

Comparing quantitative results from three different methods: do they tell the same story?

This Briefing Note explores the experience from two studies in the Maldives and in Jamaica. In both studies a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used, linked by a scorecard approach. By 'scorecard' we refer to a set of questions that is the same in the focus groups and the quantitative interviews.

We designed the studies in this way to give us the best of both worlds; representative, statistically significant findings by means of the quantitative survey, and an understanding of why respondents had scored the way they had. The obvious benefits of this approach are that the group discussion adds value in terms of linking the scores to explanations, and that the qualitative explanations are 'sharpened' by having to provide a score.

Nevertheless, when designing this arrangement we wondered to what extent the scores from these methods overlap on a purely quantitative basis. In this Briefing Note we compare three approaches of getting quantitative scores used in these studies: Individual scores at the beginning of the focus groups; a group score after some discussion;

and scores from the quantitative survey to see how they compare. We also wanted to explore how the group dynamics of discussion, diagnosis and scoring might influence the scores produced.

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Using the results from two case studies, we find that the methods used broadly match, which increases confidence in the results, but that one method cannot substitute the other.

The two case studies

The first case study is a survey among parents and students on four islands in the Maldives, exploring their satisfaction with the education they receive. The survey is part of an ongoing evaluation of a project that seeks to improve schools on these islands.

The second case study, only briefly discussed, used the

same methodology to evaluate a community development project in Jamaica, which had the objectives of improving education, health, agriculture, skills training and infrastructure.

Three occasions using the scorecard

We asked the same set of core questions in three different settings.

1. Individual scores at the beginning of the focus group

At the beginning of the focus group each participant was given a one-page questionnaire, a 'community scorecard', which s/he answered individually. The scorecard, in the Maldivian language Dhivehi, contained 15 questions that included satisfaction with the school buildings, sports facilities, teaching (e.g. see Figure 1), confidence to ask questions in class, homework setting, relevance of education for finding a job, etc. The answers (scores) were then compiled by the facilitator on a flipchart and discussed.

Scoring is useful in itself because the act of being required to score something subjective sharpens the

With respect to the first question, the quantitative data generated by the individual community scorecards and the citizen report cards largely matches, though not completely (as can be expected given the different sample sizes).

On the left hand side of Figure 2 are the citizen report card results of a quantitative survey among 383 parents showing the proportion that are either fully or mostly satisfied with the education their child is receiving. It shows that parents in schools A and C are largely satisfied, while parents in schools B and D are not.

The results of the individual scores from the community scorecards are shown on the right hand side of the figure. Notably the individual scores from the community scorecards, which by design have a much smaller number of respondents, tell a similar story for three of the four schools: parents are satisfied in schools A and B but not in school C. Only the result for school D is not consistent across community scorecards and citizen report cards.

As can be expected, a small sample size is not a reliable predictor but indicative for the results of a large sample size.

The second question is how do individual scores compare to group scores; does a discussion of the issues lead to differences in scoring?

To answer this we compared the group score to the average of the individual scores among students and parents in the Maldives and among respondents in Jamaica. As Figure 3 shows, most group scores

Figure 2. Comparing individual scores from the community scorecards with results from the citizen report cards

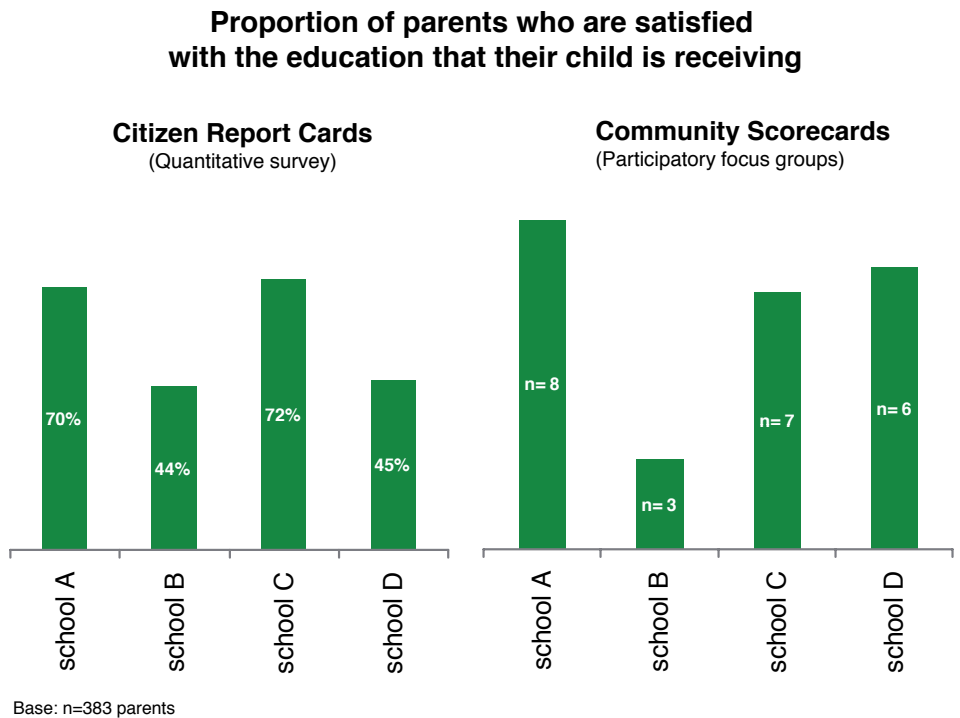
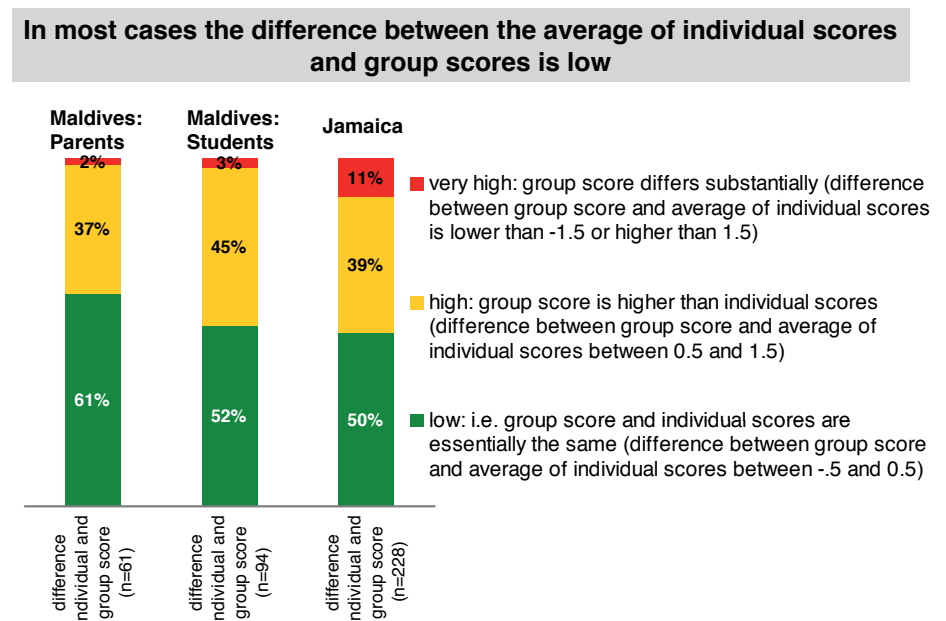


Figure 3. Difference between individual and group scores



Parents questionnaire: In summary, how satisfactory is the education that (name of sampled child) is receiving?
 Students questionnaire: In summary, how satisfactory is the education that you are receiving?
 Cases weighted to reflect size of student population, Base unweighted: Total n=385 students, n=383 parents.

did not differ substantially from the average of individual scores, however a significant minority did alter, suggesting that some group discussion changed the minds of some participants. It cannot be conclusively resolved which of the two reporting methods is more reliable, as the specifics of any group may influence the results. However the good news is that the various methods to gather data come to similar conclusions, and that we can have greater confidence in the results overall because we have triangulated the methods. In addition, we have the insights from the qualitative focus groups on the reasons underlying the scores.

Conclusion

The quantitative results obtained by using individual scores and

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group scores as part of the 'community scorecard', as well as the quantitative 'citizen report card' methods are similar. The scorecards used in the group setting provided a good indication, although not a completely reliable predictor, of the data generated from the more representative survey method. It also turns out that the individual scores are largely good indicators of the group scores. Triangulating the methods improved the reliability and confidence in the findings. It should be added that one of the main benefits of using scorecards in a

qualitative setting is to 'sharpen' the responses, as participants commit to an answer independently of the other group members, which then contributes to the discussion.

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In this way, the underlying reasoning for the scores is obtained. In short, the combination of community scorecards and citizen report cards provides the best of both worlds: representative results and insights into the motivations for the scoring.

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