

AN “EDUCATION KNOWLEDGE BRIDGE” IS URGENTLY NEEDED TO HELP FIX THE GLOBAL LEARNING CRISIS, WHITE PAPER SAYS

- In education, the greatest obstacle to progress is not the lack of research but the failure to use existing research.
- This knowledge gap is at the root of the failure to improve children’s learning worldwide, with the greatest impact on vulnerable and marginalised children – especially girls, minorities, those in poverty, displaced children, and children with learning differences and special needs.
- With 240 billion days of school lost since 2020, the pandemic has accelerated the learning crisis and jeopardised progress.
- There is an urgent need to address the learning crisis by joining forces across the communities of knowledge, policy and practice.

Zurich, 21 September, 2021 – Education.org releases today “Calling for an Education Knowledge Bridge”, a White Paper identifying the urgent challenges faced by the education sector to address the global learning crisis.

This White Paper is the result of a thorough 12-month analysis of 45 organisations and 80 interviews with education sector leaders including academics, knowledge actors, NGOs, international organisations leaders and practitioners, with input from current and former ministers of education (Haiti, Kenya, Republic of South Sudan, Sierra Leone, etc.) as well as education leaders at OECD, GPE, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, the World Bank, Education Endowment Foundation, Brookings, J-PAL, Teach for All, etc.

It finds that the greatest obstacle to progress isn’t the lack of research but the failure to use existing research. It also finds that a critical part of the response to the learning crisis can be met by urgently addressing the education sector knowing-doing gap. While vast sums of data do already exist, these resources **are not easily accessed or used by policymakers and practitioners**, preventing the development of evidence-based policies that could improve children’s learning globally.

With [nearly 260 million children out of school before COVID-19 struck](#) and [over 240 billion additional school days lost since January 2020 because of lockdowns](#), understanding and addressing the root causes of the global learning crisis has never been this critical. Across the world [almost 620 million children](#) – roughly six in ten – are not achieving the minimum proficiency standards for reading and maths. The gap is widest for vulnerable and marginalised children – especially girls, minorities, those in poverty or displaced by crisis, and children with learning differences and special needs.

As heads of states are discussing the world’s most pressing issues and COVID-19 recovery policies at UNGA, Education.org urges that the devastating impact of failing to meet children’s most basic education needs should not be ignored.

Dr Randa Grob-Zakhary, Education.org’s CEO said: *“Our education systems are failing millions of children every year, but the world does not have to be like this. Collectively, we have the opportunity to create an Education Knowledge Bridge in the next 10 years and bring millions of students into school and learning. With the support of the many willing voices who contributed to this White Paper, we hope to galvanise education leaders to engage in collective action to leapfrog progress towards building stronger, more equitable and inclusive evidence-based education systems.”*

Suzanne Grant Lewis, Chair of Education Science and Policy of Education.org, added: *“We need to move beyond the situation today where too much evidence is not visible or understandable, not relevant, not actionable, siloed, driven by donor agendas or interventions, and often duplicative”.*

With 22,000 systematic reviews produced annually, the health sector produces 26 times more synthesis work than the education sector, according to Education.org. A systematic sector-wide synthesis process is urgently needed in the education sector so that decision-makers are provided with guidance and means to implement effective evidence-based education policies.

While the building blocks of an Education Knowledge Bridge do already exist, urgent collective action is needed to fast-track progress and close the knowing-doing gap in the next ten years. This White Paper finds that this can be achieved through:

- promoting generation of **user-oriented research** focusing on evidence gaps in highest areas of need;
- building capacity for **sector-wide synthesis** comparable to what already exists in the health sector and has turbocharged progress;
- creating **actionable guidance** from the synthesis for policymakers to seize;
- **implementing change** by helping policymakers turn guidance into policies and practices;
- building a **culture of evidence use** in education.

Education.org is starting this ten-year mission now and will focused its immediate efforts on:

- making sure the best available evidence around **accelerated and catch-up learning** guides the development of post-pandemic learning recovery policies and practices;
- surfacing a broader range of evidence, including from non-traditional sources, to improve **access and learning outcomes for the 260 million out of school children**, and those now further displaced due to COVID-19, **with a first project in Kenya**
- making sure the most relevant **advances in neuroscience, human development and learning sciences** are effectively serving the six out of ten children in school but not learning to accelerate progress towards SDG 4.

Education.org is inviting all education stakeholders to come together and join forces in this journey so that every child has the opportunity to realise their potential.

Biographies

Dr Randa Grob-Zakhary, CEO

Dr Randa Grob-Zakhary, M.D., PhD, is the Founder and CEO of Education.org. Motivated by training in medicine and neuroscience, she moved into global education to contribute to reducing the gap between knowledge and practice and has worked closely with ministries of education and other education leaders. She was a Board Member with the Global Partnership for Education, and the former Chair of its Strategy and Impact Committee. Prior roles include: CEO, LEGO Foundation; Global Head of Education, Porticus; High-Level Working Group OECD Education 2030; Senior Fellow, Brookings Institute, and, McKinsey. Dr Randa Grob-Zakhary holds an M.D. and PhD in neuroscience from Johns Hopkins University (USA).

Dr Suzanne Grant Lewis, Chair of Education Science and Policy

Dr Suzanne Grant Lewis is Chair of Education Science and Policy of Education.org (EO). She provides strategic and technical guidance into global and country programme design and implementation, helps to build critical partnerships and participates in further building of EO's technical team. She has extensive experience in improving educational opportunities in the developing world, particularly in education policy and planning in Africa. Prior roles include: Director of the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP-UNESCO), co-founder of the International Education Funders Group (IEFG), Director of the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa and Harvard University faculty member (1997-2006). Dr Grant Lewis pursued graduate studies at the Kenyatta University (Kenya) and holds a PhD in International Development Education from Stanford University (USA).

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About Education.org

Education.org is an independent non-profit foundation working to advance evidence and improve education for every learner. Its mission is to build resources for education leaders by synthesising and translating an inclusive range of evidence, and to enable these resources to be used by those who make education happen by building bridges between knowledge actors, policymakers and practitioners. Established in 2019 and registered in Zurich, Switzerland, the foundation is supported by a visionary co-investor collective and is growing partnerships across governments, agencies, NGOs, universities, businesses and foundations in Africa, Middle East, Europe, and North America. For more information and to participate in this endeavour, visit [Education.org](https://www.education.org).

