INTRODUCTION

- Conceptualization of quality of education has become a critical concern in international development. Though the issue of quality is difficult to ignore, there is a limited consensus among inter/national actors as its conceptualization depends on social, economic, political, historical, cultural, and other contexts that interact with an education system of a given country (Tikly, 2011).

- Nonetheless, there are dominant practices that clearly influence the conceptualization of quality of education around the world, which mainly conveyed through international targets. On the other hand, the field of comparative education is critical towards policy homogenization and international mechanisms of policy influence (Barrett, 2011).

- I will use a comparative case study approach focusing on the vertical axis, and examine how the conceptualization of quality of education at the international level (e.g. SDGs, MDGs, EFA) influence the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) in Ethiopia; and how the inter/national targets consider educational capabilities of students by using qualitative content analysis.

- Using the capabilities approach, I argue that inter/national targets focus on improving quality of education shall define the term broadly in a way that enhance educational capabilities of students (provide all learners with real educational opportunities by addressing all barriers that affect their education) (Sen, 1999; Tikly & Barrett, 2011).

SIGNIFICANCE

- It will add to the field of international development and education by expanding the concept of quality of education to one that looks beyond student cognitive tests, but to one that looks at quality as a one that enables learners to expand their capabilities or meaningful opportunities.

QUESTIONS

- How do international goals/targets influence the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) in Ethiopia?
- How do these inter/national targets and goals consider educational capabilities of students?

QUALITY OF EDUCATION THROUGH MAINSTREAM EYES

- The close reading of the documents indicates that the essence of the international targets, specifically the SDGs, is reflected in the GEQIP in terms of emphasizing learning outcomes, having qualified teachers, and providing educational facilities even though the national government of Ethiopia contextualizes and expand some of the targets to fit with national needs. This contextualization shows countries are not merely replicate what is stated in international documents; instead, they also consider national factors while adopting these targets.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION THROUGH CAPABILITIES LENS

- In this section, I will use the three dimensions of quality of education, i.e., inclusivity, relevancy, and participation developed by Tikly and Barrett (2011).

- Inclusion: Both SDG and GEQIP do not explicitly include students from economically disadvantaged families in their list of ensuring “equitable quality education” though these groups of students are abundant in developing countries like Ethiopia. But, for the capabilities approach, inclusion means creating equal (real) opportunities for all children, especially for disadvantaged children, to access quality education by considering all barriers that affect them not to be what they want to be.

- Relevancy: International documents as well as GEQIP emphasize measuring the relevancy of education in terms of achieving good learning outcomes measured through test results. Though knowing students’ performance has undeniable role in understanding how students are doing in school, the problem arises when the opportunities or constraints that affect the result are missed from the discussion. Thus, both in school and out of school factors that influence students learning should also be taken into account to improve the quality of education.

- Participation: Both SDG and GEQIP, like the capabilities approach recommends, locate learners within communities and recognize the need of their participation to return and enroll children by portraying community engagement as vital to realize the inclusion dimension of quality of education.

CONCLUSION

- Educational policy makers should lessen over-reliance on an outcome based measure of quality of education, and consider educational capabilities of students as well for learning that is inclusive, relevant, and participatory.

REFERENCES


