Science of Learning for Education - Working Groups
Term of Reference
(11.03.2024)

In consultation with our Steering Committee, we are establishing two Working Groups to support the preparation of background research that will be the focus of the discussions at our next annual meeting, scheduled for 2-3 December 2024. The themes for the Working Groups have been selected based on priorities expressed by Member States for accelerating achievement of SDG 4.

Each Working Group will be responsible for preparing an evidence-based report of about 25-30 pages. The reports should be directed at policymakers primarily, while sufficiently grounded in empirical research and evidenced in practice. These reports are not meant to be exhaustive literature reviews, meta-analyses or systematic reviews; however, it is expected that the findings from such pieces of scholarship will feed into the reports. As one of the major objectives of our Alliance is to develop strategies leading to effective and wide-scale implementation, each report should aim to provide insights about how knowledge from the Science of Learning can be translated for implementation that adapts to individual cultures and contexts.

Members are invited to join one or both Working Groups:

(1) <u>Foundational Learning</u>: Globally, it is estimated that over 70% of children cannot read and understand a simple text by age 10. In Sub-Saharan Africa, this percentage reaches 90%. Despite increases in access to education since 2015 when the Sustainable Development Goals were launched, many children still complete primary school without having acquired the basic skills needed to progress in further education and succeed in life. Foundational learning refers to basic literacy, numeracy and social-emotional skills that are the essential building blocks for all other learning, knowledge and higher-order skills. However, despite the well-established research and knowledge base on the acquisition of reading, numeracy and social-emotional skills, much of this knowledge remains outside the sphere of the design of curricula and pedagogical practices. The purpose of this Working Group is to prepare a report demonstrating how the Science of Learning has been implemented in educational policy or practice to improve curriculum, pedagogy, teaching-learning processes, or student learning. To learn more about the global learning challenge: https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/e52f55322528903b27f1b7e61238e416-0200022022/original/Learning-poverty-report-2022-06-21-final-V7-0-conferenceEdition.pdf.

(2) <u>Technologies for Learning</u>: Despite diverse, and sometimes contradictory findings of the impact of remote and online teaching on student learning outcomes, the proliferated use of technologies of varying types and scales during COVID-19 school closures has opened up an intensive debate on the potential of technology for 'transforming' teaching-learning processes and delivering more personalized, equitable, relevant, and efficient education. Advanced educational technologies that can be adapted to students' specific learning needs and knowledge gaps have been hailed as the panacea for the future of learning, both to free up teachers' time in the classroom so they can focus on the social-emotional aspects of learning and to provide hands-on support to struggling students. However, sound, rigorous and impartial evidence of technology's added value *for* learning remains lacking. The purpose of this Working Group is to prepare a report demonstrating how the Science of Learning has informed (or should inform) the development of edtech programmes that have evidenced improvements in curriculum, pedagogy, teaching-learning processes, or student learning.

To learn more about technology in education:
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000385723/PDF/385723eng.pdf.multi

The UNESCO Secretariat will support Working Group members to prepare the reports, but members are expected to take the lead on the research, analysis and drafting of the reports according to their areas of expertise. Working Group members may consider inviting senior graduate students or post-docs to join the Working Groups, who may be interested in supporting the research, analysis or drafting phases as part of their studies. All contributors to the reports will be acknowledged.

UNESCO will organize and lead initial meetings of each Working Group, as well as attend regular meetings to review progress and provide strategic guidance from the international perspective. Overall responsibility for oversight falls under UNESCO. Final editing, design and layout of the reports will be the responsibility of UNESCO.

Members of Working Groups will be responsible for:
-   Narrowing down the theme to a specific topic or issue of relevance that addresses an open question and does not duplicate existing work.
-   Identifying and assessing the research and policy literature relevant to addressing the topic.
-   Drafting a report that synthesizes the research, identifies gaps in knowledge or implementation, provides insights for education policy or practice, and proposes solutions for moving forward.
-   Organizing regular (bi-weekly at first) working meetings to decide work assignments, debate issues, take decisions, and review progress.
-   Making recommendations for keynote speakers and organizing thematic panels at the annual meeting in December.

An indicative timeline is as follows, to be further specified after the first Working Group meeting:
-   1 April 2024: Working Groups organized.
-   15 April 2024: First meeting of each Working Group.
-   30 April 2024: Topic under each theme discussed, narrowed down, and agreed.
-   April through August: Research, analysis and drafting phase.
-   31 August: Delivery of a first draft to UNESCO and Steering Committee for review.
-   15 October: Delivery of a second draft to UNESCO and Steering Committee for final review.
-   15 November: Submission of the final report.

You may indicate your interest in joining one or both Working Groups by completing this form:
https://forms.office.com/e/c2tjaZ9s97