

Teaching At The Right Level's (TarL) Effort Regarding The Government's Use Of Technology To Promote Timely And Evidence-Based Decision Making

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Abstract

Over the years, technology has gained prominence in the education sector across the globe including Africa. Technology is not only utilized in the classrooms but also by educational administrators and managers. Despite the acknowledgment of the crucial role technology plays to improve the quality of educational management and administration, several factors prevent administrators in developing countries such as Nigeria from fully harnessing the benefits that lie therein. In the face of these challenges, the TaRL Africa team in Nigeria, is working with the Kaduna state government to ensure that available technology is fully utilized to maximize the benefits of data-informed educational planning and ensure that the Teaching at the Right Level program in the state is implemented with high quality – and therefore that learning outcomes are improved.

In partnership with UNICEF and TaRL Africa, the Kaduna state government through the Kaduna State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) piloted the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) program in 2022 in 3 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state to tackle the issue of learning poverty crises in the state. TaRL is an accelerated learning approach for foundational reading and Math skills. At a classroom level, TaRL involves three simple steps. First, assess learners. Second, group learners by learning levels rather than age or grade. Third, focus on improving their foundational skills through interactive child-centered activities. After the first year of piloting TaRL, the Kaduna State Bureau of Statistics published the Learning Poverty Report stating that Kaduna state had a 73% level of learning poverty. These statistics led SUBEB to commit funds to scale up TaRL to the six additional LGAs with a three-year plan to scale up TaRL to all LGAs in the state.

One key component of the TaRL program is assessment, because in the TaRL approach instruction is targeted to align with learners' levels of foundational literacy and numeracy competence. This is done through simple one-on-one assessment. Facilitators administer the ASER Tool developed by TaRL to assess learners in English, Local Language and numeracy; then record the learner's highest competency level. The assessment results are uploaded on an assessment portal, which in turn provides a snapshot of the learning outcomes across schools, clusters, and LGAs. This provides Kaduna state government with insights into learners' performance in these different levels; and, in turn, allows the state government

administrators to make data-driven recommendations on how to improve the TaRL program for better learning.

At the beginning of the pilot phase, all Educational Management Information System Officers (EMISOs) were trained on how to clean, upload, and visualize the assessment results. Likewise, the programme implementation team at the state level, which consists of the Directors at SUBEB, were also trained on how to navigate the assessment portal and interpret the results.

In this paper, TaRL Africa explores how effective its strategy has been to enable the Kaduna state government in utilizing TaRL assessment to make data-driven decisions regarding students' learning. We also review the accessibility of assessment data to the Kaduna state government through the TaRL portal. Likewise, we attempt to understand if government partners understand what the data means, how it can be leveraged in action planning, and what the barriers are to fully utilizing the assessment data presented on the portal.

The research inquiry is guided by the following questions:

How easily accessible is the assessment data?

How has the TaRL portal supported the Kaduna state government to understand assessment results?

How does the Kaduna state government interact with this data?

What are the challenges and recommendations to improve the government's uptake?

A mixed-method approach is used for this paper, encompassing qualitative and quantitative analysis. For the qualitative data, a series of Key Informant Interviews will be completed and analyzed, incorporating key participants representing diverse administrative positions in Kaduna state government:

The Director, Monitoring & Evaluation SUBEB

The Director, School Services SUBEB

The Director, Human Resource SUBEB

The Chief Statistics Officer, SUBEB

Head of Education Management & Information Officers in Jaba, Kaduna South & Ikara Local Government Areas

Education Secretaries in Ikara and Jaba Local Government Areas

Permanent Secretary Kaduna State Ministry of Budget & Planning

Additionally, Focused Group Discussions will be conducted with EMISOs in Jaba, Kaduna South and Ikara Local Government Areas and incorporated into the study.

For the quantitative data collection, we will analyse descriptive statistics from the Kaduna assessment portal, such as the number of times Kaduna state administrators have logged on to the portal between 2022-2024. This information will give us a clearer understanding of the frequency of utilizing data and if there is a peak period in which state partners require data for certain decision making.

Though data collection is still ongoing, – and, thus, the data has not been fully analysed – preliminary findings indicate that the state administrators appreciate the use of technology through assessment data for decision-making. This is revealed by the state's decision to design a portal that will include TaRL assessment results which will be domiciled on their server for full ownership (the assessment portal is currently being housed on the domain of TaRL Africa).

Conclusively, this paper will highlight how technology can be leveraged in developing countries for educational planning and also offer insights that other educational institutions in

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the region can adopt to utilize assessment data for action planning.

Keywords: Assessment, Data, Kaduna, State Universal Basic Education Board, Local Government Area, Nigeria, Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), Technology, Learning