



Participation in cross-national learning assessments and impact on capacity development: Programmes, practice, structures and teacher competency. Case study of Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa



Godfrey Mulongo*, Zaytoon Amod

CIP, ILRI campus, P.O Box 25171, 00603, Nairobi, Kenya

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Capacity development
Learning assessments
Teacher competency
Programmes and practice

ABSTRACT

This research is one of the few attempts to employ the conceptual framework of "technology transfer" to analyze the extent that participation in cross-national learning assessments has had on capacity development, particularly in the development of official public structures, by equipping educationists and influencing teachers' competency in Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants drawn from the Ministries of Basic Education, national examinations councils, civil society organizations and curriculum development institutions in the three countries. The in-depth interviews were complemented by relevant literature on this topic. The study established improved technical capacities in the public education sector in South Africa and Kenya to design and conduct independent large-scale learning assessments. This important research demonstrates a certain level of commitment by African countries to establish official structures necessary to design/implement and sustain a culture of monitoring learning outcomes through public funded large-scale learning assessments. The research potentially contributes to the body of knowledge as far as 'summative' evaluation and analysis of the theory of change underpinning the participation in cross-national learning assessments espoused under the Education for All (EFA) Framework of Action

1. Introduction

Cross-national learning assessments refer to comparative multi-country assessments meant to measure student achievement. These assessments utilize uniform and standardized tests on a set of similar age-group or grade study populations (UNESCO, 2006; Wagner et al., 2012). The history of large-scale cross-national, comparative learning assessments can be traced way back to 1958, with the UNESCO Institute for Education in Germany as the brainchild. However, the first successful large-scale quantitative international study in mathematics was conducted in 1965 by the International Association for the Evaluation of Education Achievement (IEA) and included Australia, Belgium, England, Finland, France, Germany, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, Scotland, Sweden, and the United States (Suter, undated). Between 1965 and 2001, the IEA sponsored studies of mathematics, science, reading, civics and technology. The Educational Testing Service conducted an International Assessment for Education Progress in science and mathematics in 1990.

At the beginning, the trailblazers of IEA were against any form of comparisons of national systems arguing that each education system

was unique in context, environment and culture. However, with passage of time, a new school of thought emerged that viewed education systems as interdependent and part of a common global economy. Therefore, from the 70's, the concept of cross-national comparisons gained traction and was largely seen as a valid form of assessing learning outcomes. The 90s witnessed the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) grow its coverage from a few countries to covering most of the world (Addey, 2014).

Perhaps the most popular large-scale learning assessment is the joint UNESCO/UNICEF project on Monitoring Education-For-All (EFA) with focus on learning achievements which began in September 1992. This was an immediate outcome of The World Declaration on Education-For-All adopted at Jomtien in March 1990. It pointed to the need to define acceptable levels of learning acquisition for educational programmes and to improve and apply systems of assessing learning achievement. The understanding was that merely improving the supply of education-quantity – was not enough, and that improvement in quality was vital, so was the means to assess such progress (UNESCO, 1994). Therefore, post Jomtien witnessed the Second International Reading Study (SIRS) between 1990 and 91, the Third International Mathematics and Science

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: mulongoe@gmail.com (G. Mulongo), Zaytoon.Amod@wits.ac.za (Z. Amod).

Study (Trends in International Mathematics and Science –TIMSS (1994), TIMSS Repeat in 1999, Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000/02, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in 2001, TIMSS study in 2003, Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2003 and Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) I (1995–99) and SACMEQ II (2000–2004). Therefore, between the first real cross-national study and the SACMEQ II, about twelve different international tests of math, science, or reading were administered to a group of volunteering countries (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2012). SACMEQ III was conducted between 2006 and 2011. SACMEQ IV is underway.

Today, the main international assessment programmes include the IEA (for example, TIMSS and PIRLS), the OECD (for example PISA), the Laboratorio Latinoamericano de Evaluación de la Calidad de la Educación or LLECE (for example the Third Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study- TERCE), Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Éducatifs des Pays de la CONFEMEN (PASEC), SACMEQ and Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) project. There are mixed views concerning the impact and significance of the cross-national learning assessments. Those that support these assessments cite the ability to document the poor performance of a country relative to others at similar levels of economic development and that they provide participating countries with data for policy and investment decisions necessary for human capital development (Greaney & Kellaghan, 2008; Lockheed in Wagner et al., 2012). Moreover, others observe that cross-national studies provide hands-on training and equip national staff of participating countries with skills to design and implement own large-scale national learning assessments: the skills include test development, computer-based management and analysis of data, policy analysis and report preparation (UNESCO, 2006). Those that argue against the cross-national learning assessments indicate that by adopting these quantitative targets; learners, teachers and countries are encouraged to adapt their behavior in order to maximize perceived rewards even in instances of dysfunctional education systems. The near impossible challenges of creating achievement tests that are culturally or educationally specific, hegemonic control of individual systems by multinational and donor institutions and demoralization of poor performing countries are other drawbacks postulated by the opponents (Barret, 2009; Goldstein, 2004).

However, education and development experts agree to a large extent that cross-national learning assessments are not an end in themselves and that they should inform policy reforms to improve the quality of education (Wagner et al., 2012; World Bank, 2004). Participation in these assessments is also expected to build the technical capacities of the participating countries. For instance, in Africa, World Bank (2004) indicates that following the MLA project, several countries, including Madagascar, Mali, Mauritius, and Morocco carried out their own assessments. World Bank (2004) further observes that data cleaning methods used in SACMEQ were adapted for school census data in some countries and that participating countries in PASEC improved their capacity in test construction and in designing and implementing learning assessments.

Wagner et al. (2012) also offer an analysis of the impact of the cross-national learning assessments on education development in developing countries. They postulate that these assessments have motivated regulatory and behavioral policy reforms, have helped create a learning environment in which assessment specialists have improved their technical skills and related performance and that they have helped increase transparency regarding education system outcomes and human capital development in the participating countries. This paper therefore assesses the veracity of this assertion in three African countries by analyzing the extent to which participation in cross-national learning assessments have impacted on capacity development at the national level (up-stream) and how this (capacity) has cascaded down to affect class-room (downstream) practice and pedagogy.

1.1. Conceptual framework

1.1.1. Measuring capacity development

Snyder, Kamanga, Tate, and McLaughlin (2010, p. 2) provide a comprehensive definition of the term **capacity** by asserting that it “includes the legal, institutional, organizational, and administrative conditions of potential effectiveness, as well as accessibility and management of human resources, financial support, facilities and maintenance, materials provision, equipment and commodities availability, and all the resources that are essential to carry-out the substantive programme agenda”. In other words, capacity includes both ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ resources (available in the right mix) necessary to accomplish a task. The ‘soft’, resources include knowledge, attitudes, skills and habits necessary to fulfill an assignment and the same should be transferable. These are the resources the study focuses on to arrive at inferences; that is, to what extent have the cross-national learning assessment programmes impacted and successfully transferred knowledge and skills to participating countries to conduct own national learning outcome assessments and to sustain this culture thereof?

How then is capacity development **measured**? Pundits generally agree that measuring capacity development initiatives is not easy; and it is quite contextual because “for many areas, there has been no underlying measure of performance” (Wing, 2004, p. 3). However, there ought not be difficulty in measuring capacity development if the foundations for monitoring and evaluation (M & E) are well established, the M & E framework is well designed and the evaluators have the requisite technical skills (see Mulongo, 2014, pp. 8–9 for details). In other words, a successful evaluation is contingent upon a good project or programme design. In this paper, the term capacity refers to the ability of a country to design and implement autonomous national large-scale learning and availability of technical experts to design and implement these assessments. Moreover, evidence of strong government structures and improved teacher competencies are considered as key indicators of enhanced capacity. Relatedly, technology transfer as used in this study refers to the transmission of technical know-how from designers of cross-national learning programmes to national counterparts/institutions so that the latter are able to design and implement their own large-scale assessments. Culture of evaluation as implied in this study is therefore related to ‘capacity development’ and is measured by the number of national learning assessments independently conducted and those planned for the future as well as commitment and capacity of national public institutions to autonomously conduct own learning assessments in a sustainable manner.

The concept of ‘technology transfer’ spans many disciplines, from science, to communication, sociology, education and anthropology (Bozeman, 2000, pp. 3–4). It refers to “the transmission of know-how to suit local conditions, with effective absorption and diffusion both within and across countries (Chung, 2001; Kanyak, 1985 in Sazali, Raduan, & Osman, 2012). Management on the other hand refers to ‘intentional, goal oriented interaction between two or more persons, groups or organizations in order to exchange technological knowledge and/or artifacts and rights.’ (Amesse & Cohendet, 2001, pp. 2–3). This study operationalized the orientation adopted by Kanyak (1985) and Chung (2001) to refer to technology transfer as the transmission of the technical know-how (influence changes in curriculum to include sufficient components on literacy and equipping of national counterparts to design and implement their own assessments) from the ‘agents’, that is, the international cross-national frameworks (under the EFA umbrella) to participating countries. Moreover, such transmission should be sensitive to local conditions (education systems/language/mode of instruction) and the instructors (teacher training institutions/teachers) should be well equipped with this capacity. With this understanding, the diagram below (Fig. 1), shows the researchers’ conceptualization of the key variables necessary for the transfer of technical skills.

From Fig. 1, the following can be inferred:

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات