



SABER IN ACTION: AN OVERVIEW

STRENGTHENING EDUCATION SYSTEMS
TO ACHIEVE LEARNING FOR ALL

JANUARY | 2018

There is widespread agreement that education delivers skills that underpin students’ future learning and lead to greater social and financial mobility, increasing one’s income and ultimately affecting a country’s economic growth and development. But there is far less agreement on the education policies and programs most likely to create quality learning environments and improve student performance, especially among the disadvantaged.

The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) begins to fill this gap. It allows countries to conduct a thorough inventory of their education policies and institutions based on global best practices. It produces data on these policies and institutions, analyzes and evaluates their quality, as well as provides decisionmakers and stakeholders at all levels with a tool for structured and effective policy dialogue.

What is a systems approach?

The systems approach to education analysis and reform is at the heart of the World Bank Group’s Education Strategy 2020: Learning for All. It recognizes that improving education requires much more than just increasing resources. Indeed, it requires strengthening all factors that improve learning for all children and youth. This means making sure that the education system’s policies and institutions for governance, accountability, information, financing rules, and school management are all aligned with learning for all. SABER is helping define and analyze education systems by identifying and assessing the education policies that matter most in helping countries achieve education results and learning.





“The Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) produces knowledge on education policies and institutions based on global best practice, with the aim of helping countries systematically strengthen their education systems to achieve learning for all children and youth.”



How does SABER work?

In each education system area, SABER collects and analyzes policy data in ways that ensure rigorous and cross-country comparability. The foundation for data collection is a What Matters framework paper in each policy area—a thorough review of the global evidence that identifies the policies and institutions that matter most in promoting learning for all. A rubric for assessing progress toward identified goals, along with a questionnaire for collecting policy data, is part of this framework document.

The data are collected in-country by local experts and verified through discussions with government counterparts before they are used for country reports and made available publicly. This validation is quite extensive in its engagement of policymakers and stakeholders.

The SABER web tool (saber.worldbank.org) consolidates all available SABER information, data, documents, and reports. SABER framework papers, country reports, and background documents are available on the web site, along with SABER diagnostic tools and questionnaires. And with the SABER web tool, data can be compared across countries.



SABER tools are applied to policy areas in education systems:

- Early childhood development (ECD)
- Education management information systems (EMIS)
- Education resilience approaches (ERA)
- Engaging the private sector (EPS)
- Equity and inclusion* (E&I)
- Information and communication technology* (ICT)
- School autonomy and accountability (SA&A)
- School finance (SF)
- School health and school feeding (SH&SF)
- Student assessment (SA)
- Teachers (T)
- Tertiary education (TE)
- Workforce development (WfD)

*Under development

Who is applying SABER?

Countries from all regions of the world are applying SABER tools and using SABER for policy dialogue and reform. Selecting the SABER policy areas they find most valuable and relevant, countries work with the World Bank to apply the SABER tools in country. To date, SABER has been applied more than 300 times in more than 100 countries, and more than 200 SABER country reports and related data are available on the SABER web tool. The Africa Region accounts for about 30% of SABER use, with countries such as Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda leading the way.

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How is SABER making a difference?

SABER aids countries in analyzing their education systems through diagnosis, dialogue, and reform. It is also enhancing the global knowledge base in the education sector. SABER is already leading to education policy reform and new program initiatives in several countries. In Jamaica the government's Early Childhood Commission used SABER to help draft its new National Strategic Plan as well as a national multisector early



childhood development policy. In Tanzania, SABER-Teachers is helping shape the government's current large-scale education reforms under its Big Results Now initiative. In Bulgaria, SABER-Workforce Development has been used by the Ministry of Education in drafting the strategy for higher education.

With patient and consistent donor support, countries applying SABER will be better poised to make significant progress in their education systems and to improve the results those systems produce. As more countries apply SABER tools, additional data and information on education system policies around the world will become available through the SABER web tool, enhancing the global knowledge base on education systems around the world.

What's next for SABER?

To improve understanding of the links between educational inputs—such as teachers, educational curricula, and budgets—and outputs—learning—SABER systematically explores factors that hinder or facilitate policy implementation. SABER views the links between education inputs and outputs as a chain that should translate policies and resources into quality learning outcomes. In practice, however, “good” policies are not always well implemented. As a next step, SABER is developing tools to assess the quality of policy implementation to ensure adopted programs have their intended impact.



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