



# School2030 Global Forum 2022

## Summary of Roundtable 5 on Conceptualising Systemic Capacity for Assessment

### Background

In June 2022, stakeholders from across the Schools2030 network gathered together in Dar es Salaam for the first Schools2030 Global Forum. The global forum brought together teachers, policy makers, civil society actors and international organisations for the purpose of discussing innovation and systems change in education. The forum followed the three key stages of Schools2030; assess, design, showcase.

On the first day the focus was on assessment, asking how assessment can contribute to innovation in school2030, and how Schools2030 can lead to systems building in more innovative and person-centred approaches to holistic assessment. To delve into these questions there were ten round table discussions. The fifth of these, hosted by Oxford MeasurEd and Save the Children as global assessment partners for Schools2030 asked the question:

*How can we conceptualise a holistic view of system capacity for generating and using data on holistic learning outcomes?*



This question is asked in opposition to views of capacity which narrowly focus on specific technical skills to produce assessment tools and analyse assessment data. It instead looks to consider who are the people who comprise a system? What are their roles in generating and using multiple kinds of assessment data? What challenges do they face in fulfilling these roles? And how can they be better supported?

The participants of the roundtable, comprising individuals working in all parts of the education system, broke into small groups, each focusing on one group within the system.

### Who comprises the education system? What is their relationship with assessment?



#### Teachers

**Role** Teachers play a central role in administering assessments and interpreting the findings to inform instructional practice. Having evidence on learning outcomes is important for teachers' work as it helps them to adapt approaches and methods, facilitates communication with learners and other stakeholders, and mobilizes support through advocacy.

**Challenges** Teachers face challenges such as having limited skills in designing tools or interpreting results, lack of time to conduct assessments properly, assessment policies that are not

appropriate for a given context, community beliefs that are not conducive to assessment, and more recently the Covid-19 pandemic, which made administering assessments difficult or impossible.

**Solutions** Teachers can overcome these challenges with investments in improving teachers' working conditions, professional development, co-equal engagement in pilot programs, and having a continuity or recovery plan in place in times of school closures.



## School Leaders

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**Role** School leaders simultaneously play the roles of convener, coordinator, and consolidator at the school level. They provide resources to teachers as well as training and workshops on assessments. School leaders keep parents and other stakeholders informed, bring together all resources to conduct assessments, and consolidate findings for improvements at the school level while using these findings to advocate to education officials. Having evidence on learning outcomes is important for the work of school leaders, as it supports discussions with parents and education officials alike about improvements that need to be made. It also provides a source of proof of the effect education is having on learners, which is critical to ensure that parents and other stakeholders trust school leaders. Finally, it helps school leaders to plan for the future and make decisions at the school level.

**Challenges** School leaders face challenges in generating and using learning outcome data, as they often lack competencies to measure learning outcomes while also lacking the political freedom to decide what should be measured and how.

**Solutions** Additional training, facilitation of connections with other school leaders, and further capacity strengthening on learning outcome measurement would help overcome some of these challenges.



## Civil Society

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**Role** Civil society organizations typically work at a systems-level to map stakeholder involvement in assessment, identify assessment needs, co-create approaches to assessment, facilitate uptake of evidence and use of data, and advocate to education officials using the evidence generated from assessments. Having evidence on learning outcomes is critical for civil society organizations, as it allows for continuous monitoring of the system, provides these organizations with data points for advocacy and policy engagement, and informs resource allocation within organizations and across the system.

**Challenges** Civil society organizations often experience challenges around the ability to document, package, and present data in a language that is accessible to a variety of stakeholders. As a result, systems are often not able to absorb data on learning with teachers and school leaders alike unable to interpret results or interact with the data itself.

**Solutions** Civil society organizations would benefit from support in documenting data and communicating results in an accessible manner while also identifying key questions that education officials need answers to.



## Ministries of Education

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**Role** Ministries of education play an important role in laying out a clear education policy framework, which includes an assessment and teacher development policy. Additionally, ministries of education should create an environment where independent data is prized and utilized and ensuring that the right people are in place to drive policy and implementation. Given this, having data on learning outcomes is critical for ministries, as it allows for planning around distribution of resources, informs policy making, evaluating whether policies are working, and making targeted interventions, where needed.

**Challenges** Ministries of education often face challenges around the technical competency of their teams, including lack of expertise to generate and interpret quality data. Ministries often have limited resources and can be hamstrung by the political process.

**Solutions** Ministries of education would benefit from the creation of independent bodies to deal with assessments, ensuring high levels of technical competency and harmonization of assessment efforts. Instituting learning outcome policy platforms would also be beneficial to ensure open sharing of results and effective interpretation of those results. Finally, greater collaboration with and benchmarking with other countries could help further build capacity and support cross-system learning.

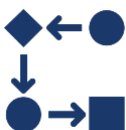
## How can we understand systemic capacity for assessment?



### Personal or Individual Factors

From our discussions, what arose across the system was an under-recognition of personal factors in determining system assessment capacity. These personal factors relate to how we as actors within the education sector perceive our role and relationships to assessment. The key factor was how personal relationships and historical uses of assessment data can lead to individuals feeling scrutinized or victimized by assessment results.

In our discussions these were raised at the school level, with teachers feeling that assessment data could be used to appraise unfairly their teaching practice. In response to this it was pointed out that such tensions exist in governments as well, with education departments being judged (or perceiving themselves to be judged) by their peers in government based on very public results of examinations and assessments. These feelings of scrutiny can lead to skewing of assessment results, or unwillingness to collect or publish data.



### Relationships and Networks

Beyond our individual relationships with assessment, the capacity of a system is built on the networks and relationships that form that system.

Networks and relationship between individuals and organisations allow for collaboration on the development of tools, sharing of expertise, amplification of evidence, and secondary analysis of data to produce new insights. At different levels of the system these networks can include:

- the presence of teacher communities of practice within and between schools

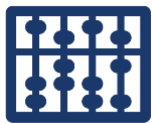
- Networks between civil society organisations and government bodies focused on the development and sharing of tools
- Existence of fora for evidence dissemination, advocacy and uptake
- Connections between governments, academia and civil society for the purpose of secondary analysis of data.

All of these networks and relationships need to be built on open, trusting, accountable relationships between actors across the sector.



### Technical Capacities

The most traditionally focused upon kind of system capacity are the technical capacities which need to be held by some or all actors in the system to ensure that evidence on learning outcomes are generated and used. What technical capacities are needed and by whom depends on the structure and mandates within a system. For example, the skills needed to develop robust, high stakes, assessment tools will usually only need to be held by a small group of individuals. In contrast, capacities such as data literacy and assessment informed practice need to be much more widespread in a capable system. In a system in which teachers are given the mandate to manage assessment within their classrooms, much more focus needs to be put on providing them with the support needed to develop tools and analyse data.



### Tools and Resources

The final general area of capacity that our discussions focused on in defining *systemic* capacity was the presence of tools and resources to support the generation and use of evidence. These tools and resources cover a wide range of functions necessary for a system to perform. This includes the presence of contextualised tools for a range of constructs, settings and purposes. It also includes resources like a national data management system that can store, disaggregate and connect learning assessment data with other data sources. Finally, in our discussion we touched upon the importance of national assessment strategies and frameworks to provide a unified framework for those working on assessment.