

Irish Aid response to the Learning Outcomes Document

1. Review the revised thematic papers

May we iterate as other agencies have, on the clarity of the introductory paragraphs that outline clearly the direction of the GRA, the comments on the previous consultation and the way forward.

We welcome the recognition of urgency and the proposed ‘rapid start-up’ as well as the ambition of doubling or tripling reading and then maths in early grades within a few years.

Throughout the three proposed activities: Research, Technical Workshops and Scalable Experiences, the document seeks to build on current thinking and on the comparative advantage of existing agencies.

The document presents eleven key research themes. This is a fairly selective list, and yet there is some duplication and overlap. Conceptually, these can be seen as falling into 4 groups; (i) the pre-school phase, (ii) the policy level issues, (iii) the classroom level issues, and (iv) system monitoring and implementation issues.

Organising the research topics into headings:

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| Starting early | Early grade instruction Effective early childhood methodology |
| Education – policy level | Local languages Mapping curriculum content Teacher training and supervision Textbook content and provision Learner and system assessment |
| Education – classroom level | Effective mathematics instruction Remediation strategies |
| Making the system work | System monitoring and Q and A Political economy. |

Some comments on the research topics:

- The two topics on early year’s education seem very similar and could perhaps be merged.
- At classroom level, there is a specific topic on mathematics instruction, but perhaps there should also be a specific topic investigating effective literacy methods.

- The point on political economy is very condensed. This point could cover a whole range of issues, including teacher incentives, CCT, community scorecards, social accountability measures. The heading political economy may not be the best title here.

Overall, there is a quite deterministic tone to the paper. It seems to imply that there is a single “right answer” for education systems – e.g. an ideal method for teaching mathematics, an ideal number of words per textbook. In reality, education is much more varied, and more related to culture and expectations. It might be more appropriate to re-phrase these to reflect awareness of these nuances.

At present the model seems quite “top down”, in that the assumption is that research will be carried out and then disseminated to beneficiary countries. Is there scope for a window allowing some more demand driven research activities? These could be (a) a fund available to allow countries to request an evaluation of an innovation that they think might be beneficial or (b) an opportunity to countries to showcase good practices and successes that they can report. Both could be opportunities to highlight good practices that are not already in the mainstream thinking.

2. Provide information on partner interest in concrete, implementable activities that our organisation would like to be involved with.

Irish Aid works closely with the education ministries and education civil society organisations in four countries: Lesotho, Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia and would be very open to supporting any of the activities outlined in the learning outcomes document but would envision that the Education ministry in question would see that activity as a priority for them. We look forward to discussing this in greater detail as the consultations continue.

Irish Aid is also a supporting partner of the IIEP and would also be very interested in discussing the possibility of closer work with IIEP in some of the areas it has mentioned in the first consultation (financing and assessment).