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CENTER FOR EDUCATION

July 2021

KEY STRATEGIES FOR MEASURING REACH, ENGAGEMENT, AND OUTCOMES OF DISTANCE LEARNING INITIATIVES

Distance learning is generally defined as teaching and learning where educators and learners are in different physical spaces. Often used synonymously with distance education, distance learning takes place through one of four modalities: audio/radio, video/television, mobile phone, and/or online learning platforms. Printed texts often accompany these modalities or could be a fifth modality in cases where technology is not used for teaching and learning, such as correspondence (paper-based) education. Distance learning can be designed for learners of all ages and levels, from preschool learners through adults in nonformal learning programs or higher education. Distance learning can also be designed for educators, caregivers, and other family members.

This brief identifies key strategies for comprehensively measuring reach, engagement, and outcomes of distance learning initiatives to ensure quality, equity, and inclusion in and through distance learning.



THREE-PRONGED APPROACH FOR MEASURING DISTANCE LEARNING

At the onset of planning, design, and implementation of distance learning initiatives, teams should determine integrated monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) approaches, multi-modal technology interfaces, and mixed methods measurements to help ensure equity, inclusion, and quality of data.

INTEGRATED REMOTE AND IN-PERSON DATA COLLECTION

Combining remote and in-person MEL approaches enables more frequent, responsive, and systematic data collection in emergency and non-emergency contexts. Remote data collection provides timely data on reach and engagement, and can be used when in-person data collection is not feasible. In-person data collection is preferable for measuring outcomes, including attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and where building rapport with the learners is critical.

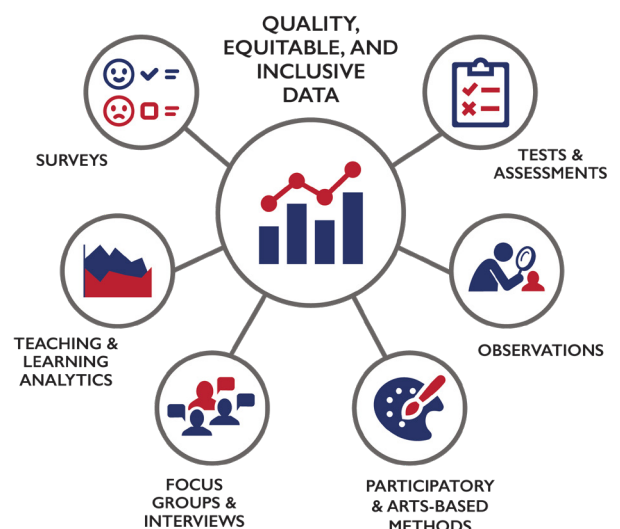


MULTI-MODAL TECHNOLOGY INTERFACES

Measuring distance learning through multiple technology interfaces helps reach a wider group of participants, including those with limited access to technology and connectivity. Interfaces should be selected based on technology device access and accessibility needs, connectivity, and demographics of the users. Technology interfaces include: phone or video calls, interactive voice response, text messages, social media groups, paper, images, video and audio recordings, learning management systems, and educational apps, programs, or games.

MIXED METHODS DATA COLLECTION

Combining quantitative and qualitative data collection methods allows for deeper analyses and provides greater opportunity to measure intended and unintended reach, engagement, and outcomes. Quantitative data collection methods include surveys, tests and assessments, teaching and learning analytics, and observations. Qualitative data collection methods include qualitative observations, focus group discussions, interviews, and participatory and arts-based research.



PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE: A HYPOTHETICAL CASE

LEARN, a fictional organization, delivers distance learning to local communities through radio, television, and mobile phone applications (short videos and text messages), along with accompanying printed learning materials. This initiative aims to provide continued learning in literacy, numeracy, and socioemotional learning for primary school students, with a focus on marginalized learners.

LEARN carries out an intentional, three-pronged MEL strategy that is responsive to emergencies, and ensures quality, equity, and inclusion. LEARN has detailed MEL procedures for ensuring learners with disabilities, non-dominant language groups, girls, as well as households that do not own mobile phones can participate in data collection.



INTEGRATED REMOTE AND IN-PERSON DATA COLLECTION

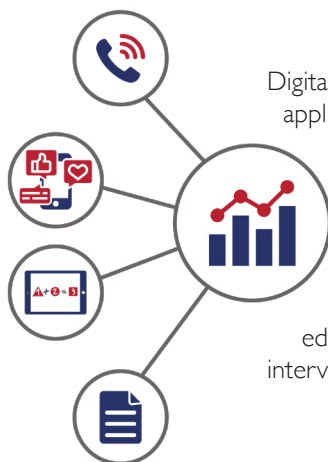


To measure reach and engagement, LEARN regularly carries out remote data collection approaches using mobile phone surveys.

In-person data collection is used to measure reach and engagement among participants who do not have access to mobile phone technology, and to capture knowledge and attitudinal outcomes.

MULTI-MODAL TECHNOLOGY INTERFACES

For households with phones, LEARN staff and educators conduct periodic mobile phone surveys with learners, caregivers, and educators to measure reach and engagement in the distance learning programming. When possible, caregivers and learners share student work and ask educators questions in virtual groups, such as WhatsApp. To measure socioemotional learning, educators conduct phone interviews with caregivers and learners.



Digital analytics programmed into mobile phone applications are used to measure reach and engagement, as well as some knowledge outcomes.

In-person one-on-one assessments with learners are used to measure literacy and numeracy outcomes as well as socioemotional outcomes. For learners, caregivers, and educators who do not have phones, surveys and interviews are conducted in-person when feasible.

MIXED-METHODS DATA COLLECTION

LEARN uses mixed methods to measure reach, engagement, and outcomes including surveys, interviews, learning assessments, and analytics from educational apps. Using a combination of methods helps ensure inclusion of all learners and to identify intended and unintended outcomes.

