The Power Triangle of Education: Unlocking the Relationship of Educational Research, Policy, and Practice

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Abstract

This research explores the intricate interplay of educational research, policy, and practice, collectively referred to as the Power Triangle of Education. The study adopts a qualitative case study design, conducting a cross-case analysis of selected dissertations to identify overarching trends, insights, and key factors that contribute to the relationship between research, policy, and practice. The findings provide evidence of the influence of educational research on policy development, with the alignment between research findings and policy development varying across the dissertations. The investigation of policy implementation in educational practice revealed both successes and challenges, with effective implementation strategies and barriers identified. The assessment of the impact of educational practices on policy improvement demonstrated positive outcomes in various domains, with the need for evidence-based practices and continuous evaluation emphasized. Barriers and enablers in the relationship between research, policy, and practice were identified, with common barriers including a lack of communication and collaboration among stakeholders, limited access to research evidence, and resource constraints. Enablers included strong leadership, supportive policy environments, and effective dissemination of research findings. Based on the research findings, evidence-based recommendations are proposed to enhance the relationship and improve educational outcomes. These include strengthening the connection between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners; enhancing access to research evidence; providing adequate resources and support for policy implementation; fostering a positive and inclusive policy environment; promoting research-practice partnerships; and emphasizing evaluation and monitoring. This research contributes to the understanding of the Power Triangle of Education, providing insights into how educational research, policy, and practice interact and influence each other, and offering recommendations for enhancing this relationship to improve educational outcomes.

Keywords: Power Triangle of Education, Educational Research, Educational Policy, Educational Practice Research-Practice Partnerships

Introduction

Education's landscape is characterized by a multifaceted interaction of research, policy, and practice, with each component exerting influence and simultaneously being influenced by the others. This complex interconnection is encapsulated in what we term the **Power Triangle of Education**. This power triangle symbolizes the vibrant and mutual relationship among educational research, policy, and practice, and it illustrates how these three pillars collaboratively mold the contours of the educational environment.

Educational research provides empirical evidence that informs policy decisions and guides educational practice. However, the use and interpretation of research data in policy-making is not always straightforward. For instance, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has had a

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significant impact on educational policy decisions globally, but its data has also been subject to misuse and oversimplification (Hopfenbeck, 2016).

On the other hand, educational policy can both enable and constrain educational practice. Policies are often shaped by political, economic, and societal forces, and their implementation can have profound effects on the ground. For example, the state policy of the Soviet government in the 1920s had a significant impact on the system of public education during the formation of the Soviet state (Shchukin & Nekrylova, 2021).

Educational practice, the third vertex of the Power Triangle, is where policy is enacted and research is applied. It is in the classrooms, schools, and educational institutions where the impacts of research and policy are most tangibly felt. However, there can be a discrepancy between policy intentions and practical outcomes, as seen in the implementation of inclusion in art education (Ulrichsen, Eriksen, & Bayati, 2021).

In today's educational landscape, the intricate relationship between educational research, policy, and practice holds significant importance. Understanding how these three components interact and influence one another is essential for driving effective policy decisions and implementing evidence-based practices that enhance educational outcomes. This research aims to explore and analyze the relationship between educational research, policy, and practice in the context of improving policies through educational practices.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between educational research, policy, and practice and its impact on policy improvement through educational practices. By examining how research findings inform policy decisions and how those policies are implemented in educational practice, we seek to unravel the dynamics and interactions within the Power Triangle of Education.

While various studies have explored the individual elements of educational research, policy, and practice, there is a need to delve deeper into their interconnections and the mechanisms through which they influence one another. Previous research has often focused on isolated aspects of the relationship, with limited attention given to the specific context of policy improvement through educational practices. This gap in the literature highlights the necessity of conducting a comprehensive exploration of the relationship between educational research, policy, and practice, particularly in the context of policy improvement.

Research studies, such as those conducted by Smith and Johnson (2018), have emphasized the critical role of educational research as a foundation for evidence-based policy decisions in education. However, these studies primarily focused on the influence of research on policy development, overlooking the role of educational practices in policy improvement. Similarly, Roberts (2016) explored the disconnect between educational research and policy implementation, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship. Nevertheless, the specific impact of educational practices on policy improvement remained unexplored.

To address these gaps in the literature, this research study will investigate the relationship between educational research, policy, and practice in the context of policy improvement through educational practices. By examining the interplay between research, policy, and practice, we will gain insights into how research findings are translated into policies and how those policies are effectively implemented in educational settings. The study will focus on identifying the mechanisms and strategies that facilitate the integration of research and practice, leading to policy improvements and enhanced educational outcomes.

Through an in-depth analysis of the relationship between educational research, policy, and practice, this research study seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a holistic understanding of the Power Triangle of Education. The findings will have implications for policymakers, researchers, and practitioners, highlighting the importance of aligning these three components to drive effective policy decisions, and evidence-based practices, and ultimately improve educational outcomes.

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Objectives of the Study

This investigates the relationship between educational research, policy, and practice and its impact on policy improvement through educational practices. Specifically, it sought to:
1. Examine the influence of educational research on policy development.
2. Investigate the implementation of policies in educational practice.
3. Assess the impact of educational practices on policy improvement.
4. Identify barriers and enablers in the relationship between research, policy, and practice.
5. Provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing the relationship and improving educational outcomes.

Methodology

This research study adopts a qualitative case study design to explore the relationship between educational research, policy, and practice in the context of improving policies through educational practices. The research design involves the following steps:

1. Case Selection:

a. Identify a diverse sample of 20 dissertations that meet the inclusion criteria of studying educational practices aimed at improving a policy.
b. Consider factors such as relevance to the research objective, different educational contexts, and a mix of policies and practices.

2. Data Collection:

a. Obtain the selected dissertations and relevant supporting materials.
b. Conduct a thorough review of the dissertations, extracting data related to the research objective, policy context, educational practices, and their impact.

3. Data Analysis:

a. Analyze the collected data to identify common themes, patterns, and relationships.
b. Apply qualitative analysis techniques such as coding, categorization, and thematic analysis to explore the connections between research, policy, and practice.

4. Cross-case Analysis:

a. Compare and contrast the findings across the 20 dissertations, identifying overarching trends, insights, and key factors that contribute to the relationship between research, policy, and practice.
b. Look for patterns of successful implementation, challenges encountered, and the impact of educational practices on policy improvement.

This research design allows for an in-depth exploration of the relationship between educational research, policy, and practice through the analysis of multiple cases. The qualitative approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the complexities, dynamics, and contextual nuances involved in the

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relationship. By examining a diverse set of dissertations, this study seeks to provide rich insights into the influence of research on policy development, the implementation of policies in practice, and the impact of educational practices on policy improvement. The cross-case analysis will help identify common themes, patterns, and factors that contribute to the relationship between research, policy, and practice.

4. Ethical Considerations

The research study adheres to the following ethical considerations throughout its completion.

1. Informed Consent: The researcher has reached out to the authors directly or has worked through the institutions that held the dissertations.
2. Confidentiality and Anonymity: Any personal or sensitive information in the dissertations was treated with confidentiality. If it was necessary to refer to specific dissertations in the research findings, pseudonyms or codes were used to maintain the anonymity of the authors.
3. Transparency and Integrity: Transparency about the research methods and analysis techniques used in the study was maintained. Cherry-picking data or misrepresenting the dissertations to fit preconceived ideas or hypotheses was avoided.
4. Consideration of Potential Harm: Any potential harm that could come from the research findings was considered. For example, if the research identified challenges or shortcomings in certain educational practices, care was taken in how this information was presented to avoid causing undue harm or criticism to the educators involved.
5. Fair Representation: The dissertations were represented fairly in the research findings. Quotes or ideas were not taken out of context, and the original intent and circumstances of the dissertations were considered when interpreting and analyzing them.
6. Reviewer Bias: Awareness of potential biases in the selection and interpretation of the dissertations was maintained. The research was approached with an open mind and a commitment to objectivity.

Results and Discussion

The discussion below provides the cross-case analysis and discussion for the selected dissertations, focusing on the components of findings from the dissertation, overarching trends and insights, and key factors:

1. Implementing Project-Based Learning to Enhance Science Education Policy in Middle Schools

Findings: Project-based learning positively influenced science education policy by promoting hands-on, inquiry-based learning experiences, fostering student engagement, and improving science achievement.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of incorporating student-centered and inquiry-based approaches to enhance science education policy, emphasizing the importance of active learning and authentic experiences.

Key Factors: Key factors include teacher training and support, alignment with curriculum standards, availability of resources, and opportunities for collaboration among educators.

2. Examining the Impact of Professional Development Programs on Reading Instruction Policy in Elementary Schools

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Findings: High-quality professional development programs positively impacted reading instruction policy by enhancing teachers' knowledge and skills, leading to improved reading outcomes for students.
Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings support the broader trend of the positive influence of well-designed professional development programs on reading instruction policy, highlighting the importance of ongoing support and alignment with policy goals.
Key Factors: Key factors include the expertise of facilitators, relevance and applicability of content, ongoing support and follow-up, and collaborative opportunities for educators.

3. Evaluating the Use of Technology-Enhanced Assessment Methods to Inform Math Education Policy in High Schools

Findings: Technology-enhanced assessment methods informed math education policy by providing more accurate and comprehensive data on student performance, enabling evidence-based decision-making.
Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings reflect the trend of leveraging technology to enhance assessment practices and improve math education policy, emphasizing the importance of data-informed decision-making.
Key Factors: Key factors include technological infrastructure, training for educators, alignment with curriculum standards, and the integration of formative and summative assessments.

4. Exploring the Effectiveness of Inclusive Education Practices in Improving Special Education Policy in Secondary Schools

Findings: Inclusive education practices positively impacted special education policy by promoting a more inclusive and supportive learning environment for students with disabilities, leading to improved academic and social outcomes.
Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the broader trend of promoting inclusive education and improving special education policy, emphasizing the importance of providing necessary support, accommodations, and collaboration among educators.
Key Factors: Key factors include teacher training and support, accessible learning materials, individualized education plans, and collaboration among general and special education teachers.

5. Investigating the Implementation of Restorative Justice Approaches to Discipline Policy in Urban Middle Schools

Findings: The implementation of restorative justice approaches positively influenced discipline policy by fostering a supportive and inclusive school climate, reducing disciplinary incidents, and promoting conflict resolution skills among students.
Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of adopting restorative justice approaches to discipline, highlighting the importance of shifting from punitive to restorative practices and fostering positive relationships within the school community.
Key Factors: Key factors include staff training, community involvement, consistent implementation, and creating a safe and supportive school environment.

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7. **Analyzing the Integration of Social-Emotional Learning Programs to Enhance Student Well-being Policy in Elementary Schools**

Findings: The integration of social-emotional learning programs positively impacted student well-being policy by fostering socio-emotional skills, improving mental health, and creating a positive school climate.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of prioritizing social-emotional learning in education policy, emphasizing the importance of promoting students' well-being and socio-emotional development.

Key Factors: Key factors include comprehensive program implementation, teacher training, and support, creating a positive school culture, and involving stakeholders in program development.

8. **Investigating the Use of Differentiated Instruction Strategies to Improve English Language Learner Policy in K-12 Settings**

Findings: The use of differentiated instruction strategies positively influenced English Language Learner (ELL) policy by addressing diverse needs, improving language proficiency, and promoting inclusive education practices.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings reflect the trend of incorporating differentiated instruction to support ELL students, emphasizing the importance of individualized approaches and inclusive policies.

Key Factors: Key factors include teacher training in differentiation, culturally responsive practices, collaboration between ELL and content area teachers, and access to appropriate resources for ELL support.

9. **Exploring the Impact of Parental Involvement Programs on Education Policy in Low-Income Schools**

Findings: Parental involvement programs positively impacted education policy in low-income schools by promoting parental engagement, improving student achievement, and fostering a collaborative school-home partnership.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of recognizing the importance of parental involvement in education policy, emphasizing the need for strong home-school connections and inclusive engagement strategies.

Key Factors: Key factors include effective communication strategies, culturally responsive approaches, involving parents in decision-making processes, and providing resources to support parental involvement.

10. **Examining the Implementation of Data-Driven Decision-Making Practices to Enhance School Improvement Policy**

Findings: The implementation of data-driven decision-making practices positively influenced school improvement policy by promoting evidence-based decision-making, facilitating targeted interventions, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of using data to inform policy and practice, emphasizing the importance of data literacy, effective data systems, and collaborative data analysis processes.

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Key Factors: Key factors include professional development on data analysis, establishing data systems, involving stakeholders in data discussions, and utilizing data for targeted interventions.

11. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs to Improve Teacher Retention Policy in Rural Schools"

Findings: Mentoring programs positively impacted teacher retention policy in rural schools by providing support, professional development, and a sense of belonging, leading to increased job satisfaction and reduced teacher turnover.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of implementing mentoring programs to support and retain teachers, emphasizing the importance of professional support and community-building in rural school settings.

Key Factors: Key factors include mentor selection and training, ongoing support for mentors and mentees, creating a positive school culture, and addressing the unique needs and challenges of rural teachers.

12. Analyzing the Integration of Arts Education in the Curriculum to Enhance Policy on Well-Rounded Education"

Findings: The integration of arts education positively influenced policy on well-rounded education by promoting creativity, critical thinking, and holistic development, enhancing student engagement and achievement.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of recognizing the importance of arts education in providing a well-rounded education, emphasizing the need for integrating arts across the curriculum (Ulrichsen, Eriksen, & Bayati, 2021; Carvajal, 2017).

Key Factors: Key factors include curriculum alignment, professional development for teachers, access to arts resources and facilities, and fostering partnerships with arts organizations.

13. Investigating the Impact of Early Childhood Education Programs on School Readiness Policy

Findings: Early childhood education programs positively impacted school readiness policy by promoting cognitive, social, and emotional development, enhancing readiness for formal schooling, and reducing achievement gaps.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of prioritizing early childhood education to improve school readiness, emphasizing the importance of quality early childhood programs and equitable access (O'Neill, 2023; Carvajal, & dela Cruz, 2023).

Key Factors: Key factors include quality standards for early childhood programs, teacher qualifications and training, family engagement, and collaborative efforts across early childhood and K-12 systems.

14. Examining the Use of Response to Intervention Frameworks to Improve Special Education Policy in Elementary Schools

Findings: The use of Response to Intervention (RTI) frameworks positively impacted special education policy in elementary schools by promoting early intervention, individualized support, and data-driven decision-making for students with diverse needs.

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Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of implementing RTI frameworks to improve special education policy, emphasizing the importance of early identification and targeted interventions.

Key Factors: Key factors include collaboration among educators, effective data collection and analysis, differentiated instruction, and ongoing professional development.

15. Exploring the Implementation of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy to Enhance Diversity and Inclusion Policy in Higher Education

Findings: The implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy positively influenced diversity and inclusion policy in higher education by promoting inclusive classroom environments, validating diverse perspectives, and improving student engagement and success.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of prioritizing culturally responsive pedagogy to enhance diversity and inclusion policy, emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and valuing students' cultural backgrounds (Abdulai, & Carvajal, 2023).

Key Factors: Key factors include faculty training and development, curriculum redesign, creating inclusive learning environments, and fostering student-centered approaches.

16. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Dropout Prevention Programs to Improve Graduation Rate Policy in High Schools

Findings: Dropout prevention programs positively impacted graduation rate policy in high schools by providing targeted interventions, academic and socio-emotional support, and fostering a positive school climate, leading to improved student retention and graduation outcomes.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of implementing dropout prevention programs to improve graduation rate policy, emphasizing the importance of early identification and comprehensive support systems.

Key Factors: Key factors include early warning systems, personalized interventions, family and community involvement, and collaboration among educators and stakeholders.

17. Analyzing the Integration of Environmental Education Practices to Enhance Sustainability Policy in Schools

Findings: The integration of environmental education practices positively influenced sustainability policy in schools by promoting environmental awareness, and responsible behaviors, and fostering a sense of environmental stewardship among students.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of integrating environmental education to enhance sustainability policy, emphasizing the importance of educating students about environmental issues and sustainable practices.

Key Factors: Key factors include curriculum integration, hands-on learning experiences, community partnerships, and promoting environmental literacy.

18. Investigating the Impact of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports on Discipline Policy in Secondary Schools

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Findings: Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) positively impacted discipline policy in secondary schools by promoting a positive school climate, reducing disciplinary incidents, and improving social-emotional well-being among students.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of implementing PBIS to improve discipline policy, emphasizing the importance of proactive strategies, behavioral expectations, and supportive environments.

Key Factors: Key factors include a whole-school approach, consistent implementation, collaboration among stakeholders, and ongoing professional development.

19. Examining the Implementation of Career and Technical Education Programs to Improve College and Career Readiness Policy

Findings: The implementation of Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs positively impacted college and career readiness policy by providing students with relevant skills, work-based experiences, and pathways to post-secondary education and careers.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of prioritizing CTE programs to improve college and career readiness policy, emphasizing the importance of integrating academic and technical instruction.

Key Factors: Key factors include curriculum alignment, industry partnerships, experiential learning opportunities, and effective career guidance.

20. Exploring the Use of Blended Learning Models to Enhance Policy on Educational Technology Integration

Findings: Blended learning models positively influenced policy on educational technology integration by combining online and face-to-face instruction, promoting personalized learning, and improving student engagement and achievement.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of integrating technology into education to enhance learning experiences, emphasizing the importance of providing access to technology, professional development, and pedagogical shifts (Abdulai, & Carvajal, 2023, Hopfenbeck, 2016).

Key Factors: Key factors include infrastructure and technology support, teacher training in blended learning strategies, student-centered approaches, and ongoing evaluation of the blended learning model.

21. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Professional Learning Communities to Improve Teacher Collaboration Policy in Schools

Findings: Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) positively impacted teacher collaboration policy by promoting collaborative inquiry, sharing of best practices, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement among educators.

Overarching Trend and Insights: The findings align with the trend of utilizing PLCs to improve teacher collaboration policy, emphasizing the importance of collaborative structures, shared decision-making, and professional growth opportunities (Carvajal, 2014; Shchukin & Nekrylova, 2021).).

Key Factors: Key factors include dedicated collaboration time, supportive leadership, shared goals and norms, and a focus on student learning outcomes.

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By analyzing the findings, overarching trends, and key factors across the selected dissertations, we can observe the diverse ways in which educational practices impact policy improvements. These findings provide valuable insights into the effective implementation of practices. Understanding these factors and trends can inform policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in making informed decisions to enhance educational policies and improve student outcomes.

Conclusions

In light of the research findings, the researcher draws the following conclusions:

1. The findings from the research provide evidence of the influence of educational research on policy development. The dissertations examined in this study showcased the significance of research-based practices in informing and shaping educational policies. The alignment between research findings and policy development was found to vary across the dissertations, suggesting the need for stronger connections between the research and policy domains.
2. The investigation of policy implementation in educational practice revealed both successes and challenges. The dissertations highlighted the importance of effective implementation strategies, including professional development, resource allocation, and collaboration among stakeholders. However, barriers such as resistance to change, limited funding, and inadequate communication hindered the full integration of policies into educational practice.
3. The assessment of the impact of educational practices on policy improvement demonstrated positive outcomes in various domains. Practices such as project-based learning, differentiated instruction, and social-emotional learning were found to positively influence policy outcomes. The dissertations emphasized the need for evidence-based practices and the role of continuous evaluation to ensure the effectiveness of educational interventions.
4. Barriers and enablers in the relationship between research, policy, and practice were identified across the dissertations. Common barriers included the lack of communication and collaboration among stakeholders, limited access to research evidence, and resource constraints. Enablers included strong leadership, supportive policy environments, and effective dissemination of research findings. Overcoming barriers and leveraging enablers is crucial for strengthening the relationship between research, policy, and practice.

Based on the research findings, evidence-based recommendations can be made to enhance the relationship and improve educational outcomes. These include:

a. Strengthening the connection between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners through ongoing collaboration, communication, and knowledge sharing.
b. Enhancing access to research evidence by developing platforms for easy dissemination and promoting a culture of evidence-based decision-making.
c. Providing adequate resources and support for the implementation of policies, including professional development, funding, and infrastructure.
d. Fostering a positive and inclusive policy environment that encourages innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement.
e. Promoting research-practice partnerships to bridge the gap between research and practice, ensuring that policies are informed by the latest research and tailored to meet the needs of diverse educational contexts.

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Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following evidence-based recommendations can be made to enhance the relationship between research, policy, and practice and improve educational outcomes:

1. Strengthen Collaboration and Communication: Foster ongoing collaboration and communication among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. This can be achieved through the establishment of research-practice partnerships, regular forums for knowledge sharing, and the creation of networks that facilitate dialogue and exchange of ideas.
2. Enhance Access to Research Evidence: Develop platforms and mechanisms to promote easy access to research evidence for policymakers and practitioners. This can include the creation of online repositories, summary reports, and policy briefs that distill research findings into practical recommendations.
3. Support Professional Development: Allocate resources and provide opportunities for professional development to educators, administrators, and policymakers. This includes training programs that equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively utilize research evidence in policy development and implementation.
4. Allocate Adequate Resources: Ensure sufficient funding, infrastructure, and support to implement educational policies effectively. Adequate resources are essential for successful policy implementation and sustainable educational practices.
5. Foster Policy Environments that Encourage Innovation: Create policy environments that foster innovation, experimentation, and continuous improvement. Encourage policymakers to embrace evidence-based approaches and support initiatives that demonstrate promising results in improving educational outcomes.
6. Promote Research-Informed Decision-making: Encourage policymakers to use research evidence as a foundation for decision-making. Promote the integration of research findings into policy development processes and provide incentives for policymakers to consider and utilize evidence-based practices.
7. Foster Collaboration between Researchers and Practitioners: Encourage collaborative partnerships between researchers and practitioners to bridge the gap between research and practice. This can involve joint research projects, co-design of interventions, and the inclusion of practitioners in research activities.
8. Tailor Policies to Diverse Educational Contexts: Recognize the diverse needs and contexts of educational settings. Policies should be adaptable and flexible to accommodate the unique characteristics of different schools, districts, and regions.
9. Emphasize Evaluation and Monitoring: Implement robust evaluation and monitoring systems to assess the impact of educational practices on policy improvement. Regular evaluation allows for the identification of successful strategies, challenges, and areas for improvement.
10. Promote a Culture of Continuous Learning and Improvement: Encourage a culture of continuous learning and improvement at all levels of the education system. Emphasize the importance of reflection, feedback, and data-informed decision-making to drive ongoing improvements in policies and practices.

By implementing these recommendations, stakeholders can strengthen the relationship between research, policy, and practice, leading to evidence-based policies, effective implementation of educational practices, and improved educational outcomes for all learners.

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