

A little targeted instruction goes a long way: Two A/B tests tweaking Uttar Pradesh's FLN programme

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Does a system already running a structured-pedagogy programme need the “full package” of targeted instruction?

Research Question

- Targeted instruction works, but the full package has nine components and is hard to scale inside government systems.
- Individual components of targeted instruction have rarely been tested, especially, where complementary programmes are already in place.
- In this study, we test whether one or two cost-effective components can be integrated into an existing at-scale programme.

Context

- Uttar Pradesh (India): ~19 million children in government primary schools. Around half of Grade 5 students cannot read a Grade 2 level text (ASER Report, 2024).
- NEP 2020 and NIPUN Bharat make foundational learning as national priority.
- Department of Basic Education (Uttar Pradesh) provides every teacher structured daily lesson plans (i.e., Sandarsika) already at scale.



Approach: Two rounds of A/B testing inside the government programme with Grade 4 and 5 students

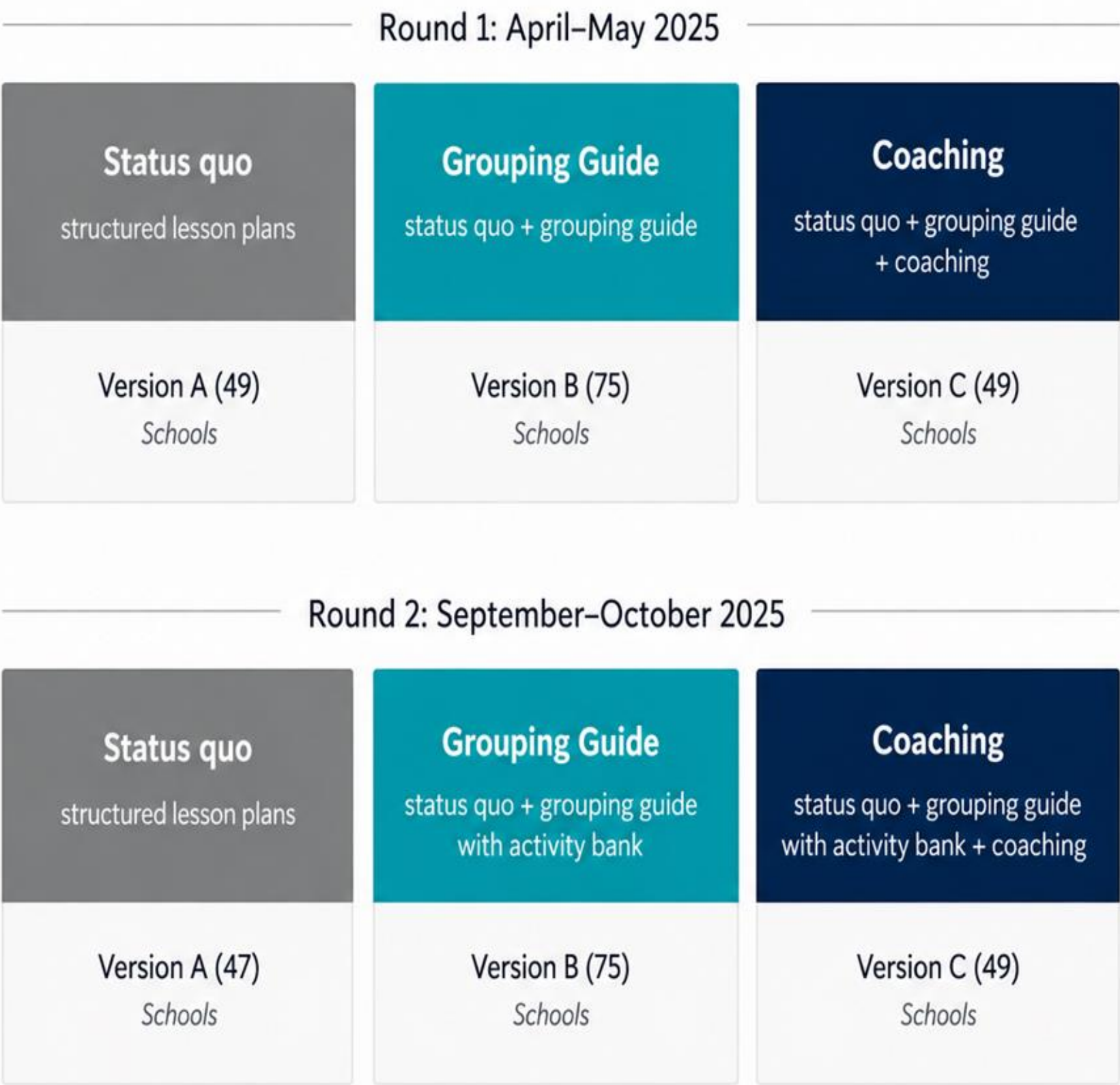


Method

- **Status quo:** *Sandarshika* daily plan, no grouping by learning level or flexibility to adjust lessons based on level.
- Two rounds of A/B tests:
 - R1:** Added a **grouping guide** to help teachers assess, group, and align instruction to current learning levels; weekly **coaching** reinforced use.
 - R2:** Iteration, re-tested the same comparison, with an expanded activity bank and more structured coaching

Measurement: ASER reading level (0–4), assessed by Pratham staff independent of delivery. 3,181 children at baseline; 2,607 tracked across all four assessment points.

Figure 1: A/B test study design



One or two components of targeted instruction programme can be integrated into ongoing at-scale programming, yielding high returns



Findings

- Both beat the status quo at $p < 0.001$.
- The grouping guide cost \$0.76 per child and buys about 15 standard deviations of additional reading per \$100 spent; guide plus coaching cost \$1.87 and buys about 10.
- Implementation fidelity explain mechanism: ability grouping was observed in ~20% of status-quo schools, ~60% under the guide and ~85-90% under coaching.

Implications

- A single low-cost component is highly cost-effective way to improve learning inside a FLN programme already running at scale.
- Lead with the guide. Add coaching where grouping is not taking hold: its effects compound, but it costs 2.5× as much.

Figure 2: Both tweaks move ahead, with growing effects over time

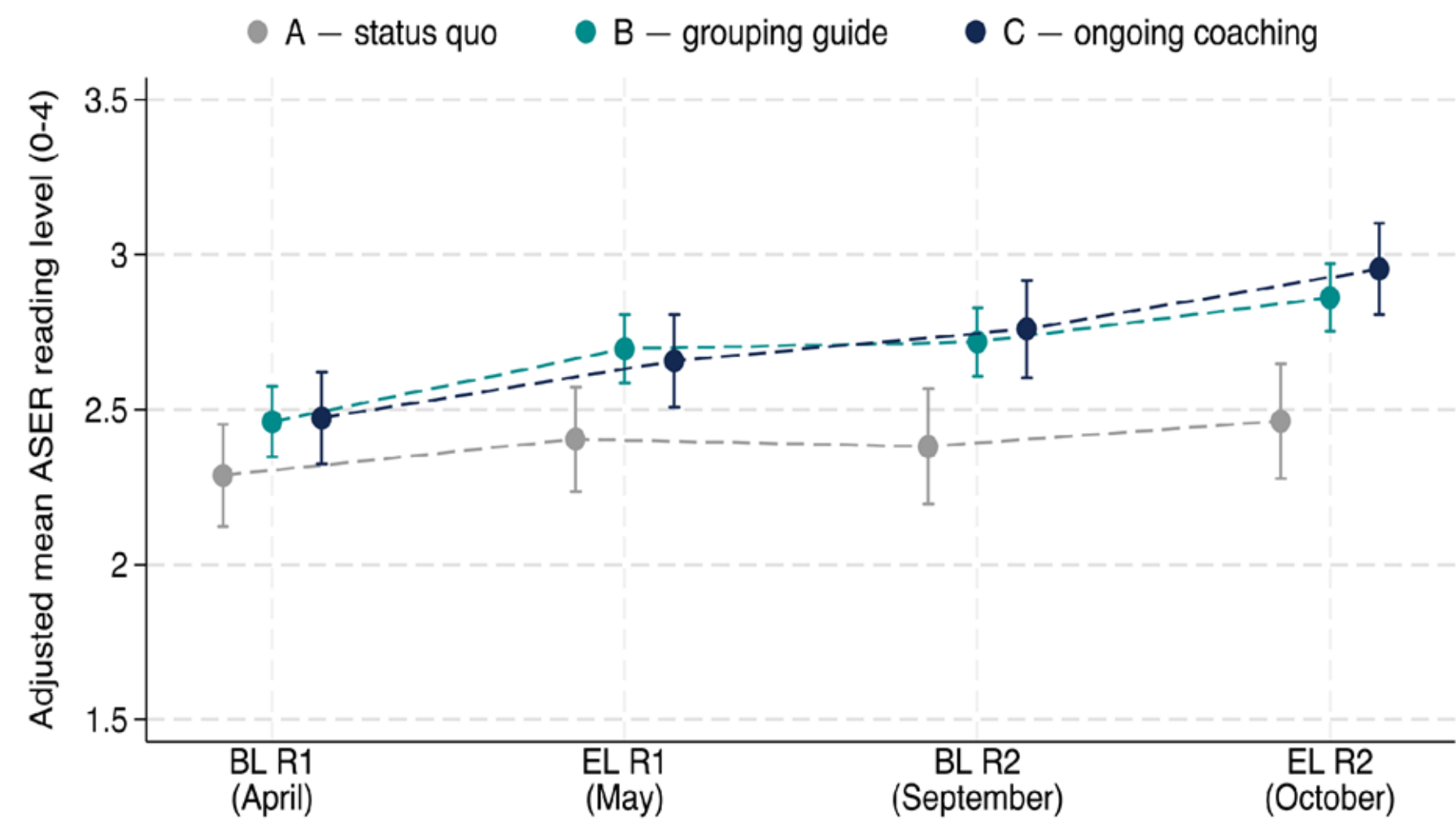


Table 1: Grouping guides are particularly cost-effective

	Reading gain R2 (SD)	Cost per child	SD per \$100
Grouping Guide	+0.12	\$0.76	15.4
Guide + Coaching	+0.19	\$1.87	10.2

Contact information

Thank you!

For more information, please
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