

Editorial

Policy makers face tough choices when evaluating policy alternatives; it is crucial they weigh up the costs of change and balance the positives versus potential negative economic or political impacts. Should they pursue what is most technically feasible? What is most politically and socially achievable? Or focus on what can be sustainable long term? Policy makers also need to find the right balance between modernising and disruption, foster innovation while recognising the socially highly conservative nature of education, and leverage potential with existing capacity.

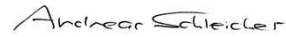
But to transform education at scale, a radical vision is not enough. High-quality research and smart strategies need to be in place to make often difficult changes possible. Research can help policy makers lower the political cost of taking action by backing difficult decisions with evidence. And the good news is that our knowledge about what works in education has improved vastly. It is true that digitalisation has contributed to the rise in populism and “post-truth” societies that can work against rational policy making. But more and better data and new analytical tools have also massively expanded the scope and power of comparative social research to create a more evidence-based environment. This has helped drive the development of better policies and teaching practices.

And yet, many barriers remain to the systematic use of educational research in policy and practice. Education research sometimes fails to focus on the questions that are most relevant to policy makers, while research results are not always available in a form intelligible to them. The links between research and practice are equally fraught, and teachers and school leaders face similarly hard decisions to policy makers. Education has yet to become a knowledge sector that can effectively adapt its practices by using research about their effectiveness. In many other fields, people enter their professional lives expecting their practice to be transformed by research, but that is not necessarily the case in education. Far too often, education leaders fail to scrutinise their own practices and their effectiveness. There is, of course, a large body of research about learning but much of it is unrelated to the work of teachers in the classroom. Even the most relevant work has insufficient impact, with practitioners sometimes working in isolation and building their practice on received wisdom about what works.

How, then, can a culture of research engagement be created and nurtured in policy and practice? How can we ensure that continuous professional learning is both a norm and a deliberate strategy in organisations and systems? And how can we move beyond prescribing what teachers should do, given that this is unlikely to transform teachers' practices?

The answer to these questions hinges firstly on leadership. Effective leadership within organisations ensures that research and innovation are tightly connected and work towards systematic improvement. It ensures a consistent understanding of the respective roles and impact of the various structures, processes and approaches, and how they connect and complement each other. Secondly, it also lies in effective system-level co-ordination of research generation, which is fundamental to building a robust knowledge base and increasing engagement with this evidence.

This report shows that this can be achieved. Examples from across the world illustrate how quality research can and is making a difference. But much more can be done. Our schools and universities of today are our economy and society of tomorrow. Only bold, innovative and evidence-based education policy and practice will help develop better and more equitable economic outcomes, greater social participation and stronger democracies.



Andreas Schleicher,

OECD Director for Education and Skills,

Special Advisor on Education Policy to the Secretary-General at the OECD



From:

Who Really Cares about Using Education Research in Policy and Practice?

Developing a Culture of Research Engagement

Access the complete publication at:

<https://doi.org/10.1787/bc641427-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2023), "Editorial", in *Who Really Cares about Using Education Research in Policy and Practice?: Developing a Culture of Research Engagement*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/000074ef-en>

This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. Extracts from publications may be subject to additional disclaimers, which are set out in the complete version of the publication, available at the link provided.

The use of this work, whether digital or print, is governed by the Terms and Conditions to be found at <http://www.oecd.org/termsandconditions>.