

**4 QUALITY
EDUCATION**



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STRATEGIC REVIEW OF GLOBAL AND REGIONAL EVIDENCE AND KNOWLEDGE INITIATIVES, NETWORKS AND PLATFORMS IN EDUCATION

Submitted by NORRAG

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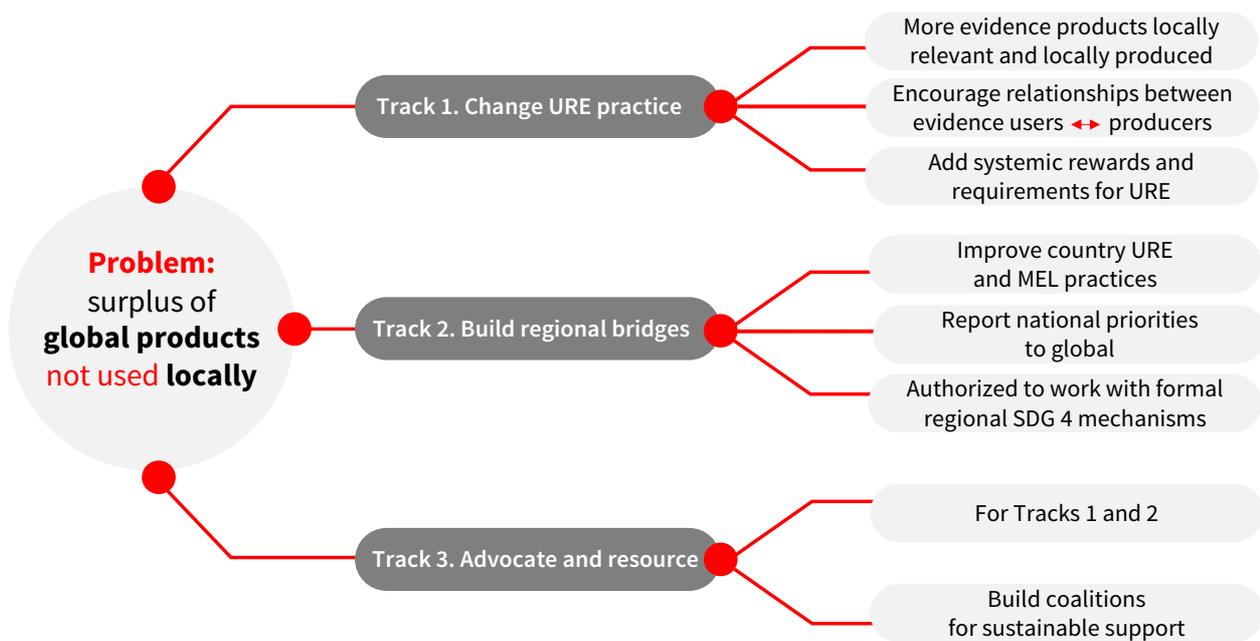
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Executive Summary

The current study addresses the question of how the use of research evidence for policy, planning, and implementation (URE-4-PPI) could be promoted to more effectively work toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4. It draws on a survey, individual and group interviews, and a comparator case study with the public health sector.

Chapter 1 presents the two research questions, the sub-questions and the larger interpretive framework of the study. The two **research questions** are as follows: (1) How can the use of research evidence (URE) be promoted to serve the achievement of the SDG-4 targets? (2) What can be learned from the public health sector in terms of how the use of research evidence is coordinated and managed? Two **problems** are identified: First, despite living in an era with a surplus of globally produced data and research, there is still limited uptake in policy, planning, and implementation. Secondly, global INPs keep producing a great number of studies that are not used at the local level. Achieving the strategic objectives of FA1 requires closing these two broken feedback loops through implementing all three tracks of our **recommendations**. The current approach to improving the use of research and evidence (URE) is not working. All countries (South and North) need to implement **all pathways to effective URE**, supported by **regional hubs** and global, regional and national **advocacy and resource mobilization**.

Figure ES.1: Summary of problem statement and recommendations



Chapter 2 provides an overview of the **methodology** used for the survey as well as the comparator case. To examine the landscape around the sources for the URE, we administered an online survey in six UN languages in the month of October. A total of 898 individuals residing in more than 103 countries filled out the survey. The breakdown of the respondents shows that there is a solid representation from national governments or ministries (19%), research/think tanks/university (22%), civil society organizations (18%), teaching profession or teachers associations (14%), intergovernmental organizations (IOs) (10%), and private foundations/private sector (8%). The respondents submitted the survey in all the six languages and reside in more than 103 countries, well representing all the five regions. The survey consists of eight questions on respondents' understandings, identification, and utilization of existing initiatives, networks, and platforms as well as which SDG-4 goals are well supported or underserved with evidence and research.

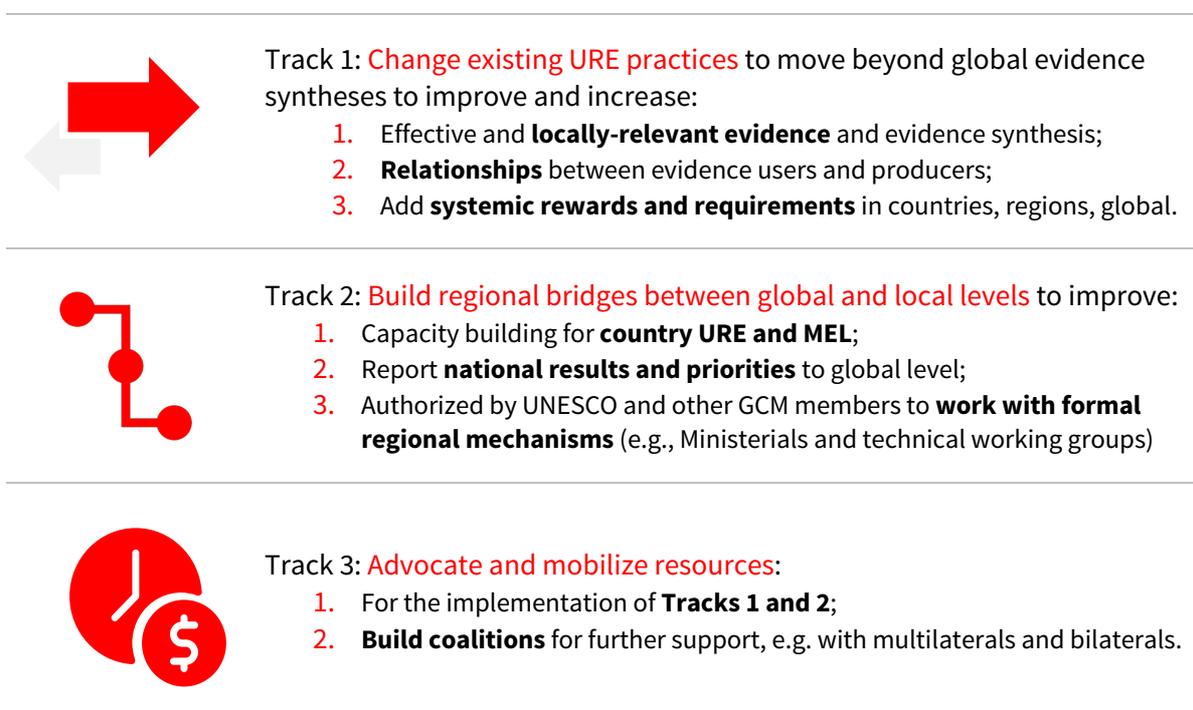
Following the survey, we held 14 meetings with 33 stakeholders to complement our survey findings. In addition, this study conducted the comparator case study to examine what the education sector could learn from public health about URE-4-PPI. This comparator case study used the following four methods: (i) database search for systematic reviews, (ii) a bibliometric analysis of scholarship in education and public health, (iii) expert interviews, and (iv) analysis of initiatives, networks, and platforms in public health.

Chapter 3 deals with a **survey** of the initiatives, networks, and platforms (INPs). The main findings are as follows: (i) the respondents indicated that **SDG 4 targets are not equally well supported**: foundational learning (SDG 4 targets 1, 2, and 6) and gender and social inclusion (target 5) were well supported by policy research, but technical, vocational, and higher education (targets 3 and 4) and sustainable development and global citizenship (target 7) were underserved; (ii) approximately half of the respondents indicated that they turn first to INPs, **seeking evidence most in the design phase** of their projects or educational reforms; (iii) there is a vast number of URE sources: the respondents were able to identify 654 INPs or URE-related organizations by name or URL address. Indeed, every interviewee agreed that there is a **surplus of research and evidence sources** and argued that a lack of sources is not the main obstacle for using research evidence in education; (iv) interestingly and against the commonly held belief that most policy-relevant research is produced at the global level, particularly in the Global North, more than half of the sources that the respondents consult for URE were **national sources**; (v) when examining the relationship between the various sources that the respondents consult, **the INPs identified are rather loosely connected** (density = 0.006). The component analysis confirmed this finding: there are a large number of national INPs that are unconnected to the regional or international levels. Unsurprisingly, there is great visibility of the INPs of the following international organizations, here listed in the order of frequency: UNESCO, OECD, World Bank, and UNICEF; (vi) national governments or ministries seem to mainly trust INPs that are administered by IOs (UNESCO, OECD, World Bank, GPE, UNICEF), whereas respondents in civil society organizations tend to be more diverse in their choice of INPs, including local platforms, regional organizations (CLADE, CEPAL, ANCEFA, and ASPBAE), and international organizations; and (vii) the request for more **user-friendliness** (especially from respondents in the Global North), on the one hand, and **better alignment** with national priorities, local participation, and capacity-building (especially from respondents in the Global South), on the other hand, was also reiterated in the individual and group interviews.

Chapter 4 examines **what the education sector might learn from public health** research and governance about how best to strengthen the production and use of research evidence for policy, planning, and implementation. This chapter combines an analysis of systematic reviews, learning from expert interviews, and a bibliometric analysis of scholarship in education and public health. A comparison with the public health subsector lends itself to comparison because it moved beyond the narrower focus on evidence-based medicine found in the health sector. The comparative bibliometric analysis presented here reveals (i) a **similar number** of articles published after 1999 in public health (1,660) and education (1,825). However, the scholarship on evidence use in policy grew significantly more in public health (on average 30.5% year on year) than in education (23.6%); (ii) equally important, there were many more highly cited papers in public health (520) than in education (66). Research into the evidence for public health is strongly interconnected through shared citations, whereas similar education research appears to be comprised of many smaller communities. These **specialized communities in education are more self-referential**, whereas public health scholarship extensively references policy theory and knowledge translation scholarship. Thus, there seems to be a greater agreement in public health than in education on what constitutes “evidence” and which scholars are authorized by their peers to make such universal claims; (iii) there has been an increasing number of publications in public health that are preoccupied with knowledge translation (KT). However, since the mid-2010s, there has been a growing awareness that **getting research into policy is not only a technical matter of KT** and exchange, but also a political, social, and systemic challenge; and (iv) similar to the education sector, **controversies exist about the hierarchy of evidence** and how research evidence is used differently and for different purposes across the policy cycle.

The current approach to use of research and evidence (URE) is not working. **Chapter 5** offers a summary of the **main recommendations** to enable a more effective use of research evidence for policy, planning, and implementation (URE-4-PPI). This chapter details the recommendations arising from the analysis of the evidence of how decision making based on evidence can best be supported, and the findings of the original research conducted for this study, and a roadmap for improving URE at global, regional and national levels over the next 4 years (**Annex 1**). The chapter concludes with a detailed roadmap and action plan. **All recommendations are critical** to achieve the objectives of FA1: to further promote URE and support the capacity of national actors in URE (including through South-South collaboration),¹ by fixing the two broken feedback loops between researchers and decision makers, and between global supply and regional/national demand. The third area of activity is advocacy and resource mobilization needed to support implementing the recommendations (**Figure ES.2**).

Figure ES.2: Summary of recommendations



¹ Terms of Reference p.16