INEE

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
Réseau Inter-Agences pour l´Éducation en Situations d´Urgence
La Red Interagencial para la Educación en Situaciones de Emergencia
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الشبكة المشتركة لوكالات التعليم في حالات الطوارئ

INEE Minimum Standards Case Study:
The Use of Minimum Standards for Capacity Building of the Lecturers at the University of Nairobi, Kenya

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Background and Context

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) in partnership with the University of Nairobi (UoN), Kenya came together in 2009 to launch a Master of Education degree program in Education in Emergencies (EiE). The graduate-level program is the first of its kind in the world. The first required unit–Theory and Practice of Education in Emergencies–will be offered by the School of Education, Department of Educational Administration and Planning beginning in March 2011.

A key challenge in the creation of this program, in addition to the fact that it is an emerging academic discipline, was that the field of Education in Emergencies was also a new area for both the faculty and the students at the University of Nairobi. The partners therefore needed to develop the curricula for the entire graduate-level program and to build the capacity of the University instructors.

The INEE Minimum Standards Handbook was one of the essential resources used to shape the curriculum. In the early development stages of the course, forty (40) lecturers from the School of Education of the University of Nairobi attended a four-day workshop organized by UNICEF, Save the Children, and the University of Nairobi that provided a comprehensive overview of the field of Education in Emergencies and the INEE Minimum Standards. During that workshop five lecturers were also trained as trainers.

Application

The Education in Emergencies (EiE) core teaching team, initially made up of 10 University of Nairobi lecturers, found the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook to be a rich resource for teaching this required course. Additionally, the INEE Minimum Standards have been distributed to all of the enrolled Master's students in the Department of Educational Administration and Planning and will be used as a reference tool in the library. The core team found the organization of the five domains and the 19 Minimum Standards very useful as they familiarized themselves with the field of Education in Emergencies. The accompanying implementation Toolkit also proved to be very useful in identifying various activities that could be used for teaching the course. In some instances, the Toolkit was useful in developing short case studies for teaching and learning. In addition to mainstreaming the INEE Minimum Standards throughout the core and electives units as part of the EiE

Specialisation, one 4-hour class session during the required core course was dedicated to introducing students to the INEE Minimum Standards and applying and contextualizing them to different scenarios. On initial course evaluations, students have already indicated that the INEE Minimum Standards are a practical tool that allows them to ground the learning process through the practical application of the standards to various dilemmas that education practitioners might face in the field. The new 2010 edition of the Handbook is very well organized; it has become an easy reference for professors, trainers, and students alike.

In February 2011, the core UoN faculty team was involved in a workshop where the INEE Minimum Standards were contextualized for Somalia. The venue of this workshop was the Somalia Education Cluster, based in Nairobi, Kenya. It was facilitated by the INEE Coordinator for Minimum Standards, the Somalia Education Cluster Coordinator, and the Visiting Practitioner from IRC. This was one of the most valuable workshops for the core team. It illustrated how the INEE Minimum Standards were applied and how various case studies could be used in the EiE course curriculum and easily developed for future workshops. Participants representing NGOs and CBOs shared their experience and described their education projects in Somalia, a country that is affected by a chronic cycle of natural and man-made disasters and conflict.

The challenges to applying the INEE Minimum Standards in complex contexts were considered, emphasizing the local needs and conditions in the three areas of Somalia, namely Puntland, Somalia and South East Somalia. During this workshop the contextualization of the INEE Minimum Standards became a reality. Participants were drawn from organizations working in Somalia. They started by contextualizing 10 Minimum Standards from the 5 domains of the Handbook specifically for implementation in Somalia. Through collaboration and dialogue with EiE practitioners in attendance, the EiE core team learned valuable lessons of application of the Standards. These lessons will go a long way in closing the gap between theory and practice in the teaching and learning process of EiE at the University of Nairobi.

Challenges

During the capacity building activities, the main challenges have been learning the interrelated domains and standards. While the INEE Minimum Standards provide facilitators and students a deeper grasp of education in emergencies, several questions surfaced as the faculty members and students began to think through applying the standards to the Kenyan context, such as: Why "Minimum" Standards? Are the INEE Minimum Standards achievable or are they set too high? Who should use them? When should they be used? Are the INEE Minimum Standards also applicable in times of peace? How can the Ministry of Education become more familiar with the Minimum Standards so they can integrate them into national policy? Initially, students were confused about how to contextualize what, at first, seemed like universal standards and how the foundational standards support all other standards. They also misinterpreted what the standards meant at times.

These areas of confusion and concern were gradually clarified as facilitators and students gained more experience with education in emergencies and greater comfort with the INEE Minimum Standards through their engagement with case studies, application activities, and facilitator-led discussions. Despite the challenges, the INEE Minimum Standards have proven to be a very rich and well-organized resource for students and practitioners to think and plan for education in emergencies preparedness, response, and recovery to lay the foundation for long-term development.

Outcomes

Many of the outcomes are yet to be fully realized as the University of Nairobi is only in the beginning stages of implementing the Master of Education degree in Education in Emergencies. Despite the novelty of the program, many solid foundations have already been laid for later outcomes to be more fully realized. First, the INEE Minimum Standards will become part of the content taught in the Master of Education program for Education in Emergencies at the University of Nairobi, School of Education, Kenya. Second, the INEE Minimum Standards Handbook will be used as an essential resource for the Master of Education students after they graduate. Students preparing to work in the EiE field are being equipped with knowledge of a key tool for the education sector and will become increasingly familiar and skilled in utilizing the INEE Minimum Standards throughout the remainder of the core unit and into the electives, all of which draw on the INEE Minimum

Standards for knowledge creation and skills development. In the long run, the knowledge and skills learned will be applied to the schools/institutions in which these graduates will work. The potential uses for INEE Minimum Standards in our context are still unfolding and while it may be too early to anticipate the full outcome of the program, promising first steps are continuing to emerge.

Would you like to share your Minimum Standards experience?

Please contact the INEE Coordinator for Minimum Standards at minimumstandards@ineesite.org and visit www.ineesite.org/MScasestudies for more information, including case study templates in English, French, Spanish and Arabic.