Has the Pendulum Stopped Swinging (At Last)?

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Most of the people attending this meeting have been profoundly affected by three documents drafted 10 years ago, and signed into law or published in 2002. The first two are products of the 107th Congress: (1) the amendment and reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, aka “No Child Left Behind”, and (2) the Education Sciences Reform Act, which established the Institute of Education Sciences. The third groundbreaking document was "Scientific Research in Education", edited by Shavelson & Towne, the product of the National Research Council’s Committee on Scientific Principles for Education.

Together this legislation and report generated considerable excitement and optimism about the need for, and possibility of, new approaches to increasing the rigor and relevance of education research. They also generated criticism, resistance, and opposition, with many in the field of education research viewing them collectively as yet another phase in the cycles of promise & disappointment about advancing educational effectiveness that have waxed & waned over the past century.

I will argue that this time, something novel, valuable, and enduring has occurred, and that research in education will continue to “harden” in the future. I will explain why I believe that the advances of the past decade can be sustained and enable the “Education Sciences” to remain worthy of the designation. The pendulum will not swing back.