

**How do we ensure policy development in GCC countries meets the needs of GCC learners?****Key Ideas:**

- GCC based education research needs to form the base for government education decision making in the region.
- There are a number of mechanisms that can be implemented to better support practice to policy alignment.

**All governments grapple with the challenge of measuring and defining impact from national spend on education. In the search for what works, policy makers look to different forms of evidence to help support decision making. Importance sources of evidence in the GCC include publications by agencies such as the OECD, UNESCO and the World Bank.**

**While these publications are often based on credible research about what works in education, they are not usually based on research in the GCC. The unique cultural, demographic and national aspirations of the GCC countries make it essential to ensure education policy and its implementation is based on a solid evidence base of what works in a GCC context.**

**In looking at how other countries have successfully developed a research base to inform policy making, we can take a number of lessons that could be applied to the GCC. These include:**

- **Encouraging more qualitative and action education research.** In deciding what works, we need to focus research on learners themselves, not just systems or processes. This requires an increase in social research using proven qualitative or mix methods approaches and published in peer reviewed journals (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009). In today's data driven society it is tempting to focus only on what data is saying. While this is important, it is also important to ensure the learners voice is central to the research process.
- **Establishing who are the 'researchers' conducting education research.** Obvious researchers are found in university faculty and education ministries. However, in international studies, it was found that some areas of the private sector have valuable research sources that are underutilised for policy making. These include the work of consulting firms and outsourced school inspection organisations, like Tribal, who collect relevant data that could be better utilised as an evidence base for policy making.
- **Developing mechanisms for closer interactions** between researchers and those designing and implementing education policy. These Research Practice Partnerships (RPP) provide formal networks for knowledge brokerage (Alazimi and Alazimi, 2023).
- **Formalising policy evaluation and impact through government evaluation units.** The rise of interest in theory-based evaluation (realist evaluation) prompted many governments to establish evaluation assessment units. These units applied intervention logic methodologies to determine what works, for whom, in what context and by what mechanisms (Powell, 2009). This more 'systems'-oriented approach to policy impact allows depth of insight by recognising social impact of policy is complex and dynamic.
- **Building research capability** among both policy makers and practitioners to ensure education research is in a form that is accessible, credible and usable for government decision making. The skills of information synthesis are core to absorbing research and identifying its application in a specific context.

Tribal prides itself on ensuring all education work in the GCC is supported by a strong evidence base. In particular our school improvement, inspections and skills development work. We are committed to contributing to the regional evidence base by working with governments to use our data and outputs to identify how we can better support national education outcomes.

**For more information on the education research to policy gap in the GCC, get in touch with one of our Middle East Education Specialists.**