

# RISE

RESEARCH ON IMPROVING  
SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION

## How learning profiles can create feedback loops to improve learning in education systems

IIEP webinar 3 – Use of learning assessment data

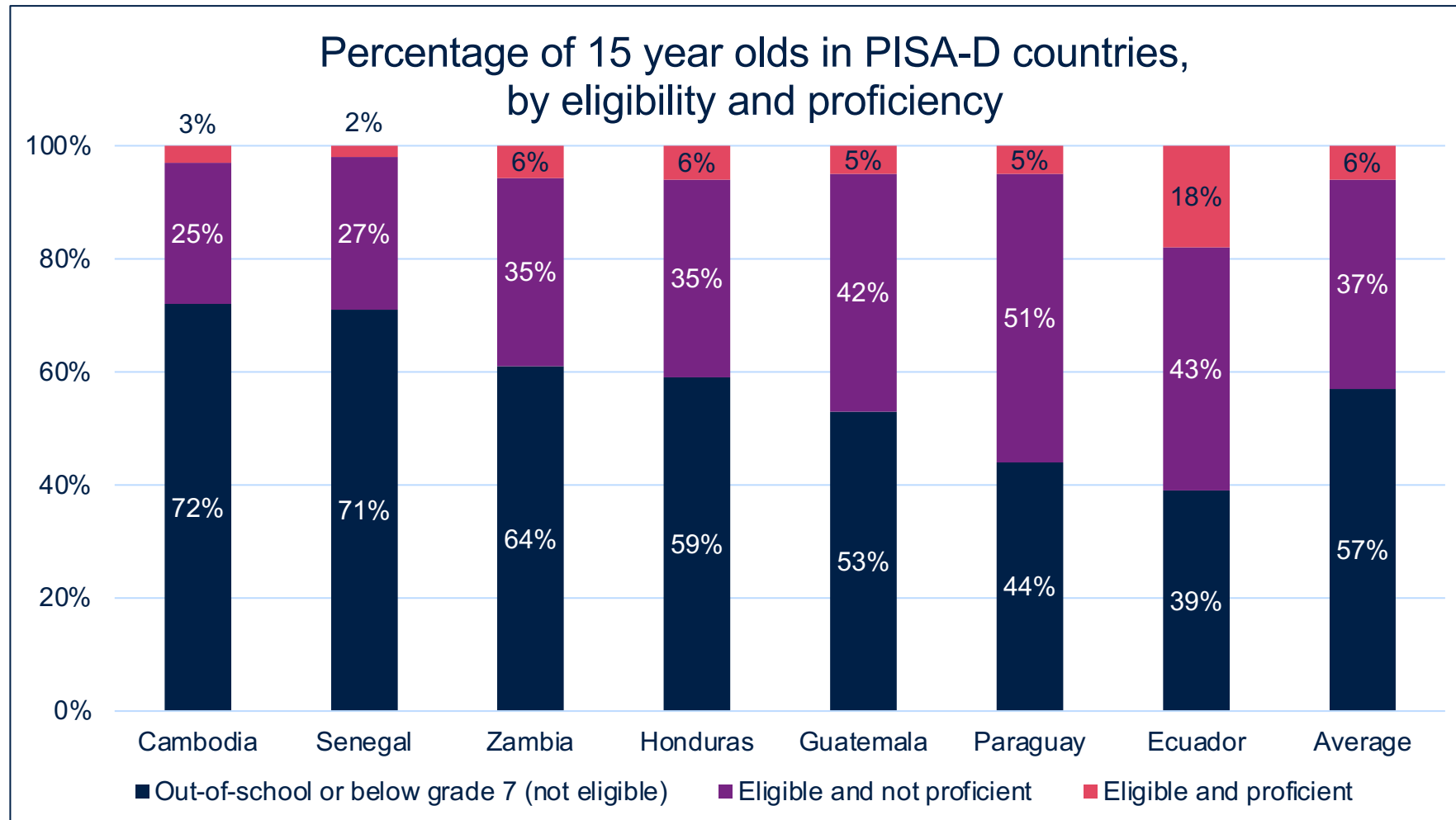
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# Not all learning assessments are equally informative

- Cross section data of a single age/grade is about **outcomes**, not about the **process** of learning
  - When do kids fall behind?
- Assessments often happen **too late in the schooling cycle** to show where children start falling behind
  - You cannot 'fix' grade 10 by trying to fix grade 9
- Assessments often focus on in-school children and therefore are **no cohort measures**
  - E.g. PISA-D

# PISA-D countries had low enrolment, low grade attainment and low learning: Only 43% of 15-year-olds were in school and eligible



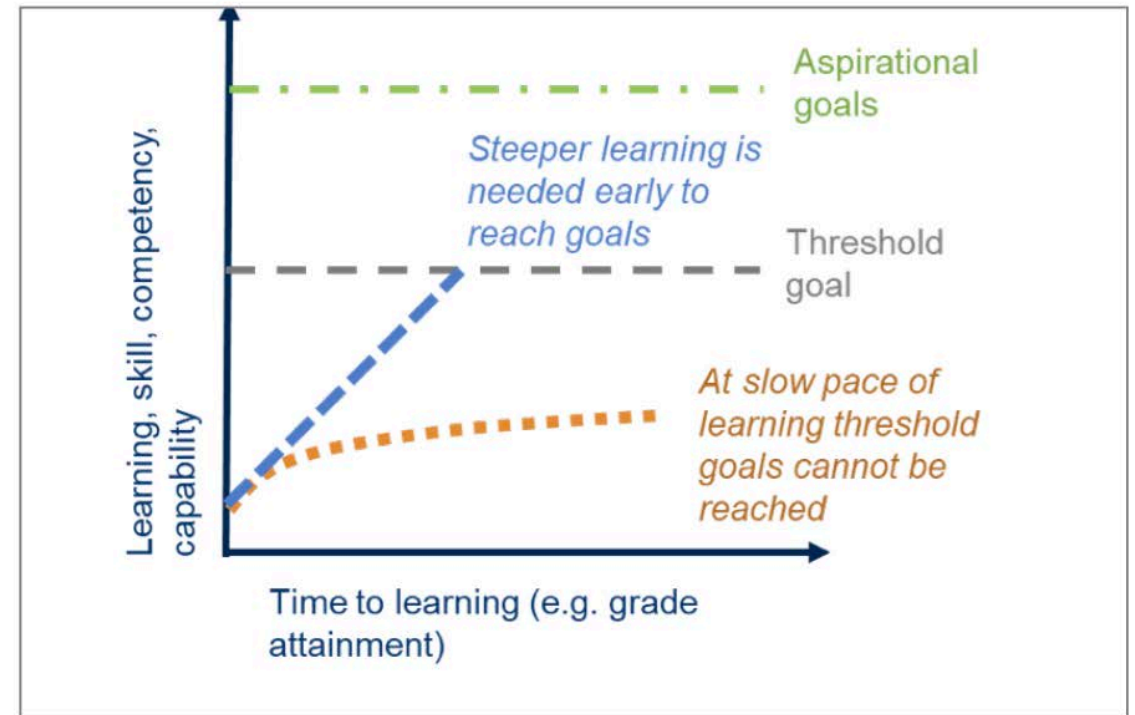
Data source: PISA for Development, 2018, adapted from [Kaffenberger and Pritchett, 2020](#) 1

# What is a learning profile?

Describes how much children learn over time in a specific context

- Allow us to trace out the trajectory of learning across multiple ages/grades
- Understand when children start falling behind
- Typically cover the earlier schooling years and a full cohort of children – both in and out of school
- Data: ASER, Uwezo, DHS, FII surveys, MICS
- Analyze learning differences across groups

Figure 5. Illustration of a flat learning profile compared to learning goals

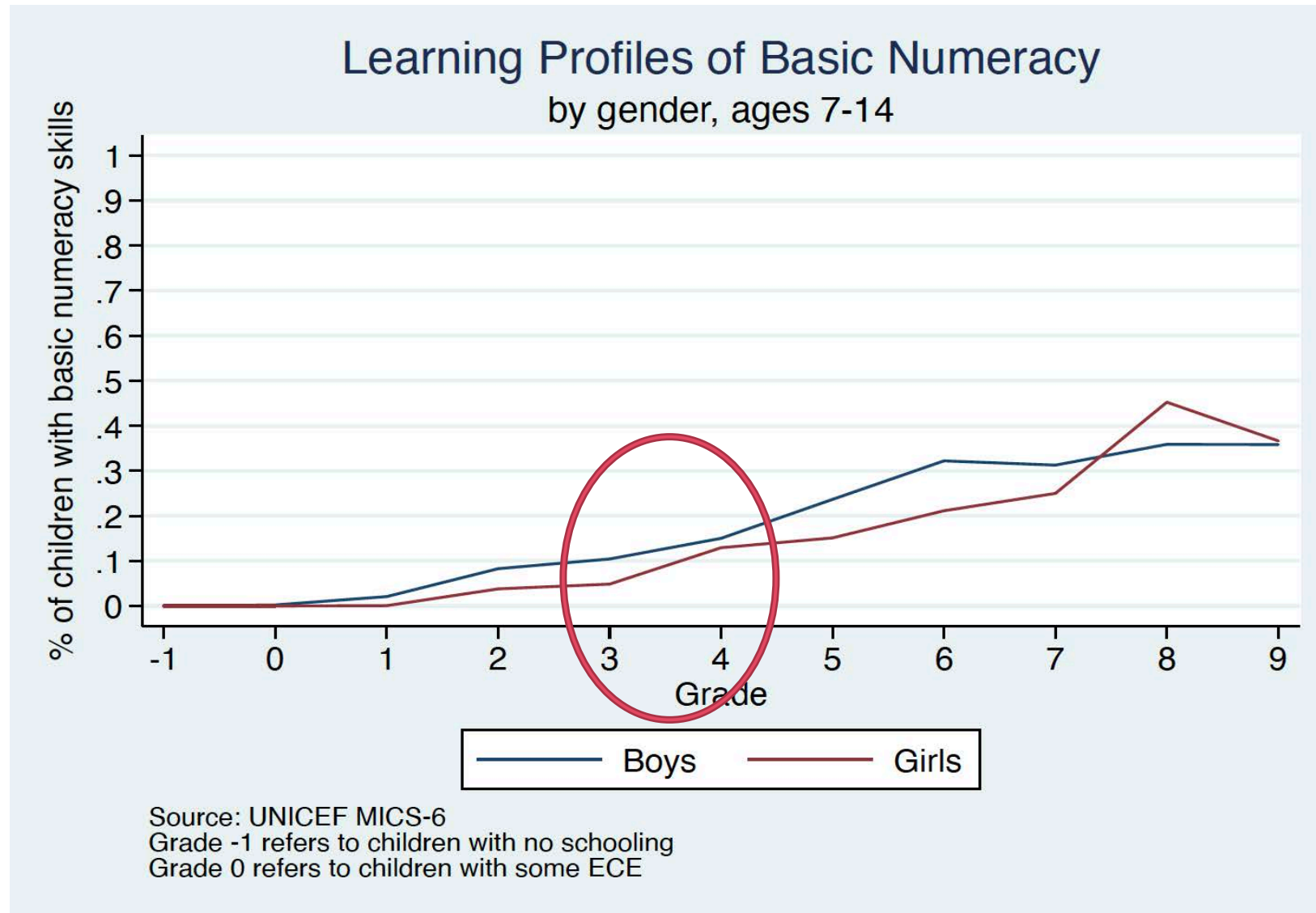


Source: [Belafi et al., 2020](#)<sup>2</sup>

# What have learning profiles taught us?

- **Learning profiles are too flat:** Most students in developing countries are not learning enough each year to achieve SDG 4.<sup>3</sup>
- But **learning varies dramatically** across countries, within countries and within classrooms.<sup>4</sup>
- **Learning differences emerge early** in primary school and are difficult to correct later on.<sup>5</sup>
- **Conventional responses** to the learning crisis might often **yield only small effects:**
  - Because many children learn little each year in school, **spending more years in school** will not improve learning by very much.<sup>6</sup>
  - Even if countries **eliminated inequalities** in learning associated with gender, location or SES, the vast majority of children would still not reach the SDG learning targets.<sup>7</sup>

# Example: Ghana has flat learning profiles with small gender gaps compared to a large universal foundational skills gap



# Learning profiles can help prioritize for learning

- The good news: This data already exists for many countries (DHS, MICS-6 etc.) <sup>8</sup>
- Learning profiles can help hone in on problems in the learning **process**
  - When do children fall behind? Which children fall behind? Equity gaps vs. universal gaps?
- This can help **align actors** around a clear set of priorities for an education system
- We know from experience that actors in education systems need to **set clear learning goals**, in most cases this will entail foundational literacy and numeracy
  - System shifts to align for learning (Kenya, Tanzania, India, Botswana, Puebla/Mexico, Sobral/Brazil) <sup>9</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Kaffenberger, M. and Pritchett, L., 2020. Failing to Plan? Estimating the Impact of Achieving Schooling Goals on Cohort Learning. RISE Working Paper Series. 20/038. [https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP\\_2020/038](https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2020/038).
- <sup>2</sup> Belafi, C., Hwa, Y., and Kaffenberger, M. 2020. Building on Solid Foundations: Prioritising Universal, Early, Conceptual and Procedural Mastery of Foundational Skills. RISE Insight Series 2020/021. [https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI\\_2020/021](https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2020/021).
- <sup>3</sup> Kaffenberger, M. and Pritchett, L., 2017. More School or More Learning? Evidence from Learning Profiles from the Financial Inclusion Insights Data, RISE Working Paper 17/012, [https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP\\_2017/012](https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2017/012). See also: Beatty, A. et al. 2018. Indonesia Got Schooled: 15 Years of Rising Enrolment and Flat Learning Profiles. RISE Working Paper Series 18/026. [https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP\\_2018/026](https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2018/026). Also: Pratham. 2019. Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2018, New Delhi. <http://img.asercentre.org/docs/ASER%202018/Release%20Material/aserreport2018.pdf>.
- <sup>4</sup> Pritchett, L. and Sandefur, J., 2017. Girls' Schooling and Women's Literacy: Schooling Targets Alone Won't Work Reach Learning Goals. RISE Working Paper 17/011, [https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP\\_2017/011](https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2017/011). See also Muralidharan. K. et al., 2019. Disrupting Education? Education on Technology-Aided Instruction in India, in: *American Economic Review*, Vol. 109:4, 1426-1460, p.1428. <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20171112>.
- <sup>5</sup> Singh, A., 2019. Learning more with every year: School year productivity and international learning divergence, in: *Journal of the European Economic Association*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvz033>. See also Belafi et al., 2020 (endnote 2).
- <sup>6</sup> see Kaffenberger and Pritchett, 2020 (endnote 1).
- <sup>7</sup> Akmal, M. and Pritchett, L., 2019. Learning Equity Requires More than Equality: Learning Goals and Achievement Gaps between the Rich & the Poor in Five Developing Countries, RISE Working Paper 19/028. [https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP\\_2019/028](https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-WP_2019/028).
- <sup>8</sup> Kaffenberger, M. 2019. A Typology of Learning Profiles: Tools for Analysing the Dynamics of Learning. RISE Insight Series.2019/015. [https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI\\_2019/013](https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2019/013).
- <sup>9</sup> Crouch, L. 2020. Systems Implications for Core Instructional Support Lessons from Sobral (Brazil), Puebla (Mexico), and Kenya. RISE Insight Series. 2020/020. [https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI\\_2020/020](https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2020/020). See also: Kaffenberger, M., 2021. Aligning Education Systems for Learning: How Systems Shift. RISE Blog, 25 March. <https://riseprogramme.org/blog/aligning-education-systems-for-learning-how-systems-shift>. Also: Hwa, Y., Kaffenberger, M. and Silberstein, J. 2020. Aligning Levels of Instruction with Goals and the Needs of Students (ALIGNS): Varied Approaches, Common Principles. RISE Insight Series. 2020/022. [https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI\\_2020/022](https://doi.org/10.35489/BSG-RISE-RI_2020/022).



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