

Case Title:

Using Evidence to Improve Teacher Placement in Ghana

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Organization: Ministry of Education Ghana, USAID/Ghana & Social Impact



Classroom Teacher in Ghana.
Credit: Social Impact.

Summary:

Ministry of Education in Ghana requested more evidence to guide policy decisions and introduce more systematic processes with which to implement teacher rationalization—which effectively means how to plan for the effective placement of teachers. Rather than conducting a standard assessment, USAID and its implementer, Social Impact worked with the Ministry of Education to design a utilization focused assessment. This assessment effectively integrates collaboration, learning and adapting by bringing in the users of the assessment into the design of the assessment, into the review and interpretation of results, and into the data collection itself.

From an organizational perspective this approach provides users with data that is more in line with their needs, the tools they need to advocate for use of data, and the opportunity for decision makers from different units and divisions to discuss and interpret results collaboratively. On a wider scale, this approach has implications for a wider use of data for decision making in the Ministry and also has important implications for government transparency. The data gathered here when available to the public can help stakeholders can better understand how their government makes important decisions about the education of the country’s children.

1. Which subcomponents of the Collaborating, Learning and Adapting Framework are reflected *most* in your case (select up to 5 subcomponents)?



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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Internal Collaboration | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Openness |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External Collaboration | <input type="checkbox"/> Relationships & Networks |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technical Evidence Base | <input type="checkbox"/> Continuous Learning & Improvement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theories of Change | <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge Management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scenario Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional Memory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> M&E for Learning | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decision-Making |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pause & Reflect | <input type="checkbox"/> Mission Resources |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adaptive Management | <input type="checkbox"/> CLA in Implementing Mechanisms |

2. What is the general context in which the case takes place? What organizational or development challenge(s) prompted you to collaborate, learn, and/or adapt?

The Ministry of Education in Ghana is systematically moving to place a greater focus on evidence-based decision making. One of the signs of this is that, in 2014, the Ministry of Education established a concept note and request looking for more evidence to guide policy decisions and introduce more systematic processes with which to implement teacher rationalization—which effectively means how to plan for the effective placement of teachers.

Decisions and policies around teacher rationalization have a significant effect on Ghana. Teacher rationalization at the national level aims to find the best ways to not only place teachers efficiently so that students can access schools, but also place them effectively so that teachers have the correct education and language background to demonstrate their skills and improve student outcomes. While essential, effective teacher rationalization, requires a great of well organized data. Factors such as language use, official language of instruction, pupil teacher ratios, pupil to trained teacher ratios, class to teacher ratios, and efficiency measures all need to be collected and effectively mapped and disaggregated to understand the current state of these factors as the district and school levels. Once the data is there, it needs to be systematically combined with qualitative data and weighted against each other in a way that the government sees fit—essentially creating a formula that can help systematically and efficiently guide teacher rationalization.

3. Why did you decide to use a CLA approach? Why was CLA considered helpful for addressing your organizational or development challenge(s)?

To meet this request from the Government of Ghana, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Partnership for Education in Ghana requested that a Teacher Rationalization Study be implemented under the Evaluating Systems activity, led by Social Impact, Inc. However, rather than conducting a standard assessment, USAID and Evaluating Systems worked with the Ministry of Education to design a utilization focused assessment. Through this CLA focused process, USAID, Evaluating Systems and the Government of Ghana could work to ensure that this assessment is not simply a static and forgotten document to be filed away after a single reading. Rather this assessment is process through which data can effectively be integrated into a specific learning and decision making process within the Ministry.

4. Tell us the story of how you used a collaborating, learning and/or adapting approach to address the organizational or development challenge described in Question 2.

As stated above, the Teacher Rationalization Study is an assessment process that effectively integrates collaboration, learning and adapting by bringing in the users of the assessment into the design of the assessment, into the review and interpretation of results, and into the data collection itself. The process followed the 4-phase, 15 step process described by Michael Quinn in his approach to utilization focused evaluation. In this process Evaluating Systems provided facilitating guidance, but ultimate decisions were made by the Ministry itself. In this case, this was done through key, collaborative steps.

First, the Teacher Rationalization Study Working Group (TRSWG) was collaboratively formed. Evaluating Systems set guidance about the kinds of backgrounds that would be helpful to the group and then the Ministry established its members. Second, Evaluating Systems facilitated a kickoff meeting of the TRSWG. Here the, the TRSWG reviewed, adapted and validated draft terms of reference for the group outlining the specific roles and responsibilities and how the group would support the data collection and use process moving forward. They also reviewed and provided feedback on the methods to be used for the first phase of data collection and identified key informants to participate in the assessment. Third, after the kickoff meeting, Evaluating Systems finalized the design approach, had it validated by the TRSWG and then relied on the support from the TRSWG to arrange for the meetings. Finally, once the data was collected and processed, Evaluating Systems convened a second TRSWG working group meeting to review findings and collaboratively provide guidance and context for the conclusions and recommendations drawn from the report. In the phases to come Evaluating Systems will conduct another level of analysis through a research design and work with the TRSWG to share the results of the combined studies effectively.

Essential to the progress of the steps above is a recognition of the heavy workload that Government partners have. Through each of these steps, the Evaluating Systems team took a very proactive facilitation approach holding well structured meetings, focusing on the key collaborative decisions that needed to be made, and presenting findings and facts in the most clear and precise way possible. By easing this administrative burden, each of the steps outlined above could be conducted in a way that focused foremost on the collaboration and discussion, the learning from results and the decision making needed for adaptation.

5. Organizational Effectiveness: How has collaborating, learning and adapting affected your team and/or organization? If it's too early to tell, what effects do you expect to see in the future?

There were three key benefits to organizational effectiveness that we saw come out of this process. First, the assessment gave all actors involved (both at USAID and the Government of Ghana) the space and tools to understand the data in a substantive way, and also discuss and strategize on how to effectively use that data to advocate for changes to policy and practice within the Ministry.

Second, participants not only became very comfortable with how to use and interpret data for teacher rationalization specifically, but, through this process, could become even stronger advocates for evidence based decision making in general. In the future we hope to see that this data and evidence based decision making is applied not just to teacher rationalization, but also a wider range of decisions made in the Ministry of Education.

Third, especially during the collaborative interpretation of results, we saw the benefit of bringing together actors from across the Ministry of Education, Ghana Education Service and non governmental sectors into one room. Here, actors that do not always get the opportunity to work together look at the same findings and then share what are often varied interpretations and conclusions based on those findings. The TRSWG gave the opportunity to hear from other perspectives, recognize their validity, and then work together to come to consensus. That process fostered collaboration across Ministry units and divisions.

6. Development Results: How has using a CLA approach contributed to your development outcomes? What evidence can you provide? If it's too early to tell, what effects do you expect to see in the future?

While the current results we see are in the realm of organizational effectiveness, we do hope to see long term development results. The two key changes we hope to see is that with a data driven teacher rationalization “formula”, teachers are placed more efficiently and effectively. This would first, allow for the Ministry of Education to make the most of their scarce resources and limit the current challenge of teacher shortages. Second, it allows for teachers to be placed more effectively specifically with regards to language of instruction, where many teachers are placed in schools where they do not speak the languages of their students.

This approach also has a wider effect on the possibility for transparency and accountability in the teacher rationalization process. Because the process of teacher placement is so complex, and policies are interpreted and implemented in many different ways, many teachers and communities may perceive the process of teacher rationalization as unfair or politically influenced. Through this study, the Ministry of Education is working to clarify these policies, and use data to make the process more transparent. In this way districts, schools, teachers, school management committees, and communities can have more trust in the process, and hold their government accountable to providing them with the services they are entitled to.

7. What factors affected the success or shortcomings of your collaborating, learning and adapting approach? What were the main enablers or obstacles?

Two factors were essential to the success of this activity. First, this assessment required a great deal of time and leadership from the Ministry of Education and Ghana Education Service with 22 committed group members, 16 key informants and three different units in the Ministry of Education sharing large data sets with Evaluating Systems. This kind of commitment would only have been possible if it was a high priority for the government itself.

Second, through Evaluating Systems, a long term monitoring and evaluation partner in Ghana, USAID was able to be more flexible on the exact design of the approach. In this case, where the design is part of the activity itself, it would be difficult to do this under a short term contract mechanism.

8. Based on your experience and lessons learned, what advice would you share with colleagues about using a collaborating, learning and adapting approach?

When collecting data, put users in the driver's seat. In this case the TRSWG was chaired by the MOE with Evaluating Systems playing a role that focused more on guidance, facilitation and technical rigor. Through this arrangement, Evaluating Systems was able to maintain integrity and rigor for the assessment, but with targeted technical support, the users drove the assessment.

Collaboration, learning and adapting are not done separately: With evaluations and assessments, too often, we conduct the research and wait for the collaboration, learning and adapting to come after. Integrating CLA throughout assessment and evaluation processes gives us data and evidence that we can really use.

Recognize the political side of learning and adaptation: The existence of data does not mean that people will learn or adapt from it. Data and evidence can only change policy and practice when the right people are advocating for its use.