EQUIP-Tanzania Adaptive Programming
Reflections: Mid-Term Review January 2016

What is Adaptive Programming[1]?

A *science of delivery* underscores the importance of a data-driven and rigorous process to understand what works, under what conditions, why, and how. Too often in international development, conclusions are made without understanding counterfactuals and the assumption is that we can replicate success without understanding its constituent elements.

Traditional development models capture knowledge when it is too late to apply lessons to live projects. We need ways to develop and challenge our hypotheses *while we execute* and be less concerned about the accuracy of our original hypotheses. We need to try many things, look for positive deviants where they exist, and better understand why some results are better than others despite similar circumstances. What are we not seeing and what could we learn if only we admitted we might be working with misinformed assumptions? Can we be rigorous without being rigid and open without being undisciplined?

In essence, how can we design and implement in a way that allows change to be incorporated into what we are doing as we are doing it, within the framework of our overall impact and outcome goals within agreed timeframes

Some principles that may guide development practitioners:

1. **The importance of framing the right problem cannot be overstated**	Are we addressing the actual causes in our interventions? If we're working on symptoms rather than underlying causes, we're unlikely to succeed and likely to frustrate our partners and beneficiaries.
2. **End-user preferences matter**	We shouldn't assume we know what "users" want or need without asking them and allowing them to make informed choices. Too often we over-supply what people don't need and under-supply what they want
3. **Complex problems don't fit neatly into sector-specific boxes**	Complex problem often require multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder teams to identify binding constraints and leverage strengths from government, the private sector, and civil society to 'unblock' them
4. **All delivery is data**	Technology, and mobile phones in particular, have reduced the cost of data collection, analytics, and visualization. We can leverage this information to make better, evidence-based decisions faster and as well as create faster feedback loops with our ultimate beneficiaries

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[1] Taken from *Learning from Data-Driven Delivery*,
http://blogs.worldbank.org//voices/learning-data-driven-delivery

5. **Implementation matters and requires adaptive execution.**	Leadership teams must be able to change direction when necessary and use "learning by doing" and "doing by learning" approaches to fail fast, fail small, and fail forward. Development challenges require technical and adaptive skills. Successful implementation is about turning art into science by building practitioners' capacity to learn faster, iterate, and change course when needed.

The Case of EQUIP-Tanzania

EQUIP-Tanzania is a holistic development programme supporting national primary education quality improvement in Tanzania.   With around GBP £50 million UKAID budget it has operated since 2013 in support of better learning outcomes at basic education level, especially for girls. It seeks to develop, implement and demonstrate best approaches to strengthen the quality of education in seven regions, ready for national scale-up. It targets 2.3 million enrolled primary students and 47,446 Teachers in 30,478 Classrooms in 4,439 Target Schools of 1,065 Target Wards across 47 Target Local Government Authorities (LGA), (also known as districts) in 7 Regions.

It is designed with a strong understanding of the political economy of decentralization in Tanzania and uses existing institutional processes, mandates and functionaries to achieve its goals. Implementation of specific interventions is within system, driven by a modality of sub-national ownership with continuous facility for reflection and interaction across and between the multiple stakeholders. The structure allows for continuous lesson learning resulting in the ability for adaptive programming during implementation. It further allows the programme to implement multiple interventions simultaneously with benefit of the respective lessons learnt from each individual intervention. The approach is new to Tanzania within the education system and to some extent, the sub-national governance structures.

EQUIP-Tanzania is able to successfully practice Adaptive Programming through a number of principles that underpin the programme.

- Firstly, we do not over-prescribe activities, especially at the local levels. Schools and communities, as a rule, do not respond well to micro-instructions that almost always do not fit the specific institutional needs or structure. The encouragement of sector stakeholders to do within the context of their environment allows for innovation, diversity and the ability of the programme to learn across the target regions but also to adapt practice where an activity is not suitably having the intended impact.

- Secondly, monitoring and self-assessment is a critical facet of EQUIP-Tanzania. The above avoidance of prescription and stakeholder determination allows for an open approach by beneficiaries, providing a wealth of feedback. Continuous training and periodic review allows for beneficiaries to have a platform to voice opinion and concerns. National and Sub-National institutions and functionaries implement the programme

feeding back to government decision-makers. Regional Managing Agent Teams working with Regions and Districts ensure that feedback finds the appropriate decision-makers within the programme.

- Thirdly, EQUIP-Tanzania implements in partnership with National and Sub-National Institutions and sub-national functionaries. In essence the owners of the system. It works with existing systems and looks to build upon its strengths. Through using system actors and the system itself, it allows for beneficiaries to operate within a known structure and allows them to use their knowledge of what was before as they move towards an aspiration for the future. This provides for a platform that generates innovative approaches.

Five key examples of Adaptive Programming from the first half of EQUIP-Tanzania implementation have been identified below to share learning and both guide and inform delivery:

1/ Moving from Central to Decentralised Financial Execution

Regional and Local Government Authority (LGA) ownership is a pivotal facet of EQUIP-Tanzania. With 47 LGA across 7 regions, it is not possible to adopt a 'project approach' for implementation, which offers no sustainability as demonstrated by other education programmes in Tanzania.

The initial approach of requiring District Executive Directors to *sign-up* to EQUIP-Tanzania through a request letter to the Regional Administrative Secretary (RASec) achieved early buy-in but did not translate to all LGA taking full responsibility for implementation, with many trying to utilise the Regional Managing Agent Team for simple activities such as collecting data and organising training venues. Unsurprisingly, when implementation obstacles were encountered, there was often limited response to solution finding by LGA. Inversely, those LGA that had taken ownership and responsibility were pushing ahead well. This posed the risked of 'A-team' and 'B team' LGAs.

To counter the above, it was decided to devolve the fund execution and financial management to LGA level, overseen by RASec. £23m of DFID finance was rerouted via the central government Treasury to reach the LGA, empowering and changing the dynamics. LGA programme planning, budgeting and scheduling immediately created increased ownership and responsibility, albeit within programme parameters. Funds are 'ring-fenced' but the receipt of management of funds has placed significant requirements on the LGA for which most are responding well.

Result: LGA have taken control of implementation, notably the complex issues of rural logistics and beneficiary management, especially the teacher cadre and Teacher Training College INSET trainers. LGA officers are beginning to show signs of taking responsibility for decision-making and defending their positions to senior government members when questioned. Financial Management Reporting remains a

concern and the programme continues to support all aspects of programme cycle management through capacity building and mentoring.

2/ Inclusion of Sub-National Strategic Leaders in support of Sub-National Managers

EQUIP-Tanzania targets Local Government Authorities (LGA) and the wards schools and communities they are educationally responsible for.

Upon early understanding of the political economy of Tanzania, it was apparent that the Regional Administrative Secretariats (RASec) were missing in the business case and technical proposal. No funding had been apportioned either. In an environment where funding denotes power, and where the head of the RASec holds a political power equal to that of a Ministry Permanent Secretary, this was identified as a critical omission.

An approach was agreed with the education service delivery Ministry's Permanent Secretary to embed the leadership of sub-national programme activities with the RASec and to support the RASec to provide sector leadership to LGA to provide sector management. ALL RASec education personnel were included in LGA training and sub-national Managing Agent Teams were designed to work through the RASec, giving as much scope for them to lead EQUIP-Tanzania as they could demand. EQUIP-Tanzania Regional Managing Agent Teams are moving to sit within the RASec allowing for greater resource sharing.

Result: EQUIP-Tanzania is strategically led and performance controlled by the RASec in each region. All programme communications go through/via the RASec. EQUIP-Tanzania is understood by the decentralised system as a government programme for primary education targeting the improvement of the quality of education delivery. This is changing the level of dialogue from input to output/outcome.

3/ Moving from a Hierarchical Cascade to a Partnership Training Model

EQUIP-Tanzania sub-national capacity building, like other training in Tanzania and elsewhere, is built upon cascade training models. Within a system as large as Tanzania's, there are strong efficiency arguments for such an approach. Effectiveness however is subject to the quality of the functionaries and the number of levels within the cascade model.

It was evident early implementation that some governance levels of sub-national Tanzania harboured distrust both vertically and horizontally. Many functionaries sincerely believed their line managers or sub-ordinates were a critical obstacle to improvement. In such an environment where the functionaries of a system working together are a requirement for a sustainable, cascade to work, cascade training looked a weak option.

To counter this, an alternative model was developed. We call this a partnership training model. We identified that distrust mostly came from disinformation or lack of information between levels of the system. To overcome this, functionaries from different levels were trained together. For example, WEC and Head Teachers were both trained on school leadership by Inspectors– so now both functionaries could agree on what each other should be doing and how, and Inspectors now were seen as part of the team for school improvement and not merely assessors of 'how bad things were going', which was a common complaint. WEC and Head Teachers were also trained together to jointly support School Committees, further enhancing the relationship.

Result: Partnerships were developed around new and revived practices and consistent messaging was developed across functionaries. Other stakeholders, for example, community members are responding positively to improved relations between levels by changing their attitudes also. Overall, the sub-national system and functionaries have begun to jointly understand better the issues faced by schools and solutions to overcome some of them.

4/ Movement away from Data-needs of Central level to those of School and Sub-national level

The Education Management Information System (EMIS) dialogue centres around national level actors, annual census and dashboards, missing the critical aspects of accuracy, timeliness and consistency at the information source – schools. Through programme support to the perceived EMIS problem – the need for school-disaggregated annual data – it was observed that the information obstacles were not located centrally but the national level actors were too focused on institutional ownership (including some Development Partners) to be able to know and address the critical aspects. Decentralised actors were not being consulted or given what they needed, which is continuous data and tools to manage performance.

EQUIP-Tanzania is working with the sub-national level and helping to shift data use from being largely confined to policy and guidelines, towards being a tool to support continuous performance improvement. Our support focuses on school-level systems feeding sub-national management systems, embedding all activities within a platform that allows for schools to govern, communities to know and monitor, wards to coordinate and districts to manage, as mandated by policy and demanded by functionary.

Result: the sub-national information focus is now very much targeting schools and the processes for discussing performance are based on this information aligned to clear expectations of school and functionary (e.g. Head Teacher and WEC). This is forecast to become more pronounced as the School Information System rolls out in its entirely in 2016 and is digitized with the use of 5,500 tablets.

5/ Adaptation of Teacher INSET (In-Service Training)

EQUIP-Tanzania trains up to 22,000 teachers for any given INSET intervention. Training focuses on a variety of modalities including residential, cluster and school-based, communities of practice-based. Training has focused on achieving the most efficient (time and cost) and effective (output driven) means of upskilling teachers. A training and output focussed evaluation system was put in place to learn from trainers, trainees and monitors.

The evolution of EQUIP-Tanzania INSET commenced with a combination of school-cluster and school-based training, working with Teacher Training Colleges, using their Tutors as peripatetic trainers. Representatives of schools (INSET Coordinators and Head Teachers) were trained at ward clusters with WEC (coordination and quality control) and all early grade teachers were trained at school level.

Given the diversity of ability of Tutors and the low levels of teacher experience of professional training programmes and modern pedagogy, the modality changed to Residential (3-day substantive focus), school-based communities of practice (twice monthly) and reflective ward cluster sessions (1-day monthly). Representatives of schools (INSET Coordinators, Head Teachers and WEC) were trained at Residential level, all early grade teachers were trained at school level and INSET Coordinators and Head Teachers participate in ward clusters with WEC. This allowed more in-depth training, with more direct tutor contact time, to occur at the start of a cycle when new ideas where being introduced. The model is still focused on the idea of peer learning and support within schools and the possibility for inter-school discussion and dialogue through the clusters.

Given the increasing content complexity of materials which were new to all teachers (here focussing on phonetics and phonics), the INSET evolved again to ensure sufficient underscoring of content and skills so that: INSET Coordinators and all early grade teachers were trained at Residential level (3 days), all early grade teachers (plus other teachers within the school) were trained at school level (twice-monthly) and INSET Coordinators and WEC participate in ward clusters (1-day monthly). This ensured the new, complex, content was being directly trained to the teachers who would be using it in the classrooms at the outset, but that they still benefited from peer discussion and reflection as previously designed.

Result: all INSET beneficiaries have been given a voice to help improve the INSET programme. Through regular feedback and reflection, weaknesses of the modality in relation to clear training objectives were learnt and modifications made to improve the programme's delivery. Through greater ownership and participation, and limited prescription in the model, the early grade training INSET has grown to include in many schools all their respective teachers regardless of standard taught. These additional teachers are included at zero increased cost as they participate at a level where no funding is available for implementation. This approach has proved both popular and highly cost effective, providing a model for replication as Tanzania grapples with the challenges of mass teacher professional upgrading.