REPORT

Launch Event of the KIX Europe | Asia | Pacific Hub

27 May 2020

Introduction

The online launch of the KIX Europe | Asia |Pacific (EAP) Hub took place on 27 May 2020, 11.00-12.30 Geneva Time, and brought together over 85 participants representing 18 countries, as well as all partner organizations of the KIX EAP Hub and a few special guests. It was organized by NORRAG, in its capacity as Regional Learning Partner for the Hub, and was translated into Russian and Arabic.
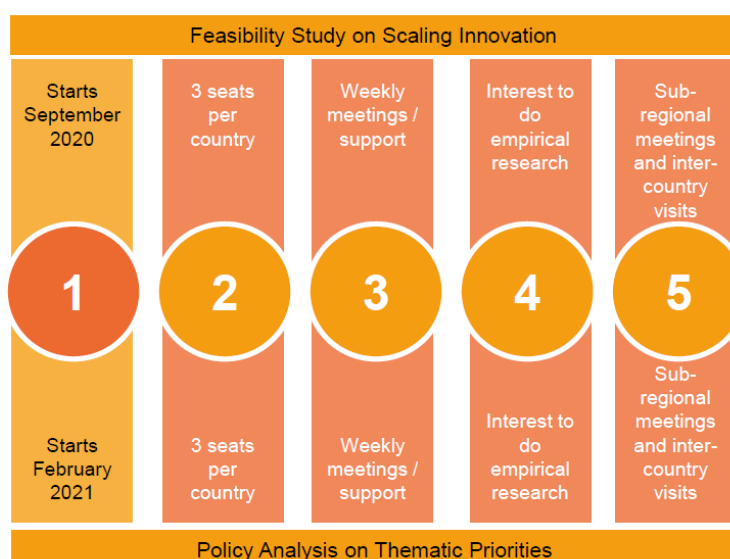
After a brief welcome address by Moira Faul, Executive Director of NORRAG, Ian Macpherson, Lead - KIX at the Global Partnership for Education (GPE, Washington) and Tricia Wind, Team Leader for KIX at the International Development Research Center (IDRC, Ottawa), gave a global overview of the origins and purpose of the KIX Initiative, which was conceived in response to the demands by ministry officials of GPE partner countries. They also specified their respective roles as funding entity and implementing partner.

Prof. Gita Steiner-Khamsi, Director of NORRAG and of the KIX EAP Hub presented the Hub, the team and upcoming activities. She explained NORRAG's "Feedback Loops" approach and the 3 objectives of the Hub, as formulated in the strategic proposal:
1. Enhance the utilization of global public goods for national policy analysis and planning
2. Mobilize national experts for agenda setting, policy analysis, and policy advice
3. Identify and learn from scalable innovations

Prof. Steiner-Khamsi recalled the underlying principle of KIX, namely that knowledge and innovation already exist in the countries and that KIX is about helping to surface knowledge and analyzing how to scale up innovation. As Regional Learning Partner, NORRAG will mobilize and support education stakeholders of all participating countries to achieve this goal and contribute to build stronger education systems.

Upcoming activities of the Hub include **knowledge production and exchange** in the form of "Learning Cycles", and **knowledge dissemination** through webinars, podcasts, KIX digital platform, blog posts, among others. The learning cycles will be the main opportunities for national experts to gain professional development and get more strongly involved in the production of knowledge that is relevant at country and regional level, and thus for participating countries to benefit from KIX.

The pre-requisite to participate in the 4-month learning cycles is to have a national KIX infrastructure in place and participants selected:
- national steering committee of up to 5 members (up to 3 from government, up to 2 from LEG)
- national KIX coordinator, preferably from research institution (remunerated position)
- 3 participants for each learning cycle (one government, one research and one open)

The project also makes small grants available to visit each other's innovations and interesting pilot projects.

Schedule of Learning Cycles (LC)

	Feb	March	April	May		Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2020						LC 1: Innovation Exchange			
2021	LC 2: Policy Analysis Exchange								
2022	LC 3: Innovation Exchange								
2023	LC 4: Policy Analysis Exchange								

The KIX EAP Hub has a technical team in place, based in Europe and Australia, to help national experts produce empirical studies and discussion papers. They mainly assist with data analysis and visualization, editing and publishing. In addition, the Hub has a communications office that supports the production of blog posts, podcasts and short videos. The strategic partners also assist with providing webinars and professional development during annual regional conferences.

Inputs from the KIX EAP Hub partners

The floor was then given to the partners of the KIX EAP Hub: the initial group of strategic partners consisting in ACER, FHI360 and Nazarbayev University, as well as UNESCO Bangkok and UNICEF Regional Office Geneva as part of the expanded partnership.

Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), represented by Jeaniene Spink, Research Director, and Elizabeth Cassity, Senior Research Fellow

ACER is a not for profit and fully independent organization that works exclusively in the field of education research. Its core expertise is measuring students learning and improving learning, but also providing support and expertise in teacher development, teacher standards, curriculum analysis, among others. ACER also aims at gathering and understanding the evidence that underpins policy reform. With a very strong presence in the Asia Pacific region, its approach focuses on working in partnership with governments and regional bodies. ACER has developed a 10-year technical partnership in the Pacific (15 Pacific governments) to meet the regions' educational goals.

FHI 360, represented by Carina Omoeva, Director, Research and Evaluation

FHI360 is active cross-sectorally in the field of human development, education being a key component of their portfolio. Their focus is on education systems' strengthening and capacity building, as well as large scale reforms and education research on system change. In its role as technical partner in the Hub, FHI 360 can offer support to monitoring and data collection in the context of COVID-19. The issue of equity is also at the core of their work, as co-lead of the education equity research initiative (data production, collection and analysis on issues of equity in education) which has developed a lot of tools and metrics in partnership with different organization.

Nazarbayev University Graduate School of Education, represented by Aida Sagintayeva, Dean

Nazarbayev university is a classical university with a very strong research agenda and professors from 50 different countries. It has developed partnerships with universities all around the world, such as Cambridge

University and the National University of Singapore. The mission of the university is not only to build its own capacity, but also to strengthen national capacities, including in educational research. The professors are members of national committees for reforms in education policies and for the transformation of professional development in the sector of education. The university also conducts large projects on inclusive education and multilingual education.

UNESCO Bangkok, represented by Maki Hayashikawa, Chief of Section

The Regional Bureau for Education covers 46 countries in Asia-Pacific. Together with UNICEF regional office, it co-chairs and hosts the secretariat of the thematic working group on Education 2030 and coordinates the regional efforts helping countries and partners in advancing the Education 2030 agenda. The thematic working group has 3 strategic pillars: advocacy and communication, capacity building and technical support, knowledge generation and management. Knowledge management in particular is of utmost importance for the region today, and UNESCO Bangkok will disseminate the knowledge products that come out of the Hub in order to amplify the messages.

UNICEF Regional Office Europe and Central Asia, represented by Parmosivea Soobrayan, Regional Education Adviser

UNICEF has a country presence in over 150 countries, in which education is the primary program. In all countries, the focus is on systemic education reforms aimed at addressing equity and inclusion, and the main modality is systems' strengthening. Knowledge and innovation are extremely important, as UNICEF tries to ensure that all the programs are evidence based, more and more purposefully in the way they work but also in their programming explicit focus as well on evidence generation. Increasingly, one of the biggest challenges is to mediate the divide between research generation on one side and utilization on the other side, which is an interface that KIX addresses specifically.

Key messages from breakout sessions

South Asia
Participating countries: Pakistan (Sindh), Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Afghanistan

COVID response was a common concern for all of the countries, with a focus on issues of online teaching, data management and development of contingency plan. Nepal expressed their interest in exchanging about how to include pandemic response to their 10-year education plan currently under development. Other challenges included out-of-school children, data management systems, teaching and learning, learning outcomes and national assessment systems, quality of education, STEM and TVET, teacher management, transition of students across different levels of school, digitization of teaching and learning content, alternative learning systems for rural and remote regions, and the need to focus on children with disabilities.

Southeast Asia and Pacific
Participating countries: Cambodia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste

Participants provided an overview of their respective education system with a focus on the current COVID-19 pandemic. All of them are faced with multiple challenges related to pandemic, including technology and distance learning, inclusion of health and hygiene issues into education and the difficulties of starting education again after months of interruption. Even if the participating countries are not badly affected by the disease, all education systems have experienced strong disruption in the past few months and are hoping for some kind of support through the KIX initiative. Overall, the participants also expressed a strong interest in KIX and look forward to exchanges in the subregion. Finally, the importance of a solid in-country infrastructure and the need to rapidly recruit a liaison person were stressed.

Europe
Participating countries: Albania, Georgia and Moldova

Participants were all enthusiastic about KIX and upcoming activities. The discussion mainly focused on practical issues that need to be taken into consideration for the next steps of the project. In particular, they requested more detailed terms of reference for the KIX steering committee and national coordinator who will be appointed. Another key question was whether there would be funding available as part of the EAP Hub and what's in there for the governments to participate. A good understanding of the potential benefits of KIX for the participating countries was considered necessary for a successful implementation of the project.

Central Asia and Mongolia
Participating countries: Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia

Educational response to COVID-19 was considered as a main priority for all of the participants. The establishment of inclusive education for all of the children in times of COVID-19 with focus on children at risk is a common challenge. Participants also expressed interest in knowledge exchange in the field of distance and online learning, digital learning resources, and learning platforms, as well as technical and organizational aspects of online learning and involvement of the IT sector. Other key thematic priorities included the improvement and utility of educational assessments to identify students at risk and students' educational needs, the need for acquiring the capacity to use big data to improve education efficiency, and the improvement of numeracy skills of students.

Middle East and North Africa
Participating countries: Sudan and Yemen

All participants showed a lot of interest in the KIX initiative. They stressed looking forward to mutual learning, as their education sectors faced many challenges that demanded a lot of capacity to deal with. Several emphasized the urgency and difficulty of implementing education policy and practice at this critical time. Several others pointed out the preliminary nature of this consultation and the need to identify priorities both by reaction to the on-line survey and by internal consultation in their institutions. A few core themes mentioned are teaching and learning – including assessments -, early childhood education, and better quality and use of data for performance of educational systems.

Partners
Participating organizations: ACER, FHI360, GPE, IDRC, NORRAG, UNESCO Bangkok, UNESCO IIEP, UNICEF Regional Office Geneva, UNICEF Regional Office EAPRO

The partner organizations reflected on feedback, suggestions and thematic priorities for the KIX EAP Hub. There was a focus on the research-policy interface and how the institutional capacity on research at the government and partner side can be built to this end. Participants agreed on the need to ensure not just capacity building in conducting research in line with international standards and research methodologies, but ensuring the production of knowledge and policy discourse that was utilized. The group also considered how gender may be looked at in the Regional Call and discussed the impact of Covid-19 in the EAP region including how priorities may have changed.

Other issues included:
- need for support around research, research methods and approach to research
- strong interest in the region for capacity building on using data for policy purposes, how to use evidence, how to interpret evidence and how to improve the use of the data to influence reform and influence policy agendas.

- issue of interfacing between credible, contextually relevant research evidence on one hand and utilization on the other, highlighting the need to develop research relevant to the broader systemic framework
- need to produce policy products that inform the broader agenda, as opposed to being stand-alone pieces.
- data and policy reform discussion is critical, but with no clear answers. There is a need to hold central, emerging government priorities and what is considered important for the governments themselves in this regard.

The impact of COVID-19 on the education sectors, both negative and positive, was also extensively discussed, with the following highlights:
- There should be a better understanding of how crises such as Covid-19 transform the education sector
- COVID-19 has brought attention to online/remote learning, but it must be remembered that many learners/families do not have access to the technology required to effectively participate in online learning. It is thus important to consider low/no-tech learning solutions.

Next steps

- **June 10**: Local Education Group appoints a 5-person **National KIX Steering Committee**

- **June 20**: National KIX Steering Committee appoints **National KIX Coordinator** (part time function remunerated 250USD/month)

- **July 20**: National KIX Steering Committee confirms **3 persons to participate in the first Learning Cycle on Innovations**

- **September 7**: Start of the **first Learning Cycle on Innovations**

Useful resources

>> KIX EAP Hub web page

>> KIX EAP Hub Launch Event page

>> KIX EAP Hub technical proposal

>> NORRAG Blog on COVID response: **"COVID-19 Education Disruption and the Response by the Global Education Community"**

>> Terms of reference Hub member countries

>> more information on the GPE KIX Initiative