

edpol.net

An education policy⁽¹⁾ framework for long-term, strategic planning

Jan 2022

(1) Education policy scope: strategic policy at a system or macro level i.e. policy that acts upon the system at a national and policy instrument level. This excludes practitioner level policy (e.g. EEF tools like behaviour, one to one tuition, school hours, learning styles, adventure learning, parental participation, etc).

Consider the whole and consider the parts

Content:

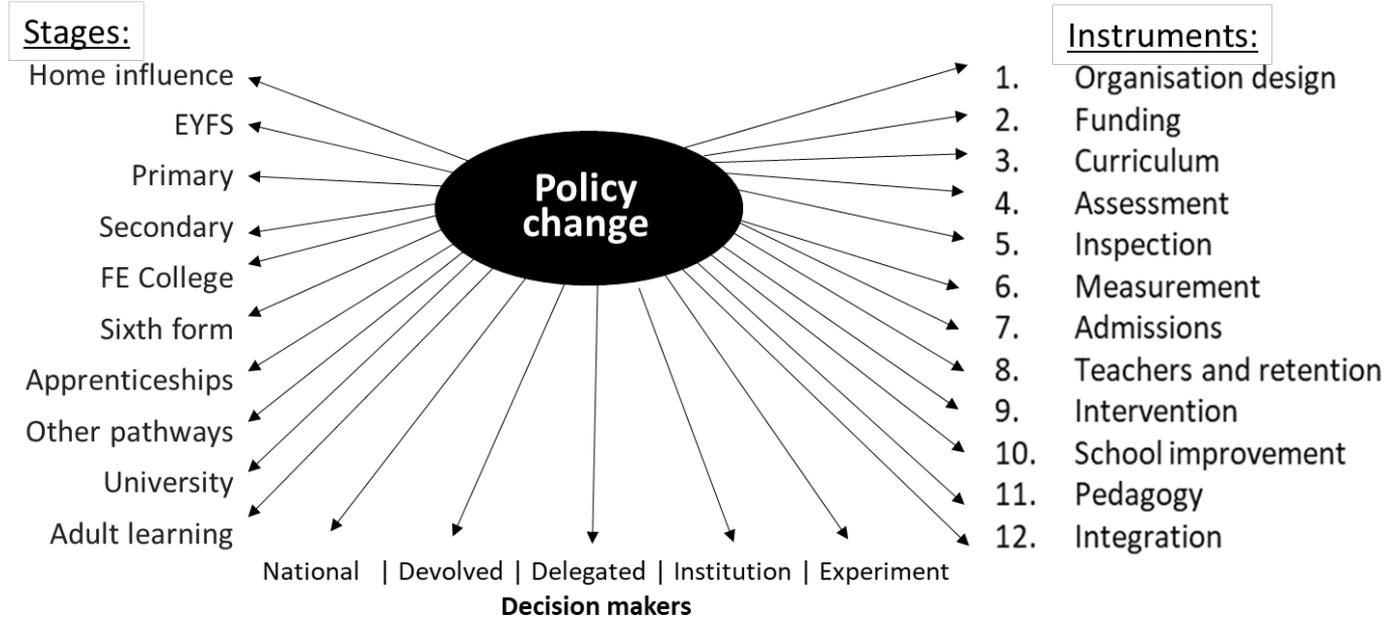
1. Clarify where policy decision making is made
2. Agree the planning structure
3. Agree the governance structure
4. Consider changing the current policy making matrix

1. Clarify where policy decision making is made

- a) Education policy is complex and needs to be better understood
- b) Education policy is made up of policy instruments
- c) Policy instruments are managed by different decision makers
- d) Decision makers and policy instruments combine in a Policy Matrix
- e) Governance and planning should operate around and within the Policy Matrix

Education policy is complex and needs to be better understood

There's a pernicious view that education policy is relatively "easy". In fact, it has to be one of the most difficult areas to establish a coherent system with anticipated outcomes, because there are so many policy instruments acting on so many stages of education. They are all interdependent and there are a range of decision makers who all exercise their influence. To build a governance and planning framework it is necessary to break down policy and decision making.



Education policy is made up of policy instruments

There are many policy levers or instruments that shape education content and delivery. A classification of 12 instruments is provided below*

Policy instruments or levers. These are discretionary levers to control or manage the system:

1. Organisation design (the decision to support for example, trusts; religious schools; grammar schools, sixth form and colleges etc)
2. Funding (nationally or locally, specified by formula, delegated etc)
3. Curriculum (to what extent specified, adherence requirement, areas of autonomy; content etc)
4. Assessment (formative and summative, particularly latter)
5. Inspection (e.g. OFSTED – part 1 of accountability)
6. Measurement (e.g. league tables, Ebacc, 4+ Eng/Maths, progress 8, attainment 8, ALPS etc - part 2 of accountability)
7. Admissions (e.g. parental choice, acceptance criteria, funding per pupil)
8. Teacher professionalism, deployment and retention (ITT, ECF, CPD, NPQs, pay)
9. Intervention (e.g. SEND policies, targeted funding such as pupil premium, other disadvantage etc)
10. School improvement (a form of intervention, but pulled out as such a large area, schools and colleges)
11. Pedagogy (arguably should be remit of school/trust etc but currently influenced or controlled centrally)
12. Integration (the extent to which education policy is joined up with other vital services e.g. housing, social services, transport etc)

*although others (Tim Oates, Cambridge Assessment list 14) use different classifications

Policy instruments are managed by different decision makers

Decision making can reside in many different areas e.g. centralised or locally devolved. The following lists some of the ways policy making ownership can be distributed and provides examples for England:

Decision making centre*

- **National** (Central government, national Civil Service, parliament/select committee, cross party, etc)
- **Devolved** (e.g. Provinces, States, Scotland, Wales, NI, middle tier)
- **Delegated** (e.g. ad-hoc, advisory body, expert group, working groups, policy boards with rotating membership,)
- **Institutions** (e.g. permanent, national or local organisations with specialist expertise e.g. research)
- **Experimentation** (i.e. encouraging innovation and market experimentation, pilots and supplier innovation)

Example in England

- The “Westminster model” between Ministers and Civil Service
- LEAs (until 2010), mayoral regions, MATs
- QCDA (to 2011), ESA, Teaches’ Review Body, Office for Access, HE funding council etc
- OFSTED and Ofqual (Exec Public Bodies)
- MATs like Oasis, Reach, Big Education, tech suppliers etc

[*Note: “Decision maker” refers to the ultimate authority and also includes organisations and people that have partial, advisory or recommending status in the process]

Decision makers and policy instruments combine in a “Policy Matrix”

Combining Policy instruments and decision making centres, creates a decision matrix. This is illustrated below using a rough approximation for arrangements in England. Darker colours denote greater authority for decision making. Some areas have become particularly centralised like funding, curriculum and measurement while teacher training and professionalism has become more delegated. Devolution and experimentation largely take place through Trusts.

		Decision makers:				
		National	Devolved	Delegated	Institution	Experiment*
Instruments	1. Organisation design					
	2. Funding					
	3. Curriculum					
	4. Assessment					
	5. Inspection					
	6. Measurement					
	7. Admissions					
	8. Teachers and retention					
	9. Intervention					
	10. School improvement					
	11. Pedagogy					
	12. Integration					

Governance and planning operates around and within the Policy Matrix

Long-term planning and governance must wrap around this complex matrix. Governance and planning must be formalised:

- At the national level to ensure vision, mission, guidance, policy cohesion, priorities and sequencing
- For each policy instrument, to ensure consistency and effectiveness. Here this is called “Instrument planning”

Planning and Governance framework

		Decision makers:				
		National	Devolved	Delegated	Institution	Experiment*
Instruments (1)	1. Organisation design					
	2. Funding					
	3. Curriculum					
	4. Assessment					
	5. Inspection					
	6. Measurement					
	7. Admissions					
	8. Teachers and retention					
	9. Intervention					
	10. School improvement					
	11. Pedagogy					
	12. Integration					

2. Agree the planning structure

- a) The process for long-term strategic planning is tried and tested
- b) For education planning, it is critical to agree who has an input
- c) There should be national planning and instrument based planning
- d) All elements are combined in the education planning framework

The process for long-term strategic planning is tried and tested

Long-term strategic planning in business and large organisations is a tried and tested process. A generic form is shown below. For education policy, this form of planning should operate at both the national/macro level and for “Instrument Planning”, with the two deeply connected.

P
r
o
c
e
s
s



Stage	Elements
Needs, vision, outcomes	What is the purpose and vision for education (and parts of it)? What are the aspirations? Create specific and measurable goals with time frames.
Environmental analysis	Review external circumstances e.g. future demands re skills, tech and AI; likely funding; relative performance of English education; data led where possible
Situation analysis	Where are we now e.g. infrastructure; human capital; skills; retention level; stakeholder satisfaction; policy instrument performance and interdependence. Likely SWOT analysis etc
Gap analysis	How far are we from where we want to be? What are the particular areas of weakness and opportunity, what is good/great that can be built on?
Priorities and modelling	What are the priority goals and what are the most important instruments/levers to achieve change? How will instruments interact to avoid unintended consequences?
Long-term plan	Write plan, with priorities, spending allocation, hierarchy of plans, timings, implementation approaches and expected outcomes
Piloting and evaluation	Ideally, material change is piloted and evaluated before roll-out. This doesn't necessarily mean randomised control trials, most evaluation is helpful
Iteration of plan	Look, listen, learn and where possible, loop back

Planning in education is often associated with school and college planning, often made with governing bodies or trustees. The type of planning can be limited vis-a-vis time scales and proscribed parameters. MATs have more scope but are still operating within a constrained framework.

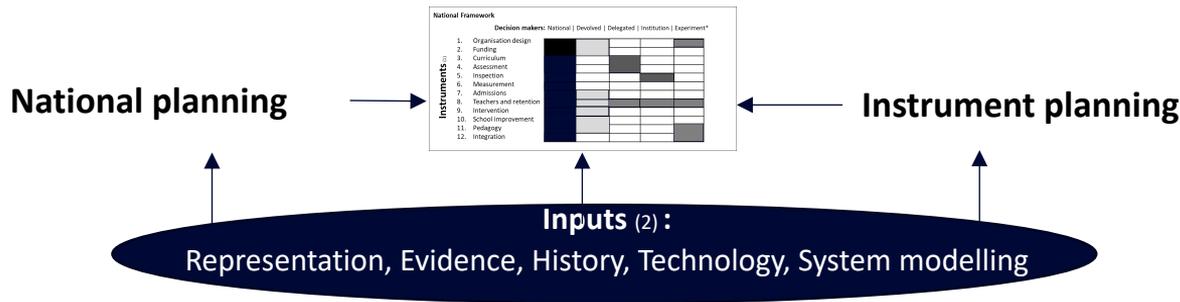
Strategic or long term planning is relatively unconstrained. It can address tougher issues and more radically realign resources.

For education planning, it is critical to agree who has an input

The following inputs should be included in the strategic planning process for both national planning and Instrument based planning.

The extent to which these inputs are engaged should be codified in the planning structure:

- Representation (for consultation, advise, expertise including practitioner (informal, unions, professional bodies), Trusts, business and public sector, parents and children, systematically diverse)
- Evidence and Research (most methods, from academia and comparative policy reviews – see edpol Knowledge Centre)
- History and experience (recognition of what has been tried before and learning from this)
- Technology (from contributing to programme implementation, teacher delivery to potential shifts in paradigms)
- Complex system modelling for education interdependency (see Tim Oates 14 levers and edpol etc)



There should be national planning and instrument based planning

National planning must enable the rest of the system. It should agree vision and purpose, create clear priorities for new policy initiatives, clear responsibilities for actors and sequence initiatives to ensure they are implemented well. It should provide guidance for Instrument planning and consider the interaction of different instruments.

This strategic planning and oversight will only be possible if:

- There is a clear process
- The Civil Service is less involved in implementation and maintenance
- There are opportunities to devolve and delegate
- Supporting bodies (permanent and ad-hoc) are rebuilt

It will only be effective if there is greater use of evidence and systematic representation

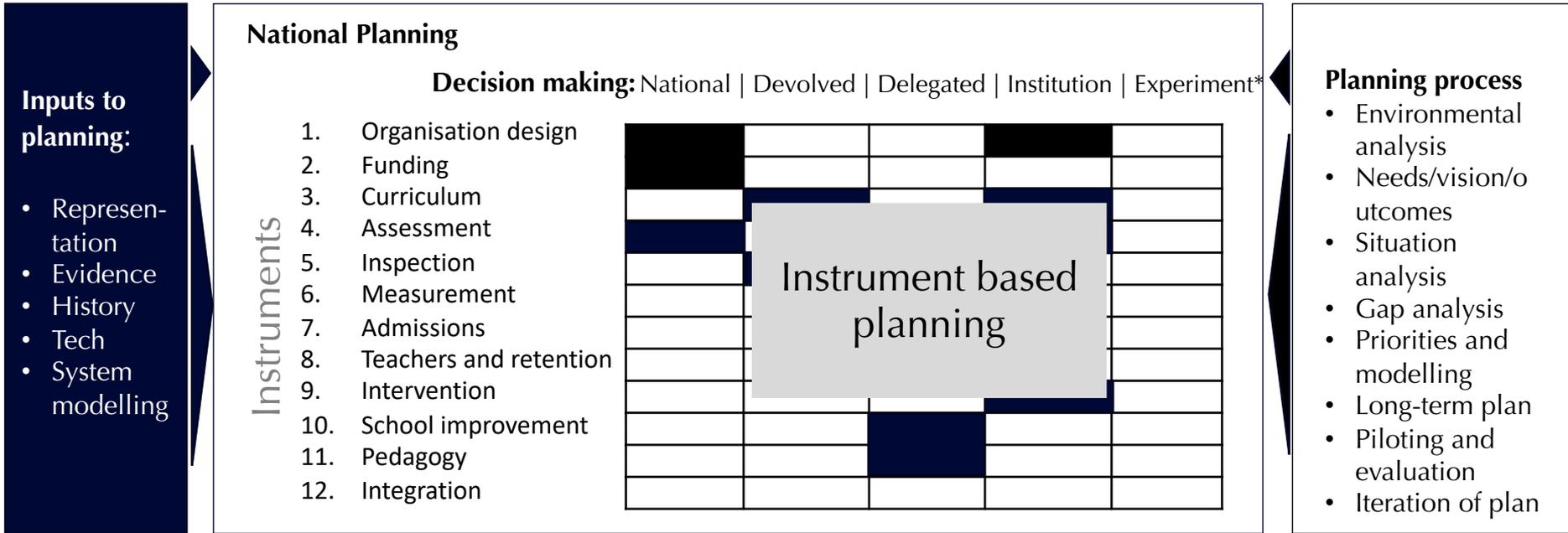
Instrument based planning must ensure each lever is thoroughly reviewed and planned, particularly tough issues that have been beyond the short term planning cycle. Instruments should be considered across decision making centres and across age staged education, to ensure all are acting in unison e.g. SEND policy is coordinated at a national, devolved and delegated level and intervention takes place at the right stages.

For review and planning, related instruments should be grouped, e.g. curriculum, assessment and measurement, or school improvement, integration, intervention and funding, in order to achieve System Coherence.

Coherent Instrument planning is largely dependent on National planning i.e. to enhance and coordinate planning around policy instruments and to create clarity between the role of different organisations.

All elements are combined in the education planning framework

The planning framework should encompass both national planning (around the policy matrix) and Instrument based planning (within the policy matrix). All should move through an established planning process. Careful consideration should be given to who is represented in the process and what use is made of evidence, history, technology and modelling.



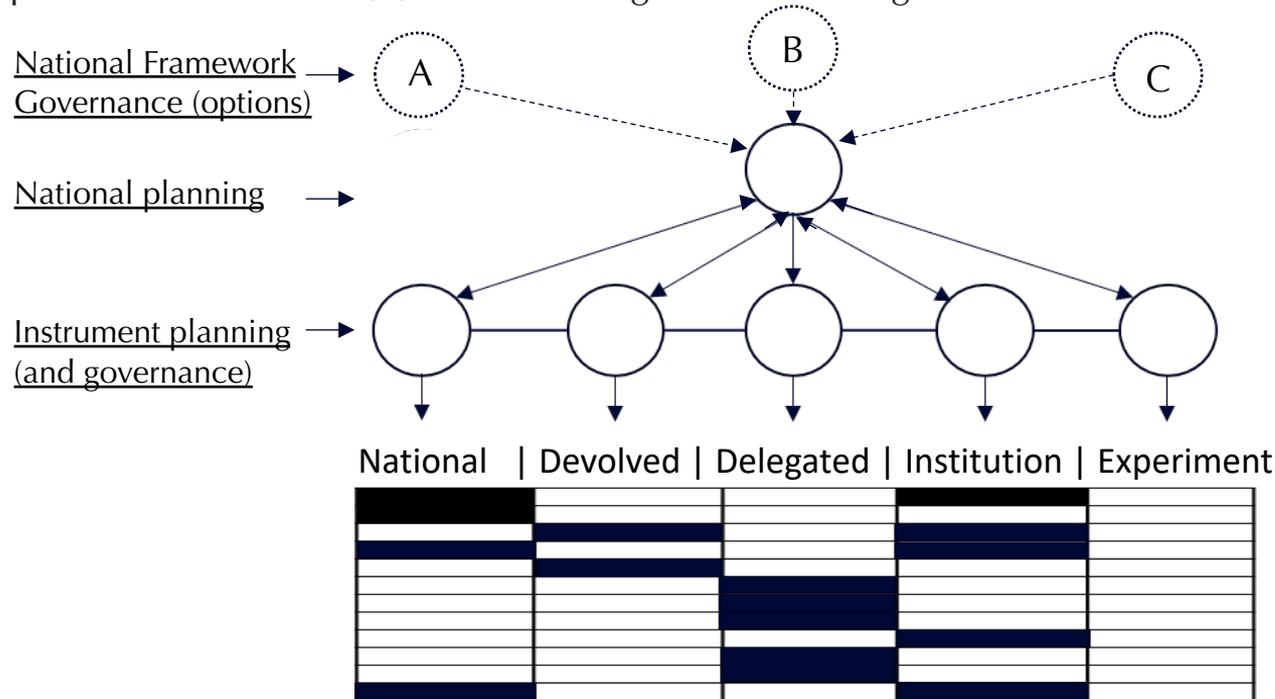
* Particularly supplier experimentation, but also the ability to decide after trials

3. Agree the Governance structure

a) The planning framework governance can be managed in several ways

The governance of planning can be managed in several ways

Ultimately, governance should reach over national level planning and the instrument based planning. National governance could be owned by the central/national government (A), or the remit of a delegated body (B), or within a permanent institution (C). The latter might be favoured given the technical nature of the work.



4. Consider changing the current policy making matrix

- a) The policy matrix is not fixed
- b) Reviewing the matrix should be central to national planning
- c) A revised policy matrix could allow the department to be more strategic

The policy matrix is not fixed

Long-term planning can and should challenge the prevailing paradigm. The policy matrix paradigm determines where decision making authority lies and who supports decisions. As below, this can lead to education systems with very different cultures and priorities. England's decision making structure is fundamentally different to other countries, because it is very centralised and there are only a few weak countervailing or assisting organisations.

Decision makers: National | Devolved | Delegated | Institution | Experiment*

Examples (needs verification)

National and Experiment	Authority		Advise		Disruptors	England
National & Devolved	Authority	Authority				Canada, Australia, Finland
Devolved		Authority				USA
National & Delegated	Authority		Recommend			Singapore
National and Institutions	Authority		Advise	Authority		Japan, South Korean

Many jurisdictions have long standing institutions to rule or advise on curriculum, assessment and departmental coordination. Similarly, there are many expert groups who have authority to recommend or enact on admissions, teacher professionalism, school improvement and pedagogy.

Reviewing the matrix should be central to national planning

National governance and planning should review the policy making matrix. It should better understand the alternative approaches around the world and consider the dynamics and outcomes determined by the shape of the matrix. Optimisation of policy ownership is likely to have a greater effect on education outcomes than any other initiative.

(Illustrative – requires research)

England

National | Devolved | Delegated | Institution | Experiment*

	National	Devolved	Delegated	Institution	Experiment*
1. Organisation design					
2. Funding					
3. Curriculum					
4. Assessment					
5. Inspection					
6. Measurement					
7. Admissions					
8. Teachers and retention					
9. Intervention					
10. School improvement					
11. Pedagogy					
12. Integration					

Singapore

National | Devolved | Delegated | Institution | Experiment*

	National	Devolved	Delegated	Institution	Experiment*
1. Organisation design					
2. Funding					
3. Curriculum					
4. Assessment					
5. Inspection					
6. Measurement					
7. Admissions					
8. Teachers and retention					
9. Intervention					
10. School improvement					
11. Pedagogy					
12. Integration					

Finland

National | Devolved | Delegated | Institution | Experiment*

	National	Devolved	Delegated	Institution	Experiment*
1. Organisation design					
2. Funding					
3. Curriculum					
4. Assessment					
5. Inspection					
6. Measurement					
7. Admissions					
8. Teachers and retention					
9. Intervention					
10. School improvement					
11. Pedagogy					
12. Integration					

Canada

National | Devolved | Delegated | Institution | Experiment*

	National	Devolved	Delegated	Institution	Experiment*
1. Organisation design					
2. Funding					
3. Curriculum					
4. Assessment					
5. Inspection					
6. Measurement					
7. Admissions					
8. Teachers and retention					
9. Intervention					
10. School improvement					
11. Pedagogy					
12. Integration					

A revised policy matrix could allow the department to be more strategic

Current arrangements overly rely on the national centre and do not make best use of wider capabilities. Rebalancing allows central government to maintain overall control but releases it from much delivery and maintenance.

A Revised policy matrix foresees permanent institutions to advise on ongoing instruments such as funding, curriculum assessment and intervention, ad-hoc delegation for org. design, inspection, measurement, admissions, school improvement and integration, greater devolution of curriculum and many other areas and finally, wide spread piloting.

Regions might have some authority over curriculum (e.g. local skills content or emphasis), inspection (e.g. MAT or LA devolved authority), measurement (e.g. balanced score card for league tables), market use (e.g. changes in parental choice), teacher development (e.g. LA and employer accredited courses for college lecturers) and intervention (e.g. integrated education, health and care services).

Current policy matrix – illustrative

National | Devolved | Delegated | Institution | Experiment

Total	Limited			Trusts etc
Total		Sch. discretion		
Total	Minimal	Recommend		
Total		Recommend		
Appoint			OFSTED	
Total				
Directing	Limited			
Directing	Trusts	Ambition etc	CC & Unis	Trusts etc
Total	Limited			
??	Trusts et			
Directing	Mixed			Big Ed etc
				Oasis, RtS et

V

Revised policy matrix - illustrative

National | Devolved | Delegated | Institution | Experiment

Total	Advisory	Advisory		Pilot
Total	Advisory	Advisory	Recommend	
Partial	Partial	Advisory	Recommend	Pilot
Total		Advisory	Recommend	Pilot
Partial	Partial	Advisory	Advisory	Pilot
Partial	Partial	Recommend		Pilot
Partial		Recommend		Pilot
Partial	Partial	Recommend	Advisory	Pilot
Partial	Partial	Advisory	Recommend	Pilot
Partial	Partial	Recommend		Pilot
partial	Advisory	Advisory	Advisory	Pilot
Partial	Partial	Recommend		Pilot

Instruments

- Decision makers:**
1. Organisation design
 2. Funding
 3. Curriculum
 4. Assessment
 5. Inspection
 6. Measurement
 7. Admissions
 8. Teachers and retention
 9. Intervention
 10. School improvement
 11. Pedagogy
 12. Integration