Terms of Reference

Consultancy: Formative study on the Utilization of Learning Assessments in Kenya and Tanzania

1.0 Introduction to GESCI

The Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GESCI) is an international non-profit organisation founded on the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force on Information Communication Technology (ICT). GESCI was established in 2003 at the first World Summit on the Information Society.

GESCI works with governments and partners in providing strategic supports to develop and implement models of good ICT-based practice for high-quality education & training and to build effective leadership abilities in ICT and Knowledge Society development among Government officials across the Developing World. Much of GESCI’s work is with Government Ministries and their related agencies responsible for education, science & technology, innovation, and vocational training.

2.0 About the ADAPT project

Through support from Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and International Development Research Centre (IDRC) under the Knowledge Innovations Exchange (KIX) Program, GESCI is leading a consortium of 3 organizations to implement a two-year Adapting assessment into policy and learning (ADAPT): Adolescent 21st Century skills in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania project. This consortium brings together 3 organizations with experience connecting the practitioner, education research, and policy engagement worlds namely; Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GESCI) as the Lead Organization, Makerere University’s College of Education and External Studies (CEES), and The University of Notre Dame’s Global Center for the Development of the Whole Child (GC-DWC).

The project’s overall objective is to promote the acquisition of 21st-century skills for adolescents by strengthening the utilization of data from learning assessments in curriculum design, adaptation, and delivery. The project specifically seeks to;

- Generate lessons from past and present national and regional learning assessments and initiatives to enhance national data-driven decision-making.
- Build capacity of a dynamic learning community to integrate and assess 21st-century skills and support the utilization of learning assessments at the school and sub-national (district/county/region) levels.
• Mobilize policy uptake on the utilization of learning assessments in the education plans, curriculum frameworks, and teacher development.

3.0 Objectives of the research
One of the key components of the project is to conduct a detailed formative analysis of how past learning assessments have been used to affect policy and practice across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Additionally, the research will aim at gathering knowledge and evidence on how the three government systems have harnessed the evidence from Learning assessments in their educational planning and reforms and explore the barriers and enablers for evidence-based decision making, capture key learnings from past experiences, and recommend doable actions to support the strengthening of the use of learning assessment data in educational planning.

The research will specifically seek to gather data on the following;
- What are the lessons about national data-driven decision-making from past and present national and regional learning assessments in East Africa?
- How can we use the learnings from past assessment experiences to establish and strengthen a dynamic learning community in East Africa?
- Who are the key actors and networks within the educational systems of the three countries, and how do they work in as far as utilization of learning assessments is concerned?
- What are some of the best practices, successes, challenges, and barriers to the utilization of learning assessments across the three countries?
- What are the best ways in which to support policymakers at the national level to integrate the ALiVE learning assessment into data-driven decisions to improve curriculum design and delivery?

4.0 The proposed Methodology and Approach
The research is expected to adopt a mixed-methods approach in the collection, analysis, and reporting. This may include but will not be limited to the following approaches:

a) **Desk Review**: A thorough review of relevant existing literature on the utilization of learning assessments, challenges, and opportunities across Kenya, and Tanzania.

b) **Case studies**: Detailed case studies will be carried out on the various learning assessments and how they have individually been used to inform education planning and policy paying attention to national and regional-level learning assessments.

c) **Quantitative survey (a representative sample of policymakers and practitioners)**
A survey to help provide a clearer/specific picture on key issues around the education system, the key actors, and existing mechanisms for the utilization of learning assessments.

d) **Focus Group Discussions**
To complement the data, this study will also employ a qualitative approach to data collection, and fieldwork in the form of focus group discussions (FGDs) with carefully selected members of the key groups in the education sector (Curriculum Support Officers, teachers, etc.).
e) Key Informants In-Depth Interviews

Key Informant Interviews will be carried out with representatives of key agencies/partners, government representatives, etc. The decision on whom to be interviewed will be made jointly with ADAPT project team.

GESCI is seeking a Consultant/Team to conduct the formative study including: data collection, analysis, and reporting. The experts are expected to carry out the assignment in consultation with the Research Steering Group comprising of ADAPT project Lead, Knowledge champions, ALIVE project manager, and the GESCI Education Specialist. We are ideally seeking a firm that can implement a systems-level study across the 2 countries with demonstrable experience in interviewing and engaging with high-level decision-makers and practitioners in the education sector.

5.0 Details of the consultancy

5.1 Summary of Research Consultancy:

Under the direction of the Project Lead, with general support from the research steering committee, the Research Consultant will be responsible for leading the scoping, research design, development of tools, data collection, analysis, and reporting for the formative study.

5.2 Expected time frame of consultancy:

Consultancy is scheduled to commence on or around Jan 15, 2021, with the final deliverable to be completed and submitted on or before April 15, 2021. (Approximately 30 days spread out over approximately three months, or until completion of the task.)

PHASE ONE: PLANNING (5 days)

Preparation and Desk Research:

- Meet with Research Steering Committee to preliminarily identify key issues and concerns on which to focus the research, as well as stakeholders and key informants to consult, and inform the next phase.
- Conduct a literature review of existing research on the use of learning assessments in Kenya and Tanzania.
- Finalize the research scope, design, and protocols.
- Develop a timeline for the completion of the project.
- Develop a comprehensive list of interviewees including government representatives, NGOs, local partners, and others.

PHASE TWO: INFORMATION GATHERING (15 days)

Data collection and analysis:

- Develop tools for the interviews and guidelines for a minimum set of information that should be obtained from each interview.
- Conduct stakeholder interviews and case studies (minimum 15).
- Document information obtained in each interview, and consolidate the findings into a brief (15 pages) summary of key findings and emerging issues that arose from the interviews.
PHASE THREE: REPORT WRITING (10 days)

- Prepare a detailed report of how past learning assessments have been used to inform education planning and policy, factors that have led or contributed to the utilization of learning assessments, challenges and/or gaps, and recommendations.
- Circulate the draft report for review by the Research Steering Committee (at least two rounds of review), and integrate and address comments.
- Submit the final report to the GESCI.

5.3 Indicative Schedule of key Deliverables

- Interviews and selection and contracting: **Week beginning 10-14th January 2022**
- Inception report – with a preliminary desk review and enhanced methodology and plan for carrying out baseline data analysis and report write-up – **20 January 2022**
- Fieldwork report – A report on the field process, challenges and mitigations measures taken (max 5 pages) – **18 February 2022**
- First draft report presentation for ADSI management feedback – **25 February 2022**
- Final report integrating revisions based on feedback and the baseline toolkit of approaches and instruments – **18 March 2022**
- Participate in dissemination workshop in April 2022 (**Date to be agreed**)

6.0 Requirements

- The Consultant or Lead Consultant (in case of a team) should possess a minimum Master’s degree in Education, Development studies, and other related fields. Those with a Doctorate will have an added advantage.
- Knowledge of the global education landscape, education policy issues, and specifically the East African Education context.
- Proven experience in researching learning Assessment Systems (LAS), education policy, and 21st-century skills areas.
- Excellent written and spoken English; Swahili highly desirable.
- Ability to effectively coordinate and oversee multi-country research projects, as well as the ability to be flexible and work well under pressure in a fast-paced environment.
- Experience managing complex projects and deadlines involving different partners.
- Experience conducting qualitative, interview-based research for policy audiences.
- Experience researching education-focused NGOs and/or in the non-profit sector is desirable.
- Permission to work in either Kenya or Tanzania.

7.0 Payment schedule

*Consultancy: Formative study on the Utilization of Learning Assessments in Kenya and Tanzania*
• 40% upon approval of Inception report
• 30% upon submission of the first draft
• 30% upon completion and approval of the final report

Confidentiality and Copyright: The consultancy team will be required to sign a confidentiality clause whereby information accessed through the ADAPT formative study can only be disclosed and shared with authorized members of the ADAPT project. GESCI will have ownership over any Intellectual Property developed for or derived from the engagement.

Submission of proposals

Interested consultants should submit a detailed proposal (10 pages max) outlining their understanding of the task, proposed approach, budget, examples of past similar work (with at least 3 referees), and CV/profile of key personnel. Please submit by email under the heading ‘ADAPT formative study – Kenya and Tanzania’ to GESCI procurement at: procurement@gesci.org cc samuel.otieno@gesci.org by 14th January 2022.

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. For further information on the consultancy, you can contact Samuel Otieno, ADAPT Project Lead at: samuel.otieno@gesci.org