KIX Hub19

Meeting Report
Third Online/Virtual Meeting for Country Focal Points and Partners
Reported by the KIX Hub Secretariat

Date: 11 June 2020

Time: 14h30 - 16h00 (EAT)

Participants: 38 participants representing the following organizations: ACDF Pact, ADEA, AfECN, FAWE, Federal Ministry of Education (Nigeria), IDRC, IFEF (KIX Africa 21 Hub), IICBA, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (Sierra Leone), Ministry of Education (Kenya), Ministry of Education and Training (Lesotho), Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Malawi), Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (Zimbabwe), Rwanda Education Board, SEACMEQ, TALENT, UNESCO, UNICEF, Uganda and VVOB.

Meeting Objectives:

The meeting aimed to present: the key findings from the rapid assessment on the themes of learning assessments, early childhood education and gender equality; what is and what isn't working in these thematic areas and the details of the in-depth country mapping.

I. Introduction

Abhiyan Jung Rana, Regional Education Adviser for UNICEF ESARO, welcomed participants and introduced the objectives of the meeting. Mr. Rana introduced the new members of the KIX Hub Secretariat: Dr. Tilaye Kassahun, Chelsea Lavallee and Argaw Korssa. He encouraged all partners to work together to develop a shared understanding on the thematic areas of the KIX Hub and to determine together the Hub's priorities.

II. Presentation of Country Results

Dr. Victoria Kisaakye Kanobe, Senior Program Coordinator at UNESCO IICBA, presented the analysis of the remaining themes - Learning Assessments, Early Childhood Education and Gender Equality – from the country rapid assessment survey results. The survey collected data on policy development, national strategies and frameworks, innovations, emerging priorities and institutional capacity development needs for each thematic area. The results will inform the KIX regional calls to be launched by the IDRC and the GPE this summer.

Survey respondents indicated the following priority areas for the KIX Hub:
- Learning Assessment – develop and implement technology use in learning assessment; strengthen capacity on various assessment methods and strengthen experience and knowledge sharing among countries.

- Early Childhood Education - support establishment of pre-schools; develop effective ECD models and monitoring and evaluation policies; share best practices and strengthen organizational capacity to manage and deliver early childhood development services.
- Gender Equality - support implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies; provide capacity building support to the Gender Unit of Ministries of Education; share best practices of re-entry guidelines for schoolgirls who get pregnant and support the education of the girl child and women teachers, particularly in STEM.

III. Experiences, Key Lessons Learnt and Critical Priorities on Policy Formulation and Implementation

Learning Assessments

Davide Ruscelli, coordinator of the TALENT network at UNESCO Dakar presented the status of learning assessment systems in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). TALENT is a network of partners and Directors of Learning Assessment and Teacher Training in 44 SSA countries that strengthens capacity, conducts studies and action research and shares knowledge on the quality of learning. He reiterated that several types of assessments are practiced in SSA, either formative or summative, including high-stakes exams, large scale learning assessments, classroom-based assessments and citizen led assessments.

TALENT conducted an analytical mapping of aspects of learning assessments that were common to the majority of SSA countries, and found that: Programme d'analyse des systèmes éducatifs de la CONFEMEN (PASEC) and the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SEACMEQ) have been well-established for three decades; an increasing number of countries are including learning assessments in their education sector plans (ESPs); 34 of 48 countries have conducted a national assessment since 2015; national assessments are typically conducted by Ministry of Education staff; international/donor financing of national assessments is significant and there is still a quality gap between the standards of international and regional assessment versus national assessment.

The mapping suggests several opportunities and needs around greater South-South collaboration on evaluation systems; more training on assessment development; better dissemination of assessment results, especially to teachers and more records on funding of assessments. Overall, much progress has been made, but the results and data are underutilized in education policy development and formulation.

Ann W. Ngatia, coordinator at the Kenya National Examinations Council, shared Kenya's experience of Competency Based Assessment (CBA) for the new Basic Education Curriculum. Kenya participates in SAECMEQ and the National Assessment System for Monitoring Learner Achievement (NASMLA) and several professional assessment groups. Kenya uses a mixed methods approach using formative assessments (CBA), portfolio assessments in grade 3 involving parents and summative assessments via national examinations for certification and selection. She pointed out that Kenya is moving toward the use of formative assessment, as summative assessments can reinforce rote learning and may not allow students to adequately display their knowledge.

The National Assessment Centre uses periodic sample-based assessments to monitor quality of education and for policy formulation. Kenya also has methods for assessing special needs learning outcomes and its CBA assessments are available online for e-assessment or for hard copy distribution, which demonstrates opportunities for flexibility while maintaining standardization in the assessments.

Kenya is looking to increase teachers' capacity to write good items and to train data collectors. The Ministry of Education writes feedback reports on how to improve assessments and uses an online platform to gather trends as well as identify areas for improvement and guidance which primary schools can then adapt to their local context.

Finally, Ann noted that Kenya has identified areas to improve, including reducing large class sizes, improving equality in diverse schools, addressing the teacher shortage, decreasing dependence on commercial tests and responding to security and conflict issues affecting learning and others.

Early Childhood Education

Dr. George Evans Owino, from the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), presented on what works and does not work for early childhood development in education policy formulation and implementation. AfECN brings together partners across SSA to share knowledge and support early childhood development. In terms of the "early years," we know that the brain develops significantly in the first five years and therefore the investment in learning at this age is critical. ECE is now an integral part of the education agenda and is included in the SDGs, yet only 3.3% of funding to education is for pre-primary education, and there are still 57.5 million children at this level who are out of school.

Progress is being made as a global push is being made to invest in early years. Continental commitments to ECE are growing; 60% of SSA countries have pre-primary policies; the African Union has established an ECE CESA cluster; AfECN, Mauritius, which is also the ADEA-Inter-country Quality Node (ICQN) ECED lead, and national ECD networks are bringing more stakeholders together and there is a push to allocate 10% of education budgets to the pre-primary level.

Many opportunities exist to strengthen ECE on the continent. The African Union commitment has provided many advocacy platforms, and advocacy moments are available through the Tokyo International Conference of African Development (TICAD), Econometrics for Finance (JEF) and others. Through GPE, which has made pre-primary education a strategic priority area, more funding is becoming available. The global Nurturing Care framework had been adopted by three SSA countries and will continue to role out.

To support what works, legislation needs to support policy development; program design and implementation need to be holistic; empirical evidence must be used; services must be universal and targeted; multiple sectors need to be included (beyond the education sector) and the government, non-state actors and especially the private sector need to collaborate together. In terms of capacity building, continuous support is needed, training alone is not sufficient. Community and parental involvement must be supported.

Gender

Ms. Anna Murru, Partnership Manager at VVOB, presented on gender in education. A 2018 study demonstrates that up to $30 trillion USD are lost due to poor education outcomes for girls, which demonstrates that an investment in girls is an investment in our communities. Our focus should be placed not only on primary education, but on secondary education and STEM. Policy for retention and improved participation of girls that works is developed while being inclusive of users (girls, teachers, school leaders), is based on evidence and is well-planned.

Gender-responsive pedagogy, developed by FAWE, must be included in the policy development process to ensure that the classroom is conducive to both girls' and boys' needs and negative stereotypes are not reinforced, especially during the early years. We know that safe learning environments are critical, this includes proper WASH facilities, attention to sexual maturation considerations and emphasis among the school and community members on the importance of girls' success in education.

Teresa Omondi of FAWE briefly highlighted the need for community participation in girls' retention and involvement in education. Re-entry policies for girls in school and training for their care givers on gender norms are needed because we know child play to be very important to formation of gender norms from

a young age. FAWE has an outreach program which supports mothers who did not go to school with literacy training so they can support their children's education.

Question and Answer Exchange

Ann Ngatia was asked at which level e-learning starts in Kenya and whether there is an e-learning policy in Kenya. She responded that there is currently no e-learning policy in Kenya and there is no official e-learning for all schools. However ICT use is strongly encouraged, and there is a great deal of ICT use by teachers. The government is also progressively using ICT to register students. Ann will share the tools currently in use for assessments in Kenya.

Rwanda requested to share their experience with learning assessment. Victoria responded that the Hub will ensure a platform to do so is made available.

When asked to what extent learning assessment mechanisms at national, regional and international levels capture how girls and boys are faring in terms of performance/achievements, Anna Murru responded that this depends on the EMIS (education management information system), which is used in most African countries. EMIS needs to capture data for both girls and boys and the policy options depend on the design of EMIS and the data it can generate. Some correlations can be seen, for example in relation to teaching and learning: girls in rural areas show lower performance than girls in urban areas. This could be explained by several factors, including poor WASH facilities or long travel distances to school. We need strong EMIS to generate data so we can act.

IV. Presentation on the In-depth Country Mapping

Dr. Tilaye Kassahun, the KIX Hub Team Leader, presented the principal aspects of the in-depth country mapping. The objectives of the in-depth country mapping are three-fold:
- Provide up-to-date information of the major trends in data, evidence and issues impacting the education needs of countries in line with all six thematic areas and beyond;
- Examine and compile relevant research, evaluations, innovations, and best practices to generate priorities and areas of focus for the regional KIX Hub;
- Identify shared regional policy challenges that are aligned with literature, expert opinions and, especially, key national education policymakers and stakeholders.

The country mapping will incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methods including a desk review, survey questionnaire, structured interviews and validation workshop. It will be critically important that all of us contribute to the data collection process to ensure a holistic vision for the Hub is developed. A summary of the roles of each of the KIX Hub stakeholders and the schedule of execution are outlined clearly in the PowerPoint.

The final deliverable will be a 20-page report detailing the regional priority mapping and situational analysis along the six thematic areas. The KIX Hub Secretariat will begin work on the country mapping beginning Monday, June 15, 2020 and specific directions will be sent to each stakeholder to execute the intended tasks as of June 17, 2020.

V. Closing remarks

Tricia Wind, KIX Team Leader at IDRC, Canada, provided final remarks to all meeting participants. She thanked everyone for their participation in the meeting and their commitment to working together to share knowledge across countries. She encouraged everyone to participate in the forthcoming country mapping, as this is an important component of the Hub and the overall KIX project and will enable us all to determine the priorities of the Hub for the coming years.