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Webinar series to share the findings of the Program with education development partners

Webinar #2

Using data to improve learning: the « Shawara Karatu » initiative in Niger



September 28th, 2023

2:00 pm - 3:30 pm GMT



PRESENTATION 2: THE SHAWARA KARATU INITIATIVE, A PROPOSED SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF DATA USE

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 IPE 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?

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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.