

# ESRC-DFID Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Research Programme Annual Workshop 2019

## Knowledge Synthesis, Policy Directions, and Implications for Impact



## Overview

The ESRC-DFID Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems (RLO) Programme aims to provide critical evidence on how education systems might work better to overcome the global learning crisis; essentially, on how to raise learning outcomes and participation at scale in developing countries. The Programme is made up of 31 research grants of which 26 remain active and is producing innovative, rigorous and policy relevant research on these questions in Latin America, South Asia, and Africa.

Across the programme, and consistent with research on education systems elsewhere, a substantial body of evidence, with important implications for policy thinking, is beginning to emerge on a range of pressing questions - such as how to step up targeted support to the most marginalised (children with disabilities, children affected by crises and hard-to-reach girls); good quality teaching that serves all children; and system reform which delivers results in the flow of resources and transparency in decisions to ensure that education systems are more accountable, effective and inclusive.

In this, the fourth Annual Programme Workshop, we look forward to highlighting the early achievements of the RLO programme and celebrating its unique features. We are confident that through the clear steer offered by its systems framework, the Programme is well positioned to strengthen the evidence-base on what works to drive up quality and equity in education systems in developing countries.

## Programme Focus

The Raising Learning Outcomes in Education Systems Research Programme is defined by three overarching research questions:

- How do interacting dynamics in the social, political, economic and cultural context enable or inhibit the delivery of quality education?
- How do specific policies or interventions designed to deliver quality education and learning for all interact with these contextual dynamics, and with what impact?
- How do we better understand, measure and evaluate educational quality and learning outcomes in development contexts?

## Workshop Aims

1. Find commonalities in our findings on factors that enable or inhibit progression in learning and explore potential future collaborations between grants.
2. Share our scientific discoveries and thinking within the programme, including on the assessment of learning, methods of study, and research tools and innovations.
3. Identify across the programme, promising policy avenues to ensure that learning is effective and equitable.
4. Consider the needs and priorities of (potential) non-academic users and deliberate on how best to plan, document and communicate the impact of the research.

**Wednesday, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

	Session	Session objective
<b>8:30 – 9:00</b>	<b>Registration and Coffee</b>	
<b>9.00 – 9.30</b>	<b>Welcome and opening remarks</b>	
<b>Scientific Synthesis</b>		
<b>9.30 – 11.00</b>	<b>Session 1 – Promoting fairness, equity and equality through social accountability</b>	<p>This session explores specific questions on fairness, equity and equality in education and the political and social structures that prevent their realisation. Convened by the PRL, this session invites selected research teams to highlight the determinants of inequality in their focus countries and to speak of their work on strengthening governance and accountability. Of specific interest is the analysis of the ‘actors’ in the education system and the relationships between them; and the ‘actions’ taken by research teams to improve trust and foster accountability, with the ultimate aim of ensuring fairness and equity.</p> <p><i>Speakers include:</i>  <i>Ricardo Sabates (University of Cambridge), Robin Shields (University of Bath), Caroline Dyer (University of Leeds), Munib Sohail (National Rural Support Programme), Asadul Islam (Monash University), and Sayantan Ghosal (University of Glasgow).</i></p>
<b>11:00 – 11:30</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
<b>11:30 – 13:00</b>	<b>Session 2 – Context: An impediment to learning?</b>	<p>This session examines, across the programme, specific policies and interventions designed to reduce the effects of adversity on learning outcomes. Structural inequalities, race, ethnic conflict, class and caste, natural disasters and epidemics, moderate and severe, physical and other disabilities, and where people live have affected access to educational services and the participation of different sections of various communities in educational institutions and teachings. Political and economic reforms aimed at eradicating or reducing structural inequalities and systems levels reforms in education have taken different permutations, at different times across world regions - with mixed effects. And we</p>

		<p>have learned that the relationship between adverse conditions and the outcomes of education is not entirely unidirectional. Significantly, that pro-poor political and economic reform is often subverted to benefit the not so poor; and educational reforms aimed at providing better life chances for those seen to be disadvantaged by race or ethnicity, or by gender and location, have in the long run sometimes the opposite effect. This session invites a discussion about context and educational achievement; and of achievement in the short term and participation in society in the longer term.</p> <p>Participants are organised in groups by world region in an attempt to gain a better understanding, across the focus regions of the programme, of the nature of adversity and reforms and interventions to reduce its impact on learning and learning outcomes.</p>
<b>13:00 – 14:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>14:00 – 15:30</b>	<b>Session 3 – Conceptualising learning, assessing outcomes, and influencing policy</b>	<p>The raison d'être of the RLO Research Programme is to raise learning outcomes in education systems in developing countries. But it is not always clear how learning is conceptualised across the programme. In several grants, learning is studied as cognitive process, while in others learning is perceived to be socially and culturally situated, and so it is the learning environment and social relations rather than the individual that is of interest. There are contrasts too in the purposes for which learning assessments are used. For some, learning assessments are employed to monitor the extent to which the formal curriculum is mastered as an indicator of the effectiveness of the system; while for others, learning assessments are employed to challenge the system on the effectiveness of service delivery, or elsewhere to gauge the efficacy of a particular intervention or large scale-reform on learning outcomes. Furthermore, different learning assessment instruments are employed, some better suited to the diagnosis of the learning deficit than others. What we do know is that the RLO is replete with examples of learning and rich in</p>

		<p>experience in its efforts to improve it. Consequently, this session aims to tease out common and divergent opinions on the nature of learning and of the manner in which it is assessed.</p> <p><i>Speakers include:</i>  <i>Erin Murphy-Graham (University of California Berkeley), Melanie Walker (University of the Free State), Gabrielle Wills (Stellenbosch University), Lindsay Brown (NYU - Global TIES for Children), Ianthi Tsimpli (University of Cambridge), Anuradha De (CORD India), and Rebecca Thornton (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign).</i></p>
<b>15:30 – 16:00</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
<b>Policy Uptake</b>		
<b>16:00 – 17:30</b>	<b>Session 4 - Policy Uptake</b>	<p>This session, a panel discussion on <i>the challenges of translating evidence into policy and practice</i>, is led by the Impact Initiative. Drawing on case studies relevant to RLO research, a panel of policy actors will provide clear examples of how to translate evidence into education change in low-resource settings, and the challenges in doing so.</p> <p><i>Moderated by:</i>  <i>Pauline Rose (Director, Research for Equitable Access and Learning (REAL) Centre, University of Cambridge)</i></p> <p><i>Speakers include:</i>  <i>Laura Savage (Deputy Team Lead, DFID Education Research Team), Victoria Brown (Education, Monitoring and Evaluation and Development Consultant, Ichuli Consulting), and Joseph O'Reilly (Head of Education Policy &amp; Advocacy, Save the Children).</i></p>
<b>17:30 – 17.45</b>	<b>Summary and Reflections</b>	
<b>18:30</b>	<b>Drinks Reception followed by Conference Dinner at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford</b>	

**Thursday, 31<sup>st</sup> January 2019**

<b>9:00 – 9:30</b>	<b>Coffee</b>	
<b>9:30 – 11:15</b>	<b>Session 5 – Writing for impact</b>	This session considers how to use different types of evidence effectively for impact stories. It provides an opportunity to develop pre-prepared 120-word impact stories. There will be an ‘impact surgery’ with policy practitioners, as well as opportunities to identify future stories for publication with the Impact Initiative.
<b>11:15 – 11:45</b>	<b>Coffee Break</b>	
<b>Methods</b>		
<b>11:45 – 13:00</b>	<b>Session 6 – Methodological approaches for systems research in education</b>	This session looks across the programme at some of the methods, tools and innovations employed to address the core thematic and crosscutting policy areas. It draws on the RLO Methods Repository as well as the RLO Special Issue on Methods, which will be available to read beforehand.
<b>13:00 – 14:00</b>	<b>Lunch</b>	
<b>Reflections</b>		
<b>14:00 – 15:30</b>	<b>Session 7: Future Collaborations</b>	The session, facilitated by both the PRL and the Impact Initiative, provides an opportunity for open reflections on research synergies across the programme. Researchers from different ESRC-DFID grants will be encouraged to come together around a policy issue that relates to themes of the RLO programme and create a plan for policy engagement activities that could be enabled through support from the Impact Initiative.
<b>15:30 – 16:00</b>	<b>Evaluation, wrap up and close</b>	

## Participants List

Florence Hope Agwang	Uganda National Association of the Deaf
Jenny Aker	Tufts University
Ben Alcott	University of Cambridge
Mekbib Alemu	Addis Ababa University
Nicola Ansell	Brunel University London
Monazza Aslam	University of Oxford
Rona Bronwin	DFID
Lindsay Brown	NYU - Global TIES for Children
Victoria Brown	Mango Tree-Ichuli
Matthew Brown	Private Secretary for Minister Baldwin
Anuradha De	CORD India
Arshima Dost	
Caroline Dyer	University of Leeds
Melanie Ehren	University College London
Adam Farley	DFID
James Georgalakis	Impact Initiative
Sayantana Ghosal	University of Glasgow
Emma Greengrass	Impact Initiative
Adamou Hamadou	Sahel Consulting Group
Emily Hancock	ESRC
Julia Hayes	University of Cambridge
Pete Henly	ESRC
Rachel Hinton	DFID
Heleen Hofmeyr	Stellenbosch University
Therese Hopfenbeck	University of Oxford
Mikateko Höppener	University of the Free State
Asad Islam	Monash University
Suraj Jacob	Vidya Bhawan Society
Gemma Johnson	ESRC
David Johnson	PRL, University of Oxford
Gordana Kelava	University of Oxford
Sharon Kim	New York University
Ha Yeon Kim	Global TIES for Children at New York University
Vanessa Kind	Durham University
Gayathri Krishna	Tata Institute of Social Sciences
Maman Lawan Borko	Sahel Consulting
Pulane Lefoka	National University of Lesotho
Helen Longlands	University College London
Bronwen Magrath	University of Oxford
Rabea Malik	IDEAS Pakistan
Pam Mason	ESRC
Relebohile Moletsane	University of KwaZulu-Natal
Lina Mukhopadhyay	The English & Foreign Languages University
Patience Mukwambo	University of the Free State
Erin Murphy-Graham	University of California Berkeley
Dorothy Nampota	University of Malawi
Satyajeet Nanda	Public Affairs Centre Bangalore
Rebecca Olivia Nankinga	Uganda National Association of the Deaf
Ahereza Noah	Uganda National Association of The Deaf
Joseph O'Reilly	Save the Children
Charles Oloa	Mangotree-Ichuli Institute
Minati Panda	Jawaharlal Nehru University

Rosie Peppin Vaughan	University College London
Lauren Quinn	UKRI ESRC
Zainab Qureshi	Evidence for Policy Design (EPoD)
Purnima Ramanujan	ASER Centre, Pratham Education Foundation
Mahjabeen Raza	New York University
Pauline Rose	REAL Centre, University of Cambridge
Ricardo Sabates	University of Cambridge
Laura Savage	DFID
Priyanka Saxena	Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion
Kelly Shepherd	Institute of Development Studies
Robin Shields	University of Bath
Nidhi Singal	University of Cambridge
Ganesh Bahadur Singh	Tribhuvan University
Abhijeet Singh	Stockholm School of Economics
Moneeb Sohail	National Rural Support Programme (NRSP)
Mesfin Tadesse	Addis Ababa University
Rebecca Thornton	University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Elizabeth Tofaris	Impact Initiative
Jean-Francois Trani	Brown School, Washington University in St Louis
Ianthi Maria Tsimpli	University of Cambridge
Elaine Unterhalter	University College London
Anna Vignoles	University of Cambridge
Melanie Walker	University of the Free State
Jenny Webster	University of Central Lancashire
Gabrielle Wills	Stellenbosch University
Emily Woolf	DFID
Ulrike Zeshan	University of Central Lancashire