Innovative strategies to increase your reach, functions and impact

SCHOOL for THINKTANKERS

On Think Tanks

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Today's Session

Introductions (10 min)

Presentation (30 min)

Questions (5 min)

<< 10 min Break>>

Breakout group exercise (25 min)

Share back + Group discussion (15 min)

Remaining questions or thoughts (5 min)

Center for Universal Education at BROOKINGS

Introductions

What is your name, what city/country do live in and what topic (in one sentence) do you work on?

And… what is the most strange/ interesting/ unexpected job you've ever had in your life?

Innovative strategies

This session aims to:

Expand your strategic mindset around the role of generating evidence and communication for impacting policy and practice.

Deconstruct the traditional linear research to impact trajectory to enable you to better leverage different processes.

What's our goal and how do we get there?

1. What problem are you trying to solve or what gap are you trying to fill and who ultimately will benefit?

2. How do you get there? Often policy research is thought of as very linear:

Research ▸ Evidence ▸ Action ▸ Impact

But…. it's often not so linear and what fits into the boxes of **research** and **evidence** generation can take on many shapes and sizes…

- Conducts innovative research and generates real solutions to achieve quality learning for all
- Informs policymakers and thought-leaders on educational challenges around the world
- Shapes the policy debate by elevating global education priorities on the international agenda
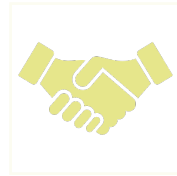
The Center for Universal Education (CUE) at Brookings

1. Engage in a consultative process

Why?

1. Engage in a consultative process

- Create a learning opportunity for your research
- Establish buy-in -stakeholders are more likely to adopt your ideas if they feel like part of the process.
- An opportunity to share ownership of the ideas.

1. Engage in a consultative process:
Who?

Researchers

Implementers

Policymakers

Funders

Beneficiaries (the people who your research impacts)

Note this may also include those opposed to your ideas!
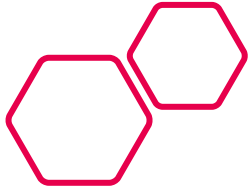
1. Engage in a consultative process:
How?

Possible actions:

- Conduct surveys among your stakeholders
- Hold consultative roundtable discussions
- Create an advisory group
- Crowdsource information through social media

Keep in mind:

- Strategic clarity with tactical flexibility
- Be a neutral convener
- Nerve center, not owner

1. Engage in a consultative process: Example

Learning Metrics Task Force
- Led by CUE and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics aimed at improving learning outcomes for children and youth worldwide.
- 30 organizations in multistakeholder collaboration.
- 1,700 Consultations in 118 countries.

The LMTF Seven Domains of Learning
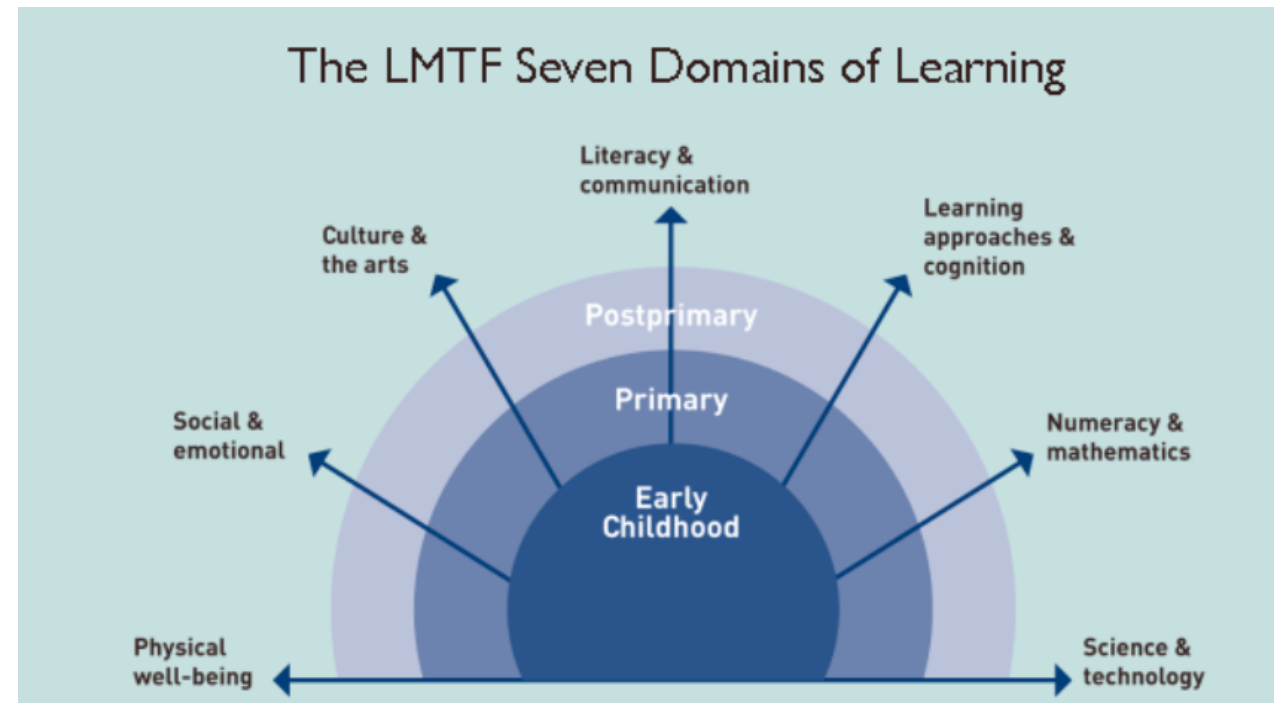
2. Partner with those who have presence on the ground

Why?

2. Partner with those who have presence on the ground

- To bring important "real life" insights to our research
- Ensure the research is responsive to needs on the ground
- Gather primary qualitative or quantitative data
- Test out hypotheses
- Test out tools

2. Partner with those who have presence on the ground: Who?

Implementing organizations such as NGOs

Funders such as donor agencies or foundations

Government (national and subnational)

Local universities or think tanks

2. Partner with those who have presence on the ground: **How?**

- Data collection
- Pilot tools
- Conduct training
- Disseminate research

2. Partner with those who have presence on the ground: Example

Real-time Scaling Labs

- Led by CUE in collaboration with local partners around the world

- Participatory, action research approach to document, learn from, and support ongoing efforts to scale education innovations

- Goal: generate more evidence and provide practical recommendations around the process of scaling and strengthen local scaling capacity

3. Diversify the team

Why?

3. Diversify the Team

Bringing in other researchers and practitioners from a variety of environments can enrichen and amplify your work

3. Diversify the team: Who?

Scholars from Universities or other Think Tanks

Policymakers from Government

Practitioners from Implementing Agencies

Center for Universal Education at BROOKINGS

3. Diversify the team
How?

- Guest scholars
- Non-resident scholars
- Practitioners in residence
- Co-author studies and blog posts

3. Diversify the team: Example

Echidna Global Scholars Program

Annual cohort of 3-4 scholars from around the world come to CUE for 4-6 mos. to conduct research on Girls Education

Current scholar *Tran Thi Ngoc Tran* is co-founder and managing
director of ProPath Education Group.

She will explore the experiences and needs of Vietnamese young women participating in entrepreneurial education in the Future for Women Program

4. Create communities of practice

Why?

4. Create communities of practice

- Generate a learning loop – learn from and share with others – both in terms of content and policy thinking
- Amplify policy influence

4. Create communities of practice
Who?

Researchers

Implementers

Policymakers

Funders

*A more diverse group (including from outside the sector) can bring important insights to the CoP

4. Create communities of practice: Example

The Global Education and ECD Costing Consortium (GEECC)

- Experts working to advance knowledge and capacity around costing Ed and ECD

- Monthly working session Zoom meetings

- Outputs:
  - Problem Statement and Theory of Change
  - Joint survey on existing costing tools
  - Website with compiled resources

5. Develop tools and build capacity

Why?

5. Develop tools and build capacity

When your research identifies practical gaps to achieving the goals you are seeking, sometimes the most direct way to achieve those goals is to try to fill those gaps yourself!

5. Develop tools and build capacity: **Who?**

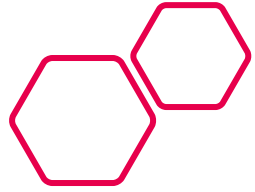Researchers

Implementers

Policymakers

Funders

5. Develop tools and build capacity
How?

- Playbooks
- Survey tools
- Data collection tools
- Databases
- Training modules

5. Develop tools and capacity:
Example

Brookings Education and ECD Cost Calculator

- Tool for collecting and analyzing cost data
- Available online to anyone
- Guidance documents to accompany tool
- Data used to build database on costs

Questions?

1. **Identify a research question** or area that you are working on.

2. **Choose one strategy from the list of 5** innovative strategies (something you haven't yet done):

1. *Engage in a consultative process*
2. *Partner with those who have presence on the ground*
3. *Diversify the team*
4. *Create communities of practice*
5. *Develop tools and build capacity*

3. **Identify the Why, Who and How** of this strategy as it applies to your research question.

4. **Share with your group** (3 mins each)

Breakout Exercise (25 mins)

Share Back & Group Discussion

Remaining questions or thoughts

Thank you!

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