Implementing Beneficiary Assessment in Education:
A Guide for Practitioners
(with examples from Brazil)

Lawrence F. Salmen
Assisted by Misgana Amelga

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1. The Beneficiary Assessment Approach

Beneficiary assessment (BA) is a qualitative research tool used to improve the impact of development operations by gaining the views of intended beneficiaries regarding a planned or ongoing intervention. The objective is to assess the value of an activity as perceived by project beneficiaries and integrate these findings into project activities. "The beneficiary assessment approach is not intended to supplant the questionnaire survey but to provide reliable qualitative, in-depth information on the sociocultural conditions of a beneficiary population—information intended to be of immediate use to managers and policymakers responsible for improving people's lives."¹

The rationale behind the approach is that the ultimate clients, project beneficiaries, often do not have a voice in the design and implementation of development projects intended for their benefit. Providing them with an opportunity to have their voices heard in the development process, and responding to their needs during project design and implementation, increases the likelihood of their full participation in project activities. This increased participation, in turn, leads to ownership, whereby beneficiaries become the key actors in producing the needed and desired changes in their own development.

Beneficiary assessment is the most widely used approach for listening and consultation in World Bank-supported projects. As such it plays a central part in the broader conceptual development activity known as social assessment. The utility of bringing the people's voice into the development process is manifest from the identification of an intervention, to ensure that what is done conforms to a perceived need; to design, so that the intervention may be tailored to the particular context of the people for whom it is intended; to implementation, so that ongoing action reflects and meets ever-changing realities; to evaluation, whereby the intended beneficiaries become the key arbiters of the value of an activity intended to support them.

The beneficiary assessment approach, bridging cultures with decisionmaking, is useful not only for project work but, more broadly, for program and policy formation as well, at both the sectoral and national (macro) levels. This manual is intended to be used by practitioners at all levels—from school and technical directors to state and federal education officials and to institutions of applied research. While this guide is adapted to the education sector in Brazil, its key principles may serve other sectors with appropriate adaptation for regional variations.
2. Designing the Beneficiary Assessment

It is necessary to consider the following factors in designing and undertaking a beneficiary assessment:

- Understanding the context
- Setting objectives
- Identifying implementing institutions and individuals
- Preparing the Terms of Reference
- Developing the interview guide
- Determining the sample size
- Pretesting the interview guide
- Implementation
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Report writing.

Understanding the Context

To implement a beneficiary assessment, one must first have a good understanding of the environment in which it is to take place. This will be particularly important since the person managing the assessment, the social scientist, is likely to be new to the project and, perhaps, the locale. In understanding the context, it is important to become familiar with the sociocultural setting and the institutional environment where the project is taking place. The following activities are recommended as initial steps in assessment design:

- Reading all relevant documentation such as identification, appraisal, and supervision reports; any previous related studies; and broader social and economic analyses—for local, regional, and national levels.
- Interviews with key persons involved in developing, implementing, and evaluating the project in other agencies, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government, or donor institutions
- Firsthand exploration of sites covered—and time permitting, not covered—by the program being assessed. Limited immersion in the environment being affected by the intervention is in order here; this should involve unstructured conversations with randomly selected intended beneficiaries and other key actors (such as teachers, community leaders, school dropouts, and so forth).

Setting Objectives

Once the context in which the BA is to be implemented is clear, it will be easier to determine BA objectives that are feasible and realistic. It is the project manager who must develop the objectives of the BA. This assessment must be of use to the manager as he or she attempts to implement and evaluate a project that meets the needs and helps realize the aspirations of its intended beneficiaries. While the general objective of a BA will be to increase the reach and quality of education, particular objectives will likely include:
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- Increasing school attendance
- Reducing school drop-out rates
- Improving relations between school and community
- Increasing the relevance of the curriculum to the lives of students
- Improving the efficacy of teaching
- Improving school conditions (for example, materials or physical plant)
- Providing feedback from school and community that can be used to improve the impact of particular programs.

Selecting Institutions and Field Researchers

Institutions

Ideally, BAs should be done by government in partnership with an NGO, a university research center, or a consulting firm. The contracted agency then identifies and recruits qualified BA teams and coordinates the training and implementation process. Placing the responsibility for executing the BA with an agency external to the unit implementing the project increases both the quality of the BA, as this agency should have the particular skills needed for this work and the credibility of the BA, as it is done by a "neutral" party not seen as overly identified with the project itself.

A further goal in selecting and assisting institutions to carry out BA work is to build capacity in a sustainable manner. For example, in Africa, individuals who formerly worked with the Zambia Rural Development Studies Bureau of the university are implementing the BA for the World Bank-supported Social Recovery Project through an NGO that they formed. This NGO does participatory assessments for other Bank activities as well as other donor agencies. In India, as a result of experience gained in doing BAs, the Institute of Social and Economic Change of Bangalore has been put under contract by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to undertake BAs as part of an upcoming study of the health of employees working in the reeling operations of the sericulture industry.

In Brazil, the principal participants in the Bank-supported Northeast Education Project, the states of Bahia and Ceará, each have plans to continue supporting qualitative research on education following the lines of the BA approach. The Centro Luiz Freire of Pernambuco, an NGO dedicated to the development and empowerment of the poor of the Northeast, is building on its Ford Foundation-supported BA work on education done in 1995 with further similar inquiry into the perspectives of pupils on education in Pernambuco. In all cases, because of inexperience with a new methodology, continuous capacity building through training, guidance, and monitoring is necessary.

Following the selection of the BA implementing agency, a study director should be recruited who will be responsible for choosing and supervising the BA teams. The person recruited must understand and have a good appreciation of the approach as well as the objectives of the assessment to be undertaken. In addition, the study director will need good analytical and writing skills, as he or she will be primarily responsible for the tabulation and analysis of assessor reports and will also prepare the final paper, including recommendations. In addition, a steering committee composed of officials from the relevant government ministry, project staff, neutral and respected non-governmental persons, and the BA study director should be appointed to monitor the progress of the assessment.

In selecting individuals and institutions to conduct beneficiary assessments it is important to keep in mind that a major value
strengths and weaknesses of bonds between diverse and often poorly related institutions. Of particular importance in education is the nature of the linkages between the community and the school. The best BA practitioners will be able to communicate with key elements of both of these diverse human collectivities.

Field Researchers

BA teams should be composed of individuals who are familiar with the particular culture in which the assessment will take place, and they must have sound conversational ability in the language of the beneficiaries. The selection process for the BA teams is an important one, as it determines to a large extent the quality of field interviews and the integrity of information gathered.

The BA teams must conduct conversational interviews with people of modest means who do not know them. Responses must be elicited in such a way that they can be recorded in an orderly and intelligible manner and ultimately be used to improve the conditions of these people. Although the assessors ideally should have a university background, in a number of cases individuals with a high school education and good communications and writing skill have been equally or even more effective than persons with higher education.

A good BA interviewer will be:

- A good listener
- Sensitive to local culture
- Respectful of all persons, regardless of status
- Unobtrusive
- Open and engaging
- Proficient at recalling interviews
- Demonstrably able in writing skills.

Having good recall is an important characteristic for the assessor, who should try to minimize the note-taking process during the interviews. The interviews should be done in an informal, conversational manner, as opposed to a more structured questionnaire style, inasmuch as note taking during an interview may create an atmosphere of fear or distrust, inhibiting the free flow of conversation needed for meaningful interviews. Because assessors will be writing notes based on their interviews—as opposed to filling out forms—clarity and precision of writing will be important.

Despite the fact that a majority of BA interviewers have been social scientists, the above-mentioned characteristics are more important than the academic discipline of the interviewers. BA teams should be balanced in terms of gender representation, as persons normally communicate more openly with persons of the same gender on many of the sensitive topics generally covered by BAs.

Preparing Terms of Reference for BA Implementation

The terms of reference for BA implementation should elaborate on the following areas:

- Brief note on background and justification (rationale)
- Specific purpose and objectives
- Methodology—techniques to be used
- Research issues and themes to be addressed (including the preparation of an interview guide)
- Sample size
- Time frame for implementation (generally between four weeks and six months, depending on the sample size)
- Budget (usual range: $20,000 to $100,000).
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Preparation of Interview Guides

The interview guide plays an important role in the implementation of the BA. Given that this is the main instrument used to obtain information from the assessment, the development of its content should be a collaborative effort between the project manager and the BA study director.

The BA technique of conversational interviews uses themes based on areas of interest and operational relevance to project management as guides to conducting conversations instead of administering mostly closed questions, as is generally done in traditional surveys. Use of this technique allows for a smoother flow of information and often brings to light new information that was not previously considered by project management. The following are sample interview themes:

- The value of formal education to parents, community leaders, and children and adolescents (both in and out of school)
- Participation of parents in their children’s schooling (form, degree, rationale)
- The quality of the school as seen by the three groups above and as determined by the relevance of the curriculum for obtaining employment and by the performance of teachers
- Obstacles to children’s remaining in school (as seen by these three groups)
- Suggestions from these groups for improving the school.

Sampling Frames

In determining the sample size, the primary concern is that the beneficiary population interviewed should be large enough to serve as the basis for management decisionmaking. “While statistical sampling procedures may serve as a general guide, these will suggest sample sizes greater than those needed for beneficiary assessment. Because of the in-depth, qualitative methodology employed in this approach, long conversational interviews, often complemented by participant observation, can provide a great deal of understanding from a relatively small number of beneficiaries.” 2 The parameters of the extent of coverage will be determined by the viability of the target communities and the complexity of the program. Stratification of the sample size should generally be according to ethnicity, class, income, and gender.

While the bulk of the interviews carried out will be with students and teachers, interviews will also be conducted with other key actors such as parents, project managers, NGOs, and community leaders. For example, in the case of health projects, health workers are included in the interviews. For agricultural extension projects, interviews with extension agents can bring perspective to issues raised by farmers. In undertaking BAs for micro-finance rural finance projects, loan officers are interviewed as well as borrowers from the targeted communities.

By including interviews with these other key actors, it becomes possible to provide project managers with a more comprehensive and accurate picture of the issue at hand. In addition, it enables BA teams to provide more relevant and realistic recommendations. For these other stakeholders, representative sampling should be carried out along the same lines as with direct beneficiaries.

Example of Sampling Frame

For one-on-one conversational interviews, the sampling frame selected for the Bank-supported BA conducted in the state of Ceará, Brazil, in 1996 attempted to represent both school-based and community-based persons who actually or potentially exercised influence over the breadth and quality of education in their area, as follows:
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1. For each municipality:

   Schools:
   1 rural (two classrooms)
   3 greater urban area/state (eight classrooms)
   3 greater urban area/municipal (eight classrooms)
   2 greater urban area/private (eight classrooms)

   Total: 9

   Per school:
   1 director
   2 teachers
   3 good students
   3 poor students
   3 dropouts

   Total: 12

   Three municipalities per state (representing major diverse subregions) times 108 school-based persons per municipality equals 324 school-based persons.

2. Community-based:

   For each municipality:

   30 parents of children in school
   20 parents of dropouts
   10 other adults in the community
   4 informal leaders
   2 formal leaders
   2 local government officials
   3 NGO, association, or church representatives

   Total: 71

   Three municipalities per state equals 213 community-based persons in state.

   Total: 324 plus 213 equals 537 interviews.

   Assuming one experienced interviewer can conduct three conversational interviews per day, a team of four persons can be expected to interview 72 stakeholders per six-day-week, or cover the entire sample of 537 in two months (eight weeks).

   BAs that include focus groups and participant observation (see below) will also select representative groups and case studies, respectively, and take more time, or involve larger teams of interviewers.

Methodology

Conversational Interviews

These are the basic tool of inquiry for the BA practitioner. Conversational interviews often take place in the homes of the interviewees, who are apt to be most comfortable there. Interviews should be conducted in such a way that open-ended questions revolve around a number of themes or topics that project management has selected. The objective is to gain in-depth information on beneficiary views in relation to a planned or ongoing activity by encouraging beneficiaries to speak freely and, perhaps, bring to light unforeseen issues of concern to project management.

   Interviews can be conducted on a one-to-one basis or in focus groups. The advantages of individual interviews are that people are likely to speak more freely, without worrying what peers or other community members may think. Lower-status or introverted members of communities may not feel comfortable speaking out in groups. Use of focus group interviews permits a wider coverage of people but is harder to quantify and makes attribution of responses to specific individuals more difficult.

Factors to keep in mind in undertaking conversational interviews:

- Establishment of trust and good rapport between interviewer and respondent enhances the likelihood of gaining unsolicited information (which could be as, or
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even more, important than thematic areas identified in the interview guide).

- Unguided discussion is apt to be vague and therefore of little use for decision-making; probing for specificity is often required (for example, if a dropout states that one reason she left school was that the teacher often came to class late, the interviewer should follow up with inquiries into how often and how late).

- The timing of the interview, its duration, and the time of day, should all depend on what is most convenient for the intended beneficiary.

- It is recommended that interviews be completed within 45 minutes to an hour (both to accommodate interviewees and to facilitate recall).

- Note taking should be kept to a minimum and should be expanded upon as soon after the interview as possible.

Examples of conversational interview techniques:

It has been said that conversational interviews are simply a way to approach a certain subject in a natural manner. Asking direct questions on sensitive topics can put people on the defensive; responses given may be ones that the respondent feels the interviewer wants to hear. The use of indirect questioning is meant to elicit a more valid expression of opinion, or of fact. Below are examples of interviewing techniques.

Adaptation of the project to the needs and priorities of beneficiaries:

"Some people say that school is for the rich; others say education is a social right. What do you say?"

"Some people say schools are good only for literacy; others say they are needed to get a good job. What do you believe?"

Degree to which people identify with the project:

"I noticed a school in your neighborhood. I also noticed a number of school-age children playing in the streets during school hours. How can schooling be improved to keep these kids in school?"

"Whose school is this, anyway?"

Suggestions for project improvements:

"Imagine you are charge of this school, what would you do to improve it?"

"So you are happy with what the school is doing; it couldn’t be better?"

Focus Group Discussions

In addition to enabling a wider coverage of the beneficiary population in a given time, focus group interviews can serve as a cross-check to individual interviews carried out in the BA. The groups should normally comprise six to 12 people with common characteristics (for example, a group may be composed of students, dropouts, parents of children in school or of dropouts, and so on). There are times, however, when it may be of use to purposefully mix the constituents of a focus group—say, with teachers and parents of dropouts—in order to better appreciate the nature of conflict and communication between them, and provide the opportunity for indigenous solutions.

Identify Participants with Assistance from Local School Leaders and Authorities

The interview guide should be used in conducting these interviews. The interviewer takes on a facilitative role, guiding the discussion to cover topics from the thematic guide and ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to participate. This will generally entail encouraging the more reticent, introverted persons to speak up while providing
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less encouragement to those most apt to dominate the discussion. A researcher should also be present to take notes. While the difficulty of quantifying focus group discussions may be considered a liability, their utility as a cross-check and as a fairly rapid and easy-to-read barometer of the mood of a community on many topics make focus groups a useful component of the BA approach.

Participant Observation

This technique generally involves protracted residence in a targeted community. During this stay, it is expected that the participant observer will establish enough rapport and involvement so as to enable him/her to accurately represent the conditions within the community as they relate to project objectives. The participant observer normally spends from three weeks to three months in a given community. The researcher will focus on the areas of concern identified in the interview guide. Emphasis in this exercise is not only on the topics but also on the socio-cultural and political context in which beneficiaries live.

During this stay in the community, the participant observer should prepare case studies of five to 10 households based on repeated visits and observation. Participant observation, being costly and time-consuming, should be used selectively on topics of particular interest that are of a sensitive nature and lend themselves to this form of intensive personal interaction.

In a Bank-supported basic education project in Turkey that had as its primary objective raising primary school attendance rates among girls, participant observation was carried out over one-month periods in two villages where attendance was very low. The participant observers lived with families who had school-age daughters who had not attended basic education schools. The objective was to better understand the factors influencing this nonattendance. In the Northeast Brazil education project, trained observers spent roughly one month visiting slum areas of Salvador and Fortaleza getting to know and interviewing primary school dropouts and families of dropouts (the families were not those of the dropouts interviewed).

Important Points in Undertaking Participant Observation

1. The reason for the participant observer's stay should be explained to everyone at the outset.

Communities, while informed of the nature of the participant observer's stay in the community, should ultimately see the participant observer as more than an acquaintance, more like a friend.

2. There should not be overidentification with any group, but rather accessibility to all.

A few close contacts from diverse major segments of the population should be cultivated. They should represent key income social groups such as home-owners and renters or parents of children in school and of dropouts. The participant observer should join in major organizations and activities of the community enough to be appreciated and identified as a participant. He or she should retain independence yet demonstrate some level of involvement in the affairs of the community.

The participant observer should base structured conversations on topics in the interview guide and discuss relevant issues with various representative members of the community.
3. Implementation

Training of Field Researchers

The training of local researchers should take approximately five days. Training takes more the form of orientation rather than intensive training. The rationale is that BA is a simple-to-use technique and should be relatively easy to implement. The following training schedule is recommended:

**Day 1:**
- Introduction to the project and its objectives
- Introduction of the BA approach and distribution of course materials
- Illustration of BA as a management tool to be used at all phases of the project cycle (design, implementation, and evaluation) through presentation and discussion of case studies
- Familiarization with the reading materials provided.

**Day 2:**
- Discussion of the following BA techniques: conversational interviews, focus groups, and participant observation
- Review of the interview guide
- Tips on report writing
- Simulation of individual interviews and focus group discussions using the interview guide
- Note taking based on simulation exercises
- Review of note taking

**Days 3-4:**
- Field exercise and pretest of interview guide. The team will choose one or more neighborhoods to apply the draft interview guide. Most team members will conduct conversational interviews with at least five persons selected at random as representatives of the diverse elements (such as age, gender, status, and so forth) of the community. The remainder will conduct either focus groups or participant observation.

**Day 5:**
- Morning: Team members will review notes and relate experiences to the entire group
- Afternoon: Critique by the study director and the project manager; suggestions for improvement of applied techniques and the interview guide

Monitoring and Evaluation

Adequate monitoring is a crucial aspect of the BA process. This monitoring is necessary
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to ensure that the BA stays true to its objectives. The monitoring process must ensure that BA researchers are effectively gathering information, and not biased in their recording of interviews, and that information gathered is relevant to project management needs.

Monitoring and evaluation of the BA is the overall responsibility of the project manager. To assist with this task it is advisable to constitute a steering committee composed of representatives of project management, the BA director and possibly team leaders, and one or more outside technical experts. This committee, or designated members of it, will be present at the key phases of the BA: design, fieldwork, data compilation and analysis, and final report preparation.

One crucial moment for the monitoring of the BA is the interim review, which should come roughly one-third of the way through the fieldwork. The BA team should prepare a brief progress report for this review presenting initial findings, suggested revisions to the interview guide, and other recommendations for BA improvement. This interim review allows for changes in the BA based on actual field experience while there is sufficient time remaining for the improvements to affect the bulk of the assessment.

Preparation of the Final BA Report

The final beneficiary assessment report is an important part of the BA process not only because it summarizes the findings of the field research but also because the recommendations it provides serve as a guide to project management. Given the goal of serving a wide range of users, two kinds of final reports for the BA may be envisaged: the comprehensive and the abbreviated, the former for broader policy application and the latter for local use. The comprehensive final report should attempt to quantify findings to the extent possible. Responses should be categorized according to thematic areas of the interview guide and presented as percentages. The findings of focus group discussions will have to be summarized by groups and by regions where they took place. To the extent possible, the report should focus on issues of relevance and importance to project objectives.

The comprehensive final BA report should contain the following:

- An executive summary
- An introduction that sets out the project's background, the BA's objectives, and a description of the methodology used
- The findings of the BA as they relate to the interview guide (this section should include tables)
- Any other relevant information
- Conclusions and recommendations.

The abbreviated report should contain only the essentials of sample size, interview guide, conclusions (as related to key findings), and recommendations. While the lengths of final reports will vary according to the subject matter, need, and context, these may be five to 10 pages for abbreviated reports and 25 to 40 pages for comprehensive reports.
4. The Brazilian Experience

While the history of participant observation and qualitative research as tools for improving project management go back in Brazil at least to the mid-sixties (in the urban sector), the experience of applying beneficiary assessment to the education sector with the participation of international development agencies got its start only in 1995. In that year, the Ford Foundation, the United Nations Children’s Fund, and the World Bank—with the strong support of the local, state, and federal governments—initiated a process of systematic listening to the key actors in education; this process focused on the urban poor in the states of Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. On the basis of this experience, the states of Bahia and Ceará followed with expanded beneficiary assessments of their own in municipal areas of varying sizes.

While these two latter surveys are still in the process of finalization, on the basis of the first three studies and a review of the pilot studies and preliminary findings of the latter two, a number of observations may be made as to the nature and import of the findings of this kind of operational research known as beneficiary assessment. Four families of findings are presented here, each of which surfaced in more than one of the five BAs mentioned above; for each family tentative uses, or solutions, are offered, and these should naturally be refined and adapted to particular locales by education professionals in Brazil.

Status and the Schools

As with many findings of beneficiary assessments, the fact that teachers and administrators come from more privileged classes than the poor persons they serve may well be obvious but has far-ranging implications. In São Paulo, middle-class teachers had difficulty relating to the fatigue of students from poor families who spent much of their time away from school in part-time jobs earning money to supplement their families’ meager incomes. Similarly, in Rio de Janeiro, the prevalence of violence in poor neighborhoods was seen to have an inhibiting influence on school attendance among the poor. This was little understood by school personnel living in more secure communities.

The parents of poor children, for their part, many of whom had received little or no formal education when they were young, felt completely alien to what transpired inside the school. Whatever interaction took place between parents and school was often demeaning to the parents and did not reveal the substance of what went on in the school. As one father in Bahia put it, “The school sometimes asks parents to help paint the building, and when there are no meals, mothers are asked to help with the food.”
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The result of this split between the worlds of the community and of the school was that the members of the former considered the latter a "black box" about which they knew little and in which they had little place to function as agents of change. The disparity in status between parents and teachers is nuanced in the Northeast, where the teachers receive low salaries (less than $200 a month) but where, for that very reason and because of differences in formal education between parents and teachers, the latter often guard their "superior" status jealously and are perceived by members of the community as looking down on them, a result that only acts to increase the divide between school and community.

This information about the two worlds of the school and community, oriented by status, should serve as an alarm provoking improved selection, training, and monitoring of school personnel. Schools can be proactive in animating parent-teacher associations and, more broadly, increasing outreach into the communities they are supposed to serve. In Ceará, the BA found one teacher who visited the families of students who performed poorly; the resulting attention to improved study, and increased respect for the teacher, paid off in markedly improved grades for these students.

In the same state, when a school invited parents to join teachers in an informal get-together once a week and discuss the substance of what was taught to their children, and how it was taught, relations between school and community improved and school attendance increased. This sort of reaching out and bridging between the two worlds of school and community can go a long way in increasing the ownership of the school by those who must ultimately benefit from it.

Management Does Make a Difference

Perhaps because the student-teacher relationship is so central to the efficacy of schooling, the importance of the school director, and school management in general, is sometimes neglected. Yet observation of more than 50 schools in various regions of Brazil has demonstrated the strong influence of school management. One school director visited in Salvador was activating a parent-teacher association in a way that clearly had a most positive effect on making the school an integral part of the community and thereby increasing its service and utility to it.

Management at higher levels appears to be important as well; the director of instruction for the State of Bahia felt that much of the impact of education in that state can be attributed to the performance of the coordenador municipal, the person named by the state to head municipal education. Additional BA work could place increased focus on the role and influence of the various levels of management in the school system. As with the previous point, remedial action would include improved recruitment and selection, training, and monitoring of school managers, at all levels.

Proper Beginnings: Repetition and Deception in Grade One

Many students in Brazil are made to repeat classes, and many of them are unaware of this phenomenon and its causes as it is occurring. Just the fact of frequent repetition with little explanation of causality causes severe low self-esteem in many students. Furthermore, it appears that there is a cruel deception played on young children as they start primary schools, particularly in the Northeast. In grade one it is not uncommon to find children passing through a series of forward steps on the way to being literate—from weak to strong to accelerated to special and, finally, to regular. The children wrongly believe these advances to be sequential promotions in grade level. When they find out that all this time, for as much as five years, they have remained in the first grade,
they often despair and leave school altogether, never to come back.

Proper school administration can remedy this fault. Clearly, transparency is needed whereby students and their families are informed of the reasons for repetition and the actual level of advancement in school. Increased attention to literacy training would also seem to be in order. The importance of effective management in remediating this excessive repetition and deception such that students start their schooling on a sound foundation cannot be overstressed.

Seeing the World through Two Different Lenses

Perhaps the broadest finding of the BA work done on education in Brazil to date is also the most basic: children and adults perceive school and, more generally, learning in markedly different ways. Children of primary school age see school mostly as a place for socializing—making friends, playing sports, generally relating to others. Parents and teachers, on the other hand, see school primarily as a place of learning, to prepare for employment and later life. Similarly, a child is apt to judge the quality of his or her performance as a student according to behavior—respectful stance toward others, courtesy, punctuality, and so forth—whereas an adult evaluates student performance by the more traditional indicator of grades in subject matter taught in class. Children see the world through affective lenses; adults see the world through cognitive lenses. The worlds seen by children and adults are thus two different worlds.

All effective service is tailored to the population group being served. Schools should be no different. If schools are not places where children want to go, they will not be frequented by children—or will be frequented with a heavy heart (causing low attention span, passivity, hostility, and so forth). There are indications (from Ceará) that when schools provide more space for recreation and more time for socializing they retain their client population, children, for more years. More work could be done to verify the significance of this sort of adaptation. What is certain is that the two worlds affecting the efficacy of education revealed by beneficiary assessment, divided by perception as by status, require effective bridging for education to become the lasting agent of change it must become in a truly developing society.
5. Documenting BA Impact

An important part of the BA process that is often omitted is the documentation of how BA findings have affected project activities. This should be done at the end of the BA, after the report is given to project management. The task manager should make sure that any follow-up actions that are taken as a result of BA findings should be kept in the project file as well as the final BA report.

In the case of the Northeast Education Project in Brazil, the information gleaned from the pilots of the BAs in Bahia and Ceará were usefully included in the policy-oriented document “A Call to Action.” Information thus recorded can then readily be referred to in designing follow-up projects and even in replicating the process in different areas of the country. A manager appointed while a project is going on will thus have up-to-date information on the BA and be likely to continue to follow the approach in use. By documenting the process, findings, and impact of the beneficiary assessment and keeping this information as a permanent part of the file, the BA process becomes a learning and feedback component generating continuous project improvement.
Notes


2. Salmen, p. 4.

3. CENPEC, "Education, Schooling and Community Project; sub-study, Beneficiary Assessment (phase 2)," São Paolo, 1966, p. 6—based on BA work done in Bahia and Ceará under the direction of Adelia Portela and Sofia Lerche, respectively.
