



EDDATA II

SCHOOL QUALITY SNAPSHOT

Concept and proposed development process

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Introduction

There is, at present, a gap in the knowledge and tools available to donors and governments in improving the management of the education system in most developing countries. In designing new programs, for example, donors and governments tend to rely on secondary sources of information such as EMIS systems, casual empiricism of the “donor walkabout” variety where a few schools are visited without any structured system, and, sometimes but not often, data from a good but general-purpose household survey, or from a country’s student assessment data system. What is missing is a source of data that is relatively inexpensive yet scientifically valid, easy to carry out in time for any assessment of the sector and hence easy to update, and oriented at providing a sense of the management issues in the schools and in the sector as a whole, specifically as they relate to children’s early and efficient acquisition of essential learning skills. The data-gathering approach should be efficient enough for one person to carry out during a single-day visit per school, and the sample of schools statistically optimized so as to yield reasonable inference at whatever level (national, or a particular region) the donor is interested in, at least-possible cost.

The lack of solid but inexpensive information about pedagogical management in classrooms and schools means that many donor and government programs are designed without key information about practices known to have an impact on knowledge acquisition by children. In most countries it is unknown whether teachers or principals apply what is taught in pre-service or even in-service programs, or find it useful; it is unknown, with any degree of certainty, whether textbooks arrive in school when they are needed; whether children are learning to read in anything like a reasonable time frame; or whether teachers are using effective teaching methods. Anecdotal impressions may be repeated and copied from donor to donor, but there is little real and recent evidence. In most countries, the use of time by teachers in the classroom is unexplored, as is the degree and type of involvement by parents in monitoring their children’s cognitive achievement. Many other examples of key gaps in knowledge are possible. This lack of information hampers not only program design, but, more importantly, makes credible policy dialogue nearly impossible.

A simple instrument, based on what the best expert opinion and research say are the most important processes of school management (and in particular, pedagogical management) and governance in ensuring children’s participation in school and improving their cognitive achievement, could go a long way in filling this critical gap. Such an instrument, in its basic version, could be carried out in a school by one visitor in a single morning session, and applied to a sample of just enough schools to give donors and governments a fast, inexpensive, yet reliable and empirically-driven scan of the education system as a whole in a given country, province, state, or other single entity. If extended to larger proportions of the population being sampled, its results could be used not only for sector assessment and program design at a general level, but also to capture distinctions between provinces or districts.

A few other analysts have noted this gap and have come up with similar ideas. The well-known educationist and ex Minister of Education of Chile, Ernesto Schiefelbein, has come up with what he calls the “20-minute classroom yardstick”. This effort and others like it offer useful information, however their statistical and validity characteristics for broad application

tend to be weak or unexamined. Building on such promising efforts, the School Quality Snapshot is designed to offer a “best” approach that fulfills statistical and validity requirements for broad application, yet still meets the expense and practicality constraints we believe are worth respecting.

This kind of "snapshot" approach is likely to be particularly useful in situations when a donor, such as USAID, is re-engaging in a particular country’s education sector after an absence, when a major new program needs to be designed, or when a program or set of programs needs to be evaluated.

The resulting instrument should be useful for at least three practical purposes:

1. As a means of sector assessment, providing USAID missions and others a key source of information on which to build country plans and strategies
2. As part of regular education census efforts of a district, state, or national EMIS, providing educational administrators with information necessary for system-level resource distribution and activity programming.
3. In individual school communities as a means to monitor, evaluate, organize, communicate, and information on the current effectiveness of their schools, and as a basis for local action.

Specifics of the Snapshot development process

The development of the School Quality Snapshot begins with a **review of similar efforts and of relevant research literature**.

Parallel to this review, Ed Data II is engaging a **panel of experts** in exchange on “state of the art” and “best practices” approaches regarding the measurement of school quality in terms of the pedagogical effectiveness of classroom, school and system management practices.

The objective of this work is to establish a broadly applicable and valid set of “fresh” and “refreshed”, **straightforward measures of key dimensions** of the effectiveness of schools and educational systems. Examples of the kinds of measures we have in mind (to be extended and improved upon through the expert panel process) are provided in the following table.

Dimension	Aspect	POSSIBLE types of measures
Learning outcomes	Students' acquisition of learning foundations (early reading and possibly math skills)	Direct assessment of students' early reading; math skills
Classroom Management	Class size and more specifically, whether adequate strategies are being used for a given class size	Classroom observation against a checklist or protocol of effective large-class management
	Textbook availability and use in the classroom	Teacher survey on timeliness of arrival of textbooks, classroom observation of use; assessment of use via children interviews

Dimension	Aspect	POSSIBLE types of measures
	Type and variety of instructional methods used	Classroom observation against a checklist or protocol
	Active students (student vs teacher talk; group activities)	Classroom observation using checklist or protocol
	Time use in the classroom	Classroom observation using checklist or protocol
	Treatment of multigrade classes	Classroom observation using checklist or protocol
	Teacher use of student assessment and feedback	Correlation between teacher assessment and an objective method of evaluation; assess teacher evaluation processes
School Management	School head's role and vision	Interviews with school head; with teachers; with students. Observation of head teacher's management style
	Nature and quality of records	Observation against a checklist or protocol
	School financial management	Observation against a checklist or protocol
	Management and distribution of material resources	Observation against a checklist or protocol
	Student absenteeism	Reported or observed absentee rates over time, by gender & other characteristics (Obtained from records maintained by school or PTA)
	Teacher absenteeism	Reported or observed absentee rates over time; interview questions with head teacher
School – community relations	Nature and quality of school-community relations	Parent and teacher interviews containing questions on frequency and quality of teacher reporting of children's learning assessment, existence of written standards of service; role and activities of parents' association, and others
Pedagogical Support systems	Nature and quality of pre-service teacher preparation	Questionnaire applied to teachers and principals to specifically probe whether pre-service training is considered useful; probe how it is used, and why it is considered useful, to go beyond mere opinion and socially-conditioned response (a problem in most existing surveys)
	Availability, nature & quality of in-service teacher instruction opportunities	Questionnaire applied to teachers and principals to specifically probe whether pre-service training is considered useful; probe how it is used, and why it is considered useful, to go beyond mere opinion and socially-conditioned response (a problem in most existing surveys)
	School-level teacher pedagogical support actions, opportunities	Questionnaire applied to teachers to probe into whether they ever received pedagogical support based on problems they report having
	Pedagogical support capacity in educational services beyond the school level	Information on the presence of support officers with sufficient training and knowledge to provide effective pedagogical support; presence of other

Dimension	Aspect	POSSIBLE types of measures
		inputs needed; assessment of frequency and nature of school visits; existence and application of useful checklists; existence of clear job descriptions for support officers

The measures of the acquisition of learning foundations (early reading and possibly math skills) are critical to the approach, as they represent the principal outcomes against which school and system effectiveness will be evaluated.

On the basis of review of existing instruments and the conclusions of the expert panel, the **School Quality Snapshot instrument will then be constructed**, with the underlying, self-imposed cost constraint that all necessary information for a given school must be able to be gathered by a single enumerator during one morning or school-day.

Piloting in two or three countries is the next important step. Once participating Missions/countries are selected, the basic survey instrument will be adapted to ensure that it addressed each country's particular education system and relevant issues. The instrument will be administered, with full reliability testing, results analysis and reporting.

Final reporting will include both **individual country "snapshots"** with full reporting of reliability margins; and a general **pilot evaluation and recommendations report**, including results of reliability analysis, and recommendations for improvement of the instrument and process. **Presentation meetings** are also envisaged, to report and discuss results with a wider audience prior to report publication.

Workplan

Due date or period	Action
Sept-October 2006	Research and development of draft survey instrument
1 October 2006	Pilot Mission selection announcement
14 October 2006	Expert Panel Meeting for critical review of draft survey instrument and proposed measures
1 November 2006	Revised survey instrument sent to Expert Panel for comment
15 November 2006	Survey instrument completed
20 November 2007	RFP sent out to recognized, qualified local survey subcontract firms in selected pilot countries
05 December 2007	Local sub-contractor proposals due
05 January 2007	Sub-contract award announcement in pilot countries
16 January 2007	Pilot start-up
31 January 2007	Adaptation of survey instrument to pilot country completed
February 2007	Enumerator training
March-April 2007	Data collection
May-June 2007	Data entry, cleaning, and analysis
15 July 2007	Initial drafts of individual country snapshot reports and general pilot evaluation report completed
July - August 2007	Presentations of results and finalization of draft reports