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Centre for Evidence in Education Policy
(Renamed Education Policy Knowledge Centre in '21)
(EPKC)

Building on “What Works” for practitioners, towards a new “What’s Possible” for policy makers

November 2020

Overview: Centre for Evidence in Education Policy

Page, content and rationale

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4. Education policy makers in England face many obstacles
5. Evidence should support policy makers, but it is fragmented and hard to access
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8. We should create a What Works for policy makers – a CEEP for “What’s Possible”
9. The What Works methodology can be applied to the messier world of policy evidence
10. And the What Works model can be used to make policy options available
11. The new CEEP could then provide support to everyone in policy making
12. This would drive material improvements in policy process and behaviour
13. The CEEP would create a range of important benefits

Summary: A Centre for Evidence in Education Policy (CEEP)

Issues for policy makers and use of evidence

The centralised policy making process in England is weak. We can learn important lessons from other nations' use of evidence and from What Works.

- In England, policy is made at pace, aggravated by a rapid turnover of Ministers
- There are systemic issues in the Civil Service and the DfE is increasingly focused on implementation and maintenance
- Representative bodies are too numerous to be coherent and often mistrusted
- In England, evidence for policy makers* is fragmented and hard to navigate
- Other jurisdictions rely on national institutions to present evidence for policy makers and practitioners
- England supports practitioners through What Works/EEF – this approach could be extended to policy makers

Centre for Evidence in Education Policy

We should create a What Works for policy makers – a CEEP for “What’s Possible”

- A new national institution that provides an “intelligent interface” - to access, categorise and navigate existing evidence and experience
- To objectively synthesise and present quantitative, qualitative and experienced based evidence – from local, national and global sources
- To arrange evidence around generic policy options * and could identify where evidence gaps exist
- It would not make policy recommendations and it would not undertake its own research
- Critically, it would be easily accessible to all: Ministers; Civil Servants; SpAds; Think Tanks; Oppositions; representative bodies etc
- It should be independent of Government

The What Works and CEEP benefits

The What Works methodology can be adapted for the messier world of policy evidence and the new CEEP would provide a much-needed guide to education policy makers

- The What Works model provides a powerful template for evidence assessment, presentation and dissemination
- We can move from What Works with practitioners to “What’s Possible” for policy makers
- All parties will quickly understand policy options, the underlying evidence and the consequences of implementation
- A shared evidence base will further common understanding and improve the quality of discussion
- It will act as an enduring reference point. As actors and influencers rotate and move, it could lay the foundation for longer-term planning

* See end for Fundamental Questions list at macro/system level

Education policy makers in England face many obstacles*

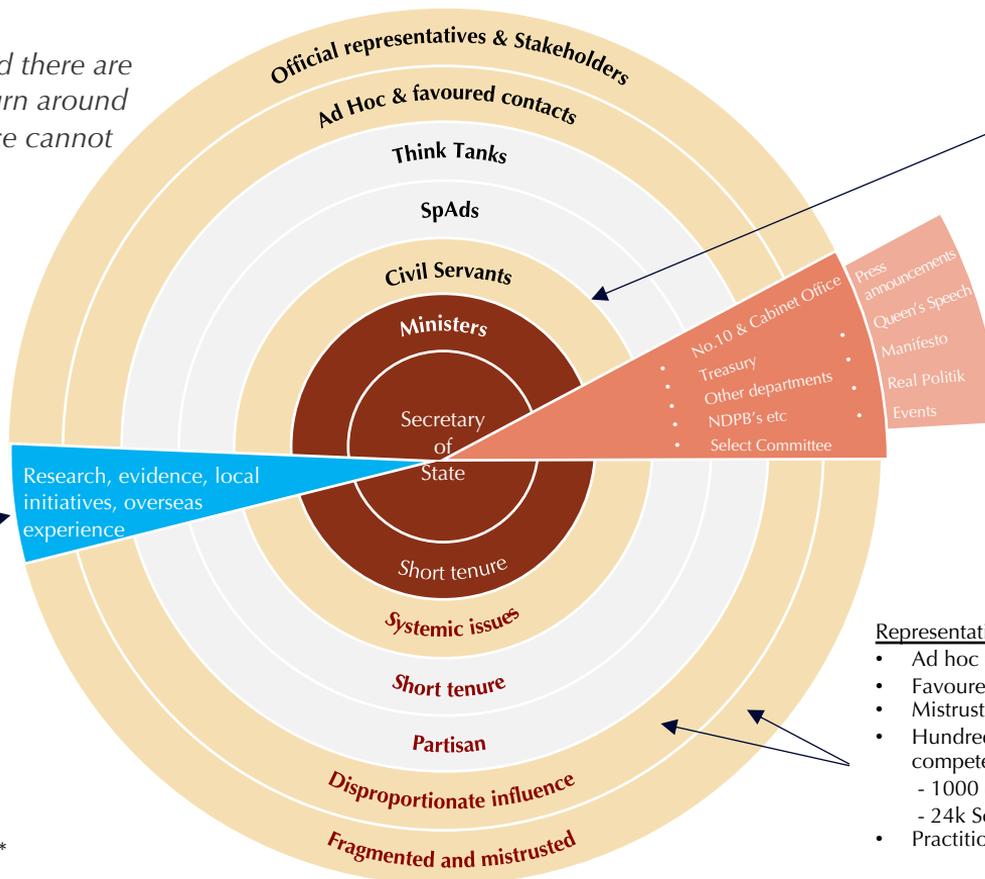
Policy making is highly centralised and there are few effective checks and balances. Turn around times must be fast and the Civil Service cannot respond strategically.

Education Context: multiple challenges

- Decision making is centralised
- There is a high level of policy churn*
- Policy made at pace, with high ministerial turnover
- Less informed discussion on fundamentals*
- Increasing expectation of system performance
- More complex needs
- Erosion of local/middle tier
- Fragmented system with accountability and empowerment unreconciled

Research & evidence: Used tactically

- Effective at practitioner level
- Ineffective at policy making level
 - Selective use of evidence
 - Insufficient time to consider evidence
 - Too little synthesis of evidence
 - Much "evidence" mistrusted
 - Much not easily accessed
 - No ranking of evidence quality
 - Little or no evaluation before roll-out
 - No systemic coverage of fundamentals**



Civil Service: Systemic issues

- High departmental turnover
- Low institutional memory
- General skills valued over domain knowledge
- Implementation and maintenance consumes most resource
- Requirement for short turn-around of advice
- Pressure to retro-fit evidence
- Inadequate training, poor use of external resource
- Narrow range of education experience
- Gaps in departmental co-ordination

Key

Strong policy making centre

Weak checks and balances

Research and evidence

Intervention and dependencies

Representation: Fragmented

- Ad hoc and informal consultation
- Favoured contacts have disproportionate influence
- Mistrust of many official representatives
- Hundreds of educational institutions compete for influence plus:
 - 1000 MATs and 30 large MATs
 - 24k School Leaders
- Practitioner voice not often heard

* See edpol website December 2020 for in depth evidence

**See end for Fundamental Questions list at macro/system level

Evidence should support policy makers, but it is fragmented and hard to access

Understanding evidence for policy makers is difficult, (in contrast with evidence for practitioners). It is not mediated for policy makers, there is no meta-level synthesis and no presentation of policy options.

	Institutional source of evidence, advise and experience>	Focused and govt funded organisation	General and independent organisation	Academic	Think Tanks	Practitioner	Representative and stakeholder
Examples >	EEF	EPI; NFER; The Young Foundation;	Durham; Exeter; Birmingham; York; Cambridge; Swansea; Oxford; UCL/IOE	Public First; IPPR; Policy Exchange; HEPI; Sutton Trust; Royal Society; IforG;	ResearchEd; School 21; Right to Succeed; Research Schools Network;	City and Guilds; ASCL; NAHT; AOC; CBI;	
Areas							
Policy Options	None	None	None	None	None	None	
International Learning**	Less	Less	Partial	Less	Less	Less	
Policy Advocacy	Less	Partial	Partial	Strong	Partial	Strong	
Policy Critique	Less	Strong	Strong	Partial	Partial	Strong	
Practice Evidence	Strong	Partial	Partial	Less	Strong	Less	

For government policy makers**



- Research and evidence emanates from many organisations
 - Research overlaps in some areas and is lacking in others
 - There is no overall research plan*
 - Policy advocacy is usually based on “point solutions”
 - Policy advocacy often has ideological bias
 - Coverage of international learning is weak
 - There is no presentation of policy options with evaluation of evidence
 - There is no mediation of a complex research offering
-
- Evidence for practitioners is stronger***
 - It is also mediated by organization such as The Chartered College; Institute for Effective Education and the EEF itself

*The DfE does issue “Areas of Research Interest” priorities but on an ad-hoc basis and not in line with a long-term plan

**Not specific country research initiatives but learning from other nations’ polices, experience and research

***Helped by What Works and EEF

Other jurisdictions have national institutions to support both policy makers and practitioners with evidence

These long-standing organisations support both policy makers and practitioners, often with separate institutions serving each

	Finland	Singapore	Australia	Japan	Scotland
National Institutions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
-for practice evidence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
-for policy evidence	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Government Funded	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Operates with independence**	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Commissions research	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Priorities	Set centrally	✓	✓✗	✓	✓
	Vis a national plan	✓	✗	✓	✓
Existed > 20 years	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Long term perspective	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Examining evidence from other jurisdictions	?	✓	✓	✓	✓

Insight:

- In all cases, large, national institutions exist to provide rigorous research and evidence
- Different categories of evidence are used to advise a) policy makers and b) practitioners
- Institutions are well established with long-term perspective
- Typically research is directed in accordance with a national plan
- In all cases, institutions exist to objectively understand policy and to improve outcomes
- Funding is typically through government and research integrity is protected
- Evidence is sought from other jurisdiction

*Based on EPI/edpol research "How leading nations organise, focus and fund educational research; December 2020

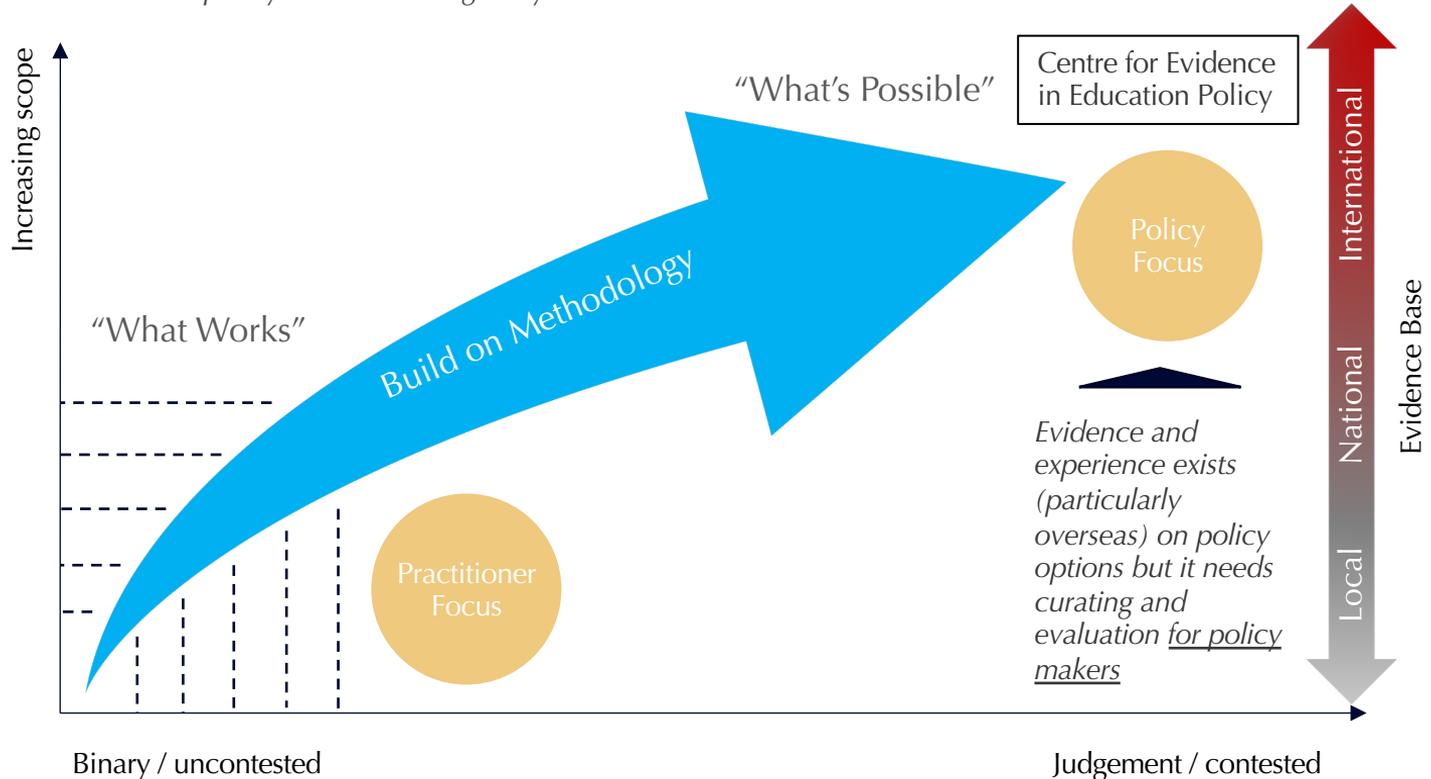
** At very least pursue unrestrained methodological research

What Works/EEF supports only practitioners but the approach could be extended to policy makers

England has been a leader in establishing objective assessment of teacher practice and school/college organisation. However, as this area has become stronger, research and evidence for policy makers has arguably become weaker

Highly successful What Works initiatives are “based on the science” and therefore orientated to areas where RCTs can provide uncontested outcomes: largely for practitioners

- Education Practice
- Health & Care
- Early Intervention
- Policing
- Ageing Better
- Local Growth



We should create a What Works for policy makers – a CEEP for “What’s Possible”

The CEEP would be an “intelligent interface” to access and navigate underlying sources of evidence. It would not be another research organisation, rather a centre to objectively synthesise and present evidence from quantitative, qualitative and experienced based sources

CEEP Front End: User friendly, menu-driven, summarised evidence, presented as policy options								
	Focused and govt funded	General and independent	Academic**	Think Tanks	Practitioner	Representative and stakeholder	Other Jurisdictions	
For government policy makers	Policy Options	Synthesis and evaluation of available evidence, organised in generic policy options						
	International Learning*	Less	Less	Partial	Less	Less	Less	Strong
	Policy Advocacy	Less	Partial	Partial	Strong	Partial	Strong	Strong
	Policy Critique	Less	Strong	Strong	Partial	Partial	Strong	Strong
Commission research and evaluation through DfE, ESRC etc to cover gaps in macro-policy understanding				Review evidence and learning from other jurisdictions*, particularly to understand policy interdependence and unforeseen consequences				

Drilldown to the source documents

- Review multiple primary and secondary sources
- Research strength ranked for reliability (cf EEF Toolkit)
- Weak research is excluded
- Comprehensive curation is required
- Evaluate results from practical experience/implementations
- Evidence organized behind generic policy options (see appendix – Fundamental questions) – **to identify “What’s Possible”**

*Not specific country research initiatives but learning from other nations’ policies, experience and research
 **Taylor & Francis; Elsevier; Routledge; British Journal of Education Studies; BERA
 *** Including Education Resource Information Centre in USA (ERIC); World Bank Knowledge Repository; OECD

What Works' methodology can be applied to the messier world of policy evidence

*"By putting a balanced overview of evidence in the hands of policy professionals, these synthesis are a valuable resource in decision making"**

What Works for practitioners:

"The What Works Centres have developed their own methodologies for conducting systematic reviews but all broadly follow the five-stage process set out below. The reviews are conducted using a set of evidence standards. These privilege evaluations that are methodologically more robust" *



"What's Possible" for policy makers:

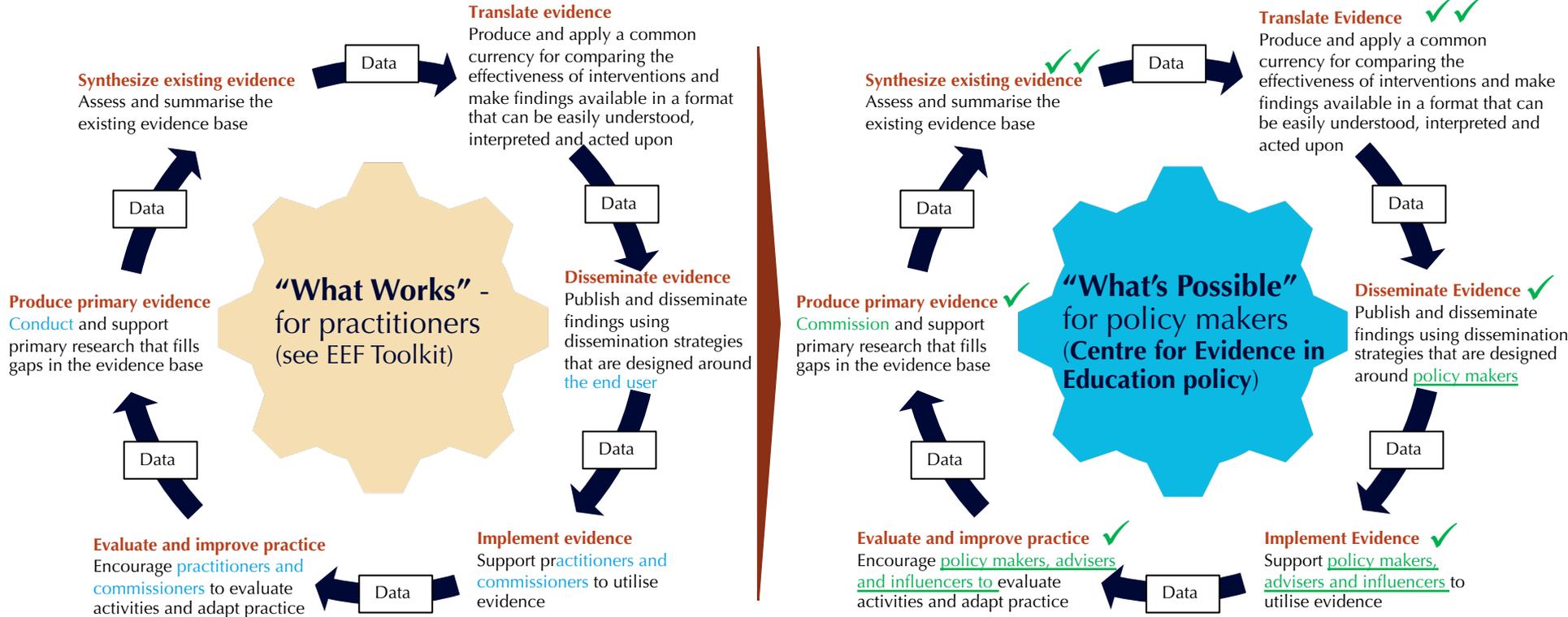
The What Works five stage methodology can build evidenced options for policy makers:

1. The existing literature and evidence is reviewed, including from overseas jurisdictions
2. Sources include quantitative and qualitative, evidence and experience
3. Evidence should be sorted under generic policy options (see appendix)
4. Evidence is assessed on method, implementation and outcomes (foreseen and unforeseen)
5. Conclusions are only drawn on the strength of evidence and on the efficacy of the policy/initiative vis its stated objectives

The Centre for Evidence in Education Policy must be free from any value judgement

And the What Works' model can be used to make policy options available

“Generating and collating evidence is of no use if its inaccessible to the people who need it – a bridge institution is needed”

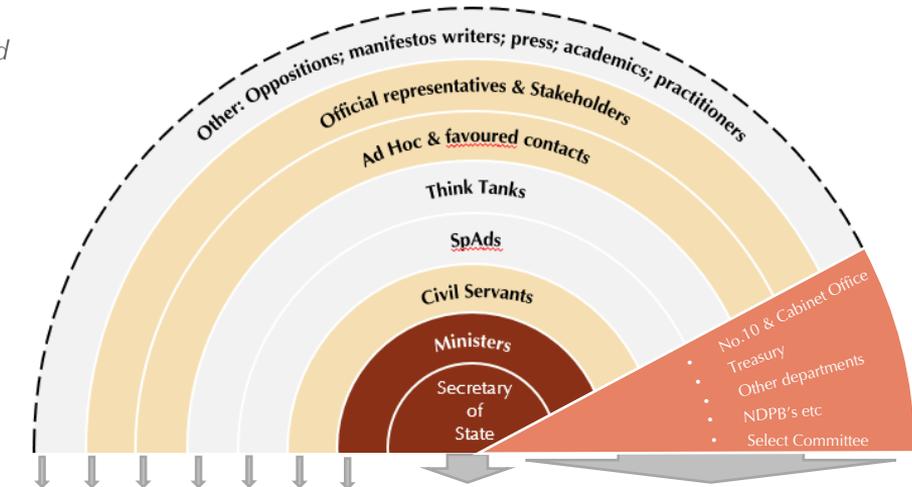


The new CEEP could then provide support to everyone in policy making

A new independent institution and information system - comprehensive, stable - providing consistent support in a frenetic, centralised policy making system

A What Works at the practitioner level becomes a What's Possible at the policy maker level

Accessible to all and not hidden behind pay-walls



Key

Strong policy making centre	Weak checks and balances
Research and evidence	Intervention and dependencies

A bit like:

- What Works Clearinghouse (USA)
- Institute of Education Sciences (USA)
- FINEC (Finland)
- NIE (Singapore)
- NIER (Japan)
- The King's Fund (UK)
- SUMMA (S. America)
- Health Knowledge Centre (NL)
- Ontario Education Research Panel (Canada)

"De-couple the evidence from the political bias" (SpAd)

"Design a technocracy without bias" (exSpAd)

"It needs to be scientific, trusted, impartial and non-partisan" (exCS)

CEEP Front End: User friendly, menu-driven, summarised evidence, presented as policy options							
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Drilldown to the source documents

"Methodical-scientific; non-partisan; impartial; trusted" (Expert)

"Judgement free - evidence rich" (ex SpAd/academic)

"The fast clock speed of policy making can be supported by the slower speed of evidence accumulation" ((Headteacher)

This would drive material improvements in policy process and behavior

Actors	Current Behavior	With Centre for Evidence in Education
No.10, Cabinet Office, Treasury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to media, core supporters and electorate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can now present with authority about many policy options
SofSs & Ministers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to short term pressure Relying on Civil Service and SpAd advice and/or ideology, manifesto, personal priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapidly receives more comprehensive and wider ranging advice from SpAds and Civil Service, with options clearly laid out
Civil Servants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding to fast policy turnaround Inadequate time to work on policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can rapidly move up “knowledge curve” in any policy area, exploring all generic options
SpAds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to have comprehensive knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As above and using the same evidence as Civil Servants; time to consider inter-departmental implications and dependencies
Think Tanks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating credible point-solutions, sometimes without considering interdependent elements of education policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can take a more holistic view of interrelated policies, considering cross-department elements and medium / long term consequences
Ad hoc and favoured contacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing authoritative but narrower perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can consider sector/personal position in light of credible alternatives and weighted evidence
Official Representatives and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often forced to deal with short term member issues Time and resource mitigates against long term plan consideration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move up “knowledge curve” quickly Can reference other options and available evidence, to credibly respond to new initiatives
Research Bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pushing forward research and understanding Often following funding i.e. much at micro/practitioner level Lack of national plan and priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunity to contribute to meta-studies, meta-analysis and fill in research gaps according to a plan As per Think Tanks – able to consider whole system
Local and practitioner initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficult to break through noise in educational debate and access government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Automatically incorporated into weighted knowledge and evidence base
Opposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responding piece-meal according to government agenda 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved discussion as opposition can access shared evidence base and credibly respond to any new government initiative
Manifesto writers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often written without sufficient time/sometimes experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can examine options using same resource as government and give greater consideration to desired outcomes

The CEEP would create a range of important benefits

Rapid access

The centre allows all parties to quickly understand “What’s Possible”: policy options, consequences and the available evidence

- All parties rapidly gain a deeper understanding of policy options
- Any discussion can be better informed
- Civil Servants can quickly provide comprehensive options and advice
- Other contributors to the decision making process have time to consider the evidence and respond
- Prior experience and outcomes can be codified
- Other jurisdiction experience can be considered
- Expected and unintended consequences can be understood

A common source

A trusted, authoritative overview of options and evidence quickly improves the quality of discussions and common understanding

- Reasoned consideration of options is more likely between opposing parties
- Selective use of evidence can be quickly countered
- Proposals based on ideology rather than evidenced are exposed
- More consideration can be given to desired outcomes [with greater consensus of means]
- Manifesto and parliamentary programmes can draw on the same evidence base
- Representative bodies can coalesce around a shared evidence base

A stable foundation

Macro/system level policy making currently lacks rigour. A Centre for Evidence can provide a methodology that guides more thoughtful decision making

- Generic policy options can be developed from experience around the world
- Supporting evidence can be built up over a number of years
- An enduring reference point is established while Ministers and Civil Servants change
- Institutional memory is maintained
- From greater understanding, the foundation for longer term planning might be secured

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Appendices

Examples: fundamental questions at macro/system level (Education in England) DRAFT

Systems	Funding	Teacher Professionalism	Disadvantage	Curriculum	Vocational	Assessment	EYFS	Measurement & Accountability	Wellbeing	Success
National										
<p>Where should the line of responsibility sit between schools and government?</p> <p>Should secondary academisation be completed, held or reversed?</p> <p>How should the primary sector be managed?</p> <p>How is parental choice managed v balanced intake? (Choice v equity v effectiveness)</p> <p>What is the potential role of the middle tier?</p> <p>How does evidence gathering incorporate a teacher view?</p>	<p>What is the appropriate level of education funding?</p> <p>What is the correct resource balance between sectors¹?</p> <p>How far should funding correct regional imbalances?</p>	<p>What is correct balance between university, independent training and school development?</p> <p>How is empowerment balanced with accountability?</p> <p>What is the role of technology?</p> <p>How far will policy stability improve teacher retention?</p> <p>What is the priority and method of developing more great leaders?</p>	<p>What is the cost/benefit of early intervention?</p> <p>How far can and should schools overcome pupil disadvantage?</p> <p>Where is the best return on additional funding?</p>	<p>Does tertiary education determine secondary school goals and is this a problem?</p> <p>What is a stretching and inclusive curriculum for secondary?</p> <p>Is there a trade off between equality and excellence?</p> <p>How are minimum standards best achieved?</p> <p>Should the curriculum help develop the “whole child” and does this create measurement challenges?</p>	<p>How are technical and vocational options given more status?</p> <p>What is the appropriate funding level?</p> <p>Should the single curriculum run to year 9, 10, or 11?</p> <p>How can inclusion be increased?</p> <p>What is the strategy for adult education ?</p>	<p>Should we have comparable or criteria-based attainment levels?</p> <p>What are the costs and benefits of the exam centered system?</p> <p>Should the timings and form of assessment/examination change?</p> <p>Should curriculum and assessment change be recommended to government?</p>	<p>How important is pre school nursery to early development?</p> <p>How prescriptive should the curriculum be from age 4 to 7?</p> <p>What is the appropriate SEN funding in EYFS?</p>	<p>Do we monitor what it is easy to measure?</p> <p>Can character goals be measured?</p> <p>How is school accountability and responsibility best balanced?</p> <p>Should inspection really be “improvement”?</p> <p>What is the importance of problem solving and teamwork?</p>	<p>How do we improve the health, welfare and life satisfaction of children in school?</p> <p>How should school success be measured?</p> <p>How do we balance compliance, enablement and wellbeing?</p>	<p>What do we want education to deliver in the next 5/10/20 years?</p> <p>How should school success be measured?</p> <p>How do we balance compliance, enablement and wellbeing?</p>
Local										
<p>How far can underperformance be rectified by local/area intervention? –[Should Opportunity areas be continued]?</p> <p>How should we maximise benefits in local school cooperation?</p> <p>How do we identify, evaluate and scale</p>		<p>How is the best teaching talent attracted to the most disadvantaged areas?</p>		<p>Should there be greater opportunity to flex curriculum requirements at a local level?</p>	<p>Should policy be sector or place based?</p> <p>What are the future skills needs by area?</p> <p>What is the most effective model of cooperation between schools, FEs and employers?</p>			<p>How to better engage parents and the community?</p>	<p>At what level should care services be coordinated e.g. neighborhood; community; LA; mayoral or regional?</p> <p>How are care services coordinated where LAs no longer fulfil the</p>	

All have generic policy options

Example of generic policy options: Accountability

WIP -Draft

	<u>Accountability</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Countries?</u>
1	Inspection centrally controlled: "High stakes"	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publicly available• Graded report• Significant consequences	England
2	Inspection centrally controlled: Minimum standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publicly available• Binary result• Consequences for inadequate rating	?
3	Inspection centrally controlled: Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Private report• Advice on improvement	New Zeland? <ul style="list-style-type: none">• , Estonia
4	Inspection through middle-tier	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Authority or Trust inspects• Can be evaluation of LA/MAT	Canada/Provinces?
5	Data + Inspection Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sampling of school performance• Local & national data	Finland
6	Alternative measurements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress 8• SATS• GCSE/A Level etc or equivalent	?

How leading education nations organise, focus and fund education research and evaluation*

	Finland	Singapore	Australia	Japan	Scotland
Major institutions and relationship to Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINECC) - Within Finnish National Agency for Education (EDUFI) Independent “freedom” of evaluation methods, organisation and results Established 1999 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Institute of Education (NIE) Office for Education Research Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice Established early 2000’s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) – independent Longitudinal Study of Australian Youth (LSAY) National Youth Affairs Research Scheme Department of Education Commissions Research Running 20 – 30 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Institute for Educational Policy Research (NIER) Japan Educational Research Association (JERA) Educational Policy Research Institute (NFERI) Some institutions existed for a century 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Scotland* created:- National Improvement Hub-resource database for practice Research Strategy for Scottish Education 2017 *Instituted 2011
How funded, magnitude and relative spend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government funding £3.3 million (19/20) 0.015% of education spend (2016) “Examining effectiveness, efficiency and economy” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded by Ministry of Education (MoE) Education Research Funding Programme (ERFP) Fourth tranche 2018-22 Pedagog / Practice £5m p.a Policy Grant awarded S\$50 – 350k 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACER contracted revenue AUS\$ 90 million p.a. Murdoch Children’s Institute Co-operative funding between national government and states Queensland runs comprehensive program Research from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consultancies & universities, ACER - Deloitte Access Economics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded by Government €22.5 million (19/20) 0.007% of total educational spend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scottish Funding Council
Priorities and how set	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duties governed by legislation Supervised by Evaluation Council (Sector, Training, work, student representation) Detailed specification of research – “to conduct evaluations related to education and teaching” Four year cycle of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research with policy impact clear part of 2022 strategic vision To have an impact on policy and pedagogy Guided by economic planning and education strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States commission ACER for research ACER includes a “what works” department LSAY – to understand transitions and pathways Recently Department commissioned five large scale reports including drivers of outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NIER – collects and analyses academic research to plan and design education policy – mid and long term Also to respond to solutions to urgent Political issues NIER department focuses and coordinates direction of research projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research Strategy 2017 produced on behalf of Scottish Government and Education Scotland OEID recommendations To use a more rigorous and evidence based approach System focus and “What works” “Learning together” - for connection between policy, research, practice