DeliverEd

Researching how to deliver education reforms

The learning crisis
We are just 10 years away from the 2030 deadline to meet the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal 4 of ensuring inclusive, equitable, quality education for all – but over 800 million children and youth are not on track to learn the skills needed to thrive now and in the future. The global learning crisis demands urgent action, and implementation is critical to reform. But as the Education Commission’s landmark Learning Generation report highlights, the actual delivery of policy reforms remains one of the primary challenges to addressing the learning crisis.

Addressing not only what but how
Governments, donors, researchers, multilateral agencies, NGOs, and the private sector have been using various approaches to improve education results, including comprehensive education sector planning processes, and addressing inclusivity, gender sensitivity, and conflict vulnerability. RISE, a multi-country research initiative, is looking at which education system reforms improve learning effectively at large scale. But governments still lack rigorous evidence on how to implement these solutions. While the international community has focused on building knowledge on what needs to happen to improve learning, less attention has been paid to how to do it at a systems level.

One strategy to improving the how is known as the “delivery approach.” First popularized through the UK Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit in the 2000s, delivery approaches range from multi-year “delivery units” to shorter, problem-solving “delivery labs.” Several well-known initiatives include Big Results Now! in Tanzania, the Chief Minister’s Special Monitoring Unit in Punjab, and PEMANDU in Malaysia. More than 40 countries have used delivery approaches across a variety of sectors, including health, education, and at the center of government. Despite this reach, fewer than 10 peer-reviewed articles exist on their impact, and there is very little independent research on delivery approaches in low- and middle-income countries.

A demand for greater evidence
During the dissemination of The Learning Generation report, the Education Commission encountered high demand from policymakers for evidence-based practices around implementation of learning reforms. In response, the Commission held two workshops on delivery in 2017 (Nairobi) and 2018 (Seoul) for a total of 25 national and subnational delegations from Africa and Asia. Following the workshops, many government delegations, development partners, and civil society stakeholders expressed strong interest in better understanding how and under what conditions delivery approaches...
are effective for achieving education system reforms. However, as much of the research on delivery has been conducted by the implementers themselves, there is a need for independent research, particularly on its application in low- and middle-income countries. Thanks to support from DFID, the Education Commission and Oxford’s Blavatnik School of Government are partnering for the next three years to tackle this gap in research and evidence.

**DeliverEd’s objectives**

The DeliverEd program will generate rigorous evidence on policy implementation, so leaders have better tools to guide their education reform efforts. DeliverEd will define what a delivery approach entails and what evidence exists for its efficacy in improving education outcomes, by comprehensively reviewing the evidence base for delivery approaches and reframing the approach beyond delivery units or delivery labs. This will help to unify an understanding of these approaches for both practitioners and academics. DeliverEd will also produce case studies on several countries – including Ghana, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Jordan – that have adopted a delivery approach. Through the country studies, the project will address key research questions, including:

1. What delivery approach was established and what were its characteristics?
2. How was the delivery approach embedded in the government? What were the goals of the approach and who managed it?
3. What outcomes are associated with the approach? How did outcomes change after the approach was taken? What impacted the delivery approach’s outcomes?

DeliverEd aims to produce peer-reviewed articles on delivery from its research as well as a series of policy briefs accessible to decision-makers interested in learning from this research.

Throughout the research process, stakeholder engagement will inform the research and lay the groundwork for timely dissemination to a wide range of stakeholders, particularly policymakers in developing countries. This will be supported by a high-level advisory group that will provide strategic guidance on the project’s content and outputs and connect DeliverEd to other relevant initiatives and partners.

Please email deliver.ed@educationcommission.org to stay informed of DeliverEd’s research and activities.