

GPPA 430: EDUCATION POLICY AROUND THE WORLD

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I Course description and learning goals

Education systems play a crucial role in shaping individual wellbeing and the wealth of nations. Around the world, the provision of education falls under the purview of governments; these regulate, fund, and often directly manage schools. They set policies on what should be taught in schools, who can become a teacher, how teachers should be compensated, how much funding should be allocated to schools, whether private providers are eligible for public subsidies, whether and how school performance should be assessed, and more. These education policy decisions vary considerably across countries and, sometimes, within them. In this course we will examine how these decisions shape education systems' performance, and why governments make the decisions they make. The focus will be on primary and secondary education.

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Describe the main trends and challenges facing education systems around the world today;
- Assess what the evidence says about the effectiveness of common policy proposals to address these challenges (e.g., compensating teachers based on their students' test scores, giving information to parents about schools' performance, contracting out the management of schools to the private sector, spending more on education, etc.); and
- Make politically-attuned education policy recommendations.

In addition, the course seeks to promote the development of the following general skills:

- Communication skills, both oral and written;
- Synthesis skills;
- Resourcefulness and independent research skills;
- Critical thinking skills (which will be applied to assess the logic of arguments and the quality of the evidence used to support them);
- Professional development skills including, for example, the ability to write clearly, meet deadlines, use appropriate language in all communications, and participate thoughtfully and respectfully in group discussions.

2 Expectations and Grading

- **In-class discussion of readings (20% of final grade).** Each week typically has three required academic articles and/or book chapters. Make sure you have carefully read and digested *all* required readings *before* each class. Full credit in class participation will be assigned each week for thoughtful participation in the discussion of assigned readings.

- **Twitter threads (20%).** For weeks 2-10, write a Twitter thread about *one* of the assigned readings for that week, where you summarize and assess the reading as you would for those who haven't read it. Your thread should include the following elements:

1. What is the article's main claim?
2. What Table or Figure provides the strongest support for that claim?
3. Do you buy the claim?
4. What is your overall assessment of the article?

We will use them to jumpstart the discussion of the readings.

Submission instructions:

- Twitter threads are due by 1:30pm before each class via Canvas.
- Use the Twitter thread example posted on Canvas to format your thread.
- Save your Twitter thread as a PDF document (no Word documents or other formats).
- Name your file as follows: [ARTICLE'S FIRST AUTHOR'S LAST NAME], [ARTICLE'S SECOND AUTHOR'S LAST NAME], ..., [ARTICLE'S LAST AUTHOR'S LAST NAME]_[YOUR FIRST NAME]. For example, if I was writing a Twitter thread for Duflo, Esther, Rachel Glennerster, and Michael Kremer. 2006. "Using Randomization in Development Economics Research: A Toolkit," the name of my Twitter thread file would be Duflo, Glennerster, Kremer_Agustina.docx.

- **Policy Proposal (40% = 15% first submission + 25% second submission).** Write a concise report (max. 3 pages single-spaced, 12-point font) where you provide evidence-based, politically-attuned education policy recommendations to a country of your choice from the following list: Mexico, Brazil, Uganda, Kenya, Thailand, Indonesia, Jordan, Hungary, the United States. The audience for the report is the Ministry/ Department of Education in the country you choose.

First submission. Due no later than **Tuesday, February 18 by 4pm**. Write a 2-page policy proposal where you (a) provide a diagnosis of the current state of primary and/ or secondary schooling in the country, and (b) provide a policy recommendation based on your diagnosis of the country's main needs in the education sector.

Second submission. Add a section that discusses the country's political context, especially any features of this context that might be relevant to the education policy-making process. Then, adjust section **b** of your first submission to improve the political feasibility of your policy recommendations. The full report can be no more than 3 pages single-spaced. Due no later than **Friday, March 20 by 9pm**.

- **Final Reflection Essay (20%).** The final take-home exam is due no later than **March 19 by 6pm**. It will consist of a single essay asking you to reflect on what you have learnt during the course. I will distribute

the essay prompt during week 10. The deadline will not be extended except for students who show proof of illness or experience a death or serious illness in the immediate family. Please don't kill any family members during exams week. Lying constitutes a violation of academic honesty (see **section 3**).

Contesting a grade. I hope there will be no reason to contest a grade. If you strongly feel that your grade on an assignment does not reflect the quality of your work, though, you may appeal through the following procedure: Write a one-page, single-spaced memo that explains, in as much detail as possible, why you think you should have received a different grade. Email me your memo, your graded assignment, and a letter in which you formally request a re-grade. I will reevaluate the work and assign a new grade, which may be higher, lower, or identical to the one you originally received. This new grade will be final. Grade complaints will not be entertained beyond seven calendar days after an assignment or exam has been returned graded to you.

3 Academic honesty

All suspected cases of plagiarism, cheating, lying, or other violations of academic integrity standards will be referred to the Office of Academic Integrity. Any violation of UCSD's academic honesty policy for which a student is found responsible will be considered grounds for failing the course. You are expected to be the sole author of all your work, and to properly attribute ideas, quotations, and sources. If you are unsure how to do this, please come to office hours or ask in class. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, or other violations, please see UCSD's [academic honesty policy](#).

4 Electronics policy

Laptops, tablets, phones, digital recorders, and other electronic devices are not allowed in class, except for students with disabilities by prior agreement of the instructor. The research to date is [unambiguous](#): (a) students tend to learn less and do worse in exams when they use laptops during lectures; and (b) laptop use by one student harms the learning of students around them. Students who use electronics in class will lose their participation points for that class.

5 Requesting accommodations

Students requesting accommodations for this course must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the School of Global Policy and Strategy, so that accommodations may be arranged in advance. Contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone); osd@ucsd.edu (email); <http://disabilities.ucsd.edu> (website).

6 Email policy

I will reply to emails within two business days.

7 Schedule and required readings

This section provides an outline of the topic, motivating questions, and list of required readings for each class. I suggest you do the readings in the order I have listed them. (Recommended readings are

also listed for those interested in reading more about a particular topic; we will cover some of these during lecture.) If there are revisions of the syllabus, I will let you know via Canvas.

All journal articles should be downloadable through the links provided below, which are accessible to UCSD users. If you have trouble with a link, you have the full citation information to find the article via Google Scholar.

PART I: Education Patterns

W1 Jan-10 Schooling and Learning

Topics: The expansion of schooling over time. Schooling versus learning. Measures of learning. Monetary returns to schooling. Non-monetary benefits of schooling (e.g., health, fertility, political participation). EFA, MDGs and SDGs. The challenge of educational research. Primer on causal inference methods.

Required readings (2):

World Development Report 2018. *Learning to Realize Education's Promise*. Chapters 1 & 3. [[link](#)]

Duflo, Esther. 2001. "Schooling and labor market consequences of school construction in Indonesia: Evidence from an unusual policy experiment." *The American Economic Review*, 91(4), 795-813. [[link](#)]

Recommended:

Duflo, Esther, Rachel Glennerster, and Michael Kremer. 2006. "Using Randomization in Development Economics Research: A Toolkit." *NBER Technical Working Paper*. FIRST 15 PAGES (up to "Publication Bias") [[link](#)]

Murnane, Richard, and John Willett. 2011. *Methods matter: Improving causal inference in educational and social science research*. Chapters 1 and 4. Oxford University Press.

PART II: Education Policy

W2 Jan-17 Teacher incentives

Topics: Teacher absenteeism. Monitoring. Pay-for-performance.

Required readings (4):

Duflo, Esther, Rema Hanna, and Stephen P. Ryan. 2012. "Incentives work: Getting teachers to come to school." *American Economic Review* 102(4): 1241-78. [[link](#)]

Muralidharan, Karthik, and Venkatesh Sundararaman. 2011. "Teacher performance pay: Experimental evidence from India." *Journal of Political Economy* 119(1): 39-77. [[link](#)]

Behrman, Jere R., Susan W. Parker, Petra E. Todd, and Kenneth I. Wolpin. 2015. "Aligning learning incentives of students and teachers: Results from a social experiment in Mexican high schools." *Journal of Political Economy* 123(2): 325-364. [[link](#)]

Duflo, Esther, Pascaline Dupas, and Michael Kremer. 2015. "School governance, teacher incentives, and pupil–teacher ratios: Experimental evidence from Kenyan primary schools." *Journal of Public Economics* 123: 92-110. [[link](#)]

W3 Jan-24 Teacher incentives (cont.)

Topics: Teacher incentives, education inputs, and the interaction between the two. The limits of incentives.

Required readings (4):

Gilligan, Daniel O., Naureen Karachiwalla, Ibrahim Kasirye, Adrienne M. Lucas, and Derek Neal. 2018. *Educator incentives and educational triage in rural primary schools*. NBER Working Paper No. 24911. [[link](#)]

Mbiti, Isaac, Karthik Muralidharan, Mauricio Romero, Youdi Schipper, Constantine Manda, and Rakesh Rajani. 2019. "Inputs, incentives, and complementarities in education: Experimental evidence from Tanzania." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 134(3): 1627-1673. [[link](#)]

Belles-Obrero, Cristina, and Maria Lombardi. 2019. "Teacher Performance Pay and Student Learning: Evidence from a Nationwide Program in Peru." IZA Working Paper. [[link](#)]

Duflo, Esther, and Abhijit Banerjee. October 26, 2019. "Economic incentives don't always do what we want them to." *New York Times*. [available on Canvas]

W4 Jan-31 Teacher training and professional development

Topics: Teacher training and recruitment. Selectivity and prestige. Who becomes a teacher. How much teachers know.

Required readings (2):

Bold, Tessa, Deon Filmer, Gayle Martin, Ezequiel Molina, Brian Stacy, Christophe Rockmore, Jakob Svensson, and Waly Wane. 2017. "Enrollment without Learning: Teacher Effort, Knowledge, and Skill in Primary Schools in Africa." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 31(4): 185-204. [[link](#)]

Bruns, Barbara, and Javier Luque. 2014. *Great Teachers: How to Raise Student Learning In Latin America and the Caribbean*. Washington, DC: The World Bank. Chapter 3. [[link](#)]

Recommended:

Elacqua, Gregory, Diana Hicapie, Emiliana Vegas, and Mariana Alfonso. 2018. *Profesión: profesor en América Latina ¿Por qué se perdió el prestigio docente y cómo recuperarlo?* Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank. [[link](#)]

W5 Feb-7 Education spending

Topics: Education spending. Teacher salaries. Class size. ICTs.

Required readings (4):

Lafortune, Julien, Jesse Rothstein, and Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach. 2018. "School Finance Reform and the Distribution of Student Achievement." *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 10(2): 1-26. [[link](#)]

Richard J. Murnane, Marcus R. Waldman, John B. Willett, Maria Soledad Bos, and Emiliana Vegas. 2017. "The Consequences of Educational Voucher Reform in Chile." NBER Working Paper 23550. [[link](#)]

De Ree, Joppe, Karthik Muralidharan, Menno Pradhan, and Halsey Rogers. 2015. "Double for nothing? The Effect of Unconditional Teachers' Salary Increases on Performance." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Skim. [[link](#)]

Alva, Camila, Matteo Bobba, Gianmarco Leon, Christopher Neilson, and Marco Nieddu. 2017. "Teacher Wages, Student Achievement and the Recruitment of Talent in Rural Peru." IZA Working Paper. [[link](#)]

W6 Feb-14 Governance

Topics: Private vs. public management of schools. School choice and vouchers. Quality assurance systems. Curriculum policy. Student assignment policies.

Required readings (3):

Hsieh, C.T. and Miguel Urquiola. 2006. "The effects of generalized school choice on achievement and stratification: Evidence from Chile's school voucher program." *Journal of Public Economics* 90(8): 1477-1503. [[link](#)]

Romero, Mauricio, Justin Sandefur, and Wayne Sandholtz. 2019. "Outsourcing education: Experimental evidence from Liberia." *American Economic Review*. [[link](#)]

Romero, Mauricio, and Justin Sandefur. 2019. "Beyond Short-term Learning Gains: The Impact of Outsourcing Schools in Liberia after Three Years." CGD Working Paper. [[link](#)]

Recommended:

Akmal, Maryam, Lee Crawford and Susannah Hares. October 28, 2019. "Low-Cost Private Schools: What Have We Learned in the Five Years Since the DFID Rigorous Review." Center for Global Development. [[link](#)]

PART III: Education Politics

W7 Feb-21 Democracy

Required readings (5):

Velasco, Andrés. November 28, 2019. “Bipolar Economics.” *Project Syndicate*. [\[link\]](#)

Bold, Tessa, Mwangi Kimenyi, Germano Mwabu, Alice Ng'ang'a and Justin Sandefur. 2018. “Experimental Evidence on Scaling Up Education Reforms in Kenya.” *Journal of Public Economics*. **Skim to understand the main take-away.** [\[link\]](#)

Harding, Robin, and David Stasavage. 2013. “What Democracy Does (and Doesn't Do) for Basic Services: School Fees, School Inputs, and African Elections.” *The Journal of Politics* 76(1): 229-245. [\[link\]](#)

Paglayan, Agustina. 2018. “Democracy and Educational Expansion: Evidence from 200 Years.” Working Paper. [\[link\]](#)

Kramon, Eric, and Daniel Posner. 2016. “Ethnic Favoritism in Education in Kenya.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 11: 1–58. [\[link\]](#)

Recommended:

Ansell, Ben. 2008. "Traders, teachers, and tyrants: democracy, globalization, and public investment in education." *International Organization* 62(2): 289-322. [\[link\]](#)

W8 Feb-28 Teacher unions

Required readings (3):

Bruns, Barbara, Isabel Harbaugh Macdonald, and Ben Ross Schneider. 2019. “The politics of quality reforms and the challenges for SDGs in education.” *World Development* 118: 27-38. [\[link\]](#)

Andreas Schleicher. 2011. “Building a High-Quality Teaching Profession: Lessons from around the world.” Chapter 4. OECD. [\[link\]](#)

Paglayan, Agustina. 2019. “Public-Sector Unions and the Size of Government.” *American Journal of Political Science* 63(1): 21-36. [\[link\]](#)

W9 Mar-6 The “Dark Side” of Education Systems: Indoctrination and Patronage

Required readings (3):

Cantoni, Davide, Yuyu Chen, David Yang, Noam Yuchtman, and Jane Zhang. 2017. “Curriculum and Ideology.” *Journal of Political Economy* 125(2): 338-392. [\[link\]](#)

Paglayan, Agustina. 2017. “Civil War, State Consolidation, and the Spread of Mass Education.” Working Paper. [\[link\]](#)

Akthari, Mitra, Diana Moreira, and Laura Trucco. 2018. “Political turnover, bureaucratic turnover, and the quality of public services.” Working Paper. [\[link\]](#)

W10 Mar-13 Demand for schooling, information for parents

Topics: Determinants of parental demand for educational improvement. Short-term vs. long-term consumption. Coordination problems. The role of information.

Required readings (3):

González, Felipe. "Collective action in networks: Evidence from the Chilean student movement." Working Paper. [[link](#)]

Jensen, Robert. 2010. "The (Perceived) Returns to Education and the Demand for Schooling." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 125(2): 515-548. [[link](#)]

Bursztyjn, Leonardo. 2016. "Poverty and the political economy of public education spending: Evidence from Brazil." *Journal of the European Economic Association* 14(5): 1101-1128. [[link](#)]