

**EDUC 680B:
Systems to Support Early Grade Reading in Developing Countries**

**Online Class, Fall 2017
3 credits**

Instructor: John Comings, Adjunct Professor
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Purpose of the Course

The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the components of systems to improve early grade reading in developing countries and to system reform and change. The goal is to enable you to:

- Articulate the theory of system change (key concepts), and list some strategies (practice) for system change, including understanding the incremental nature of change.
- Explain the various components of the system (supervision, materials, training, curriculum) that need real reforms to make the system effective.
- Articulate the broader context (culture, government, political, economics) that influences how the system changes or doesn't.
- Describe the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of system change, starting with how to assess primary students' reading improvement.

The course will be relevant to those interested in early grade reading for both international and U.S.-based contexts, and it would also benefit those working on adult literacy in either context.

Course objectives:

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Explain the importance of system reform for improving early grade reading;
- Articulate what is meant by system reform;
- Outline the major theories about how to build or reform an effective system for children's reading;
- Outline the strategies for system change;
- Articulate the various components of the system such as policy, finance, curriculum, materials, training, supervision, and inclusion that need reform to make the system effective for early grade reading;
- Discuss the importance of context, such as cultural, social, political, and economic factors that influence the effectiveness of system; and
- Describe the importance of evaluating the effectiveness of system change.

Topics and Methodology

The course will cover the following topics:

1. Systems theory: theories linked to strategies and context
2. Strategies for system reform
3. Components of the system: educational policies
4. Components of the system: instructional system
5. Components of the system: teacher preparation
6. Components of the system: supervision and support
7. Components of the system: inclusion and exclusion
8. Components of the system: monitoring and evaluation
9. Components of the system: finances

This course will combine elements of both theory and practice and in doing so will require participants to read literature, watch videos, and write and share papers. Our readings will be drawn from both scholarly journals and in-depth reports on early grade reading systems and system reforms. In the almost-weekly Discussions, we will invite you to reflect on the readings, videos and lectures by posting comments, responding to others' comments, and sharing the evolution of your thinking throughout the duration of the course.

Action research is integrated into this course. By practicing this methodology, you will develop a valuable research skill and experience that will support your decisions on how system change can be facilitated to improve early grade reading in a specific context. This methodology will require you to seek out information beyond what has been assigned in the course, conduct analyses, design action plans, test your plans, and then reflect upon and revise those plans.

This is an online course and includes asynchronous interaction. Students will primarily learn from the course materials provided online in modules, supplemented by course units that will emphasize, illustrate and/or demonstrate key principles from the key topics. Students will also engage in interactive learning through discussion of course-related topics and completion of assignments, which are essentially learning exercises. Reflective written assignments will help students to personalize the material and see its relevance to their own context or country.

This online course structure is different in many ways from a course in a traditional classroom context, but most students find it to be an excellent way to learn. Online courses have certain advantages over classroom courses (e.g., flexibility), but there are some disadvantages as well (such as the need to be a self-starter and self-motivated). Taking an online course is therefore not an ideal option for everyone. Consider carefully whether this course is a good fit for your needs and abilities.

There are three assignments during this course:

1. **Paper 1:** Summarizing Hartwell's article (week of September 25) and choosing three policy areas to discuss in more depth.

2. **Paper 2:** An action research paper where you will answer a question related to EITHER the *Instructional Systems* component OR the *Teacher Preparation* component; you will collect information from documents or observation about the effectiveness of this component in your current context, your analysis of their effectiveness, and suggestions for improving that component.
3. **Paper 3:** The final product is a system analysis and reform plan for one component of the system to support early grade reading in your own context.

We will give full instructions for each assignment on the Blackboard course website. The instructor will assess each individual assignment, providing feedback that should inform your final project.

Course Requirements

This course requires the active participation of all class members: reading and sharing feedback, helping others develop their ideas, and expressing your own thoughts in class activities and small-group work.

- To take this course, you should have at least 4-6 hours per week dedicated for reading, writing and discussion. For your participation to be helpful to everyone, it is essential that you follow the course schedule and complete the required readings and discussion posts/responses by the dates required.
- Please let us know in advance if you will be traveling or expect to be unavailable for an extended period. We expect you to communicate with classmates to minimize the impact of your absence.
- Please contact the course instructor either through the Blackboard email, Discussion Forum where you can post questions about the course, or directly through email. The instructor's direct email address is on the first page of this syllabus.
- All assignments are due when indicated. You should review all assignments at the beginning of the class to ensure that you allow enough time for each. Some assignments require you to interview people, find documents, or observe classes or schools and so you should schedule these activities well in advance of these assignments.
- You will receive a grade for this course, according to the grading system below. If you would like to take the course on a "Pass/Fail" basis, please inform the instructor via email (jcomings@umass.edu) **before Monday, September 18.**

Assignments and Grading

Participation in discussions (posting comments, responding to others, by deadlines each week)	25
Paper 1: Summarizing Hartwell's article (week of Sept 25) and choosing three policy areas to discuss in more depth. Due Monday, October 2, 2017	20
Paper 2: An action research paper where you will answer a question related to EITHER the <i>Instructional Systems</i> component OR the <i>Teacher Preparation</i> component. Due Monday, October 23, 2017	20
Paper 3: A system analysis and reform plan for improving one or more components of the system to support early grade reading in your own context. Due Monday, November 27, 2017	35
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS	100

Points	Grade
94-100	A
90-93	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
0-72	F

ALL PAPERS SHOULD BE SINGLE-SPACED and SUBMITTED through the appropriate link on the BLACKBOARD WEBSITE. We will not accept emailed or paper copies of your assignments.

Incompletes

Students who are unable to complete course requirements within the allotted time because of severe medical or personal problems may request a grade of Incomplete from me **at least two weeks before the end of the course**. Normally, incomplete grades are warranted only if a student is passing the course at the time of the request and if the course requirements can be completed by the end of the following semester. If we grant you an incomplete, you will have until January 15, 2017 to complete all assignments. If you have not completed all assignments by then, you will receive an "F" in the course.

Accommodation Statement

The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. If you have a documented physical, psychological, or learning disability on file with Disability Services, you may be eligible for reasonable academic accommodations to help you succeed in this course. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify me within the first two weeks of the semester so that we may make appropriate arrangements. You can get more information on how to access Disability Services at <http://www.umass.edu/disability>

Academic Honesty Statement

Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct.

Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent. Follow the link below for detailed information on the Academic Honesty Policy:

http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty

References for Course Readings

We will post ALL readings for this course on the Blackboard course website. Readings are subject to change; **please check the Blackboard website each week to see the final readings and discussions assigned.**

Ainscow, M. and Miles, S. (2009). Developing inclusive education systems: how can we move policies forward? Chapter in Spanish book edited by Climent Gine, et al. Available through UNESCO at http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/COPs/News_documents/2009/0907Beirut/DevelopingInclusive_Education_Systems.pdf

- Banathy, B. H. (1986) *A systems view of institutionalizing change in education*. Paper presented at the NAAS/ASSS Symposium: Future Educational Delivery Systems, Columbus: OH.
- Bean, R. M. (2014). *The Power of Coaching: Improving Early Grade Reading Instruction in Developing Countries*, pp. 6-31. Washington, D.C.: USAID
- Chapman, D.W. (2008). *Options for Improving the Management of Education Systems*, Chap. 8, pp. 251-276 in Cummings, W. and Williams, J. (eds), *Policy-Making for Education Reform in Developing Countries: Policy Options and Strategies*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Crouch, L. (2011). Motivating early grade instruction and learning: institutional issues. Chapter 7 in A. Gove & A. Wetterberg (Eds.). *The early grade reading assessment: Applications and interventions to improve basic literacy* (pp. 227-250). North Carolina: RTI International.
- Crouch, L. and DeStefano, J. (2015). *A Practical Approach to In-Country Systems Research*. Paper presented at the Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) Program Launch Conference, Washington DC, June 2015.
- Cummings, W. (2008). *Policy Options for Access and Equity in Basic Education*, pp. 65-100, in Cummings, W. and Williams, J. (eds), *Policy-Making for Education Reform in Developing Countries: Policy Options and Strategies*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- De Grauwe, A. (2007) *Supervision: a key component of a quality monitoring system*, pp. 1-33. Paris: International Institute for Education Planning (UNESCO).
- DeStefano, J., & Crouch, L. (2006). *Education reform support today* (Report for EQUIP2, USAID). Washington DC: Academy for Educational Development.
- EFA Global Monitoring Report team. (2015). *Investing in teachers is investing in learning: A prerequisite for the transformative power of education*. Background paper for the Oslo Summit on Education for Development.
- Hartwell, A. (2013). *Policy matters: Early grade reading policy toolbox*. Unpublished Manuscript. University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA.
- International Institute for Educational Planning (2007). *Supervision: a key component of a quality monitoring system*. Paris: IIEP.
- Nordtveit, B. H. (2010). Development as a complex process of change: conception and analysis of projects, programs and policies. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30 (1), 110-117.

Saavedra, J. (2002). *Education Financing in Developing Countries: Level and Sources of Funds*. World Bank Institute.

Schuh Moore, A., DeStefano, J., and Adelman, A. (2012). *Opportunity to Learn: A high impact strategy for improving educational outcomes in developing countries*. USAID.

Tatto, M. T. (2008). Policy Tools to Improve Teaching, Chap. 7, pp. 217-250 in Cummings, W. and Williams, J. (eds), *Policy-Making for Education Reform in Developing Countries: Policy Options and Strategies*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.

Course Schedule

Week	Date and Focus of Class	Readings to be completed	Assignments Due
Sept 4 (Week 1)	Course Overview, Introductions Systems theory	Course Etiquette Full Syllabus Banathy, B. H. <i>A systems view of institutionalizing change in education</i> .	Post and respond to others' posts about discussion prompts
Sept 11 (Week 2)	Systems theory (continued): theories linked to strategies and context	Nordtveit, B. H. <i>Development as a complex process of change: conception and analysis of projects, programs and policies</i> . pp. 110-117.	Post and respond to others' posts about discussion prompts
Sept 18 (Week 3)	Strategies for system reform	DeStefano, J., & Crouch, L. <i>Education reform support today</i> . pp. 1-61.	Post and respond to others' posts about discussion prompts
Sept 25 (Week 4)	Components of the system: Policies	Hartwell, A. <i>Policy Matters</i> . pp. 1-28.	Work on Paper 1, due Monday, October 2.
Oct 2 (Week 5)	Components of the system: instructional system	Crouch, L. <i>Motivating early grade instruction and learning: institutional issues</i> , pp. 227- 250. Schuh Moore, A., DeStefano, J., and Adelman, A. (2012). <i>Opportunity to Learn: A high impact strategy for improving educational outcomes in developing countries</i> , pp. 7-24 (and skim pp. 29-57)	Upload Paper 1 to the Blackboard website by today, Monday, October 2. Post and respond to others' posts about discussion prompts

Week	Date and Focus of Class	Readings to be completed	Assignments Due
Oct 9 (Week 6)	Components of the system: teacher recruitment, retention and preparation	<p>Tatto, M. T. (2008) <i>Policy Tools to Improve Teaching</i>, Chap. 7, pp. 217-250 in Cummings and Williams, <i>Policy-Making for Education Reform in Developing Countries</i>.</p> <p>EFA Global Monitoring Report team. (2015). <i>Investing in Teachers is Investing in Learning: A Prerequisite for the Transformative Power of Education</i>.</p> <p>(Optional): UNESCO. (2013) <i>A four-part strategy for providing the best teachers</i>. Chapter 6 in Global Monitoring Report, pp. 233-274.</p>	Start work on Paper 2, due Monday, October 23
Oct 16 (Week 7)	Components of the system: supervision and support	<p>de Grauwe, A. (2007) <i>Supervision: a key component of a quality monitoring system</i>, pp. 1-33. Paris: International Institute for Education Planning (UNESCO).</p> <p>Bean, R. M. (2014). <i>The Power of Coaching: Improving Early Grade Reading Instruction in Developing Countries</i>, pp. 6-31. Washington, D.C.: USAID.</p>	<p>Continue working on Paper 2 (action research paper)</p> <p>Post and respond to others' posts about discussion prompts</p>
Oct 23 (Week 8)	Components of the system: inclusion and exclusion	<p>Ainscow, M. (2009). <i>Developing inclusive education systems: what are the levers for change?</i> pp. 109-124.</p> <p>Cummings, W. (2008). <i>Policy Options for Access and Equity in Basic Education</i>, pp. 65-100, in Cummings and Williams <i>Policy-Making for Education Reform in Developing Countries</i>.</p>	Upload Paper 2 to the Blackboard website by today, Monday, October 23.
Oct 30 (Week 9)	Components of the system: monitoring and evaluation	<p>Chapman, D.W. (2008). <i>Options for Improving the Management of Education Systems</i>, Chap. 8, pp. 251-276 in Cummings and Williams <i>Policy-Making for Education Reform in Developing Countries</i>. (cont. below)</p>	Work on our final paper/product: A system analysis and reform plan for improving one or more components of the system to support early

Week	Date and Focus of Class	Readings to be completed	Assignments Due
		Crouch, L. and DeStefano, J. (2015). <i>A Practical Approach to In-Country Systems Research</i> . Paper presented at the Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) Program Launch Conference, Washington DC, June 2015.	grade reading in your own context Post and respond to others' posts about discussion prompts
Nov 6 (Week 10)	Components of the system: financing	Saavedra, J. (2002). <i>Education Financing in Developing Countries: Level and Sources of Funds</i> . World Bank Institute.	Continue to work on your final paper/product Post and respond to others' posts about discussion prompts
Nov 13 (Week 11)	Sharing of draft final paper/product	None	Post draft of your final product (action plan for system change or reform) on Discussion board; read others' and provide feedback
Nov 20 (Week 12)	Wrapping up	None	Upload Final Paper/Product to the Blackboard website by today, Monday, November 27.