Transforming education systems:

Lessons from Global Dialogue 2025

By Dr Richard Churches and Tony McAleavy

EDT

Foreword

It was my great pleasure to welcome experts, partners and policymakers to our Global Dialogue 2025 symposium on education system reform. It was a powerful opportunity to examine the many challenges in education and skills around the world, and to spend time together exploring ideas and strategic solutions. This report by Dr Richard Churches, our Director of Research, and Tony McAleavy, our Chief Education and Skills Officer, captures key learnings from the event.

Hearing delegates' stories about their work and the similar challenges faced in different countries – from early childhood education, through school and college, and into further education or work – was fascinating, and we thank them for sharing their wisdom and insights. The event also opened up exciting opportunities for further dialogue and innovation in the areas of technology, workforce professionalism and leadership – all of which play a critical role in the development of education system reform.

We look forward to continuing these important conversations between now and next year's Global Dialogue event. Continuing conversations about what we can learn from our experience and the research available; how knowledge can be translated into policy and practice; and how teachers and leaders can support each other to improve education and skills outcomes is vital. Dialogue enables us collectively to exchange knowledge, co-develop solutions across borders, and make a long-term, sustainable impact through partnerships and collaboration.

Dan Sandhu

Chief Executive Officer

Introduction

On 20 January 2025, EDT convened its Global Dialogue event at the RSA in London, bringing together policymakers, educators and partners to discuss transformative strategies for reforming education systems worldwide. The theme was *Transforming education systems: How can effective education policy ensure positive outcomes for all children and young people?* It was a day of rich discussions about evidence-based findings and practical solutions, aimed at driving sustainable reform in education around the world.

This was the third Global Dialogue that we have facilitated. The first was in 2018 and the second took place online in 2021 in the context of rebuilding after the Covid-19 pandemic. This third Global Dialogue sought to capture learnings from current key educational challenges, and make recommendations for policymakers.

The event explored challenges and opportunities at three critical stages of the education lifecycle:

1. **Early childhood education**

2. **School-age learning**

3. **Transitions from school to further education or employment**

The morning sessions provided a technical introduction to these three stages, including expert panel presentations and discussions with our speakers: Professor Kathy Sylva (Oxford University), Dr Richard Churches (EDT), and Dr Chris Percy (DHM Associates). These discussions led to a series of interactive workshops, where participants engaged in facilitated focus groups to explore key challenges, share best practices, and co-develop potential policy solutions.

In the afternoon, the focus shifted to three pivotal accelerators of education transformation:

4. **Technology in education**

5. **Workforce professionalism**

6. **Leadership in education**

The keynote speakers in the afternoon session were Charles Radman (Global Head of Education at HP), Dr Victoria Cook (Lead Researcher at The Chartered College of Teaching), and Maggie Farrar, CBE. They provided thought-provoking insights into how these three enablers can accelerate system-wide transformation and impact.

Global Dialogue 2025 facilitated global knowledge exchange. It enabled attendees to reflect on the best international practices and identify scalable, contextually relevant strategies for reform. This report captures the key content from the six keynote sessions and provides summaries of the facilitated focus group discussions, highlighting the critical themes, policy implications, and actionable recommendations that emerged throughout the day. The event reaffirmed the power of collaborative, cross-sector engagement in shaping the future of education and underscored the importance of fostering a sustained international conversation on system-wide transformation.

Why a global dialogue in education matters

Education is a universal public good, yet its challenges are often deeply local and contextual. The ability to learn from international experiences, adapt evidence-based policies, and co-develop solutions across borders is crucial in navigating the increasingly complex landscape of education reform. Facilitating a global dialogue in education is important for many reasons:

» **Addressing shared challenges with collective intelligence**

While every education system operates within a unique social, economic and political context, many challenges are global in nature — from learning loss due to disruptions like the Covid-19 pandemic to the rising urgency of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies into classrooms. Educators and policymakers benefit immensely from engaging in dialogue with peers who have faced similar challenges, enabling them to adopt proven strategies while tailoring reforms to their own contexts.

» **Bridging the gap between policy and practice**

A key challenge in education reform is the gap between policy intentions and classroom realities. Events like Global Dialogue ensure that policymakers remain connected to educators and programme implementers, drawing on their on-the-ground insights to design policies that are both ambitious and feasible. This exchange fosters evidence-based policymaking that is informed by real-world constraints and opportunities.

» **Enhancing the impact of education programmes**

Effective education programmes rely not only on robust design but also on successful implementation. Global conversations between funders, policymakers and delivery organisations help ensure that education interventions are informed by the best available research and tailored to the needs of learners. Collaboration across sectors enhances programme scalability, sustainability, and long-term impact.

» **Fostering innovation through cross-border learning**

Some of the most innovative approaches to curriculum design, teacher development and education technology emerge when ideas and insights are exchanged across different education systems. Countries that have successfully piloted new methodologies or reforms can share lessons learned – accelerating innovation and avoiding costly trial-and-error approaches.

» **Strengthening equity and inclusion in education**

A global dialogue allows policymakers to draw on best practices in equity-focused education reform, helping to ensure that marginalised communities and under-represented groups receive the support they need. By comparing models of inclusive education, special educational needs provision, and gender-responsive policies, countries can accelerate progress towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education for All.

» **Building resilience in education systems**

In an era of global uncertainty, education systems must be resilient to economic crises, technological shifts, and environmental challenges. Countries that engage in ongoing dialogue can learn from others' crisis- and change-management strategies, ensuring their systems remain adaptable and future-ready.

Global Dialogue 2025 was a powerful demonstration of the potential of collaboration, knowledge exchange, and shared learning. However, the sharing of insights relating to system reform should not be confined to single events; it must be an ongoing process, embedded in national and international education policy discussions. By fostering sustained global engagement, policymakers, educators and programme implementers can work together to build more resilient, equitable, and effective education systems for future generations.

Session 1: Early childhood education

Professor Kathy Sylva, OBE

Professor Kathy Sylva, OBE is Honorary Research Fellow and Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of Oxford. She has been a lead researcher on large-scale studies of the effects of early education/care on children's development in both high- and low-income countries. She also conducts randomised control trial (RCT) studies on parenting programmes to support reading and behaviour. Working with colleagues in Jyvaskyla's Department of Teacher Education, she has studied early childhood curricula and pedagogy across Europe. Kathy has been a specialist adviser to parliamentary select committees and the UK Treasury. She was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2008 for services to children and families. She is a Fellow of the British Academy and the British Psychological Society, and in 2014 received the British Education Association's Nisbet Award for outstanding contribution to educational research.

Kathy's presentation focused on a study of early childhood policy in six high-performing countries, examining their systems and approaches. The study aimed to frame findings from a comparative analysis of these countries, highlighting major insights and challenges for policymakers in a global context. Kathy discussed the importance of context in early childhood education (ECE) and emphasised the diversity of approaches and the need for comprehensive services. She concluded by noting that high-quality ECE is possible in different contexts, and that aligning it with health and primary education is crucial for smooth transitions.

The study focused on South Korea, the Netherlands, Finland, England, Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia (based on PISA scores and the Economist Intelligence Unit Report), and considered academic excellence, diversity and innovation in ECE. It highlighted several key findings: Across most countries, challenges persist in recruiting high-quality professionals into the ECE workforce, with Finland being a notable exception. Additionally, while vocational training remains the dominant pathway for workforce preparation, higher education also plays a limited role.

Divergent national values shape distinct perceptions of quality, leading to varied approaches — such as England's high-stakes inspection and regulation framework, versus Finland's minimal formal monitoring. This raises fundamental questions for policymakers, such as: should ECE systems be evaluated based on inputs, such as teacher qualifications and infrastructure, or outputs, such as child and family outcomes?

As the field continues to evolve, measuring the quality of ECE systems remains an open challenge for researchers, demanding new methodologies and perspectives.

Five important areas for policymakers to consider were emphasised: strong policy foundations; comprehensive services, funding and governance; ensuring teachers and families are knowledgeable and supported; informed, individualised and continuous pedagogy; and using data to drive improvement.

Session 2: School effectiveness and improvement

Dr Richard Churches

Dr Richard Churches is the Global Director of Research at EDT. With over 30 years' experience in education, he has worked as a teacher, school leader, consultant, and government adviser. He has authored several books, including *Neuroscience for Teachers: Applying Brain Science in the Classroom* and *Teacher-Led Research: How to Design and Implement Randomised Controlled Trials.* He leads the global public research programme at EDT and has been involved in numerous educational reforms and evidence-based practices.

This session provided insights into school effectiveness and improvement from a policy-level perspective. It highlighted the importance of school improvement and effectiveness, linking them to educational outcomes, equity, health, and national and global performance. Richard discussed the multi-level challenge of school improvement, focusing on key components such as teacher quality, leadership, collaborative practices, and system-level factors.

Addressing the challenges in education requires a multi-level approach that considers factors at the classroom, school, and system levels. Teacher quality plays a crucial role, as effective instructional practices and continuous professional development directly impact student achievement. At the leadership level, strong school leaders foster a culture of learning and accountability, creating environments where educators can thrive. Collaboration among teachers is equally vital, as peer learning and shared practices enhance instructional quality.

At the system level, effective policy levers, such as external reviews and performance monitoring, are essential for driving improvement. Evidence-based practices, including data-driven decision-making and the use of research on effective pedagogy, further strengthen the education system by ensuring that reforms are informed by the best available insights. Together, these elements highlight the complexity of improving educational outcomes and the need for coordinated efforts across multiple levels.

Looking at areas where we are paying less attention, Richard emphasised the need for evidence-based practices (such as the science of reading), and the importance of grounding practices in the science of learning and what we know about how the brain learns. He also discussed the importance of a knowledge-rich curriculum and the implications of cognitive architecture for curriculum development and education reform. The presentation concluded with a discussion of the central importance of choosing the right balance of policy levers (particularly accountability, autonomy and support) to leverage change, and ensure change remains sustainable.

Session 3: Transitions from school to further education or employment

Dr Chris Percy

Dr Chris Percy is Senior Associate at DHM Associates and a leading economist, strategy consultant, and careers researcher with expertise in quantitative methods. He has been involved in various projects and initiatives at DHM Associates, contributing to the company's mission of enhancing careers, education and skills policy, research, and practice at different levels.

This session explored the complexities of successfully making transitions from school to work. It discussed the potential of careers provision and the impact of technology on future career prospects. Chris highlighted the importance of having conversations about careers, workplace visits, and job application and interview skills development activities in preparing students for the future. He presented data from various countries, showing the positive impact of careers guidance on labour market outcomes. In addition, he noted how the integration of artificial intelligence (AI)-based chatbots in careers and education guidance is transforming how individuals access information and support.

Chris gave several international examples that are leading the way: In Finland, AI-assisted data mining is being used to provide insights into job transitions and emerging skills, helping individuals to navigate the evolving labour market; Ireland has embedded AI to enhance careers guidance, offering a comprehensive online platform for career and learning pathways; Norway's national digital careers service uses AI to analyse anonymised chat data, feeding into the development of self-help tools. The service operates through a Zendesk portal with an integrated knowledge base, ensuring streamlined access to career-related information. These innovations highlight the increasing role of AI in delivering personalised, data-driven careers guidance and labour market insights across different national contexts.

Session 4: Technology in education

Charles Radman

Charles Radman is the Global Head of Education at HP, managing a multi-billion-dollar global education technology business. With over 24 years' experience at HP, 15 of which have been focused on education, Charles leads a team of experts developing HP's global K12 and higher education strategy. He is also focused on achieving HP's corporate sustainability goals of improving education outcomes for 100 million people by 2025, and improving digital equity for 150 million people by 2030.

This talk began with some stark statistics. The global teacher shortage is a growing crisis, with an estimated 44 million teachers needed worldwide to meet educational demands. Alarmingly, nearly half of all teachers are in positions where there is nobody available to replace them – further exacerbating the problem. According to a 2022 National Education Association study, teacher attrition is being driven by several key factors: 55% indicate they are ready to leave the profession earlier than planned; 80% report that unfilled job openings in their districts force them to take on excessive workloads; and 78% cite low pay as a significant issue. These trends underscore the urgent need for systemic reforms to improve working conditions, increase salaries, and address the workforce pipeline – to improve teacher recruitment and retention, which will support sustainable education systems globally.

Charles addressed the role of technology in education, focusing on how it can assist in addressing the teacher crisis. He discussed the global teacher shortage and the reasons why teachers are leaving the profession. He emphasised the importance of retaining existing teachers and upskilling lower-performing teachers to help retain them too.

He also highlighted the potential of AI in automating administrative tasks. AI has the potential to significantly enhance education by assisting with lesson planning and design, streamlining assessments and grading, improving parental communication, and supporting the development and maintenance of individualised education plans. However, successful implementation requires a robust strategy with clear expectations, sustainable funding, and professional development for educators. Teachers must first improve their basic ICT skills, and training should be ongoing rather than a one-time event.

Effective AI integration also depends on guardrails and scaffolding, ensuring that time-sensitive curricula and assessments are appropriately managed. To avoid pitfalls, educators should be critical of 'fake AI', ask plenty of questions, and remain cautious of adopting 'cool' technologies that do not necessarily improve educational outcomes. Furthermore, AI should not contribute to interoperability issues, as over-reliance on teachers to bridge technological gaps can lead to inefficiencies and increased workload rather than alleviating burdens.

Session 5: Workforce professionalism

Dr Victoria Cook

Dr Victoria Cook is Lead Researcher at the Chartered College of Teaching. Before joining the Chartered College, she spent five years as a Research Associate at the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education, contributing to international dialogue-based research projects. She is also a trained geography teacher with experience of teaching in girls' grammar schools, mixed comprehensives, and independent schools. In May 2024, Victoria co-authored a working paper titled *Revisiting the Notion of Teacher Professionalism,* with Dr Lisa-Maria Müller. This report aims to redefine teacher professionalism and advocate for a more aspirational vision for the profession.

Victoria presented on the professionalism of the teaching workforce. She discussed collaborative and critical engagement with bodies of knowledge, balancing commitment to pupils with teacher wellbeing, and informed autonomy in decision-making. She emphasised the importance of evidence-informed practice and the mechanisms of learning in professional communities. She highlighted the need for professional development to build communication between research, policy and practice, and the importance of inclusive systems that focus on peer learning, feedback and trust. The presentation concluded with a discussion on the characteristics of effective teacher professional development, and the need for meaningful conversations between policymakers and the teaching profession.

Victoria explained how effective education systems require collaborative and critical engagement with bodies of knowledge, ensuring that teachers can engage deeply with their subject matter while also questioning and refining their practices. Journal clubs were cited as an example of good practice.

By extension, a sustainable profession must balance a commitment to pupils with teacher wellbeing, recognising that educator effectiveness is directly tied to their ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Teachers should have informed autonomy, enabling them to make decisions based on their specific contexts while adhering to an ethical framework. Professional development must foster three-way communication between research, policy, and practice, acknowledging the crucial role of teachers in both adapting and implementing research evidence and building new knowledge from classroom observations and action research.

Session 6: Leadership in education

Maggie Farrar, CBE

Maggie Farrar, CBE has worked in senior leadership positions in schools and local authorities in London and Birmingham. She was the Director for Leadership Development, Research and Succession Planning at the National College for School Leadership in England, and served as interim Chief Executive. Maggie has been instrumental in developing a school-led self-improvement system in England and has led the design and development of leadership programmes. She is a trained mindfulness teacher with the Oxford University Mindfulness Centre, and focuses on supporting school leaders in cultivating mindfulness and compassionate leadership. She was awarded the CBE for services to education in 2014.

Maggie spoke about the power and potential of compassionate leadership. She discussed the challenges faced by headteachers, including moral injury, anxiety, burnout and stress. She emphasised the importance of compassionate leadership in addressing these challenges and building resilience. She highlighted the relational work of system change and the need for compassionate leadership to strengthen trust, a sense of belonging, and relationships. The presentation concluded with a discussion on the cumulative nature of compassionate leadership, and its potential to transform the education system into one that is kinder and more humane.

In England, the recent Headrest Report highlights some of the most pressing challenges that headteachers face, underscoring the need for a more compassionate approach to school leadership. One significant issue is moral injury, where headteachers are forced to make decisions that conflict with their deeply held beliefs and principles, due to constraints such as budget limitations, staff shortages and other systemic challenges. Additionally, anxiety, burnout and stress are widespread, as school leadership proves to be both physically and emotionally exhausting. Many headteachers also neglect their own wellbeing, often avoiding medical appointments or taking necessary time off because they feel a strong sense of duty not to let their schools down. This growing crisis is further reinforced by findings from the most recent Teacher Wellbeing Index, which reported that 89% of school leaders and 78% of teachers experience significant stress at work. These insights highlight the urgent need for policies that prioritise leadership support, mental health resources, and sustainable work.

Compassionate leadership is not about being soft or easily swayed. Truly compassionate leaders are strong and principled, demonstrating their leadership through the way they engage with others. It is evident in how we speak, in the warmth and professional generosity we extend, in our ability to listen deeply, and in how we express gratitude and vulnerability. Being our most authentic selves in leadership fosters environments where others feel valued and empowered.

Compassion is not a static trait, but a learn-as-you-go process, built over time through intentional practice. By repeatedly expressing, modelling and encouraging compassion, we create a culture where kindness becomes normalised. Curiosity is essential. Leaders must strive to see the world not just from their own perspective but from the viewpoints of others. Assumptions can quickly lead to misjudgements, and staying open to learning about ourselves and those we lead strengthens our ability to serve effectively.

Ultimately, compassionate leadership is about fostering compassionate schools and a more humane education system. The question we must ask ourselves is: Is this vision worth fighting for?

Policy challenges and promising practices

Three facilitated workshops sought to build on the themes in the discussions and identify key contemporary lessons for policymakers and delivery bodies. The sessions were led by EDT senior staff: **Fadi Khalek (Managing Director, International), Marion Smallbones (Lead Advisor: Insights and Innovation), and Ross Anderson (Managing Director, UK).**

Workshop 1: Early childhood education

As Kathy highlighted in her presentation, context matters, and successful ECE systems all look different depending on local needs and structures. However, during the workshop, it was clear that many common challenges exist across different systems, and participants shared some promising practices that can address these issues.

One of the key themes discussed was the strong connection between high-quality ECE and long-term educational and employment outcomes. There is now increased recognition at leadership and policy levels that investment in ECE leads to improved secondary education performance and smoother transitions into employment. However, ensuring high-quality ECE remains a challenge, particularly in the areas of workforce professional development, practitioner retention, and access to training.

Workforce pay and development was identified as a major policy issue. Digital access for training was highlighted as a barrier to professional development, especially in the areas of acquiring new skills, using equipment, and improving digital literacy. Additionally, the recruitment and retention of ECE practitioners was seen as a widespread challenge. Many educators experience low motivation, and a lack of clear career progression makes the field less attractive. To address this, the discussion highlighted several promising practices, including investment in high-quality in-service professional development, which was shown to reignite practitioners' passion for working with young children. Other successful strategies included creating clear career progression routes, establishing mentorship opportunities, and having a variety of leadership roles within the ECE sector.

Beyond workforce challenges, the discussion also raised concerns about ECE quality outside formal education settings. While much of the focus is on nurseries, kindergartens and daycare centres, many children are cared for at home by parents and primary caregivers. To improve ECE in these contexts, participants emphasised the need for programmes that specifically target and support parents and caregivers, particularly in areas where formal education enrolment rates are low.

Another important issue raised was the narrative surrounding investment in ECE. The discussion underscored the need to shift the conversation from the cost of providing ECE to the cost of not investing in it. Participants stressed that by framing ECE as an essential investment rather than a financial burden, policymakers and stakeholders can better understand its long-term economic and social benefits.

In response to these policy challenges, the discussion identified several promising practices that could strengthen the ECE sector:

» **Communities of practice: Establishing professional networks where educators can share knowledge and experiences.**

» **Deep subject knowledge: Strengthening practitioners' expertise in numeracy, literacy and pedagogy, to improve teaching quality.**

» **Continuous professional development: Offering ongoing training to keep educators engaged and skilled.**

» **Clear career progression: Providing structured career paths and leadership roles to improve retention.**

» **Parental and caregiver engagement: Designing targeted early learning interventions for families outside formal education settings.**

Overall, the discussion highlighted the urgent need for systemic reforms to improve workforce conditions, expand access to quality ECE, and create sustainable, well-supported ECE systems. By implementing these strategies, ECE can be strengthened as a foundation for lifelong learning and economic development.

Workshop 2: School improvement and teacher workforce development

The discussion on school improvement explored a range of themes, from the importance of place-based policies and teacher wellbeing to vocational education, policy influence, and workforce development. A global perspective was also considered, highlighting international models and the challenges of demographic changes, and the impact of climate change on education systems.

One of the key insights from the discussion was the significance of place-based policies, which allow education systems to respond to local needs rather than relying on uniform, national-level solutions. This approach was seen as crucial for addressing regional disparities in education quality and access. Within this framework, the wellbeing of teachers was highlighted as a core factor in sustainable school improvement. Ensuring that educators feel valued and supported, both in terms of working conditions and career progression, was identified as a key strategy for improving recruitment, retention, and overall system performance. Portugal's multi-tiered inclusion-by-design model was discussed as an example of how education systems can embed inclusive practices at all levels.

A related theme was the role of politicians and policymakers in shaping effective school improvement strategies. Participants expressed concern that, all too often, education policies focus on high-visibility, short-term initiatives rather than long-term, research-informed solutions. There was a call for policymakers to engage with evidence-based strategies, even when they address less glamorous but essential systemic challenges. Teacher recruitment and retention were seen as areas that require more than just financial incentives; policy solutions need to address other issues such as professional autonomy, workload management, and meaningful career progression.

The discussion also highlighted a gap in real-world experience among teachers, particularly those in further education. Many teachers have limited exposure to industry, which affects their ability to guide students effectively into the workforce. To bridge this gap, there was a strong recommendation for increased workplace exposure and more industry collaboration in teacher training programmes. Such initiatives would help teachers better understand career pathways and evolving job market demands, ensuring that students receive relevant and practical careers guidance.

Another significant issue was the lack of clear career pathways for young people, particularly those who may not follow traditional academic trajectories. Stronger partnerships between education institutions and industry leaders were seen as crucial in ensuring smoother transitions into employment. Vocational education was a particular focus, with international models offering valuable insights. Germany's system of vocational training was cited as an effective model for ensuring parity between academic and technical education. Ethiopia's recent introduction of structured careers advice services was also noted as a step towards better aligning education with workforce needs.

The discussion underscored the need for long-term, evidence-based strategies in school improvement. A shift towards localised, inclusive policies, stronger links between education and industry, and proactive adaptation to global challenges was seen as key to ensuring that education systems remain relevant and effective in the face of rapid change.

Workshop 3: Careers, employability and future readiness

This discussion explored the balance between education and work, and emphasised that education should not become overly work-like, nor should work be entirely education-like. Achieving a balance is crucial, as an early commitment to a career path can be beneficial but may also pose challenges, particularly for young people navigating their teenage years.

One major theme was the curriculum- and system-led approach to careers education. Participants noted that curriculum awareness and support are often lacking, and financial investment in careers education remains limited. There was a recognition that work experience and education leadership could be improved, with a greater focus on creativity in problem-solving rather than rigid, structured approaches.

Soft skills were described as power skills – these include critical thinking, adaptability, resilience, creativity and problem-solving. The discussion highlighted that these skills are essential in preparing young people for work and are often undervalued in traditional academic structures. Providing agency to young people, particularly those less academically inclined, was seen as an important goal.

Career transitions were identified as inherently risky, with a need for clearer pathways and support to help young people navigate from education to employment. Delegates discussed the concept of a 'fresh start', or providing individuals with new opportunities to enter the workforce. Social and family networks also play a crucial role in shaping career success.

The conversation also touched on good careers education as a means of introducing possibilities to young people. A system-wide approach incorporating skills and dispositions was deemed necessary. Participants stressed the importance of introducing young people to career readiness in a way that is open-ended and purposeful.

Technology was discussed as both an enabler and a source of anxiety. The uncertainty surrounding AI and automation was highlighted, with concerns about where current NEET (not in education, employment or training) populations fit into this evolving landscape. AI is expected to continue evolving, leading to bifurcation in the job market, where those who have technical skills will replace those who do not.

The role of families and carers in supporting young people's career readiness was considered critical. Promising practices included scaffolded approaches to career development, particularly for vulnerable groups. Combining personal networks with technology-based partnerships can help close gaps in careers education.

Barriers preventing young people from entering education, employment, or training were also discussed. Two of the major obstacles identified were mental health challenges and a lack of demand for certain skills. Addressing these issues requires both policy intervention and systemic support.

Recommendations for policymakers

The discussions at Global Dialogue 2025 highlighted several key principles that could guide policymakers in designing and implementing effective education reforms. The complexity of education systems requires a thoughtful, evidence-based approach that moves beyond short-term solutions and political cycles. The following recommendations serve as a call to action for policymakers seeking to drive meaningful and sustainable improvements in education:

» **Prioritise meaningful engagement with other policymakers**

Education reform does not happen in isolation. Policymakers should actively engage with their peers, both domestically and internationally, to exchange insights, debate challenges, and refine strategies. Structured time for dialogue allows policymakers to learn from each other's successes and failures, potentially avoiding costly mistakes and ensuring policy coherence across different levels of government.

» **Look beyond policy headlines and focus on substance and context**

It is easy to be drawn to high-profile policy initiatives, but genuine reform requires a deep understanding of their underlying mechanisms. Copying policies from other systems without considering context often leads to unintended consequences. Policymakers must analyse the details - including governance structures, funding models, implementation challenges, and the interplay of policies - to ensure effective adaptation rather than replication.

» **Consider not just what to implement, but how to implement it**

Policy success is not just about what is proposed but how it is delivered. A well-intended reform can fail if implementation is not carefully planned. Policymakers should work closely with educators, school leaders and system administrators to ensure feasibility, provide adequate support, and anticipate practical challenges before scaling initiatives.

» **Use the best available evidence and continuously evaluate impact**

Education policy should be informed by robust, up-to-date evidence. Policymakers must ensure that reforms are grounded in empirical research and subject to continuous evaluation. Monitoring implementation and measuring effectiveness through well-defined indicators will help refine policies and make necessary adjustments in real time.

» **Define clear policy intentions and success metrics**

Without clear objectives and measurable outcomes, policies risk becoming political statements rather than instruments of change. Policymakers must articulate the intended goals of a reform, identify how success will be measured, and ensure accountability mechanisms are in place to track progress over time.

» **Address education as a system-wide, beginning-to-end challenge**

Education is not a series of disconnected stages but a lifelong journey. Every policy must be assessed within the broader system, ensuring alignment from ECE to workforce preparation and transition. A fragmented approach can undermine progress, whereas a system-wide perspective fosters coherence, continuity and long-term impact.

Transforming education systems:

Lessons from Global Dialogue 2025

edt.org/globaldialogue

To find out more about how EDT is working to improve life chances through education and skills, please get in touch.

Keep in touch

✉ enquiries@edt.org

in Education Development Trust

edt.org