

Protecting the innocent The ethics of mass innovation in education & training

Chapter in
Educational Research & Policy Making
Lesley Saunders (ed) Routledge



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Tim Oates
Group Director
Assessment Research & Development

1

Nature of enquiry in education

2

Legitimacy of analogising between the medical domain and education domain

3

Ethical frameworks for regulation versus utility frameworks

Ethical frameworks as they apply to

1
the practice of educational research and evaluation

2
the implementation of innovation through policy and reform (mass innovation)

3
the practice of education



Thesis

I wish to argue that the analogy between medical policy and practice and educational policy and practice is legitimate, and that the narrow emphasis in education on ‘utility’ is serious failing of public policy. In addition, I wish to argue that this presents a significant impediment to the realisation of ‘evidence-informed policy’. It is suggested that ‘utility frameworks’ are both unstable and inadequate – they do not provide adequate protection for the fundamental interests of learners, nor do they assert and protect the essential rights of learners.

My interim conclusion is that new mechanisms are necessary to develop an ethical framework and to ensure its adequate adoption and implementation

De-mythologising conflict in the research community or ‘is knowledge possible?’

The US National Research Council – arguments for accumulation which breach rules of accumulation

Baskhar – causal power, explanatory power and predictive power

Hodgkinson – the necessary multiplicities in the culture(s) of educational research

Hammersley – the possibility of discourse and creation of knowledge

Three observations

1

Cycle of planned failure

2

John Gray's paradox

3

Educational standards - Massey and Brecht

4

The Performance Paradox



The performance paradox

.....a weak correlation between performance indicators and performance itself (Meyer & Gupta, 1994; Meyer & O'Shaughnessy, 1993). This phenomenon is caused by the tendency of performance indicators to run down over time. They lose their value as measurements of performance and can no longer discriminate between good and bad performers. As a result, the relationship between actual and reported performance declines.



The status of knowledge from educational research

The application/utilisation of the outcomes of educational research in policy should be characterised as ‘the integration of adequate knowledge of tendencies’

Too high a burden of proof is not justified – it leads to the paradox of ‘the descent into the irrational due to the rejection of ‘acceptable uncertainty’

....against a background of paradigm wars....

The legitimacy of any analogy with medicine

Educational practice and experience as ‘treatment’

Formalised, conscious procedures

Underlying unconscious procedures, rules

Confounding contextual factors

‘Do no harm’



	Examples from the practice of medicine	Examples from the practice of education
Practice as ‘treatment’	Decisions regarding therapeutic regimes, drugs administration etc;	Decisions regarding learning environment, adapting learning approaches and activities in order to optimise learning
Formalised, conscious procedures	Diagnostic protocols; initiating appropriate tests; operating consent and confidentiality protocols; optimising outcomes for individuals; working to targets	Deployment of teaching and learning approaches such as objective-based learning, the Literacy and Numeracy strategies; cognitive acceleration; within-class pupil grouping; working to targets
Underlying unconscious procedures, implicit professional rules	Adapting communication strategies to the needs of different patients; optimising personal performance in different team settings	Adapting teaching and learning strategies to the needs of different learners in different contexts; optimising personal performance in different team settings
Examples of confounding variables in securing effective outcomes	Family wealth, social background, self-medication, prior conditions	Gender, date of birth, family wealth, social background, early educational experience

Examples

The implementation of the National Curriculum

Government funded training and key skills

The development and refinement of GNVQs

The development and implementation of
Curriculum 2000 (C2K)



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The implementation of the National Curriculum

A wholesale rejection of ethical constraints – based on
a flawed ethical argument

The implementation of the National Curriculum

DES officials repeatedly stated that to test out a full curriculum offer with a selected group of pupils would constitute tampering with their futures – ‘...you can’t experiment with things which, if things don’t go as you plan, might compromise their future lives...’

So you experiment with every child

In contrast to working with a consenting few, with appropriate compensatory mechanisms in place.



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Government funded training and key skills

The renaming fallacy – smoke and mirrors



Government funded training and key skills

1980 Weep
YOP
YTS
YT

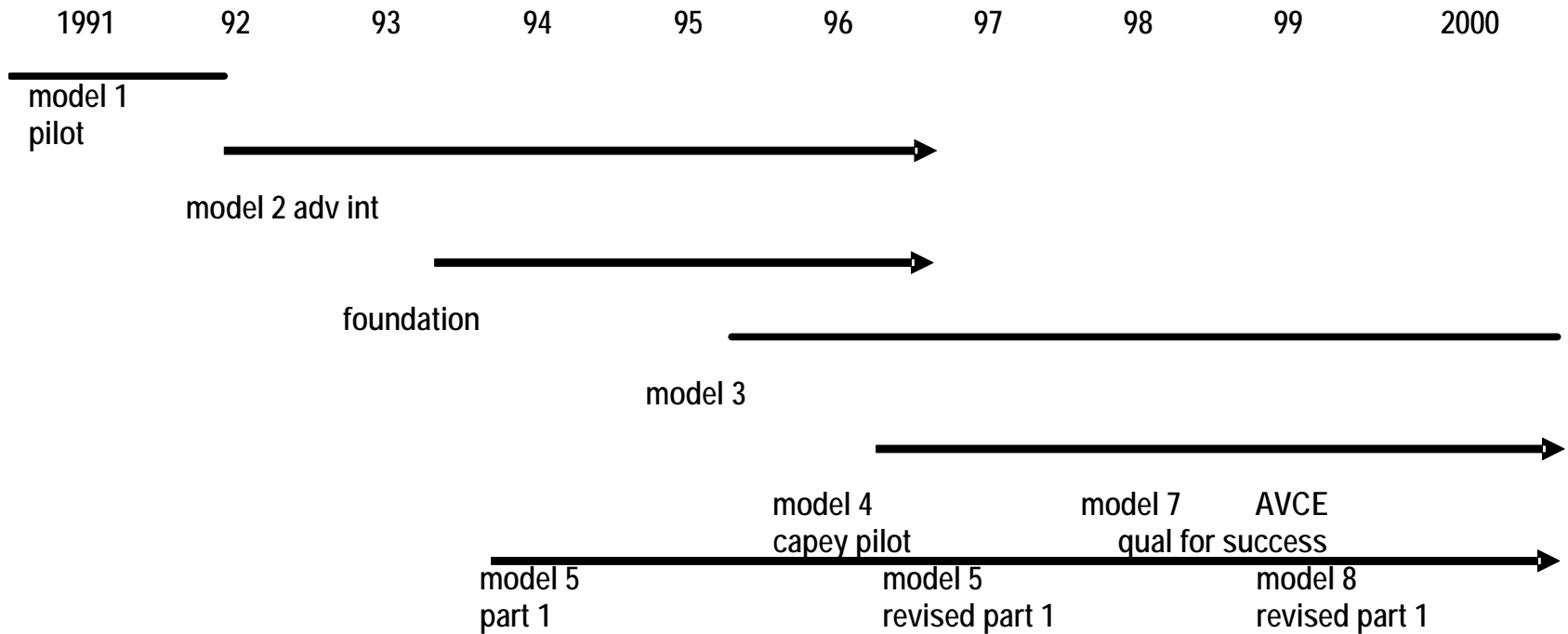
2000 Modern Apprenticeships at levels 1 and 2

all show the same structural form, with scant attention to structural incentives & drivers

The development and refinement of GNVQs

The lack of synchronisation in evaluation, policy
formation and implementation

The development of GNVQs – a qualification always in pilot?



The development and implementation of Curriculum 2000 (C2K)

Breadth

Positive outcome: The UCAS/QCA national survey shows 58% of year 12 students taking 4 AS qualifications, with 2.8% taking 5 or more. Using matched candidate data from exam entries, 105,067 (53.4%) out of a total of 196,570 Year 12 students in 2001 took 4 AS subjects.

This can be compared with around 25% taking combinations of 4 or more A level and/or old AS qualifications in the past. Therefore, as a result of Curriculum 2000 there been a substantial increase in students taking 4 subjects in their first year of study.



The development and implementation of Curriculum 2000 (C2K)

Key Skills

Significant problem: Key Skills remain very unpopular amongst students; the percentage of students which centres expected to enter for certification in three key skills dropped from 56.2% in Autumn 2000 (the number entered for the Key Skills qualification) to 20.2% in Autumn 2001 (the number entered for 3 Key Skills).

This headline figure for entry contrasts with much lower completion figures. Amongst case study centres committed to key skills and offering coherent provision, they typically have found it hard to keep students attendance to reasonable levels, and amongst students who have attended provision only low percentages have completed the tests; fewer still have completed their portfolios.



The development and implementation of Curriculum 2000 (C2K)

Progression

Underlying issue: Progression from level 2 GNVQ post-16 provision to level 3 GNVQ was emerging as an established progression route for young people, often those with prior attainments other than 5 or more GCSEs at Grade C or above. Following the introduction of AVCE, schools and colleges have emphasised to the national evaluation teams that this progression route has been adversely affected by: change of assessment regime and backwash into learning styles; increasing entry requirements for VCE in the wake of the changes to the qualifications; and centres expressing concern that vocational GCSE will be perceived by post-16 students who have done less well in GCSEs at 16 as more as a 'GCSE resit' than the motivating vocational alternative provided by Intermediate GNVQ.

The development and implementation of Curriculum 2000 (C2K)

Curriculum enrichment activities

Underlying issue: through the UCAS/QCA survey, schools and colleges reported a decrease in enrichment activities in the first two years of Curriculum 2000. This category includes a wide range of activities, including those which are extra-curricular in a formal sense and those which broaden teaching and learning through such means as field-trips and visits, visiting speakers, debates and many others.

Survey work indicates that enrichment activities have decreased in over 30% of schools and colleges for two years in a row.

Conclusions?

The need for a framework?

Who decides?

What mechanisms? (NICE; Bank of England)

Taking education out of single-term politics – implications?