

Intergovernmental Organizations and Indicators

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It is the purpose of this presentation to introduce the concept of international educational indicators, explain their history, demonstrate the work of Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) within the creation of indicators, and propose one theory regarding why there has been an increased rise in indicator use within the work of IGOs. In order to facilitate this understanding, the presentation first attempts to define indicators and suggests how to critically expand some dominant understandings of indicators. The presentation then moves to a brief history of the social and educational indicator movement. This will allow for a better understanding of where these indicators are placed in time and their connection to economic policy knowledge and utility. Additionally, this presentation will describe who I reason are the five major actors in the area of global educational indicators. These organizations play an important role in promoting indicators as a dominant and valid representation of educational systems. While not an exhaustive account, the motivations to collect and disseminate indicators include a desire for comparative information, an aspiration to establish benchmarks, and an ambition to become the sole collectors of information. This list collectively suggests a culture of performativity as described by Lyotard (1984). Therefore, this presentation will finish with a discussion of performativity, which I feel is a dominant motivation behind the sharp increase in leading IGOs' engagement in the creation of indicators. Through Lyotard's critique of performativity, I explore possible underlying reasons for the dominant position of indicators as global educational policy knowledge and the risks associated with this limited view of knowledge.