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Improving Efficiency of Schooling in the Maldives: Is De-shifting a Desirable Policy Direction?

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Economics at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Aishath Sheryn
2011
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Abstract

Education, a vital component of human capital, is essential for the growth of nations. Developing countries, faced with limited resources and budget constraints, adopt strategies that they believe will improve access to education and at the same time reduce costs. This thesis explores the desirability of one such policy option, double-shift schooling, with respect to de-shifting, its reverse policy. Whether de-shifting is a desirable policy direction is assessed, based on other countries’ experiences, alternative strategies and the current education situation in the Maldives, a country presently under this transition. Some of these alternative strategies are explored for their effectiveness in improving the quality of education.

In the case of the Maldives all schools were operating a double-shift system prior to 2009 and the government is now attempting to convert all schools to single-shift, by the end of 2013. Although the Maldives has achieved 100 per cent enrolment at primary school level, this access has not been transferred to secondary level. Statistics indicate low levels of achievement at all stages of education. The education situation in the atolls is of particular concern, where the majority of schools suffer from a lack of locally trained teachers and learning resources.

In general, it has been found that double-shift schooling does not affect the academic standards of students. However, several costs, both direct and indirect, tend to make the quality of education in double-shift schools appear to be inferior, in comparison to single-shift schools. De-shifting, which involves large costs, does not guarantee an improvement in the quality of education, since there are several other factors which significantly affect academic performance.

For the Maldives, findings from the study indicate that in addition to the high costs involved, scarcity of land, may affect the progress of de-shifting. The attitude of teachers, whose working day is lengthened without financial compensation, is also a concern. Moreover, there are other areas within the education sector which are greatly in need of immediate investment. These include, improving access and equity at secondary level, especially in the atolls, and improvement in the training of local teachers. Unless such aspects are addressed, de-shifting, although desirable in the long run, may fail to deliver the benefits that it claims.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALT</td>
<td>Academic Learning Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHSE</td>
<td>Centre for Higher Secondary Education</td>
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<td>DSS</td>
<td>Double-Shift schooling</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELT</td>
<td>Extended Learning Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSD</td>
<td>Full-School Day</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GS</td>
<td>Ghiyasuddin School</td>
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<tr>
<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development Index</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSC</td>
<td>Higher Secondary Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGCSE</td>
<td>International General Certificate School Examinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>Least Developed Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>Least Developed Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCHE</td>
<td>Maldives College of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCHE</td>
<td>Maldives College of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPND</td>
<td>Ministry of Planning and National Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NER</td>
<td>Net Enrolment Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
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<td>PPP</td>
<td>Public-Private Partnership</td>
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<td>SBM</td>
<td>School Based Management</td>
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<td>SES</td>
<td>Socio-Economic Status</td>
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<td>SOEs</td>
<td>State Owned Enterprises</td>
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<td>SSC</td>
<td>Secondary School Certificate</td>
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<td>SSS</td>
<td>Single-Shift Schooling</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UPE</td>
<td>Universal Primary Education</td>
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<td>USA</td>
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