Universal Standards for Quality in Education

To enable the delivery of Sustainable Development Goals 2030

The Commonwealth
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2017

The Commonwealth
Acknowledgements

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Diagram of Standards of Quality applied to the Commonwealth Education Policy Framework
Introduction

Education continues to be critical for many reasons such as reducing levels of poverty, improving quality of life, stimulating innovation and progress. Creating a single set of quality standards has been described as challenging, but may be useful if sufficiently broad to be inclusive.

A single set of standards for quality in education needs to be viewed in the context of world-wide cultures and belief systems that influence the curriculums and approaches in teaching and learning systems. A concise definition for “quality” in education is challenging to arrive at and many definitions may be found. When looking for definitions, one easily finds definitions and descriptions that relate to education in different ways, or that relate to systemic factors such as the quality of examination or qualification systems. None of these standards met the need for an overarching set of quality standards.

A few of the existing quality standards that have been taken notice of are:

- CHEA International Quality Group International Quality Principles
  http://www.chea.org
- ICT competency standards for teachers: policy framework, UNESCO
  http://tinyurl.com/kgwf99a
- Teachers’ standards, UK Government
  http://tinyurl.com/lmspn2n
- Professional Standards, Education and Training Foundation
  http://tinyurl.com/z42awmt
Short definitions of Standards for Quality in Education

1) Purpose
To improve the quality of education to enable the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2) Definition
Quality education refers to a system or product that has passed a certain set of criteria or principles. The standard approach in setting the criteria or principles for quality implies that quality can always be further improved. Quality thus implies the maintenance and improvement of standards with the assumption that ‘standards’ are objective and quality is a continuous change.

Quality in education across the education system consists of the application of the principles of: Effective, Empowering, Equity, Sustainable, Appropriate, and Wellbeing & Safety (EEESAW).

3) Rationale
Quality is an important aspect for cost effective educational outcomes.
There is no global or Commonwealth consensus on what is meant by quality.
The Education Minister’s Action Group (EMAG) has asked for the development of Commonwealth Standards for Quality in Education.
## 4) Standards of Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Abbreviated Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Education that is evidence based, cost effective and delivers intended outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering</td>
<td>Education that enables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equitable</td>
<td>Education that is fair, accessible for all and inclusive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable</td>
<td>Education that can be maintained at a certain rate or level that balances the requirements of social economic and environmental development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td>Education that is suitable or relevant in the circumstances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellbeing &amp; Safety</td>
<td>Education that protects and promotes health and wellbeing and strengthens resilience.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5) Application of Standards of Quality (based on the Commonwealth Education Policy Framework)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Governance</td>
<td>Political will; legislation; policy and regulation; strategic planning; financing; organisation; quality assurance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Leadership and ethics; social mobilisation and community engagement; communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>Educational professional development; curriculum; infrastructure and technology; standards and accreditation; wider workforce planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Research and development; innovation; monitoring and evaluation; dissemination and uptake; ICT and online learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-School</td>
<td>Early socialisation of children; readiness of learners; effective coalition for delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school</td>
<td>Reaching hardest to reach; building literacy, numeracy and socialisation; providing foundations for secondary schooling; early assessment of learning and development; gender role models; language policy; addressing specific gender-based factors of child non-attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>Differentiated policies for lower and upper secondary education; balance of subject knowledge; safe and accessible; tackling specific threats; addressing specific gender-based factors of child non-attendance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Tertiary education, Technical and vocational education and training skills; adult education and learning; lifelong learning and learning cultures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mapping the Standards against the SDGs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equitable</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
<th>Empowering</th>
<th>Sustainable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6</td>
<td>2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6</td>
<td>3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6</td>
<td>4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6</td>
<td>5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7</td>
<td>7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7</td>
<td>8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6</td>
<td>9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6, 9.7</td>
<td>10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7, 10.8</td>
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<td>16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.8, 16.9</td>
<td>17.1, 17.2, 17.3, 17.4, 17.5, 17.6, 17.7, 17.8, 17.9</td>
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</tbody>
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Longer definitions and description of Standards of Quality in Education

| Effective | An output of specific review/analyses that measure the quality of the achievement of a specific educational goal or the degree to which an education institution can be expected to achieve specific requirements (UNESCO 2007).
This refers to services that are adherent to an evidence base and result in improved outcomes for individuals and communities, based on need (WHO 2006).
Information derived from formal research and systematic investigation to identify causes and contributing factors to needs and actions in given contexts and populations (WHO 1998).
The hierarchy of evidence based approaches presented by Oxford Centre for Evidence-based Medicine – Levels of Evidence (March 2009) is presented below. It is well recognised with higher levels of evidence presented further up the list:
Meta-analysis
Systematic review
Randomised control trials
Cohort studies
Case controlled studies
Case studies
Expert opinion

Economic appraisal is important aspect of effectiveness that considers not just whether an intervention works, i.e. its benefits, but also looks at the cost of an intervention. This is useful for priority setting allowing opportunity costs to be taken into consideration. There are a number of recognised methodologies for economic appraisal including:
Cost-benefit analysis
Cost-effectiveness Analysis
Cost-utility analysis

| Empowering | Empowering is the expansion of assets and capabilities of people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives. (World Bank 2002). |
### Equity

Equity in education is the means to achieve equality. It intends to provide the best opportunities for all students to achieve their full potential and act to address instances of disadvantage which restrict educational achievement *(UNESCO 2015)*.

The absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically, or geographically *(WHO 2015)*.

Differences in health which are unnecessary and avoidable but, in addition, are also considered unfair and unjust *(Whitehead and Dahlgren, 2007)*. Services/facilities appropriate for the individual’s circumstance irrespective of geography, gender, race/ethnicity, age, culture, or sexual orientation *(Marmot and Allen 2014)*.

### Sustainable

The **United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)** highlighted the **Brundtland Commission**’s report *(1987)* has defined sustainable development as, “development which meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This concept supports strong **economic** and **social development**. It also underlines the importance of protecting the natural resource base and the **environment**.

### Appropriate

Suitable or proper in the circumstances *(Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2016)*

Relevant - Closely connected or appropriate to what is being done *(Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2016)*

Methods, procedures, techniques and equipment that are scientifically valid, adapted to local needs and acceptable to those who use them and to those for whom they are used, and that can be maintained and utilized with resources the community or country can afford *(WHO 2004)*.

### Wellbeing & Safety

Defined as packaged delivery which minimize risks and harm to service users *(WHO 2006)*.

Reducing risk, promoting healthy and safe environments in education settings, sanitation, noise and transport injuries and chemical, environmental, biological and radiation hazards. Protection from heat, cold, flooding, environmental disasters, injuries and violence.

Resilience skills: School based emotional literacy, violence and abuse prevention programmes.

Behaviour and health literacy to address risk factors and promote positive health behaviours (tobacco, alcohol, drugs, sexual health, physical activity, injury prevention, healthy eating and oral health. Healthy living environments.

*(Commonwealth Secretariat, Health and Education Unit, Systems Framework for Healthy Policy 2016)*.
**Resources/web links**

**Commonwealth Education Hub:** background papers and case studies available at: https://www.thecommonwealth-educationhub.net/quality-standards-education

**References**


