

---

## Education sector analysis, planning and monitoring

### Educational planning methodology

**At the core of any effort to improve education quality and learning outcomes are three central processes: analysing the current education sector conditions, planning for improvement, and monitoring efforts to implement those plans.**

The first step in planning for improved learning outcomes is sector analysis. This requires a review of the available data and research on the characteristics of the education system, its performance, and its context. The next step, sector planning, uses that analysis to strategically identify priority goals, and to determine the most effective strategies, programmes, and specific activities to achieve those goals – all in light of the available resources and capacity. Sector monitoring, in turn, involves keeping track of the plan's implementation through indicators that measure contextual issues, inputs, processes, and outputs. Monitoring data then feed back into the analysis of the sector for another planning phase, and the cycle continues. In reality there is a great deal of movement back and forth, as new considerations re-shape previous decisions in a recursive way.

### **Key characteristics of effective education sector planning**

**It is strategic, with the goal of learning at the core:** The list of possible activities can be long. If the planning process is not strategically oriented towards achieving a specific vision for improvement, time and resources may be spent on disconnected issues, with little overall impact (UNESCO-IIEP, 2010; UNESCO-IIEP, GPE, 2015; UNESCO 2013; Abdul-Hamid, 2014). The primary objective of an education system is for students to learn. Education planning should be grounded in a discussion of the system's specific learning goals, and should prioritize key actions most likely to improve the system's ability to achieve these learning outcomes. To achieve this, the planning process needs to be informed by a legislative framework and a set of values that prioritizes every child's right to learn (UNESCO-IIEP, 2010; Pigozzi, 2004). Finally, the planning process itself needs to reflect principles of adaptive learning, allowing for adaptation and refinement as planning and implementation illuminate new issues and lead to new understanding (UNESCO-IIEP, 2010).

**It is grounded in quantitative and qualitative evidence:** Effective education sector planning begins with a comprehensive sector analysis, including an analysis of what students are actually learning, what they are not learning and why not, and how learning can be improved, as well as other data on education sector efficiency (UNESCO-IBE, 2012; UNESCO-IIEP et al, World Bank, UNICEF, GPE, 2014).. The system's existing Education Management Information System, and other past monitoring and evaluation, should provide some of the needed data – underscoring the ongoing need to build comprehensive and reliable data systems (Mourshed, Chijoke, and Barber, 2010). Qualitative research evidence is also important, particularly for understanding the processes that affect student learning outcomes. Policy-makers may need assistance in locating good-quality local and international research and effectively interpreting it in relation to the national context (Auld and

---

Morris, 2016; Batchelor, 2012; Coffield, 2012). The education sector analysis process needs to be open to considering evidence that contradicts established assumptions, and should allow space for dialogue and debate on difficult issues (Pigozzi, 2004; UNESCO, 2006).

**It is context-sensitive and realistic:** Education plans need to respond to the specific context in a number of ways. One of these is conflict and crisis preparedness, addressing the country's specific vulnerabilities in an integrated way throughout the plan's strategies. (UNESCO-IIEP, 2011, 2015). The plan also needs to avoid the wholesale adoption of methods simply transported from elsewhere. 'Best practices' are rarely if ever universal, and education planners need to analyse current circumstances in order to understand the key next steps to improvement within their own country's social, institutional, and economic reality (Auld and Morris, 2016; Coffield, 2012; Mourshed, Chijoke, and Barber, 2010; OECD, 2010, 2014). Finally, the planning process needs to include attention to current and projected financial, technical, and political resources and constraints so the adopted strategies are feasible and realistic (UNESCO-IIEP, GPE, 2015).

**It holistically integrates core issues:** Planners need to be well-versed in issues such as non-discrimination, gender equity, conflict and crisis preparedness, and any ethical or cultural goals that are important to the education system, to bring these concerns into the planning processes (UNESCO-IIEP, 2011). They also need to have a deep understanding of effective teaching and of the different issues and processes that affect teaching and learning (UNESCO-IBE, 2012).

**It is inclusive of stakeholders:** Education systems have a wide range of stakeholders, including local civil society, teacher unions, parent groups, student representatives, faith-based groups, employer associations, donors, and international organisations. –Engaging these stakeholders mobilises knowledge, capacity, and resources, which are important for effective planning, implementation, and monitoring of education policies (Coffield, 2012; USAID, 1999; UNESCO-IIEP, 2010; UNESCO, 2006). Public debate about what education quality means and how to achieve it can be taken as a positive sign, since it signals that education is an important public priority – a characteristic many of the world's strongest education systems hold in common (OECD, 2010, 2014; UNESCO, 2006.) Yet it is also important that leadership and decision-making mechanisms are strong enough to achieve a negotiated outcome to these discussions and move forward with implementation in a coordinated way (Mourshed, Chijoke, and Barber, 2010).

**It provides coherent and sustained reform:** Education planning needs to take into account all subsectors – such as early childhood, primary, secondary, higher, adult and non-formal education – in a coherent way to achieve significant change (UNESCO-IIEP, GPE, 2015). Deep system reform may be necessary, rather than just piecemeal improvements (OECD, 2010, 2014). Research on education systems that have achieved significant improvement suggests that willingness to learn from new ideas and change long-standing traditions when necessary can be a key factor, especially as part of a broader institutional culture that promotes collaboration and learning over time (USAID, 1999; OECD, 2010, 2014). To achieve such significant levels of reform often needs sustained leadership, at least for long enough to see through more than one cycle of implementation and adaptation (Mourshed, Chijoke, and Barber, 2010).

**It uses regular monitoring and evaluation to improve strategic plans:** The strength of an education sector analysis, and of the resulting strategic plan, is highly dependent on the quality of the data used. Thus, one key element of strategic planning is improving the monitoring and evaluation system that collects fundamental educational data, as well as increasing the capacity of education planners to understand and transform data into useful knowledge (Batchelor, 2012; Mourshed, Chijoke, and Barber, 2010)

---

**It supports the disadvantaged, both within and outside school:** An education sector plan must identify sources of educational disparities and address the specific needs of disadvantaged groups (UNESCO-IIEP, GPE, 2015). Many education systems have made significant progress in their overall levels of learning achievement by providing additional support to disadvantaged learners and underperforming schools (Mourshed, Chijoke, and Barber, 2010; OECD, 2010, 2014). Additionally, a great deal of what influences students' learning actually occurs outside of school – including factors such as parental background and parenting practices; physical health and nutrition; psycho-social health; and having adequate time to rest, study, and play. Education planners may therefore need to collaborate with agencies outside the sector in order to achieve real improvements in learning outcomes for the disadvantaged.

### Plans and policies

- Ethiopia [[PDF](#)]
- Palestine [[PDF](#)]
- United Republic of Tanzania [[PDF](#)]
- Seychelles [[PDF](#)]

### Tools

- IIEP-UNESCO; Global Partnership for Education. 2015. [Guidelines for education sector plan preparation](#). Paris; New York: IIEP-UNESCO; GPE.
- IIEP-UNESCO; Global Partnership for Education. 2015. [Guidelines for education sector plan appraisal](#). Paris; New York: IIEP-UNESCO; GPE.
- IIEP-UNESCO; World Bank; UNICEF; Global Partnership for Education. 2014. [Education sector analysis methodological guidelines: Volume 1](#). Dakar: IIEP Pôle de Dakar.
- IIEP-UNESCO; World Bank; UNICEF; Global Partnership for Education. 2014. [Education sector analysis methodological guidelines: Volume 2](#). Dakar: IIEP Pôle de Dakar.
- Global Campaign for Education. 2014. [Planning matters: A handbook for civil society participation in national education sector plan activities and processes](#). Johannesburg: Global Campaign for Education.

### References and sources

Abdul-Hamid, H. 2014. [What matters most for education management information systems:](#)

Auld, E; Morris, P. 2016. 'PISA, policy and persuasion: Translating complex conditions into education "best practice"'. In: *Comparative Education*. 52, (2), 202-229.

Batchelor, S.J. 2012. [Information ecosystems of policy actors: Reviewing the landscape](#). Institute of Development Studies Working Paper, 401.

Coffield, F. 2012. 'Why the McKinsey reports will not improve school systems'. In: *Journal of Education Policy*. 27 (1), 131-149.

Mourshed, M.; Chijioké, C.; Barber, M. 2010. [How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better](#). London: McKinsey and Company.

Pigozzi, M. J. 2004. [The 10 dimensions of quality in education](#).

OECD. 2010 [Strong performers and successful reformers in education: Lessons from PISA for Mexico](#).

OECD. 2014. [Lessons from PISA for Korea, strong performers and successful reformers in education](#)

UNESCO. 2006. [National education sector development plan: A result-based planning handbook](#). Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO. 2013. [UNESCO Handbook on education policy analysis and programming: Education policy analysis Vol 1](#). Bangkok: UNESCO.

UNESCO-IBE. 2012. [General Education System Quality Analysis/Diagnosis Framework \(GEQAF\)](#).

UNESCO-IIEP. 2010a. [Strategic planning: Concept and rationale, Working Paper 1](#). Paris: UNESCO-IIEP.

———. 2010b. [Strategic planning: Organizational arrangements, Working Paper 2](#). Paris: UNESCO-IIEP.

———. 2010c. [Strategic planning: Techniques and methods Working Paper 3](#). Paris: UNESCO-IIEP.

UNESCO-IIEP. 2011. [Integrating conflict and disaster risk reduction into education sector planning](#). Paris: UNESCO-IIEP.

UNESCO-IIEP; GPE (Global Partnership for Education). 2015. [Guidelines for education sector plan preparation](#). Paris: UNESCO-IIEP.

UNESCO-IIEP; the World Bank; UNICEF; GPE (Global Partnership for Education). 2014. [Education sector analysis methodological guidelines: Volume 1](#).

USAID (United States Agency for International Development). 1999. [Educational Quality Framework. Improving Educational Quality \(IEQ\) Project](#).

---

[print](#)