PERKINS QUALITY INDICATORS: A METRIC TO MEASURE, SUPPORT & DOCUMENT GROWTH IN PROGRAM QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

The Perkins Quality Indicators (PQI) provide a metric to measure, support and document growth in program quality for programs serving children and youth with multiple disabilities. The Perkins Quality Indicators are a tool designed to be used to assess a program by identifying current good practices and areas for improvement to aid in planning for program growth. Program staff may use the PQI for self-reflection, evaluation and planning. The tool may also be used by program administrators and external evaluators, in collaboration with program staff. The PQI support development of priorities for both teacher professional development and school-based development, at individual, local, district, division, regional, and national levels, and document growth of an educational program over time. The PQI address 9 areas: building community/ inclusive culture, program planning and classroom organization, learning environment and materials, communication and social relationships, assessment and progress monitoring, curriculum and instruction, family support, administration and support, and governmental collaborations. The PQI can be adapted for specific cultural contexts. In 2020, Perkins International collaborated with the Philippines Department of Education and partners in the Philippines to adapt the PQI for the Philippines educational context. This paper will describe the collaborative process used to adapt the PQI for programs serving students with sensorial disabilities in the Philippines, with the subsequent endorsement by the Philippines Department of Education.

Keywords: measure/support program quality, multiple disabilities

1.   Perkins Quality Indicators:

The Perkins *"Quality Indicators for Programs Serving Students who are Blind and Visually Impaired with Additional Disabilities or Deafblindness"* (PQI) provide a metric to measure, support and document growth in program quality for classrooms, schools or other educational settings serving learners with multiple disabilities, visual impairment with additional disabilities and deafblindness (MDVI/DB). The Perkins Quality Indicators are a tool designed to be used to assess a program by identifying current good practices and areas for improvement to aid in planning for program growth. Program staff may use the PQI for self-reflection, evaluation and planning. The tool may also be used by program administrators and external evaluators, in collaboration with program staff.

The PQI support development of priorities for both teacher professional development and school-based development, at individual, local, district, division, regional, and national levels, and document growth of an educational program over time. The Perkins Program Quality Indicators are a result of extensive discussion between professional staff at Perkins International and respected colleagues from around the globe, and have been piloted and implemented around the world for 10 years, with ongoing updates.

1.1 Track Program Progress and Replicate Excellence:

Perkins International partners with programs to achieve excellence by coaching teachers, administrators, and staff in educational settings, measuring progress along the PQI scale: Beginning, Needing Improvement, Initiating Good Practice, Emerging Good Practice, Good Practice, Model Program. Some Model Programs have potential to achieve impact that goes beyond modeling best practices in education- with intense support and coaching they become Teaching Programs that reach out and share with other programs to lead a national culture of excellence.

1.2 Adaptation to Specific Cultural and Programmatic Contexts:

The Perkins Quality Indicators can be adapted for specific cultural and programmatic contexts. In 2020, Perkins International collaborated with the Philippines Department of Education and partners in the Philippines to adapt the PQI for the Philippines educational context. This paper will describe the inclusive and collaborative process used to adapt the PQI for programs serving students with sensorial disabilities in the Philippines, with the subsequent endorsement by the Philippines Department of Education.

1.3 Summary of Strands (Areas of Program Assessment):

The PQI are comprised of nine (9) stands as described below. Each strand includes specific indicators, and components of indicators. Detailed scoring criteria for each indicator and component are included.

1.3.1 **Building Community/ Inclusive Culture** is when the overall culture of the school includes patterns of behavior, values, and embedded beliefs and assumptions that are shared in an integrated system of academic and social supports that ensure learners with disabilities are valued, respected and included in all aspects of school with same-age peers. Supports for learners are designed, implemented and monitored to ensure that they receive an exemplary education (Brown, McDonnell & Snell, 2016; DiPaola, M., Tschannen-Moran, M., & Walther-Thomas, C., 2004). These inclusive values are embedded across all of the following strands.

1.3.2 **Program Planning and Classroom Organization** are key areas that allow programs to address the different characteristics and needs of the diverse population of learners with MDVI/DB. Since each child is unique, teaching should be individualized and based on the specific needs of the individual child. These areas allow teachers to implement a child-

centered approach, in which educational practices are individualized, flexible, respectful of, and responsive to each learner.

1.3.3 Learning Environment and Materials: Adapted and accessible environments and materials are important to maximize learning. Physical barriers, poor accessibility conditions, and lack of access to appropriate learning materials are serious barriers to learning for children with MDVI/DB.

1.3.3 Assessment and Progress Monitoring: Assessment is the foundation for providing effective instruction; formal and non-formal assessments are essential components in education of learners with MDVI/DB. Assessments provide teachers with the relevant information to decide what should be taught, and what teaching methods to use. Progress Monitoring involves regularly keeping track of learner progress in meeting goals in order for teachers to effectively plan for instruction.

1.3.4 Communication and Social Relationships: Communication is the foundation of all learning. The development of communication and social skills for learners with MDVI/DB is key for their meaningful learning and socialization and therefore critical to quality programs. Teachers should be fluent in different modes of communication and support a total communication approach so they enable their learners to communicate in meaningful ways.

1.3.5 Curriculum and Instruction: Meaningful curriculum is core to learning. Accessing curriculum is key for learners with MDVI/DB so they can have an education on an equal basis with others. Indicators and their components are based on the principles of universal design for learning and differentiated instruction. The "Expanded Core Curriculum" (ECC) addresses additional essential learning areas for learners with MDVI/DB. Functional adaptations to curriculum are also essential so learners can acquire the necessary non-academic skills for achieving a fulfilling and independent life. Effective and individualized instructional supports, delivered by all staff, are essential for learning.

1.3.6 Family Support: Building partnerships with families is essential to quality programs that serve children with MDVI/DB. Families know their children best and play a key role in the education of their children. It is important to include, support and empower families by building trusting relationships, including families as partners in the education of their children, maintaining open communication with families, and offering trainings.

1.3.7 Administration and Support: Management and administration play a key role in quality programs as they determine the culture and approach to education. An enabling administration is one that promotes and supports the right to education of all children at all levels. A supportive administration also supports teachers and their continuing professional development.

1.3.8 Governmental Collaborations: Quality education for learners with MDVI/DB can only be enhanced if educators have the support of school leaders, government authorities, and the community. Collaboration between government and schools is essential to enhance the quality of education for learners with MDVI/DB. Disability related policies are foundational to high quality education, as well as a legislative framework that turns the right to education into action for learners with MDVI/DB.

1.4 Evaluation Criteria and Reporting:

The PQI cover nine (9) strands or key program areas as described above; each strand contains a number of indicators, some with multiple components. A recording worksheet allows for recording of ratings and comments for each indicator by evaluators, and a summary of ratings both by strand and for the overall program. Detailed criteria are included for each rating. This supports documentation of the current level of each program, documents growth of each program over time, and supports development of evidence-based teacher and school development plans.

Most indicators are scored using a standard 5-point scale as defined below:

1.4.1 Good Practice: Practice is effective and could be replicated in another program.

1.4.2 Emerging Good Practice- Fully Implemented: Practice is correct and acceptable but could still use improvement before it can be recommended for replicability. Practice has been in place for at least one year, and is implemented by more than one staff person.

1.4.3 Initiating Good Practice: Practice is correct and acceptable but could still use improvement before it can be recommended for replicability. Practice has recently started, has been in place for less than one year, and/or is implemented by only one staff person.

1.4.4 Needing Improvement: Some attempt is being made, but practice is inconsistent or used inappropriately.

1.4.5 Not Implemented: Practice is not observed in situations where it should be observable. **Not applicable:** The indicator is not relevant in this situation.

1.5 Application during Education in Emergency Situations (e.g., Pandemic, Virtual/ Remote Education):

The PQI were originally developed with in person educational programs in mind. We recognize, however, that much of the world remains in an "education in emergency" situation, including virtual/ remote education, due to the COVID pandemic. We must be flexible and nimble in responding to the current pandemic situation, developing innovative and creative ways to continue to provide quality education to children with multiple disabilities, and to support the myriad needs of our children and their families during these challenging times.

The PQI can be adapted for use during an "education in emergency" situation. Each of the indicators describe specific components of what a "quality educational program for learners with MDVI/DB" looks like. When implementing the PQI during an "education in emergency" situation, it is important to look carefully at each indicator and the evaluation criteria, and think creatively with the evaluation team (including teachers and families) about how this concept could be applied and implemented during the present situation. The comments section of the scoring workbook can be used to document adaptations and how the indicator is evidenced during "education in emergency" situations, as needed.

1.6   Adaptation of PQI for Learners with Sensorial Disabilities in the Philippines[1]**:**

There is a shortage of educators who are trained to work with children with sensorial disabilities in the Philippines. And to date there have not been standards and indicators for what a quality educational program serving learners with disabilities looks like in the Philippines. Having an agreed upon set of quality indicators for educational programs serving learners with sensorial disabilities provides an essential tool for program improvement, and a clear "road map" for systematically planning for program improvement.

The "Quality Indicators for Educational Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities" Tool, for use in the Philippines, is a set of indicators that point to the quality of services provided in classrooms, schools or other educational settings that serve learners with sensorial disabilities. They are adapted from the Perkins International "Program Quality Indicators" (PQI), with additions and revisions based on a comprehensive review of research, evaluation results from 2019 and 2020 international implementation of the PQI, and comprehensive review and feedback from the Philippines working group (comprised of Supervisors, Division Supervisors In Charge of SPED, Principals, and Regional SPED Supervisors).

The initial PQI Philippine development workshop, the subsequent validation session, and the follow-up training included broad participation across the education sector, including Department of Education Regional officials, Division Supervisors In-Charge of Special Education, Principals, Personnel from Department of Education Central Office, Regional Special Education Supervisors, and teachers of the three Gabay project sites: Batangas City and Province, Sorsogon City and Province and Maasin City and Southern Leyte. It provided a valuable professional opportunity for the selected participants to work together with Perkins International expert consultants to revise and contextualize the PQI, and develop "Quality Indicators for Educational Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities" specifically for the Philippines.

2.   Project Goal and Objectives:

The project goal was to improve program implementation of blind, deaf and deafblind learners by providing schools with Quality Indicators for Programs Serving Students with Sensorial Disabilities.

Specific objectives included:

1.   Identify quality indicators for programs serving students with sensorial disabilities based on Perkins identified areas;

2.   Validate the above output and revise based on feedback;

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[1] The adaptation of the PQI for the Philippines is supported by project Gabay (Guide): Strengthening Inclusive Education for Blind, Deaf and Deafblind Children of the Resources for the Blind, Inc. (RBI) with its Sub-Awardee, Perkins School for the Blind/Perkins International, USA. Gabay is made possible through the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development or USAID.

3. Provide training and develop action plans for implementation of quality indicators; and

4. Obtain approval of the final output from the Undersecretaries of Curriculum and Instruction and Planning Service, Human Resources and Organizational Development.

3.   Adaptation Process and Results:

3.1   Highlights of the Process

The Perkins Quality Indicators were adapted for the Philippines context, resulting in the development of "Quality Indicators for Educational Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities" in the Philippines. Perkins International and the Philippines Gabay team led the comprehensive and inclusive development process. Following is an outline of the steps in this adaptation and development process:

3.1.1 Adapted from Perkins International "Program Quality Indicators" (PQI))

a.   2010: PQI Developed by Perkins International professionals and global
     Colleagues
b.   2010-2020: PQI piloted and implemented globally, with ongoing updates
c.   2019: Revised Perkins Program Quality Indicators
d.   2018-2020: Latin America in depth implementation

     i. Collaboration with Ministries of Education Mexico, Argentina, Brazil
     ii. Development of Model Programs

3.1.2 Philippines Development Process: Quality Indicators for Education Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities:

a.   Develop Draft #1 Philippines Quality Indicators (Perkins International)

     i. Based on Perkins Program Quality Indicators
     ii. Revisions based on global implementation and evaluation of extensive Latin
         America implementation 2018-2020; and
     iii. Comprehensive review of research

b.   Philippines Working Group: Comprehensive review and feedback, contextualizing Quality Indicators for Philippines; Develop Draft #2

     1.   Supervisors, Division Supervisors in Charge of SPED, Principals, Regional SPED Supervisors in collaboration with Perkins International and Gabay team

c.   Department of Education Validators: Comprehensive review and feedback (in collaboration with Perkins International and Gabay team); Develop Draft #3
d.   Administrator Training on Implementation of Quality Indicators for Education Programs Serving Children with Sensorial Disabilities
e.   Presentation of Quality Indicators to Department of Education, with subsequent endorsement by Department of Education

3.2   Results

As a result of this comprehensive and inclusive development, review, revision and validation process, agreement was reached on a set of "Quality Indicators for Educational Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities" to be implemented in educational programs in the Philippines. The Department of Education has endorsed the "Quality Indicators for Educational Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities".

All project objectives were met, specifically:
1.   "Quality Indicators for Educational Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities" was developed and revised for Philippines context with a working group of Philippines educators and Department of Education officials.
2.   A reporting format for implementation of the Quality Indicators was developed.
3.   "Guidelines on the Use of Quality Indicators for Education Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities" were developed and agreed upon.
4.   Department of Education Validators reviewed and approved the "Quality Indicators" and "Guidelines on Use".
5.   Training participants were oriented on the use of the "Quality Indicators" and developed action plans for implementation of the "Quality Indicators"'
6.   "Quality Indicators for Educational Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities" was presented to Philippines Department of Education and endorsed by the Undersecretaries of Curriculum and Instruction and **Planning** Service, Human Resources and Organizational Development, Philippines Department of Education.

4.   Learnings and Participant Observations

Active engagement of participants: Workshop and Training participants were actively engaged throughout the process, asking questions, requesting clarifications, and suggesting revisions in order to develop consensus on a comprehensive set of "Quality Indicators for Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities" that is applicable in the Philippines context. The multi-step, comprehensive and inclusive development process resulted in agreement on a set of Quality Indicators that will provide an essential tool for program improvement in Philippines. This comprehensive development process included: a) development of draft Quality Indicators by Perkins International, b) review and revision of Quality Indicators by Workshop participants, c) validation of Quality Indicators by Department of Education officials, d) training for administrators and teachers on implementation of Quality Indicators, and e) presentation to Department of Education.

In the words of workshop and training participants:
"I personally commend the expertise of our training facilitators in guiding very well the participants in going through the different aspects of the activity. The openness they exhibited on the comments that we gave and for accepting those ideas. I know very well that the content of the Matrix were well formulated by experts but still this were critical to fit in the Philippine context of Education…the participants were very active in sharing ideas just to come up with the workable indicators." (School Principal, Maasin City, Southern Leyte)
An essential tool to guide program improvement and support program administrators: The "Quality Indicators" provide a valuable tool to guide and support program improvement. The comprehensive indicators, with very specific rating criteria, provide administrators, including

those who may have limited experience in educational programs for learners with sensorial disabilities, with the tools to support and lead program improvement efforts at their schools.

In the words of workshop and training participants:

"During the training, I acquired new information and new experience. I would like to commend all the facilitators, the host, the trainers… that despite of the new normal setting of learning new things because of this pandemic and despite of the different time zone, still they manage the training so well and they provide all the necessary information that we will be needing to our school…I am very glad about the fact that this tool could be very effective and useful on assessing a program and identifying practices in dealing with children with disabilities and I know that this would bring a very big help to us. So truly…the adaptation of this tool could be very essential in improving the quality of basic education because no learner should be left behind regardless of his condition." (Teacher II, Division of Sorsogon)

"It is the first time I attended this kind of training. Before participating in this training, I am hesitant because I still don't have the experience in observing special education classes…I was only assigned to a school with a special education class five months ago, but as the workshop and now the training goes on, my thinking radically changed. It deepened my understanding that these learners are also like us and they need special attention. Believing on thought that everyone has the right to education. This training also reminds, not only education supervisors but also especially us School Administrators that we have many things to plan, prepare and to do to effectively address the educational needs of these special learners. I am thankful for the chance and opportunity to learn more on how we could possibly facilitate effective learning for these learners." (School Principal)

"…There are the AHA moments for me. The three salient points I gave from this webinar are: RELEVANCE, EQUITY AND RIGHTS. The RELEVANCE of the tool to the initial operation of my school will give me an edge to start it right for I already have the quality indicators at hand. It will provide information from Inclusive Culture down to the Governmental Collaboration which can be used for improving and enhancing the program implementation in each of our respective schools. Secondary to this is EQUITY. With the help of Quality Indicators, as a School Head, I am now visualizing and looking for ways or for the process to ensure that every child with disabilities needs understanding of his or her unique capabilities, limitations and deterrent advancement by providing additional support. These challenges and road blocks will be overthrown. Although its outcome is uncertain, it gives every child a fair chance and even equal opportunity in achieving their goals and dreams. Then, the RIGHTS. In our Philippine Constitution, it is clearly stated that every child with special needs has the right to an educational program that is suitable to his needs. The program strongly supports this and I acknowledge the very core of protecting, enhancing and uplifting our due diligence in enforcing the child's rights, access good, quality education. We are now on the right track! Relevance, Equity and Rights rolled into Quality Indicators. Quality Indicators for a quality and better Philippines." (School Principal, Southern Leyte)

5.   Recommendations

The Quality Indicators provide a unique and valuable tool, specifically adapted for the Philippines context, to guide program improvement for educational programs serving learners with sensorial disabilities. There is strong potential to leverage the collaborative work accomplished to date and significantly expand impact. Recommended next steps include technical assistance to a) support initial implementation of the Quality Indicators, b) review

results of pilot implementation in initial schools, c) make any revisions indicated by implementation in initial pilot schools, and d) support implementation of Quality Indicators at additional schools.

6.   Conclusion:

The Perkins Quality Indicators (PQI) provide a metric to measure, support and document growth in program quality for classrooms, schools or other educational settings serving learners with multiple disabilities, visual impairment with additional disabilities and deafblindness (MDVI/DB). The PQI are a tool designed to be used to assess a program by identifying current good practices and areas for improvement to aid in planning for program growth.

When combined with a systematic and targeted professional development plan, including targeted technical assistance and coaching, the PQI provide a powerful tool to support development of a national culture of excellence, including development of model programs that can demonstrate excellence in teaching. Some Model Programs have potential to achieve impact that goes beyond modeling best practices in education- with intense support and coaching they become Teaching Programs that reach out and share with other programs to lead a national culture of excellence.

This global tool can be adapted for specific cultural and programmatic contexts.   Perkins International and the Philippines Gabay team led a comprehensive and inclusive development, review, revision and validation process, resulting in agreement on a set of "Quality Indicators for Educational Programs Serving Learners with Sensorial Disabilities" in the Philippines, which has been endorsed by the Philippines Department of Education.

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