Issues in Measuring Learning

October 17th 2016

Break-out group on end of primary and end of lower secondary

UNESCO INSTITUTE for STATISTICS

United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Main Points for Discussion

☐ How best to balance the technical challenges with political demands for data on learning

☐ What are the pros and cons of reaching for higher degrees of comparability across constructs and targets?

☐ **How can the agenda on equity be expressed through measurement? Didn't discuss**

Main Points of Discussion – balancing technical challenge with political demands

◻ If it is sink or swim: do not include early grades in indicator 4.1.1 but retain thematic indicator 4.1.2 (countries having learning assessment during primary)

◻ Need to establish clear standards and criteria for accepting data on learning outcomes from national, regional and international assessments – also establish the governance arrangements regarding body(ies) that will make these decisions on acceptance **and explain these in an easily accessible way**

◻ Work with those assessments that don't meet standards to strengthen these to the point when they can be used for global monitoring

◻ Countries would need guidance on how the data will be used to place countries on the learning scale – details of how the learning scale would be operationalised needed

◻ Effective coordination of the (approved) assessments being used and moving towards more harmonised approaches, periodicity (3-5 years), learning scale coverage, etc

Main Points of Discussion - pros and cons of reaching for higher degrees of comparability

Pros: meets the demands of the indicator to a greater extent; puts all countries on to a common scale; facilitates peer learning and sharing of successful experiences in a commonly understood framework; uses existing assessments and items and is cheaper than developing a new assessment; can drive up quality of assessments;

Cons: technically and politically challenging to agree a common learning scale and approach, proficiency levels and cut-points with all countries; to map/align assessments against this scale; to establish standards for assessments; will require significant efforts to bring all countries on board; challenges in certain regions (i.e., South Asia) to bring countries into assessments that meet the standards;

Other Main Points of Discussion

❑ More than one way to achieve a common learning scale – another approach is to build the scale from the existing regional and international assessments, using these programmes' frameworks and levels of proficiency to construct the scale

❑ Which ever option chosen, need to look at gaps in terms of coverage of the learning scale and coverage of countries by approved assessments – how to manage expansion of country participation in 'approved' assessments?

❑ What to do with countries that do not want to join regional or international assessment and whose national assessment does not meet standards?

Possible next steps

- ❑ Agree way forward to complete work on universal learning scales for reading and mathematics and mapping of national, regional and international assessments against these

- ❑ Consult with countries on the scales and identify national, regional and international assessments for review and mapping

- ❑ Confirm criteria for reviewing assessments

- ❑ Establish governance arrangements for processing the work and agreeing on scales and assessments to be used

- ❑ Complete the mapping of assessments on to the learning scale and begin reporting

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