Three approaches to basic education in East Timor: a performance-based comparative analysis

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The country of East Timor is new, small, and linguistically diverse with a population of less than two million people speaking at least 20 different languages. Contested visions for the political, economic, and developmental future of the country further complicate policy construction and implementation in all sectors including basic education. At present, at least three different educational models of early basic education are being trialed or implemented. These are, in purely descriptive terms, an L1 instructional model, an L2 instructional model using the most prominent local language as the language of instruction, and an L2 instructional model using a European language as the language of instruction.

Based on extensive testing done in late 2015, this interesting presentation will (a) compare the three models in terms of educational outcomes, (b) explore the impact of a range of contextual variables on these outcomes, and (c) based on this analysis, highlight practical as well as theoretical implications of the findings for future policy and practice in the field of basic education in linguistically and culturally diverse countries in Asia.