# Bridging Research and Policy in Lebanon's Education Sector: A Strategic Analysis

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## Résumé

Face à l'aggravation de la crise éducative au Liban, l'intégration de la recherche dans l'élaboration des politiques s'impose comme une obligation urgente. Cet article présente une analyse SWOT complète du lien entre la recherche et les politiques dans le secteur éducatif libanais, fondée sur une revue ciblée de la littérature et des entretiens avec des chercheurs et des décideurs issus des principales universités et institutions nationales. Les universités et institutions publiques libanaises disposent d'une forte capacité de recherche; toutefois, cette étude met en lumière des faiblesses structurelles telles que la fragmentation des systèmes de données, la qualité inégale des recherches et l'insuffisance des liens institutionnels. Ces obstacles limitent considérablement l'utilisation des données probantes dans les réformes éducatives. Les entretiens révèlent à la fois des opportunités et des freins à la réforme, notamment les initiatives soutenues par les bailleurs, les efforts localisés de groupes de réflexion, ainsi que les contraintes culturelles et politiques persistantes. L'étude montre que certaines réformes, telles que le curriculum national et la politique d'éducation inclusive, témoignent d'un usage croissant de la recherche. Toutefois, de nombreuses productions scientifiques restent sous-utilisées en raison d'un manque de coordination et de l'évitement des sujets sensibles. L'article se conclut par des recommandations, issues d'avis d'experts, pour institutionnaliser le lien entre recherche et politique, en soulignant l'importance de la socialisation des chercheurs, de la cartographie bibliométrique et de la création d'une plateforme reliant la recherche à l'élaboration des politiques, en vue d'aligner la production de connaissances avec les priorités éducatives nationales.

## Mots-clés

Recherche, Politique, Éducation, Forces, Faiblesses, Opportunités, Menaces

## Abstract

With Lebanon's worsening educational crisis, integrating research into policymaking has emerged as a pressing obligation. This paper presents a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the research–policy interconnection in Lebanon's education sector, relying on a targeted literature review and key informant interviews with researchers and policymakers from leading universities and national institutions. Lebanese universities and public institutions have held a strong capacity for research; however, this study uncovers structural weaknesses such as fragmented data systems, inconsistent research quality, and weak institutional links. Such impediments significantly limit the use of evidence in education reform. Interviews reveal both opportunities and barriers to reform, including donor-driven initiatives, localized think tank efforts, and persistent cultural and political limitations. This paper's findings has shown that some reforms, like the national curriculum and inclusive education policy, have demonstrated growing use of research. Many research outputs remain underutilized due to weak coordination and the avoidance of sensitive topics. The paper concludes with expert-informed recommendations to institutionalize research–policy

linkages, citing the importance of researcher socialization, bibliometric mapping, and the creation of a platform linking research to policy making, creating an alignment between knowledge production and national educational priorities.

## Keywords

Research, policy, education, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.

## مستخلص

في ظل تفاقم الأزمة التعليمية في لبنان، برز دمج البحث العلمي في صنع السياسات كأولوية ملحّة. تقدّم هذه الورقة تحليلاً شاملاً لنقاط القوة والضعف والفرص والتهديدات (SWOT) في العلاقة بين البحث والسياسة في قطاع التعليم اللبناني، مستندة إلى مراجعة أدبية مستهدفة ومقابلات مع باحثين وصانعي سياسات من جامعات ومؤسسات وطنية رائدة. على الرغم من وجود قدرات بحثية قوية في الجامعات اللبنانية والمؤسسات العامة مثل المركز التربوي للبحوث والإنماء(CERD) ، إلا أن الدراسة تكشف عن وجود نقاط ضعف هيكلية تقيّد بشكل كبير استخدام الأدلة في إصلاح التعليم، مثل أنظمة البيانات المجزأة، وتفاوت جودة الأبحاث، وضعف الروابط المؤسسية. تكشف المقابلات عن فرص ومعوّقات للإصلاح، بما في ذلك المبادرات الممولّة من الجهات المانحة، وجهود مراكز التفكير المحلية، بالإضافة إلى القيود الثقافية والسياسية المستمرة. وتُظهر النتائج أن بعض الإصلاحات تشهد تزايدًا في استخدام الأدلة البحثية، مثل المنهج الوطني والسياسة الوطنية للتعليم الدامج. إلا أن العديد من مخرجات الأبحاث لا تزال غير مُستثمرة بشكل كافٍ بسبب ضعف التنسيق، وغياب التفاعل المنهجي، وتجنّب المواضيع الحساسة. وتختتم الورقة بتوصيات مبنية على آراء خبراء تهدف إلى مأسسة العلاقة بين البحث وصنع السياسات، مع التأكيد على أهمية دمج الباحثين في البيئة الاجتماعية، وإجراء خرائط ببليومترية للأبحاث، وإنشاء منصة للتواصل بين البحث وصناع السياسات، لضمان توافق إنتاج المعرفة مع الأولويات التعليمية الوطنية.

## كلمات مفتاحية

بحث، سياسة، تعليم، نقاط القوة، نقاط الضعف، الفرص، التهديدات.

# 1. Introduction

Evidence-informed and research-based policymaking has become a cornerstone of educational reform globally, emphasizing that rigorous research can guide effective strategies and improve learning outcomes (Slavin et al., 2021). Lebanon's education sector, once a source of national pride, is now faced with severe challenges that underscore the need for research-driven interventions. International assessments show that Lebanese students perform well below global and regional averages, with roughly two-thirds of 15-year-olds failing to achieve basic proficiency in reading, math, and science on the 2018 PISA exam. (Pisa 2018 national report). This learning crisis has been exacerbated by compounded shocks since 2019 (economic collapse, pandemic, Beirut port blast, regional instability), which disrupted schooling and deepened educational inequalities (Pushparatnam et al., 2025). As the country grapples with declining outcomes and strained resources, the "need for evidence-based, cost-effective approaches" becomes ever more important for policymakers and stakeholders" to inform recovery and reform efforts (Pushparatnam et al., 2025).

In relation to the ongoing curriculum reform, few studies have systematically examined h research has influenced educational policymaking in Lebanon despite growing calls for evidence-informed decision-making.

To address this gap, the present paper offers a systemic SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the research–policy nexus in Lebanese education. Drawing from a comprehensive review of existing literature as well as insights gathered through key informant interviews with educational researchers focused on bridging research and educational policies. The analysis identifies the main sources of educational research and evaluates the current landscape; it highlights opportunities for enhancing the connection between research and policy in regards to Lebanon's educational system and examines ongoing challenges. The study concludes by offering practical recommendations aimed at bridging the gap between researchers and policymakers, with the goal of aligning research and policy to support educational reform in Lebanon, especially in the face of current pressing challenges.

# 2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative and exploratory research design to investigate the interface and potential gap between educational research and policymaking in Lebanon. Two primary methods of data collection and analysis are integrated into this study: a comprehensive literature review and Key Informant Interviews with educational experts. Both sources of data were systematically analyzed using the SWOT analysis framework, which allowed for the categorization of findings into strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

## 2.1. Literature Review

A targeted literature review was conducted to examine the existing body of research on the relationship between educational research and policy development in Lebanon. Sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, institutional reports, policy briefs, as well as working papers published by Lebanese universities, governmental bodies, and international organizations. The literature selection was guided by relevance and categorized into three main themes: (i) the role of research in educational policymaking, (ii) historical and current policy reform efforts, and (iii) systemic barriers and facilitators of evidence-based decision-making in the education sector. The documents entailed in the literature review were critically reviewed and evaluated to identify content that is relevant to the SWOT framework categories.

## 2.2. Key Informant Interviews

To complement and contextualize the literature findings, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with key educational researchers and policy experts currently engaged in projects that aim to strengthen the research–policy nexus in Lebanon. Interviewees were affiliated with prominent educationally oriented institutions, including the Lebanese University (LU), American University of Beirut (AUB), Saint Joseph University (USJ), Notre Dame University (NDU), and the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD). The interviews focused on the experts' experiences, challenges and potential opportunities in translating research into policy, current policy reform initiatives, particularly curriculum reform. Prior to conducting the interviews, verbal consent was obtained from all participants, after which the interviews were thematically analyzed following the same SWOT framework applied to the literature review.

## 2.3. Analytical Framework

SWOT analysis was adopted to synthesize data across the two methods of data collection. SWOT analysis is a framework used to evaluate internal strengths and weaknesses alongside external opportunities and threats (GÜREL, 2017), This framework is particularly useful for mapping complex, context-dependent systems where the same factor can assume different roles depending on implementation and context. For example, a research infrastructure may be a strength if effectively utilized or a weakness if underfunded and isolated from policy processes. Similarly, unaddressed opportunities such as international partnerships or curriculum reforms may evolve into threats if neglected.

The integration of literature and expert interviews ensures both depth and currency of the findings, offering evidence informed insights that can support future reform efforts by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), CERD, and academic institutions.

# 3. Strengths: Positive Drivers of Evidence Use in Education

Despite challenges, Lebanon has significant strengths to leverage research for better educational policymaking. One major strength lies in the presence of established universities and research centers that can drive evidence production, and produce educational research in three languages: Arabic, English and French.

Lebanon's universities, particularly their faculties of education, play a critical role in generating educational research that could support policymaking. Among these, the Faculty of Education at the Lebanese University (LU) stands out as a central institutional actor and a major reservoir of educational researchers. As the country's only public university with national reach, LU hosts a high concentration of experts who have historically contributed to educational development. These contributions include curriculum design, textbook development, and research collaborations with the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) (Abdul-Hamid & Yassine, 2020).

In addition to LU, leading private universities, such as the American University of Beirut (AUB), Saint Joseph University (USJ), Lebanese American University (LAU), University of Balamand (UOB), and Notre Dame University (NDU), have also made notable contributions through their faculties of education and research centers. These institutions conduct research on pedagogy, curriculum, and education policy, and scholars often advise the Ministry or participate in national reform initiatives.

For instance, the Issam Fares Institute at AUB has funded research on the role of policy institutes in Arab education reform (American University of Beirut, n.d.). The Center for Applied Research in Education (CARE) at Notre Dame University (NDU) also plays a significant role in advancing educational research and contributing to evidence-based policy development (NDU, n.d.).

Public sector research capacity is rooted in the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) which operates under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). Founded in 1971, CERD is decreed as the government's educational research and planning institute. According to its legal mandate, CERD serves as the national "focal point of providing educational statistics and designing, planning and implementing educational strategies, policies and plans", leading wide consultations across public and private pre-university institutions (CRDP Lebanon, n.d.) It also develops national curricula and training programs, continuously updating the education sector by incorporating international best practices (CRDP Lebanon, n.d.). In principle, CERD's role is to generate data and research to guide policy, for example, CERD publishes annual Statistical Bulletins on schools and has conducted studies on teacher workforce, social factors, and learning outcomes. Historically, CERD led major reform efforts (such as the 1994 education reform plan), and it commissioned research to evaluate the 1997 curriculum (Shuayb, 2018).

Interviewed experts pointed to the new national curriculum reform currently underway as a promising example of increased evidence use in education policymaking. According to the director of the research office at CERD, the curriculum design process is being informed by nine dedicated research papers that reference both national studies and international best practices in curriculum development.

> *"The center conducted nine studies on key issues in Lebanon's education sector, including labor market needs, university challenges, and student perspectives. These studies informed nine position papers covering themes such as language of instruction, curriculum structure, inclusion, assessment, and the teaching of Arabic, French, science, and mathematics, aligned with global educational approaches."*

Other key educational research institutions include LAES, which produces evidence-based studies to inform policy, and CLS, which conducts multidisciplinary research focused on equity and inclusion in education.

Interviewed educational experts emphasized the substantial role that universities and research institutions play in producing a wide range of educational research in Lebanon. They acknowledged

that faculties of education, particularly at institutions like LU, AUB, and USJ, have consistently contributed to knowledge production that informs various aspects of education policy and practice. Several experts highlighted the depth and volume of research being generated through academic theses, dissertations, and institutionally funded projects. However, one expert noted a clear discrepancy in the quality of this research,

> *"There's a huge difference, some research is of excellent quality, while others are extremely poor. The variation is striking."*

pointing out that some outputs are of high academic and practical value, while others suffer from weak methodological rigor or limited relevance. This inconsistency was attributed to the absence of a unified national quality assurance framework to regulate and assess the standards of research, particularly at the postgraduate level.

Lebanon's recent commitment to inclusive education represents an example of the integration of research into the policymaking process. The Ministry of Education's National Inclusive Education Policy asserts the right to education for children with disabilities and relies on research to achieve this goal (UNEG, 2024). Expert perspectives on the development and implementation of the inclusive education policy were mixed. Several interviewees praised the policy for emerging from a structured pilot initiative and for incorporating research findings from the pilot evaluation "Case Study on the Inclusive Education Pilot Study in Lebanese Public Schools," June 2021, (UNICEF, 2021a). However, other informants expressed concern that the policy lacked a broader empirical foundation. They noted that the formulation of the policy did not draw sufficiently on national research regarding the actual number of children with disabilities, the types and distribution of disabilities across regions, or systemic barriers to access. Moreover, even if such research existed, it was neither cited in the policy documents nor made publicly available. They argued that this undermines the contextual relevance of the policy, and raises questions about the extent to which it is truly evidence-based.

## 4. Weaknesses: Missing Links in the Research–Policy Chain

Despite the earlier mentioned research capacities, there is a lack of large-scale, longitudinal studies and data systems that provide the kind of evidence needed for long-term policy planning. Educational data in Lebanon is often fragmented, MEHE and CERD have made progress in collecting statistics, but these are not always linked and analyzed to track trends over time. There are almost no national

cohort studies beyond TIMSS 2019 (Gajderowicz et al., 2019) and PISA 2018 low proficiency rates (Avvisati et al., 2019).

In addition to the scarcity of longitudinal data, several experts highlighted the fragmented and uncoordinated system for indexing educational research in Lebanon. They emphasized the absence of a centralized, accessible database that systematically maps existing studies on education.

These structural gaps in data continuity and research accessibility in Lebanon reflect broader patterns observed across the Arab region. In Knowledge Production in the Arab World: The Impossible Promise (2016), Sari Hanafi and Rigas Arvanitis argue that research systems across the Arab region suffer from deep structural fragmentation, institutional silos, and a lack of cumulative knowledge building. This fragmentation limits research visibility and distances academic work from public and policy concerns, reducing much of it to rhetorical or symbolic output. Under the same context, Adnan Al-Amin (2021) examines how such disconnected research traditions manifest in what he calls a "production of emptiness," wherein academic activity proceeds without anchoring itself in meaningful social or educational transformation.

> *"Empty empiricism is a common tendency among educational researchers, characterized by repetitive research 'exercises' and at times even deceptive research practices."*

This broader critique of research detachment is echoed in empirical studies that explore the institutional and structural barriers preventing research from informing policy in Lebanon. A study by Takieddine and Bou Diab (2018) highlights a significant gap between academic research and practical application, noting that academic institutions often prioritize theoretical research over policy-relevant studies, leading to limited impact on national policy development. This disconnect is further exacerbated by promotion criteria within Lebanese universities that emphasize the quantity of publications (Boutros et al., 2022) which may lead to a situation where research is not relevant to the specific needs of the country. Additionally, the organizational cultures of Lebanese higher education institutions, characterized by bureaucratic and corporate structures, often limit faculty involvement in decision-making, further deterring scholars from participating in policy discourse (Nauffal, 2004). Research by Shuayb (2018) found a marked "reluctance amongst academics…to play a direct role in influencing policy making", even when they belong to an education research association. A study by Abouchedid and Abdelnour (2025) cited the socialization of researchers as an important factor to improve research productivity and reduce the gap between research and policy.

There is also an issue of "preaching to the choir", policy briefs and conferences frequently circulate among academics and NGOs, but senior government officials are often not involved. As a result, many completed studies fail to reach the broader community of policymakers (Shuayb, 2018).

The disconnect between research and policy gives rise to a number of poorly addressed thematic areas, for example despite the extensive research done on the education of gifted students in Lebanon (Sarouphim, 2010, Antoun et al., 2022) there remains no policy dedicated to gifted learners. The absence of formal identification tools and culturally relevant curricula further exacerbates the issue, leading to inconsistent and inadequate support for gifted individuals across the country (Hroub, 2022).

In addition to the structural limitations previously discussed, interviewed educational researchers identified several cultural and perceptual barriers that continue to hinder the integration of research into policymaking in Lebanon. A recurring concern among interviewees was the lack of belief among policymakers in the value of research; most experts agreed that research is often viewed as marginal to policy decisions. While one expert noted a gradual positive shift over the past five years, another framed the issue as a case of:

> *"Cognitive dissonance; a subtle inconsistency between what we think and how we act."*

Experts also pointed out to problematic cultural attitudes, particularly the persistent idealization of Lebanon's historical reputation for educational excellence, as one interviewee noted:

> *"We are culturally stuck to the halo that Lebanon has an excellent educational system."*

This mindset creates resistance to critical self-assessment and fosters an overreliance on adopting foreign models in curriculum reform, at the expense of contextually grounded approaches:

> *"We still do what they did in France, or USA, and it is not always contextually appropriate"*

Additionally, interviewees agreed that the relationship between researchers and policymakers is either non-existent or highly fragmented. Some believed it is primarily the responsibility of MEHE and CERD to initiate engagement with researchers, while the majority emphasized that the responsibility should be shared among researchers, educational institutions and governmental entities.

# 5. Opportunities: Leveraging Global Attention for Local Educational Transformation

A key opportunity lies in the impact of international assessments and donor-supported initiatives, which have the potential to direct the educational discourse in Lebanon toward evidence-informed policymaking. The results of TIMSS and PISA have acted as a wake-up call; for example, the poor performance on PISA 2015 and 2018 sparked debates on quality and equity, and provided a momentum for initiatives targeting fundamental skills (Pushparatnam et al., 2025). Donor-supported programs have built on these findings: Lebanon's collaboration with agencies on programs like "Reaching All Children with Education" (RACE) and "Quality Instruction Towards Access and Basic Education Improvement" (QITABI) has typically included data collection and monitoring components that generate research insights (QITABI 2, 2025). A flagship initiative illustrating this is the Research for Results (R4R) program, a joint effort between MEHE and international partners (World Bank, UK FCDO, and USAID). Launched in 2016 at the request of the Ministry to the World Bank, R4R's objective was to produce evidence-based policy recommendations to strengthen the efficiency and quality of education services (World Bank Group, 2021b).

Additionally, global recovery initiatives have increasingly encouraged the development of Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) and the strategic use of data as critical tools for driving evidence-informed educational reform. Following compounded crises; economic collapse, the Beirut port explosion, pandemic-related school closures, and regional conflicts, global agencies have stepped in to support Lebanon's educational recovery. A consistent theme in these "build back better" initiatives is the urgent need to improve education data systems for more effective planning. UNESCO's emergency education response has prioritized data reporting, and it is publishing bi-weekly education crisis fact sheets that tracks student registration numbers, school reopening status, and other key indicators to inform decision-makers (MEHE, 2024). In the same context, a 2021 Save the Children brief on Lebanon's education emergency urged immediate investment in data collection and coordination mechanisms (Ndeda et al., 2021). In sum, Lebanon's engagement with global recovery and resilience programs comes with strong expectations for evidence-based management.

Interviewed educational experts mentioned donor-funded programs as important opportunities to strengthen the research capacity in Lebanon. However, they also cautioned that such opportunities can quickly become counterproductive when donor agendas are adopted without sufficient contextual

adaptation. Several experts observed that both researchers and institutions often align with external priorities, sometimes at the expense of locally grounded evidence and needs. As one expert reflected, drawing from personal experience with donor-funded initiatives,

> *"The opportunity must come from within; no one can fix us if we are not willing to fix ourselves."*

In parallel, interviewees highlighted the ongoing think tank initiative within CERD as a promising example of locally driven reform.

> *"The Think Tank is implemented with a main mission to identify the research priorities of the Ministry of Education on one hand, and CRDP and the field on the other. The importance of the Think Tank is also in taking these results and reaching policymakers effectively and synthetically, through conferences, workshops, reports, and articles."*

The Think Tank for Educational Research and Innovation, established at CERD in partnership with national and international stakeholders, serves as a collaborative laboratory of ideas aimed at revitalizing educational research in Lebanon. It brings together experts from universities, and government institutions to generate evidence-based recommendations, and guide national education policy (CRDP, n.d.). The initiative is currently supporting the development of two national policies, on citizenship education (Khalil & Abou Chedid, 2025) and educational leadership, targeting the pre-university stages. Both policies are grounded in comprehensive national and international research, offering a sustainable model for integrating research into policymaking.

## 6. Threats to Evidence-Informed Education

Lebanon's recent crises have severely affected evidence-informed policymaking in education. First, the country's post-2019 economic collapse and political turmoil have disrupted funding flows and upended government priorities. The financial crisis reduced public spending and shifted the Ministry of Education's focus to emergency response rather than policy reforms (Saidi, 2021). Education budgets shrank to under 2% of GDP as of 2020, well below regional norms, resulting in sidelining investments in research and data systems (World Bank group, 2021a). Additionally, pressures from protracted crises have overwhelmed the system's capacity for evidence building. The Syrian refugee influx has made Lebanon's student population nearly 40% refugee children (UNICEF, 2021b), and

schools were closed for over 75% of the 2020 academic year due to the pandemic (World Bank, 2021a). As a result, over 700,000 children were out of school and suffered severe learning loss (UNICEF, 2022). Faced with this emergency, basic service delivery was prioritized over longer-term research initiatives.

According to Salem (2020), researchers in Lebanon have been among the most affected by these ongoing crises. Many have had to scale down their academic work altogether due to disruptions, particularly the shortage of U.S. dollar liquidity that has affected research operations and institutional viability.

Importantly, these financial and institutional obstacles are not new; they have long hindered efforts to build a sustainable research infrastructure in Lebanon's education sector. For example, following the civil war, CERD initiated a major reform effort in 1994 that proposed five foundational studies on teachers, education data, and broader social issues. However, 'only one of the studies… was actually published,' primarily due to limitations in funding and research capacity (Shuyab, 2018). One of the educational research experts interviewed confirmed this historical pattern, noting that the core group of researchers once responsible for educational research production at CERD retired nearly a decade ago and have not been replaced. Due to prolonged public sector hiring freezes driven by financial constraints, these vacancies remain unfilled, significantly affecting CERD's research capacity. As a result, the center's primary role in generating sustained, policy-relevant educational research has been severely compromised.

In addition, a persistent digital divide delays data collection and the rollout of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) planned in Lebanon's 2021–2025 education strategy. Many public schools in rural areas, still lack reliable electricity and internet connectivity, making them unable to report data (UNHCR, 2023).

Interviewees identified several threats to the integration of research into educational policymaking in Lebanon. Chief among them is the absence of a systematic relationship between researchers and policymakers, with one expert noting,

> *"No one is working on this link… neither researchers are reaching out to decision makers, nor policymakers are seeking to use research."*

This disconnect is compounded by donor-driven research agendas that often lead to redundancy, with funds used to *"Confirm what we already know."*

One of the experts mentioned the threat posed by the avoidance of sensitive issues in academic research, noting that

> *"The academic landscape continues to sideline critical topics that are considered socially or politically sensitive, thereby creating gaps in the research agenda and constraining evidence-informed policymaking."*

# 7. Expert Recommendations for Institutionalizing Research–Policy Linkages in Lebanon

Educational experts interviewed for this study reaffirmed the concerns outlined in the literature regarding threats to research integration and proposed a series of targeted, actionable recommendations to address them. one of the recommendations was the socialization of researchers,

*"Research productivity is influenced by the socialization of faculty staff members into a research culture, supported by institutional processes and climate"*

This includes in addition to academic training, building skills in communication, policy engagement, and public discourse. Experts also emphasized the need for a comprehensive bibliometric analysis to map the evolution of educational research in Lebanon.

> *""It's also valuable to conduct what we refer to as bibliometric research, or what some might call systematic research, which helps trace the evolution and development of research over time."*

Such an analysis would reveal existing gaps, reduce duplication, and allow stakeholders to understand what evidence is currently available and what type of research is most needed.

To achieve long-term coherence, the experts pointed out to the need for systemic connectivity, where research and policymaking are interlinked through institutional rather than individual relationships. This involves adopting sustainable strategies that are resilient to changes in political leadership. One key proposal was the creation of a platform or digital infrastructure that links research results directly

to decision-makers. Such a platform would ensure that evidence reaches policymakers in accessible and timely formats.

A prominent recommendation was to establish a research–policy committee embedded within the Ministry of Education and CERD. This body would include both policymakers and researchers, enabling collaborative agenda setting and increasing policymakers' ownership of the evidence produced. As one expert explained,

> *"When policymakers are involved, they become more motivated and interested; they understand the importance of the results and they gain deeper understanding and commitment to the policies they enact."*

In sum, these recommendations highlight the collective recognition that structural change, not just more data, is essential to institutionalizing evidence-informed policymaking in Lebanon's education sector.

Furthermore, interviewees agreed that policy implementation should not mark the end of the role of research in policy making. Even after a policy is enacted, it requires continuous participatory spaces through which educators, researchers, and community members can reflect on its impact, propose adjustments, and ensure accountability.

# 8. Conclusion

To conclude, when the experts were asked who should bear the responsibility for establishing and sustaining the link between research and educational policymaking, there was a clear consensus: the responsibility is shared. It lies equally with researchers, research institutions, and policymakers. Each actor plays a critical role in creating a functional and sustainable evidence-policy ecosystem. As for the qualifications required to drive this integration forward, one expert offered a particularly resonant reflection:

> *"We have first world people but third world systems."*

This statement summarizes a key insight that our study can conclude with; the problem is not a lack of individual expertise or capacity, but rather the fragmented, inefficient systems that fail to connect and leverage existing talent. Bridging this systemic gap is essential if Lebanon is to utilize its human capital and institutional knowledge for effective, research-informed education reform.

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