Preparing Complementary Questionnaires

An evaluation of learning usually involves collecting information relating to context that may influence student performance. This information can be gathered from the students themselves, their teachers, the director of their school, their parents. It is important to predict the existence of information that will establish links between these responses and the results obtained by the students. Technically, it is to provide "merge variables."

Upon reviewing the results achieved by students during an evaluation, managers want often to know the performance of different subgroups in addition to the performance of the entire population. On the other hand, it may be useful to analyze the results in relation to certain aspects related to the students, the school environment or sociocultural in order to better understand the factors that influence student performance. Such linking of results with the contextual variables can provide information on the adequacy of resources and strategies adopted in a school system. To be able to achieve this kind of compilations, we must collected the information as well as factors which may be linked to their performance.

The EduStat databases can include questions as part of a complementary questionnaire. It is possible to group questions in relation to themes, thus constituting specification tables suitable for this type of variables. Some statistics compiler options are specific to the processing of contextual variables.

This document recalls certain aspects linked to this type of data collection instrument.

A.   Some factors that determine the effectiveness teaching

Several factors can influence student performance. However, we must retain those for which information is available and that it is possible to "measure". Here is a list of often selected variables in the administration of a survey on learning. They were grouped according to four different themes.

1. Supported elements

Parents and the community:

- health and student motivation;
- financial and material assistance;
- exchanges between staff and parents.

The resources used:

- textbooks, reading and calculus books;
- teachers' guides;
- school supplies;
- classroom;
- equipment in classrooms.

2. Enabling conditions

The staff (teachers and management):

- skill;
- experience;
- stability;
- availability.

The organization of activities:

- autonomy;
- resources.

The calendar / schedule:

- number of school days;
- number of teaching hours per day;
- student absenteeism.

3. School Atmosphere

> Order and discipline:

- in classrooms;
- school rules;
- curriculum.

4. Process of teaching / learning

- time spent studying
- diversity of teaching methods.
- lessons learned.
- evaluation of learning.

B. Information sources

The information describing the contextual variables can be collected from several categories of people: the students themselves, their parents, and the school staff.

- *Students themselves*

Students can provide information on certain aspects that may influence academic performance. Two types of information is usually collected from students: factual information (gender, age, school delay, absenteeism) and views on different aspects related to school activities (motivation, work at home).

- *Teachers*

Teachers are able to provide information on practices used in class. It is also possible to consider some specific staff characteristics such as competence, experience, and stability.

- *Management staff*

Management staff can provide information on schools involved in the evaluation (equipment, material conditions).

- *Parents*

Parents are able to indicate their interest in their child's education. They can also reveal certain aspects of family background which may influence academic performance.

C.   Collecting information

Several types of instruments can be used to gather contextual information. We have to retain the forms suitable to available sources. It is important to provide the presence of information for relating these different sources (for example, a common code to different sources of information).

- *Questionnaires*

This is the most commonly used form. Factual information are asked (age, sex, occupation, experience) or opinions on aspects that could be related to the evaluation (motivation, interest). Such questionnaires can be filled both by students (sometimes with the help of an adult), by school staff or parents (under certain conditions).

- *Interviews*

Officials may wish to gather factual or qualitative information from some people related to the purpose of the evaluation. The interview is a form of data collection that lends itself to such concerns. However, we should prepare an interview grid if we want that information be collected and used at the time of data analysis. Such interviews could be conducted with parents or school staff.

- *Observation Grids*

Sometimes it is useful to observe the behavior of people related to the execution of an activity. Thus, we can examine the conduct of operations taking place in the execution of an assessment of learning outcomes. The control of the administration of the evaluation mechanism can be done through such observation entrusted to persons who have been sensitized to this type of operation. We will have to provide a grid that will allow observers to note facts that will later be analyzed as part of quality control.

- *Checklists*

It may be necessary to provide a list of tasks to be performed by any person working in the school system. Factual information can be recorded. In addition to be used as a reminder, such instrument can better document the progress of educational activities.