

What are the Necessary Evaluation Criteria for Non-Formal Educational Institutions for Migrant Children?

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1. Introduction and Background

The global landscape of human mobility has undergone significant shifts in recent years, necessitating a re-evaluation of how educational systems accommodate displaced populations. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the global migrant population reached approximately 281 million by 2022, representing 3.6% of the world's population. Within this figure, the number of displaced persons reached a historic peak of 117 million, of whom approximately 28 million were children (McAuliffe & Oucho, 2024). As underscored by the 2025 Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), education remains a fundamental pillar for the successful settlement and social participation of these individuals.

Despite the critical importance of education, many migrant children face systemic barriers to entering public school systems. The EU policy network SIRIUS identifies linguistic hurdles and psychological trauma as primary obstacles that prevent direct integration into formal education. In this context, Non-Formal Education (NFE)—often provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—serves as an essential bridge. NFE offers a unique set of benefits, including curriculum flexibility, targeted linguistic support, a safe environment

free from discrimination, and the presence of role models who share similar cultural backgrounds (Lipnickienė et al., 2018, pp. 15-18). These factors are instrumental in building resilience and fostering holistic development among traumatized or marginalized children. However, a significant challenge identified in recent analyses is the scarcity of robust quality assessment systems for these NFE institutions, leaving a gap in how their educational efficacy is measured and recognized (Lipnickienė et al., 2018, p. 44).

2. Research Overview and Purpose of the Study

The primary objective of this research is to elucidate the necessary evaluation criteria for establishing a quality assurance system within non-formal educational institutions specifically tailored for migrant children. To achieve this, the study aims to:

1. Analyze the conceptual and practical differences in quality assessment between formal and non-formal educational frameworks.
2. Identify the specific indicators and items that should be integrated into the quality evaluation of NFE for migrant children.

3. Theoretical Framework and Significance

This study draws on the theoretical work of Maruyama, H., Ohta, M., Nii, K., Mihara, R. and Ohashi, C. (2016), who argue that NFE should not be dismissed as a mere supplement to the formal system. Instead, they characterize NFE as a "free space" where marginalized cultures can be practiced and where diverse values—beyond those of universal, standardized education—can flourish. This perspective suggests that NFE outcomes must be evaluated based on their own intrinsic values rather than being forced into the rigid frameworks of public education.

4. Research Methods

This research employs a multi-faceted qualitative approach. First, an extensive review of existing literature regarding NFE quality assessment was conducted, with a particular focus on the adult education sector and the specific characteristics of NFE evaluation methods and criteria. This stage aimed to identify the recurring challenges in evaluating non-standardized educational settings.

Second, the study utilizes a case study of Migrant Learning Centers (MLCs) in Tak Province, Thailand. The choice of Tak Province is significant due to its established quality assurance system, which resulted from a collaborative effort between NGOs and the provincial education committee of the Thai Ministry of Education. This collaboration ensures that the evaluation criteria reflect, to some extent, the quality standards expected by the Thai government. The analysis is informed by on-site interviews and a examination of the evaluation materials used for MLCs.

5. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the current evaluation system in the Thai MLCs revealed a distinct emphasis on "input" indicators. Specifically, items related to child health and welfare account for approximately 50% of the total assessment. While these are crucial for the holistic development and safety of migrant children—consistent with the "safe environment" mentioned by SIRIUS—the assessment of the actual pedagogical process remains underdeveloped.

Data regarding teacher qualifications and academic degrees are recorded; however, there is a notable absence of criteria for evaluating specific teaching methodologies or the quality of learning content. Current evaluations tend to focus on the type of curriculum being followed

rather than how it is delivered or received. Furthermore, student assessments are currently limited to the confirmation of completion status. There are no systematic measures in place to evaluate actual learning achievement, academic comprehension, or the progress made by individual students.

These findings suggest a critical need for the inclusion of "output" indicators in the quality assurance framework. If the learning experiences of children in MLCs are to be properly recognized and valued for their future transition into formal education or the labor market, the system must incorporate evaluations of educational content and measurable learning outcomes.

However, the discussion must evolve to consider not only *what* is measured—such as educational content and achievements—but also *who* should act as the evaluators to ensure the process remains fair and contextually sensitive.

References

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