NFER
International

Our mission is to build better futures for children globally, and to support improvements within education systems.

Who we are

NFER is a leading independent provider of education research, evaluation and assessment solutions worldwide.

Who we work with

Government departments and agencies

NGOs

Donors

Private and civil society organisations

Local partners

How we deliver

Over **200** permanent staff

Over **30** international partners

Over **100** global associates

Quality assurance embedded within everything we do

Some of our clients include:

UNICEF

UNESCO

The World Bank

Save the Children

Global Campaign for Education

Botswana Examinations Council

What we deliver

Over 100 projects completed globally in 2020

Track record of working across four continents

Influence on policy and practice

Education challenges need the expertise of education specialists.

The depth and breadth of our experience gained from 75 years working in education enables us to create insights and solutions which help improve education systems and outcomes worldwide.

We work with our clients and partners to:

1

UNDERSTAND

Our education expertise and experience in the countries where we work, supported by local partners and Associates, enables us to **understand the needs** of our clients and their stakeholders.

2

MEASURE

We will create research instruments and assessment solutions which enable us to measure and **gather data** on the focus area.

3

ANALYSE

Our expert team of statisticians, psychometricians, economists and researchers will **interrogate** and **analyse** the data to provide clarity, insight and evidence.

4

APPLY

The education experience we are able to bring to every challenge provides the foundation for us to build **clear** and **actionable** recommendations.

95 per cent of those who read our reports said NFER research had an impact on their organisation.

NFER STAKEHOLDER SURVEY 2020

We have a strong track record of delivering projects which provide valuable insights across all aspects of teaching and learning.

This includes:

- Understanding the effectiveness of different teaching practices and approaches.

- Evaluating the implementation of complex interventions and programmes, triangulating evidence from a range of perspectives.

- Using assessment data to robustly monitor the performance of education systems and providing comparisons to other countries and global frameworks.

- Developing formative assessment tools, which provide teachers with immediate feedback on their students' strengths and gaps in their learning.

- Researching teacher training, development, and motivation.

Using our technical expertise to solve complex educational challenges since 1946.

We specialise in high quality research, evaluation and learning assessment.

Our expertise spans the full spectrum of qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods techniques. We are also a world leader in the measurement of learning outcomes – developing, trialling and delivering high quality, robust and informative assessments.

Our 200+ in-house team of professional researchers, statisticians, psychometricians, economists, trials and assessment specialists, policy analysts and information specialists allow us to respond nimbly to the needs of our clients.

research

assessment

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evaluation

capacity building
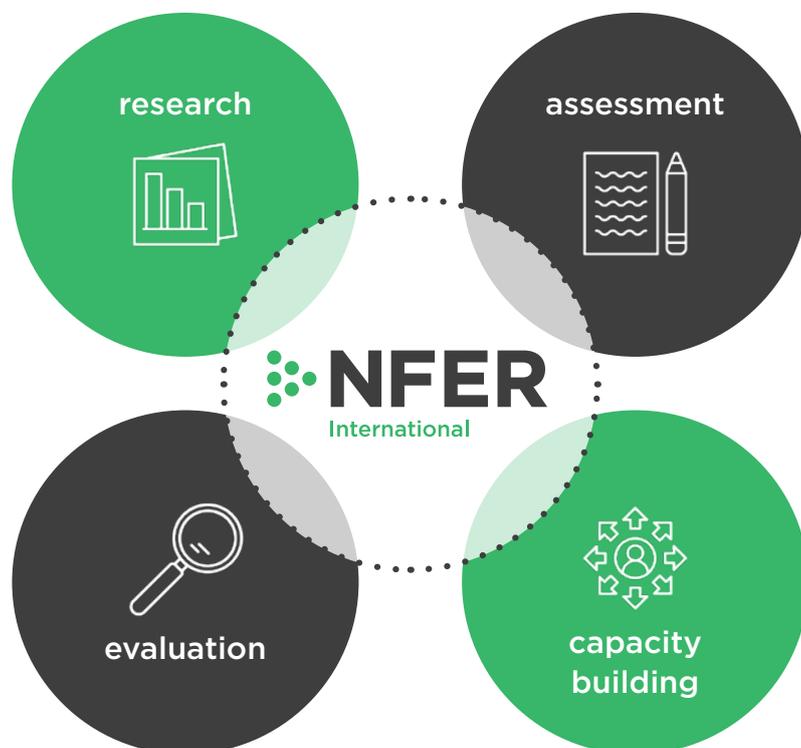
Some of our areas of specialist expertise, include:

Consultancy on a range of assessment activities including **system reviews**, guidance on **assessment strategy development** and **quality assurance** services.

Designing and implementing impact, value for money, implementation and process evaluations, adopting a range of designs, such as **randomised controlled trials**, **quasi-experiments** and **theory-based evaluation**.

Designing, developing, trialling and delivering learning assessments, including **test specification**, **curriculum alignment**, **item design and development**, **scorer guides** and **scorer training**, **trialling assessments**, **psychometric analysis** and **standard setting/grading**.

Applying a range of methods and areas of expertise, including **instrument design**, **surveys**, **participatory methods**, **focus groups**, **interviews**, **reviews** and **evidence scoping**, **econometrics**, and comparative **case studies**.

Developing **tasks** and **tests** for use as formative assessments and providing **diagnostic information** on tests to help inform teaching and learning.

For 75 years, our dedicated and highly qualified team has been generating evidence and ensuring it reaches the heart of education practice and policymaking.

We draw on our unique **multi-disciplinary** expertise to deliver complex projects, such as **international large-scale assessments**.

We have a long and successful history of delivering international large-scale assessments and benchmarking studies, combining our expertise in assessment, survey operations and policy-relevant analysis.

We have partnered with the **IEA** and **OECD** in the design and delivery of a wide range of ground-breaking international studies such as **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)**, **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)** and **Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)**. We have also published analyses and reports using international datasets to provide insights to inform and challenge policy.

International comparisons between the policies, structures, participants and beneficiaries of different education systems, when used appropriately, can offer valuable insights for anyone seeking to better understand and improve outcomes.

Our rigorous and independent approach, reliable survey infrastructure, understanding of complex survey designs and secondary analysis expertise ensure our findings are internationally respected.

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2020, we worked with UNESCO to develop a new indicator to measure one of the targets for the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goal Four on Quality Education.

Underpinning the new indicator is a conceptual and measurement framework developed by NFER. The framework considers the planned, implemented and experienced learning environments within three education themes at three different levels: system, school and classroom.

We piloted the tools in Bhutan, Costa Rica and The Gambia and the results were disseminated to members of the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning (GAML). GAML and the Sustainable Development Goal Technical Coordination Group have discussed the pilot and the tools have been approved for further development.

We are constantly finding new ways to answer key educational questions to create better opportunities for learners worldwide.

"The NFER team have developed a thorough understanding of our objectives and values...the support provided has been of consistently high quality"

PROMOTING EQUALITY IN
AFRICAN SCHOOLS (PEAS)

We understand the persistent barriers to learning that many children face. High quality evidence can help change this.

The opportunities and quality of life available to children and young people worldwide arise directly from the education they receive. And yet much of the world faces a learning crisis, with many children not accessing a quality education.

The impact of Covid-19 has exacerbated existing barriers to education – particularly for girls and children with disabilities – and requires urgent attention. We are committed to helping understand how wider policies and programmes affect equitable and inclusive access to a quality education.

Since the outbreak of the global pandemic we have evaluated education programmes designed to address education outcomes for marginalised children.

NFER were commissioned by the Global Campaign for Education to evaluate the impact of their work in 63 countries across sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean.

We used the innovative, participatory and inclusive approach of Outcome Harvesting (OH) to capture outcomes. We combined the OH with a process and learning evaluation approach to generate lessons and recommendations for the future of the GCE movement. OH is a relatively new evaluation methodology that is suited to evaluating complex programmes with multiple actors, particularly in the arena of policy advocacy and capacity building.

Our findings demonstrated strong improvement throughout the course of the programme in the areas of diversity and representation of the most marginalised, and identified significant lessons learned for both programme stakeholders and those looking to support education advocacy programmes in the future.

We are widely praised for our independence, analytic creativity, and the quality of our outputs.

"The team working on the STAR-G evaluation have been very professional, responsive and flexible"

NFER STAKEHOLDER SURVEY 2020

Maintaining our emphasis on quality, we are responsive and adaptable to sector and societal changes.

E-assessment

We have a growing capability around e-assessment, working with established partners to provide high quality e-assessment systems and solutions. We have a reputation for excellence around item authoring, test construction, management of users, test delivery, marking, data analysis and reporting. We also offer a broad range of services to accompany e-assessment projects. This includes management of technology partners, user research and arranging small scale qualitative and large scale quantitative trials.

The impact of Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted the education of the vast majority of the world's population, especially those who were already most vulnerable. NFER has been at the forefront of utilising our research, evaluation and assessment expertise to assist teachers and school leaders to fully understand the impacts of the pandemic and to inform policies and practices which will address them. This included adaptation of a three-year project for Save the Children, where at the mid-point review stage – during school closures – the evaluation sought to gather information from stakeholders, project monitoring data, and a detailed desk review to explore the effects of the pandemic on girls' education, and assess the ability of the project to adapt its activities to respond to the changing context.

Our education experts can deliver a range of capacity building and training, tailor-made to your needs.

Whether you are looking for specialist advice or you want to improve the capacity and skills of your team, we can help, for as long as you need.

We have recently worked with a wide range of organisations and donors, including the World Bank, to deliver professional and high impact workshops.

Regional Spotlight: Africa

Evaluation of School Inspections and Improvement Pilot

Client: Promoting Equality in African Schools (PEAS) in partnership with Uganda's Directorate of Education Standards (DES)

Aim: Conduct an independent evaluation of the PEAS-DES inspect and improve programme

Project Overview: We used a mixed-methods approach. As part of the evaluation, we adapted the World Management Survey to assess changes in the quality of leadership and management in the sample schools and used comparative case studies to understand how and why changes occured. This delivered an understanding of what impact the intervention had and the mechanisms that contributed to this impact. The final evaluation informed the scale-up of the intervention and how it can be delivered in a cost-effective way.

Expanding the use of e-assessment in Rwanda

Client: Rwanda Education Board (REB) and UNESCO

Aim: To help achieve delivery of Rwanda's ICT in Education Policy

Project Overview: We delivered a range of advisory and capacity building services. This included a study on teaching and e-assessment in Rwanda (to scope the possibilities for the use of ICT in assessment). We also oversaw the creation of e-assessment materials, provided training and promoted use of the e-assessment system. The results of the research provided a menu of e-assessments with an analysis of their suitability. REB followed our recommendations, including developing capacity to use e-assessment and technology to support teaching and learning.

Launch of the first Botswana Educational Achievement Monitor (BEAM)

Client: Botswana Examinations Council (in partnership with IEA)

Aim: Design and implementation of the first BEAM

Project Overview: We are leading the development of the new assessment framework, test instruments for mathematics and reading, and questionnaires to gather contextual information. The new monitor will be a comprehensive and sample-based assessment that will measure and monitor the quality of education provided across the education system. Once designed, NFER staff will continue to help enable BEAM to identify trends in educational attainment over time. BEAM will produce empirical data which measures the extent to which learners in Standard 4 (senior secondary) have achieved the national educational goals. The findings will inform Ministry of Education officials, school governors, headteachers, teachers, and parents on the levels of education attained by children and assist with education planning and policy.

Technical Assistance to the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia

Client: British Council

Aim: To improve the quality of analysis and presentation of data in the *Educational Statistics Annual Abstract* and develop two new teacher management frameworks

Project Overview: We shared best practices around data visualisation and analysis, and provided senior level expertise to facilitate the development of two new policy documents focusing on teacher management: *The Teacher Workforce Management Framework* and *The Teacher Education Colleges Accreditation Manual*. Following highly positive feedback, both policies secured the buy-in of key governmental stakeholders responsible for implementation.

Understanding Teacher Attendance in Embu County

Client: NFER

Aim: Increase understanding around the prevalence and causes of absent teachers in Embu County, Kenya

Project Overview: We undertook a mixed methods approach, including teacher surveys and interviews with headteachers in 20 schools, self-reported attendance rates which were triangulated using attendance spot checks, and focus group discussions with parents and other stakeholders. Our report outlined the factors associated with teacher attendance and perceived efficacy of recent reforms to improve attendance. This included four key policy recommendations, such as a new focus on interventions that address not only school but also class absenteeism.

Evaluation of the Successful Transition and Advancement of the Rights of Girls Project (STAR-G)

Client: Save the Children

Aim: To improve the opportunities of 15,000 marginalised girls through teacher professional development, literacy and numeracy skills development, improved self-esteem, and community engagement.

Project Overview: We designed a mixed methods evaluation to explore the learning and transition progress of over 2,400 girls, by comparing results of both 'intervention' and 'comparison' groups. The research approach was later adapted to generate learning despite country-wide school closures. We delivered baseline and midline reports, which provided a range of important insights and recommendations. Informed by our recommendations, the programme adapted interventions to better support the most marginalised girls, and altered monitoring activities to capture lessons learned during Covid-19.

Experts in education

Our pioneering methods and experience gained over 75 years have enabled us to become a true authority and respected voice in education.
We are focused on generating clear, actionable recommendations from our work.

Influence on policy and practice

Our unrivalled education sector knowledge and experience mean that our work can inform policymakers and other education stakeholders, and also support the strengthening of classroom practice.

Strong local partnerships

We have strong local partnerships and good relationships with education stakeholders in country, particularly in East Africa. This means that our work is always grounded in the local context.

More than a transaction

As a mission-led organisation we want to partner with our clients to ensure maximum impact for our work. We are not-for-profit, meaning we invest any surplus funds directly back into research, development and innovation.

With backgrounds in research, academia, teaching and policy, our staff develop and deliver vital high-quality insights and assessments, grounded in **deep subject knowledge** and a thorough understanding of education.

Our multidisciplinary team includes a range of international education experts who are able to offer specialist input. We are professional, approachable, easy to work with and dedicated to supporting clients in achieving their aims.

Through our extensive network of partners and associates we can work in a range of languages and deliver projects that are responsive to their context, respect local laws and customs, and provide a reliable and adaptable offer to our clients.

Our Associates Network

The global education specialists and researchers in our Associates pool span the range of NFER's expertise, including international education and development, research and evaluation, assessment and fieldwork. We manage our Associates Pool to ensure it is of the highest quality and carefully match our Associates to the projects which require their particular skills and expertise. Our Associates are integral members of our project teams and enable us to field high performing teams with the right set of skills for our clients' work.

It all starts with a conversation...

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In a world of unprecedented disruption and change, caused by a global pandemic, social upheaval, technological innovation and the climate crisis, it is more important than ever that education policy and practice is informed by high-quality evidence.

NFER exists to create this evidence and get it into the hands of those who can use it to make a difference.