QUALITY EDUCATION AND MONITORING OF LEARNING OUTCOMES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.
EFA GOAL 6: A CHALLENGING GOAL
(1)

- Quality is at the heart of education
- EFA Goal 6 has been a neglected goal?
- Education = Learning??
  Children might stay longer in the education system but learning may not be taking place effectively.
EFA GOAL 6: A CHALLENGING GOAL

(2)

- More difficult goal to monitor and achieve than access to education

- Monitoring of quality largely focused on input measures (e.g. expenditure, infrastructure, learning materials, teacher supply and qualifications), or at most on outputs.

- The proxy indicator to measure quality as part of the EFA Development Index (EDI): Survival Rate to Grade 5

→ An urgent need to look beyond inputs/outputs towards learning outcomes
MONITORING LEARNING OUTCOMES: POLICY CHALLENGES

- Defining what we want to achieve and measure
- Wide disparities across countries in the AP region
- Learning gaps within the country: inequalities in learning achievement linked to inequalities in opportunity
- Still limited information about gaps in school quality and learning within countries
  What factors are associated with student learning outcomes? Are learning outcomes improving?
- Disconnect between information collected and effectively utilizing it to make policy changes towards teaching and learning
DEFINING QUALITY AND LEARNING IN EDUCATION

Governments and the international community are trying to define both cognitive and non-cognitive skills from a lifelong perspective and to meet needs of the changing world:

- **Four pillars of education in Delors Report, (UNESCO, 1996)**
  - Learning to know
  - Learning to do
  - Learning to live together
  - Learning to be

- **OECD’s DeSeCo definition and selection of competencies (2006)**
  - Interacting in socially heterogenous groups
  - Acting autonomously
  - Using tools interactively

- **Assessment and Teaching of 21st Century Skills (ATC21S)**
  - Ways of thinking
  - Ways of working
  - Tools for working
  - Living in the world

**Delors Report:**
- “Learning: the treasure within”, report by the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century commission in 1996
- Commission chaired by Jacques Delors
- Highlighted the four pillars of education

**OECD’s DeSeCo:** These are three broad categories of key competencies. 9 key competencies under these categories include: 1) relating well to others; cooperating; and managing and resolving conflict; 2) acting within the big picture or the larger context; forming and conducting life plans and personal projects; and defending and asserting one’s rights, interests, limits, and needs; 3) using language, symbols, and text interactively; using knowledge and information interactively; and using technology interactive.

**ATC21S:** One of the most recent efforts about defining 21st century skills, created by the University of Melbourne, Cisco, Intel and Microsoft and launched at the Learning and Technology World Forum 2009 in London. 10 skills have been defined under these four categories: 1) Creativity and innovation; critical thinking, problem solving, decision making; learning to learn, metacognition; 2) Communication; collaboration; 3) Information literacy; ICT literacy; 4) Citizenship; life and career; personal and social responsibility.
Assessments of learning outcomes take different forms:

- **International learning assessments** (e.g. PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS), which allow cross-country comparison based on international benchmarks

- **National learning assessments**, which provide information about learning outcomes according to nationally defined standards

- **Public examinations**, conducted at major system transition points, e.g. from lower to upper secondary or from secondary to higher education, often for certifying or screening purposes

- **School-based assessments**, conducted by schools, based on central guidelines regarding the nature of the assessment task, how it will be completed and supervised, and how it will be marked
### Country response in Asia-Pacific region: Increased participation in international assessments

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>PISA</th>
<th>TIMSS</th>
<th>PIRLS</th>
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<td>Australia</td>
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<td>Thailand</td>
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- **PISA** (Programme for International Students Assessment)
- **TIMSS** (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study)
- **PIRLS** (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study)
2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study or TIMMS surveyed 7 countries in the region: Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and Thailand – with ROK as the top among all countries surveyed.

The TIMMS scores show that students with a score of 400 or less have only the most basic knowledge of whole numbers, decimals and basic graphs; Students scoring from 550 and above can apply their understanding and knowledge in a variety of complex situations.

Average test scores in ROK were almost twice as high as for students in Ghana, at the bottom of the league.

The average student in Indonesia and Thailand stands alongside or below the poorest-performing 10% of students in Japan and Singapore.

While average test scores are higher in OECD countries, a substantial number of students still score below the low threshold, meaning they only have a basic understanding of math – this 10% of students in the United Kingdom and the US score below the low threshold, even higher in Italy.

“The distribution of PISA achievement in Bangkok is almost identical to that of the United States. While this highlights the disparity in education quality between Bangkok and the other areas of Thailand, it also suggests that many of the major problems of education quality in rural areas in Thailand have been solved in Bangkok.”
COUNTRY RESPONSE IN AP REGION: INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

- 25 countries in AP region have undertaken some form of National Assessment activities between 1995-99 and 2000-06

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<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
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<td>Central Eastern Europe</td>
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% of countries

COUNTRY RESPONSE IN AP REGION: HIGH-STAKE PUBLIC EXAMS AND RECENT TRENDS

- Many countries have reduced the number of exams
  - End of primary exam discontinued e.g. NSW in Australia; Bangladesh; India; Pakistan
  - End of lower secondary exam discontinued e.g. Australia except NSW, New Zealand, Hong Kong (after 2011)
- In some countries the university entrance exam is the most significant standardized exam
  - e.g. National Higher Entrance Examination in China; National Center Test for University Admissions in Japan
- An increased emphasis is put on moderated school-based assessments
  - e.g. Australia; Hong Kong; Korea; New Zealand

Source: Hill (2010)

NSW = New South Wales state in Australia

SELECTION: controlling access to secondary schools, courses within schools and entry to higher education institutions

CERTIFICATION: finding out and reporting what a student has achieved, whether they have graduated and what they know and are able to do

ACCOUNTABILITY: evaluating the effectiveness of instruction, motivating students and teachers to perform well, and reviewing the effectiveness of schools

Note: in Asia-Pacific Region much emphasis on Selection
Examinations represent an important quality control mechanism, but they can cause negative effects:

- Cheating and corruption
- Excessive drilling
- Commercial tutoring ("Shadow Education")
- Stress on students
- Schools and teachers excessively focusing on exams, ignoring aspects of curriculum not tested: teaching for the test.

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Reviewed various approaches to the assessment of learning outcomes in different countries in the region and exchanged country knowledge and experiences

9 countries participated

MESSAGES DRAWN FROM KEDI-UNESCO BANGKOK JOINT SEMINAR
“MONITORING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE” (SEOUL, JULY 2010) (1)

- The search for better and relevant approaches for monitoring education performance is an ongoing process.
- Improving quality of learning is a common concern in both developed and developing countries.
- More can be done to draw lessons from country specific data from international assessment studies.
- Not all countries have national assessments, but it is an emerging trend.
- National assessments allow countries to examine quality and equality in learning outcomes, to assess the impact of major educational reform, etc.
- Approaches to national assessment vary in the objective, target sample, assessment subjects, marking and scoring methods, use of assessment results, etc.
MESSAGES DRAWN FROM KEDI-UNESCO BANGKOK JOINT SEMINAR “MONITORING STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND SCHOOL PERFORMANCE” (SEOUL, JULY 2010) (2)

- Enhancement of national capacity to undertake assessment activities, analyze and use results is much needed.
- Need to further investigate on the real impacts of high-stake examinations on quality of learning across countries.
- Most assessments focus on cognitive skills but increasingly attempts are made to assess learning outcomes beyond academic achievement.
- Need to understand functioning and complementarities of different assessment activities within countries, towards a more coherent approach.
REFERENCES


Kim, G-J. Policy Issues on Quality of Basic Education: With a Focus on Learning Outcomes. UNESCO Bangkok’s presentation at International High-Level Meeting on Standards for the Quality of Basic Education (7-9 November 2010, Hangzhou, China).


"Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills." (EFA Goal 6)

THANK YOU
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