Blended Learning Measurement Agenda
A Path Forward for the Ecosystem

THE CHALLENGE

Authored by TLA Partner Saro Mohammed
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The Challenge
OVERVIEW

Although we know a lot about effectively personalizing instruction for students, **the existing evidence base for blended learning is young**.

Currently, there are many success stories being added to the conversation, with varying levels of evidence, all being described as "evidence of success."

As noted above, the **implications** of these success stories for practice **vary** with their **study designs** and the **level of evidence** they report.

Added to this, implementation is growing rapidly, and, out of necessity, decisions are being made on the ground regardless of the existence of relevant evidence.

Because of the rapidly innovative nature of blended learning, researchers need to take a particularly applied view of generating evidence, and implementers need to be particularly proactive about asking the questions they need answered in order to do their jobs.

Both groups also need to ensure that their expectations for evidence match the maturity of implementation and the length of time required to find some answers.

The Challenge
DISCONNECTED CYCLES

There are two disconnected cycles: evidence and implementation

EVIDENCE CYCLE

- Uncovering, documenting, interpreting findings
- Well-known only to researchers
- Evidence generated and disseminated only among researchers

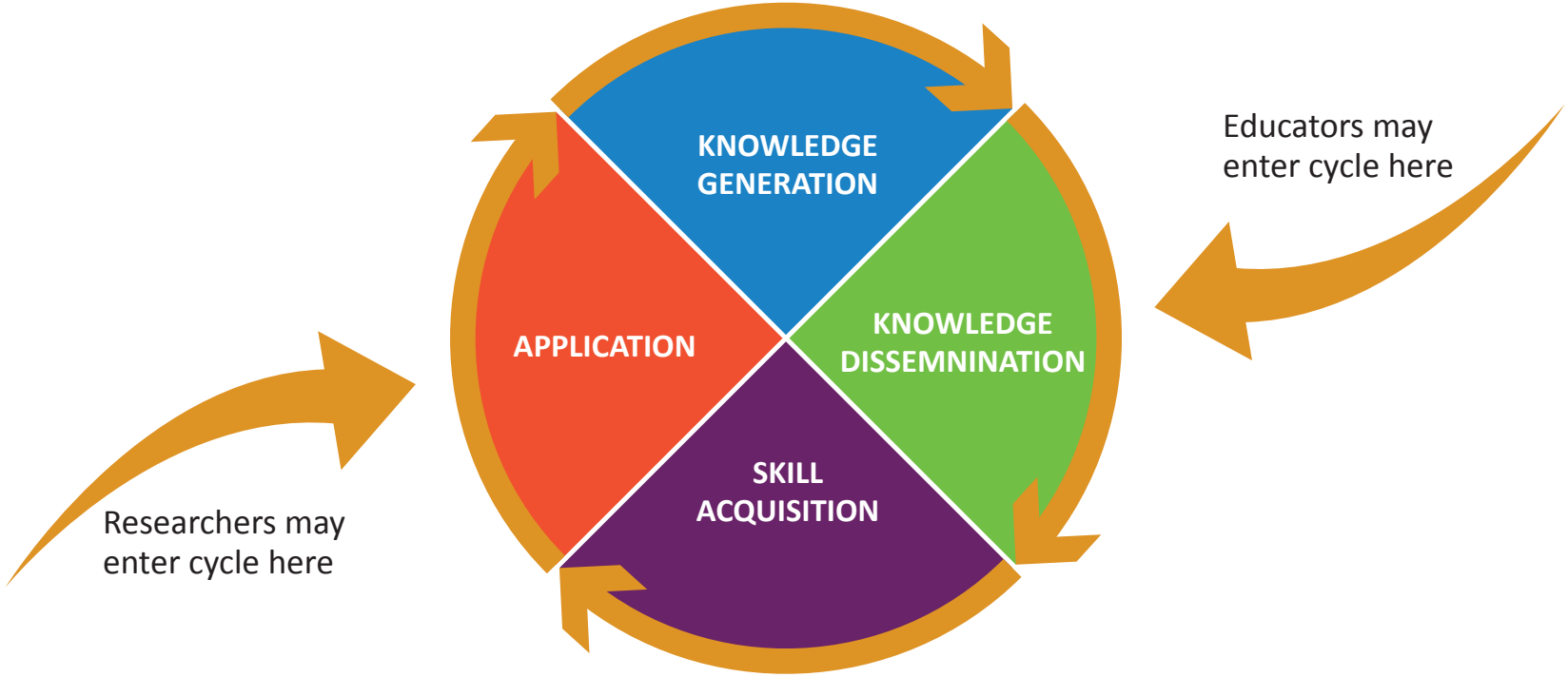
IMPLEMENTATION CYCLE

- Decision makers exhorted to use evidence, but not supported in doing so
- No access to relevant findings, or implications of findings not shared if there is access
- Decisions are made and implemented based on different levels of evidence

The Challenge
A UNIFIED CYCLE

Both cycles depend on each other in order to know and do what is best for all students.

We are not asking implementers and decision makers to slow implementation. Rather, we are asking for a few concrete actions from stakeholder groups so that evidence can be used where available, and more can be generated where needed.



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The Challenge
TRANSPARENCY

To connect the evidence and implementation cycles, we need to:

1. **Make the evidence cycle more transparent: share more about ongoing work at earlier stages**

   - Knowing about the hypotheses currently being tested, and the plans, purposes, and goals of measurement projects at various stages will enable us all to accurately and quickly determine whether to make decisions based on the evidence in its current state or wait for new evidence that is on its way.
   - In other fields of study, (e.g., early reading development) sharing early-stage research is done at conferences, communities of practice, and even professional development sessions.

2. Disseminate existing and new evidence broadly: share findings and their implications accurately and make them relevant to practice
3. Study more classrooms: the evidence cycle cannot operate without the participation of implementers, because the data exists within the implementation cycle

The Challenge
DISSEMINATION

To connect the evidence and implementation cycles, we need to:

1. Make the evidence cycle more transparent: share more about ongoing work at earlier stages
2. **Disseminate existing and new evidence broadly: share findings and their implications faithfully and make them relevant to practice**

   - All stakeholders benefit when evidence, both positive and negative, is shared accurately across different audiences.
   - It is no longer enough to rely on academic publications and conferences as the sole venue for disseminating (only positive, statistically significant) findings.
   - Stakeholders in both the evidence and the implementation cycles need to improve communication and develop a shared language so that they can share understanding of which practices are supported by evidence.

3. Study more classrooms: the evidence cycle cannot operate without the participation of implementers, because the data exists within the implementation cycle

The Challenge
PARTICIPATION

To connect the evidence and implementation cycles, we need to:

1. Make the evidence cycle more transparent: share more about ongoing work at earlier stages
2. Disseminate existing and new evidence broadly: share findings and their implications faithfully and make them relevant to practice
3. **Study more classrooms: the evidence cycle cannot operate without the participation of implementers, because the data exist within the implementation cycle**

- Schools and classrooms hold all of the answers to if, when, and how blended learning is effective.
- Schools and classrooms also hold all of the new questions that researchers should be trying to answer.
- If the two cycles are connected, we can create spaces for conducting studies and sharing findings openly without fear of being labeled "failures."

The Challenge
CALL TO RESEARCHERS

Both the evidence and implementation cycles depend on each other in order to know and do what is best for all students. Over the next several slides, this measurement agenda challenges **Researchers** (on behalf of developers/districts, if applicable) to:

- be **specific** about what they are studying (what's the "intervention?"), and be **explicit** about how the "it" is different from comparison classrooms
- **share findings broadly**, in academic and non-academic settings
- be specific about what **claims and implications** the findings support, using existing frameworks and standards such as those outlined by the Institute of Education Sciences and National Science Foundation, American Educational Research Association, Office of Innovation and Improvement[1], and ESSA
- use designs that support rigorous claims whenever possible
- focus on the **practices and contexts** (e.g., the teacher/school/student characteristics in play) of blended learning implementation, not just on blended learning as an intervention
    > measure these explicitly, and report these details so that others have all the information they need to generalize findings appropriately, in the absence of a truly unbiased randomized design, which can be generalized broadly
- develop measures of new/not well-measured constructs

[1] Final Priorities, Requirements, Definitions, and Selection Criteria—Investing in Innovation Fund, p. 18703§5: https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-03-27/pdf/2013-07016.pdf

The Challenge
CALL TO DECISION MAKERS

Both the evidence and implementation cycles depend on each other in order to know and do what is best for all students. Over the next several pages, this measurement agenda challenges **Decision Makers** (policymakers, administrators, and funders) to:

- understand **what we know**, and what we **still need to know** about effectiveness
- **incorporate** this knowledge **into decision-makin**g
- **ask questions** that arise from decisions they have to make
- allow the generation of new knowledge that tells us what we still need to know
- understand enough about how measures influence evidence, to be able to advocate for use of reliable and valid measures

CALL TO IMPLEMENTERS

Both the evidence and implementation cycles depend on each other in order to know and do what is best for all students. Over the next several pages, this measurement agenda challenges **Implementers** (educators and others involved in implementing) to:

- understand **what we know**, and what we **still need to know** about effectiveness
- **incorporate** this knowledge **into implementation/instructional decisions**
- **ask questions** that arise from practice
- (ideally) generate their own localized evidence, incorporating this evidence into their practice
- **share with others** who may be in similar contexts
- find and use valid and reliable measures when conducting their own localized measurement

Blended Learning Measurement Agenda

WHERE DO I GO NEXT?

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Current Conditions of the blended learning measurement ecosystem

THE CHALLENGE

Understand the specific challenges we face when measuring blended learning

PART 1: MEASUREMENT LEARNING AGENDA

Outline of the knowledge and skills that enable us to generate evidence for decision-making and implementation

PART 2: MEASUREMENT DISSEMINATION GOALS

Outline of the knowledge and skills that enable the flow of data back and forth between research and practice

Part 3: MEASUREMENT COMPETENCY STANDARDS

Outline of the knowledge and skills that enable the implementation of evidence-based blended learning practices

Part 4: MEASUREMENT IMPLEMENTATION OBJECTIVES

Outline of the actions that enable the responsive implementation of evidence-based blended learning practices in constantly changing contexts

Return to the Blended Learning Measurement Agenda landing page.

Blended Learning Measurement Agenda
A Path Forward for the Ecosystem

THE CHALLENGE

Authored by TLA Partner Saro Mohammed, May 2016.

The Learning Accelerator is a catalyst for transforming American K-12 education through blended learning on a national scale. Part architect and investor: we cultivate solutions to overcome the barriers to blended learning and work directly with districts and states to develop implementation strategies that can be scaled and shared with school districts nationwide.

For more information, please visit www.learningaccelerator.org

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