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Applying a new policy monitoring tool for education in emergencies

Pina Tarricone
Kemran Mestan
Ian Teo

The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Centre drives improvements in learning by supporting the monitoring of educational outcomes worldwide. The GEM Centre is a long-term partnership between the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) and the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

Applying a new policy monitoring tool for EiE

Introduction

Two years on, the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact national education systems due to partial or complete closures of schools, or by creating uncertainty around the possibility of school closures. In response, policymakers have developed flexible teaching and learning strategies to support schooling continuity, as well as students, their parents/guardians, teachers, and school leaders (UIS, 2021; UNESCO, 2020).

Education in emergencies (EiE) occur when education systems are impacted by events that disrupt learning and schooling, and challenge their resiliency. In addition to communicable diseases, learning and schooling are disrupted by disasters, political conflicts, and complex emergencies and mass displacement.[1]

To support education policymakers and stakeholders, such as governments, NGOs, community leaders and teachers, to build resilient education systems, the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Centre developed two practical policy resources – a Policy Monitoring Framework (PMF) and a Policy Monitoring Tool (PMT).

How can these new resources help policymakers?

The PMF and PMT were developed based on evidence from a rapid review of publicly available policy, academic and grey literature. The key findings from this review indicated common gaps and factors affecting education during, and following, emergencies.

The research identified best practices for preparedness, response and recovery activities that promote equitable and quality education outcomes, with a focus on equitable learning progress and access to K-12 education.

The PMF and PMT resources can be used by policymakers and education stakeholders to review existing EiE policies and strategies, identify areas for improvement, monitor changes to EiE policies, and prioritise their activities to build education system resilience. Both the PMF and PMT can be used flexibly across different country contexts and EiE events.

While the PMT has been developed based on evidence from the review, it has not yet been applied in a country context. The GEM Centre would like to support ministries of education and education policymakers who are interested in applying the PMT to their education system. This will help the GEM Centre gain information about the suitability and applicability of the tool in context. The key steps in applying the PMT are presented on the next pages.

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1   This involves a confluence of disasters and communicable diseases, and political conflicts.

Step 1: Review the Policy Monitoring Framework

The Policy Monitoring Framework (PMF) consists of three emergency management phases and three factors for consideration by policymakers to help build resilient education systems (see Figure 1).
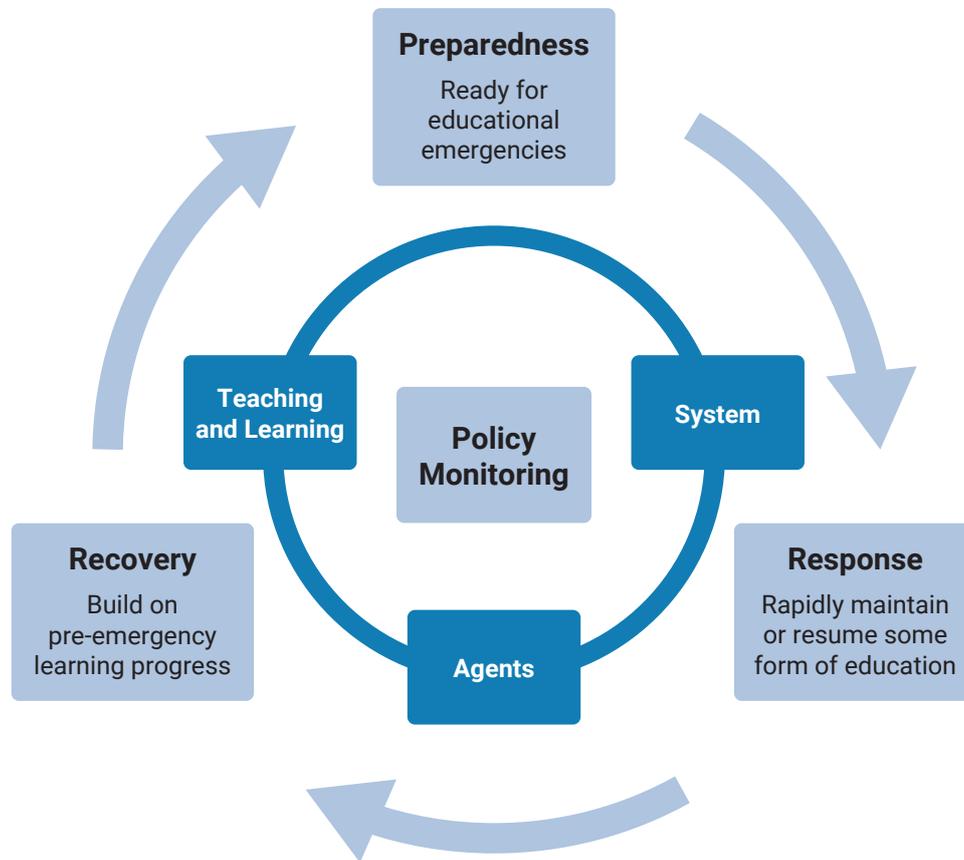
Figure 1: Policy Monitoring Framework for building a resilient education system

- The *Preparedness phase* involves policymakers being ready for emergencies by having detailed education policy and planning documentation to clarify what actions should be taken during, and following, an emergency.
- The *Response phase* refers to policies, plans and actions that address priority areas to enable education system continuity.
- The *Recovery Phase* focuses on returning students to schools and continuing learning progress (INEE, 2010).

Common to all three phases are factors that influence how policymakers manage education systems and school-level planning.

- The *Systems factor* refers to the central processes, practices, networks, and relations that policymakers engage with and within.
- The *Teaching and Learning factor* refers to all activities and resources that are directly related to how teachers teach, and how students learn and are assessed.

- The *Agents factor* refers to entities (e.g., organisations, communities, and individuals) that make decisions and act over the course of emergency management phases.

Together, the three types of factors with the three phases enables policymakers to guide the monitoring of policy for building a resilient education system.

The policy monitoring process involves reviewing existing policies and strategies, thereby identifying improvements, as well as new policies and strategies that need to be developed.

Step 2: Review the Policy Monitoring Tool

The Policy Monitoring Tool (PMT) supports policymakers by elaborating on policy considerations and issues for the Systems, Teaching and Learning, and Agents factors of the PMF. This hierarchy of factors, considerations and issues, was developed into a flexible monitoring tool that could be used by policymakers across Preparedness, Response and Recovery phases and different EiE events. Table 1 provides an excerpt of the PMT that outlines policy factors and specific policy considerations. Please see the review for a complete description of this tool and all policy issues that correspond with specific policy considerations.

Table 1: Excerpt of policy monitoring tool

Policy factors	Policy considerations
1. Systems	1.1. Planning for emergencies in education.
	1.2. Instituting strong coordination and collaboration.
	1.3. Communicating between and with education stakeholders.
	1.4. Constructing robust ICT infrastructure.
	1.5. Building sound school facilities.
	1.6. Bolstering monitoring systems.
2. Teaching and Learning	2.1. Embedding assessment into the education system.
	2.2. Implementing digital teaching and learning.
	2.3. Applying multiple teaching modalities.
3. Agent	3.1. Clarifying responsibilities amongst government agents.
	3.2. Engaging the community.
	3.3. Strengthening schools and supporting school leaders.
	3.4. Developing teacher capacity.
	3.5. Helping parents and resourcing the home learning environment.
	3.6. Fostering children's resilience.

Step 3: Apply the Policy Monitoring Tool to your education system

Policymakers can use the PMT to generate a heat map that examines the extent to which policies address issues across the three emergency management phases. This is depicted in Figure 2, which provides a hypothetical example of which policy issues relating to policy consideration 1.1. Planning for emergencies in education needs to be prioritised across the Preparedness, Response and Recovery phases.

Policy factor	Policy consideration	Policy issue	Emergency management phase		
			Preparedness	Response	Recovery
1. Systems	1.1. Planning for emergencies in education.	1.1.1. At an education system level, risks are mapped to identify which institutions and processes are vulnerable to various external shocks.	High	High	Very high
		1.1.2. Emergency planning procedures are documented, communicated to relevant agents and implemented at an education systems and school level.	Medium	High	High
		1.1.3. Education authorities produce macro planning documents and guides to support schools to develop individualised subsidiary plans.	High	Medium	High
		1.1.4. Emergency Response and Recovery plans detail the resources, actions, tasks, and data required in the Response and Recovery phases of an emergency.	High	Very high	Very high
		1.1.5. Institutional continuity plans specify adjustments and accommodations necessary to sustain core education system and school functions. These include alternative teaching procedures and supports for vulnerable children.	Low	High	High

Low	Medium	High	Very high	Not applicable

Figure 2: Example of PMT heat map

As illustrated in Figure 2, applying the PMT will allow policymakers to identify and highlight policy issues. The policy issues that are not sufficiently addressed are allocated a 'Very high' or 'High' priority rating, while those issues that are sufficiently addressed are assigned 'Low' priority. This colour-coded rating system allows policymakers to identify which policy issues, and corresponding policy considerations, require more attention. The tool can be adapted to respective education systems. For example, policy issues that may not be relevant to an education system can be assigned the 'Not applicable' category, or additional context specific issues can be added to the tool.

Step 4: Implement change based on the results of the Policy Monitoring Tool

Policymakers may use the PMT as a baseline to monitor changes to EiE policies across emergency management phases and prioritise their activities to build education system resilience.

The PMT can be used flexibly by policymakers to implement change based on two approaches.

- Create a *broad EiE policy heat map*. This enables policymakers to gain a broad understanding of their education system's EiE policy demands, monitor a wide range of policies across emergency management phases, and prioritise activities for building education system resilience.

- Create a *focused EiE policy heat map*. This enables policymakers to choose specific policy factors, considerations or issues across one or more emergency management phases. This targeted approach allows policymakers to monitor and prioritise specific EiE policies and practices to enhance overall education system resiliency.

Please contact Dr Pina Tarricone pina.tarricone@acer.org to discuss how the GEM Centre can support you to apply the PMT to your education system.

Review the GEM Centre's PMF and PMT in full here.

References

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