

Open Government in Education: Learning from experience

International Policy Forum
November 16-18, 2021



BACKGROUND

The concept of [open government](#) has gained momentum over the last decade. Broad consensus has emerged among stakeholders across different fields that Open Government (OG) initiatives typically evolve around the principles of transparency, citizen participation and accountability. At its core, OG is about recalibrating the power dynamics between the government and citizens, and putting power back in the hands of the latter (Sambuli, 2016¹). It is assumed that OG initiatives strengthen democratic participation and empower citizens. The concept of OG is therefore a powerful tool in the fight against corruption. Applying this concept to the field of education, IIEP defines OG as:

the opening up within the education sector of government data, processes, decisions, and control mechanisms to public involvement and scrutiny, with a view to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education.

According to a 2019 assessment conducted by the OGP (Open Government Partnership, 2021²), 58 countries have made nearly 200 commitments to increase transparency, citizen engagement and government accountability within the education sector. These commitments can generally be grouped around the domains of [open data](#), [open budgeting](#), [open contracting](#), [open policy-making](#), and [social auditing](#). Initiatives range from introducing transparency into the contracting of school meals to making schools accountable in the use of parental donations.

Nevertheless, despite the worldwide increase in OG initiatives, and their promising implications for the fight against corruption, no extensive analysis has been carried out on the advantages and possible risks of these initiatives, and their enabling conditions are yet to be investigated in a systematic way. Overall, there is a shortage of literature and general data on OG in education, and the actual efficacy of such initiatives is yet to be proven.

¹ Sambuli, N. 2016. Let's admit it: Open Government is political. Blog published on medium.com, <https://medium.com/omidyarnetwork/lets-admit-it-open-government-ispolitical-3de7fa52ccc1>.

² Open Government Partnership. 2021. Education. Published on OGP website, January 18, 2021 <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/policy-area/education/>

In order to address this research gap, in 2018 the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) initiated a comprehensive research project entitled ‘Open government in education: Learning from experience’. The project included: (i) [a literature review](#) on the general concept of open government in education; (ii) a global survey sent to 38 UNESCO Member States with at least one OGP commitment in the education sector, in order to better understand the current landscape of OG initiatives in education and compare perspectives of national stakeholders; (iii) [seven in-depth case studies](#) on open government initiatives led in Colombia, India, Madagascar, Peru, Portugal, Ukraine and the USA, and (iv) two thematic studies on parental involvement in school management in India and in sub-Saharan Africa.

The International Policy Forum on open government in education, to be conducted virtually from November 16 to 18, 2021, is the culmination of this research project. The Forum will aim to share the main findings of the research conducted by the Institute and facilitate discussion between stakeholders. By bringing together researchers, decision-makers, civil society representatives, and development partners, it aims to help policy-makers and programme implementers make more informed decisions, with a view to promoting more responsive, effective, and innovative educational planning with a focus on citizen involvement.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the Policy Forum are:

- to provide an overview of a selected number of OG initiatives in education, and to draw up a typology of the various domains of open government on this basis;
- to share and discuss the main findings of IIEP’s research project on OG in education, including the goals and potential impacts of OG initiatives on educational planning and accountability;
- to facilitate exchanges on the conditions of success for such initiatives among education officials, researchers, and civil society representatives, and to draw up an evaluation framework for OG initiatives in the field of education;
- to formulate recommendations for educational decision-makers and planners on how to make informed decisions on the design and implementation of OG policies in education.

MAJOR EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. The main findings of IIEP’s research will be shared and actively discussed during the Forum.
2. Discussions around this issue of common interest, that is expected to grow in importance over the coming years, will enhance dialogue between decision-makers, practitioners, civil society representatives, and researchers.
3. Guidelines on the design and implementation of open government initiatives will be prepared by the Institute as a follow-up of the Policy Forum, taking into account the major outcomes of the discussions.
4. The Forum debates will feed into IIEP’s future work on governance, regulatory, and ethical frameworks for multi-stakeholder delivery of education as part of its 2022-2025 Medium-Term Strategy.

FORMAT AND AUDIENCE

The Policy Forum will take place virtually on the Zoom platform and via livestream. Participants of the Zoom meeting will include the researchers who contributed to IIEP’s research project on open government in education. Also attending will be national officials from all regions of the world who are responsible for promoting open government, citizen participation or social accountability in the education sector, as well as representatives from the Open Government Partnership (OGP) at country level.

A number of civil society representatives and development partners interested in questions of open government will also be invited to follow the livestream of the event on YouTube. If you are interested in receiving an invitation, please contact the forum organizers at OGForum@iiep.unesco.org.

WORKING LANGUAGE

The working languages of the Policy Forum will be English, French, and Spanish. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Tuesday, 16 November

	Opening session
Keynote speeches	What is the specificity and what are the promises of open government in education?
Theme 1	Central, local, and school approaches: Overview of OG initiatives in education around the world
Theme 2	Ensuring equal access and use of OG initiatives: Focus on women and youth

Wednesday, 17 November

Theme 3	Using new technologies to facilitate citizen involvement: Lessons from experience
Theme 4	OG and accountability: Making the link

Thursday, 18 November

Theme 5	Involving citizens in the planning cycle: limits and risks
Workshops	OG policies: Designing recommendations for decision-makers and planners
	Closing session

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