To advance the analytical and operational quality of the World Bank’s promotion of sustainable and inclusive “investment in people”, the Office of the Chief Economist for the Human Development Network promotes an evidence-based approach to development policy. Part of this agenda includes support research to strengthen the knowledge base for HD policy, particularly through the use of systematic impact evaluations. Evaluations are grouped into seven clusters: Basic Education Service Delivery, Conditional Cash Transfers, HIV/AIDS Prevention, Malaria, Pay-for-Performance in Health, Active Labor Markets and Youth Employment, and Early Childhood Development.

Policy questions:

- Does school-based management improve service delivery and learning outcomes?
- Does providing parents with better information about school quality have an impact on school performance?
- Can the use of contract teachers improve schooling access and student learning?
- Can linking teachers’ pay to performance improve student learning?

Background & Context

School systems in most developing countries largely fail to deliver quality primary education to poor children. Over 100 million primary age children either never enter or fail to complete primary school, and studies show that even children who do complete may be functionally illiterate and innumerate.

Efforts to improve education in both the developed and developing world typically focus on providing more inputs to schools—increasing spending along existing allocation patterns. But, substantial evidence shows that increased funding is not sufficient for improved learning outcomes. Incremental funds may be allocated to inputs that have weak impacts on student learning. In the United States, a tripling of real education spending per student since 1960 has been absorbed by higher teacher salaries and lower class sizes but has had no measurable impact on either student numbers or average student learning levels. 1 Teachers and other education personnel (which typically represent 75% or more of education spending) may be poorly motivated to perform. A study of teacher absenteeism in nine developing countries found that, on any given day, 11-30% of teachers were absent from their posts. 2

The 2004 World Development Report Making Services Work for Poor People argued that the underlying cause of such failures in basic service delivery in developing countries are weak accountability relationships between the state, service providers, and the citizens and clients they serve. In the education sector, efforts in both developed and developing countries to strengthen these

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accountability relationships through system reforms have been numerous. However, designs have varied considerably and there has been very little rigorous evaluation of impact. This impact evaluation cluster is promoting rigorous evaluations of three of the most common types of accountability-promoting reforms in basic education: school based management; information provision to empower school stakeholders; and teacher contracting and incentive reforms. Below is a small sample of ongoing basic education evaluations.

**Human Development Impact Evaluations in Basic Education Accountability**

**School-based Management**

**Mexico** – This IE is evaluating the impact of providing extra funding through the *Apoyo a la Gestion Escolar (AGEs)* – the SBM component of Mexico’s compensatory education program - to school committees on parental participation in committees and school/learning outcomes. This study is examining whether improved outcomes, as a result of AGEs, are attributable exclusively to increased parental participation, or if there is a relationship between increased resources and improved outcomes regardless of parental participation.

**Nepal** – This IE extends an ongoing evaluation that is measuring the impact of Nepal’s strong form of SBM – near complete transfer of power to community-managed schools – on learning. This extension is examining the effectiveness of a peer-to-peer networking strategy designed to strengthen communities’ capacity to monitor and manage local schools. Should it prove effective, this strategy holds high promise for developing countries as it is demand-driven and relatively low cost.

**Information for accountability projects**

**Benin** - This randomized evaluation of 600 primary schools in Benin examines two interventions aimed at making school-based management work more effectively. This research aims at determining whether making information about school inputs and performance more easily available to parents and community members stimulates more engagement in school management committees and more effective decision making. It will complement the existing research evidence on school-based management by increasing our understanding of the impact of information dissemination (both directly through targeted SMC trainings as well as through local radio broadcasts) on student learning outcomes.

**Teacher contracting and pay for performance projects**

**Sao Paulo and Pernambuco, Brazil** – These evaluations are examining how bonus pay linked to student performance affects teachers’ effort, training uptake, skills and classroom practice, and how much these, in turn, affect student learning outcomes. It is also studying whether linking pay to students’ test results promotes significant adverse behaviors, as critics claim, such as diverting curriculum time from non-tested subjects or manipulation of test results.

**Kenya** – This impact evaluation evaluated 70 (the total sample included 140) schools wherein students were randomly assigned to either a new contract teacher or a regular civil servant teacher, and where within the 70 remaining schools students were “tracked” by achievement level. In 70 schools (half from each above group), an NGO carried out school management committee trainings. Analysis also made use of regression discontinuity design (when measuring effect of “achievement-based tracking” on student learning). Overall, the program increased test scores by .22 std, though this depended on implementation method. Additionally the program was most effective when parent-run school committees were trained to monitor the program. Also, the program was more effective for students taught by new contract teachers (by .18std) and tracking students by achievement level raised performance levels by .25 std, regardless of teacher type.