

DEVELOP

A CULTURE OF R&D IN EDUCATION

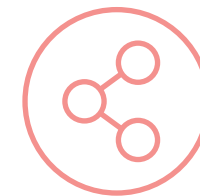
Leaders across all parts of the education ecosystem—from government to civil society to business—must embrace new approaches to solving problems at scale. Building a strong culture of R&D within the education ecosystem is a key step. A culture of R&D is one where ideas are exchanged openly, new education approaches to seemingly intransigent problems, such as improving learning outcomes for marginalized children, are tried and evaluated, failures are honestly shared, and data inform decisions on changes to practice and policy. All the actors in the ecosystem are flexible and creative, adapting to different contexts as they develop and scale solutions. The Zambian government embraced a culture of R&D when its Lesson Study practice empowered teachers to experiment with new ways of supporting their own development through peer learning. So did the NGO BRAC when experimenting with an accelerated learning program to bring more children into the formal school system in Bangladesh. But to truly develop an inclusive and adaptive education ecosystem, this culture of R&D must extend beyond individual initiatives and become a shared ethos across the education community. To develop a shared culture of R&D in education:

Leaders in government should provide full encouragement, space, and support for trying new ways to tackle persistent education problems. This includes:

- **Adapting rules and policies** to allow a new approach to be tried. The national education ministry in Brazil, for example, allowed the state ministry in Amazonas to test a new approach to distance learning, which gave rise to the Media Center model.
- **Funding new approaches** that hold promise. The Honduran government pays the salaries of tutors in the Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial program who teach in the alternative secondary school reaching young people living in rural areas.
- **Providing infrastructure support** that helps new approaches flourish. The Kenyan government's National Library Service is working with Worldreader to incorporate e-readers loaded with digital books throughout the country's public library network.

Leaders across philanthropy, civil society, government, and business should actively cultivate a cohort of Learning Leaders.

To truly shift to a culture of R&D throughout the education ecosystem, leaders at all levels should be equipped with the competencies to embrace this approach, such as risk taking, experimentation, continuous learning, and adaptation. Within each country context, an initiative to support leaders to take on this approach should be actively pursued. Such initiatives could seek to develop the capacity of a cohort of leaders that cuts across levels and sectors, for example from senior policymakers, NGO leaders, and donor heads to educators, principals, program officers, and portfolio managers. Such an initiative would be highly collaborative and multisectoral, building off what exists in each country and drawing from global expertise in leadership development. Philanthropy, government, and business leaders should contribute funding as well as, together with civil society leaders, relevant mentoring, training, and in-kind expertise.



SHARE

NEW IDEAS THROUGH A NETWORK OF IDEA HUBS

Leaders in governments should establish Idea Hubs for identifying, adapting, and sharing effective approaches to improving learning and scaling them. Approaches led by all actors—government, educators, business, civil society—should be discussed. The goal of the Idea Hubs is to provide a nimble mechanism for government decision-makers to stay up to date with new approaches being tried, to review evidence around the approaches, and to identify the ones that could usefully be scaled up by government or with government involvement. This should include a concerted effort to identify local, homegrown innovations that hold promise to improve education in more contexts or communities, but require additional technical support, funding, or capacity building to do so. Idea Hubs will be especially important to help government decision-makers adapt to future changes, such as near-constant evolution in technology that is increasingly used as a tool to address educational problems. These hubs should be linked through a global network to allow for experiences and lessons shared among regional and national Idea Hubs, contributing to a global knowledge bank of effective approaches and conditions that facilitate learning at large scale. The formation of Idea Hubs around learning could draw lessons from innovation units that exist in some governments around the world to identify and facilitate public sector adoption of innovations.