

# Improving Post-Primary Education with Evidence

*Promoting a Policy-Oriented Research Agenda*

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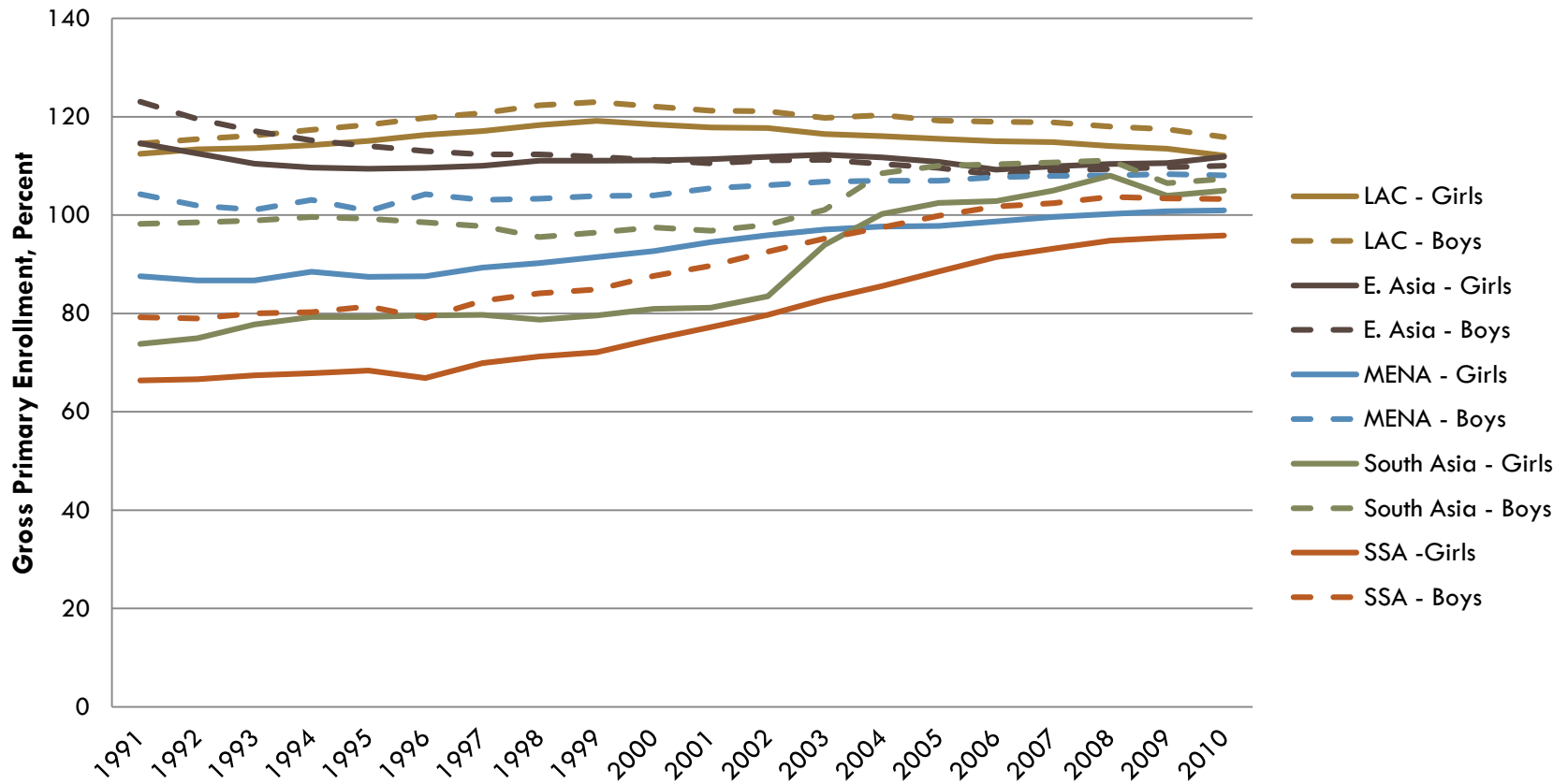
# J-PAL Research in Education

- Network of 72 academics doing RCTs and working to influence policy
- 82 RCTs on education: important lessons for primary education
- Big gaps in evidence on secondary, the next big challenge in research and policy



# The Post-Primary Challenge: Rising Expectations

## Primary: Converging on Universal Enrollment





# The Post Primary Challenge: Learning

- Low learning levels at start and end of secondary school
  - ▣ Disappointing learning outcomes in many countries that have made big investments in secondary education
  - ▣ Inheriting poor learning levels from primary eg ASER (India) and UWEZO (East Africa) show most children not up to grade level in literacy, mathematics
- Qualified instructors hard to find
  - ▣ Few in the previous generation completed secondary school
- Most secondary systems designed for small elite
  - ▣ Often very expensive relative to primary, highly selective, often boarding schools
  - ▣ Relevance of curriculum, especially for new mass intake?

# Findings from J-PAL's PPE Literature Review: Demand

- Enrollment sensitive to costs of schooling, borrowing constraints, and incentives (e.g. CCTs)
- RCTs have shown that small changes in CCT design can increase bang for the buck (e.g. changes in timing of payments)
- Students often misinformed about benefits of schooling, but complete more school when given accurate information about opportunities
- In vocational education, information about wages in different occupations can change choice of training
  - women enter more lucrative, typically male dominated, trades

# Findings from J-PAL's PPE Literature Review: Supply

- Incomplete and inconclusive evidence on how to provide quality, relevant education
- Public vs. private: selection issues make role of private schools very hard to evaluate:
  - Promising results from Colombia voucher study: do these results hold elsewhere and what about impact on public schools?
- Selective schools: natural regression discontinuity so many studies. Return to going to an elite school relatively modest
- ICT: mixed evidence; often not well integrated into a relevant curriculum
- Pedagogy: almost no evidence, primary example suggests this is critical, but do the lessons from primary translate to secondary?

# Promising Ideas from Evidence on Primary

- Class size and inputs less important than pedagogy
- Teaching at the right level for the student has big returns
  - ▣ ICTs
  - ▣ Tracking
  - ▣ Remedial education
- Accountability of teachers is critical, but incentives need to be crafted carefully
- Important interactions between health and education (eg deworming). Does this hold at later ages?





# Additional Open Policy Questions

- Pedagogy
  - What's the right mix of theoretical vs. practical knowledge?
  - Language of instruction?
  - Is ICT more important in post primary?
  
- Vocational and private schools
  - What mix of classroom vs. hands-on training?
  - How should private sector be encouraged and/or regulated?



# Additional Open Policy Questions

- **Teacher and School Performance**
  - How best to train and incentivize teachers?
  - Measurement tools to track student, teacher, and school performance
  - Is parental oversight harder at post primary?
  
- **Demand-side Interventions**
  - Optimal design of CCTs
  - Testing scalable versions of information interventions
  - How to reach kids who have already dropped out? Is the answer different for boys and girls?



# Filling the Knowledge Gap

- Accumulation of RCT's testing a range of programs in primary has given us a much better understanding of the drivers of quantity and quality at primary level.
- Also led to important policy changes
- Post Primary Education Initiative designed to systematically fill the gap on secondary education
  - ▣ Review of what we know what we don't (supported by MacAuthur and Marshall foundations)
  - ▣ Set out key general questions
  - ▣ Fund best studies to fill the knowledge gaps
  - ▣ Coordinated outreach on research findings
- Similar initiatives in Agricultural Technology Adoption, Governance, and Sanitation

# Thank You!

For information about J-PAL's PPE Initiative, please contact:

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