"Using data to improve learning: the "Shawara Karatu" initiative in Niger".

Presentation 1: What are the issues when it comes to using data?

A look back at the key findings of the diagnosis.

Those who work in the analysis of education systems and support ministries in the implementation of their education policies note that there is a real willingness to use data to improve learning. When we try to understand why this isn't happening today, we realize that it’s not just the insistence on advocacy (even if it remains necessary) that will enable progress to be made, but rather action on various key points, and in particular the need to reposition evaluation within the strategic vision of Ministries, which today doesn’t exist, or at least isn’t visible. The clearest manifestation of this lack of vision is that none of the educational actor has the responsibility of analyzing these data with a view to improving learning. When this is done, it is on a voluntary and individual basis, and not at system level.

To get beyond this stage, there are other constraints:

- From a technical point of view, agents need to be equipped to access data in a usable format.
- There is also the constraint of equipment availability: educational actors need computers to store and analyze data, which is not the case in most of the inspections visited by the program; This observation also calls into question the programs that fund the equipment and the objectives they aim to achieve.

Is it possible to exploit individual research on specific issues linked to evaluation data?

Today, it has to be said that educational actors are overwhelmed by data produced mainly with external funding and technical assistance, which do not necessarily involve players in the field, leading countries not to use them.

Any research contribution that addresses the issues at hand and contributes to the debate deserves to be considered, especially studies carried out with and in cooperation with people working in the field.

What are the key recommendations emerging from this study to help countries establish a culture of evaluation and data analysis?

The diagnosis and experimentation carried out have shown that there is no real policy on the use of evaluation data, in Niger as in most of the program's intervention countries.
One of the special features of the program is that, once the diagnosis has been made, it does not lead to recommendations being made to the countries concerned, but rather to exchanges with the educational actors involved, with a view to co-constructing a solution that meets their specific needs. Establishing a culture of evaluation therefore requires, first and foremost, awareness of the fact that the data resulting from these evaluations are not used. The solutions proposed then emerge from the actors themselves. The Shawara Karatu example, developed below, is one of the solutions proposed by Niger’s Ministry of Education to build the capacity of stakeholders to appropriate and use data.

However, if we were to identify a first step in establishing a culture of data evaluation and analysis, it would be to set up an institutional framework in these countries to encourage data analysis and use.

The problem: There is no general data use policy. The effects: the non-use of data by local actors. My question: I’d like you to tell us the immediate and underlying causes of this problem.

We have identified 3 reasons why data is not used:
- A lack of strategic vision: data is not collected to improve the quality of learning, but rather to report on progress (e.g. 2nd quarter assessments). What's more, data analysis is not part of anyone's mandate.
- Lack of time: the sheer volume of assessments in the systems makes it impossible to take the time to analyze the results and make decisions on the basis of these analyses.
- A lack of confidence in the data: in several countries, we are witnessing a logic of using data to rank schools, give awards for excellence or, on the contrary, blame schools in difficulty. This logic leads some schools to present complacent data to avoid being stigmatized.

The Shawara Karatu help to raise awareness and consider these various dimensions, and then analyze the factors that prevent data from being analyzed according to the profile of the actors involved (principal, teacher...)

For more details, see the guidance note produced: https://dakar.iiep.unesco.org/actualites/note-dorientation-evaluer-les-apprentissages-des-eleves-oui-mais-apres
If I understand correctly, the presentation focuses on quantitative data, not qualitative. If we consider assessment to be at the core of the curriculum development process, does teacher absenteeism considered in quantitative terms limit the use of this data to improve the quality of learning and teaching?

This question raises the issue of the place of qualitative data in the process described. Indeed, when we look at the most readily available data, the vast majority are quantitative. However, during the implementation of the experimentation, we have seen that the systems also have a considerable amount of qualitative data, which can be very useful, such as inspection reports, school visit reports, or reports produced at the start of the school year, which provide valuable information.

In the Shawara Karatu, a place for dialogue and consultation, it is essential to take hold of this qualitative data and analyze it, so that it can be used to produce information for discussion and analysis at the communal days.

While preparing Shawara Karatu, we realized that to grasp certain issues and realities, it was essential to conduct interviews with actors and the community in the field, and to rely on qualitative data. Qualitative data enable us to understand what is going on behind the findings of quantitative data, and to highlight certain issues that could not have been revealed by quantitative data.

Who finances the action plans drawn up at these Shawara Karatu meetings? Is it the commune? The state? Donors?

This pilot experiment was co-financed by the Ministry, the target communes and IIPE UNESCO Dakar. This co-financing made it possible to train the actors in the analysis of the information collected, to draw up data entry masks, and to provide computers for the 2 inspectorates. However, it should be noted that most of the actions carried out are part of the actors’ routine work, not outside their mandate. What they are being asked to do is to do better what they are already doing, to improve their practices. in the long term, these activities should become part of the routine workings of the Ministry of Education.

Comment: Reducing the scope of action by the experimentation has made it possible to identify problems such as the quality of data collection and collection tools. We can easily identify an infrastructural problem or a problem of tools adapted to the work. It would be interesting to evaluate the implementation and duplication of this idea on a large scale in similar contexts.

This is the challenge of the final phase of the program, which will identify the conditions for replicability of the solution developed and the conditions for scaling it up. The challenge is to identify the risk factors specific to each territory, to identify ways of mitigating them, and to draw on existing levers to improve the practices of the educational actors involved.

**Question 1**: Is this process part of the existing processes linked to the Communal Development Plan and annual investment plans etc.?

**Question 2**: Have you had discussions with other actors working on planning at decentralized level and on the elaboration of annual plans, so that the Shawara Karatu process can be integrated into them, given that funds should already be available for this routine planning?
The idea was to develop and test a solution on a very small scale, to see if it works, if it is relevant and to identify the conditions for its generalization. Once this solution has been validated by the actors in the field and shared with the country's other districts, the question is to see how the Shawara Karatu experiment can be integrated into the action plans of the Ministry of Education and the districts, i.e. into their day-to-day operations. This is the subject of presentation N°3 on the conditions for scaling up the initiative.

A member of Niger's National Research Team intervened, pointing out that the quality of data from the evaluation was a real problem in Niger, with all stakeholders unanimously agreeing on the lack of reliability of the data. Two questions were raised:

⇒ What have Shawara Karatu done to mitigate data reliability risks?
⇒ How are Shawara Karatu different from the “Cellules d'animation Pédagogique” that already existed in schools?

Improving data reliability was an easy task, as all stakeholders were unanimous on the problematic nature of the information available. The fact that this information was not taboo allowed for an open dialogue on the subject: most of the data existed in paper format, and its transmission followed a well-defined process that frequently led to errors: filling in the data to be transmitted by hand, and doing the calculations manually.

One of the first actions was to simplify the school achievement tracking form, to make it easier to enter information without losing any, thus limiting errors.

The second lever was to review the procedure for transmitting data sheets without losing any data. Sector managers no longer summarize the data, but forward the forms as they stand to the inspectorates. The latter then have access to the situation of all the schools under their responsibility.

It is at inspectorate level that the data sheets are entered, and then summaries can be made.

The third lever was to add a control system to the mask used for data entry, enabling inconsistent data to be identified. In such cases, inspectors called schools directors to make corrections. As a result, the data entered is more reliable.
How can the cost of organizing a Shawara Karatu be covered?
Organizing a Shawara Karatu in an inspection costs an average of $3,000\(^1\). One of the strategies envisaged to ensure the financing of Shawara Karatu could be to couple them with other activities carried out at commune level, which would already be financed. Furthermore, to be viable, all the ideas and solutions developed should be integrated into the action plans of the deconcentrated levels, or into the sectoral policies currently being drawn up, in the programs of the PTFs, so that scaling up can be more easily envisaged.

How often is Shawara Karatu carried out?
Initially, one Shawara Karatu was planned per quarter (at the end of each quarterly composition), bringing together town halls and inspectorates. In practice, however, and given a number of constraints, notably a heavy workload for those involved due to the organization of the school year, only two were organized. Frequency will be a factor to consider when scaling up: should we opt for a quarterly organization, or plan for two a year?
It should be pointed out that what's important is to be able to discuss the problems highlighted by the data, identify the solutions to be implemented and follow them up, and finally take stock of what's been done. This approach is currently lacking in our systems, and penalizes the effectiveness or adjustment of the actions undertaken.
An important point to emphasize: the problems identified must be derived from the data (quantitative or qualitative). By way of illustration, during the analysis, we noted a specific problem of a lower performance for girls in French and Mathematics in CM2, which came as a surprise to the educational actors, as they were not aware of this reality in their system. Today, they want to understand why.

The results of intermediate class compositions are sometimes biased. Do the Shawara Karatu provide for other external learning assessments to gain a better understanding of learning levels?
The Shawara Karatu Initiative is not intended to initiate new assessments, but rather to analyze and use data already available within the education system. This may include termly compositions as well as external learning assessments, if they exist and their use is relevant to the commune. However, during a Shawara Karatu, stakeholders may identify the need to collect new data as a priority for the commune. This could then be included in the action plan.

Is it possible to share details of the initiative with participants and offer the opportunity to react beyond this webinar?
Presentations are available on the webinar series page at:

\(^1\) If we were to organize two Shawara Karatu per year in one commune, this would require an average budget of 6,000 USD per commune over the course of a year.