

Social Accountability and Transparency Interventions Can Improve the Delivery of Educational Services

Ruiqi Gao

Laiyang No.1 Middle School, China

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Abstract: This is an essay about social accountability and transparency interventions. First I show the importance of the education and introduce the instruction of the essay. Then in the middle part of the essay, I compared six studies to explain why some interventions show a high impact while other interventions do not have any impact on the delivery of educational services. Finally, I come to a conclusion.

1. The importance of social accountability and transparency interventions

Education not only represents the cultural accomplishment of a country's citizens, but also represents the development level of a country. With the continuous development of society and the progress of science and technology, the socially recognized importance of education has been raised to a new height. The quality of education has a direct impact on the future development of the economic, cultural, scientific, technological, and societal aspects of a country, and it is an indispensable condition for a country to prosper. Education, as a highly valued and long-term aspect of a country's planning, trains talents for the country. A country with good education will have strong comprehensive national strength in scientific, technological, and societal aspects. In order to make the country have more talent and make various areas of society prosper and flourish, it is necessary to build a good educational foundation.

As a result, governments of all countries have been paying more and more attention to education and strengthening interventions in education to improve the level of education in recent years. For example, in order to let parents know more about the information of their local schools and have more choices when they choose schools for their children, some governments provide local citizens with the rankings of schools, the qualifications of teachers and the achievements of their students through newspaper reports, league tables and report cards.

However, although some remote and poor areas benefit from government interventions, they still suffer from very poor education. This is because these areas lack experienced teachers, good public educational facilities, and awareness of the importance of education, which leads to a scarcity of strong students. Based on this reality, it is imperative that governments adopt high impact interventions which improve the delivery of educational services, but which interventions are effective has yet to be clear.

I argue that the government should provide more information about education to citizens which will be useful to them and in a format which they can understand. In this essay, I will examine the results of six studies on accountability measures, comparing them as to explain why some interventions show a high impact while other interventions do not have any impact on the delivery of educational services.

2. Experimental analysis

2.1 The evidence of social accountability and transparency interventions improves the delivery of educational services

2.1.1 Government should give schools enough communicative freedom to analyze their own performance.

Firstly, there is some evidence of social accountability and transparency interventions which improve the delivery of educational services. In one study, two different primary schools in Ugandan are made to use a school scorecard instrument, one being developed by the Ministry of Education and NGO (Non-Governmental Organizations) partners and the other one developed by the schools themselves. As a result, the scorecard developed by the school management committees had a higher impact on the quality of educational services as evidenced by a reduction in the absenteeism rate of teachers and students (Barr, Mugisha, Serneels, & Zeitlin, 2012). Why were two schools subject to a similar government intervention, but had a different result? The main difference was that between autonomy and dependence. If schools have autonomy, they will be more motivated and able to provide detailed information unique to their own school. Thus, one of the important factors of government interventions is to give schools enough communicative freedom to analyze their own performance.

2.1.2 Government should make parents have access to more effective information

Moreover, a study about government intervention in Pakistan provided parents with school report cards on the performance of their own children and the significant test scores of all schools in their village. The result of this study suggest that it improved the efficiency and fairness of the schools (Andrabi, Das and Khwaja, 2014). Why did the schools see an improvement in efficiency and fairness? Two reasons can be isolated from the study: the first was that parents had more information about the school and their children's performance as students, which lead to an increase in parents' participation; and the the second was that it made parents know where their children's strengths and shortcomings are, so their children's grades improved as a result. This shows that government intervention needs to make parents have access to more effective information so that it can improve the local education level and enrollment rate.

2.1.3 Government should provide more information on test scores for schools for citizens

In addition, the United States' local government provided the low-income families with the information on test scores in their area and Hastings and Weinstein studied the impact of this intervention in 2008. As a result, those parents who received the information on test scores will choose the high performing schools, and the test scores of those students will also be improved (Hastings and Weinstein, 2008). This study shows that if the government gives the information on test scores to parents, they will have more better choices when they choose the school for their children. So governments should provide more information on test scores for schools for citizens, and this intervention will be one of the most important motivations to motivate schools to improve their performance.

2.2 The evidence of social accountability and transparency interventions doesn't improve the delivery of educational services

2.2.1 Government should ensure citizens understand the information

However, there is also evidence of social accountability and transparency interventions which did not improve the delivery of educational services. Tanzania's government had been providing its citizens with detailed information on school examination data and the school's input data on the government's website for over two years. But the result of a study showed that the data was not being accessed or used by Tanzanian citizens when choosing schools for their children (Mcmurren et al., 2016). This study shows that the intervention of the Tanzanian government had little impact. The

reason why while the government had provided the information on schools for their local citizens, yet the measure still did not work, is that only giving information to citizens is not enough to make citizens pay attention to it and take action. Therefore, the government should not only provide the information on schools for citizens, but also ensure they understand the information itself, as well as tell them how to use it so that government intervention can be effective.

2.2.2 Government should increase the incentive for schools to improve schools' educational delivery

In another study, the Welsh government abolished the league tables of schools, and the result was that this intervention markedly reduced the effectiveness of schools and students' grades dropped dramatically (Burgess, Wilson, & Worth, 2010). This study shows that this government decision failed to improve the delivery of educational services. Why was this the case? Perhaps the main reason was that parents knew less information on schools and their children's grades after the government abolished the league tables of schools, so they did not know how their children performed in the school and if they had some problems with their study. The other reasons are that with less information schools can avoid being shamed by the media, reducing the incentive for schools to improve their educational delivery, ultimately making the accountability mechanism in Wales not play as important a role in education. Therefore, governments should provide more information on different schools to improve the outcomes of teaching.

2.2.3 Government should make sure information is useful to citizens

Besides, there is another study which is about the Chilean government has identified effective schools and widely publicized the winning schools in national newspapers for citizens to know more information. But it has not played a role in increasing enrolment, increasing school fees or socio-economic status changes (Mizala and Urquiola, 2007). That is because the information, which is provided by the government, maybe is not actually helpful for the public or it didn't make the public understand, the public don't need them. All in all, the government should make the information more useful for the public and make sure it can provide them a better choices.

3. Come to a conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, education is becoming more and more important with the continued development of a nation's economic, scientific and technological sectors, and it is directly related to the level of a country, leading the government to pay more and more attention to education. Moreover, government intervention has become one of the important ways to improve education quality and ensure fairness in education. However, how come some government interventions have a high impact while others do not?

Some government interventions have a high impact when governments not only let parents know more about the detailed information of the school which will be useful to citizens, but also make sure the citizens understand it so that it can provide some better choices for parents when they choose schools for their children, in turn improving parents' educational awareness. Others do not have any impact because some governments reduce the information on schools, which eliminates the driving force for schools to improve, and providing information alone is not enough to make the citizens take action if the information is not clear or useful.

By listing and analyzing these six studies and comparing the different government interventions in this essay, I come to the following conclusion: The government should provide more information about education to citizens which will be useful to them and in a format which they can understand. Provided these conditions are met, this government intervention will have a high impact, which will play a role in improving the delivery of educational services so that the level of education of a country will increase faster.

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