State Of The Evidence

Description of the Evidence
In areas where teachers have low pedagogical and/or content knowledge, providing them with guiding lesson plans and guides (but not a strict script) along with training and monitoring to support implementation, can increase learning. Structured pedagogy typically refers to a package of activities implemented together. RTI International, an organization who has conducted extensive research and synthesis on structured pedagogy models, includes four elements in the broad definition: (1) student materials such as textbooks, (2) lesson plans for teachers to follow in classrooms, (3) teacher training to support their skill development, and (4) ongoing support to teachers, including monitoring and coaching. Combining these aspects into a package allows each element to complement the rest. As noted in the “Cost-Effective Approaches to Improve Global Learning” (Banerjee et al. 2020) report from the World Bank, FCDO, and BE2, structured pedagogy plans have been implemented with success in Kenya (Piper et al. 2018) and The Gambia (Eble et al. 2019), with the Kenya study specifically noting the cost-effectiveness of the program.

Notes on Context
Structured pedagogy is most likely to be effective in contexts where teachers need additional support to understand and implement the most effective pedagogical practices. Teachers may welcome structured pedagogy programs if they recognize a need for additional support in the classroom but may be resistant or feel insulted if they feel disrespected or perceive that structured lesson plans could restrict their freedom in the classroom.

Dissemination channels must be in place to deliver information and guidance to the teachers effectively and equitably.

This intervention may be more effective in contexts where there is high teacher turnover and teachers therefore have less classroom experience.

Equity Considerations
Broadly, structured pedagogy programs are intended to be inclusive and equitable across gender, socio-economic status, children with disabilities, and other factors. However, it will be important to ensure that each of the four elements explicitly incorporates inclusive practices. For example, coaches who observe teachers in the classroom will need to be aware of the needs of different groups including by gender and children with disabilities. In addition to being aware of children’s needs, coaches will have to provide relevant guidance and feedback to teachers to ensure they are being inclusive in their instruction. Additionally, the textbooks, teacher lesson plans, and teacher professional development will have to account for the fact that most children in low- and middle-income classrooms are learning below grade-level expectations. To ensure equitable learning for these children, the materials and training may need to incorporate aspects of personalized or targeted instruction to support their learning. Finally, since structured pedagogy examples come from in-school programs, out-of-school children or unenrolled children, who likely need pedagogical support to improve foundational learning, may first need to be reached through other approaches.
Operationalization

Operationalization Questions

In June 2020, UNICEF ESARO released a working paper called, “Structured Pedagogy: For Real-Time Equitable Improvements in Learning Outcomes.” In Section 4 (page 29), the paper outlines five steps to use the structured pedagogy framework. See the working paper by Chakera et al. 2020 for full details.

Successful Examples

- Identifying the essential ingredients to literacy and numeracy improvement: Teacher professional development and coaching, student textbooks, and structured teachers’ guides (Piper et al. 2018)
- Improving reading outcomes in Kenya: First-year effects of the PRIMR Initiative (Piper et al. 2014)
- How much can we remediate very low learning levels in rural parts of low-income countries? Impact and generalizability of a multi-pronged para-teacher intervention from a cluster-randomized trial in The Gambia (Eble et al. 2019)

Implementation Package

RTI International’s Structured Pedagogy Guides

Further Action Options

Approaches with high and consistent effectiveness are recommended for direct action through pilots to demonstrate local proof of concept and generate momentum in-country; scale-up is recommended especially if an existing country effort is operational and ready for scale. These takeaways are meant to only be a guide rather than a definitive recommendation. In some cases, even effective and well-studied interventions might benefit from further research, for example, to test scale pathways or to optimize programs for cost-effectiveness. Based on the evidence for this category, potential next steps might include:

- Connecting with implementers to learn more about how to adapt and pilot evidence-based programs in this category;
- Connecting with researchers to identify relevant open questions on implementation and scale that may benefit from further research;
- Other activities to think through the policy implications of this evidence in your context.

If you are interested in exploring these or other options, please contact the J-PAL Education team at JPAL_Education@povertyactionlab.org, to set up an initial exploratory meeting. The team will be happy to brainstorm potential next steps.