

Learning Agenda

Addressing Learning Poverty, Gender Inequality and Youth Unemployment

2024 – 2027

With support from:



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1. INTRODUCTION

JM Education and Research Centre (JMERC) is dedicated to enhancing the effectiveness of its programs and generating evidence on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) # 4: Quality Education, SDG # 5: Gender Equality and SDG # 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth. In pursuit of its vision of a World where all children and youth learn, achieve and thrive, JMERC has developed a multi-year Learning Agenda to guide its research and learning journey. This learning agenda presents a set of questions addressing critical knowledge gaps that, when answered, enable more efficient and effective programming, and provide a basis for policy advocacy and engagement. It also identifies how JMERC will answer those questions and translate evidence into learning through specific, planned activities. This Learning Agenda helps JMERC to set knowledge, information and program priorities, planning and resource allocation. It also guides JMERC to identify and engage relevant potential partners whose mission and core values align with our priorities and learning journey.

JMERC continually collects data through performance monitoring, evaluations, pilot initiatives and analysis of relevant reports such as the Global Monitoring Reports, and other regional and global initiatives. These data are used to inform JMERC's programming and to provide a basis for policy dialogue, advocacy and engagement. Through the Learning Agenda, JMERC will continue to prioritize and refine its monitoring, evaluation, learning, and innovation efforts to ensure that its programming is evidence-informed, relevant, contextualised, dynamic, responsive and impactful.

1.1 Significance of the Learning Agenda

The Learning Agenda holds significant importance to JMERC’s mission and strategic direction. As see in Figure 1, the learning agenda provides a structured framework for informed decision-making, adaptability and flexibility, improved resource allocation, stakeholder engagement, continuous systematic learning and efficient scaling.

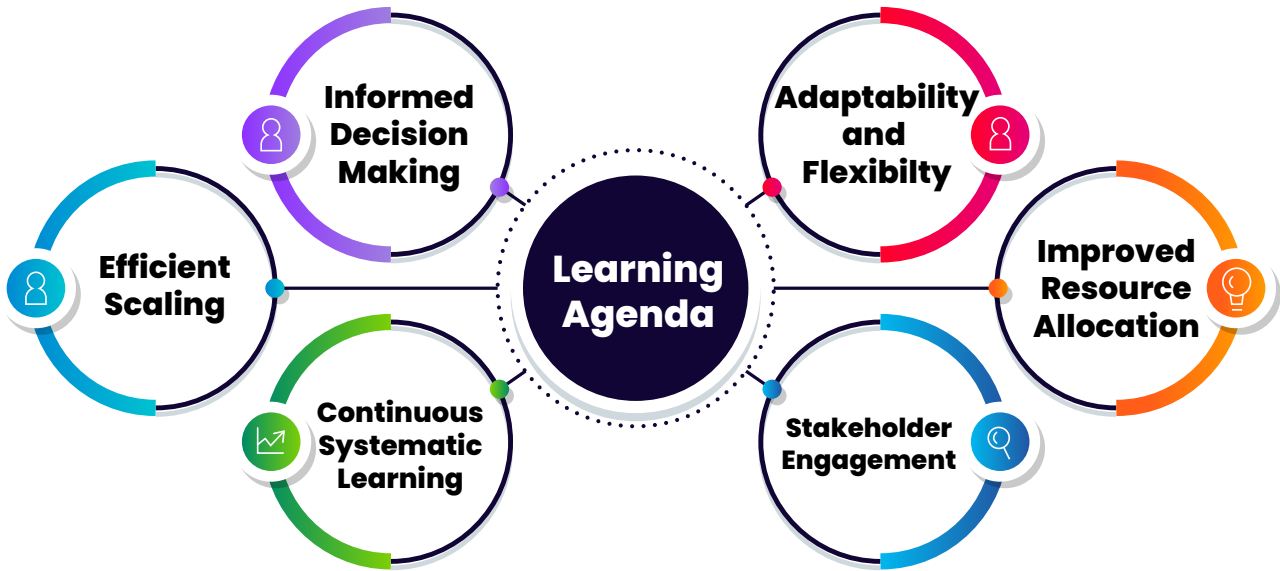


Figure 1: Significance of JMERC's Learning Agenda

1. Informed Decision-Making:

The learning agenda greatly aids JMERC in making informed decisions through collecting relevant and reliable data and insights. This, in turn, contributes to more effective planning and implementation of program activities.

2. Adaptability and Flexibility:

Programs and projects often face uncertainties and unforeseen challenges. The Learning Agenda allows for continuous adaptation and flexibility by incorporating learning loops. It also helps the programme and leadership team to adjust strategies and approaches based on real-time feedback and evolving circumstances.

3. Improved Resource Allocation:

Understanding what works and what

doesn't, enables better resource allocation. With a clear view of directing resources toward activities that have proven to be effective, the learning agenda maximises JMERC’s impact while minimising wastage.

4. Stakeholder Engagement:

Evidence generation significantly improves JMERC’s capacity to engage strategic stakeholders for deeper and wider impact. Engaging with various stakeholders, including beneficiaries, donors, and implementing partners, facilitates a more comprehensive and shared understanding of JMERC’s dynamics and outcomes.

5. Continuous Systematic Learning:

For JMERC, learning is a continuous process and having a learning agenda

fosters systematic improvement through reflection, analysis, and the application of lessons learned to enhance future interventions.

6. Efficient Scaling:

JMERC aims to scale-up its programmes to impact more people and transform generations. For this to happen, JMERC collects and documents evidence of its programmes as a fundamental step towards scaling its impact. This is done by creating an evidence hub of documentation for what has been learned during the programme, providing valuable insights for scaling initiatives in a more efficient and effective manner.

2. THE THEMATIC AREAS OF FOCUS

This Learning Learning Agenda has three thematic focus areas. Most of our interventions are implemented to contribute to more than one theme.

Themes

Gender Equality
and Inclusioun

Quality Education

Youth
Empowerment

Our Interventions

- Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Gender-Responsive Pedagogy

- Critical Pedagogy
- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
- Formative Assessment
- Parental Engagement and Empowerment
- Adaptive School Leadership

- Social and Emotional Learning
- Vocational and Entrepreneurship

3. LEARNING QUESTIONS

This Learning Agenda establishes the information JMERC wants to know through a series of five (5) broad research questions and corresponding detailed sub-questions. These questions, listed below, reflect JMERC’s research priorities for the period 2023–2027. The Learning Agenda also outlines activities intended to answer those questions through an implementation plan, which can be found at the end of this document.

3.1. Learning Question 1: How can girls within low-resourced contexts be empowered and supported to develop agency and to learn, achieve and thrive?

Empowering adolescent girls in low-resourced contexts involves ensuring access to quality education, promoting social and emotional learning (SEL), sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and enabling access to economic opportunities including honing their entrepreneurship skills. JMERC initiatives will address cultural barriers, provide health education, and foster parental/ community engagement.

The learning agenda will help JMERC to tailor interventions for sustained impact, creating an environment where girls can develop agency, learn, achieve and thrive. JMERC will also understand the unique barriers preventing girls’ access to education and investigate the impact of education on girls’ empowerment and its longterm benefits. JMERC will also identify successful strategies for promoting gender equality within educational institutions. Explore the role of mentors and role models in girls’ educational success.

Research and Learning Approaches: Conduct surveys and focus groups with girls, parents, and educators to gain insights into challenges. Analyse existing

data on girls’ educational outcomes and empowerment indicators. Collaborate with local organisations and NGOs with expertise in girls’ education and the Ministry of Education. Pilot programmes to test innovative approaches and measure their impact.

Sub-Questions include:

- 1.1 What social and emotional learning competencies do adolescent girls and young women require for their well-being? What support do they need to develop these social and emotional competencies?
- 1.2 How best can we support the Sexual and Reproductive Health of adolescent girls and young women in ways that advance their human dignity?
- 1.3 How can we help schools within low-resourced contexts develop and effectively sustain gendertransformative teaching and learning approaches?
- 1.4 How best can we build, support and sustain a vibrant movement for girls’ education and empowerment in Uganda and the region?

3.2. Learning Question 2: How can we nurture and assess the skills and values that students need for life-long learning and the world of work?

Empowering youth in Uganda for lifelong learning and the workforce involves integrating practical life skills and values into education. JMERC programmes focus on social and emotional learning, effective communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving through the Open Minds Youth (OMY) Club. JMERC also supports vocational and Entrepreneurship training and mentorship aligned with market needs to nurture adaptability, resilience, and ethical values. JMERC collaborates with educational institutions and industries to bridge the skills gap.

Research and Learning Approaches:

JMERC will conduct surveys and focus group discussions with students, parents, and educators to gain insights into the learning needs and challenges. It will analyse existing data

on SEL and Vocational and entrepreneurship skills. JMERC will pilot programmes on SEL, vocational skills & entrepreneurship to test innovative approaches and measure their impact.

Sub- Questions include:

- 2.1 How can we decolonise and contextualise the concept of SEL for better programme adaptation and scale-up?
- 2.2 What social and emotional learning competencies do students require for their life-long learning and the world of work? What support do they need to develop these social and emotional competencies?
- 2.3 How best can schools nurture students' SEL skills for life-long learning and the world of work?





3.3. Learning Question 3: How can schools and communities support effective learning for all?

JMERC exists to support effective learning for all children and youth through working with schools and communities to create a safe and inclusive environment, enabling effective learning. JMERC provides teacher professional development support to teachers, school leadership training coaching support and parental engagement and empowerment.

This creates a supportive school-wide ecosystem. By fostering a supportive ecosystem that values education and gender equality, schools and communities can collectively contribute to effective learning for all, creating opportunities for learning and breaking down barriers to learning.

Research and Learning Approaches:

JMERC will conduct surveys and focus group discussions with students, parents, and educators to gain insights into the respective learning gaps. JMERC analyses existing data on the

progress of learning in Uganda & the region. It also pilot programmes to test innovative approaches to teacher professional development, school leadership and parental engagement and measure

Sub - Questions include:

- 3.1 How can teachers be supported to use learner-centred and gender - responsive teaching, assessment tools and methodologies in ways that enhance effective learning for all?
- 3.2 What innovative approaches can teachers use to enhance children's Foundational Learning (FL) skills?
- 3.3 How can parents/caregivers support children's learning?
- 3.4 What are the alternative approaches to engage and empower parents to support students' learning?

3.4. Learning Question 4: How can we strengthen our capacity for resource mobilisation, sustainability & governance to effectively achieve our mission?

To ensure that all children and youth learn, achieve and thrive, JMERC requires strengthening capacity for resource mobilisation, sustainability, and good governance. JMERC will develop strategic partnerships with donors, NGOs, and governmental bodies to enhance resource mobilisation. It will create and strengthen transparent governance structures and accountability mechanisms to ensure effective use of resources.

Research and Learning Approaches:

Conduct surveys and focus group discussions with stakeholders to gain new insights towards answers to the research questions—Analyse existing data on JMERC’s capacity and policy documents and guidelines. Collaborate with local organisations and NGOs with similar or related mission to deepen and or widen its impact.

Sub - Questions include:

- 4.1 How can we develop a human resource team with passion and audacity to implement the JMERC mission?
- 4.2 How can we develop a funding model to sustain JMERC programmes?
- 4.3 What management and governance structures do we need to put in place? How can we develop a learning & self-improvement culture?





3.5. Learning Question 5: What evidence data do we need to show the effectiveness and efficiency of JMERC in promoting quality education, gender equality and youth empowerment?

To promote the right to quality education in Uganda, a multifaceted approach is essential. Resource mobilisation can be strengthened through strategic partnerships, engaging with local and international donors, and exploring innovative funding mechanisms. Sustainability requires long-term investments in infrastructure, programme design & development and strategic partnerships. During this period, JMERC will also strengthen its governance, including transparent budgeting, effective management, and accountability mechanisms.

By addressing resource mobilisation, sustainability, and governance collectively, JMERC can advance its commitment to enhancing the effectiveness of its programs and generating evidence on the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) # 4: Quality Education, SDG # 5: Gender Equality and SDG # 8 Decent

Work and Economic Growth.

Research & Learning Approaches:

JMERC will conduct organisational capacity assessment, capacity development workshops for the staff and the board, and conduct surveys and focus group discussions with strategic stakeholders to gain insights into what JMERC needs to improve upon.

Sub - Questions include:

- 5.1 What do we need to learn, do or develop to sustainably grow JMERC impact?
- 5.2 What lessons can we draw from the JMERC ecosystem model? How can these lessons inform Policy and practice in Uganda?
- 5.3 What partnerships and networks do we need to scale the JMERC ecosystem model?

4. DISSEMINATION STRATEGIES

Learning is not simply aimed at generating knowledge, but also more importantly at interpreting and using that information.

JMERC plans to employ a comprehensive dissemination strategy to cultivate a culture of learning within the organisation and ensure that it is continually improving the effectiveness and efficiency of its programming and operations. JMERC's approach to dissemination builds on its vision, mission and core values while continuing to cultivate new avenues for learning to meet its strategic priorities. Specifically, this includes a three-part, cyclical process to ensure that insights gained through learning activities produce learning for the organisation.

- ▶ As the evidence is gathered through learning activities, JMERC will develop summary briefs to share emerging evidence and lessons learned on specific learning agenda questions.
- ▶ Through facilitated pause - and - reflect sessions, JMERC will

identify actionable steps for using the learning generated, including recommendations for program teams, future learning activities, ideas for innovative projects, strategic decision - making, processes, policies, or procedures.

- ▶ Finally, JMERC will share learning with a wider audience, including publishing learning resources on its website, presenting at national, regional and international conferences and workshops, and semi-annual updates to the wider stakeholder community, including the government & funding partners, on the progress toward Learning Agenda evidence & implications for JMERC's work, and sharing learnings as part of its capacity-building efforts.



Annex 1: Summary research priorities Matrix

Research#	Learning Question	Sub- Questions	Data sources	Stakeholders (Internal and external)	Learning Product	Dissemination Mechanism
Priority One: Girls' Education and Empowerment	How can girls within low-resourced contexts be empowered and supported to develop agency and to learn, achieve and thrive?	What Social and Emotional Learning competencies do girls and young women require for their well-being? What support do they need to develop these social and emotional competencies?	Contextualisation Studies, Literature Reviews, School Attendance Rotter and Interviews with Students.	Teachers, Learners (Mainly Girls) and Parents.	Reports, Video clips, Abstracts	Learning Summits, Short Videos and Publications.
		How best can we support the Sexual and Reproductive Health of adolescent girls and young women in ways that advance their human dignity?				
		How can schools within low-resourced contexts effectively develop and effectively sustain gender-transformative teaching and learning approaches?				
		How best can we build, support and sustain a vibrant movement for girls' education and empowerment in Uganda and the region?				
Priority Two: Life skills and Values for youth	How can we nurture and assess the skills and values students need for life-long learning and the world of work?	How can we decolonise and contextualise the concept of SEL for better programme adaptation and scale-up?	Contextualisation Studies, Literature Reviews, School Attendance Rotter and Interviews with Students.	Learners (Girls/Youth), School Stakeholders (Administrators, Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff), Employers, Parents/Community and Support Partners.	Partner Convenings, Findings from Studies.	Project Reports
		What Social and Emotional Learning competencies do the students require for lifelong learning and the world of work?				
		What support do they need to develop these social and emotional competencies?				
		How best can schools nurture students' skills and values for life-long learning?				

Priority Three: School and Community Engagement	How can schools and communities support effective learning for all?	How can teachers be supported to use learner-centred and gender responsive teaching, assessment tools and methodologies in ways that enhance effective learning for all?	Teacher Training Institutes, NCDC Education Experts, Focus Group Discussions with both Teachers and Parents.	School Stakeholders (Administrators, Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff), Employers and Parents/Community.	End of Project Workshops, Success Stories.	Publications
		What innovative approaches can teachers use to enhance childrens' Foundational Learning (FL) skills?				
		How can parents/caregivers support children's learning?				
		What are the alternative approaches to engage and empower parents to support students learning?				
Priority Four: Institutional internal development	How can we strengthen our capacity for resource mobilisation, sustainability, governance in order to effectively achieve our mission?	How can we develop a human resource team with passion and audacity to implement the JMERC mission?	Staff Appraisal Assessment, Consulting from International Organisations and End of Year Programme Evaluations.	Funders/Donors, Partner Organisations, Educational Consortia and Government/Legal Organisations.	Reports, Advocacy Initiatives and Attending Exhibitions.	Policy Briefs, Flyers and Brochures.
		How can we develop a funding model to sustain JMERC programmes?				
		What management and governance structures do we need to put in place? How can we develop a learning and self-improvement culture?				
Priority Five: Institutional capacity to scale	What evidence data do we need to show the effectiveness and efficiency of JMERC school-wide ecosystem model?	What do we need learn, do or develop in order to sustainably grow the JMERC impact?	Annual Achievements Attained, MERL Reports and Project Performance Reports.	All JMERC Staff and Departments.	MERL Reports and Performance Appraisals.	Staff Presentations.
		What lessons can we draw from the JMERC ecosystem model? How can these lessons inform policy and practice in Uganda?				
		What partnerships and networks do we need to scale the JMERC ecosystem model?				



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