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Understanding the Evaluation Practices of Wikimedia Affiliates in Education

Research and report by
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BACKGROUND

In 2019, there were 15 Wikimedia chapters that included education activities in their Annual Plan Grant applications.

However, when reviewing grant reports for education work, we noticed some challenges. Mainly[1]:

1. The types of data that affiliates are collecting are not telling the story of their impact, especially on other Wikimedia sister projects.

2. There are no standardized practices of data collection among affiliates.

3. Only 49% of recorded education activities are documented online, and just 12% have evaluation reports

Purpose and Context

We wanted to know how to help our community **get recognized** for their work in education, and to do that we needed some data**.** We intend to **provide better tools and resources to collect that data and share** it with our affiliates and the world too!

Now, what do we mean by **evaluation**?

Evaluation refers to the systematic collection of information conducted during or after a project to critically examine and make judgments about project's effectiveness against anticipated outcomes and to help inform decisions about future interventions[2].

You will also find the term **impact evaluation** here. What is it? Impact evaluation aims to identify not only whether all project's intended results are achieved, but also aim to seek information whether the project can create or contribute to a larger transformation in the community.

References:
[1] Wikimedia and Education Database,
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wekxbA21QM9ZcXFw0aKkKFc-jI8DEEhCly8SWZ8wJNQ/edit#gid=509961721
[2] UNESCO 2009, A Guide for Monitoring and Evaluating Community-Based Project, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000186231

THE INTERVIEWS

- ✓ Semi structured interviews
- ✓ September to December 2019
- ✓ 7 Wikimedia affiliates participated

1. Wikimedia Armenia
2. Wikimedia Argentina
3. Wikimedia Serbia
4. Wikimedia Indonesia
5. Wikimedia Taiwan
6. The Center for Internet and Society (CIS) Bangalore
7. Wikimedia User Group Egypt

Question topics

- overview of their Wikimedia education activities
- the way they perceived and measured projects' successes
- evaluation approaches
- the challenges they face when collecting data

Note:
- The percentages in this report are calculated based on the responses from representatives from 7 Wikimedia affiliate organizations that conduct education activities regularly
- the sample does not represent the entire population of Wikimedia affiliates

THE RESULTS

The Wikimedia Education affiliates interviewed run a diverse set of education activities:

However, the types of data collected by the affiliates are not telling the impact of their work, especially relating to contributions on sister projects of Wikipedia, and learning outcomes for students and educators.

At the end of this research, we provide three recommendations of the next steps to improve the community's ability to collect data that better demonstrates Wikimedia's impact on education.

"If we disregard numbers of articles for a second, the Wiktionary project I ran last year was really successful. The Wiktionary project was successful in a different way. Yes, it is true that we did not generate a huge number of entries to the Arabic Wiktionary project, but it made a huge difference in how the students look at their own work, how they now have something to refer to on the internet, and how they feel like they built something for their community."

- **Reem Al-Kashif, teacher at Aim Shams University and member of Wikimedia UG Egypt**

By carrying out meaningful and effective monitoring and evaluation, our affiliates and community will be able to recognize the value of their programs and will have the ability to course-correct based on accurate and up to date information.

Conducting an evaluation enables affiliates to critically approach their Wikimedia education projects and find flaws to improve in the future.

As mentioned by Wikimedia Argentina, evaluation is a process that should always be present in each step of their strategic lines throughout their education programs.
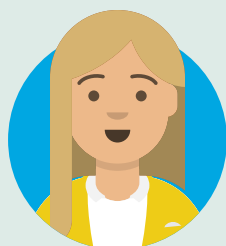
"I can't think about my activities without evaluation.
For me, the evaluation experience is the one that allows me to transform the project, to think of new projects to try to identify why it didn't work, why it works, why we have to keep doing it.
I can't think of anything in my life without evaluation.
It's like my teacher-feeling all the time. We are evaluating a lot."

- Luisina Ferrante, Education and Human Rights Manager of Wikimedia Argentina

Note: Due to Covid-19, the Wikimedia Foundation is operating at reduced capacity to allow staff to take care of themselves and their loved ones.
In light of this, the Education Team has shifted our focus to supporting those affected by school closures to make use of the Wikimedia projects to continue their learning.
The next steps of this Evaluation Recommendation will be continued in the next fiscal year 2020/2021.

Motivation

According to UNESCO[2], the purpose of an evaluation is not only to show our accountability to the funders of our programs but also to make sure that we spend resources most efficiently and effectively.
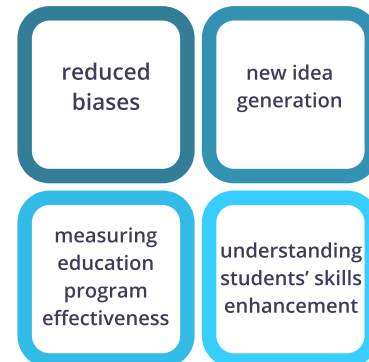
What we found

✓ All of the affiliates interviewed agree that evaluating their education projects is very important!

3 of 7 affiliates who were part of the research made **the connection** between **evaluating** their education projects and **program expansion**.

✓ Other benefits of conducting evaluation according to the affiliates:

Affiliates think that evaluating their education activities gives them more evidence of their success.

Thus, it is attracting more networks to work together with them in the future.

reduced biases

new idea generation

measuring education program effectiveness

understanding students' skills enhancement

However,

4/7 of the interviewed affiliates expressed their struggle on handling hundreds to thousands of students in a year but only have 1-2 staff members or volunteers to run their nation-wide education activities.

For 2 of 7 affiliates interviewed, this resulted in terminating all evaluation efforts altogether to only focus on the output metrics required by their donors, not the outcome or impact metrics.

"Doing evaluation helps us make sure that we are doing quality projects. And through quality projects, we can gain a stronger network. Partners want to cooperate with us and give the chance to do more."

- **Education staff at Wikimedia Armenia**[5]

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ARMENIA

Learning For The Future

Feedback and evaluation findings from past activities help affiliates gain the knowledge necessary to plan future initiatives better.

Feedback and evaluation findings from past activities help affiliates learn more and do better planning and improve future projects.

What we found

5/7 of the interviewed affiliates reported that **new ideas and better approaches** often come from the feedback they received from participants, both from **formal surveys and also oral discussions**.

For Wikimedia Argentina, evaluation has become an integral part of their education activities, helping them to **innovate**.

Wikimedia Serbia also highlights that their evaluation form is essential in:

finding ways to improve their education projects

optimizing their success

finding stories behind their results

helping to reveal the mistakes made during education activities implementation

"Collaborate, learn, and share"

The Education Team then asked affiliates on how we can support them to conduct their evaluations and learn best practices for evaluation methods from one another.

6 of 7 affiliates from the study:

would like to learn from and collaborate more with other affiliates to hold a better practice of evaluating their Wikimedia education activities

believe that customization and standardization of evaluation methods and tools will help make the collaboration and sharing process easier as it will help them to compare results from the same data points and take lessons from other affiliates' results

"It's really important for us to use the evaluation forms to find the way we can improve our projects. We also try to learn how we can optimize for success and to discover the story behind the results. It also reveals some mistakes. So we all try to learn from those evaluations, and we also do that because we think that each and every person's perspective really matters."

Nebojša Ratković, Education Program Manager of Wikimedia Serbia

Contextualization and Standardization

For the Wikimedia and education community, a data collection tool's ease of use for teachers and ability to be adapted to different languages and cultural contexts is crucial.

want customizable and standardized evaluation methods and tools

track metrics manually

The Programs and Events Dashboard is a tool that allows Wikimedia event organizers to keep track and collect data related to their activities by asking participants to sign up and register themselves to be a part of an event[3]. The tool has been partially translated into several languages[4].

What we found

affiliates interviewed find the Programs and Events Dashboard tool challenging, because:
- **it is not available in their local languages**
- **it does not have the features that are suitable for the Wikimedia project they are working on.**
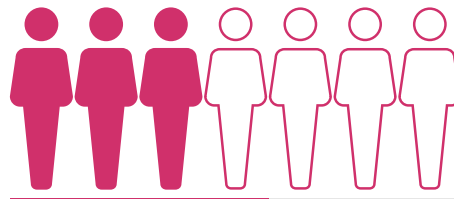
raised the issue that the Programs and Events dashboard is not user friendly for teachers and students.
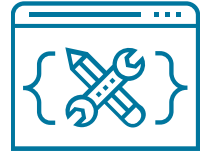
References:
[3] Programs and Events Dashboard's Meta-Wiki Page, https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Programs_%26_Events_Dashboard
[4] Programs and Events Dashboard Tool, https://outreachdashboard.wmflabs.org/

which resulted in:

CIS Bangalore developed their own tool, which helps them to measure the quantity and quality of articles on Wikisource.

Wikimedia Taiwan, Wikimedia Armenia, and Wikimedia UG Egypt count their metrics manually or with excel spreadsheets to monitor their Wikimedia education activities instead of using the existing Programs and Events Dashboard.
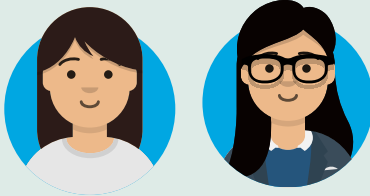
"There is not enough language localization. For example, when we log in to the Programs & Events Dashboard, we will be transferred to En-Wikipedia pages automatically. We think the Dashboard is not user friendly for teachers."

- Chia Yi and Reke Wang, Wikimedia Taiwan

Quantity and Quality

Wikimedia projects are contributing to students' 21st century skills. However, there is not sufficient data to back up the statement on the level of increasing skills itself or on how the skills impact students in the long term.

What we found

These are the 21st century skills that are present in the Wikimedia & Education activities of the 7 affiliates interviewed, based on an analysis of their reported activities.

21st Century Skills

- Technology literacy
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Creativity
- Critical Thinking
- Flexibility
- Information literacy
- Initiative
- Leadership
- Media literacy
- Productivity
- Social Skills

of participants expressed difficulties in capturing longer-term results through impact evaluation.

"As a teacher, I hate not being able to report results in a scientific way. I wish I could report things better. I hate anecdotal evidence of success, but I don't have the time and energy after finalizing the program to go back and do more evaluation on the program. It's double the work for me. I wish there was some kind of a tool where I can just go and write down step by step what happened today in my activity. It would make it easier for me, I would use that."

- Reem Al-Kashif, teacher at Aim Shams University and member of Wikimedia UG Egypt

evaluate and report the qualitative impact of their activities on schools, teachers, and students

From the interviews,
we found that most affiliates interviewed do evaluate their education program activities to some extent, but not for the long-term impact.

- investigate immediate impacts on students and teachers through verbal conversations
- expressed difficulties in capturing longer-term results through impact evaluation.

- agree that evaluation reports should be done in a scientific and structured way to showcase credible evidence of their successes
- assess and report their metrics number related to content growth

Wikimedia Indonesia and Wikimedia UG Egypt particularly highlighted that collecting metrics data is important, especially to maintain funding opportunities.

However, there is a more substantial impact that they are trying to make in their community, and they would like to see more qualitative evidence.

The more substantial impact refers to **community growth, increased students' skills, students' behavioral changes, and teachers' increased capacity**.

"Metrics are our priority for evaluation, because we have targets that need to be fulfilled for our donors.
But as the chair of Wikimedia Indonesia, I'm starting to think that what is really important is how you can grow the community. We hope to see more languages represented and more participation. From my personal perspective, when I see that our communities grow, I'm very happy."

**- Biyanto Rebin, Chief of Wikimedia Indonesia**

WHAT'S NEXT?

1. **Build capacity for evaluation in the Wikimedia community, especially on impact evaluation.**

○ Start raising and building awareness on impact evaluation practices to help the Wikimedia education community collect more evidence and amplify their impact.

○ We will coordinate webinars and publication materials that showcase best practicies among affiliates' impact evaluation methods.

2. **Provide evaluation guidelines and tools to support the community's efforts**

○ Develop a set of evaluation guidelines, both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods and tools based on community/affiliates consultation to be in line with the Wikimedia education community's needs and contexts.

⚠ The evaluation guidelines should include monitoring projects and provide a variety of different approaches and tools to capture affiliates' impact.
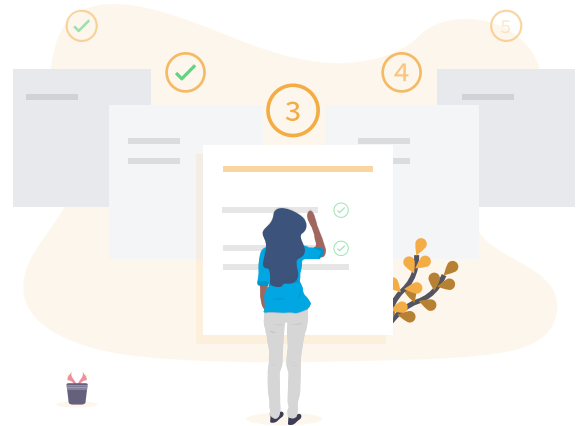
3. **Build a comparative tool to make collaboration and feedback systems work among different affiliates.**

○ Facilitate a feedback system for affiliates to be able to give feedback or suggestions and learn from each other about their activities and impact.
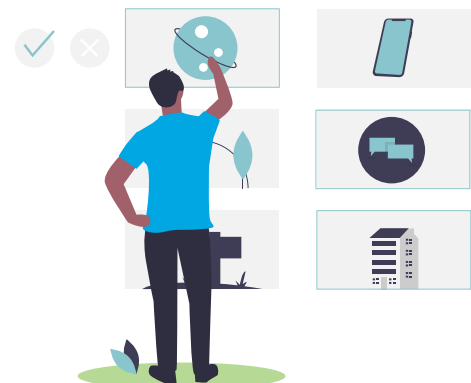
Finally,

We must support the community to build up experience and capacity in diverse data collection methods to better demonstrate Wikimedia's impact on education.

By building evaluation guidelines that are adaptable and easily contexualized for local needs, we are promoting sustainability and resilience in our Wikimedia education community. As they continue learning and developing their education activities they make a difference toward the Wikimedia movement's mission and sustainable devlopment goals for education.

This way, the Wikimedia Foundation makes sure that it is fulfilling its principles of inclusive community development by enhancing participatory methods in developing its tools to be used by its communities, particularly its education communities.

"There are different scales of activities going on and a very different range of activities also going on in the education program. It's not easy to put all of those under the same evaluation in one evaluation document.
Right now, every community evaluates their programs in their own way. If you have a standard practice or best practice on which everyone can evaluate in the same lines, it will be easier."

**- Ananth Subray,
Programme Associate of The Center for Internet and Society Bangalore**

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