

Freedom Within Boundaries

Mechanism for Regulating Educational Innovation



Educational innovation rarely arrives politely.

New pedagogical models, emerging technologies, and data-driven learning environments tend to challenge existing rules rather than fit neatly within them. This creates a persistent tension at the heart of public education systems: how to encourage innovation while maintaining responsibility, quality, and trust.

Regulation is designed to protect. Innovation is designed to disrupt.

When these two forces collide without mediation, systems are often forced into false choices: either block innovation in the name of safety, or allow experimentation that risks fragmentation and harm.



What Is a Regulatory Sandbox?



A Regulatory Sandbox is not a loophole, and it is not deregulation.

It is a structured, supervised framework that allows educational innovations to be tested responsibly within defined boundaries. The sandbox serves as a bridge between innovation and regulation, creating space for learning before deciding whether, and how, new approaches should become policy.

At its core lies a critical acknowledgment: innovation and safety are not opposites, but they must be deliberately aligned.

Government as an Innovation Partner

The introduction of Regulatory Sandboxes reflects an evolving role of government.

Rather than acting solely as a gatekeeper that enforces existing rules, the Ministry of Education increasingly functions as an innovation partner, enabling experimentation, coordinating stakeholders, and ensuring learning from pilots informs future regulation.

In Israel, this approach has been embedded within the Ministry's innovation and R&D mechanisms, enabling educational experimentation to proceed with oversight, monitoring, and clear pathways to scale through formal approval processes.



Matching Regulation to the Nature of Innovation

One of the key insights behind Regulatory Sandboxes is that not all innovations require the same regulatory response.

Different challenges call for different sandbox models:

01

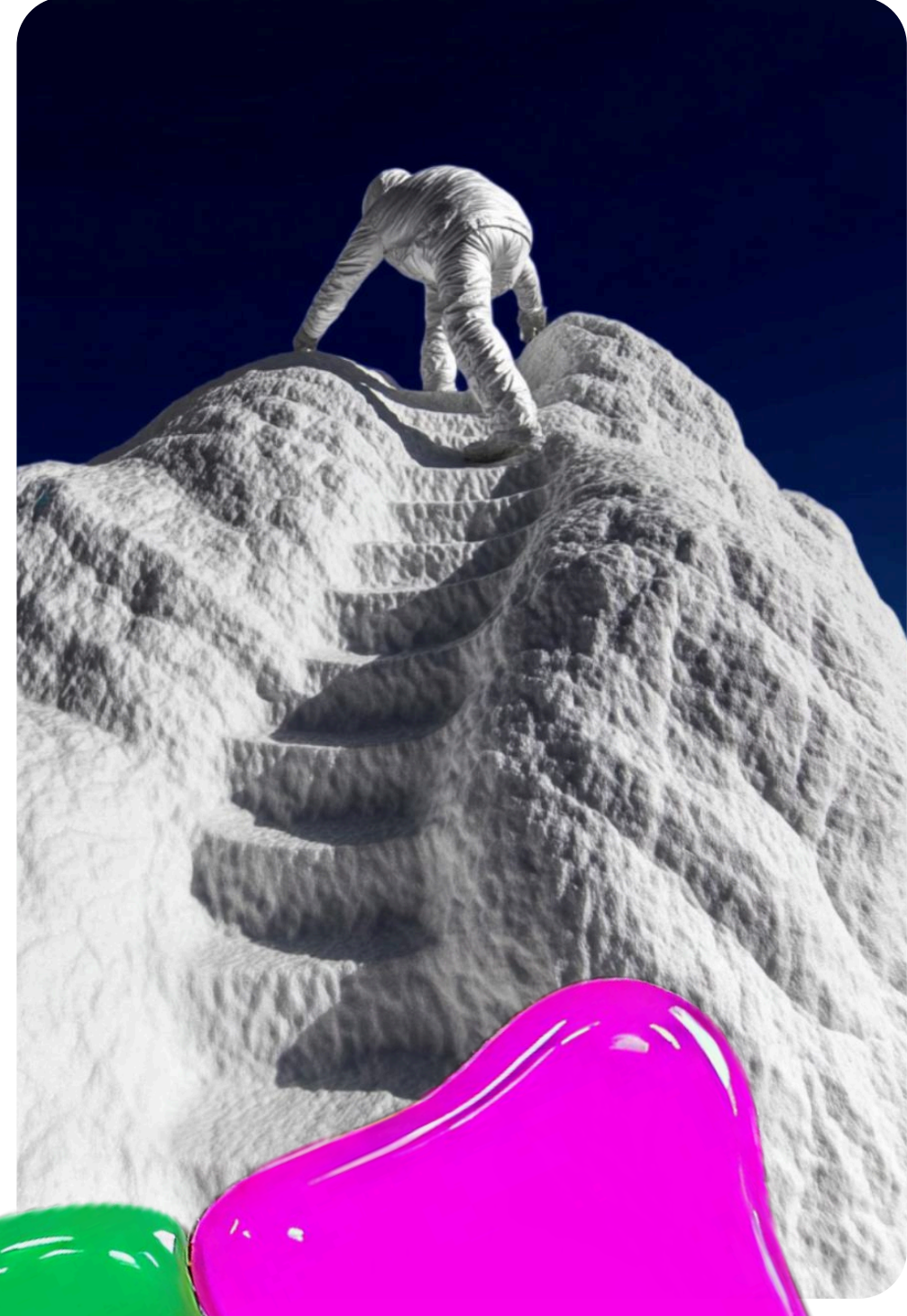
Reverse Sandboxes create new regulatory frameworks for expected future technologies or pedagogies.

02

Exemption Sandboxes allow temporary, controlled suspension of specific regulations to test promising ideas that are not allowed in spread use yet.

03

Advisory Sandboxes focus on interpretation and guidance, helping innovators understand existing regulations, and sometimes revealing that no regulatory change is needed at all.



From Pilot to Policy: A Deliberate Process

For sandboxes to function in a governmental context, structure is essential. The sandbox process typically unfolds across defined stages: clarifying the innovation and its potential system-wide value, committee review and approval, a monitored trial phase, evidence gathering, and, where justified, transition to system-wide implementation.

Regulatory Sandboxes transform pilots from local experiments into system-level learning opportunities.

Aligning Incentives Across the System

Well-designed sandboxes align incentives for all partners:

- Innovators** gain clarity, professional guidance, and realistic pathways to scale.
- Schools** receive innovations that have been tested against real needs and constraints.
- The education system** benefits from evidence-based policy development.
- Students** ultimately benefit from innovations that improve learning within safe, equitable frameworks.

Innovation becomes a shared responsibility rather than a private risk.

Why This Matters Now

The rapid expansion of AI in education makes these questions more urgent than ever.

Technologies that influence learning pathways, assessment, and decision-making cannot be regulated retroactively. They require frameworks that allow responsible testing before wide adoption.



Regulating for the Future

In complex, fast-changing systems like education, the most dangerous assumption is believing that existing regulation can anticipate every valuable innovation, or that innovation should proceed unchecked.

Regulatory Sandboxes do not lower standards. They create pathways for innovation to prove its value before becoming policy.

By treating regulation as a learning process rather than a fixed barrier, education systems can protect what matters most — while still moving forward.

