

Do monitoring and evaluation tools, designed to measure the improvement in the quality of primary education, constrain or enhance educational development?

Jane Courtney

Educational Studies, Goldsmiths College, University of London, Lewisham Way, London SE14 6NW, UK

Abstract

A learner-centred view of education argues that the learner's needs must be understood and the learner must be engaged within the learning process. Governments advocate 'learner-centred' approaches whilst introducing national strategies and systems to reach agreed standards and competencies, often globally determined. There are increasing pressures on organisations to provide evidence that the quality of education is improving. Defining quality education and how it is measured has been the focus of much discussion. This paper contributes to the discussion by focussing on the measurement of the teaching and learning process in an Education Quality Improvement Project implemented in Cambodia.

© 2007 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Teacher development; Classroom observation; Monitoring and evaluation

1. Introduction

The 'Education For All' (EFA) debate has shifted from prioritising enrolment to reflecting on quality. As international partners come to a consensus on key areas for development in the drive for 'quality education', global standards and accountability are increasingly introduced. In this paper 'quality education' and the difficulties of its measurement are discussed. Increasing pressures on ministries, donors and non-government organisations (NGOs) to provide evidence of quality improvement has led to the development of a range of tools to measure quality. If these tools are to provide balanced research for forward planning, as well as measuring national competency, they need to measure the

approach to education that the government is advocating. A government may be promoting a learner-centred pedagogy, but is there a shared understanding of what this means and how it might be evidenced in a classroom? Is there a match between the practice being measured and the instrument measuring that practice?

This paper examines the Education Quality Improvement Project (EQIP) implemented in Cambodia by the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) from 1999 to 2004. The project is used as a case study to examine monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools. The outcomes from the tools are analysed to determine how accurately they measure improvements in the quality of education. It is shown how data collected using these tools makes an impact on the education system. It is argued that the quality education debate needs to

E-mail address: j.courtney@gold.ac.uk

consider not only the types of tools that are used to monitor education quality, but how far the tools themselves actually reflect the culture, educational values and pedagogies the country wants to advocate.

2. Quantity to quality

The delegates at the World EFA conference in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 agreed that universal primary education should be achieved by the end of the decade. In many low-income countries, the demand for education was already exceeding the supply. Governments with poorly developed education systems were often forced to make policy changes that would later have significant consequences on the quality of the education that was provided. This is illustrated by [Chimombo \(2005\)](#), who examined 10 case studies in Malawi and wrote:

...it appears that increased access to schooling has been achieved at the expense of the quality of education offered. ([Chimombo, 2005, p. 155](#))

[Khaniya and Williams \(2004\)](#) writing about Nepal point out that while completion rates in primary school remain low and provision is minimal, high enrolment rates are unlikely to lead to an increase in human capital. [Chimombo \(2005\)](#) and [Khaniya and Williams \(2004\)](#) echo the work from the [World Bank \(2002\)](#) which also expressed concern that the success of EFA goals could undermine the quality of education that was offered. In Cambodia, ‘teacher class ratios are increasing as a result of the success of the enrolment campaigns ...greater efficiency puts learning quality at risk’ (ESSP Review Report, 2002).

Despite the Jomtien conference, by 1998 approximately 113 million children were not enrolled for a basic primary education ([UN, 2001](#)). When the Dakar EFA conference took place in 2000, a framework of action was developed. The universal primary education target was set at 2015 and the primary education goal was elaborated. Reference was made not just to enrolment, but to the quality of education pupils would receive. All three newly elaborated sub targets referred to quality:

...have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality..., full and equal access to, and achievement in, basic education of good quality, ...improving all aspects of the

quality of education and ensuring excellence for all ([DFID, 2001, p. 10](#)).

Not only did the Dakar framework sub-targets emphasise the importance of quality, but they also made reference to measuring outcomes.

... so that recognised and measurable outcomes are achieved ([DFID, 2001, p. 10](#)).

By 2005 when the EFA Global Monitoring Report was published world wide, concern was increasingly directed at the quality of education.

The achievement of universal participation in education will be fundamentally dependent upon the quality of education available (EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2005, p. 28).

Defining and contextualising what is meant by quality education is a pre-requisite to exploring the effect of M&E tools in project work in low-income countries.

[Mingat \(2003\)](#) writes that the vast majority of educational professionals, if faced with the question of ‘how do you improve quality in education?’ are likely to reply ‘increase the inputs into the system and improve the processes that take place’. Yet the dominant method for quality improvement appears to be the setting of predefined targets which are expected to generate an improvement that can then be measured by testing the learning outcomes. [Chapman and Snyder \(2000\)](#) cite Davey and Neill who warn that although it is popular for educational reformers to see testing as a key strategy to improving educational performance that ‘measurement in itself will not induce positive educational change’.

The shift of policy emphasis from the quality of inputs and outputs to the quality of the process can be seen in many countries throughout the world. In [Norway \(2003\)](#), for example, significant reforms in the last 15 years were made by the Committee for Quality in Primary Education. They defined quality in three areas. Structural quality which included management and resource allocation; process quality, the educational processes and results quality, the desired results of the educational activities of pupils’ learning such as knowledge, skills and attitudes. Interestingly, the report moves directly from a discussion of quality to an outline of competence. The definition of ‘quality’ in [World Bank \(2002\)](#) reports also appears to be closely linked with learning outcomes. [Latif \(2004\)](#) writes

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/356546>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/356546>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)