

# Learning - Provocation Paper

## Introduction

Contemporary discussions in academic, organisational, and business scenarios turn around the crucial relevance of learning to trigger, foster, and sustain changes at individual, community, and system levels. Therefore, transiting from the traditional and linear paradigm of knowledge to more iterative alternatives to create, use, reflect, assess, and reflect on it represents structural changes in our way as a network to approach and build learning globally from very localised iterations that inform our collective action and impact. Nevertheless, reality tends to overcome the fiction or theory. In other words, the shocking experiences for learners and education systems uncovered and exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic have evidenced the urgent need for acting in positioning learning at first at all levels, as results have been getting worse for children around the world, with 64% of 10-year-olds now unable to read a sentence for meaning following the pandemic. Kids are in school, but not learning; globally, we're generating knowledge, but it's not resulting in better actions being taken. We're not learning.

Consequently, as a network, our work is all about learning for students, teachers, organizations, and systems. If we already had all of the answers, all young people would be thriving. It means that we are not learning fast or effectively enough. Therefore, we must question ourselves, what is the nature of the learning that really drives change? what has the learning's role been in driving system change and community development within and beyond the network? Why a learning-oriented approach or a culture of learning should be at the centre of our collective action within the network? How could the generation of evidence underpin the community impact and system change? As a network, are we walking through the right way to tackle the learning crisis?

## Story

In 2016, Anurag Kundu, a policymaker in the Delhi Commission for the Rights of Children, found that only 10% of Delhi parents were attending parent-teacher meetings. Teachers frequently said that this was because parents were not interested in their children's learning process, or were busy working too hard due to their informal occupation as daily wagers. But Kundu, a Teach For India alumni with firsthand knowledge of the classroom wasn't so sure. He set out to investigate why don't parents and caregivers really weren't showing up at school. Anurag despatched a team of researchers to schools to speak to students and parents, engaging with 400 children - and their parents - across 20 schools in 3 wards. At the end, they organized a conference to share findings with other students, teachers, and parents.

The most significant insights from the research was that most parents were actually not showing up at school because they were not being offered tea or being made to feel welcome in the space by teachers that they felt didn't respect them. Moreover, the students weren't telling their parents about the meetings, because they were only ever told all of the things they were doing badly. So Kundu organized for the Delhi Government to sanction the spending of 7 rupees (\$0.1) per parent so they could be served a tea at each meeting to facilitate teacher engagement with parents and caregivers. They also created a new framework where parents and teachers had to praise the kid first. As a result, attendance rates are up to 70% at parent-teacher meetings within 3 months. This ethnographic approach to learning gave the Delhi Government an insight into the reality of the system that the high level data didn't allow. They now use this approach to get live feedback on a monthly basis, from researchers embedded in schools, and a monthly survey of 700 families.

## Perspectives

<b>Tomás Recart, Enseña Chile</b>	<a href="#">21:10 – 22:16</a>	“We need to spread our efforts to have systems that learn”
<b>Rebecca Crook, Metis Collective</b>	<a href="#">23:30 – 24:45</a>	“If we want that kids to experience learning and reimagine an education that is relevant, engaging, purposeful, and joyful; we also need that the facilitators experience that”
<b>Rebecca Crook, Metis Collective</b>	<a href="#">42:51- 44:46</a>	“The culture of learning is shaping and helping evolves the way how we do things at all levels”
<b>Raquel Jardim, Teach for All -SLAC.</b>	<a href="#">1:09:27 – 1:10:52</a>	“We need to give attention to listening and create a space for vulnerability and understanding themselves. There is so much that people can learn by just sharing and listening [...] If you are in education, you need to be open to understand how other people are learning, and unfortunately teachers are not always open to listen. It means that change needs to come from teachers”
<b>Edikan Mbang, Teach for Nigeria</b>	<a href="#">1:12:00 – 1:13:37</a>	“Learning happens at all organizational levels; thus, it is needed to empower every person to be able to lead learning, generate evidence and use evidence to learn and improve”

“The way how we are measuring competencies, skill sets, and teacher progress are about continuing that cycle of oppression because what we know is some of those benchmarks were created with different interests in mind, they were not created for everyone right”. [Nedgine Paul Deroly](#), CEO Anseye Pou Ayti

“Even when you are interacting with the data you are playing with your pre-conceived notions, rather than really trying to understand it. Sitting with the people, helping them to understand how to interact, what actions to take”. Jawad Asghar, Fab Inc.

“We know that students learn when teachers learn, and teachers learn when they are in an environment/system that can learn”. Tomás Recart, Teach for Chile.

“Learning is what ignites our passion, and it is not just student learning, we must start there, but we need to spread our efforts to have systems that learn”. Tomás Recart, Enseña Chile.

“Learning is necessarily vulnerable and relational and involves trust. How do I design with and not just for? It is an uncomfortable, delightful, and disorienting journey into our adult learners go through to be able to unlearn”. Rebecca Crook, Metis Collective (Kenya).

“If we are working collectively and if we are really working with our communities we cannot strategically plan and sequence. The universe for impact and change is an ongoing process of learning and discovering and finding out what works for the context or the community or the system. We have

to know the direction of where we are going, but also need to have the ability to be agile and shift according to what emerges”. [Soon Seng Chan](#), CEO, Teach for Malaysia

“Kids were doing critical thinking in our communities for generations, but it was not embedded in the ways in which the curriculum was developed. And one of the ways that we realised we can kind of breakdown that wall and start to use measurements that are culture and community focused. One example is the fact that as young as 5-6 years old, kids have leadership responsibilities in the community.

When you come into the classroom they are seen as too young right to take on leadership roles; so, we are saying actually we can reverse that, and we can flip the script and start to learn from the ways in which kids are leaders from very early and have responsibilities quite young, and bring that into the context of the community”. [Nedgine Paul Deroly](#), CEO Anseye Pou Ayti

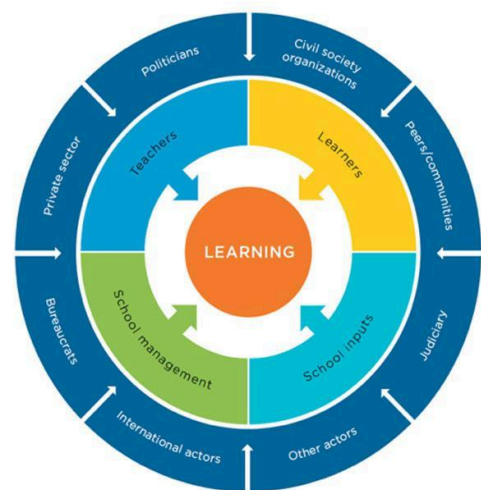
“Reflecting together on evidence is critical, but we need to question and reflect on if we are collecting the right evidence and defining the indicators correctively. Furthermore, we should reflect on what it does mean for each context because there are too many variations in these contexts, and we need to keep open the conversation to really understand what that means for each one, and then to adjust tools iteratively to measure our progress”. Sonali Hedditch, UN Women, SCE

“I know there is a huge set of learnings and a lot that I could unpack as relates to my monitoring and evaluation processes, but one of the first steps I would say across any context is questioning where the word, the data and the measurements and the standards and guidelines came from and if they are truly at the service of all kids”. [Nedgine Paul Deroly](#), CEO Anseye Pou Ayti

## Evidence

**Putting learning at the centre. All for learning, learning for all.** Over the years, we have evidenced the need to position learning as the central priority for education systems worldwide to tackle the learning crisis and remediate learning losses due to unexpected shocks such as COVID-19. The SDG-4 “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” coherently pointed out the global discussion around the urgent need for investing in securing quality of learning for all. However, what might seem as a clear pathway to improve learning outcomes globally still demand urgent actions, as has been emphasised at the Transforming Education Summit, around 770 million people still lacked basic literacy skills in 2020.

In that sense, [World Development 2018’s report “Learning to realise education’s promise”](#) has urged that learning outcomes will not change without the serious commitment of education systems to use learning as a guide and metric. It implies a commitment of all for learning, and therefore to learning for all, based on three complementary but interdependent strategies: I. Assessing learning to make it a serious goal; II. Act on evidence to make schools work for all learners; and III. Align actors to make the whole system work for learning<sup>1</sup>. As a network, we need to work collectively for creating the conditions to mobilise, align and commit all the actors in the system to act around learning.



<sup>1</sup> World Bank. (2018). *World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise*. Washington, DC: World Bank. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-1096-1>

Equally important, RISE’s working paper highlights that “some education systems were created that were both closed and coherent only around schooling (at best), not around learning, and in these systems low performance on all other dimensions besides the expansion of schooling can emerge and persist despite efforts to improve learning<sup>2</sup>”. Consequently, it claims that a possible to explore is forward “undertaking transitions from systems coherent exclusively for enrolment to education systems coherent for learning”.

**Learning orientation across individuals, organizations and systems.** Who should be at the first of our learning orientation culture? In the attempt to embrace a [learning-centred ecosystem](#), some authors believe and envision it as the alternative to put

individual child at the centre, and they see it as the mobilisers of a community or locality to meet child’s individual requirements, goals and interests, and critical to radical personalisation of learning. On the other hand, other scholars go farther and see learning ecosystems as an opportunity to connect better high value specific skills with local educational provision<sup>3</sup>. In that sense, intentional design, catalysing, and programming are required to bring about these derisible forms of ecosystems. However, the Knowledge Work’s forecast claims that if we do not design intentionally for vibrant learning ecosystems, we risk creating a fractured landscape in which only learners who come from families that can afford, have the time and resources to customise or supplement their learning journeys have access to learning that adapts to and meets their needs<sup>4</sup>.



Therefore, working collectively to address the ten levers of transformation highlighted in the graph above can avert that negative scenario and create rigorous and equitable learning ecosystem that is better distributed and flexible than current’s education systems. (See [Innovating Toward a Vibrant Learning Ecosystem](#))

**Evidence based actions, impact and transformation.** The Knowledge Work’s forecast emphasises that developing a learner-focused data infrastructure allows to follow each individual across many kinds of learning experiences throughout their lifetime. Likewise, a data-driven approach makes it easy for learners to customise their learning journeys, enabling them to move across boundaries and focusing on what they need and want to learn versus what providers offer it. As a result, this approach helps stakeholders build the capacity to understand and use learning-related data effectively. In other words, it can efficiently support learning agents in using data about the person, community, and system to guide choices and inform a more localised instruction.

<sup>2</sup> [Pritchett, L. \(2015\)](#). Creating Education Systems Coherent for Learning Outcomes: Making the Transition from Schooling to Learning

<sup>3</sup> Local Learning Ecosystems: Emerging Models

<sup>4</sup> [Prince, K. \(2014\)](#). Innovating Toward a Vibrant Learning Ecosystem: Ten Pathways for transforming learning

## Examples

- Enseña Chile has created [The Red CQA](#): Colegios que Aprenden (*The CQA network: schools that learn*). This network seeks to generate spaces where the leaders come to exchange experiences, learn the purpose to connect and mobilize. It has been driven by the [Enseña Chile learning approach](#).
- [UN Women's Second Chance Education and Vocational Learning Program](#) has managed to put learning at the centre, facilitating it for partners that exchange lessons and information on what they are doing, enhancing the knowledge, and understanding of the variations of learning collectively at the organization and partner level.
- [The Accelerated Education Working Group](#) is an interagency group that has adopted an evidence-based approach to inform strategic planning, project design, project implementation, monitoring and evaluation and in-service training efforts of Accelerated Education (AE). It intends to organize and disseminate existing knowledge and data, generate new evidence, and produce conclusions and recommendations through academic research, program evaluations, and multi-method tests of the assumptions and principles that have been developed to guide AE programming.
- [TEGA app from Girl Effect that allows girls to submit community data with smart phones](#). This unique approach unlocks the open and honest conversations that might otherwise be lost or not included in traditional research.
- [Black Thrive work in Lambeth](#) training community members in monitoring, learning, and evaluation (MEL).
- In [Teach for Nigeria](#), centring learning as a priority and mobilizing collective action have created a mindset shift. They have seen tremendous changes from the top-down to the students due to the consistent program iteration and raising awareness of the foundation of learnings and reflections at all levels.
- [Enseña Peru Ayni and Efecto](#) Ancash shared learning approaches. The results show that through the years the impact of Enseña Perú has become more effective. The results also suggest the presence of a positive spillover effect of the PDL: The presence of a *Professional Enseña Perú* (PEP or PDL participant) contributes to raising the results across grade levels
- [Firelight Foundation](#) has adopted learning from assessment and documentation to inform action, sharing data back with civil society organisations and grantee-partners so they can improve their programs and disseminating these lessons to the wider philanthropic and civil society communities in ways they can actively use, adapt, or replicate.

## Insights

**Change happens at the speed of learning.** More importantly, change happens at the speed at which everyone in the system is able to learn. System leaders often make the mistake of thinking that because a policy has been passed into law, that change will automatically happen. But in education, real change means changing the beliefs, habits and abilities of thousands of teachers, students, parents and school leaders. And that type of change can only happen at the speed at which those people can learn.

**Great learning means having good data, and good systems.** It specially requires effective monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) in order to understand impact, inform iterative design, demonstrate what works (and why), and to ensure that feedback loops are part of the process of change.

**As leaders, it is important that we have a learning mindset.** It significantly facilitates and demonstrates the value proposition of new approaches to learning that can enable us to foster a culture of learning based on the search for permanent improvements. As a result, we could be able to expand our understanding of the whole system of learning, making decisions on the need to redesign and transforming it.

**In systems, you need data systems, but above all a culture and processes of learning.** On the one hand, data systems might lead us to gather relevant information to understand the impact and evolution of our actions at all levels. However, they cannot ensure by themselves that learning is being adopted and generating deep transformations across the organisation and beyond it. On the other hand, incorporating data systems into a structured learning processes guided by a learning culture could enables us to develop new learning agent roles that build and drive effectively learning opportunities and support the adoption of a culture of learning at all levels, starting from each individual.

**At a system level, the culture and systems of learning should be inclusive and distributed.** It means that it is needed to foster new learning cultures that support learners as whole people and make space for individual interests through developing new approaches to personalised learning in multiple contexts. It might require extending our actions beyond formal learning environments to include or facilitate connections with community-based or informal learning experiences.

**Good learning takes into account local evidence and not just a data dashboard.** Therefore, we must foster the development of mechanisms for understanding better learners' experiences and schools' performance. It might lead us to deepen the system's understanding of what learning approaches and supports best help students and educational communities in particular circumstances from adapting, experiencing and assessing them.

## Questions

Although our network shares a purpose around which to iterate and learn, also does have a global organization with a mandate, resources, and infrastructure to facilitate learning as well as has built a culture and approach to learning that has encouraged innovation and uptake of promising ideas and approaches, we still have several questions on:

- What are we lacking as a network to build up and foster learning-oriented framework that guides systemic change?
- To what degree organizations within the network are collectively working towards positioning learning at the core of their community and system change efforts?
- What should the role of the network be in tackling the roots of learning crisis/poverty and educational inequalities at very local levels?
- How should an ecosystem that enhance learning look like for the network to trigger and sustain community impact and system change?
- What are the enablers and barriers faced by attempt to put learning at the core of our collective action?
- How are we using the evidence to foster learning and transformation at local, national, and global levels?

## Further readings and resources

- [Community Impact Conversation 6 - Learning: full call recording](#)
- [Fostering Global Network Learning for System Change](#)
- [World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise](#)
- [Community Impact Conversation - Video note-taking Learning](#)
- A [short case study on the work of Enseña Chile](#), including a section on Colegios Que Aprenden
- A community impact [case study on the work of Teach For Nigeria](#) in Ogun State
- [Collective intelligence from the book Game Changing](#), by Francois Taddei at LPI
- [Problem-driven iterative adaptation \(Lant Pritchett et al.\)](#) (learning at a system level)