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### Document

#### **Education(al) research and education policy making: is conflict inevitable?**

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#### **Bibliographic reference :**

Whitty, G. (2006). Education(al) research and education policy making: is conflict inevitable? *British Educational Research Journal*, 32, 2 (April), 159-176.

#### **Abstract :**

The relationship between educational research and the implementation of educational practices and policies is a current concern in several countries. The author looks at the state of this relationship in the United Kingdom and attempts to demonstrate, through real examples, the extent to which criticism of research can be a source of conflict.

Besides presenting the advantages and inconveniences of using research results when establishing educational policies, the author examines the policy-making process as well as the difficulties in choosing the most relevant research.

#### **Different Views on Educational Research**

According to the author, the United Kingdom government has developed a rather negative view of the contribution of educational research to educational policy making and implementation.

Generally speaking, the government questions the usefulness of educational research and deems that research should better meet the needs of educational policies. Even the quality of research projects is sometimes questioned (e.g., lack of thoroughness, non-applicability to schools and classes, inaccessibility of results, biases, etc.).

The author deplors this restrictive and instrumental view of research given that it cannot be limited to meeting the needs of policy-makers, although it is hard to develop educational policies backed by research. Indeed, research projects need to be diversified to enhance the pool of knowledge in education.

However, this view had the effect of encouraging a pooling of knowledge gained through completed research and enabled better coordination of research projects currently underway. In addition, the need for research projects deemed useful had the effect of increasing resources allotted to these research projects.

#### **Using Educational Research**

The author also discusses the way in which research projects are used in the development of educational policies. He points out the importance of questioning how research projects are chosen and evaluated. Moreover, he emphasizes the possibility that policy-makers do not consider research projects taken as a whole, especially when justifying the choice of a particular policy they wish to establish.

Furthermore, a few examples are presented for the purpose of showing that educational research can have an effect at different levels, from the political arena to the classroom.

#### **Lessons for the Scientific Community**

A few elements likely to foster better cooperation between the world of research and that of policy making are also suggested to the scientific community:

- 1) Improving access to research results and finding effective means of making these results available;
- 2) Establishing partnerships among various groups of stakeholders;
- 3) Encouraging different research projects and approaches, given that the needs in education are ever-changing;
- 4) Establishing well-defined quality criteria for each approach.

Lastly, the author ends by emphasizing the importance of making a distinction between research projects in education and research projects for education, while affirming the importance of discussing ideas and objectives rather than

organizational problems and techniques.

**Key Words :**

Educational Policies, Educational Research, Educational Policy Making, Newsletter1

**Monitored Countries :**

United Kingdom