

UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Working Paper 2020

Structured Pedagogy: For Real-Time Equitable Improvement in Learning Outcomes

Executive Summary (version 2, 20 June 2020)

87% of children in sub-Saharan Africa cannot read and understand a simple text by age 10. This learning crisis undermines sustainable growth and poverty reduction as there is growing evidence that many of the benefits of education – cultural, economic, and social – accrue to individuals and society only when learning occurs. However barriers to learning are complex, multiple and interlinked and improving learning at scale seems intractable; frequently the conventional mix of education inputs is not improving learning outcomes, with the result that countries in ESAR are unable to prepare children and adolescents for future learning, life, work and active citizenship.

This learning crisis needs to be met with a learning revolution.

While it is difficult to improve learning outcomes for children at scale, there is a growing body of literature from low and middle income country contexts that indicates structured pedagogy programmes have the potential to address some of these challenges at scale.

Building from research and experience, building on values of rights and equity and aligned with UNICEF’s Global Education Strategy and flagship approach for foundational literacy and numeracy, the Structured Pedagogy Framework has been designed to provide a guide on the core components of implementing an effective structured pedagogy programme.

The Framework (illustrated below) sets out the elements that are important to achieve efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable results with the ultimate goal that all children gain foundational (literacy and numeracy) and social and emotional skills, as an essential grounding for ongoing learning and for life and work.

The Structured Pedagogy Framework:  
The essential components for achieving real-time change in teaching and learning

**Values and frameworks:** Child’s right to quality education, equity, SDG4, ending learning poverty, African Union’s Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016–2025, UNICEF Education Strategy 2019–2030

**Goal:** all children gain foundation (literacy and numeracy) and transferable (social and emotional) skills as an essential grounding for ongoing learning and for life and work.

Teacher professional development

ESSENTIAL

- High quality expert-led teacher training
- Ongoing expert coaching and peer mentoring
- Digital coaching options

ADDITIONAL

- Enhance teacher motivation and retention, and teaching and learning environments, including reducing pupil teacher ratios



Providing teaching and learning materials

ESSENTIAL

- High quality, scientifically valid, mother tongue, one-to-one materials for teachers and learners that provide detailed lesson plans and strategies, including on how to formatively assess learning
- Digital learning platforms



Effective delivery system

- **Data and monitoring:** Clear roles and responsibilities, transparent data and regular reporting to monitor progress
- **Prioritization and leadership:** Prominent and active leadership at the highest level
- **Public accountability:** Through Data Must Speak-type interventions to improve teacher, parent and student knowledge about learning.



Activating caregivers in children’s learning

ESSENTIAL

- Activating parents as co-educators through consultation, engagement and information on teaching and learning with parents
- Citizen accountability to enhance sustainability
- Resources for parents and support in digital literacy, for complementary home learning activities



ADDITIONAL

- Support parents to keep their child in school - Support parents to keep their child in school - e.g. for children with disabilities, MHPSS, adult education, cash transfers

Harnessing formative student assessment



ESSENTIAL

- Establish inclusive tools and teacher practices for reliable and low effort assessments

ADDITIONAL

- Extend learning assessments into social emotional skills, mental health and psycho-social status.

Harnessing ICT for learning through the structured pedagogy framework

Use of technology to support learning to be:

- Purposeful (used with a clear result in mind)
- Aligned (relevant and connected to the education system)
- Complementary (supporting teachers, not substituting them)
- Integrated (used by teachers and learners and used and maintained within system processes).



Technology can be used in any of the four components and as part of the delivery system

## Eastern and Southern Africa Country Examples



### All Children Reading: A Grand Challenge for Development led by USAID with Australian Government and World Vision – region-wide.

To improve early grade reading, education systems are strengthened to ensure children learn in a language they understand. For example, the Malawi National Reading Programme is revising student textbooks and teacher guides, distributing textbooks to students, training teachers, assessing students, updating national policy, and engaging families to support reading founded upon evidence-based practices for teaching reading in Chichewa as well as English.

### Big results now! Education led by Govt of Tanzania with DFID, SIDA, World Bank - Tanzania

Big Results Now! was introduced in early 2013 to deliver transformational change in the education sector through a set of nine activities aimed at increasing resource flows to schools, and at improving attainment levels in the early grades in reading, writing and numeracy. An EGRA showed that the proportion of Standard 3 students classed as 'non-readers' declined from 28% to 16%, whilst the proportion of students classed as 'progressing readers' increased from 22% to 31% between 2013 and 2016 whilst, from late 2015, there were significant improvements in the regularity and size of financial flows to schools

### Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) and Catch Up – Botswana, Madagascar, Uganda and Zambia

TaRL is a remedial intervention championed by J-PAL and Pratham that seeks to improve basic literacy and numeracy outcomes for children in grades 3 to 5, by tailoring instruction to the learning level of the child. RCTs demonstrate significant impact on learning. Core aspects are: grouping of children according to their assessed levels rather than according to age or grade; targeted instruction and lessons; providing teachers with effective assessment and pedagogical materials and ideas; strong implementation and monitoring systems.

### Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS) – South Africa

EGRS is a well evaluated intervention involving mother-tongue TLMS, teacher training (including coaching) and formative assessment. EGRS evaluated reading achievements and found the highest impact when materials were aligned to the national curriculum, teachers and learners were supported with high quality reading materials and teachers were trained centrally and accessed ongoing coaching.

### Literacy Boost – Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia

The Save the Children and World Vision partnership on early grade literacy consists of three components: reading assessments, teacher training and community action. It consistently finds treatment schools to have improved literacy outcomes compared to control groups, specifically for the most disadvantaged learners. An evaluation of Literacy Boost in Malawi showed 27% gains in single word reading for the poorest quintile of learners, which represented 13% more than in schools that did not benefit from the programme.

### Tusome – Kenya with USAID and DFID

Since 2015, the Tusome ("Let's read" in Kiswahili) project to improve early grade literacy has reached 7m million children across 22,600 public schools, 5,027 private schools and 1,500 alternative basic education institutions. It builds on the lessons learnt during the 2011-2014 Primary Mathematics and Reading (PRIMR) initiative, which rigorously evaluated and found significantly improved learning outcomes. Key success factors that were taken up by Tusome include improved lesson plans, student books, teacher training (including coaching support) and classroom assessment. Tusome was shown to have led to a decrease in nonreaders from 38 to 12 percent in English Grade 2, while the percentage of fluent readers rose from 12 to 47 percent. Analysis showed that ongoing coaching support to teachers was an essential determinant of improved teaching and learning.

## Using the Structured Pedagogy Framework

The Structured Pedagogy Framework offers an evidence-based plan for implementing education reforms and interventions that are likely to lead to real-time improvements in learning, especially for the most disadvantaged children.

The Structured Pedagogy Framework can guide UNICEF Country Offices at critical decision-making moments – new CPDs, MTRs, strategic moments of reflection, development of Education Section Plans, and in critical conversation with Ministers, donors and partners – with inputs that can realistically be included in CO programming and ultimately help COs support the government to achieve improvements in children's learning outcomes.

COs first need to consider whether structured pedagogy is appropriate for the current state of educational development and the education system's capacity. There needs to be genuine political will and partner support, coupled with significant funding, time and effort to be dedicated to rolling out structured pedagogy.

When applying the Structured Pedagogy Framework or assessing if it is desirable and realistic for the country context, COs can consider five steps: contextual analysis; audit of quality education interventions; stakeholder mapping; financing review; and assessing the preconditions for success.

The full paper, which sets out the evidence base the Structured Pedagogy Framework is drawn from, explanation on the components of the Framework, additional and expanded case studies and a more detailed guide to using the Framework, is available here: <https://unicef.sharepoint.com/:b:/t/ESAR-Education/EZkd1VM89sFNlpNrYotEjSMBxUz5mQrWrRbHr3J8B7aGcA?e=i18HW4>

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