Achieving Evidence Uptake: Global Learnings from the Jacobs Foundation's *Evidence in Practice* event

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SALEX School Action Learning Exchange

JACOBS FOUNDATION Our Promise to Youth

RESULTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Executive Summary

This learning brief presents lessons and case studies for how to achieve the uptake of evidence for better education outcomes that were shared by over 200 global education researchers, practitioners, policymakers, and donors in March 2024 during the *Evidence in Practice* global event in Barranquilla, Colombia.

The event provided an opportunity for education experts to present research and evidence from their work around the world and to discuss strategies, successes, and challenges they have faced in moving from evidence generation to evidence uptake. The learnings from the event are shared across four themes.

Evidence generation. Participants shared that evidence uptake starts long before a study has been completed, and maximizing the potential for evidence uptake is dependent on many decisions related to research design and implementation, including:

- Research questions
- Stakeholders involved in the research design process
- Methods and type of evidence being generated
- The intervention being studied.

Evidence use and uptake strategies. After the research has been completed, participants shared a series of lessons related to outreach and dissemination itself, including:

- How best to know and diversify evidence audiences
- Crafting messages that are persuasive and compelling
- Using a range of channels effectively to deliver the evidence
- Being opportunistic in getting evidence out.

Evidence for policy change. A significant amount of education research focuses on the effectiveness of policies, and discussions during the event revealed important lessons and challenges specifically related to evidence uptake in policy communities, including:

- Identifying government champions
- Leveraging policymaker incentives to guide outreach
- Balancing system-wide views with policy-specific views in the evidence
- Addressing issues of government turnover.

Evidence for school-level change. Evidence can also play an important role in strengthening classroom and school decisions and actions, and participants highlighted tactics that can improve opportunities for uptake among teachers and school leaders including:

- Taking a broad view of how evidence is defined
- Involving school actors in sensemaking of research findings and as messengers
- Investing the capacity of teachers and school leaders to be involved in the evidence process
- Designing evidence generation and uptake activities with teacher incentives and constraints in mind
- Expanding evidence uptake from one school to many.

Introduction

In March 2024, a diverse group of leaders in global education research, practice, and policy came together for the *Evidence in Practice* global event in Barranquilla, Colombia. Participants included members of two communities: the School Action Learning Exchange and the Jacobs Foundation Research Fellows.

The **School Action Learning Exchange (SALEX)** is a global network that brings together organizations supporting schools, school leaders, and teachers. Its diverse founding members, spanning six continents and including national NGOs, multilateral institutions, and global organizations, collaborate to share knowledge, build capacity and implement effective practices in education. Supported by the Jacobs Foundation and facilitated by Results for Development (R4D), SALEX fosters knowledge exchange, collaborative research, and impactful projects aligned with its learning agenda, benefiting both local contexts and the broader global education community.

The **Jacobs Foundation Research Fellows (JRFs)** are researchers whose work is dedicated to improving the learning and development of children and youth worldwide. Fellowships are awarded to cohorts of early- or mid-career researchers annually, and the *Evidence in Practice* event brought together representatives from all cohorts of the Research Fellow program.

Together, the participants from SALEX, JRF, and the wider community represented academics from a myriad of disciplines, MEL and program leads from education-focused NGOs, and civil society and Foundation representatives. While each individual looks at their work from different lenses and uses different approaches, a common goal shared among all participants was the objective to utilize evidence to improve global education outcomes.

What do we mean by evidence use, translation, and uptake. Translating evidence into changes at the individual, school, and policy levels is not easy and not guaranteed. Many research studies that reveal important and potentially valuable insights about improving education are never put into practice, and knowing how to turn research findings into actionable recommendations is a skill in and of itself.

The Jacobs Foundation defines evidence generation and uptake among education organizations according to four key dimensions: culture of evidence (is there a strong commitment to evidence in decision-making), effectiveness (has the approach been proven to be effective based on rigorous evidence), implementability (can the approach be integrated into the system and implemented effectively), and transferability (is the approach relevant and transferable to a broader setting).

For the purposes of this learning brief and the discussions that took place in Barranquilla, we use the following definitions and framing for evidence use, translation, and uptake:

Evidence

- We use an expansive definition of evidence, including research evidence (including journal articles and peer-reviewed papers), sector-generated evidence (including student assessment data and feedback surveys), practice-informed advice from individuals and organizations, and all other forms of evidence that contribute to informed decision-making within the education sector (Hayter and Morales, 2023).

Evidence Generation

- We define evidence generation as any activities that support the creation of new data, research, or other evidence, including the design of research studies, data collection and analysis, and gathering of new data or evidence (qualitative or quantitative).

Evidence Translation

- We use an adaptation of the definition of translation introduced in the Results for Development (R4D) 2018 study on evidence translation – translation is an active process through which actors identify, filter, interpret, adapt, contextualize and communicate evidence for the purposes of policymaking or other intended change.

Evidence Uptake

- Here again, we use an expansive definition, in which evidence uptake refers to any use of evidence for concrete behavior, narrative, or policy change. This could include evidence-informed policy decisions by government officials, changes in teaching practices in the classroom that are informed by evidence, and a range of other uses.

While evidence translation and uptake in particular are not easy, they are achievable – and during the *Evidence in Practice* event, participants had the opportunity to share and learn from a myriad of real-life cases that highlighted how stakeholders can effectively translate evidence into positive change in the global education sector.

About this learning brief. This brief shares learnings from these cases of successful (and in some cases, unsuccessful) efforts to achieve evidence uptake for better education outcomes. We organize these learnings around several themes:

Evidence Generation	**Research design**
Evidence Use and Uptake Strategies	**Audience strategies**
	Message strategies
	Channel strategies
	External factors strategies
Specific Uptake Goals	**Policy change**
	School-level change
Challenges	**Challenges**

Evidence generation. Optimizing the potential for evidence uptake starts at the beginning of the research process. Participants shared several lessons for strategies that researchers can take during the design and implementation of studies to lay a smooth path for the translation of evidence after the study ends.

Evidence use and uptake strategies. Several factors influence whether research is actually used by decisionmakers and other stakeholders, including who (the audience), what (the message), and how (the channels) evidence is being communicated. In addition, an array of external factors can play a role in whether evidence is ultimately used. Participants shared strategies to leverage and mitigate these internal and external factors that they have found effective.

Strategies for specific uptake goals. In addition to general uptake strategies, participants highlighted specific translation tactics that can support two types of uptake – evidence uptake at the policy level and evidence uptake at the school level. These evidence use goals are common across many global education researchers and evidence generators but may require different approaches to achieve impact.

Challenges. Finally, participants shared evidence uptake challenges that do not always have clear strategies or tactics associated with them. While these challenges can stand in the way of evidence uptake, they are important to understand and acknowledge as part of the evidence generation and use process to circumvent or mitigate them as much as possible.

The brief presents a set of learnings analyzed from event notes and recordings, and it features cases and lessons from SALEX members and Research Fellows who are included in a list of acknowledgements at the end of this brief. The brief has been produced as a learning product for the SALEX network by the SALEX backbone team at Results for Development (R4D). It is designed as a complementary product to the forthcoming research brief – *Unpacking how education learning networks can best support evidence use in global education.*

The remainder of this learning brief is organized into four sections that broadly align with the themes highlighted above – learnings for Evidence Generation, Evidence Translation and Use, Policy Change, and School-Level Change. Within each theme, we share strategies identified by *Evidence in Practice* event participants as well as cases that help illustrate these tactics and challenges that emerged within each theme.

Evidence Generation

Feature Case – Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa.

Between June 2023 and January 2024, TaRL Africa was interested in studying the effectiveness of an adaptation to the TaRL program providing teacher-led peer mentoring in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Despite having deep and extensive experience implementing rigorous randomized control trials to evaluate its work, TaRL Africa wanted to take a different approach to its evidence generation, focusing more on learning questions that teachers and program implementers might have about how the program works in practice and applying agile pilot research to rigorously investigate adaptations that could potentially be adopted by schools after the study.

Keep reading to the end of this section to learn how TaRL Africa supported evidence uptake for this study.

A common mistake made by researchers and practitioners alike is not adequately considering outreach and uptake goals in the first stages of the work – the research design itself. Decisions from what research questions to who is involved in the research to what constitutes evidence all influence the likelihood that the ultimate findings are accessed and used by intended audiences. There are several strategies that can be used during the design phase to optimize the potential for uptake later.

Evidence Generation - Learnings

Learning 1 - What research question matters

- Just because something is interesting from an academic view does not mean it will provide insight to the people who would ultimately use the research findings.
- Along these lines, several participants highlighted that "what works" is almost never the only important question; researchers also need to consider why and how something works or it does not to provide useful insights for uptake.
- One valuable question to consider in relation to any primary research question is "what is the root cause;" changes in learner outcomes are complex and difficult to achieve, and understanding the root cause behind changes is valuable for practitioners. ***For example, in their research on models to promote whole child development, Kizazi not only looks at whether an approach in a classroom is working, but also what enduring changes in perceptions and relationships among the teachers, community members and children are taking place.***

Learning 2 – Who contributes to the research design matters

- Research benefits from having those who have the potential to take up findings involved in all phases, including the design.
- The research question that "the highest paid person in the room" asks will be different than what is asked by the teacher or school leader who will be implementing the program. And if the person implementing the program is uninterested in the research question, the chance of uptake is very low. ***Education International recognized this in their work on Teacher Learning Circles, making the decision to have research questions identified solely by the teachers involved in the program.***
- Involving education practitioners in the research design also has the potential to build capacity for them to integrate evidence-informed decision making and monitoring and learning activities into their day-to-day work.

Learning 3 – What type of evidence matters

- Not all evidence is created equal – but there is also not one single method that is "right" for increasing evidence uptake.
- Participants pointed to the value of including qualitative data, even when randomized controlled trials (RCT) and other quantitative findings are also important. And working with academic researchers can help ensure that the qualitative data being collected is rigorous and informs the interpretation and "sense making" of results. ***Like TARL Africa, Global Schools Forum found that qualitative approaches help us understand why and how education innovations work. As part of the GSF Impact at Scale Labs program, Dignitas' LeadNow edtech innovation used qualitative feedback alongside A-B testing to understand why some designs were more effective than others.***
- Participants also raised concerns about the risk of relying too heavily on self-reported data without having a means of triangulation.
- While many participants have deep experience using RCTs, even quantitative researchers highlighted that RCTs are not the only method – nor are they always the right method.

Learning 4 – Look where evidence is missing, or where it may already exist

- There is no shortage of research questions that would benefit from more evidence, but there is also a large evidence base that already exists in global education.
- Researchers should consider prioritizing questions that are significantly lacking in existing evidence, especially when practitioners including teachers and policymakers are faced with more evidence than they are likely to be able to use in their decisions and actions.

Learning 5 – What intervention matters

- As with research questions, the design of the intervention being tested should be something that fits the local context in which it is being tested. Positive findings about a brilliant intervention that has no likelihood of being adopted (because of resources, external constraints, or opposition) are unlikely to be used to improve education.
- ***Partners including RTI International and Youth Impact highlighted this issue, and researcher Amy Ogan noted that this was an issue that emerged in her recent study of an edtech program in Cote d'Ivoire: "There were a lot of hidden constraints that would indicate whether our evidence was useful or would be used by [government officials]. If they decided that there was absolutely no budget for trainings [part of the intervention], then the evidence would not matter. Luckily they found budget, but sometimes those constraints are not visible."***

Challenges

- **Challenges to supporting and incentivizing multistakeholder and multidisciplinary research.** As one small group highlighted during the *Evidence in Practice* event, researchers from different disciplines are rarely at the same conferences, never mind researchers and practitioners. The result is that research design and interpretation can take place in an echo chamber and important perspectives can be missed.

The rest of the story - Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa. Even before completing their pilot study of teacher-led mentoring, TaRL Africa saw an immediate response from the teachers involved – and from other districts. The evidence generated from studying the teacher-led mentoring program was of such interest and value to schools that comparison (non-treatment) schools expressed interest in implementing teacher-led mentoring, and the local government is looking for funding to build out this mentoring solution in 100 new schools.

Evidence Use and Uptake Strategies

Feature Case - PAL Network.

Since 2005, the PAL Network has been undertaking research and evidence generation to utilize citizen-led assessments (CLAs) in order to change the narrative around childhood learning from access to quality. While CLAs have been able to highlight findings that show the critical importance of education quality in improving learner outcomes, the evidence alone was not enough to achieve the policy and school-level changes needed to consistently and comprehensively strengthen education quality in schools around the world. PAL Network realized that they needed to leverage evidence use and uptake strategies to make these changes happen.

Keep reading to the end of this section to learn how the PAL Network supported evidence uptake as part of this work.

During and after the completion of research, dissemination and outreach activities are needed to maximize the potential that evidence is seen and used by the people involved in schools and education systems. Outreach provides an opportunity for researchers and their partners to assess the factors that contribute to or hinder evidence use and uptake – and to design strategies to leverage or mitigate these factors. The *Evidence in Practice* event surfaced four types of factors that can play an important role in evidence use and uptake – and that can be built into outreach strategies: Audience, Message, Channel, and External Factors.

Evidence Use and Uptake Strategies - Learnings

Learning 1 – Know, diversify, and involve your audience

- **Value of stakeholder mapping** – look at who has the potential to take up your evidence, what are their levels of interest and prioritization, their alignment, and their incentives with what the evidence says? And what do you want them to do with the evidence? ***SALEX member Kizazi recommends that, if there are lots of audiences to consider, categorize these into discrete groups and prioritize which groups to focus on (including which groups might enhance or derail the process) and what is of value to each of the different groups. Kizazi also shares the value of seeing how to engage groups with each other to cultivate local champions and build community (for example, involving a head teacher and a community member to speak about the evidence and interpretation from their experience in the government stakeholder meeting).***
- **Scaffolding stakeholders** – even if some audiences are higher-priority than others, do not only focus on one group or level. While evidence may have a clear "uptake point" (such as policy or classroom decisions), there are many groups of influencers, and directing outreach to multiple groups increases the potential that it gets used eventually. ***SALEX member Youth Impact highlights one example of this strategy in their work in Botswana (see box below).***
- **Interpret with your audiences –** while your research may highlight concrete findings, audiences should be brought in when it comes to interpretation and sense-making of those findings.
- **Agree upon a common language and concepts –** researchers should seek to understand whether there are concepts or terms that they use differently than their stakeholders and should make an effort early on to come to a common lexicon and framework so that the evidence is useful when it is finalized.

Scaffolding Stakeholders with Youth Impact

In Youth Impact's work in Botswana (later expanded globally), some audiences prioritized having published results that they could put stock in, while others found it more important that the organization had team members that could provide them practical support in how to take up findings in their own contexts. Both groups mattered, and Youth Impact had strategies to respond to both sets of needs. By scaffolding stakeholders, the organization was able to take a two-pronged approach to pursue evidence uptake, and both strategies proved to be successful in different places.

Learning 2 – Be strategic and creative in crafting the message

- **Meet your audience where they are.** When sharing evidence, use the terms and formats that your audiences are already using. In many cases, this means distilling findings into short and simple statements that are **solution oriented**.
- **Start with persuasion if people are not fully on board.** There are many potential constraints for research findings being used, but one primary constraint is that people do not believe the findings or the recommendations from them. If this is a barrier with one of your audience groups, participants highlighted that this should be a starting point for outreach; other constraints in implementing findings (like resources or capacity) should be secondary issues.
- **Benchmarking can help.** Collecting and sharing data on where schools or systems are starting from can help both to persuade audiences who are not fully on board and to provide a clear message of how the evidence shows progress against benchmarks.
- **Power of stories.** While numbers can be an important motivator, participants noted the importance of having stories to accompany both qualitative and quantitative data to make it clear how the research shows changes in the lives and outcomes of people.

Learning 3 – Explore all of your possible channels to distribute the message

- **Don't settle for a single channel.** Participants highlighted that researchers should take a lot of shots through a lot of different channels because it is not always clear what is going to resonate with each of your audiences.
- **Potential of social media.** Channels like X and LinkedIn can be ways to force researchers to distill their findings into short and easy-to-digest messages that may reach more of your audiences than an academic paper. ***As researcher Alex Eble found in his research on improving literacy and numeracy in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau, sometimes a simple and unexpected channel can make the biggest difference:***

> *The thing that had the biggest impact surprised me – but the most influential thing we did in terms of changing national systems was a really good thread on Twitter. We took all findings from the two studies and condensed them into core messages and nothing else. We made them modular, had good images – so people could parachute in and learn what we were doing, and if they left after the 2nd or 6th tweet, they would have the core messages and could take them away. And it worked. People shared it, they talked about it, and the word got out. All of a sudden, resources came to us. I did not expect the big lever would be Twitter and not the visibility of publication in a top journal. So that is one lesson – throw a bunch of stuff at the wall.*

- **Potential of mass media.** Especially for findings that are large and/or surprising, mass traditional media (such as television, newspaper, and radio) can be a way to amplify the message and sometimes even change the narrative.
- **More messengers are better than fewer.** Beyond the message itself, finding fellow messengers can help amplify the evidence and persuade those who may need to hear the message from more than one source.

Learning 4 – Assess your external context, and be opportunistic

- **Using timing to your advantage.** During times of uncertainty (for example, elections or political instability), there may be greater opportunity for positive findings to resonate and be picked up by decision makers or other audiences. Use these moments to your advantage.
- **Listen and make outreach a conversation.** Outreach is sometimes designed as a one-way activity – i.e. researcher delivering findings to their audiences. However, evidence uptake is more likely if researchers listen to how their audiences respond to the initial messages and adapt to their responses. These responses can also catalyze dialogues about how to use the evidence or where more information may be needed.
- **Use null results too.** Researchers often focus on positive findings, but it is important to be opportunistic about negative or null results as well, especially if these results can help audiences understand where to change their behavior away from a certain action or policy.

Challenges

- **Messaging challenges.** Participants highlighted that it can be difficult to generate and communicate evidence in a way that is seen as adaptive and not punitive (especially at the school level). Research often focuses on models or interventions that may improve something that is not currently working well, and while this research can lead to important recommendations for how to improve, it can be perceived as criticism of current practices.

- **Balancing ease of understanding with accurate presentation of results and research.** As we discuss above, evidence uptake relies on audiences who would take up the message (often policymakers or school actors) to find the results compelling and understandable. However, coming up with an "easy to understand" message has the potential to dilute the nuance of the evidence. ***Researcher Kathryn Humphreys shared one example from studies of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Research on ACEs was so compelling to medical and education professionals that findings were often adopted in a way that oversimplified the findings in a way that could in fact be harmful to children and families.***

- **Academic incentives do not always align with evidence uptake.** For many researchers, the primary and immediate goals of research relate to professional advancement, such as the publication of studies in peer-reviewed journals and securing tenure at top universities. While many researchers also hope that their research is used and useful to education stakeholders, this may be a secondary incentive.

- **Need for more resources of outreach and uptake.** Research funding often does not require plans or activities related to the use of evidence, such as dissemination or outreach activities. Outreach requires significant time and funding, and if it is not resourced properly, it is unlikely to be done well – or done at all. Donors could better incentivize evidence uptake activities in at least two key ways. First, outreach could be included as a mandatory activity in research grant proposals and/or selection criteria that proposals are scored against. Second, donors could require that a portion of the proposed budget is set aside for outreach.

- **Long term evidence use needs to be more than communication and may require coordination or system- based approaches and some of the strategies for policy change listed below.** Even with great communication strategies, policymakers or practitioners can be overwhelmed with multiple messages from organizations or academic teams. High quality evidence use may require more coordination or building of evidence brokering institutions, such as EdLabs that can support policymakers through synthesizing and translating evidence.

The rest of the story – PAL Network. The PAL Network designed a comprehensive and multifaceted outreach strategy, and they worked to overcome the challenges they anticipated facing from audiences. They acknowledged that generating evidence sometimes feels like it is about just extractive assessments, so they made sure their messaging came with solutions too. PAL simplified their messaging of the findings for ordinary citizens to understand, and they facilitated discussions on local actions to improve learning, using village/district report cards. At the same time, they also looked at higher-level uptake, hosting national launches of their research reports and participating in international conferences. Ultimately, this strategy showed real signs of success - donors, NGOs, and government bodies all agreed to the presence of a learning crisis and came together to agree on a call to action. And the PAL Network can see links between their work and concrete changes to the global narrative and even to the SDGs.

Strategies for Policy Change

Feature Case - Motriz.

Since 2016, Brazilian organization Motriz (formerly Instituto Gesto and Vetor Brasil) has worked in collaboration with Departments of Education in the country to collect and share evidence on the Predictors of Learning. They are an evidence based tool harvested from school principals and education managers perceptions that Motriz developed to understand how school networks were performing in terms of structural practices that provide students learning.

Driven by this data, Motriz partners with Departments of Education to implement sustainable and impactful changes for students learning. From the lessons learned from these partnerships with governments, Motriz highlighted challenges that come with both designing and sharing research with policymakers who sometimes face incentives and motivations that may turn progressive policy changes into a challenge. Motriz developed a set of innovative approaches to turn their evidence into policy changes across the country.

Keep reading to the end of this section to learn how Motriz supported evidence uptake with policymakers .

Whether at national or district level, policymakers face a unique set of challenges, motivations and incentives related to making policy that supports learners and schools. Government officials may have more evidence than they need rather than less, and evidence-informed policy choices that are the right choice on paper may not survive budget constraints or pushback from other stakeholders. Despite these obstacles, participants highlighted several tactics that can help researchers and their partners translate their findings into real policy changes.

Strategies for Policy Change - Learnings

Learning 1 – Identify government champions, and work with them early and often

- Taking up evidence that recommends a change in policy will ultimately require champions who often influence policy decisions.
- Participants noted that identifying champions early and engaging with them consistently, from research co-design to sharing and making sense of the findings, helped to ensure that they were more willing and interested in implementing changes when the research was completed. ***Researcher Amy Ogan noted that, in her multi-year study on edtech interventions in Cote d'Ivoire, her team had biweekly meetings with their NGO partner that was working closely with the government and semi-regular in-person meetings with the Ministry of Education. This consistency was needed to get buy-in for the results when the study came to a close.***
- While these engagements take a lot of time and resources, there was strong consensus that this is one of the best strategies for achieving policymaker uptake of findings.

Learning 2 – Use policymaker incentives to guide the message and outreach

- Like any audience, policymakers have incentives for the decisions that they make, and understanding these can help to design the best strategic approach for messaging and outreach of findings.
- ***The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlighted how this has been a successful strategy for their work. As an independent research organization, EEF is able to appeal to incentives that policymakers face in having a "stamp of approval" for their work from a party that is seen as non-partisan, allowing EEF to ensure that their findings are taken seriously and often implemented by government officials across the political spectrum.***

Learning 3 – Balance a narrow focus with a system view

- While some policymakers have influence over the entire education system, most government officials are focused on one component of education – and changes to specific components of education may be easier to sell to government champions.
- Narrowing the scope of research can be a helpful way to ensure that findings provide recommendations that are feasible and adoptable for policymakers.
- Furthermore, providing a systemic view together with a narrow focus for action might help stakeholders locate where there are opportunities for sustainable coherent changes.
- ***At the same time, SALEX member Educate! highlighted the importance of considering the role that more modular changes in education will have to the entire system so that adopted recommendations do not inadvertently harm other components of the education system.***

Learning 4 – Use and package existing evidence

- ***One SALEX member provided some caution when it comes to generating new evidence to share with policymakers: "Policymakers are not lacking in evidence – they are drowning in it."***
- Stakeholders seeking to influence evidence-based policy decisions should recognize that policymakers have to sift through significant piles of evidence in their work, and sometimes the best strategy is to be better at consolidating and messaging existing evidence.

Challenges

- **Donor structures need to better align with supporting collaboration and long-term activities.** Using evidence to create changes in education systems is a long-term goal and one that requires many perspectives and actors. Unfortunately, the ways that funders work are often misaligned with this reality. For many donor programs, multiple actors are competing for the same pot of funding, making it difficult to motivate greater collaboration. Further, when funding is provided for a short time period, researchers are forced to develop research questions and milestones that can be answered in the short term without acknowledging that big changes may take much longer to be realized.

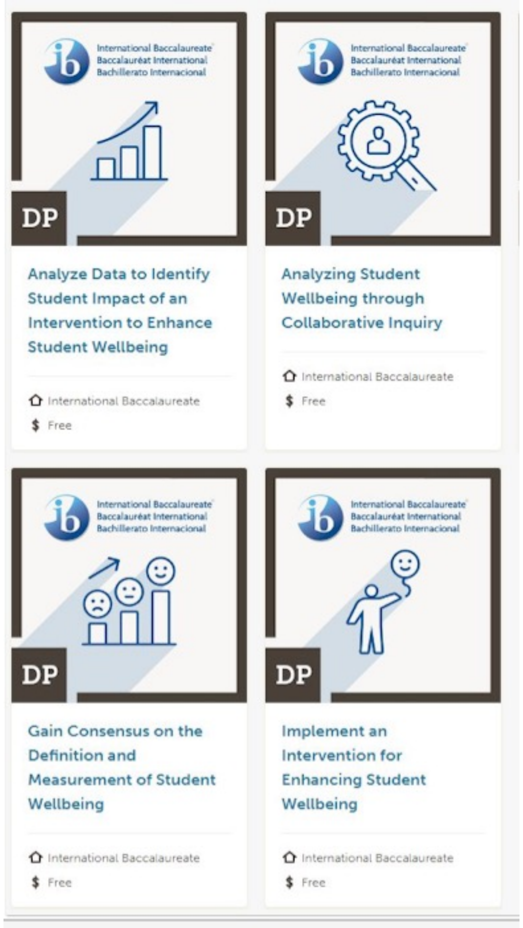
The rest of the story – Motriz. Motriz designed every element of their Predictors of Learning to respond to the needs as well as the potential criticism of policymakers. They recognized that indicators like these could face pushback from policymakers who do not want to be seen as underperforming, and so the team developed innovative ways to pair the data with potential solutions that policymakers could take on. Data harvested from school principals and Department of Education managers is based on evidence and is turned into a local contextualized diagnosis. Data is used to define practice, which is part of the design of the program implemented in partnership with local governments. Motriz also designed the evidence and related dissemination as an annual process, allowing policymakers to see that they would have space and support to improve school performance over time. Finally, Motriz stuck with the research year after year, recognizing that it takes time to change the behavior and attitudes of government officials, but that change can eventually take place.

Strategies for School-Level Change

Feature Case – International Baccalaureate (IB).

Supporting teachers to take up evidence related to student wellbeing has been a priority of International Baccalaureate for many years. But the team at IB also understands the challenges that teachers face in building evidence into their day-to-day teaching practice. Evidence can be complex and tedious to comb through, and it may not always be clear how to best integrate that evidence into the classroom. IB sought to address these challenges through the development of a new micro-credentialing program being piloted in collaboration with Digital Promise.

Keep reading to the end of this section to learn how IB is supporting evidence uptake for this innovation.



Like policymakers, teachers and school leaders face specific challenges and incentives to integrating evidence in their work. Research findings may not automatically be transferable to the reality of what happens in a classroom, and school-level actors are often overstretched with school priorities that do not include interpreting and implementing evidence. To successfully achieve evidence uptake at the school level, researchers and their partners need to speak to the needs of teachers and school leaders, including their priorities, their objectives, and the constraints.

Strategies for School-Level Change - Learnings

Learning 1 – Reconsider the definition of evidence at the school level

- While rigorous evidence of different forms continues to have an important role to play in school-level decisions, the views and experiences of teachers provide important insights that also need to inform classroom and school-level decisions.
- These data can be collected using rigorous methods – but even when they are not, they should be included in the pool of evidence helping to inform practices.

Learning 2 – Sense making should happen in the classroom – and in a way that makes sense to teachers

- Researchers may be the ones generating findings, but interpreting findings related to school-level change should happen with teachers and school leaders to ensure recommendations take into consideration the context of the schools and classrooms where they work.
- Participants also highlighted that teachers may be more amenable to uptake of findings if they are able to "see the findings" rather than being told. Researchers can do this through site visits, videos, or other means.
- ***According to TaRL Africa*, one way to help ensure that sense-making actually happens in the classroom is to be present during the research phase. TaRL Africa sat with schools and teachers during their study of teacher-led peer mentoring, allowing them to respond quickly to questions and requests from the schools and to interpret the findings together in real-time.**

Learning 3 – Invest in capacity development for teachers and school leaders to engage in evidence generation and translation

- In some settings and for some research, teachers may lack the capacity to engage in the generation and interpretation of evidence. Participants noted this should be seen as an opportunity for investment rather than a challenge.
- Researchers and their partners should support capacity building of teachers through things like coaching and/or tools and guides so that teachers can engage with the evidence directly, making it more likely that it be taken up.

Learning 4 – Consider the barriers and the incentives that teachers and school leaders face in taking up evidence

- Teachers and school leaders face unique challenges and incentives in their work. Challenges can include issues like time and resources to use evidence, and incentives can include intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.
- All of these can be used by researchers to increase the chance that their findings are taken up, as the example from the IB shows.
- ***One way to align research findings with teacher incentives is to make sure that what is being tested and innovated on is in line with teachers' existing priorities, as HundrED found in their research on wellbeing innovations.***

Learning 5 – Teachers and school leaders should be the key messengers

- Researchers may be the first messenger for research findings, but they should not be the main messenger.
- Having teachers and school leaders as the main messengers ensures that the message is being delivered in a language and channel that is familiar to classroom stakeholders.
- It is also a signal to researchers of the value of their findings in a classroom setting; if a teacher is willing to advocate for evidence-based recommendations, this is a sign that they (and likely other teachers) value those findings.

Learning 6 – School-level change does not need to stop in one school

- Finally, it is important to think of school-level change as something that can be scaled and expanded beyond a single school or only the schools in the study sample.
- ***For example, Teach For All and Enseña por Colombia (ExC) were able to expand findings from a study on teacher wellbeing, starting by implementing the findings with ExC Fellows and eventually scaling to a regional model for social and emotional learning.***

The rest of the story – International Baccalaureate. The micro credentials that IB developed deliberately addressed barriers and leveraged incentives that teachers face in evidence uptake. Understanding that the time involved in improving knowledge and practice around wellbeing can be an obstacle for teachers, IB ensured that courses were created as very short and easy modules that teachers could find time to take. Recognizing that teachers often benefit from earning formal credentials that go toward their professional development, the online course included a certification for teachers who complete it. While the microcredentials are still being piloted, early signs from teachers who have tested the model highlight that these design choices will make this an effective way to get actionable evidence on wellbeing into the hands of teachers and school leaders.

Summary

While there is no single strategy that is guaranteed to result in the successful translation, use, and uptake of evidence, the global education experts cited in this brief highlight a diverse set of tactics and approaches that can optimize the opportunity for evidence to be used for real change in learner outcomes. These learnings include ideas across four key dimensions of evidence generation and uptake:

Evidence generation. During research design and implementation, use outreach and uptake goals to guide all aspects of the research including:

- Research questions
- Stakeholders involved in the research design process
- Methods and type of evidence being generated
- The intervention being studied.

Evidence use and uptake strategies. In designing and implementing dissemination with different audiences:

- Get to know and work to diversify evidence audiences
- Craft messages that are persuasive and compelling
- Use a range of channels effectively to deliver the evidence
- Be opportunistic in getting evidence out.

For **evidence for policy change,** work with government officials and policymakers to ensure that the evidence speaks to their needs, challenges, and incentives. Tactics to use include:

- Identifying government champions
- Leveraging policymaker incentives to guide outreach
- Balancing system-wide views with policy-specific views in the evidence
- Addressing issues of government turnover.

Finally, for **evidence for school-level change,** the school itself should be the focus of all research and outreach activities. This can be achieved through a range of tactics:

- Taking a broad view of how evidence is defined
- Involving school actors in sensemaking of research findings and as messengers
- Investing the capacity of teachers and school leaders to be involved in the evidence process
- Designing evidence generation and uptake activities with teacher incentives and constraints in mind
- Expanding evidence uptake from one school to many.

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