agreed.

- 10.2. Successful completion of the inception phase and continuation of the programme will include delivering outputs as listed in the table above subject to agreement with DFID.
- 10.3. Country research will take place in years 2-8 of the programme.

11. Contracting Arrangements

- 11.1. In order to ensure the Programme Directorate maintains ultimate responsibility for the effective delivery of this programme, the Research Director contract will form part of the winning bid of the Programme Directorate contract at the end of the inception period. The Programme Directorate will be responsible for managing the Research Director and associated Intellectual Leadership Team contracts for the implementation phase and this will involve administering all contracting, logistics and travel for these groups. The Research Director will then be managed by the Programme Directorate for the remainder of the programme.
- 11.2. DFID will take a phased approach to the contracting of this 8 year programme. We will initially award the Programme Directorate contract for the first 6 months inception period, at the end of which the final country selection, workplan and budget will be agreed. At that point, we will amend the contract to include the PD and RD/ILT inputs for the following 2.5 years. Progression beyond inception period will be dependent on strong performance of all parties involved, evidence of a strong working relationship between the Research Director and Programme Directorate functions during inception and agreement of all workplans and costs moving forward.
- 11.3. At the end of year 3, DFID will review programme performance thus far and consider proposed work-plans and detailed costs for the remainder of the programme (year 4-8) before deciding whether to issue a contract for the remainder of the programme. If a contract is awarded for years 4-8, there will be a formal break point at the end of year 6.
- 11.4. On this basis, DFID is requesting detailed fixed costs for the first 3 years of the Programme Directorate contract (with rates fixed for that period), and indicative costs for the remainder of the programme. There will be the opportunity to renegotiate costs at the 3 and 6 year stage; while this will help to mitigate unexpected risks such as foreign exchange fluctuations, we do not expect to see the overall balance between management and research costs change over this period.
- 11.5. DFID reserves the right to extend this programme by a further 2 years (thus up to 10 maximum) if it is deemed necessary. We may also scale back or discontinue this programme at any point (in line with our Terms and Conditions) if it is not achieving the results anticipated. Conversely, we may also scale up the research programme, or attract additional donor funds should it prove to be having a strong impact and has the potential to yield better results.
- 11.6. DFID would like payments under this contract to be strongly linked to performance and delivery of outputs. Please outline as part of your bid how you think this would work best, and higher points will be awarded to a payment plan that rewards strong performance and encourages risk sharing of non-delivery where appropriate.

12. Due Diligence/Fraud/corruption

- 12.1. The Programme Directorate will be responsible for conducting due diligence on potential country research teams in line with DFID requirements.
- 12.2. DFID has a zero tolerance approach to corruption. The Programme Directorate will have full responsibility for monitoring and mitigating the risk of fraud and corruption in the procurement and delivery of country research.

13. Duty of Care and Logistical Arrangements

- 13.1. At this point, the countries are undefined and will be agreed upon during the Inception Phase between DFID the Research Director and the supplier for the Programme Directorate. It is envisaged that work may be carried out in some fragile and conflict affected states as part of this programme and therefore we have rated Duty of Care as medium-high risk on this basis. Suppliers are required to carry out a risk assessment (of foreseeable risks) and are required to provide evidence that they have the capability to take on and effectively manage their Duty of Care responsibilities throughout the life of the contract even in the most challenging of environments.
- 13.2. The Supplier is responsible for the safety and well-being of their personnel and third parties affected by their activities under this contract, including appropriate security arrangements. They will also be responsible for the provision of suitable security arrangements for their domestic and business property.
- 13.3. DFID will share available information with the supplier on security status and developments in country where appropriate.
- 13.4. The supplier is responsible for ensuring appropriate safety and security briefings for all of their personnel working under this contract and ensuring that their personnel register and receive briefing as relating to health, safety and security. Travel advice is also available on the FCO website and the supplier must ensure they (and their personnel) are up to date with the latest position.
- 13.5. This requirement may require the supplier to operate in a seismically active zone that is considered at high risk of earthquakes. Minor tremors are not uncommon. Earthquakes are impossible to predict and can result in major devastation and loss of life. There are several websites focusing on earthquakes, including the following-

<http://geology.about.com/library/bl/maps/blworldindex.htm>

The Supplier should be comfortable working in such an environment and should be capable of deploying to any areas required within the region in order to deliver the contract (subject to travel clearance being granted).

- 13.6. This requirement may require the supplier to operate in conflict-affected areas where parts of it are highly insecure. Travel to many zones within the region will be subject to travel clearance from the UK government in advance. The security situation may be volatile and subject to change at short notice. The supplier should be comfortable working in such an environment and should be capable of deploying to any areas required within the region in order to deliver the contract (subject to travel clearance being granted).
- 13.7. The supplier is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements, processes and procedures are in place for their personnel, taking into account the environment they will be working in and the level of risk involved in delivery of the contract (such as working in dangerous, fragile and hostile environments etc.). The supplier must ensure their personnel receive the required level of training and complete a UK government approved hostile environment training course (SAFE) or safety in the field training prior to deployment if necessary.
- 13.8. Suppliers must develop their PQQ and Tender (if invited to Tender) on the basis of being fully responsible for Duty of Care in line with DFID's Duty of Care policies and the details provided above. Suppliers should be aware that an assessment of Duty of Care will be undertaken at the PQQ and inception stages and must confirm in their

PQQ response that they have the capability to work in a variety of countries as outlined, but not limited to, the countries in which DFID currently operates.

- 13.9. Suppliers **must** also include a Duty of Care plan as part of the PQQ response. For this procurement, suppliers will be required to provide evidence that they have the capability to take on and effectively manage their DoC Responsibilities throughout the life of the contract even in the most challenging of environments.
- 13.10. If the Supplier is unwilling or unable to accept responsibility for Security and Duty of Care as detailed above, the Tender will be viewed as non-compliant and excluded from further evaluation.

14. Detailed Background

- 14.1. Education policy and programme decision makers need more robust evidence around how and why education systems perform the way they do, what the critical constraints are, what policies or interventions have potential to unblock these constraints and what the impacts of large scale systemic reforms are on learning for all. This will require a significant multi-disciplinary research team to tackle these complex questions that will cut across education economics, governance, public administration, and management. DFID is therefore commissioning a large-scale, multi-year research programme to build the evidence for these issues. This will be a new way to approach education research that aims develop a new and influential field of study to support more effective education systems.
- 14.2. The High Level Panel report on the post-2015 agenda highlighted the need to assess the quality of education and not just access. It is likely that learning will be at the heart of future education policy and programmes, but current rates of progress in many countries mean it would take an unacceptably long time to reach an adequate level.ⁱⁱ
- 14.3. From an equity angle, emerging evidence suggests that different school systems are (in)equitable in different ways. For example, differences in achievement between wealth quintiles in India increase over time. Initial evidence suggests the elite-focused curriculum in India leaves poorer children far behind with increasingly lower chances of catching up over time. In comparison, differences between wealth quintiles and ethnic groups in Vietnam remain relatively constant, or even improve over time, with a possible explanation being Vietnam's greater emphasis on mastery of the basics of reading and writing by all students.ⁱⁱⁱ The 2012 Global Monitoring Report argues "to tackle the barriers that prevent disadvantaged children from entering on time and progressing through school, system-wide reforms are needed".^{iv} System reform is therefore important to both the equity and quality of education and will be central to achieving better learning for girls in particular.

We know little about what works to reform developing country education systems to improve learning for all, especially girls.

- 14.4. Strong evidence from different contexts suggests that more resources alone do not drive better learning. Bruns argues that, "researchers have documented the weak correlation between spending and results in education that emerges from cross-country and within country analysis".^v This holds for both developed and developing countries. In a recent review published in Science^{vi}, not one single 'traditional' input based intervention (e.g. textbooks) was found to deliver either statistically significant impacts on student learning or value for money.
- 14.5. While inputs are clearly important, in particular where no schools, textbooks or teachers exist, there is growing evidence that how resources are used plays a major role in determining the effectiveness of an education system. Woessman examines

international maths scores for over a quarter of a million children in both developed and emerging economies. He concludes that international differences in student performance are strongly related to institutional factors, for example centralised assessment or school autonomy, as opposed to differences in the levels of resources put into the system.^{vii} Other research shows that social, political and household factors are also important in explaining variations in the learning outcomes for children, such as parental expectations.^{viii} The recent Economist Intelligence Unit report into the performance of education systems concluded that “simply pouring more resources into a system is not enough: far more important are the processes which use these resources”.^{ix}

- 14.6. However, the evidence on what works to reform education systems in low-income countries to improve learning is weak. Recent work by McKinsey suggests that education systems can improve.^x The report divides school systems into poor, fair, good and excellent performers and charts progress along this continuum. This is the first report to take a robust conceptual and analytical approach to system reform and offers promising insights into how to understand whole system reforms. However, it only includes two developing country systems and the evidence base on which it can draw for developing country systems is very sparse. Similarly, studies by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) use international assessment data to understand the effects of system reforms, largely in richer countries. Learning from these reform efforts and existing evidence from OECD and partner countries will be used to inform the design of education systems research proposed in this programme. But neither the OECD nor the McKinsey studies provide sufficient evidence to guide investments in education reforms in developing countries.
- 14.7. A recent rigorous review that synthesised the best available studies looking at educational inputs in developing countries concluded that “remarkably little is known about the impacts of education policies on student outcomes in developing countries ...[because] much of the literature has focused on basic school and teacher characteristics”.^{xi} A recent book called the Rebirth of Education by Lant Pritchett argues that no country has “an evidence-based plan for achieving significant progress in education”.^{xii} This is largely because there is limited evidence on which to draw from and in some cases there is reticence to spend the political capital needed to push through system wide reforms.
- 14.8. Education research, in general, is of limited use to informing system reforms. Much of it is fragmented, qualitative in nature and focuses on inputs. There is a body of political economy approaches to education reform dating from the 1980s and 1990s.^{xiii} These studies help to underscore the importance of politics, processes and institutions in education, but have less of an emphasis on ‘what works’ to improve education systems.^{xiv} A recent review of the political economy of education reform found only 1 high quality study, though there was a reasonable body of medium-quality evidence.^{xv}
- 14.9. More recently, there has been a wave of randomised control trials (RCTs) of education interventions over the past 15 years.^{xvi} These have introduced a new emphasis on rigour in education research. They point to interventions that can improve access to education and provide some initial evidence regarding learning, though evidence around cost effectiveness and what works at scale is lacking. More recent RCTs have focused on system type interventions that aim to change the incentives of people, from parents to teachers to administrators, involved in making sure every child learns. This includes emerging evidence on the potential for interventions focussed around teacher accountability, school based management and pedagogical innovation to deliver greater gains in learning than input based interventions.

- 14.10. The majority of this first wave of RCTs consists of small scale interventions delivered through non-governmental organisations (NGOs). There is therefore a legitimate concern about the generalisability of these findings to education systems, which operate at a very different scale and with a very different set of incentives and political economy. A recent replication of an RCT of contract teachers in NGO schools in Kenya found identical positive effects in the NGO schools and zero effect in the government schools. The roll out of the intervention was interrupted in the state system due to a teacher's strike and court case which resulted in the formalisation of the contract teachers.^{xvii}
- 14.11. This illustrates the importance of a deep understanding of the education system and context to be able to understand how some of these promising interventions could play out at scale and within the political economy of that country. There is a need to generate more quality contextualised evidence around education systems in developing countries as it is likely that what works depends on the context. Mixed methods approaches will be required, as well as access to education policy makers and institutions, to be able to look at the political economy of education reform and the testing of interventions to understand what works at a systemic level to improve learning for all.
- 14.12. Education systems research is a field of study that examines the organisation, financing, and delivery of education services and the impact of these services on learning, skills development and broader well-being. A systems focus looks at the whole education system across multiple levels, including early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary. The major focus of research on an education system should be on the management, governance and functioning of that system. Research on systems is likely to focus less on the characteristics of inputs into the education system (e.g. length of teacher training, textbooks) and more on the institutional and political economy factors that help drive the performance of the system. This would include elements such as accountability, incentives, transparency, monitoring, and assessment as well as the politics of reform, and would link what happens at a policy and institutional level with what happens in the classroom and learning. A systems focus would also include examining how equitable the system is in the way it operates, with a particular regard to differences in access and performance between boys and girls, as well as marginalised groups.
- 14.13. There has been limited but good quality research around some system areas, most notably accountability. A 2011 review of high quality research from World Bank accountability investments found "promising evidence that changing performance incentives of actors within an education system, for example through school based management or the use of information, can have impacts on the quality of education".^{xviii} However, the authors note that this field is nascent, comprising of only 22 rigorous impact evaluations globally across these varied interventions, with little replication and a dearth of evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa.
- 14.14. It is likely that new conceptual models and methods will have to be developed to be able to answer education system questions. This could include innovative ways to collect data that allow policy makers to see the impacts of their policies on a rolling basis, across time over different social groups and over a large area, as has been considered in the health field.^{xix} It is also likely that this research will benefit from cross-disciplinary collaboration, bringing in the experience of systems research from health, engineering and management sciences amongst other fields. For example, there are models of how to understand systemic change from the private sector, including the DFID supported "Making Markets Work for the Poor" approach which understands sustainable change at scale by taking into account spill over effects including crowding-in, adoption and replication.^{xx} A systems approach will also draw

heavily on governance work around state capability and the political economy of reform.^{xxi}

- 14.15. In the education field specifically, there are emerging conceptual models of how to understand education systems although none is widely accepted.^{xxii} UNESCO has developed A General Education System Quality Analysis/Diagnosis Framework (GEQAF) and UNICEF has developed a tool for analysing bottlenecks to equity in education systems. The World Bank has promoted the analysis of education systems through its Systems Analysis for Better Education Results (SABER) based on the following systems model:

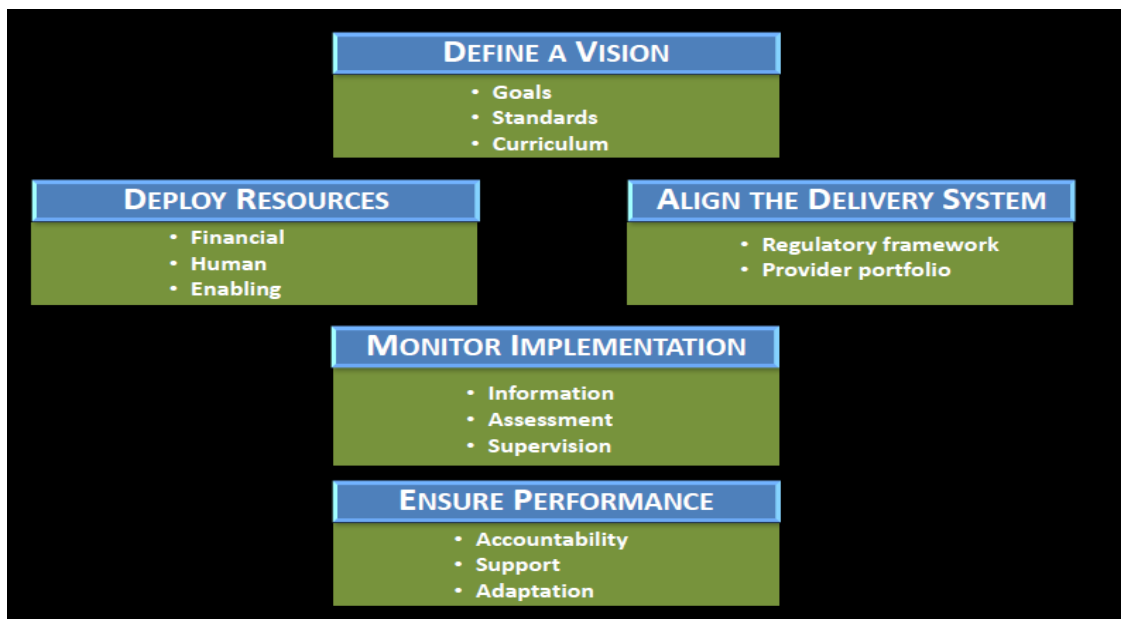


Figure 2: SABER Framework (Source: SABER Presentation to UNICEF)

- 14.16. SABER has made progress in identifying various policies under each domain in over 100 countries and will be a useful starting point for this research programme to consider the variety of policies in the field. Below we propose a new model of education systems, tested and refined through engagement with research and policy communities. This was done through a series of interviews with key people and through two workshops with academics, policy makers and donors in London and Washington DC. This model is represented below:

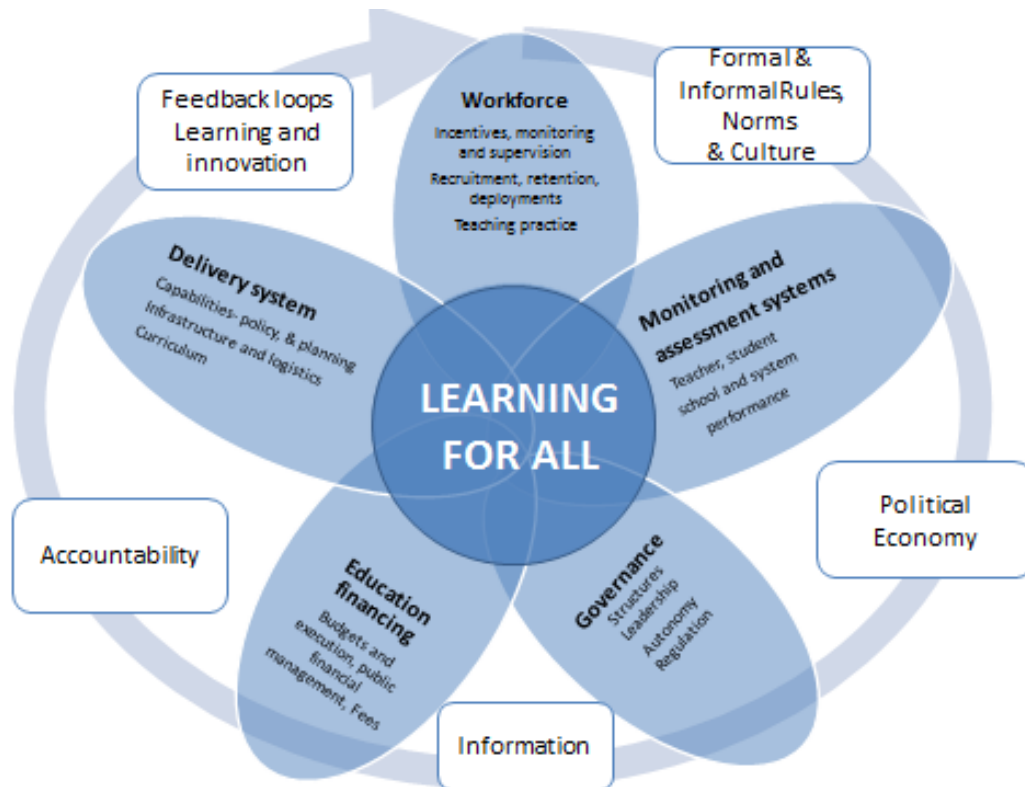


Figure 3: Education Systems Model

- 14.17. Figure 3 puts learning and equity at the heart of the systems model. Learning for all means that *all* children have access to quality education. This is a particular concern in many developing countries where girls' learning lags significantly behind boys, and discrimination against marginalised groups is common. Learning for all includes not only the cognitive dimensions of education (e.g. maths, reading) but also the non-cognitive dimensions such as self-efficacy and confidence that are also important to determining future life chances.
- 14.18. As well as outlining the functional aspects of any education system (e.g. workforce, financing,) the model emphasises the interconnections between parts of the system that are driven by:
- Formal and informal rules, norms and culture;
 - Political economy;
 - Information flows;
 - Accountability;
 - Feedback loops and innovation.
- 14.19. We would expect this, or other conceptual models, to be developed as part of the research programme and to start building consensus in the research and policy communities. This is an important step to enable the systematic and scientific study of education systems.

ⁱ Hanushek, E. (1995), *Interpreting recent research on schooling in developing countries*, World Bank, Research Observer Volume 10 (issue 2); 227-246.

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- iv UNESCO (2012) Global Monitoring Report *Youth and Skills: Putting Education to Work*.
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- vi Kremer, M. Brannenl, C. & Glennerster, R. (2013) The Challenge of Education and Learning in the Developing World" *Science* vol 340, number 6130 pp. 297-300.
- vii Woessmann L. (2003) Schooling Resources, Educational Institutions and Student Performance: the International Evidence. *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*. 65(2): 117-7.
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- x Mourshed.M, Chijioke.C, & Barber.M, (2010) How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better <http://mckinseysociety.com/how-the-worlds-most-improved-school-systems-keep-getting-better/#sthash.5TL8nQt8.dpuf>
- xi Glewwe, P. Hanushek, E. (2012) School Resources and Educational Outcomes in Developing Countries: A Review of the Literature from 1990 to 2010, *NBER Working Papers* 17554, 2011 P.45
- xii Pritchett, L. (2013) *The Rebirth of Education*, P89, Centre for Global Development, Washington DC.
- xiii See Grindle, M. Thomas, J. (1991) *Public Choices and Policy Change: The Political Economy of Reform in Developing Countries* Johns Hopkins University Press, US. or Lewin, K. & Stuart, J. (1996) *Educational Innovation in Developing Countries; Case Studies of Change Makers*, 2nd edition, MacMillan.
- xiv Kingdon, G. et al, (2013) *A Rigorous Review of the Political Economy of Education Systems*, Department for International Development (forthcoming).
- xv Ibid
- xvi Kremer, M. Brannenl, C. & Glennerster, R. (2013) The Challenge of Education and Learning in the Developing World" *Science* vol 340, number 6130 pp. 297-300.
- xvii Bold, T. Kimenyi, M. Mwabu, G. Ng'ang'a, A. Sandefur, J. (2013) Scaling Up What Works: Experimental Evidence on External Validity in Kenyan Education, *Centre for Global Development, Washington DC, Working Paper* 321.
- xviii Bruns, B. Filmer, B. Patrinos, H. (2011) *Making Schools Work: New Evidence on Accountability Reforms*, World Bank, U.S.
- xix See for example – Victora.C.G, Black.R.E, Boerma.J.T, Bryce.J, (2010) Measuring Impact in the Millennium Development Goal Era and Beyond: A new Approach to Large Scale Effectiveness Evaluation, *The Lancet* Online July 9, 2010.
- xx ITAD (2013) *A Review of M4P Evaluation Methods and Approaches*, <http://www.itad.com/reports/review-of-m4p-evaluation-methods-and-approaches/>
- xxi See for example – Pritchett, L. Woolcock, M. Andrews, M.(2012) Looking Like a State: Techniques of Persistent Failure in State Capability for Implementation, Harvard Centre for International Development Working Paper, <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/cid/publications/faculty-working-papers/cid-working-paper-no.-239>
- xxii A 2013 rapid review of education systems research found:
- A wide range of conceptual frameworks were identified regarding education systems in low and middle income countries but these were not widely accepted or used extensively as a basis for research.

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- Many of the conceptual frameworks were proposed in policy discussion papers or developed as implementation tools rather than being primarily intended as research frameworks.
 - Overall, a small number of high quality studies were identified in the field of education systems research but the majority of studies identified through this rapid review were of moderate or low quality.
 - It could be argued that there is a need for more agreement regarding the conceptual frameworks which should underpin education systems research to enable more direct comparison between research studies and the development of a strong evidence base.
- (HEART *Rapid Review of Education Systems Research* 2013)