Sub-theme: Evidence and Knowledge: Including All Learners

Abstract: Exploring an emerging innovation: using the Capability Approach to improve rural teacher deployment in Nigeria

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In Nigeria, the central role of teachers in the provision of a quality education has been explicitly recognised by the Ministry of Education; however, concerns about the teaching force persist. In Kwara State, there are extreme imbalances in teacher distribution between rural and urban areas due to female teachers rejecting rural posts. This paper explores an innovative use of the Capability Approach (CA) that was applied in the Education Sector Support Programme in Nigeria (ESSPIN), in order to identify the issues hindering effective rural deployment and to develop solutions to reconcile issues.

The rationale for using CA lay in its ability to offer a new analytical space in which to understand teachers’ well-being, as it elucidates how environmental, social and personal conditions constrain the ‘beings and doings’ that they value. Research was conducted from May-June 2012 with 78 female teachers, and showed that constraint on their most valued ‘beings and doings’ was particularly acute in rural areas, leading to significant amounts of rural deployment avoidance. Findings demonstrated that not all constraints could be reduced with the simple offering of rural allowances, as many women valued personal safety, but felt that assault and harassment was rife in rural areas; thus, an innovative pilot policy was developed with the aim of reducing these and other constraints. This paper will demonstrate how the enhancement of capabilities as a way to attract and retain teachers in rural posts is an emerging innovation that is worth exploring up to and beyond 2015.

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