Trani, Jean-Francois; Washington University in St Louis
jtrani@wustl.edu
Authors: Name: Jean-Francois
Surname: Trani
Email: jftrani@yahoo.fr
Affiliation: Washington University in St. Louis
Position: Associate Professor
Name: Parul
Surname: Bakhshi
Email: parulbakhshi@gmail.com
Affiliation: Washington University in St. Louis

Title: Sustainability and Development Conference Using Systems Dynamics Thinking to foster participation strengthen equity and inclusion in education in rural schools of Afghanistan and Pakistan

To promote sustainable inclusion, understood as equitable access and quality learning for all as promoted by the Sustainable Development Goal 4, we argue that education policies need to bring together perspectives of school stakeholders: children, teachers, parents and school committee members. We use system dynamics to investigate the views of inclusion by those stakeholders in rural primary schools of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The trend towards standardization of assessments has led to education being viewed in terms of numeric thresholds of achievement jeopardizing the idealistic goals of the SDGs. Moreover, we argue that the "threshold" mentality will not allow for inclusion of vulnerable children, and even might encourage exclusion.

Taking a strong capabilities perspective that focuses on not just the instrumental value but the intrinsic value of education, our study aims to strengthen social accountability in primary schools. Using Systems Dynamics methods such as Group Model Building, we facilitated over 400 workshops with community stakeholder groups in 108 schools to draw a series of 432 Causal Loop Diagrams (CLD) identifying the causal relationships and feedback between variables present in the classroom system. We also implemented action plans elaborated by school stakeholders based on those CLDs. We then used Social Network Analysis to identify a core structure of variables and relationships within the context of classroom systems across schools and countries.

Identifying a common structure of education with a few substructures has important implications. First, we show that all actors, including children, are able to exert individual agency, to reason and to offer their views about what should be learned and how the learning process should take place (Polat 2011). Second, we learned that education is also about emphasizing the role of the learner and promoting positive rights, such as nurturing learner creativity, promoting equality in the learning process while enforcing negative rights such as protection from abuses (Sen 1992, Subrahmanian 2002, Unterhalter 2007). Third, we inform education policies built on a renewed understanding of the wicked problem that is inclusion. The EEQAP addresses some of the main challenges that calls for a paradigm shift in education towards learning skills and wellbeing.