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STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS FOR EDUCATION POLICY EFFECTIVENESS IN UGANDA

EDUCATION POLICY LAB BLUE PRINT



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Education Policy Lab (EPL) is evidence-based policy development and implementation mechanism that brings together Ministries departments Agencies and Local Governments together and policy researchers to generate evidence and innovations for sustainable transformation of education and sports sector. The EPL is joint partnership between the Ministry of Education, Department of Policy, Research, and Analysis with Ace Policy Research Institute (APRI). The lab utilizes the existing structures of the Ministry of education and sports. The EPL is an innovative initiative designed to enhance the effectiveness of policy processes across Uganda's Education and Sports sector. The Lab will serve as a collaborative platform bringing together policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and other stakeholders to support, peer review policy evidence, refine, and evaluate policy interventions.

This partnership is aligned with the Ministry's Missions and strategic approaches of both institutions. The MoES mission is *"to provide technical support, guide, coordinate, regulate, and promote the delivery of quality education and sports to all persons in Uganda; for national integration, individual and national development"*. **The aim of the Lab will be to improve policy development and implementation processes by specifically focusing on access to opportunities for early and foundational learning through enhanced policy coordination and support and contribute to improved learning outcomes across the sector at all levels for sustained human capital development.**

The Early Childhood Care and Education Policy (2024), the National Teachers' Policy (2019), the Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy (2019) warrant a concerted effort towards ensuring successful execution. This calls for broader systems thinking across the sector and the whole human capital development program of Government than siloed approaches. The EPL would be a mechanism for system delivery of policy commitments aligned with political priorities. Through adaptation of implementation science, the EPL would directly tackle policy challenges and cause correct through iterative approaches.

The EPL will bring together policymakers, researchers, practitioners, development partners, and civil society organizations to bridge the gap between policy formulation and implementation. It will provide a collaborative space to test, refine, and scale up interventions that have demonstrated effectiveness in improving teaching and learning outcomes, while fostering a culture of data-driven and evidence-based decision-making within the education sector.

Through this partnership, APRI and the MoES aim to:

- (a) Promote inclusive and high-quality early and foundational learning for all children, with particular focus on those in underserved and marginalized communities.
- (b) Address gender disparities and promote equity and safety in learning environments by tackling barriers that hinder especially girls from fully participating in education.
- (c) Strengthen institutional capacity, collaboration, and policy coherence within Uganda's

- education sector to enhance the effectiveness of implementation and coordination.
- (d) Ensure that education policies are evidence-informed and aligned with national development goals and global commitments.

2.0 VISION, MISSION AND OBJECTIVES OF THE EPL

2.1 EPL Vision

The Education Policy lab seeks to be the lead lab for sustainably developing and utilizing policy research evidence for education policy development and implementation in Uganda.

2.2 Mission

To boost national collective action, harmonization, and subsidiarity for sustainable and competitive development of Uganda's education and sports sector.

2.3 Objectives of the EPL

The overall objective of the MoES EPL is to improve access to opportunities for early and foundational learning through enhanced gender equity, evidence generation and utilization, policy coordination, and contribute to improved learning outcomes at the early and foundational years.

Specific objectives of the Ministry of Education and Sports EPL are to:

- a) Facilitate innovative and evidence-based solutions through application of multi-disciplinary approaches in policy formulation.
- b) Facilitate experimentation and testing of policy ideas in a controlled iterative manner allowing policy actors to identify and address potential issues before scaling.
- c) Foster cross-country/contextual learning opportunities and capacity strengthening for public officials, researchers, and other relevant stakeholders.
- d) Strengthening non-state sector and institutional capacities in education policy research and innovations for improved policy impact.
- e) Ensure quality assurance of policy implementation at scale arising from the potential to affect many beneficiaries and targeting young girls who face numerous barriers to access education opportunities.
- f) Conduct scientific research studies and introduce new innovations for education and sports policy reviews and improvements.
- g) Strengthen policy coordination and collaboration between Government and other stakeholders to solve policy problems in a multi-level governance framework.

3.0 STRATEGIC FIT AND LEADERSHIP

The lab is envisioned as a coordination and collation hub for representative input from sector players. With the purpose of representing, collecting and coordinating evidence based informed policy development and strategic implementation of agreed upon actions in the education and sports sector.

Leadership of the Platform is proposed as follows. The EPL is aligned and supports the Policy Technical Working Group (PTWG), under the Human capital Development Programme (HCDP), of the NDP IV. Membership to the TWG is cross-institutional, and includes external partners (DPs, Private Sectors) to engender detailed technical dialogue on Education. The EPL will feed directly into the TWG discourse through EPL representative. Specifically, Lab shall support TWG to carry out the following functions:

- (a) Monitor the implementation of the Priorities Implementation Action Plan (PIAP) and raise issues for TWGs consideration.
- (b) Support policy review and program policy performance annually before budget approvals.
- (c) Ensure harmony between policies and all education and sports sector strategies.
- (d) Develop policy briefs and position papers on policy and strategic issues in the thematic area for consideration by PWG.
- (e) Review new policy and project concept notes and make recommendations to PWG for clearance.

3.1 EPL Steering committee

- (a) The Platform will be led by the steering committee with representatives of the key stakeholders: Government (MOES- BE and EPAR), Development Partners (2), Thematic Leaders.
- (b) EPL steering Committee shall be chaired by the Commissioner, Education Policy and Research, MoES.
- (c) The Steering committee shall provide technical guidance to the delivery team of the lab.
- (d) The following members are proposed as Members of the Steering Committee.
 - a. Mr. Brighton Barugahare – Commissioner, PAR
 - b. Mr. Michael Alior – Commissioner, Education Planning
 - c. Dr. Sara Ruto – Echidna Giving
 - d. Professor James Habyarimana – Independent/Global Expert
 - e. Jacklyn Makaaru Arinaitwe – Co-Team Lead/EPL (Ex-officio)
 - f. Ms. Diana Sekaggya – Education Economist
 - g. Ministerial Appointee – TBD

3.2 Project team

EPL will have a Project team composed of staff from MoES-EPAR and supported by a lean and effective team from APRI. The team will be responsible for organizing, coordinating and implementing activities of the Lab in accordance with the Lab objectives.

3.3 EPL Implementation Approach

The EPL implementation will be guided by fundamental principles that guide the Education and Sports Sector. The EPL will institute organized systems (structures, strategies, policies and guidelines) that support sustenance of the initiative goals and actions. This section details the Lab approaches, tools, techniques and designs, people support and organizational change and management support needs, capacity building efforts, leadership and governance operations, communication plans as well as measurement of progress and performance towards each output and related results. The implementation will be guided by the two-year work plan as approved by the steering committee.

4.0 PARTNERSHIPS

The program of work under this initiative will be implemented by APRI in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Sports, Department of Policy Analysis and Research. We will pursue partnerships with other agencies of Government, non-state actors, academia, and other key stakeholders in delivering this work. The potential partnerships include the following:

- a) The Uganda National Institute of Teacher Education (UNITE) – an agency of Government of Uganda, whose role is to coordinate and provide all levels of teacher education in the country from initial teacher education to graduate level training. UNITE is among the reforms initiated by the Teacher Policy, 2019, and the Teachers’ Bill, 2024. UNITE is a key partner under this initiative specifically for the introduction of structured pedagogy in teacher training programs for purposes of national scaling. With UNITE, we will Reinvalidate the gender in education policy with well stipulated rights for the girls mainstreamed through initial teacher training.
- b) Convene a community of stakeholders within the foundational learning space and teacher support to galvanize support for improving foundational learning. Among other things, this network of actors will lead on; generating evidence and advocating for increased investment in foundational learning, and specifically for girls; knowledge sharing and exchange through tools, solutions to recurring problems, insights, and best practices; peer and collective learning and skills development; problem solving and innovation; building a shared repository for knowledge, stories, cases, methodologies etc; and fostering relationships based on commitment to advocating for change.

- c) Collaborate with the network of civil society organizations within the Network for Early Childhood Development Actors in Uganda (NECDA), the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and academia to collate, share lessons, learning, and to collaborate on research and advocacy activities. Other specific collaborative partners will be identified during the inception phase.
- d) Partner with gender-focused organizations to address the root causes of gender inequalities e.g. discriminatory social norms, unequal political, socio-economic, legal, and power dynamics which create barriers to girls' education. We will be intentional to understand how intersectionality such gender identity, age, disability and other factors interact and what gender-specific evidence can address policy shifts by investing in thorough gender analysis.
- e) Other institutions of the education sector are responsible for curriculum development and assessment. These are the National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) and the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB). The intent is to ensure that by the end of the initial two years of the initiative, these institutions are aware of the reforms happening and the reforms have been incorporated into their approaches.
- f) Local Governments, especially in the areas where research and initial testing activities will take place. This is to ensure that the lessons from the research or pilot activities are integrated into local government processes for education for learning and scaling to other local governments. Additionally, we will work with duty bearers and other government agencies to create enforcement mechanisms for the illegalized gender practices which create barriers for girls to access school and gender-based violence in schools; and entrench/mainstream practices that break culturally gendered behavior in learning.
- g) Ministry of Finance and Development Partners partnerships are critical to mobilizing resources for financing reforms arising out of the research activities and piloting interventions at scale after the initial years of the initiative.

5.0 SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work under EPL will involve the following components.

5.1 Component 1 – Research, Analysis, and Evidence

This component will not only involve research and evidence generation but also collation and dissemination. In the first year of the Lab, we will work with mainly secondary data/information supplemented by in-depth focused thematic studies to produce digestible materials for use in decision making and driven by peer demand from Government counterparts. All analysis will have gender-focused considerations. The lab will produce an annual 'state of education report' each with themes spanning topics such as gender, resourcing, status of reforms, learning outcomes, proficiency and progression etc.

5.2 Component 2 – Support to Development of Structured Pedagogy Pre-Service Training

This component will support the development of a structured pedagogy and learning framework for pre-primary and primary schools in Uganda. This framework will build upon the existing curriculum and learning framework and adapt it by providing for clear learning objectives, sequenced lessons, explicit instruction, guided practice, and independent practice among students as well as assessment and feedback mechanisms. This will create a supportive and efficient learning environment, promote learner engagement, understanding and achievement of learning outcomes.

The support to preservice training will entail working with Uganda National Institute of Teacher Education (UNITE) to review the existing training curriculum for pre-primary and primary teachers to establish the state of gender-responsive pedagogies and training content in the said curriculum. The component will subsequently support review and realignment of the said curriculum towards uptake, adoption and utilization of gender-responsive pedagogies. This will ensure that all pre-service teacher trainees are equipped with the necessary competences and abilities to utilize gender-responsive pedagogies as they teach children in pre-primary and primary schools across the country.

5.3 Component 3 – Support Technical Synergy, Co-creation, and Learning

The component shall entail reciprocal synergistic interventions, cross-learning, peer collaboration, and co-creation aimed at strengthening and uplifting the profiles of the staff of MoES PEIL, UNITE, Local Governments, like minded stakeholders and APRI to effectively execute the program activities and achieve a higher level of capability, efficiency, and innovation.

This shall include activities such as training, participation in national, regional, and international networking events/conferences, and symposiums, and convening communities of learning.

5.4 Component 4 – Program Oversight and Management

This component shall entail project oversight and management interventions, as well as lab monitoring and evaluation activities.

6.0 KEY RESULTS FRAMEWORK

Hierarchy of Objectives	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
1.0 Long-term Goal	To improve access to opportunities for early and foundational learning through enhanced gender equity, evidence generation and utilization, policy coordination, and contribute to improved learning outcomes at the early and foundational years	1. All children attain school readiness and are proficient in FLN by primary three. 2. The education system attains gender equity with no child left behind.		
A significant increase in the percentage of primary school-aged children achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) proficiency in all regions across the country.	1. Improved school readiness: A measurable increase in the number of children at six years entering primary school who exhibit school readiness. 2. Reduced learning poverty: A measurable reduction in the learning poverty levels in the proportion of primary three pupils meeting minimum reading comprehension and basic arithmetic standards. 3. National foundational learning proficiency rate: Increase in the percentage of children reaching age-appropriate proficiency levels in literacy and numeracy	1. 60% of all children at primary one exhibit school readiness by 2030. 2. 20% reduction in learning poverty by 2030. 3. 15% increase in proficiency rates in five years by 2030.	1. Spot regional/cross-sectional assessments of a representative sample of children at primary one. 2. National-level FLN Assessments (e.g., Early Grade Reading/Math Assessments - EGRA/EGMA), longitudinal student tracking data. Collaborate with UWEZO Uganda.	Assumption: Macro-economic stability allows for consistent budgetary allocation to FLN budgets. Risk: High teacher absence or lack of compliance with the Structured Pedagogy models compromises results.

Hierarchy of Objectives	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
2.0 Intermediate Outcomes				
2.1: Government adopts and effectively budgets for the scale-up of evidence-based structured pedagogy models informed by EP Lab research.	1. National educational strategies/program implementation plans (PIAPs) and teacher professional development frameworks have incorporated Lab-validated structured pedagogy models 2. Increase in the percentage of the education budget allocated to teacher training and materials aligned with the Structured Pedagogy approach.	1. Approved model for structured pedagogy for teacher training and continuous professional development by 2027. 2. Increased budgetary allocations to education, specifically teacher training and professional development.	Circulars and policy documents, official budget reports, and policy briefs.	Assumption: Senior political leadership remains committed to results-based budgeting in the education sector.
2.2: The education system's capacity to design, implement, and monitor high-fidelity structured pedagogy programs is strengthened.	1. Improved technical capacity of the MoES staff to design and implement policies based on evidence and cross-contextual experiences. 2. Increase in the numbers of teachers implementing the structured pedagogy models across the country.	1. All MoES EPL and APRI staff receive relevant training by end of 2027. 2. 60% of teachers implementing structured pedagogy approved models with fidelity by 2030 in pilot districts.	Staff training reports, benchmarking and learning exchange reports Independent classroom observation data, teacher training participant evaluations and certification records.	Risk: Lack of sufficient master trainers/coaches to cascade the high-fidelity training model required by structured pedagogy.

Hierarchy of Objectives	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
	3. Government teacher training institutions utilize Lab-developed training modules for structured pedagogy.	3. All UNITE campuses have institutionalized structured pedagogy models by 2030.		
2.3: Strengthened partnerships and a growing ecosystem of foundational learning.	1. Initiate and grow partnerships with like-minded institutions across government, non-state, academia, and financing institutions to support foundational learning implementation. 2. Collaborate with gender-focused organizations to ensure the approaches to foundational learning in Uganda are gender intentional. 3. Strengthen APRI's capacity to support the MoES delivery on the vision of the EPL.		Partnership and collaboration agreements. Extra APRI staff hired and trained, embedded in MoES department.	Risk: Organizations and agencies operating in siloes which encumber achievement of common vision.
3.0 Outputs (Direct Results of Lab Activities)				

Hierarchy of Objectives	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
Output 3.1: Evidence generation and collation	1. Collate international evidence on what works in structured pedagogy to improve foundational learning, with specific attention to models, delivery, and factors for success. 2. Assess teacher training status and requirements for foundational learning in Uganda. 3. Cost effectiveness studies, on quantifying costs per learner for structured pedagogy to determine how to scale interventions within fixed budgets. 4. Fidelity and contextualization study showing how different components of structured pedagogy affect implementation fidelity across diverse contexts e.g. rural/urban and different groups.	1. At least 3 short studies/reports per year. 2. One thematic Issue Note per quarter for the quarterly Education Policy Newsletter. 3. State of the Education Report biennially.	Lab working papers series, Study/research reports, evaluation reports, benchmarking reports, policy notes,	Risk: Difficulty in standardizing the delivery of the structured pedagogy across diverse geographies and linguistic contexts for research purposes.

Hierarchy of Objectives	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
	5. Thematic studies on effective pedagogical approaches for teacher improvement, assessment methods and foundational learning benchmarking on other countries. 6. Mapping and convening of active stakeholders in the foundational learning ecosystem and consensus building. 7. Short pilot studies on integrating structured pedagogy in the curriculum for foundational learning.			
Output 3.2: Evidence synthesis, dissemination, policy outreach and tools	1. Translated and targeted guides, tools, and technical assistance packages created to inform adaptation of structured pedagogy for their local context. 2. Key research findings are presented to Ministerial-level officials and Technical Working Groups.	1. Technical working sessions convened 2. At least two presentations to Ministerial working groups. 3. At least one high level policy/thematic dialogue annually, in	List of published adaptation guides/toolkits (e.g., fidelity checklists, lesson plan templates), minutes and presentation slides from high-level policy meetings.	Assumption: Ministries are open to adapting and customizing external evidence rather than relying solely on internally generated programs.

Hierarchy of Objectives	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
	3. High level policy and technical dialogues convened.	addition to the state of Education report.		
Output 3.3: Synergy, Co-creation, Learning and Collaboration	1. Data/evidence utilization workshops held for government staff, APRI, and CSOs on using FLN data to inform structured pedagogy implementation adjustments. 2. Active research/policy partnerships with like-minded organizations, local academic institutions and government research bodies (local and international). 3. Benchmarking, networking, and learning exchanges with countries and organizations who have successfully embedded policy labs in their government systems. 4. Convene community of	1. At least two workshops a year (currently exploring one with DataDrive2030). 2. At least two partnerships formalized. 3. At least two visits/exchanges per year.	Workshop attendance lists, learning exchange reports, participant feedback surveys, signed agreements for collaborative research projects.	

Hierarchy of Objectives	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Targets	Means of Verification	Assumptions & Risks
	actors in the foundational learning space to generate consensus and common vision.			

7.0 WORK PLAN

Timeframe	Quarter	Output Focus	Key Activities (Corresponding to Results Framework Outputs)
Year 1: Inception, Foundation & Design			
Months 1-3	Q1: Inception Activities	MoES and APRI Administrative Arrangements	1. Agree on scope of work and work plans 2. Sign necessary agreements 3. Constitute Steering Group 4. Hire technical staff 5. Launch EPL activities
Months 4-6	Q2: Setup & Foundational Evidence	3.1 Evidence Generation, 3.3 Synergy & Collaboration	1. Collate and synthesize international evidence on structured pedagogy models, delivery, and success factors. 2. Convene initial community of actors in the foundational learning space to generate consensus and common vision. 3. Initiate mapping and convening of active stakeholders. 4. Formalize first 2-3 partnerships (e.g., with local academic institutions, data organizations).
Months 4-6	Q2: Needs Assessment & Scoping	3.1 Evidence Generation, 3.2 Policy Outreach, 3.3 Synergy & Collaboration	1. Complete assessment of teacher training status and requirements for FLN in Uganda (report ready). 2. Conduct scoping and establish methodology for cost-effectiveness studies (cost per learner) for structured pedagogy. 3. Hold first Data/evidence utilization workshop for government staff, APRI, and CSOs. 4. Begin developing initial draft guides/tools for local context adaptation.

Timeframe	Quarter	Output Focus	Key Activities (Corresponding to Results Framework Outputs)
Months 7-9	Q3: Pilot Launch & Fidelity Design	3.1 Evidence Generation, 3.2 Policy Outreach	1. Launch short pilot study on integrating structured pedagogy in the curriculum for foundational learning. 2. Conduct data collection for the fidelity and contextualization study (rural/urban and different groups). 3. Initiate thematic studies (e.g., assessment methods, effective pedagogical approaches). 4. First presentation to Ministerial working groups (presenting Q2 findings, e.g., teacher training gaps).
Months 10-12	Q4: Translation & System Learning	3.2 Policy Outreach, 3.3 Synergy & Collaboration	1. Finalize and disseminate Cost-Effectiveness Study Report. 2. Complete and disseminate first set of translated guides/toolkits (e.g., fidelity checklists). 3. Conduct first two benchmarking/learning exchanges with countries/organizations that have successful policy labs. 4. Host first high-level policy/thematic dialogue.
Year 2: Integration & Scale-Up			
Months 13-15	Q5: Fidelity Analysis & Policy Briefing	3.1 Evidence Generation, 3.2 Policy Outreach, 3.3 Synergy & Collaboration	1. Finalize and disseminate Fidelity and Contextualization Study Report. 2. Second presentation to Ministerial working groups (focused on fidelity findings and necessary policy adjustments). 3. Hold second Data/evidence utilization workshop (focused on implementing fidelity adjustments). 4. Monitor and conduct interim assessment of the short pilot study.
Months 16-18	Q6: Technical Assistance & Benchmarking	3.2 Policy Outreach, 3.3 Synergy & Collaboration	1. Develop final technical assistance packages and training modules based on all research. 2. Conduct second two benchmarking/learning exchanges (focused on system-wide scale-up and institutionalization of policy labs). 3. Host second high-level policy/thematic dialogue (focusing on achieving fidelity at scale). 4. Finalize all remaining thematic studies.

Timeframe	Quarter	Output Focus	Key Activities (Corresponding to Results Framework Outputs)
Months 19-21	Q7: Biennial Report Drafting & Policy Action	3.1 Evidence Generation, 3.2 Policy Outreach	1. Conclude and analyze results from the short pilot study. 2. Draft and finalize the State of the Education Report (Biennially) based on all generated evidence. 3. Third presentation to Ministerial working groups (presenting findings of the State of the Education Report). 4. Formalize remaining necessary partnerships to support long-term goals.
Months 22-24	Q8: Consolidation, Dissemination, & Planning	3.2 Policy Outreach, 3.3 Synergy & Collaboration	1. Host final high-level policy dialogue (launching the State of the Education Report and formalizing policy recommendations). 2. Finalize and widely disseminate all translated guides and toolkits. 3. Final review of learning exchange findings to ensure continuous improvement mechanisms are in place. 4. Internal Review: Assess progress toward all Intermediate Outcome (2.0) indicators and design the research agenda for Year 3 (focused on scaling up the approved Structured Pedagogy model).