

## Part IV

# Learning, Time Use, and Life Transitions

The third central theme in *Young Lives* is 'Learning, Time Use, and Life Transitions'. Longitudinal research is able to reveal factors shaping children's cognitive and psycho-social development, and how they learn both in school and elsewhere; their experiences of school, work, and caring for others in their families; changing ways in which boys and girls spend their time as they grow up; and how all these relate to children's pathways from early childhood into adulthood. Much of this material will appear in later rounds of research and subsequent volumes of this series. Here, we consider some aspects of pre-schools, schools, and work.

Significant growth in formal education in the last 50 years has resulted in the vast majority of children receiving at least some schooling. Economic growth in developing countries has been accompanied by a massive increase in available education, and it is reasonable to assume that schooling can help break the poverty cycle by providing children of poor people with the knowledge necessary to earn higher incomes. This is supported by many studies showing correlations between years of schooling and higher income (for example, Psacharopoulos 1997).

There is, however, need for caution about such correlations on two principal grounds. First, they rarely take account of the quality of schools or children's ability (Glewwe 1996; Glewwe and Kremer 2006). Second, the potential of schooling to increase incomes also requires an appropriate economic environment that can provide employment for school leavers, particularly when increasing numbers attending school take away the competitive edge of schooling in the job market. Third, schooling is not homogeneous, nor of standardized quality. Equity issues are central, since children access (or are excluded from) 'quality education' according to their ethnicity, gender, individual and

household circumstances, the accessibility of schooling, and parents' ability to cover the costs of schooling – especially in countries with a growing private sector. Longitudinal research is able to offer a more nuanced account of how poverty interacts with school trajectories to shape children's educational outcomes in terms of literacy and numeracy. Moreover, the UN Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) does not confine education to numeracy and literacy, but demands that it be directed at the development of children to their fullest potential. Apart from the material advantages of earning power, education should provide skills and knowledge to enable people to have more control over their own lives, providing capabilities that are the converse of restrictive poverty. The question arises as to whether too heavy a focus on formal schooling might detract from learning important life skills outside the classroom.

Schooling is central to enabling most children to develop socially and economically. Moreover, school attendance, and to a lesser extent numeracy and literacy, are easier to measure in large-scale surveys, than are other aspects of learning. So these factors usually dominate consideration of educational systems. The qualitative research of *Young Lives* is able also to look at schooling in the contexts of children's lives and experience, as illustrated in the chapters by Woodhead (Chapter 14) and Orkin (Chapter 17) in this section. It examines different ways in which children and families relate to their schools, and how schooling affects them. Moreover, the qualitative work picks up ways in which children can learn social and life skills outside school. One of the narratives emerging from *Young Lives* research points to the danger that poor-quality schooling can remove from children opportunities for learning outside the classroom, giving them very little in return. That material will be seen in later volumes of this series, and here is hinted at in Chapter 16 about learning agricultural skills from work in South Africa.

We present four chapters: one on early childhood development, one on the problems of equity in Peru's schools, and two on relationships between school and work.

In Chapter 8, Patrice Engle shows that the years before primary school age are very influential in child development and that the disadvantages experienced by poor children need to be addressed at this stage. Other chapters point to the importance of nutrition in particular. In Part IV, Martin Woodhead (Chapter 14) uses both survey data and detailed case studies from three of the *Young Lives* country sites to examine the roles of early childhood care and education in children's development,

pointing to the ways availability of government and private pre-school shapes children's opportunities and transitions to school. Provision of early learning opportunities is only a first step towards improving school outcomes for poor children. Differing quality of institutions and differing access to them threaten to increase inequalities within poor communities. Breaks in continuity between the home and the institutions, and between institutions as young children progress through them, can hinder progressive development of the child.

Santiago Cueto et al. (Chapter 15) consider Peru's attempts to cater for children whose first language is an indigenous one rather than Spanish, basing his analysis mainly on national survey data and school censuses. While they commend the country's policy of trying to incorporate and strengthen indigenous language skills in schools, children from areas where indigenous languages are dominant find themselves at a disadvantage in the school system, for both physical and socio-cultural reasons. They point to the need to attend to the quality of schools in rural areas, and the importance of attending to particularly disadvantaged children within these schools.

It is frequently assumed, especially in economic models, that work and schooling are in direct competition for children's time and effort. The chapters by Camfield (Chapter 12) and by Crivello et al. (Chapter 13) in the previous section show work to be a significant feature in children's lives in Young Lives research sites. Generally, it has been argued that work comprises an important component of child development in many contexts, and it is not necessarily incompatible with schooling (see Bourdillon et al. 2010: 88–132). The remaining chapters in this volume consider children's work.

Kate Orkin (Chapter 17) combines Young Lives qualitative research with data from its surveys to discuss the relationships between children's work and their schooling. Economic models rarely consider the characteristics of either work or school, but qualitative data from Ethiopia suggest that work and school are sometimes competitive and sometimes complementary, and that children can benefit from work experiences. Using this data from a site in which a large proportion of children attended school and also engaged in paid work, she discerned characteristics of work and school that made the two either complementary or competitive. She then used Young Lives survey data to suggest that at least some of these characteristics have wider application.

Andrew Dawes, Judith Streak, Susan Levine, and Deborah Ewing (Chapter 16) report on a survey on children's agricultural work in South Africa, which links into themes emerging from Young Lives research.

Although children's work is often driven by poverty, the most frequent reason for unpaid agricultural work on family farms is responsibility to the family. Poverty and responsibility are not exclusive reasons for working: several of the chapters in the previous section point to the importance of children's work to families, especially in response to shocks that affect their economic status. Another common reason for both paid and unpaid work is to learn agricultural skills, which may be more useful to the children in the future than the poor quality of schooling that is available to many of them. A common use of paid work is to earn for school expenses, in which case school and work complement each other even though they may compete for time.

## References

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