

CYCLE OF KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE KIX LAC

USE OF EVIDENCE IN EDUCATION



Workshop systematization

Workshop: "What is meant by 'evidence'? Unlocking the Power of Grey Literature in Education Decision-Making"



Objective:

The workshop entitled "What is meant by 'evidence'? Unlocking the impact of grey literature on educational decision-making", conducted by SUMMA-KIX LAC in conjunction with [Education.org](https://www.education.org), had as its main objective to disseminate the *Guide on "Guidance for broadening the evidence base in educational decision-making"* ([See guide](#)) to members of ministries, academia and non-governmental organizations in El Salvador, Honduras Guatemala and Nicaragua. In addition, through the iterative application of this guide, the workshop sought to gather information to enrich the contextualization process with inputs and perspectives relevant to the Latin American region.

The Guidance Guide, which was developed by the International Working Group led by Education.org, aims to broaden the sources that are considered as "evidence", including gray literature, and proposes a methodological tool designed to provide the reader with a wide range of information sources in a clear manner, thus facilitating their subsequent classification, identification and evaluation for the use of evidence in educational decision making.

Methodology

The workshop was led by Dr. Suzanne Grant and Dr. Erin Sorensen, both members of Education.org, and was structured in three distinct parts. In the first section, participants discussed the challenges they face at the national level in using evidence to inform their practices. In the second part, the facilitators provided an overview of the Guidance Document developed by the International Working Group (IWG). The third section consisted of two participatory activities related to the first two sections of the Guidance Document.

In the first part of the workshop, participants identified and discussed specific national and regional challenges in using evidence to inform their practices. Below is a table summarizing the challenges raised by participants at the national and regional levels.

| Country | Challenges |
|-----------|---|
| Regional | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The countries highlighted the need to develop competencies to identify and evaluate the relevance of various sources of information. 2. Participants emphasized the importance of promoting a culture of using evidence to support interventions. 3. At the regional level, there is a paucity of publications focused specifically on Central America. Participants acknowledge the presence of literature focused on Latin America and South America. However, they point out a gap in terms of academic production focused on Central America, along with difficulties in accessing and searching for specific evidence at the national and regional levels. 4. The scarcity of evidence in Spanish and the abundance of resources in English and other languages is identified as a challenge. 5. Country representatives experience difficulties in accessing academic documents and sources. |
| Honduras | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate the relevance of the information due to the diversity of sources and formats. 2. Avoid possible risks related to the information obtained. 3. Ensuring the currency, validity and relevance of the results of the literature. 4. Lack of a widespread culture of using evidence or literature/research-based information. |
| Guatemala | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accessibility to evidence, especially that produced in the Central American region. It is mentioned that there seems to be a "gap" or absence of research/evidence from Central America that is published or widely known. 2. Language barriers, as much of the available evidence is written in English or other languages, and not necessarily in Spanish. |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. The need to build a culture of evidence-based implementations, instead of relying on beliefs, assumptions or traditions. 4. In the specific case of Guatemala, the challenge of ensuring that proposed implementations are truly based on what is known and known to work, rather than on an arbitrary basis, is mentioned. |
| Nicaragua | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of culture or practice in the use of evidence/literature by researchers and academia when conducting research. 2. Although there is an office of access to public information, it is identified as a challenge to actually search for and use this available information. 3. The lack of use of evidence and literature is seen as a limitation, not only in the university subsystem, but also in other subsystems where research is conducted. 4. The importance and significance of using evidence and literature to clarify, expand, extend reports or results of the topics and research developed is recognized. 5. Relevance of the evidence to the knowledge to be promoted from the research. |
| El Salvador | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieving a better balance between political aspects, practical/technical aspects and scientific aspects in educational public policy decision making. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is mentioned that sometimes decisions are made mostly from the practical perspective of the ministry's technicians due to their experience working in schools. - At other times, the greater weight falls on the political aspect. 2. Lack of communication and integration of information between the different areas and units of the ministry. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is noted that often the information generated in one area is not communicated to the others. - Each area has its own style of information, but it is not possible to integrate data that could be duplicated or complementary between areas. 3. . The need to achieve a better culture of using information, data and scientific evidence in a balanced way with the other practical and political aspects. 4. The need to develop a culture of sharing the data being generated by the new information systems, and to transform these data into useful evidence. 5. Lack of effective partnerships and mechanisms between ministries and universities/research centers to share and use the data generated. 6. From the perspective of academia/research centers, there is difficulty in disseminating and publicizing the evidence they generate. |

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| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Lack of established spaces and mechanisms to facilitate easy access to "gray literature" or evidence generated at the national level in El Salvador. 8. While it is relatively easy to find evidence from other Latin American countries, accessing information/literature produced internally at the national level represents a challenge. 9. It is recognized that there is a need for a more ingrained culture of sharing information and evidence in education, both from those who generate it and those who consume it. |
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In the second part of the workshop, the facilitators provided an overview of the International Working Group (IWG) Guidelines. The International Working Group (IWG), sponsored by Education.org, was established for the purpose of developing a system and tools to guide and expand the use of available sources and information for educational decision making. The IWG is comprised of technical experts from 27 organizations around the world. Through this inter-agency collaboration, the Guidance for Expanding the Evidence Base for Educational Decision Making was developed.

The draft Guidance for Expanding the Evidence Base for Educational Decision Making has been sent to participants for review and familiarization.

The next part of the workshop included two hands-on, participatory activities.

The first activity focused on the first section of the Guidance Guide: the Classification of sources according to analytical purpose or analytical questions and aimed to answer the question, "What type of evidence is required to address the analytical purpose or analytical questions posed?"

The following table provides examples that were mentioned during the session.

| Analytical Purpose | Classification cluster |
|---|---|
| Regarding Teacher Professional Development, how effective are online training sessions for teachers? | Scholarly/Research sources |
| How much does it cost to implement a Teacher Training plan? | Primary sources |
| Which criteria should be considered when evaluating the reliability and credibility of an evidence source in the educational context? | Scholarly/Research sources Government/Official sources |

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| What strategies could be implemented to promote an institutional culture that values and encourages the use of evidence in educational decision-making? | Scholarly/Research sources Government/Official sources |
| What methodologies/interventions are most efficient for addressing post-pandemic educational backlog? | Organizational/Company sources |

The second activity focused on the second section of the Guidance Framework: Identification and Access, addressing the question: "Where can one search to find the types of sources needed to answer the analytical questions posed?"

The following table provides examples mentioned by participants during the activity.

| Classification cluster | Where to Search | Examples |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Primary sources | Repositories and databases | University Observatory of National and International Education (OUDENI)/UPNFM https://observatorio.upnfm.edu.hn/observatorio/ Central American Integration System (SICA) https://www.sica.int/iniciativas/ocades |
| Academic and research sources | Repositories and databases | Digital Repository of Science and Culture of El Salvador REDICCES http://www.redicces.org.sv/jspui/ Repository of the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional Francisco Morazán (UPNFM) https://repositorio.upnfm.edu.hn/home Repository of the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua https://www.unan.edu.ni/index.php/investigacion Institute for Research in Education (INIE) of the University of Costa Rica https://inie.ucr.ac.cr/ Revista Paradigma, de Investigación Educativa https://camjol.info/index.php/PARADIGMA Indice de Nicaragua Journal https://revistaindice.cnu.edu.ni/index.php/indice UMBRAL Magazine of the UPNFM CONARE Repository https://repositorio.conare.ac.cr/ |
| | Expert networks and research communities: | Network for Early Literacy in Central America and the Caribbean (RedLEI) https://red-lei.org/recursos/centroamerica/ |
| | | Ministry of Education of Honduras |

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| Government / Official sources | Government Publications | https://www.se.gob.hn/ Ministry of Education of Guatemala https://www.mineduc.gob.gt/portal/index.asp Ministry of Education of El Salvador https://www.mined.gob.sv/ Ministry of Education Nicaragua https://www.mined.gob.ni/ |
| Organization / Company sources | Websites of organizations or institutions | SUMMA Laboratory for Research and Innovation in Education for Latin America and the Caribbean https://www.summaedu.org/ PONGO Platform https://pongo.org.sv/ Foundation for Higher Education (FEES) https://fes.edu.sv/?page_id=1942 Organization of Ibero-American States https://oei.int/ UNESCO SITEAL https://siteal.iiep.unesco.org/ State of the Nation Program State of the Region Report https://estadonacion.or.cr/proyectos-estado-de-la-region |
| Informal and other sources | | |

Summary

The workshop "What do you mean by "evidence"? Unlocking the Power of Grey Literature in Education Decision-Making", highlighted several key points regarding the challenges and opportunities in accessing and utilizing evidence for decision-making in education. Here's a synthesis of the main points discussed:

Challenges in Accessing Evidence: Participants highlighted challenges in accessing evidence, particularly in finding relevant information, especially at the national level. More mechanisms or platforms need to be created for sharing and disseminating evidence, leading to difficulties in locating and accessing pertinent data and research findings.

Expanding the Definition of Evidence: The workshop emphasized the need to broaden the definition of evidence beyond scholarly research to include grey literature sources such as policy documents, implementation reports, and evaluations. These sources are often contextually rich and can provide valuable insights for decision-makers.

Development of Guidance for Evidence Use: The workshop presented a draft of Guidance for broadening the evidence base in educational decision-making aimed at facilitating the identification, access, and utilization of evidence in education decision-making. These guidelines focus on classifying evidence, identifying and accessing sources, and evaluating their relevance and credibility.

Classification of Evidence: The classification framework discussed during the workshop organizes evidence into different clusters, including primary sources, academic research, government or official sources, organizational sources, and informal sources. This framework helps identify where to search for specific types of evidence based on the analytical question at hand. These questions should be specific and relevant to the decision-making process, enabling targeted searches and analysis.

Identification and Access to Sources: The classification framework recommends employing a systematic approach to identifying and accessing various sources

Reflections

The workshop shed light on the complexities involved in navigating the landscape of evidence in education. While there is a growing recognition of the importance of evidence-informed decision-making, significant challenges remain in accessing and utilizing relevant information effectively. The broadening of the definition of evidence to encompass a diverse range of sources reflects a shift towards more inclusive and contextually relevant approaches to evidence use.

The classification framework presented during the workshop provides a structured approach to organizing evidence, which can help decision-makers navigate the vast array of available information more effectively. However, there is a need for further refinement and adaptation of this framework to specific contexts and needs.

The discussion around bias and quality underscores the importance of critical appraisal skills in interpreting evidence. Decision-makers need to be equipped with the necessary tools and knowledge to assess the credibility and relevance of different sources accurately.

Feedback from participants:

Elma Barahona, Research Coordinator UPNFM, Honduras: *"I join in thanking you for this great work that will definitely support what we are doing and on the one hand allows us to do work from the academy but I also see the great potential of how to work with these other organizations, sectors that are developing really valuable practices in education and that they can also make use of the guide".*

Jorger Araujo, Dean of the Law School of the Foundation for Higher Education (FES) / ESEN, El Salvador: *"As we use it in our projects we can identify details, nuances or some things that can enrich the document".*

Rosa Maria Moncada, Deputy Project Leader - Empowering Teachers Initiative KIX LAC, Honduras: *"This is a perfect start [the guide] for a request that Honduras has been making to KIX LAC for support in training program for researchers and perhaps this is an ideal start to develop other modules that are included in what they are visualizing at this time".*

Participants

| Country | Institution | Role | Name |
|---------|-----------------------|--|----------------------------|
| HON | MOE | General Director of Curriculum and Evaluation. | Alana Rosario Dominguez |
| HON | MOE | Technical Assistant of the General Directorate of Curriculum and Evaluation. | Ana Mirian López |
| HON | MOE | General Subdirector of Educational Research. | Esthefani Cerrato |
| HON | UPNFM. | Research Coordinator | Elma Barahona Henry |
| HON | UPNFM. | Director of Curricular Development | Carla Leticia Paz Delgado |
| ESA | MOE | National Directorate of Teacher Training | Luis Eduardo Minero |
| ESA | MOE | National Directorate of Educational Evaluation | José Carlos Marquez |
| ESA | MOE | National Directorate of Educational Counseling | Alba Cristina Perez |
| ESA | MOE | Human Development Directorate | Isamar Lopez |
| ESA | FES | Dean of the Law School of the Foundation for Higher Education (FES) / ESEN. | Jorge Araujo |
| ESA | FES | Program Coordinator of the Foundation for Higher Education (FES) / ESEN. | David Lopez |
| GUA | OEI | Programs and Projects Coordinator OEI Office in Guatemala | Mariela Isabel Zelada |
| GUA | Pestalozzi Foundation | Education Officer at Fundación Pestalozzi | Silvia Romero |
| NIC | MOE | General Director of Educational Planning and Programming. | Nora Cuadra Baquedano |
| NIC | MOE | Research Department Coordinator | Rossny Peña |
| NIC | MOE | Responsible for the Planning and Evaluation Directorate | Claudia Solórzano Vanegas, |
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| NIC | UNAN | Head of Innovation CNU | Violeta Gago García, |
| NIC | UNAN | Head of the Undergraduate and Bachelor's Degree Department | Sonia Orozco Hernández |
| CAN | IDRC | Senior Program Specialist, KIX International Development Research Centre (IDRC) | Margarita Lopez |