



Cross Section Analysis of the Education Sector: Meta-Evaluation and Synthesis

Summary report

As a federal enterprise, GIZ supports the German Government in achieving its objectives in the international cooperation for sustainable development. This presentation covers former GTZ/InWEnt activities that through the name change are conditionally designated as GIZ activities.

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Summary report

The Institute for International Cooperation in Education (IZB) and the Institute for the Management and Economics in Education (IBB) of the University of Teacher Education Zug (PH Zug) co-authored a cross section analysis on behalf of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). The report consisted of a meta-evaluation and a synthesis of projects conducted by GIZ in the education sector. The aim of the report was to summarise and analyse individual evaluations, to aggregate findings from these evaluations and to develop recommendations based on these findings.

Ten independent evaluations (IE), which were conducted on behalf of the monitoring and evaluation unit of GIZ, as well as twelve project progress reviews (PPR) and two decentral evaluations (DE) commissioned by projects served as basis for the report. For the meta-evaluation, we developed a rating system to analyse the quality of the individual evaluations. Only evaluations that were deemed sufficiently robust were included in the synthesis.

The results of the meta-evaluation of the IE are positive. Across all categories, the quality of the IE is satisfactory better. The transparency of the methodology employed, the use of data sources, as well as the recommendations provided in the evaluations are aspects with particularly good ratings. On average, the rating score of the IE is 15.7 out of 18 possible points with 6 being the lowest score possible. With regard to the PPR, the results are mixed: The average score is 12 out of 18 points. Three of the analysed PPR were not regarded sufficiently robust to be included in the synthesis. Across all PPR, there is room for improvement with regard to the appropriate use of results chains¹, as well as with regard to the transparency of the methods employed. Finally, the two DE analysed achieve a rating of 13 and 12 out of 18 points, respectively.

Based on the criteria set by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), the projects evaluated by the IE and PPR were given the following average marks (with 1 being the best and 6 being the lowest score): relevance 1.6, effectiveness 2.4, impact 2.9, efficiency 2.7 and sustainability 2.9. The average score of the overall assessments was 2.7, thereby placing it between level 2 (good result; without substantial deficits) and level 3 (satisfactory result; positive results dominate). However, from our point of view, the evaluations tended to be mild assessments.

For the synthesis, we developed an analytical grid based on the guiding questions from the terms of reference. The grid was used separately for IE, PPR and DE. With the help of the grid, all evaluations were analysed with regard to noteworthy content, as well as recurring themes. The latter analysis identified the following thematic clusters: cooperation as a success factor, monitoring and evaluation (in the education sector) and methodological approaches in the education sector.

Cooperation as a success factor

With regard to the managerial success and failure factors, the **form of collaborative relationships** was a recurring theme. The weak motivation and capacities for cooperation of national governmental partners were criticised in several individual evaluations. That being said, the coopera-

¹ GIZ initially replaced the term “results chain” with the term “results structure” and finally with the term “results model”. As the evaluated documents predominantly utilise “result chain”, this phrasing is also used in the summary.

tion with governmental partners on the decentralised level was judged more favourably. The cooperation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), their motivation and energy was also judged favourably, though mentioned less frequently. In some cases, not all relevant actors were sufficiently included in the planning process and/or their motivation and intentions were not adequately taken into account.

Across all types of evaluations, the relevance of the strategic orientation was commended. Overall, the projects were judged to deal with important obstacles for development and to be in line with national as well as international policies. With regard to the termination of development programmes, missing exit strategies as well as an insufficient consolidation were criticised in the IE. Regarding the relevance for education systems as a whole, the synthesis shows that projects often did not have a lasting impact at the system level, despite obtaining very positive relevance ratings. This was not the case for all projects, however, as some were deemed to have had a lasting impact. In some cases, individual capacity building was deemed successful, but the planned transfer to the system level failed. The scrutinised projects all operated in more or less fragile and unpredictable contexts, thus making an impact on the system level very difficult to achieve. Expressions of intent from government partners regarding reforms were often not followed up by actions. In many instances, expectations regarding reforms were too optimistic, even in cases where the reforms were already under implementation. During the planning phase of interventions, the motivation and needs of the various actors involved in reform processes were judged to have been analysed insufficiently. Compared to the IE, the PPR contain more positive assessments of the system relevance.

Donor coordination was found to be taking place with other bilateral as well as multilateral donor agencies in most cases. All types of evaluations showed that there was a strong wish for higher levels of donor coordination in order to avoid parallel structures and overlapping interventions in the future.

Monitoring und Evaluation in the Education Sector

With regard to several overarching questions of special strategic relevance to GIZ, several matters became evident. First in many interventions there is lack of proof of impact at the target group level. While direct and indirect impacts of interventions are usually detailed in the evaluations, a significant number of evaluations failed to provide evidence of impact at the level of the intended target group(s) of the respective intervention.

On the one hand, this represents an area for improvement with regard to project management, since it was not possible to identify and prove factors beneficial for the intended target groups within the framework of project monitoring. On the other hand, the expected impacts of the interventions were - in hindsight - often characterised as too ambitious, especially when taking the contexts of the interventions into account.

Regarding the **quality of education**, quality was often linked to educational achievements. Indicators used here are usually school grades, completion rates for primary school as well as transition rates from primary to secondary school or further education. However, it is not always possible to be certain that students have acquired essential competencies based on their school grades and/or school diplomas. Several evaluations underline the importance of providing relevant educational content that takes into account the life context of the students and is compatible with (possible) professional and/or further training. At the same time, these issues are a reflection of the scope of

the evaluated projects. Their aims were situated on the level of intermediaries (e.g. ministries of education, school inspections, and teaching staff) and were therefore often reaching students only indirectly.

Methodological Aspects in the Education Sector

The projects analysed in the synthesis combine various activities. The individual activities are usually judged favourably in the evaluations. However, activities that are already promising on their own become even more effective when used in conjunction with other, aligned activities. A context-sensitive mix of individual activities is paramount for achieving impact on intermediary and target group levels. The combination of further training for teaching staff with the development and introduction of new curricula and a multi-level approach was especially promising. Regarding the commitment of partners, it is helpful if interventions can be connected to existing measures or institutions; the intervention in Chad which made use of pre-existing parental groups is such an example.

Regarding the sector-specific criteria for success and failure, the improvement of access to and quality of education are core aims of all interventions. In the Sub-Saharan region, improved access to education presents a huge challenge for the education systems as there are not enough sufficiently qualified teachers available. International research has shown that solely focusing on improving access to education can have adverse effects on the quality of education. Improving the quality of education, in turn, often has beneficial effects on school enrolment and retention rates. If education is seen as relevant by the students and their families, the motivation to engage in educational activities rises and, ultimately, this results in improved academic performances. **Quality of education and access to education** are therefore issues that are closely interlinked and that cannot be treated separately or in parallel, but only in a systemic fashion. Taking the diverse contexts into consideration, this was done on a satisfactory level in all projects analysed.

In all interventions located at the level of primary education, there are measures to strengthen the training and further training of teachers. The improvements of didactical competences and professional competences are core aims. The development and distribution of new curricula of teaching and learning materials are also important measures; ideally all of the above is done in a combined fashion. This makes it more likely that teachers are able and willing to use newly developed learning and teaching materials in their classrooms. A good example of this is provided by a project in Ghana where teaching materials were developed in various languages with the participation and support of the staff from the educational department as well as teacher training institutions. The synthesis also shows that a shift from teacher-oriented towards student-oriented classroom practices is a recurring theme during teacher education and further training (for example in Ghana, Guinea and Malawi).

The purposeful use of a **multi-level approach** is deemed especially promising. Furthermore, there is a connection between a multi-level approach and the aspect of system relevance. Some IE indicated that successful interventions had only little or no impact beyond a specific focus area due to influential context factors of influence aligned with the interventions. For example, despite managing to successfully develop improved teaching and learning materials, as well as a successful teacher training programme in Pakistan, there was no shift towards more student-centred learning. An insufficient basic teacher training, as well as a challenging infrastructure for teachers and not enough teaching and learning materials – and existing material with poor print quality – were identified as likely causes. Other examples from PPR indicate that combined actions should ideally target the micro, meso and macro level concurrently for optimal effect. In cases where this is not

possible, at least two levels should be targeted. An illustration of this can be found in a project in Central Asia where educational institutions in the cooperating countries introduce innovations aimed at a sustainable improvement of the relevance of education and the usability of teaching and learning content. The program supports key actors and institutions among the associated partners in their process of securing political support for a broad implementation through counselling and capacity build-up.

Several of the evaluated projects operated in fragile (post-)conflict situations. In these projects, the interventions were adjusted to the context with special care. Examples can be found in the combination of support for primary education and non-formal vocational training in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the support for “home schools” for Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

The issue of **gender equality** is treated in all three types of evaluations. In the projects initiated by GIZ in Sub-Saharan Africa, the focus on gender issues can be deemed a success. Results include higher school enrolment rates and lower drop-out rates among girls. Awareness for these issues has been raised through the interventions. The success can also be traced back to a system with smaller classes, involvement of (in particular) mothers, all-female classes and well-educated female teachers. Approaches which took the (context-dependant) needs of girls into account and sought to establish collaboration with councils of elders, religious leaders and decentralised educational structures were especially effective. A project in Guinea that focused on improving the educational situation for disadvantaged population strata (especially socially disadvantaged girls and girls with learning difficulties) can be seen as an example, with HIV and AIDS prevention as an important cross-sectional issue. The decentralised organisation of the project was a central success factor as collaboration on a national level became impossible during a period of crisis of central government. A further effect of the program “Filles éduquées réussissent” (FIERE – educated girls are successful) in Guinea is a change of attitude and conduct among the girls. According the evaluation, many girls affected by the programme are increasingly confident and more interested in attending school.

Recommendations

With regard to the **success factor cooperation** and the **system relevance** of interventions, we recommend the following:

1. GIZ should – in dialogue with its main commissioning party, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) – work towards more realistic intervention goals with corresponding adequate and financially secure durations. A stronger **long-term orientation and coherence** of the interventions would be helpful with regarding to successful implementations and consolidations of reform processes in the field.
2. In terms of the preparation and planning of education projects, GIZ should consider whether corresponding instruments – such as **actor mapping** and **capacity assessments** – can be used more consistently and effectively. This would entail an identification of relevant stakeholders, an analysis of their **ownership and motivation** as well as of their role(s) in processes of education policy reform processes. In the education sector, relevant actors are typically – but not exclusively – students, parents, teachers, school administrations and government agencies from the local to the national level.

3. In order to be able to respond to changing circumstances, GIZ projects should develop flexible **exit and consolidation strategies** in collaboration with local partners early on during the project planning phase, if possible.
4. Regarding the activities in the field, the emphasis on **participatory approaches involving all relevant actors** (such as involvement of parents or development of teaching material with the involvement of staff from education authorities, teacher education institutions and teachers) should be strengthened further. Although cost- and time-intensive, this could lead to more sustainable results. At the same time, such participatory approaches foster mutual appreciation and trust between GIZ and its partners.
5. In cases where reform processes with state partners cannot be advanced, GIZ should collaborate more with **NGOs**. In the education sector, NGOs can assume vital functions, for example by participating in the conception and funding of education projects. Civil society organisations are often more flexible and change-oriented than government agencies. However, they have less impact on the system level. The evaluations analysed in the cross-section report that refer to NGOs often judge their energy and motivation as positive. These recommendations are contextually sensitive. It is important to consider possible side-effects of cooperation with pro-government and anti-government NGOs.

With regard to **monitoring and evaluation systems** (M+E systems), particularly of **education projects**, the following steps are recommended:

6. M+E systems should be improved to allow for a continuous monitoring of project performance and steering decisions, as well as **evidence of results achieved**. For the education sector, GIZ should look into developing better solutions for the measurement of results at target group level, even if this part of the project planning is outside the scope of responsibility of GIZ. In this regard, the usefulness of indicators should be checked continuously. Indicators linked to changes at the intermediary level, as well as conclusions about improvements in learning performances of students are especially relevant. At the target group level, learning level measurements which give consideration to regional contexts are particularly relevant. Examples for this are the Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) or the Programme d'Analyse des Systèmes Educatifs de la CONFEMEN (PASEC).
7. We recommend that innovations be tested regarding their applicability in scaling-up and further dissemination in the education sector in other countries, as the transfer of good practices with contextual adjustments can cause significant synergies. The existing **M+E systems** are not sufficiently suitable to capture the **context factors** under which certain methodological approaches may exert their effects. This is necessary in order to realistically assess the transferability of innovations. A combination of M+E systems with actor mapping should be examined.

Regarding the **methodological aspects**, we recommend the following:

8. If **education quality** is equated to **learning outcomes**, and this is in turn equated to the competence of the students (as it appears to be the case in numerous evaluated education

projects), we recommend that GIZ focusses on how learning outcomes can be measured by alternative means. Caution is advised when merely school grades are utilised. The validity of school grades is a recurring debate in education research, including how grades are arrived at. Whether students are able to apply their knowledge in a useful way and whether their competencies enable a connection to vocational education and further training cannot automatically be assessed on the basis of school grades. Competency-based curricula, standards and tests can be a viable way of improvement. An example of such an approach is the educational standards in Germany (cf. Klieme, 2007; The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Federal States in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2004).

9. **Access to education and quality of education** are closely related. We recommend that education project continue to view both areas as interdependent aspects.
10. Provided the respective local context offers an appropriate level of support, partners in the field of education should be advised to **move from teacher-centred to more student-centred teaching methods**, especially in combination and complementarity with (directive) orientations and structural orders (cf. Hattie, 2009). In order to utilise this potential, the following factors concerning teacher training and development of teaching materials should be taken into account:
 - A shift from teacher-centred towards student-centred teaching entails profound changes in the attitude and self-image of teachers, which in turn is closely linked to ownership issues.
 - For high quality student-centred teaching, teachers need to be trained even better than for teacher-centred settings.
 - Successful student-centred teaching methods require adapted curricula, teaching and learning materials.
11. Interventions should continue to develop, or help developing, **teaching material** in a participatory way and with strong emphasis on quality. New materials should be tested in the field (at the micro level) and coupled with teacher training and organisational development at the macro level.