

Foreword

Policy makers like immediate answers but education research moves at a snail's pace: It sometimes takes decades before a longitudinal survey yields policy-relevant insights to the burning questions we have right now. Education research also does not always focus on the questions that are most relevant to policy makers and practitioners. Nor are research results always available in a form intelligible to them. And even when they are, research will have insufficient impact if it is not used to challenge conventional wisdom or long-held beliefs in what works. Sometimes policy makers and practitioners forget that data are not the plural of anecdote, and often they are simply too busy to look for research-based answers. On top of that, education systems often lack adequate infrastructure and mechanisms to support them in using research in their daily decisions.

In the medical sector, a vaccine will not go into the field before clinical trials have delivered sufficient evidence that it will not be harmful – even amid a pandemic. In contrast, 9 out of 10 reforms studied in OECD's Education Policy Outlook did not even attempt to study their long-term efficacy. It is no surprise then that the health sector invests 17 times more on research and innovation than the education sector does even though education and health occupy similar positions in public budgets.

The price of this disconnect between education policy, research and practice has been high: Over the last few decades, education in most OECD countries has lost productivity, with teacher salaries having risen but outcomes not improved.

The good news is that we can do better. The OECD's Strengthening the Impact of Education Research project looks at a question at the heart of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI)'s mission: How can we make education research more relevant and more impactful? This report represents the first step towards addressing the knowledge gap on what and how initiatives to increase the use of research can be effective. It brings together leading experts who discuss recent research in the field of education and other sectors. The report describes mechanisms used to strengthen the impact of education research in policy and practice, and the different levels of engagement by individual and institutional actors in these processes. It also looks at the drivers of, and barriers to, using research in education policy and practice systematically and at scale.

Getting this right is important. Our schools and universities of today are our economy and society 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.



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