

## Chapter 16

# The Importance of Evidence-informed Policy Research in Education

## A perspective from Wales

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*In this chapter, Jane Davidson from Wales describes the challenging educational reform agenda the country is developing, in particular for the youngest and the most vulnerable children. She shows that this education policy is strongly evidence informed and heavily influenced by international practice.*

### Introduction

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to this very timely publication on evidence informed policy research in education from the OECD/CERI. My hope is that this will be an invaluable resource supporting educational policy development and in due course improved educational outcomes within national boundaries. I was delighted that the OECD chose to draw on Wales' experience in a seminar on evidence informed policy during 2006. This publication offers the prospect of bringing our experience to the attention of an even wider audience.

Wales is a small country but we have very big ambitions for education, training and lifelong learning. We are developing a challenging reform agenda which encompasses all phases of education starting with improvements in child care services for our youngest and most vulnerable children. And we are harnessing the opportunities we have been given since the devolution of government that took place in the United Kingdom in 1999 to ensure that our agenda is well matched to Wales' distinctive needs. Since 1999 Wales, like Scotland and Northern Ireland has had responsibility for nearly all areas of education policy. Those powers will be further strengthened by changes to the process of law making being introduced in 2007.

Education policy in Wales is both strongly evidence informed and heavily influenced by international practice. We are developing a distinctive system of education, training and lifelong learning, not a parochial one. If we are to achieve our ambitions with the limited resources that we have as a small nation, we need to draw on the growing international evidence of how we can improve learning outcomes. But we also want other countries to observe and wherever possible learn from us. I hope that this article will provide a further contribution to what is becoming an increasingly fruitful international exchange of ideas and experience.

## The Learning Country

Devolution has provided us with the opportunity to create a distinctive education and lifelong learning system in Wales and our ambition is that it should be world class: that is why we boldly call ourselves “The Learning Country”.

We set out our vision in September 2001 in our 10-year strategy “The Learning Country”. In 2006, 5 years into the strategy, we published “The Learning Country: Vision into Action” as an updated strategic statement. This allowed us to reaffirm our commitment to improved outcomes, report on progress and set out our main priorities from now until 2010.

Through “The Learning Country” programme we want to:

- introduce a radical Early Years education and care programme for 0-7 year-olds;
- put the needs of learners first and encourage their full participation in the policy-making process;
- raise standards across the board and particularly for our most disadvantaged;
- support practitioners and develop their pedagogy;
- provide a more rounded, skills-based curriculum that gives far greater flexibility to schools;
- enhance social inclusion, including much greater participation in post-16 education and training, thereby removing barriers to learning;
- transform 14-19 education and training;
- carry out tri-level reform of our education system, through a new relationship between the Assembly Government, local authorities and schools/colleges.

In short we want to create a skilled and creative nation with opportunity for all and based on policies made for and in Wales.

## Evidence informed policy

The Government to which I belong is deeply committed to evidence informed policy-making. Across all of the sectors for which we are responsible we commission and act upon high quality educational research, draw upon inspection evidence, value practitioner knowledge and conduct regular evaluations of our major policies. We are particularly fortunate in Wales to be able to draw upon qualitative evidence from all phases of education from our education and training Inspectorate Estyn.

A considerable challenge for the Welsh Assembly – as with all governments – is to get best value from scarce resources. We believe this should be tackled through thinking smarter, using this research-based knowledge and other evidence in a powerful way.

I would like to illustrate this commitment with some particular examples.

### *Early years*

Early years education and care is one of the foremost areas where we are committed to significant education reform in Wales. We have looked carefully at international

research evidence on the outcomes of early years interventions. This has convinced us that the years before formal schooling are critically important to a child's personal and social development and to their attitudes to learning later in life.

To that end we have piloted the "Foundation Phase" – a new approach to the curriculum, learning and assessment for 3-7 year-olds. This has been piloted in 41 schools and early years settings throughout Wales, including maintained schools; voluntary and private nurseries; playgroups and child minders. In September 2008, we will roll-out the Foundation Phase to all schools and settings in Wales and implementation will be complete by 2011.

The Foundation Phase reflects the research evidence that children learn through well-planned play and a curriculum based upon areas of learning rather than separate subjects. But powerful though that evidence is, one of the key ingredients contributing to the success of the policy to date has been to provide opportunities for classroom practitioners and others to see at first hand how similar policies have been implemented elsewhere. Through funding that we have made available through the General Teaching Council for Wales many practitioners have visited areas which are successfully utilising this approach such as Reggio Emilia in Italy and New Zealand. We see this as being the congruence of educational research and practitioner research of a type that we are especially keen to develop in Wales.

We have also been anxious to ensure that the implementation of this policy should be informed by a powerful evidence base. We therefore commissioned leading researchers from the internationally regarded Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) Project at London's Institute of Education, assisted by colleagues from the University of Wales Institute Cardiff, to evaluate the pilot. The final evaluation report was published in 2006. Its findings were very encouraging, confirming that there is overwhelming support for the new framework and that it meets the needs of children, their parents and practitioners. It confirmed that the Foundation Phase provides a broad and balanced basis for children's learning and development, and that the emphasis the Foundation Phase puts on play and active learning has had a positive effect on children's progress.

The Report also highlights a number of issues concerning training, staffing levels, qualifications and funding that will be addressed through a workforce action plan. This will consider the additional staffing that will be required, the training needs of existing staff and the qualifications needs and career paths of our new Early Years Professionals.

### ***Pupil assessment***

The proposal set out in "The Learning Country" that produced the most favourable response was that to discontinue statutory assessment tests for 7-year-old pupils at the end of Key Stage 1.

It had been apparent for a number of years that teachers are extremely competent in their own assessment of this age group, so I was confident in being able to remove this element of national testing.

Key Stage 1 tests were undertaken for the last time in Wales in the Summer of 2002. Results of teacher assessment in 2003 maintained the high levels of performance in previous years with over 80% of pupils achieving at least level 2 in each subject. This trend continued in 2004 and 2005.

Research on the National Curriculum in Wales in 2004 revealed that there was an appetite in our schools for removing national testing for 11-year-olds and 14-year-olds at Key Stages 2 and 3. There has been a growing perception in the United Kingdom that pupils are tested too often during the early key stages. This had been exacerbated by widespread use of commercially available tests in addition to statutory assessments.

Many teachers, particularly in our primary schools, felt under pressure to “teach” to the tests, with a consequential negative impact on the wider curriculum notwithstanding the fact that the statutory guidance stressed that both measures (*i.e.* teacher assessment and the tests) had parity of esteem. This meant that neither teachers nor pupils were making the best use of educational opportunities during the school year.

I therefore asked Professor Richard Daugherty of the University of Wales Aberystwyth and a leading member of the United Kingdom’s Assessment Reform Group, to chair a Review Group to look into this area. Explicit in the Group’s remit was a requirement that any proposed system should have the interests of pupils as its primary focus.

I received the Review Group’s final report in May 2004. It set out a number of proposals which we were able to accept and which were subsequently supported through a consultation exercise. These were:

- assessment for learning should be at the core of our assessment system, allowing opportunities for the whole child to develop and flourish;
- good and effective use should be made of teachers’ own judgements;
- at the end of year 5 pupils aged 9-10 should take diagnostic assessments in literacy, numeracy and enquiry skills. The information derived from these assessments should be used by the Year 6 teachers to prepare pupils for the transition to secondary schools by Y7 teachers in receiving and progressing pupils;
- Year 6 teacher assessment should be retained;
- at Key Stage 3 (age 14) it was recommended that we move away from national tests and put greater emphasis on teacher assessment;
- we should introduce a system where schools could achieve accredited centre status using high quality assessment procedures to support this new approach.

We are also drawing on the work of the Assessment Reform Group and in particular their publication “Assessment Systems for the Future” in preparing our revised and skills-based National Curriculum for 7-14 year olds from 2008.

We believe that having drawn on this powerful research and practitioner evidence, we are in the vanguard of assessment reform in schools in the United Kingdom and more widely. At the same time we recognise the importance of benchmarking our performance against developments in other countries.

This is why we have also committed ourselves to participating in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The response from secondary schools invited to take part has been very positive. Schools were able to enter their pupils for tests in either Welsh or English according to their choice or that of the pupil. 2006 was the first time that Wales has taken part in PISA as an independent participant. We will know at the end

of 2007 how well we compare internationally. I am confident that we shall show up positively.

### *The Welsh Baccalaureate*

The Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification (WBQ) aims to create an overarching and unifying post-16 qualification intended to maintain depth of study whilst encouraging breadth. The WBQ grew out of concerns here in Wales that the traditional advanced level academic programme followed by many post-16 students was too narrow and not sufficiently inclusive. Post-16 qualification reforms introduced in England and Wales in 2000 were generally felt not to have succeeded in ensuring breadth and balance in post-16 programmes of study. There was also concern in Wales about the lack of parity of esteem for vocational and academic qualifications.

The WBQ is based on a “Core plus Options” model, with the optional part consisting of existing qualifications such as GCSE, GCE, VCE, GNVQ, BTEC National Certificates and Diplomas, or NVQs – all of which form part of the wider UK qualifications framework. There are two distinctive features of the WBQ. The first is that it is an overarching qualification and the second is that it has a Core consisting of four components:

- *key skills* – the development of key skills will be embedded in each candidate’s programme, by design in the core component and within specific key skills programmes and through signposting in the Options, leading to assessment and certification;
- *Wales, Europe and the World* – in which the focus is on political, economic, social and cultural issues in Wales, and which sets them in the context of Europe (including the United Kingdom) and the wider world. This component includes a language module;
- *work-related education* – which enhances understanding of the world of work, the importance of enterprise and entrepreneurship and which contributes to careers education and guidance. There is a requirement that all candidates will work with employers and contribute to team enterprise activities;
- *personal and social education* – which includes equal opportunities, social inclusion and sustainable development, and which aims to promote active citizenship. There is a community participation element for all candidates.

The Core has been designed to develop all the key skills, including the wider key skills. It is intended that the study of the key skills will also be contextualised within the other components of the WBQ.

The Welsh Assembly Government has funded the development of the WBQ since 2001. Altogether 31 schools and colleges were involved in the pilot phase. Three cohorts of students have begun the 2-year programme in each of September 2003, September 2004 and September 2005. The pilot phase runs until 2007. The WBQ is being developed and piloted by the Cardiff-based Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC). The project director is Keith Davies. Further details on the WBQ are available at [www.wbq.org.uk](http://www.wbq.org.uk).

Ongoing project evaluation has been built into the pilot from the outset. Internal evaluation has been provided by the Centre for the Study of Education in an International Context (CEIC) at the University of Bath. The Centre has provided ongoing formative

evaluation as well as reporting on a regular basis to the WJEC WBQ Team and to the Welsh Assembly Government. The reports produced by the internal evaluation team have included a series of eight which focused on different themes relating to the pilot. The areas covered have included aspects of teaching and learning; the development of key skills; management and organisation within centres; and staff training and support. These reports created an invaluable resource which both identified and critically evaluated best practice from across the pilot settings and which all other participants in the pilot were able to draw upon.

The WBQ pilot has also been externally evaluated by the Centre for Developing and Evaluating Lifelong Learning (CDELL) at the University of Nottingham. The evaluation was based on the collection and analysis of a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. These included questionnaire surveys of staff, students and parents; case study visits to centres; and interviews and consultations with a range of other key stakeholders.

The Nottingham team concluded that the WBQ model was suitable for rollout to 14- to 19-year-olds in all schools, colleges and workplace providers in Wales and made recommendations for future planning and action aimed at ensuring that this could be achieved successfully. The evaluation highlighted the enormous amount of progress that had been made during the course of the pilot, whilst also drawing our attention to some important challenges surrounding more general implementation. The evaluation report is available at [www.nottingham.ac.uk/centres/cdell/ltsn/](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/centres/cdell/ltsn/)

This evaluation evidence made a crucial contribution to the decision I announced in autumn 2006 that the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification would be rolled out to all schools, colleges and work-based learning providers in Wales from September 2007. In fact, from September over a third of schools and colleges in Wales will be offering the new qualification.

### ***Devolution of student finance***

Higher education tuition fees of up to £3000 were introduced in England following the Higher Education Act of 2004. That same Act devolved responsibility for determining such matters in Wales to the Welsh Assembly Government. This offered the prospect of a wide range of benefits for Welsh learners. A commitment to widening access to higher education is a well established aspect of our policies in this area. The new powers gave us the opportunity to devise and implement a tuition fee and student support regime to suit Wales's needs and which would benefit our poorest students. It also provided the opportunity to develop a system which would be user-friendly, enable applications and administration through the medium of Welsh and which in due course could encourage the uptake of subjects which would benefit the Welsh economy.

The Assembly Government was, however, anxious that the political debate surrounding the role to be played by tuition fees in Wales should be informed by evidence and by as objective as possible an understanding of the implications for Wales of the tuition fee arrangements that were being introduced in England.

In order to promote this deeper understanding more widely and in order to ensure that the policies adopted in this area were informed by the best available research evidence – including research specifically commissioned for this purpose – we asked Professor Teresa Rees from Cardiff University, one of Wales' leading social science researchers, to chair an evidence based review. The remit was to produce recommendations for the Assembly Government as to the tuition fee and associated student finance policies that

would be most appropriate in a Welsh context. The review was launched in July 2004 and reported the following year.

The Review examined the evidence from around the world on how students have reacted to the introduction of deferred tuition fees. Research specifically commissioned for the review looked at the attitudes of Welsh students towards taking on a loan burden to cover the cost of fees. The Review also considered the financial implications for the higher education sector in Wales of the policies introduced in England given the two very significant cross-border flows of both staff and students between our two countries. The evidence base generated by the Review played a crucial part in influencing the political discussion which preceded the final decision on this matter.

Following the Review the policy we have adopted in Wales involves:

- deferred flexible fees of up to £3070 to be introduced from autumn 2007;
- a fee remission grant of £1845 for Welsh students studying in Wales which provides an incentive for greater numbers of students to study in Wales;
- a Welsh Bursary Scheme that will allow institutions to tailor bursaries to meet their needs but which has a common, means tested bursary made available to all students;
- loans to cover student fee liabilities which only become due for repayment following graduation and when individuals are earning over the repayment threshold.

Students are also able to access grants and loans to assist with living costs as well as support targeted at those with additional needs and commitments.

The Review also highlighted the importance of continuing evaluation of the new arrangements in Wales, partly in order to ensure that the introduction of higher rate fees did not serve as a disincentive for certain groups of students.

The Rees Review also recommended that the impact of the new tuition fee arrangements on part-time students should be the subject of a separate study. Part-time study has become an increasingly important aspect of higher education in the United Kingdom over recent years. Theresa Rees was anxious to ensure that we should guard against the risk that the new arrangements might have unintended consequences in this area.

The Government agreed this recommendation and we commissioned Dr Heather Graham, Director of the Open University in Wales to conduct a separate independent review. As a result of that further review we have introduced a range of measures designed to provide additional support for part-time students, particularly those engaged in small volumes of study. We have decided that the statutory student finance system administered through Student Finance Wales should offer a package of financial support for students studying at half time and above. Below that level we believe that support is better targeted through institutions.

We have provided an additional £10.6 million per annum to support part-time study. The additional funding is designed to enable institutions to strengthen part-time provision without the need to charge higher fees. Wales will begin implementing the new arrangements brought about by the Graham Review for the academic year 2007/08 onwards.

A combination of research and evaluation evidence was, therefore, central to the decision to introduce flexible tuition fees in Wales. They remain central to our implementation of the student finance arrangements in Wales. The outcomes of this further policy research and evaluation will be published in due course.

### **Areas for further work**

These are a few examples of where Wales has successfully harnessed evidence to inform policy. There are many more! I would however like to highlight three further policy areas which are still being developed but where I see the evidence-based approach as having a critical contribution to make over the next few years.

#### ***Flying Start***

The Foundation Phase is providing evidence-based learning for the three to seven age group. The other pillar of our Early Years policy is for our youngest children and we call it Flying Start. It will fund high quality services for children between 0 and 3. It will build on and complement existing valuable work begun under Sure Start. £46 million has been made available for Flying Start programmes between 2006 and 2008.

It will be based on international evidence of the interventions that support improved outcomes for children in the long term. Local children and Young People's Partnerships will choose the most deprived primary school catchment areas, and in those areas families will have an entitlement to a prescribed menu of services free, good quality childcare for 2-year-olds, additional health visiting, language and play programmes, and the best evaluated parenting programmes.

We have now issued detailed Flying Start guidance on childcare and parenting. This has been based on thorough reviews of existing evaluations. We are also commissioning an original review to define good quality health visiting, to support learning and development right from the earliest stages.

As this programme gains momentum we will continue to commission further high quality research on the effectiveness of interventions so as to inform professional practice.

#### ***RAISE***

For the Welsh Assembly Government everything that we do in the field of education, lifelong learning and skills is underpinned by our conviction that these areas have a major role to play in achieving social justice. We are determined to tackle and remove the links between deprivation and low educational attainment.

It gave me great pleasure, therefore, to be able to announce in 2006 a major new programme to tackle disadvantage and low attainment in our schools.

We have called this programme – which will involve a total spend of £16m in 2006/07 – RAISE (Raising Attainment and Individual Standards of Education). This funding will be used to support our most disadvantaged pupils and to offer them opportunities they would otherwise be denied.



We are already drawing upon international evidence in the fields of school improvement and educational transformation in framing this exciting programme. We will be commissioning action research and evaluations of the programme in due course.

We intend to link the work going on in individual schools and education authorities with international evidence on tackling the links between disadvantage and low levels of educational attainment. We would be very keen to work with OECD partners in this area.

### *Practitioner pedagogy*

We believe there is a crucially important role for practitioners in achieving our aims. Practitioners in this context includes the teachers, lecturers early years workers, teaching assistants, work-based tutors, youth and community workers and all the other education professionals that we now have in our system.

These practitioners are absolutely vital to the success of the vision set out in “The Learning Country”. This is why I consider the work we are doing to encourage, disseminate and network innovative learning and teaching practice – what we call our “Pedagogy Initiative” – to be of such great importance.

Whilst we do not want to define a prescriptive approach to pedagogy, it is clear from a growing body of evidence that the following characteristics are associated with successful practice in our schools and colleges:

- passion for learning which infuses organisations and workplaces;
- constantly looking outwards for new ideas and schemes;
- learner-centred work;
- student work which is focused on problem-solving and enquiry approaches;
- assessment which is used for learning; and
- students being part of a wider learning community, where they support each other and their teachers.

I want all our children born today to experience learning in such environments and to work with practitioners who are regularly reviewing their own teaching styles.

We are now turning our attention to taking this initiative forward over the next five years. It is being informed and shaped by leading international thinking. I have appointed a team of pedagogy champions – current practitioners who will provide leadership across all phases of education. And we will build practitioner networks so that key messages can be disseminated to education settings throughout Wales.

The pedagogy initiative aims to provide independent and authoritative guidance on what appears to work best. We have no expectation that this will produce, in all cases, straightforward answers. It is certainly not our intention to produce some form of official pedagogy. It is, however, important that we use research evidence to produce a robust methodology for the important work we are undertaking. In this respect, I constantly reflect upon the view of Professor John MacBeath that we have probably found out more about learning in the last decade, than was discovered in the previous 2000 years. I am equally convinced that there remains plenty still to discover over the next decade and beyond.

## Working together

Be sure that the message from Wales is that we are a nation very ready to join with others in developing the strongest possible networks for evidence informed policy.

As a learning country we will continue to want to learn from others, wherever they are, as we build our vision. A number of countries have contributed to our work to date:

- some of our early years planning has been informed by Finland, Italy and New Zealand;
- some of our bilingual development proposals have been informed by Canada and the Basque country;
- some of our assessment and teacher development agenda is being informed by New South Wales in Australia.

I hope we can look forward to many other countries making a contribution over the years to come.

Wales is also very keen to build international networks and to play a stronger role within the OECD family. It was the Welsh bard Elfed who said “it is good to love one’s country, but it is far, far better to love the world”. That is my maxim and that of my Government. It’s not a bad one for international educational research and the work that OECD sponsors in this area.

## 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.

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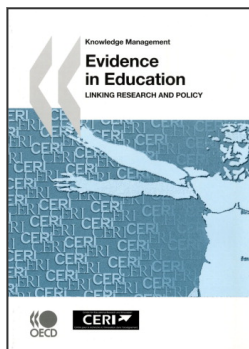
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