

The role of data and information in the education system in Ethiopia during COVID-19

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Delivering Education during COVID-19

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Policy Studies Institute



RISE

RESEARCH ON IMPROVING
SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION



**CAMBRIDGE
AFRICA**



Overview

The role of data and information in the education system response to the COVID-19 pandemic

1. Design of the education system COVID-19 response strategy
 2. Factors influencing the implementation of this strategy
 3. Stakeholder's views of the effectiveness of this strategy
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Strengthening education systems and building 'resilience'

In response to the challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, much focus on strengthening education systems and building 'resilience'

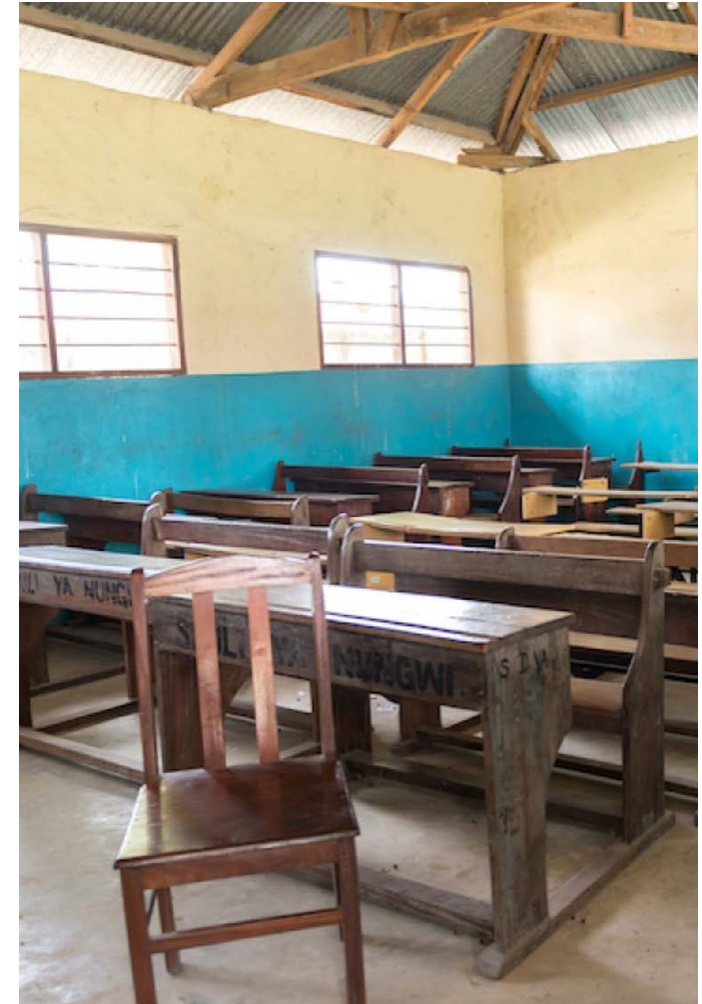
Resilience as:

...the capacity of a system to anticipate, adapt, and reorganize itself under conditions of adversity in ways that promote and sustain its successful functioning (Masten, 2014; Ungar, 2011, 2018).

Systems that demonstrate resilience... (Ungar, 2018):

- ...are open to new information and are dynamic and complex
- ...promote connectivity and collaboration
- ...demonstrate experimentation and learning
- ...have sufficient resources to function when stressed or compromised

Understanding underlying power dynamics is key to promoting resilience and strengthening data and information systems (e.g. Jerven, 2013; Sandefur & Glassman, 2015; Ungar, 2018)



The role of data and information in strengthening the education system in Ethiopia

System strengthening for equitable learning is a key priority in Ethiopia, even prior to the pandemic

Improved data collection and analysis is key to ongoing education reforms (World Bank, 2018):

- The quality and timeliness of the data collection;
- The ability to aggregate, integrate and analyse data from different sources and
- The use of data for planning, designing of intervention and decision-making purposes, particularly at the local level

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, these objectives are perhaps even more critical



The Current Study

In August 2020 RISE Ethiopia undertook research to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the education system

- Phone surveys with school principals (n=127) and teachers (n=316)
- Phone and online surveys with donors (n=3), regional stakeholders (n=20) and woreda (district) level stakeholders (n=15)



Region	Donors	Regional Gov.	Woreda Gov.	School Principals	Teachers
Addis Ababa	3	0	0	16	47
Amhara	-	8	2	17	40
Ben. Gumuz	-	0	0	17	41
Oromia	-	3	6	31	83
SNNP	-	8	2	14	28
Somali	-	0	0	15	37
Tigray	-	1	5	17	40
Total	3	20	15	127	316

The political context of Ethiopia's ongoing education reforms

Our ongoing RISE Ethiopia research has demonstrated how the wider political context has relevance for what takes place within the education system (e.g. Asegdom et al., 2019; Asegdom, Carvalho & Rose, 2021; Iyer & Rossiter, 2018; Yorke, Rose, Pankhurst, 2021).

- Education is central to the government's overall development strategy
- Centralised nature of planning limits the involvement of regional, woreda (district) and school level stakeholders in the design of plans and strategy - leads to knowledge gaps in the system
- Strategies implemented through a sequential chain of command - at-odds with building capacity and limits the ability of stakeholders to adapt strategies to local contexts
- The the (limited) availability of data within the system – impacts the design of strategies and influences the views and actions of stakeholders

Governments' response to the COVID-19 pandemic



The design of governments' COVID-19 education response strategy

1. *Limited Stakeholder Involvement* - Mainly involved federal level stakeholders in consultation with donors, with limited to no involvement of regional, woreda, or school level stakeholders
2. *Limited Data Available for planning* - Data and evidence used for planning was not always up-to-date and made responding to the crisis challenging.
3. *Equity was prioritised at the planning stage* but strategies for supporting disadvantaged groups were limited

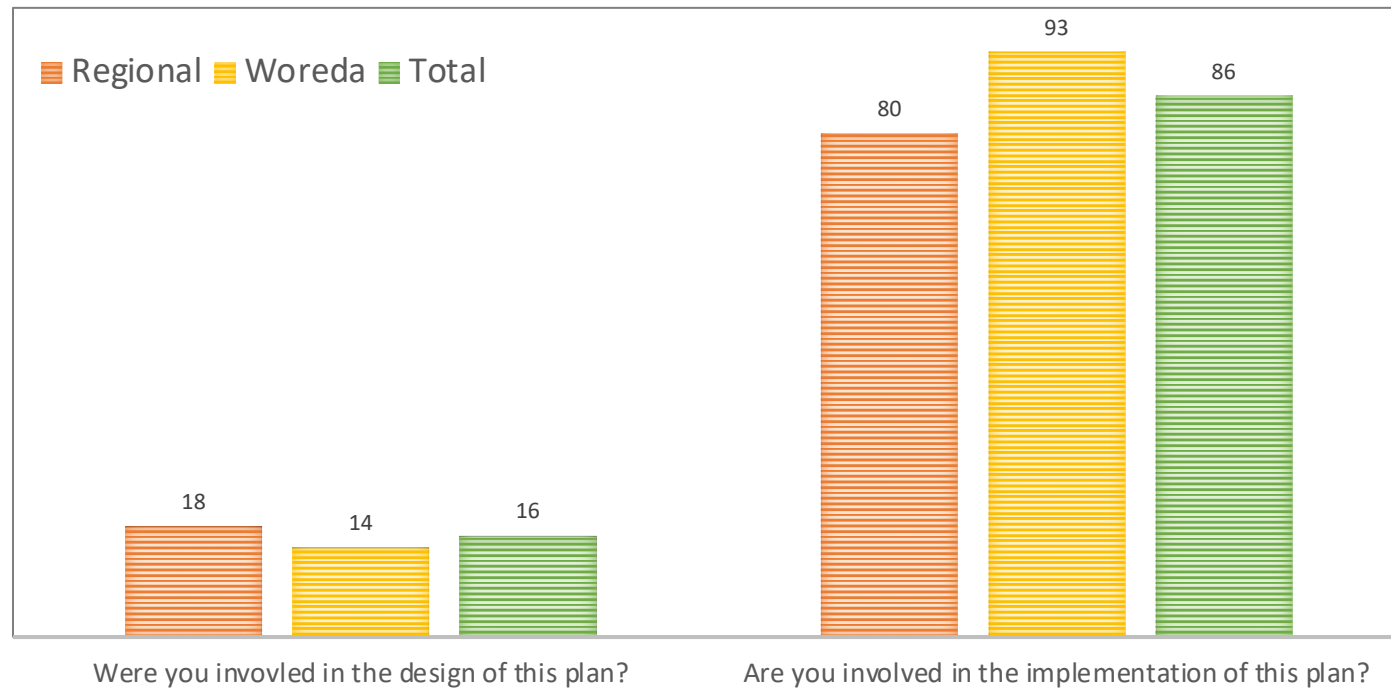


Figure: Stakeholders' involvement in the COVID-19 response strategy (%)



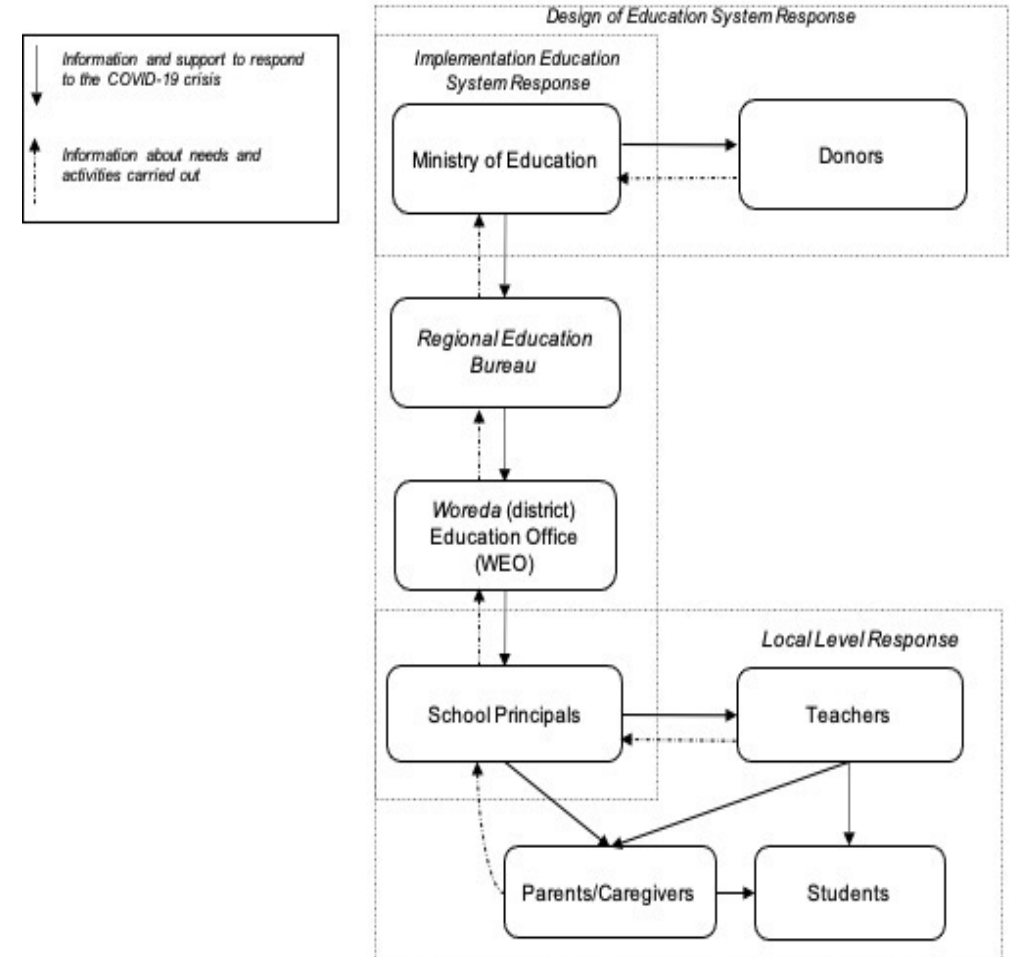
The implementation of governments' COVID-19 education response strategy

Information and support flowed in a cascade manner through the system, with information lost from one level to the next:

- most government stakeholders, three-quarters of school principals and half of teachers reported receiving info and support
- Differences across location (region and rural-urban)

Information and support that school level stakeholders received *significantly* impacted the likelihood that they supported students' learning during the school closures (Yorke, Rose, Woldehanna, Hailu, 2021).

Good levels of connectivity and coordination *amongst* stakeholders at different levels of the education system (e.g. donor and MoE; regional and woreda), however communication *between* these levels was less effective



Stakeholder's views of the education system COVID-19 response

- Stakeholders at all levels were more likely to view the education system response as *somewhat effective*
- Some (local-level) stakeholders criticised the 'one-size-fits-all' approach which they believed would fail to support the needs of students who are most marginalised
- As a result, many stakeholders believed that existing problems would be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic

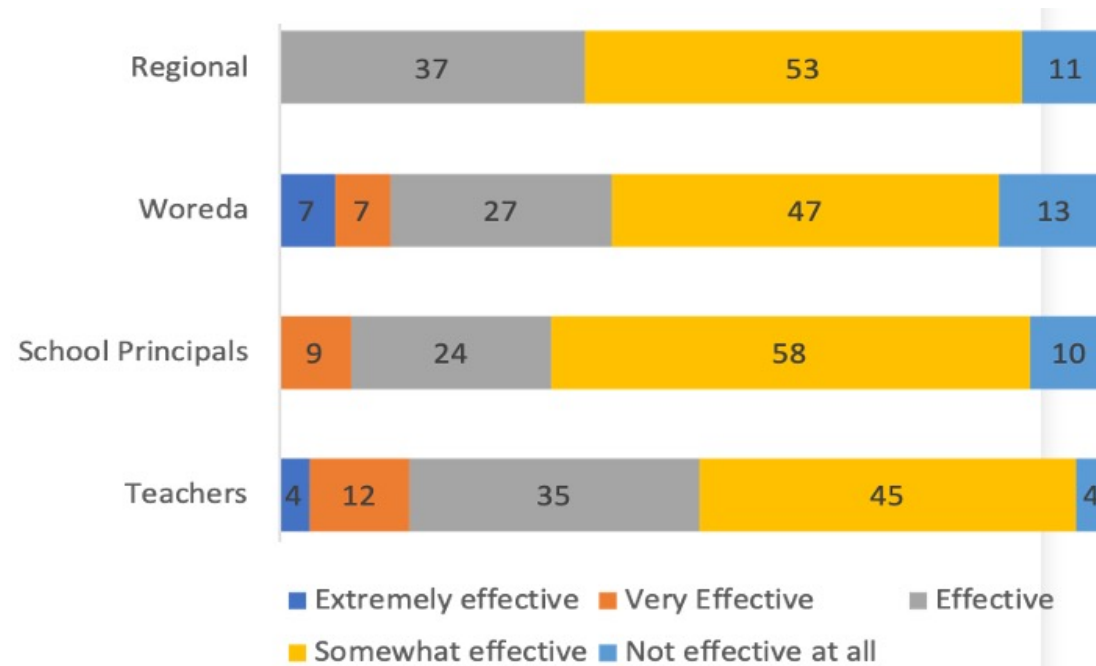


Figure: Perceived Effectiveness of Educational Programmes Broadcast through Radio (%)



Stakeholder's views of the education system COVID-19 response (Cont.)

Automatic promotion was one of the most debated strategies

- While many accepted that this policy was necessary, they also believed it would negatively impact the quality of education, especially for students who are disadvantaged
- Viewed as an abrupt decision that was based on insufficient evidence, without consultation with local-level stakeholders. Some even viewed this policy as going against local knowledge

“At least the promotion policy should have included the views of the main stakeholders: teachers, and school management...it will be a challenge in the next grade. I think history is repeating itself where quality of education is compromised” (School Principal, Addis Ababa).

“[Automatic promotion] is inappropriate. There is a huge emphasis on coverage at the expense of quality”
(Teacher, Rural Amhara).



The role of data and information in strengthening the education system beyond COVID-19



Existing challenges within the education system limited the effectiveness of the COVID-19 response

Stakeholders emphasised the need for better data and evidence to:

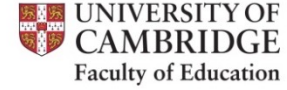
- identify the needs of different students across different locations
- develop evidence-based strategies that can be tailored to needs and context

The need for co-ordination action was also indicated

- Greater prioritisation of local knowledge and efforts to include local level stakeholders in the design of plans and strategies
- Improved flow of information and support for those implementing plans and strategies
- Greater collaboration and co-ordination between stakeholders within the system in the implementation of reforms



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Thank You!

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<https://riseprogramme.org/countries/ethiopia>