

Schooling for all: can we neglect the demand?

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Abstrak

The central message of this book can be summarized in one sentence: It is still important to create adequate demand for education, especially from certain sections of society, along with improvements in the supply or provision of schooling, if we want to address the known problems in this regard in India. This is evident from the fact that certain socio-economic factors act as significant determinants of not only-non-enrolment, dropouts, irregular attendance-but also inadequate learning in Indian schools. It is also noted that mere growth in income or expansion of economic opportunities need not encourage all sections of parents to use schooling for their children. Hence, demand-side interventions (which may include social interventions beyond the provision of monetary incentives) continue to be important in Indian context. Conventional demand-side interventions like midday meal seem to be ineffective in the current context when unskilled wage rates have increased and a meal at school may not be a serious attraction to send kids to school. Though the Right to Education (RTE) Act can be interpreted as a demand-side intervention since denying education to a child is reckoned as an unconstitutional act there, it may also be not that effective in ensuring quality schooling for all. It does not have an enforcement machinery to see that all children attend school on a regular basis. The book also examines different social interventions attempted in different parts of the world which enabled the creation generation of demand for schooling and draws a few practical lessons.