

Practitioners' experiences of implementing national education policy at the local level: an examination of 16–19 policy

What do we want to know?

What do practitioners in further education (FE) colleges say about the conditions, attitudes and implementation of national policy?

Who wants to know and why?

This review's overall aim was to support the further development of teaching and learning. Educational policy implementation has been the focus for this review. Specifically, this review looked at post-16 practitioners' perceptions of implementing national education policy at the local level. The findings of the review are relevant to the tasks of framing, presenting and administering effective policy, policy that is able to harness the potential of local settings in the pursuit of improving teaching and learning.

What were the findings?

Key findings of the review were as follows:

- Practitioners implemented national policy, but this was generally mediated to suit local conditions. They commonly responded pragmatically to national policy, making it work for the benefit of their institution or learners.
- They felt that a key challenge when implementing policy was having to balance the requirements of working in a competitive environment (in terms of attracting students to courses) with their own judgement on the best way to teach and encourage learning. They were often unsure whether the right balance had been struck.

- They were concerned about demands for more flexibility, a feeling of 'policy initiative overload' and a local tendency to place more importance on being successful in a market environment than in teaching. Tutors in particular felt that they did not have enough space to exercise pedagogic judgement and agency. The view was expressed that this aspect of practice was the most under-exploited resource in local settings.

How were the results obtained?

A systematic search of the literature was undertaken to identify studies that related to the review question. This search aimed to identify research, which had been undertaken in post-compulsory education and training (PCET) settings, reported and analysed the views of practitioners about their role in operationalising policy in their local context. The initial collection of 512 reports was screened, using predefined inclusion/exclusion criteria. The screening process identified 62 reports for more detailed analysis. Initial coding of these 62 reports was used to generate a map that identified a number of themes around which the reports could be clustered. Collaborative discussion resulted in a subset of 10 studies in 14 reports for in-depth review. The detailed analysis of these 10 studies (14 reports) forms the base of the report's findings and recommendations.



Where to find further information

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The results of this systematic review are available in four formats:

SUMMARY

Explains the purpose of the review and the main messages from the research evidence

REPORT

Describes the background and the findings of the review(s) but without full technical details of the methods used

TECHNICAL REPORT

Includes the background, main findings, and full technical details of the review

DATABASES

Access to codings describing each research study included in the review

These can be downloaded or accessed at <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/reel/>

Reports published by the EPPI-Centre in January 2008. <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=2323>

The EPPI-Centre's reference numbers for these reports of this review are 1602R (Report) and 1602T (Technical Report). The full citations are:

REPORT

Nixon L, Gregson M, Spedding T, Mearns A (2008) Practitioners' experiences of implementing national education policy at the local level. Report. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

TECHNICAL REPORT

Nixon L, Gregson M, Spedding T, Mearns A (2008) Practitioners' experiences of implementing national education policy at the local level. Report. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

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