

Education Support Group - An outline of the Education Resource Repository

Why do we need this resource repository?

With governments across the country tentatively beginning to reopen schools it is very important for us to look at ways of supporting teachers and school administrators to resume teaching-learning practices. It would not do us any good to assume that schools can reopen, and learning can simply resume in the usual way with a bridge course, as has normally been the case. Even under normal conditions, it has not been clear what a bridge course should consist of and what exactly it would be bridging. In the current context, children are coming back to school after a very abnormal disruption, and in many cases after major disruptions in their lives.

While there are many aspects of this school reopening that would be like the annual reopening after vacations, there are some very crucial ways in which it would be different.

1. We are likely to see more variations in the class than what we were used to seeing – teaching to the mean will be even less effective than usual
2. More emotional support may be needed for children – both in terms of addressing the disruptions in their lives, and in terms of (re)adapting to the skills of learning, processes of schools.
3. Children's readiness to engage with formal learning will vary widely across contexts
4. More skills must be re-acquired and more content needs to be re-learnt than usual

Additional resources and tools are needed for responding to this requirement – for teachers, students, parents and school administrators. These resources also need to be flexible and allow for the school system to respond to the immediate requirement as well as for responding to any further school disruptions/ changes . While teachers are expected to create and use resources to respond to the situation, they have not had any special preparation to do so. The repository is intended to be a participatory, supportive space for meeting this need.

How do we compile these resources?

Fortunately, across the country many interventions have continued at ground zero, addressing the needs of the children and the communities. These have ranged from alternative, community based schools which functioned as learning centres, community learning activities, school teachers combining forces to deliver online lessons (especially in rural and remote areas), small groups of children supported in their learning through digital media and resources.

The underlying unifying theme from several of these “alternative” interventions seems to be an underlying desire to connect with the children and a focus on individual learning. Many methods have been tried – evolving mostly organically, in response to the needs of the contexts they were working and very crucially, based on the resources and capabilities available within the intervention; where the formal school system has been disrupted across these interventions, a common thread that emerges is of community stepping in to fill that learning need. Children's lived experiences, embedded within the community, have both become the learning and the means for the learning.

The endeavor of this repository would be to curate and publish the resources from across these interventions. While these resources could provide the school system with multiple strategies for handling the immediate student learning needs, they could also help fashion a transformatory shift in the way school education can be designed and delivered.

How will these resources be organized?

The objective is to compile the resources in a manner as to support the acquisition/ re-acquisition of skills of learning – in terms of language abilities, mathematical abilities as well as social/ behavioral skills. Broadly, the resources could be imagined along these lines below and they will be pegged at different age groups – early childhood (2-6 years) primary school level (6-10 years) and middle school level (11-13 years). It is expected that these resources will help the teachers and students in meeting the grade-appropriate learning requirements, in a flexible manner, at the pace of the child.

1. Resources for supporting the (re)development of reading and writing
2. Resources for supporting the (re)development of arithmetic skills
3. Resources for teachers to create group activities for children – focusing on listening to each other, working collaboratively, cooperative games, and storytelling
4. Resources for the teacher to organize the classroom in terms of mixed learning levels – this will include language and mathematics exemplars
5. Models of assessment, including oral assessments as well as activity-based assessments
6. Learning materials for students to practice their skills – self-learning, group-learning as well as teacher-led activities
7. Resources for the teachers to address students with different learning needs
8. Resources for the teachers to respond to any signs of psychological distress in children
9. Resources for teachers to learn the digital skills necessary for conducting online/ digital classes
10. Collection of community-based initiatives to support learning/ use of community resources for supporting learning

These resources will be created/ curated from multiple organizations, and they are not intended to be prescriptive. Rather, we hope that these would help teachers equip themselves with a flexible repertoire of approaches and resources to respond to children at different levels. Resources will not be subject to any editorial supervision – other than for the appropriateness for the intended purpose and audience.

How will these resources be made available?

These resources will be made available on a web portal; periodic offline versions of these can also be distributed through the education departments wherever they are interested. We expect the portal to be on a Mediawiki based platform – which would mean that resources can be contributed on an on-going basis by practitioners.