

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
BROOKINGS CAFETERIA: Addressing the Global Learning Crisis

Friday, September 13, 2019

PARTICIPANTS:

Hosts:

FRED DEWS
Managing Editor, Podcasts and Digital Projects
The Brookings Institution

CHRIS MCKENNA
Communications Manager
The Brookings Institution

Guests:

JENNY PERLMAN ROBINSON
Senior Fellow, Global Economy and Development
The Brookings Institution

SABINA VIGANI
Cote d'Ivoire Country Director
Jacobs Foundation

DR. ALI YAGHI
General Manager
Al Hussein Fund for Excellence (Jordan)

LYDIA WILBARD
National Director
CAMFED Tanzania

(MUSIC)

DEWS: Welcome to the Brookings Cafeteria, the podcast about ideas and the experts who have them. I'm Fred Dews.

Millions of children around the globe aren't learning. According to data released in 2018, only 12 percent of children tested in seven low or middle-income countries met minimum proficiency for math and 23 percent for reading. This compares to 77 percent and 80 percent respectively in wealthier OECD countries.

The international education field is inundated by small-scale projects that last only for only a short period of time. While small-scale efforts are important for testing new ideas and they do impact students' lives, they typically don't occur at the magnitude needed to address this global learning crisis. How can the international education field move past this "project mindset" mentality to help bring about transformational systemic change?

To find out how, my colleague Chris McKenna interviewed Jenny Perlman Robinson, Senior Fellow at the Center for Universal Education here at Brookings, and author of the report, "Millions Learning: Scaling up Quality Education in Developing Countries." She tells Chris more about her research on scaling—or growing—education programs around the world and then shares her discussions with three education leaders she interviewed at a global meeting in Switzerland this summer. These experienced leaders possess deep insights on the role that public, private, and civil society actors can play in scaling and sustaining education programs, and they bring fresh perspectives on the topic from around the globe.

Also on today's show, Senior Fellow Molly Reynolds breaks down what's happening in Congress after it returns to work after a summer recess.

You can follow the Brookings Podcast Network on Twitter @PolicyPodcasts to get information about links to all of our shows, including The Current, Dollar and Sense, the Brookings Trade Podcast and our events podcast. If you like the Brookings Cafeteria and our other shows, please go to Find Apple Podcasts and leave us a review.

And now on with the show.

First up, Molly Reynolds with what's happening in Congress.

REYNOLDS: I'm Molly Reynolds, a Senior Fellow in Governance Studies at the Brookings Institution. Congress has returned from its annual summer recess with plenty to tackle in the coming weeks and months. While the House, Senate, and White House reached agreement on a deal to raise the debt limit and set the overall size of the discretionary federal budget in July, Congress and the President still need to take action to prevent a partial government shutdown at the end of the month. That's because the current measure of funding, federal operations, expires on the 30th. Congress doesn't seem eager to repeat the 35-day government shutdown that disrupted government services between December 2018 and January 2019 but does need to pass at least a stopgap temporary measure to avoid one. Beyond that, the House, Senate, and White House will need to come to agreement on funding levels for individual programs for the rest of the fiscal year.

While the House has completed most of its initial work on that process, the Senate has a long way to go, and a number of contentious issues will need to be worked out between the chambers and with the White House. These include questions about funding for President Trump's border wall, as well as about so-called "riders" or policy provisions included in spending bills. Negotiations in the Senate on its version of the bill to fund the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education for example, appear to have hit a roadblock over a democratic proposal to back a Trump administration preventing certain healthcare providers who receive federal funds from providing or referring patients for abortions.

The budget process isn't the only place where we might see fights over key components of President Trump's agenda. Both Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer have indicated that they intend to hold votes in their respective chambers that would overturn the President's declaration of a national emergency from earlier this year. This declaration was central to the President's reallocation of money from the defense budget to support construction of a border wall. Under the law that grants the President the authority to declare an emergency, Congress can declare a vote to overturn it every six months. And importantly, in the Senate, where Republicans hold a majority, Democrats can use special procedures to force a vote even over the objections of the majority leader.

A similar resolution overturning the emergency passed both chambers earlier this year, with 13 House Republicans, and 12 Senate Republicans joining the Democrats, and prompting the first veto of the Trump presidency. The resolution is likely to meet a similar fate on the second try, but Republicans may feel new or different pressure this time. The Trump administration recently released a list of the military construction projects that will lose funds in the reprogramming process, and members from those states and districts may find themselves having to justify their support for an executive branch decision that redirects resources away from their constituents.

Beyond the legislative process, many headlines coming from Capitol Hill in the coming months are likely to involve House Democrats' proceedings on whether to impeach President Trump. While Democrats continue to avoid a vote of the full inquiry, the House Judiciary Committee has taken several steps in recent weeks to both formalize and broaden its investigatory efforts. On August 22nd, Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerry Nadler sent a letter to four other House committee chairs, the Intelligence, Oversight, Financial Services and Foreign Policy Committees asking them for "documents and testimony, depositions and/or interview transcripts that you believe may be relevant to the judiciary committee's ongoing impeachment investigation." Thus indicating that his panel may be expanding the scope of behavior that they are considering when deciding whether or not to pursue Articles of Impeachment.

In addition, the Judiciary Committee has also adapted a set of internal procedures for its own use as it holds hearings and otherwise conducts its investigation. These are largely similar to the precedents set by similar resolutions in impeachment inquiries into Presidents Nixon and Clinton, though they provide fewer opportunities for the President and his attorneys to participate in the process than those used in previous years.

Amidst these debates, Congress may find itself addressing other issues as well. The question of whether legislators will take on any form of gun control legislation in the aftermath of serious shooting this summer remains open, in part because Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell has indicated he will not proceed until it is clear what, if anything President Trump will support on the issue. But even without other legislative action, the next few months will see plenty happening in Congress.

DEWS: And now, scaling up global education to meet the global learning crisis. Here's Chris McKenna with Jenny Perlman Robinson.

MCKENNA: Thanks Fred, and Jenny, welcome back to the Brookings Cafeteria.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Thank you, Chris.

MCKENNA: Back in 2016, you were here on this show and interviewed by my colleague Fred Dews about your *Millions Learning* report.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: We did, and it's a pleasure to be back and talking about that report—as well as to have the opportunity to discuss some of the new research we are undertaking building on that report.

MCKENNA: Yes, so to set the context for this discussion today, let's go back to "*Millions Learning*". Tell me a bit about why you wrote that report.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Sure. I wrote the "*Millions Learning*" report several years ago with coauthors, Rebecca Winthrop and Eileen McGivney. The motivation for the report was to investigate where and how large-scale progress in quality education had been achieved in a number of low- and middle-income countries—looking not only at improvements in access but also at improvements in the quality of education achieved.

The impetus for the research, Chris, was the Sustainable Development Goals – or “SDGs” – the new global development agenda the United Nations launched in 2015. One of the 17 goals that more than 190 countries committed to achieving by 2030 is SDG 4, which is of particular interest to my work – as it seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. During the 15 years leading up to the SDGs, the world experienced rapid growth in the number of children who could attend school. This is of course a good thing, but it has become clear that the act of going to school isn't necessarily the same thing as learning. Additionally, the rapid increase brought with it several challenges, including the rapid influx of new students placing pressure on teachers and education systems to provide *quality* learning opportunities for students. Acknowledging this, the global community said “okay, many more children have reached school, now how can we ensure they are learning valuable skills there that will support their lives and livelihoods?” in addition to ensuring that the 10 percent who are still not in school—those still left behind—have access to quality learning opportunities as well.

Research by my colleague at Brookings, Rebecca Winthrop, revealed that the current pace of change is so slow that it could take up to 100 years for children in developing countries to reach the education levels achieved in developed countries. This “100-year gap” is unacceptable. To achieve SDG 4, education systems must learn how to effectively both identify and scale initiatives that can rapidly

accelerate progress. The report was written to help policymakers, practitioners, and funders do just this by understanding essential scaling principles, and how they could apply these to their own contexts.

MCKENNA: Interesting. So let's stay on this topic of scaling, because that's the key concept here. I encourage listeners to go and listen to the discussion from April 2016 that we had about the report, but just kind of briefly to set the stage for today's conversation, what do you mean by scaling?

PERLMAN ROBINSON: It's a good question as there are many different understandings of the term "scaling". At the Center for Universal Education, we use the term scaling to represent a range of pathways that expand and deepen the impact of approaches that lead to lasting improvements in people's lives. In the Millions Learning report, we put forward this idea that we want to better understand the *process* behind how effective approaches to improving children's learning have scaled. Our interest in scaling is not focused on expanding brands or fixed models, but rather understanding the *process* behind spreading the essential principles of effective teaching and learning, which can be adapted in different contexts.

The report highlights several "pathways" to scale, from creating new policies to replicating effective practices to strengthening government capacity to implement an initiative – these are all viable routes to scale. We are currently pursuing these and other pathways through several Real-time Scaling Labs in different countries.

MCKENNA: Tell me more about these real-time scaling labs ...

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Of course. During research conducted for the report, we had the chance to meet with many education leaders around the world. Despite working in diverse contexts, these leaders and their organizations shared several scaling-related challenges, including: approaching scaling as an afterthought rather than deliberately planning for it from the beginning; leading with a pre-determined solution rather than being problem-driven; pursuing growth in a linear fashion instead of allowing for the necessary experimentation and iteration; and finally, a feeling of working in isolation. Education leaders wanted more opportunities to exchange insights and lessons learned with others working on similar activities in education.

So after we published the report, we at the Center for Universal Education began looking into how we might create a hands-on, action-oriented research approach that responded to some of these shared challenges, allowing space for collective learning and peer-to-peer engagement among key

stakeholders as scaling happened in real-time. This was really how the idea for the Real-time Scaling Labs was born.

The scaling labs have been operating for about one-and-a-half years now and we are excited about this “action research” phase of our project where we are continuing to learn about scaling by supporting and learning from actual education initiatives as they scale in real-time.

MCKENNA: Sounds ambitious! So, are these real-time scaling labs REAL places?

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Chris, this is a question we often get since the name conjures visions of white lab coats and scientific equipment. The Real-time Scaling Labs, in fact, are not physical spaces, but rather a process established by the Center for Universal Education and partner institutions to learn from, support, and document efforts to scale initiatives focused on improving children’s learning as they unfold in real-time.

The ultimate goal is to support initiatives as they scale while simultaneously gaining deeper insight into how policymakers, civil society, and the private sector can most effectively work together to bring about large-scale transformation in the quality of children’s learning and their development.

We currently have real-time Scaling Labs are currently operating in Botswana, Cote d’Ivoire, Jordan, the Philippines, Tanzania, and the U.S. city of Philadelphia, with new labs being explored in other countries.

Learning across countries is a key feature of the Real-time Scaling Labs. Stakeholders from each of the scaling labs regularly communicate and share insights and lessons virtually and in-person, including through periodic “global convenings.” During these convenings, the Center for Universal Education gathers representatives from each of the scaling labs to reflect on shared challenges and collectively determine strategies to overcome them.

In July this past year, 2019, we held a global convening in Switzerland that was hosted by the Jacobs Foundation with 35 partners from around the world which provided an excellent opportunity to pursue these objectives.

MCKENNA: So this brings us to the heart of the episode today, the discussions that you're about to present to our listeners. As you just mentioned, these conversations are from the Real-time Scaling Labs Global Convening held this summer. Who did you have the chance to speak with, and what did you talk about?

PERLMAN ROBINSON: One of the highlights of the event was the diversity of people who attended. We had senior government officials, civil society leaders, private sector actors, and funders. During the three-day workshop, a key question that emerged was how to move from a “project mentality” of incrementally growing an individual education program to instead focus on how to achieve large-scale, sustainable systems change. I had the opportunity to speak with three individuals who occupy different roles within the education ecosystem: a funder, implementer, and an NGO leader. Each brought their valuable insights and unique perspectives to the conversation.

MCKENNA: That's great. So, Jenny, I'm going to hand the mic over to you now and we are going to listen to your discussions and your stories with attendees from the convening. So thank you.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Great. Thanks so much, Chris.

The first person I'd like to introduce is Sabina Vigani, a funder and program implementer in Cote d'Ivoire:

VIGANI: My name is Sabina, I am originally from Switzerland but working and living in Cote d'Ivoire for the last 12 years with different organizations. So since 2014, I am the country director for the Jacobs Foundation and coordinator of its landmark program which is called 'Transforming Education in Cocoa Communities' which is an education-focused program.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Next up is our colleague in Jordan who has worked in both government and civil society roles:

YAGHI: My name is Ali Yaghi, I'm the general manager of Al-Hussein Fund for Excellence, this is a non-for-profit NGO established by the banking community in Jordan as part of their corporate social responsibility towards the Jordanian society. It is led by the Central Bank of Jordan and we are officed in the Central Bank of Jordan.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: And finally, from Tanzania, the experienced leader of an international NGO dedicated to women's empowerment:

WILBARD: My name is Lydia Wilbard, I am the national director for CAMFED Tanzania.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: When tackling big social problems like early childhood development or workforce preparedness – as the Jacobs Foundation's Transforming Education in Cocoa Communities' program does – gradually growing a project oftentimes doesn't result in the sustainable large-scale

change needed to address an issue. So to begin, I was interested to learn from Sabina whether she sees this “project mentality” as a barrier to scaling quality education for all.

VIGANI: Yes, it is definitely a barrier. That's not new. What is challenging is to know how to unfold this project mentality. How to achieve the necessary mind shift to really be able to go to scale.

And so basically, to be able to change this barrier to scale is to look at the system as a whole not just to look at the specific issues that we want to solve but try to understand the context at large and context means the culture, the political environment, the socioeconomic situations, so that you know you can basically mobilize all the drivers that can help or that maybe actually now are hindering the change.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Having lived in Cote d'Ivoire for 12 years, I asked Sabina if she could provide more context into the state of education in Cote d'Ivoire.

VIGANI: We do have not only an issue with access to education (that by the way has improved quite a lot, you know, in the last decade) but we do also have an issue with quality of education; learning outcomes in primary education are extremely low.

Cote d'Ivoire is the second last compared to Francophone countries in Africa which is very low.

I am really amazed, you know, I can I really share with these civil servants, that I am talking every day and really share a passion, they really want to change the situation, right? Because they – most of them are between their 50s and 60s. They're well-educated. They had the privilege you know 40 years ago to go in an education system that was quite good, and they really want to change the situation because they feel that that's really not where Cote d'Ivoire should be.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: I agree that it's important to understand the social, political, cultural and economic context before designing any initiative, especially one with large-scale ambitions. During our discussion, I asked Sabina how important is it to establish close working relationships with the government to gain this nuanced understanding of the local context?

VIGANI: The only way you can go forward really from the beginning to try to create this ownership with the government. And this was really what we did in the beginning even though we had implementing partners, we made sure that whatever we wanted to experiment really was of interest to the government.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: I was struck by Sabina's use of the word "experiment." We know that bureaucracies and large systems are not necessarily known for their agility and ability to experiment with approaches and use data and evidence in a timely manner to make course corrections. At the same time, there are other actors within the global education ecosystem, such as philanthropic funders, who might have a greater appetite and predisposition for risk-taking and experimentation. I asked her to say more about this.

VIGANI: I think it's important, as a donor, if you have the possibility, you know, to really position yourself as a sort of research and development department. Bureaucracies, governments ... they cannot afford themselves – especially, you know, a country like Cote d'Ivoire – to do trials and errors. Right? And so, by positioning yourself as a research and development department, you can tell them look, let's try, let's experiment a few things, we can maybe fail, you know? But failure is a learning, as well. And I feel that this put them in confidence. Right? And so that they know that they don't have to get it right from the beginning. They know that finding the good solution is also a learning process.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: This notion of experimentation really resonates with us in the Real-time Scaling Labs. Working with governments and other partners to recognize the iterative nature of scaling and testing things to see what works – and helping them create the space to do so – is a key objective of the Real-time Scaling Labs. But it is not always easy! Sabina's closing comment captures the potential of the scaling lab to help governments and other stakeholders embrace this collaborative learning approach.

VIGANI: In the beginning, I was a bit concerned that selling the real time scaling lab to the government mostly used to work with donor on the project mode, and also to companies who were mostly also driven by a project mentality inspired by their implementing partners. I was concerned that it would have been very challenging and so expecting government and private companies to embark on a somewhat intangible three-years long collaborative reflection process doesn't go without saying. But I also think that the interest towards the real-time scaling lab reflects a growing awareness that we cannot address development challenges through individual projects disconnected from each other and with little government ownership.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Sticking with this theme of government ownership, our colleague in Jordan, Dr. Ali Yaghi – deeply experienced with collaborating with government – shared valuable insights. I will now hand it over to Dr. Yaghi to describe the program he is overseeing in Jordan.

YAGHI: The national financial education program was established in 2014 and it was established with, or by, an initiative from the governor of the Central Bank of Jordan. The idea behind that was, due to the international financial crisis, the Central Bank of Jordan noticed that there is a lack of awareness – financial awareness – among the Jordanian society. So the initiative was to start creating some sort of literacy and education and to create awareness among Jordanian citizens on financial concepts like savings, budgeting, banking services, planning, and so on.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: This project is an interesting example of one that was initiated by the government but includes collaboration with multiple actors from different sectors of society, including local NGOs and commercial banks—led by the Central Bank governor. Dr. Ali offered his perspective on how the government was able to lead this multi-stakeholder approach.

YAGHI: The governor called for a meeting. He invited different stakeholders, he invited banks, educators, representatives of some ministries like Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor. I mean that meeting was attended by many stakeholders, Jordanian stakeholders, and the selection of those people – the central bank invited those people according to what we felt at that time they could contribute to the project and they could benefit from the project. Now after that meeting, the governor actually wrote to the prime minister because you know when you build the system there are two ways: either you build it from top-down or you build it from bottom-up. But we thought at that time - or the governor thought - building it from the top-down might be stronger than building it from bottom-up.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: The Financial Education Program struck me as one where the mandate for the program was top-down—from the highest levels of government, but the implementation was bottom-up, where for example the Jordanian NGO, INJAZ, plays a critical role. I asked him to elaborate.

YAGHI: I want to talk about the involvement of different stakeholders even the curriculum development levels, for example INJAZ for the general learning outcome framework for the for the course for (I'm sorry) for the whole program. Now, when we designed the curricula we started with putting a general framework of learning outcomes for the whole from 7 to 12 for the whole 6 classes or 6 grades. Then we decided to develop it grade-by-grade. So obviously I mean so we developed the system incrementally. In 2015 we started to Grade 7. Now, in the next year we added to that grade 8 then a Grade 9 and so on. So, developing the curricula was incremental from 2015 up to 2021. So, this

matches: when we design things we design them top-down. But when we build them we build them bottom-up.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Dr. Yaghi continued speaking about how the program began, as I was curious how they managed to get the buy-in from such a diverse group of partners given the different interests, agendas, and motivations.

YAGHI: Now, the selecting the stakeholders of the project was really based on the strengths of each stakeholder. Like for example, the Ministry of Education was a must because implementing the project has to be done through the Ministry of Education. INJAZ because they are the people who are probably the best people in Jordan who were responsible on developing curricula, training teachers, and so on. Association of Banks in Jordan – they were invited because the argument that the governor put to the Association of Banks at that time was the financial inclusion in Jordan was around 24 percent. Now, if we increase that, the banking community will benefit from that because they can actually promote their banking services. So it was trading between banks and that project. If we increase the financial inclusion then people will get better financial services and they will get they will get better access to banking and financial services. So if the banking community support a project like that then then they are going to benefit from it because people will be able to use their banking services and financial services.

Calling for the stakeholders or getting different stakeholders on board of the project was based on the benefits each stakeholder will get out of the project.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: So, if the goal is to impact sustainable large-scale systems change, this requires multi-stakeholder collaboration. As Dr. Ali shared, each actor should be able to understand how the initiative will support them in achieving their priorities. Jordan accomplished this by articulating a national priority of improved financial literacy, determining the relevant actors that should be involved, and then making it clear to these actors why the initiative was important.

Together with Dr. Ali and other colleagues from Jordan, the Center for Universal Education looks forward to facilitating multi-stakeholder collaboration through the Real-time Scaling Lab in Jordan. I closed our conversation by asking Dr. Ali how he believed the scaling lab could most effectively support the Financial Education Program in Jordan.

YAGHI: Well, I believe the real time scaling in lab in Jordan might help as a solution provider for the project.

After four years of working with the project we can identify certain challenges. Now, I believe and hope that we in real-time scaling lab - and what I mean by we - I mean the central bank, Ministry of Education, INJAZ, and other stakeholders of the project can really, well, we identified certain problems and we hope that all of us can work on overcoming those problems.

I think the Real-time Scaling Lab might be our research center to provide solutions for various problems in this project. I like the word real time because it has to be simultaneously going with the development of the whole process. It's a real time process rather than a periodic process.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Next, I had the chance to connect with Lydia Wilbard, National Director of the NGO CAMFED in Tanzania. Lydia brings the perspective of a civil society leader. She introduced me to the mission of CAMFED and her personal experience working for the organization. We had the conversation in the lobby of a hotel so please excuse the background noise.

WILBARD: The mission of CAMFED overall is to tackle the issues of poverty and inequality by investing in girls' education. But ultimately to be able to have that world in which every child is educated, protected, respected, and valued so that they can grow up to turn the tide of poverty.

Well, I am so fortunate that I have been with CAMFED since its beginning and I am one of the founding members of the network. Now we are a new force of development where all the girls who are supported through school by CAMFED join in a network and then that's where we drive the force for development. So in Tanzania, when it came in 2005, I was one of the founding members of the network. And since then we have grown from, you know, 27/28 people who started up to now over 22,000 in the network.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Very impressive. One of CAMFED's programs is called the Learner Guide program. In Tanzania, CAMFED has administered this program since 2013 and the Real-time Scaling Lab in Tanzania is exploring the potential for the Tanzanian government to gradually assume ownership over the program, or at least some elements of it.

Compared to the example in Jordan where the government initiated the Financial Education Program, in Tanzania, a project created by an NGO is trying to expand to bring about sustainable, large-scale systems change. Let's hear a bit more about the Learner Guide program from Lydia.

WILBARD: The Learner Guide program is part of the intervention that CAMFED designed to be able to address two main issues: so, over the years, CAMFED supported girls through school. And, like I

said, they are part and parcel of the shape and development of their programs. So back in 2013 we had an opportunity to have a reflection with the girls themselves to look at the system the education system that we went through and also to look at what's transitioning when we finish school - where do we go? How do we integrate ourselves in the community? How do we become leaders and people? So we had an opportunity to reflect and look at the challenges. So, one of the challenges that came out clearly is that sometimes the education system does not necessarily groom us to become independent as we get out of school and sometimes then the learning that we gain there because of some circumstances, we are not able to all pass and excel and continue in academic system.

The Learner Guide program is a program, a life skills program, wellbeing content, which is delivered by the girls who have finished secondary school and they are happy and ready to come back and give back their energy, their time to support the learners who are still in secondary school.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: The Tanzania scaling lab will offer many opportunities to learn about the specific challenges faced in scaling a volunteer-led program such as the Learner Guide program. Linking back to the theme of the episode, we look forward to working together with CAMFED to learn how an NGO that originated a program might gradually hand over this program to the government while also determining ways the NGO can continue supporting the system. Lydia echoed our excitement about the potential for the Real-time Scaling Lab.

WILBARD: Well, for me and for CAMFED it is a massive opportunity. It's a great opportunity to be able to be part of this lab because we are now looking specifically at the details of the Learner Guide program. It is giving us an opportunity to think broader on how we can take this wonderful program, and the luck we have had, to be able to scale it further but most important is an opportunity to build in the research and document and also meet other people that are going through the same process so that we can learn together.

PERLMAN ROBINSON: Well, I learned a great deal from each of our speakers and hope you enjoyed listening. Reflecting back on the theme of moving from a project mentality to more transformational systems change, I am taking with me three things that will inform my work going forward: first, the role of the government is critical – if trying to impact the system, the government must be engaged at the beginning and involved throughout. Second, a nuanced understanding of the local context will help ensure initiatives are effectively designed to meet local needs. And third, this notion of experimentation and rapid feedback cycles to test things out to see what works – helping

governments and other stakeholders see the value in this type of iterative, adaptive learning will help move the system in the right direction. And if these and other key principles are in place, we will be much better positioned for success in providing quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for millions of children in need around the world.

I want to thank Patrick Hannahan and Katie Portnoy for their support in preparing this episode.

To learn more about Millions Learning and our upcoming research on scaling in global education, go to the Center for Universal Education on the Brookings website, [Brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu).

DEWS: The Brookings Cafeteria Podcast is the product of an amazing team of colleagues, starting with audio engineer Gaston Reboredo and producer Chris McKenna. Bill Finan, Director of the Brookings Institution Press, does the book interviews, and Lisette Baylor and Eric Abalahin provide design and web support. Our intern this fall is Eowyn Fain. Finally, my thanks to Camilo Ramirez and Emily Horne for their guidance and support.

The Brookings Cafeteria is brought to you by the Brookings Podcast Network, which also produces Dollar and Sense, The Current, and our events podcasts.

Email your questions and comments to me at BCP@Brookings.edu. If you have a question for a scholar, include an audio file and I will play it and the answer on the air.

Follow us on Twitter [@PolicyPodcasts](https://twitter.com/PolicyPodcasts). You can listen to the Brookings Cafeteria in all the usual places. Visit us online at [Brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu).

Until next time, I'm Fred Dews.