THE USE OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT FOR POLICY AND LEARNING IMPROVEMENT

Ramy Vivekanandandan Rodrigues
Education Policy & Reform Unit, UNESCO Bangkok

27 March 2013, NEQMAP Meeting
Bangkok, Thailand
Outline of presentation

1. Introduction to the Report
2. Findings from the Survey
3. Conclusions
1. Introduction to the Report

- Objectives
- Methodology
- Scope
1. Introduction

**Objectives:**

To better understand

1. The **dissemination** and **analysis** of assessment data
2. **Interventions** using assessment results
3. **Side-effects** of assessments

**Methodology:**

- Survey administered by UNESCO Bangkok in late 2011
- Respondents: Ministry of Education Officials and/or National experts
1. Introduction

- **Scope:**
  - 17 out of 48 Member States of UNESCO’s AP region responded:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUB-REGION</th>
<th>RESPONDENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>Australia (Victoria), Cook Islands, Lao PDR, Myanmar, New Zealand, Palau, Philippines, Tokelau, Thailand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South &amp; West Asia</td>
<td>Bhutan, Iran, Nepal, Sri Lanka</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Types of assessment covered in the survey:
  1. International large-scale assessments
  2. Examinations
  3. National/sub-national assessments
2. Findings from the Survey

- International large-scale assessments
- Examinations
- National/sub-national assessments
- Perceived side-effects of assessments
More countries/jurisdictions are participating in international assessments such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS.

**Table 1: Summary of participation in PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS by sub-regions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Asia</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 3 1 2 1 4 3 2 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia and the Pacific</td>
<td>4 8 9 12 13 9 11 10 10 10 3 5 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South and West Asia</td>
<td>0 0 0 1 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5 10 12 17 16 11 14 12 15 14 8 7 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PISA:**
From **5** (2000) to **16** (2012)

**TIMSS:**
From **11** (1995) to **14** (2011)

**PIRLS:**
From **6** (2001) to **8** (2011)
2. Findings: Dissemination of results from international assessments

The survey indicates that feedback to participating schools is not very common.
2. Findings: Analysis of data from international assessments

The survey indicates that very little of the analysis happens at the regional level.
2. Findings: Use of International Assessments

In addition, “ranking” in such assessments has significant influence on national policy formulation, sometimes igniting hot policy debates that lead to whole-sector reforms (i.e. Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar).
2. Findings: Examinations

- Two main observations for when examinations are held:
  1. Just before/after transitional points:
     - From primary to lower secondary
     - From lower to upper secondary
     - At the end of upper secondary
  2. At the upper secondary level

- Most influential examination:
  - Graduation from upper secondary education
  - Entrance to post-secondary, non-tertiary education
2. Findings: Use of Examinations

Compared to other types of student assessments, results of examinations are more likely to be used for learning improvements.
2. Findings: National/Sub-national Assessment

- Refers to large-scale assessment surveys designed to **measure the achievement of students in a curriculum area** for the purpose of monitoring educational quality.

- Most of the countries which participated in the survey have national / sub-national assessment in place.
2. Findings: Use of National Assessments

Results of national / sub-national assessments seem to be used mainly for making **policy improvements**.
2. Findings: Side Effects of Assessments

Types of Side Effects:

- Pressure from increased workload / preparation
- Extra paid private tutoring outside classroom
- Teaching to the test
- Focusing on performance of certain groups
2. Findings: Side Effects of Assessments

Stakeholders affected by the side effects:

- Students/student unions
- Teachers/teacher associations or unions
- Parents and wider communities
- Ministry officials/policy-makers
- Cluster of schools
- The media
3. Conclusion

- Analysis of assessment data
- Use of assessment data
- Recommendations
3. Conclusions: Analysis of Assessment Data

**Type of Analysis**
- The survey suggests that **snapshot analysis** of assessment results is more common than longitudinal or progress analysis.

**Level of Analysis**
- Analysis is more commonly conducted at the **national level** rather than at regional, school or student levels.

**Presentation of Analysis**
- Countries seem more likely to limit analysis of assessment data to the presentation of **simple descriptive analysis** of national performance rather than measuring the progress made by students or schools.
3. Conclusion: Use of Assessment Data

Respondents reported that participating in international assessments led to:
- review or changes in their curricula,
- professional development of teachers and
- organization of seminars or conferences for policy makers.

For national/sub-national assessments, the survey indicated that
- policy makers, researchers and school leaders
  are the primary audience for results.
But students themselves are not – only few countries
appear to give feedback directly to them.

There were at least three countries which said that
international assessments did not have a direct impact
on policy and learning improvements.
3. Conclusions: Recommendations

- Follow-up study focusing on the analysis and use of assessment results

- In order to identify the needs of Member States and the potential for capacity building of Ministries of Education, further investigation is needed on:
  - The type of primary and secondary data being collected at the national level on achievement and pathways of students
  - The analysis and statistical techniques used in synthesizing data

- Establishment of a network for greater regional collaboration for evidence-based decision making is highly encouraged.
Thank You!