

## Handout Module 6 Synthesis

This can be used as an example of a solution to the exercise 'preparing for your synthesis'.

### My policy issue / social question:

Educational performance in South Africa has been below expectations. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are increasingly presented as an option to improve educational outcomes. My team is brainstorming whether the large-scale introduction of tablet devices in schools would be able to support education in South Africa. We could be interested in a number of questions.

- a) Will tablet devices improve learning outcomes?
- b) Will teachers and learners accept tablet devices?
- c) How much would it cost to supply devices at a national level?
- d) Are tablet devices more effective than text-books?
- e) What is the best way to introduce tablet devices?

### What type of evidence would answer this question?

- a) Impact evaluation.
- b) Interviews and surveys.
- c) Monitoring data, census data, and cost calculations.
- d) Impact evaluation paired with cost-calculations.
- e) Research synthesis of different types of evidence.

Note that research synthesis of relevant studies would also be preferable for questions a – d. You can ask yourself, if I only have one impact evaluation that shows tablets improve learning outcomes, would that be sufficient to motivate a large-scale role out of the policy? Would this change if I have five studies showing the same finding?

### Is there sufficient evidence to answer my question?

Let us assume we are choosing question (a). It makes sense to scope for studies from within South Africa first, minding different socio-economic contexts (e.g. rural / urban). Then one could look for evidence from Africa and other developing countries. This should give a good indication what types of relevant studies are out there.

### Approach to synthesis:

Statistical meta-analysis for impact evaluation.

Explanatory / narrative synthesis for interviews and surveys.

Economic calculations for monitoring data, census data, and cost calculations.

Meta-analysis with subgroups for impact evaluation paired with cost-calculations.

Statistical meta-analysis for impact evaluation / explanatory / narrative synthesis for interviews and surveys.

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We welcome feedback on this handout. Please email any comments to: [cfar@uj.ac.za](mailto:cfar@uj.ac.za)

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