

## Chapter 10

### A Large-scale Policy Research Programme: A Canadian Experience

Satya Brink, Ph. D.  
 Director, National Policy Research, Learning Policy Directorate  
 Human Resources and Social Development Canada, Government of Canada

*In this chapter we look at how a number of factors have provided momentum for a major cultural change in evidence-based policy in Canada. At the same time as longitudinal surveys and methodologies offered opportunities for research on new trajectories, a political will appeared to undertake a concerted policy programme which resulted eventually in the “Children’s Agenda”.*

#### **A major culture change**

In the late 1980s the time was ripe for policy action on human development from childhood to adulthood in Canada. However, the evidence was inadequate for supporting expensive policy investments. Much of the research was conducted on past generations and the context had dramatically changed. Single research projects or evaluations, no matter how rigorous, were insufficient for developing a major policy initiative. Therefore, it was time to build a “body of evidence” based on the best sources of national data on the current generation of children. This was the start of a major culture change regarding not only evidence-based policy but also the use of indicators for accountability.

A number of factors aligned to provide momentum major cultural change. Research from natural as well as social science began to show that early childhood development could have impacts on outcomes later in life. Longitudinal surveys and methodologies provided opportunities for research on trajectories that could test the evidence in Canada. There was political will to undertake a concerted policy programme which resulted eventually in the “Children’s Agenda”.

#### **Policy-driven research demands a long-term view based on desirable outcomes**

Governments eager to show policy successes during their short elected mandates often demanded a short horizon for initiatives. The public debates, nevertheless, considered “legacy” proposals and encouraged the consideration of a significant addition to the policy infrastructure of the country, similar to public pensions. Such an investment required a long-term view and a variety of policy instruments to achieve the desired goal. This led over the next decade to the launch of the “National Children’s Agenda”, which

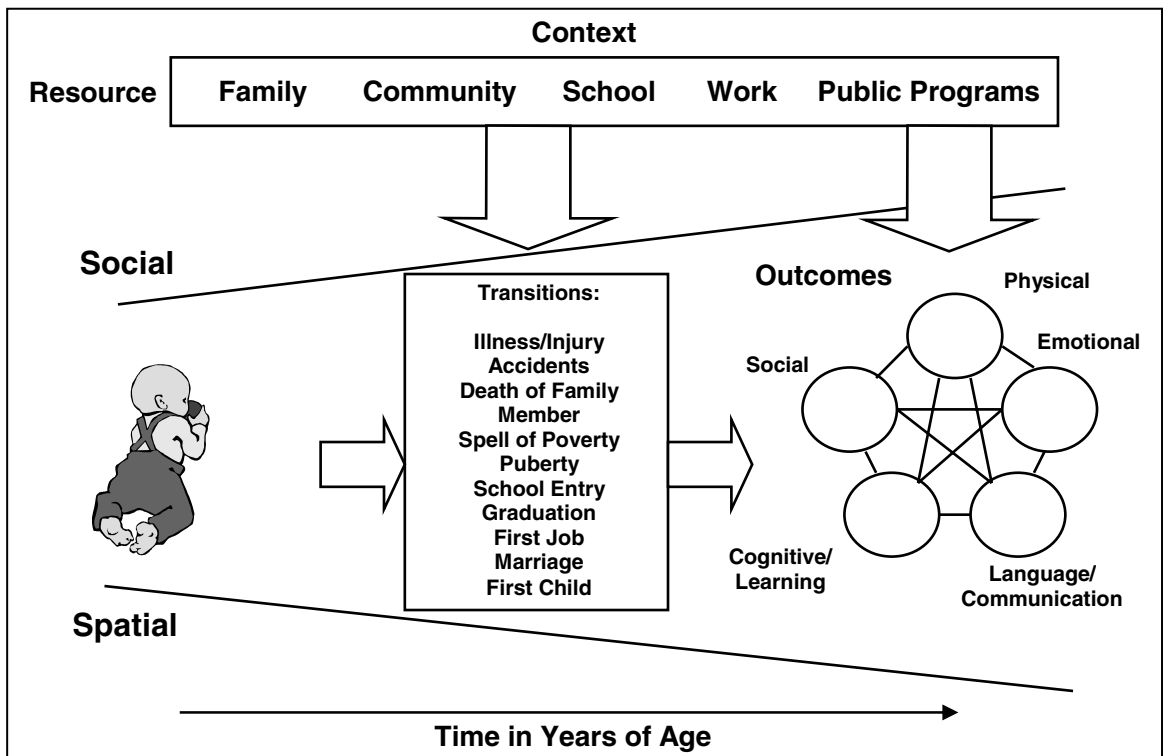
required a package of policy initiatives by two levels of governments. This article describes how this was achieved.

A major breakthrough was achieved in about 1992 when positive human development was made the desired objective rather than *ad hoc* short term goals in childhood (e.g. reducing bullying in schools). Human development was defined as a lifelong process by which individuals acquire knowledge, skills and individuality which they use to adapt to the changing environment and for personal and societal benefit. Such a lifelong perspective was important to explain different trajectories of individuals and to relate the differences to opportunities and experiences that could result in positive changes.

Such a broad conceptualisation of human development was directed to the national vision of fostering “good Canadians”. Four final outcomes in adulthood were chosen – lifelong learners, productive workers, nurturing parents and engaged citizens.

Such a long-term and holistic view required a different conceptual framework and a major rethink of the sources of data. The conceptual framework (Figure 10.1) had to accommodate the potential developmental pathways of children to adulthood while identifying the contextual factors, resources and determinants, and life events which could affect developmental outcomes. Age appropriate outcomes at each developmental stage were studied but they were linked as a trajectory. The five developmental outcomes selected as leading to the final outcomes in adulthood, were physical development, cognitive development, emotional development, social development and communication.

Figure 10.1. Conceptual framework for data, research and policy for human development



Source: Survey Documentation, HRSDC (1998).

## A better understanding of the relation between evidence and policy

Evidence-based policy enables strategic and effective policy decisions for complex, multiple and persistent problems based on reliable research evidence. Its functions are:

- to contribute to the policy debate based on evidence rather than ideology or tradition;
- to identify the seriousness of existing and emerging problems and to estimate their consequences to individuals and society;
- to determine the need and to target clientele;
- to choose between policy options based on evidence of cause and effectiveness of interventions;
- to determine the best time and the most sensitive variable for interventions and to increase the chances and durability of successful results.

The assumption that known and existing problems were serious enough to merit policy action resulted in incremental policies. Because of a high reliance on proxies or risks rather than outcomes, over or mis-targeting were common. Since the emphasis was on children at risk, problems were over-estimated, ignoring the fact that a large majority children were developing normally. Without measured outcomes it was difficult to design policy objectives and to judge their effectiveness. Evaluations were often unable to show that policy effects at the population level. In addition, emerging problems such as obesity grew to be serious issues before they were addressed.

The burden of proof demanded by the public for expenditure of tax dollars required a more rigorous approach. Results from small, single research projects were insufficient. It was no longer sufficient to examine data to see what the current state was but to develop an informed view of what might be. Scarce dollars should be used for interventions that addressed the cause rather than symptoms of the problem to increase the likelihood of problem reduction and durability of result.

Furthermore, it was necessary to build a body of evidence from multiple data sources and multiple analytical methods in order to increase the chances of successful policy investments.

## Public investment in national data

In 1992 the Canadian government invested in a national data system that would provide regular, reliable and systematic flows of data. This decision immeasurably enriched the system of surveys that support human capital development. There was a momentous change in the way such data was generated. Stable funding, protected from the risk of budget cuts was assured over time and given to a policy department rather than the national statistical agency in order to ensure that surveys would be policy-driven.

With the shift of policy questions from “who?” and “how many?” to “why?”, “which?”, “how?” and “when?”, the emphasis of analysis was on explanation, size of effect and prediction. This required multi-variate analysis, forecasting models, longitudinal analysis and experiments and data that could support such analyses.

This resulted in a suite of linked surveys, some longitudinal and others cross sectional. The innovative National Longitudinal Survey of Children Youth (NLSCY),

initiated in 1992 with the first data collection in 1996, provided an overall view of the current generation of children based on the conceptual framework in Figure 10.1. A national sample of 25 000 children was surveyed every two years from birth to age 24.

The need for reliable and objective measured outcomes of performance achievement required expensive data collection at the home of the child but contributed to a bank of information on the development progress of children. Such direct assessments of outcomes enabled analysis related to children's assets as well as exposure to risk.

Two types of age-appropriate outcomes were measured:

- *Life events of milestones*: Discrete events or a process that ends with a change in status or condition.
- *Performance achievement*: Acquired knowledge, skills or attributes.

Such a longitudinal survey focused on trajectories is broad but not deep. It was described as a backbone, which was supplemented by other cross sectional surveys and community studies that provided additional in-depth information. For example, in order to understand community effects, community based studies, called Understanding the Early Years were begun. The outcomes of children in a particular community could be compared to national and provincial averages but the distribution of outcomes in the community could also be studied relative to the distribution of services. Such evidence at the community level, anchored in space through the use of maps were powerful instruments for local action integration and for planning of service delivery.

Other sources of data were also put to use. A random control experiment called the Self Sufficiency Project tested (in addition to other research objectives) whether the outcomes of children would be affected if parents were involved in welfare to work programmes. Administrative data on social services and child care were used to understand the child rearing context. Programme evaluations were scheduled.

## **A policy-driven consolidated policy research programme**

The consolidated research programme was essential because it systematically addressed issues related to human development in order to build a body of evidence. The federal government provided research leadership through multiple activities within and outside government.

A major role was the development of key concepts and outcome indicators, in particular, a composite measure of development, the "vulnerability index". The vulnerability index is used to measure age-appropriate multiple developmental outcomes over time to gauge development. Vulnerability is defined as the occurrence of low measured current learning and behavioural outcomes that indicate a higher chance of negative outcomes later in life. Children may experience short episodes or prolonged periods of vulnerability. The developmental trajectory built using the index showed pathways of children who were resilient and those who were not after an episode of vulnerability.

While waiting for the first data release from the longitudinal survey, reviews and syntheses were conducted. Once data became available, research was generated by multiple means. The involvement of the research community was vital, resulting in the growth of interest in human development research. Policy research was largely conducted within government or by a programme of directed research contracting with researchers.

In addition, funding was provided to train young researchers in longitudinal analytical techniques, either through training or by bursaries to graduate students who would use the NLSCY for their research.

## The construction of the body of evidence

There were important parallel developments that supported the construction of evidence. E.O. Wilson's concept of consilience links the results from natural sciences with those from research in the humanities (Wilson, 1998). With the advent of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) major brain studies were conducted capturing the process of "brain sculpting" and "hard wiring" in early childhood. These findings combined with the results of research from the NLSCY began to provide powerful empirical evidence on the importance of early childhood development for success in later life.

The presentation of complex evidence required public education on the relationship between outcomes and determinants. Once the concept of outcomes was understood, information was presented on the fact that not all determinants heightened risk. Some were protective.

- *Determinants of risk* increase the probability of low outcomes, less successful trajectories.
- *Protective determinants* increase the probability of good outcomes, resilience after an episode of low outcomes and positive trajectories.

Over a six-year period, there was a continuous flow of results from high quality, peer reviewed research. The federal government published more than a hundred research reports using the NLSCY alone (see link under References). Two books were published supported by government funding, with research by multiple authors ("Growing up in Canada" and "Vulnerable Children"). Longitudinally, results distinguished between trauma effects, lagged effects and persistent effects.

A body of evidence provided an on-going view of the social and human development of individuals and society so that both preventive and corrective policies were possible. Such a body of evidence was built through multiple lines of evidence to confirm findings. Contradictory findings, on the other hand, called for further research. Moreover, syntheses and meta-analyses done by others were used to consolidate such findings.

The flow of findings using different data sources and various analyses slowly built the case for policy action. Such evidence was essential for both the generation of public acceptance of policy action and the reduction of political risk. It was essential for government to disseminate research results and the consolidated evidence using multiple formats and modes to reach a wide variety of consumers such as parliamentarians, key policy players, professionals and the general public. For instance, parliamentary committees heard evidence supporting legislation on divorce and access to children by divorced parents and grand parents.

## Policy innovations driven by evidence

Some policy innovations were possible because the case built by evidence was strong. There were several ideas that have served as a model for other policy fields.

1. *Shift in policy direction:* A packaged approach benefits from synergies and possible interactions across interventions. For example, enhanced maternity leave benefits the baby and its mother in the first year while providing job protection and career retention. Classic debates between the efficiency of targeting versus the fairness of universal policies were abandoned. Rather, there was greater acceptance of hybrid approaches of targeted universalism that would support protective factors on one hand and prevent or risk factors on the other.
2. *Federal research information as a policy instrument:*
  - No other institution, other than the federal government can make the high investment required in national data, which is then made available to researchers.
  - Many professionals and institutions contribute to the welfare of children. Investments by the federal government alone were unlikely to significantly raise the outcomes of children. However, when data from multiple sources was linked and analysed in meaningful geographical context, information became a policy tool. The availability of research information to players other than the federal government resulted in more informed decision-making by them towards achieving the same policy objective. The transaction and co-ordination costs were reduced as all parties had the same information. The resulting interactions were better and therefore, there was less duplication, less unintended consequences and more effective delivery.
3. *Innovative federal-provincial collaboration:* There was a new federal provincial relationship built for the Children's Agenda. Normally, the division of jurisdictional powers prevented joint action. However, because there was such strong public support, the federal government and the provinces negotiated an innovative way to work together. The federal government agreed to transfer payments to families with children, which would result in the reduction of welfare expenditures for provinces. These savings were to be spent on services for families with children. All governments would be accountable by publishing child development outcome indicators achieved by their expenditures. This has become a model for future federal-provincial collaboration.

### **Concrete results on behalf of Canadian children**

The mounting evidence and the power of potential analysis to determine the success of policy investments led to a string of investments. These policies work together as a package (see Table 10.1), with results from the whole being greater than the results of the individual policies.

The value of the data assets in support of both policy development as well as accountability for results has resulted in the availability of stable, sustained funding for the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth. In addition, sub-surveys were added to ensure that additional data could be used for indicators and for in-depth analysis of particular issues. Currently, the children in the survey have reached the age of majority and discussions have begun to start a new cohort.

**Table 10.1. The policy package for the national Children’s Agenda**

| Initiative  | Start date | Expenditures                  |
|---|------------|-------------------------------|
| • National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth                | 1992       | \$8 million a year            |
| • National Children’s Agenda  | 1997       |                               |
| - Centres of excellence   |            | \$20 million                  |
| - Aboriginal Headstart  |            | \$66 million (2003-2004)      |
| • Federal Provincial Early Childhood Agreement                      | 2000       | \$3.2 billion (2001/2-2007/8) |
| • Enhanced Canada Child Tax Benefit and National Child Benefit      | 2000       | \$9.1 billion (2004-2005)     |
| • Enhanced Maternity and Parental Benefits (10-35 weeks)            | 2000       | \$3 billion (2003-2004)       |
| • Child Care expense Deduction                                      | 2003       | \$545 million (2003-2004)     |
| • Understanding the Early Years – 100 communities                   | 2004       | \$100 million (over 7 years)  |
| • Canada Learning Bond (\$3000)                                     | 2004       | \$85 million                  |
| • Federal Provincial Agreement on Early Childhood Learning and Care | 2005       | \$5 billion (over 5 years)    |
| • Children’s fitness tax benefit                                    | 2007       | \$106 million                 |

### Tests for quality of evidence

Evidence does not come cheaply. How do we know that policies based on evidence are more effective and efficient than those that are not? Below are some suggested tests for the quality of the evidence:

1. The need for policy action test: Is public expenditure warranted? Are societal consequences serious? What are the risks of not responding collectively?
2. The reality test: Practical rather than moral imperative to move outcomes in a desired direction could challenge conventions.
3. The public good test: Can policies deliver desirable societal benefits? Can they reduce future public expenditures?
4. The value for money test: Are resulting policies cost-effective?
5. The certainty of result test: Does the policy work under varying situations? Different regions?
6. The durability of result test: Do policies spring board recipients to independence?

## References

- Brink, S. and S. McKellar (2000), “The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth: A Unique Canadian Survey”, *Isuma*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Autumn, p. 111-113 ([www.isuma.net/v01n02/brink/brink\\_e.shtml](http://www.isuma.net/v01n02/brink/brink_e.shtml)).
- Early Childhood Development Activities and Expenditures (2005), Government of Canada Report 2003-2004, Government of Canada, Ottawa.
- Early Learning and Child Care Activities and Expenditures (2005), Government of Canada Report 2003-2004, Government of Canada, Ottawa.
- Human Resources and Social Development Canada (1996), “Growing up in Canada: The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth”, October, Vol. 2, No. 2, HRSDC, Ottawa.
- Willms, J.D. (ed.) (2002), *Vulnerable Children: Findings from Canada's National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth*, University of Alberta Press, Alberta.
- Wilson, E.O. (1998), *Consilience – The Unity of Knowledge*, Knopf/Random House, New York.

### Web links

- Publications from Human Resources and Social Development Canada using the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth: [www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/sdc/pkrf/page00.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/sp/sdc/pkrf/page00.shtml)
- Research projects using the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth: [www.statcan.ca/english/rdc/rdcprojectsnlscy.htm](http://www.statcan.ca/english/rdc/rdcprojectsnlscy.htm)



## Biography

**Adrienne Alton-Lee** is the Chief Education Adviser for the New Zealand Ministry of Education's Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) Programme. Her role is to strengthen the evidence-base informing policy and practice in education and to provide medium term strategic advice to government. Dr. Alton-Lee is a Fellow of the International Academy of Education. She was formerly a teacher, classroom researcher, Professor and an Associate Editor of *Teaching and Teacher Education*. She has published in leading educational journals including the *Harvard Educational Review*, the *Elementary School Journal*, the *International Journal of Inclusive Education* and the *American Educational Research Journal*.

**René Bugge Bertramsen** is the Deputy General Director for the Danish University and Property Agency within the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. Since 1999 he has been involved in reforms aiming at enhancing the quality of the Danish educational R&D system (such as the establishment of the Danish Pedagogical University – DPU – and the R&D centre Learning Lab Denmark). Mr. Bertramsen was responsible for the University Act of 2003 which gave Danish universities a new governance system, *i.e.* boards with external majority and employed rectors, deans and department heads. In 2006-2007 he was responsible for a merger process where government research institutes were integrated with the universities and a number of single-faculty universities were merged with larger multi-faculty universities, including the merger of DPU with multi-faculty University of Aarhus.

**Robert Boruch**, Professor, University of Pennsylvania (USA). Dr. Boruch is current co-chair of the Steering Group of the International Campbell Collaboration, and principal investigator for the Institute of Education Sciences What Works Clearinghouse, which is designed to be a central and trusted source of information on evidence about what works in education. Dr. Boruch is an elected Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the American Statistical Association, and the Academy for Experimental Criminology. He has received awards for his work on evaluation policy, randomised trials, and on privacy of individuals and confidentiality in social research. Dr. Boruch's academic background is in psychology, statistics, and mechanical engineering, with degrees from Iowa State University and Stevens Institute of Technology.

**Satya Brink** is currently Director, National Learning Policy Research, Human Resources and Social Development Canada. She and her team are responsible for developing evidence in support of policy development for lifelong learning for the Government of Canada. This work includes analysis on outcomes for each age group and type of education as well as the impacts of earlier learning on subsequent learning. In her previous post, she was responsible for research on human development based on two major Canadian longitudinal surveys. During this time she and her team produced a major body of evidence based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth which influenced major new initiatives of the Canadian government in support of children and their families.

**Tracey Burns** is a research and policy analyst for the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, OECD, Paris. Previous to this she worked on social determinants of health across the life-span with Charles Ungerleider & Associates in Vancouver, Canada. As a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Burns led a hospital-based research team investigating newborn infants' responses to language. Tracey Burns holds a BA from McGill University, Canada and PhD from Northeastern University, USA. She is the recipient of various awards and honours, including the UBC Post-Doctoral Fellowship, a student-nominated university teaching award, and the American Psychological Association Dissertation Research Award.

**Thomas D. Cook** is the Joan and Serepta Harrison Chair in Ethics and Justice and Professor of Sociology, Psychology, Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University, where he is also a Faculty Fellow at the Institute for Policy Research. He has a BA from Oxford University and a Ph.D. from Stanford University. He is interested in causal methods for the social sciences and in the joint effects of neighborhoods, schools, peers and families on how young people develop socially and cognitively. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Margaret Mead Fellow of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. He has been awarded the Myrdal Prize for Science by the American Evaluation Association, the Donald Campbell Prize for Innovative Methodology by the Policy Sciences Organisation, and a Distinguished Research Scholar Prize of the American Psychological Association. He is the author or editor of 10 books and over 150 chapters and articles.

**Jane Davidson** is the Assembly Member for Pontypridd and former Deputy Presiding Officer for the National Assembly (Wales, United Kingdom). Since October 2000 she has been the National Assembly Education and Life-Long Learning Minister responsible for all aspects of education, training and lifelong learning. Educated at Malvern Girls' College, Birmingham University and the University of Wales, Jane has taught English, Drama and Physical Education. She is also an experienced youth worker and former Cardiff City Councillor. She was a member of the Arts Council for Wales and its Lottery Board, and Head of Social Affairs at the Welsh Local Government Association before her election to the Assembly. Jane has had a keen interest in education and youth work and is enjoying the challenges of the Education and Life-Long Learning portfolio.

**Stephen Gorard** holds the Anniversary Chair in Educational Studies at the University of York (United Kingdom), and directs the Centre for Research into Equity and Impact in Education. He is currently leading an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded project promoting the use and understanding of randomised controlled trials in public policy (<http://trials-pp.co.uk/>), and was the originator of the ESRC's Research Capacity-building Network. He has published widely about the research process in social science, but his substantive work focuses on issues of equity, especially in educational opportunities and outcomes, and on the effectiveness of educational systems. Recent books include "Teacher supply: the key issues", "Adult learning in the digital age", "Overcoming the barriers to higher education", and "Schools, markets and choice policies".

**David Gough** is Professor of Evidence Informed Policy and Practice and Director of the Social Science Research Unit (SSRU) and its Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Coordinating (EPPI) Centre, Institute of Education, University of London, United Kingdom. Previously he worked at the University of Glasgow and Japan Women's University. He directs the Methods for Research Synthesis node of the ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Node and research projects for the Department of

Education and Skills, the Teacher Training and Development Agency, the Social Care Institute of Excellence, and the Department for Work and Pensions. Dr. Gough is editor of the journal *Child Abuse Review* and associate editor of the journal *Evidence and Policy*.

**Rebecca Herman**, a principal research scientist at American Institute for Research (USA), specialises in setting standards for the quality of educational research and reviewing research based on those standards. As the project director for the What Works Clearinghouse, she is responsible for the US Department of Education's flagship project to identify effective educational programmes and practices. Dr. Herman was project director of the *Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform*. She provided congressional testimony and many invited presentations on this and related work. Dr. Herman holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology from Johns Hopkins University.

**Maria J.A. van der Hoeven** is the Minister of Economic Affairs (Netherlands). Maria J.A. van der Hoeven was born in 1949. She was trained as a primary teacher and taught at schools of home economics and junior secondary commercial education. Thereafter she was head of the Adult Commercial Vocational Training Centre in Maastricht and of the Limburg Technology Centre. From 1991 to 2002 Ms. Van der Hoeven was a member of the House of Representatives for the Christian Democratic Alliance (CDA). She has held a variety of social and cultural posts. Ms. van der Hoeven served as Minister of Education, Culture and Science from 2002 until February 2007. She was appointed as Minister of Economic Affairs in early 2007.

**David Hogan** is currently Professor and Dean of the Centre for Pedagogy and Practice at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Between 2004 and 2006 he was Vice Dean for Research at CRPP. Prior to that he was Professor of Education at the University of Tasmania in Australia, and before that he held appointments as Assistant and Associate Professor at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. He completed his PhD in the history of education at the University of Illinois in 1979. His current research interests focus on the intersections between research, policy and practice, pedagogical theory, curriculum theory and design, the design of knowledge management of innovation systems in schools, multi-level and longitudinal modeling of student outcomes, citizenship and education, and education and social theory.

**Bill Kilgallon**, OBE, has been the Chief Executive of the UK's Social Care Institute of Excellence since 2003. Prior to that he was Chief Executive of St Anne's Community Services from 1978 to 2002, an organisation he founded in 1971, which works with single homeless people and people with learning disabilities, mental health problems and alcohol and drug problems across Yorkshire and the North East. He was Chair of the Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, the largest NHS Trust in the country from 1998-2002 and Chair of the Leeds Community & Mental Health Services NHS Trust from 1992-1998. Bill Kilgallon served as a member of Leeds City Council from 1979-1992 where he chaired the Social Services, Housing and Environment Committees. He has led independent inquiries, including one into alleged abuse in a local authority children's service and one into the management of an NHS hospital for people with learning disabilities.

**Hannele Niemi** is Professor of Education (1998-) and Vice-Rector for academic affairs at the University of Helsinki, Finland (2003-). She has been Professor of Education in Oulu, Turku and Tampere Universities (1987-1998). She has been a member of the Standing Committee of Social Sciences of ESF, the Council for Society and Culture in the Academy of Finland, and the Scientific Council of the University of Helsinki. She is a Steering Committee member of the British national research programme on teaching and

learning (TLRP). She was Director of the Finnish national research programme “Life as Learning” 2002-2006. Dr. Niemi has been Chair or a researcher in many national and international evaluation projects for development of educational research and teacher education. Her main research interest areas are teachers’ professional development, moral education and technology-based learning environments.

**Johnny Nilsson** is the Former Secretary of State for Education in Sweden.

**Andrew Pollard** is Director of the Economic and Social Research Council’s Teaching and Learning Research Programme ([www.tlrp.org](http://www.tlrp.org)), the UK’s largest coordinated initiative for educational research. As a teacher, his career started in Yorkshire primary schools and he has worked in teacher education or research at Oxford and Bristol Polytechnics and the Universities of the West of England, Bristol, Cambridge and London. He is presently based at the Institute of Education London. Andrew Pollard has published widely, including work on longitudinal ethnography and analysis of social factors in teaching and learning, learner perspectives, and resources for teacher education and school practitioners. He is at present working on an analysis of learning experiences through secondary education.

**Rien Rouw** is senior policy advisor at the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Department for General Strategic and Economic Advice). He is secretary of the Knowledge Chamber.

**Tom Schuller** is Head of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), OECD, Paris. Formerly Dean of the Faculty of Continuing Education and Professor of Lifelong Learning at Birkbeck, University of London, his latest books are *The Benefits of Learning: The Impact of Education on Health, Family Life and Social Capital* (RoutledgeFalmer, 2004) and *International Perspectives on Lifelong Learning* (edited with David Istance and Hans Schuetze, Open University Press, 2002).

**Hans Stegeman** is senior policy advisor at the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (Department for International Policy). He is member of the OECD’s Education Policy Committee.

**Charles Ungerleider** is Director of Research and Knowledge Mobilisation for the Canadian Council on Learning. From 1998 until 2001, Dr. Ungerleider served as Deputy Minister of Education for the Province of British Columbia, Canada. Prior to this he was Associate Dean for teacher education (1993-1998) at the University of British Columbia. Dr. Ungerleider has studied and written about educational policy and governance, student assessment, inter-group relations, and the impact of media on Canadian society. His most recent book *Failing Our Kids: How we are ruining our public schools* provides a critical analysis of the state of public schooling in Canada, the key part schooling plays in fostering Canadian values, and how public schools are treated by parents, professionals, and politicians.

**Jerzy Wiśniewski** is a consultant in education, and public administration and an expert of the Center for Social and Economic Research (Poland). From 2003-2006 he served as head of Strategy and Structural Funds of the Ministry of Education. He was also Director General of the Polish Ministry of National Education at the time of launching the reform of the education system, as well as the head of the International Department of the Ministry of Education and project manager in the Foundation for Public Administration Development. He was a member of the CERI/OECD Governing Board as well as the OECD team reviewing the educational system in Lithuania, advised the Ukrainian Ministry of Education on the reform of the system, and led the team reviewing the VET system in Croatia (with the European Training Foundation).

## Also available in the CERI collection

***Understanding the Brain: The Birth of a Learning Science***

330 pages • June 2007 • ISBN: 978-92-64-02912-5

***Demand-Sensitive Schooling? Evidence and Issues***

146 pages • November 2006 • ISBN: 978-92-64-02840-4

***Think Scenarios, Rethink Education***

200 pages • April 2006 • ISBN: 978-92-64-02363-1

***Personalising Education***

128 pages • February 2006 • ISBN: 978-92-64-03659-8

***Students with Disabilities, Learning Difficulties and Disadvantages – Statistics and Indicators***

152 pages • October 2005 • ISBN: 978-92-64-00980-9

***E-learning in Tertiary Education: Where do We Stand?***

290 pages • June 2005 • ISBN: 978-92-64-00920-5

***Formative Assessment – Improving Learning in Secondary Classrooms***

280 pages • February 2005 • ISBN: 978-92-64-00739-3

***Quality and Recognition in Higher Education: The Cross-border Challenge***

205 pages • October 2004 • ISBN: 978-92-64-01508-6

***Internationalisation and Trade in Higher Education – Opportunities and Challenges***

250 pages • June 2004 • ISBN: 978-92-64-01504-3

***Innovation in the Knowledge Economy – Implications for Education and Learning***

Knowledge Management series

96 pages • May 2004 • ISBN: 978-92-64-10560-3

**[www.oecdbookshop.org](http://www.oecdbookshop.org)**

## *Table of Contents*

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Executive Summary</b> .....   | <b>9</b>  |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>PART ONE: SETTING THE STAGE: THE EVIDENCE AGENDA AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES</b>        |           |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>Chapter 1. The Evidence Agenda</b> .....  | <b>15</b> |
| by Tracey Burns and Tom Schuller   |           |
| Part One: Setting the Stage: The Evidence Agenda and Methodological Issues .....         | 15        |
| Part Two: Mediating the Research/Policy Interface: The Role of Brokerage Agencies .....  | 26        |
| Part Three: Evidence-based Policy Research in Practice: Examples from the Field .....    | 28        |
| Part Four: The Politicians’ Perspective .....  | 29        |
| Concluding note .....  | 30        |
| References .....   | 30        |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>Chapter 2. What Counts and What Should Count as Evidence</b> .....                    | <b>33</b> |
| by Thomas Cook and Stephen Gorard  |           |
| Introduction .....   | 33        |
| Thomas Cook’s propositions.....  | 34        |
| Stephen Gorard’s propositions .....  | 40        |
| Agreements and disagreements .....   | 43        |
| References .....   | 46        |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>PART TWO: MEDIATING THE RESEARCH/POLICY INTERFACE: THE ROLE OF BROKERAGE AGENCIES</b> |           |
| <br>   |           |
| <b>Chapter 3. What Works Clearinghouse, United States</b> .....                          | <b>53</b> |
| by Robert Boruch and Rebecca Herman  |           |
| The What Works Clearinghouse and embodiments of science .....                            | 54        |
| Assumptions and prospects .....  | 55        |
| Operating principles .....   | 55        |
| Contemporary history.....  | 56        |
| The WWC’S products .....   | 56        |
| The intended consumers and their use of WWC products .....                               | 58        |
| The WWC topics and workflow.....   | 58        |
| Concluding remarks .....   | 60        |
| References .....   | 60        |

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Chapter 4. The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating (EPPI) Centre, United Kingdom .....</b> | <b>63</b> |
| by David Gough   |           |
| Aims and function .....  | 63        |
| Methods .....  | 64        |
| Issues .....   | 68        |
| References .....   | 69        |
| <b>Chapter 5. The Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis Programme, New Zealand .....</b>                                     | <b>71</b> |
| by Adrienne Alton-Lee  |           |
| The Iterative BES approach to knowledge brokerage .....  | 72        |
| Fit-for-purpose synthesis methodology .....  | 72        |
| BES development guidelines .....   | 72        |
| Rationale for a collaborative approach across policy, research and practice .....  | 73        |
| Iterative processes of stakeholder engagement in BES development .....   | 74        |
| Strategy for use .....   | 74        |
| Brokerage from a policy agency: constraints and opportunities where there is an evidence gap .....                       | 75        |
| References .....   | 78        |
| <b>Chapter 6. The Canadian Council on Learning, Canada .....</b>   | <b>81</b> |
| by Charles Ungerleider   |           |
| The establishment of the Canadian Council on Learning .....  | 81        |
| Organisation and illustrative activities .....   | 82        |
| Opportunities and challenges .....   | 85        |
| <b>Chapter 7. The Knowledge Clearinghouse, Denmark.....</b>  | <b>87</b> |
| by René Bugge Bertramsen   |           |
| Introduction .....   | 87        |
| The institutional framework of educational R&D in Denmark.....   | 88        |
| New expectations and demands .....   | 89        |
| New solutions.....   | 91        |
| <b>Chapter 8. The Knowledge Chamber, Netherlands .....</b>   | <b>93</b> |
| by Hans Stegeman and Rien Rouw   |           |
| Introduction.....  | 93        |
| The Ministry desires a new way to deal with knowledge .....  | 94        |
| Mobilising top-ranking officials to minimise overkill, compartmentalisation and process-fetishism...                     | 95        |
| Modernising government .....   | 95        |
| The essence: structural consultation on knowledge .....  | 96        |
| Generating validated knowledge .....   | 97        |
| Organising creativity .....  | 98        |

**Chapter 9. The Social Care Institute for Excellence, United Kingdom ..... 99**  
by Bill Kilgallon

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Background .....                   | 99  |
| Stakeholders in social care .....  | 100 |
| SCIE's remit.....                  | 101 |
| Establishing a knowledge base..... | 101 |
| Achieving change.....              | 102 |
| Examples of brokerage.....         | 103 |
| Conclusion.....                    | 104 |
| References .....                   | 105 |

**PART THREE: EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY RESEARCH IN PRACTICE: EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD**

**Chapter 10. A Large-scale Policy Research Programme: A Canadian Experience ..... 109**  
by Satya Brink

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| A major culture change .....   | 109 |
| Policy-driven research demands a long-term view based on desirable outcomes..... | 109 |
| A better understanding of the relation between evidence and policy.....          | 111 |
| Public investment in national data .....   | 111 |
| A policy-driven consolidated policy research programme.....                      | 112 |
| The construction of the body of evidence .....                                   | 113 |
| Policy innovations driven by evidence.....                                       | 113 |
| Concrete results on behalf of Canadian children.....                             | 114 |
| Tests for quality of evidence .....  | 115 |
| References .....   | 116 |

**Chapter 11. Life as Learning – A Finnish National Research Programme..... 117**  
by Hannele Niemi

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Life as Learning – The Finnish case of a national research programme..... | 117 |
| Co-operation and dissemination throughout the programme .....             | 119 |
| Strengths and challenges of the programme.....                            | 120 |
| How to add additional value to the programme .....                        | 121 |
| The new initiatives – next steps after the programme.....                 | 122 |
| References .....  | 123 |

**Chapter 12. The United Kingdom's Teaching and Learning Research Programme ..... 125**  
by Andrew Pollard

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Aims .....  | 126 |
| User engagement for relevance and quality .....       | 127 |
| Knowledge generation by project teams .....           | 127 |
| Knowledge synthesis through thematic activities ..... | 127 |
| Knowledge transformation for impact .....             | 127 |
| Capacity-building for professional development .....  | 128 |
| Partnerships for sustainability .....                 | 129 |
| Conclusion.....                                       | 130 |



### **Chapter 13. Policy-driven Research and Evidence-based Educational Innovation in Singapore . 131** by David Hogan

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Context .....  | 131 |
| The Singapore core research project .....                            | 133 |
| Core Research Programme.....   | 133 |
| Specific Focus Projects .....  | 136 |
| Evidence-based innovation programme .....                            | 136 |
| Reporting: towards a knowledge management and innovation system..... | 138 |
| Conclusion.....  | 140 |
| References .....   | 140 |

### **PART FOUR: THE POLITICIANS' PERSPECTIVE**

#### **Chapter 14. Research-based Policy-Making: The Need for a Long-term Perspective..... 145** by Johnny Nilsson

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Imbalance between the tempo of policy-making and of research ..... | 146 |
| The long-term perspective.....                                     | 147 |
| Interpretations of research findings are important .....           | 148 |
| References .....   | 150 |

#### **Chapter 15. Evidence-based Policy: Yes, but Evidence-based Practice as Well!..... 151** by Maria J.A. van der Hoeven

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction .....                                       | 151 |
| Brief outline of the policy context.....                 | 152 |
| More solid knowledge base for national policy .....      | 152 |
| More solid knowledge base for educational practice ..... | 154 |
| In conclusion .....                                      | 155 |

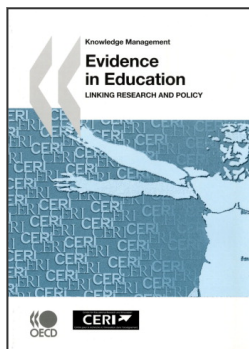
#### **Chapter 16. The Importance of Evidence-informed Policy Research in Education A perspective from Wales ..... 157** by Jane Davidson

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| Introduction .....             | 157 |
| The Learning Country .....     | 158 |
| Evidence informed policy ..... | 158 |
| Areas for further work.....    | 164 |
| Working together .....         | 166 |

#### **Chapter 17. Promoting Evidence-based Policy in Education: The Case of Poland..... 167** by Jerzy Wisniewski

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Background .....             | 167 |
| Research base .....          | 168 |
| OECD and reform .....        | 169 |
| Effect of EU accession ..... | 171 |
| Agenda-building.....         | 172 |

#### **Biography ..... 177**



**From:**  
**Evidence in Education**  
Linking Research and Policy

**Access the complete publication at:**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264033672-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

Brink, Satya (2007), "A Large-scale Policy Research Programme: A Canadian Experience", in OECD, *Evidence in Education: Linking Research and Policy*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264033672-11-en>

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to [rights@oecd.org](mailto:rights@oecd.org). Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at [info@copyright.com](mailto:info@copyright.com) or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at [contact@cfcopies.com](mailto:contact@cfcopies.com).