



Evidence Informed Policymaking in Education in Europe

EIPEE Final Project Report Policy Brief

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There is growing recognition that education policy should be informed by the most reliable and relevant evidence. The Evidence Informed Policy in Education in Europe (EIPEE) project aimed to identify the nature and range of activities linking research evidence and policymaking in education in Europe and to further develop capacity and awareness on this issue. Funded with support from the European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC) under the Lifelong Learning: Education and Training Policies (agreement number 2009-11932), the EIPEE project was a collaborative initiative involving 18 partners from across Europe, led by the EPPI-Centre at the Institute of Education, University of London. The project built on previous work in this area funded by DG EAC and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

What did the project find?

Cross-European network: The project identified a considerable amount of interest in evidence informed policy in Europe, particularly from national governments. It developed a broad-based European network of those interested in or working in this area, which included project partners, others who engaged in the project in some way, and the additional 20 organisations that have joined us to engage in further work funded by the European Commission.

Analytical framework: The project developed an analytical framework to describe the nature and range of linking activities taking place across Europe. This consists of a simple model of an evidence production-to-use system and a typology of 27 types of activity and 9 mechanisms used to enable evidence informed policy. In helping to systematise

current work and thinking about this issue, the framework builds on the work of other authors to provide a conceptual and practical tool for understanding the links between research evidence and decision-making.

Activities linking research evidence to policy making:

The project identified 269 examples of activities linking research evidence with education policy in Europe. The findings describe a wide variety of approaches that have been taken to increase the use of research evidence in policy settings across Europe.

Research on research generation and use: Enabling the fruitful use of research evidence in decision-making requires knowledge about what works and in what contexts. The project found little empirical research examining the nature, process and/or efficacy of activities used to link research evidence to educational policymaking in Europe. The existing research (most of which is in healthcare) is generally characterised by methodologically weak evaluation designs and a lack of independent objective measures used in assessing outcomes.

Recommendations

1. Enabling links between research evidence and policy

Increase the effective use of activities (including structures and systems) to link research and decision-making. The analytical framework and database of current linking activities identified by the project across Europe can be used to inform the analysis, design, development and implementation of similar or novel linking activities.

2. Increasing quality, relevance and availability of research for informing policy

Ensure that more research is 'fit for purpose' in terms of quality, relevance and availability for informing policy. This could include (i) involving policymakers' perspectives in driving research agendas to ensure relevance of the research; and (ii) increasing the use of systematic reviews of research to ensure complete, relevant, quality assured and accessible research evidence.

3. Knowledge, awareness and skills capacity building in all parts of the research evidence production-to-use system

Increase understanding and skills in relation to the use of research in policymaking in education in each part of the evidence-to-policy system. This could include: (i) participation in networks on this topic; (ii) providing tailored training for individuals and organisations to develop skills and understanding of the different parts of the system; and (iii) providing opportunities to share skills and knowledge through secondments, internships or other working/employment arrangements.

4. Policy decisions to develop evidence informed policy in education

Increase political and financial commitment to evidence informed education policy at national, regional and local levels and take the practical steps by which this commitment could have effect in the short, medium and long terms. This could include: (i) acting on the recommendations listed here; (ii) developing systems and programmes of work, including cross-national European initiatives; and (iii) drawing up priorities and targets for achieving evidence informed policy in education.

5. Increasing capacity in research on research generation and use

Develop evidence informed policymaking as a field of study in order to produce research results to inform the choice of activities for linking research to its use in education in Europe. This could include: (i) building on existing research in education conducted outside Europe and research in other areas of social policy within and outside Europe; and (ii) incorporating the evaluation of implementation and outcomes into all new linking activities.

Some aspects of these recommendations have been built into another project co-financed by the European Commission (grant number EAC-2010-1395).

How did we do it?

- **Networking:** The project worked collaboratively with partners to enable a broad-based European perspective and to develop a network of those working in this field within Europe. This included an interactive website, two partner meetings and an international seminar with speakers from the European Commission and representatives from many ministries of education.

- **Capacity building:** The project developed a training curriculum and course to build capacity in evidence informed policy and practice; topics included quality assurance of research and systematic mapping and synthesis of research to inform policy and practice.

- **Data collection and analysis:** Activities linking research evidence and policy in education across Europe, and studies of such activities, were identified through: (i) project partners; (ii) a questionnaire sent to all European ministries/departments of education (at all levels of education) and other relevant organisations and individuals; and (iii) a systematic search of the worldwide web, electronic bibliographic databases, specialist journals, key publications and websites.

- **Analytical framework:** An analytic framework was developed to classify the different activities taking place across Europe to link research evidence with policymaking.

Further information

This policy brief is based on the following report:

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