

UNESCO International Symposium on Education Policies for 2030:

School Leadership, Monitoring and Evaluation and Governance in the implementation of the Education 2030 Framework for Action

UNESCO Headquarters in Paris - January 18-20, 2016

Final report

Background

The Education 2030 Framework for Action places great emphasis on quality, inclusiveness and equity. While access to education remains high up in the national agenda of many countries, these suggested goals for education in 2030 will require governments to maximize the use of existing policy levers for change. The Symposium took as its broad theme a discussion on which public policies can best help governments to reach higher levels of education quality through the use of governance, school leadership and monitoring and evaluation.

Presentations, panels and debates were informed by [three UNESCO reports](#) featuring the main findings of a comparative analysis of public policies in the three domains carried out over the past biennium and which will be launched in September 2016.

Objectives of the Symposium

The Symposium sought to provide participants from Member States with an opportunity to:

- Learn from Member States' approaches and strategies to address these challenges in view of the Education 2030 Framework for Action;
- Debate the main findings and policy lessons resulting from the global comparative analyses undertaken by UNESCO over the past two years; and
- Draw the necessary conclusions to guide countries' policy alignments with the Education 2030 Framework for Action, as well as UNESCO's role in supporting member states.

“The International Symposium on Education Policies for 2030 has been the first activity organised by UNESCO Headquarters to contribute to reinforce the capacities of Member States to unfold the Framework for Action, and is a great opportunity for member states and stakeholders to engage in a fruitful discussion on how school leadership, monitoring and evaluation systems, and governance can play a key role in the achievement of the new Sustainable Development Goals,” said Mr Qian Tang, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General of Education, at his welcoming address to the event's participants. “The fact that it is taking place already in the first month of the first year of implementation of the new Agenda is in itself an indication of UNESCO's high commitment to engage with Member States in making

its targets achievable.”

Each day of the symposium was dedicated to a theme: school leadership, monitoring and evaluation of education, and governance in education. What follows is an account of the discussions held and the resulting outcomes.

Day 1 – School leadership

1. There was a **consensus among all the participants from different constituencies** (researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, professional organizations, etc.) about the potential of school leadership to improve school performance and students’ learning outcomes although it was recognized that the content and modalities of school leadership reform may vary depending on political, institutional or cultural contexts.
2. **The discussions suggest the need to clarify the concept of school leadership so as to make sure that there is a common understanding where discussing the related complex issues.** While it is widely understood that a principal’s role is key, effective school leadership emerges from collaboration, i.e. shared or distributed leadership, which empowers other staff also and, in particular, teachers. There is also a need to define precisely the expectation from school leadership which, in the current circumstances, refers to its potential to improve school performance and students’ learning outcomes. This is why the focus is mostly on instructional or pedagogical school leadership.
3. There is, however, **a number of pre-conditions that must be met to exploit the full potential of school leadership.** Participants rightly claimed that recognizing leadership potential is not enough to feel its beneficial effects. In general, countries that have experienced the positive effects of school leadership on student outcomes have previously invested in a political and educational environment that is conducive to success. These include: (i) appropriate governance reforms; (ii) adequate regulatory and institutional frameworks; (iii) clear (re)definition of principals’ roles and responsibilities; (iv) related support in terms of training, appraisal and feedback, and; (v) motivation through respectable status and decent remuneration for school leaders.
4. **The difficulty to develop and implement effective school leadership policies in many countries includes resistance to tradition and change.** Thus, the instructional leadership should, for instance, **take into account the autonomy of teachers** through distributing leadership and enhancing skills of teachers. When leadership is distributed, other forms of leadership are likely to take place when there is trust among teachers and dialogue between all stakeholders.
5. **The importance of sound, integrated and sustainable school leadership policies** was also highlighted. All school leadership policy dimensions listed above have to be integrated into national education policy, particularly with the policy components related to teachers and quality of education. The participants insisted on the fact that there exists “no one size fits all” policy that will perfectly suit all countries’ situations, hence the need to take into accounts the specific context of the countries where the reforms must be introduced.
6. Discussions in the breakout sessions, however, drew attention to the fact **that “cultural diversity or historical differences” should not be used as an excuse to delay important reforms in the area of school leadership.** In fact, the literature shows that in

countries that have made progress in this area, all leaders draw on the same repertoire of skills or practices, namely: (i) Develop a vision, set the objectives and guidelines to achieve that vision; (ii) Understand the staff, especially teachers, and help them improve their skills; (iii) Design or redesign school organization in line with the defined objectives and vision; (iv) Manage teaching and learning activities.

7. **Acknowledging these common core skills, the challenge for countries is to ensure that school leaders are equipped with these skills and establish an enabling environment to enable them to function smoothly.** While this environment, in terms of political, regulatory and institutional frameworks, may vary among countries, these key skills are essential for any leader, regardless of culture. The literature suggests that effective leaders use optimally different dosages of these skills, depending on contexts and circumstances.
8. **Governance reshuffling is necessary to develop effective school leadership as hierarchical systems often hinder reforms.** Successful school leadership happens with a more autonomous and systematic approach to the management of educational systems; giving more power to schools and monitoring tools at decentralized level. The corollary of this is increased accountability for school leaders, suggesting the need for developing appropriate “contract-based” framework for the evaluation of school principals.

Day 2 – Monitoring and Evaluation

1. **There is a need to find a balance between the accountability and development functions of M&E.** The lack of such a balance may not only hinder the sustainability of M&E efforts but may cause a counter effect.
2. Because of technology advances, there are simple means to collect massive amounts of data. However, **countries are facing challenges in transforming such massively collected data into information needed for decision-making.** This is actually the main concern for many of the M&E systems in education. Furthermore, many fragmented M&E components (EMIS to teacher database, inspections, students’ learning records, etc.) are still failing to connect to create the necessary synergy to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.
3. Many of the current M&E systems in education are facing challenges in responding to **ever-growing user expectations as there is a need to advocate with users as to what M&E can and cannot offer.** Furthermore, the issue of **data privacy** and who should get access to what data should be taken into account as it will be a **major concern for future M&E system.** For that, it is essential to **put in place an institutional infrastructure** (legal framework, data privacy policy, clearly defined organizational structure and responsibilities, etc..) **in order to create a robust but secure M&E environment which can cater to the needs of a variety of clients and stakeholders.**
4. **While ensuring the desired result is being achieved (“doing the right thing”), it is also equally important to pay attention to processes (“doing things right”).** M&E systems for Education 2030 should strive to achieve a balance among the different dimensions of education (input, process, output and outcomes). In a rapidly changing world, M&E systems for Education 2030 must be designed to respond effectively to

continuous emerging needs in education. Moreover, it is important to understand that there is no “one size fits all” model especially in the context of Education 2030.

5. **Bringing together all relevant stakeholders, fostering collaboration (private sector, civil society, parents) and making M&E a fully participatory process would be a critical success factor** for future M&E systems for Education 2030.
6. M&E is the means not the end and **any M&E efforts should result in real and positive influences on classroom-level actions**. Furthermore, the future M&E system in education should serve as the means to empower schools and communities where actions take place and, for that, it is important to sensitize M&E culture at the grassroots level to understand roles, responsibilities and rights. Therefore, mutual accountability on M&E should be set up between duty bearers and right-holders.
7. Although it may be challenging, **all possible efforts should be made to ensure an M&E system free from political influence**. At the same time it is necessary to ensure that information is treated as a public good and promotes transparency.

Day 3 – Governance

1. Our common and traditional approaches to governance are under question and do not seem to fully take into account the emerging challenges that Member States are facing. **The landscape in governance is constantly evolving and is no longer as perfectly delineated as it was two decades ago**. The concept and practice of governance has become a much more complex and fluid domain. Education authorities must recognize that *governance* is not the same as government. The education sector must take into account the constant increase in the number of new clients and suppliers largely dominated by the private sector and other non-state actors. The marketization of education provision by a strong private sector reflects a new distribution of power in education. This is not just a matter of private schools and universities, but also concerns the parallel ‘shadow education’ sector of private supplementary tutoring.
2. Clearly in the context of the interplay of a multiplicity of stakeholders, **there has been a paradigm shift in the action of governments and this is particularly challenging in developing countries and emerging economies** because they do not have a plentiful supply of skilled personnel for dialogue and negotiation of roles. Consequently, government capacities to ensure equity in education provision for all are being challenged.
3. In the evolving scenario and **in view of the 2030 Education Agenda, the role of education authorities at central level is crucial in steering governance reforms as well as formulating a shared strategic vision and strategy to govern and manage their education systems**. Equally, attention must be given to education authorities at other levels and to civil society and private-sector actors, in a more pluralistic framework. It is essential to align governance reforms with the Sustainable Development Goals and agenda.
4. Education provision has shifted towards decentralization in particular through much greater school autonomy, hence offering wider choices of education provision for parents. There is no “one size fits all” approach to governance. **The use of governance, while it**

can promote democracy and give voice to a vast array of stakeholders in education, has to be strategic and fit for purpose. Rather, fully recognizing the existence of a “hybrid constellation of governance principles” and taking a contextualized approach to governance seems to be far more relevant. This implies a coordinating role for governments, probably accompanied by a regulating role. The expanded roles of civil society and the private sector require new attention to regulations for both formal institutions and non-formal ones in the education sector.

Concluding remarks

At the end of the Symposium discussions centred on three main points:

First, that **the assessment of the relevance of public policies necessary to make strategic use of governance, school leadership and monitoring and evaluation has to be made using the over-riding criteria of whether they contribute significantly to improving learning or not.** In this respect, the three domains have to be considered instrumental to those policies directly influencing learning, i.e. curriculum and teacher policies. Yet the three represent an untapped potential to speed up the process of attaining the 2030 Education Agenda targets.

Second, **policy-making in education requires the involvement of teachers from the outset.** This applies not only to domains directly related to teaching and learning but also to all those that may have a relevant influence on the quality of learning, such as governance, school leadership and monitoring and evaluation.

Finally, participants underlined **the role that UNESCO must play to promote the effective design and implementation of policies in these domains,** particularly through production and sharing of knowledge and best practices, promotion of international/regional cooperation, development of normative tools, and technical support and capacity-building of Member States, and particularly the developing countries.