

New Perspectives for Learning - Briefing Paper 7

Innovations in Education and Training

Context of the Research

There are continuing demands on education and training to explore ways of improving learning and widening access to learning opportunities, including access for less favoured and excluded groups. This provides opportunities to develop new approaches to innovations in education and training.

This study has aimed at deepening the understanding of educational innovations. It has gathered empirical evidence of innovative education and learning arrangements and developed specific methodologies and guidelines for enhancing the design, implementation and evaluation of learning innovations. It has specially explored the issue of social disadvantage and exclusion, with a particular emphasis on exclusions from education and training.

It has developed a new approach to innovations in education and training based on the idea of “learning patrimony” and the impact upon this by a set of social, cultural and, above all, political and economic factors. Learning patrimony is defined as: -

- A modus operandi, that is a series of prevailing socio-institutional and educational practices, pedagogic arrangements and relations.
- A set of values, dispositions, attitudes and expectations in regard to education and training.

Key Conclusions

The key conclusions are: -

1. There has been a fundamental “clash” between the view of education as an end in itself for living a human life and the view of education as a mere instrument of the economy and people as workers.
2. Policies in western countries are characterised by disengagement of the state from the economy and increasing involvement and intervention in education and training at all levels.

3. Intervention in education has generally been based on an economic rationale and focused on “re-designing” legislative arrangements in terms of different forms of centralization-decentralization.
4. There has been a transfer control of services and resources from the professionals of education to managers from the business field. This has involved a major restructuring of the professional culture, working practices, college management styles and conditions of service, including the employment conditions of the teaching staff.
5. Performance models of assessment and systems of vocational qualifications based on “measurable competencies” has resulted in a specific pedagogy where learning objectives have to be stated in such a way that they can be unequivocally measured.
6. This has resulted in a conflict between the “democratic views of accountability” (education has to “respond” to society and its members) and economic or market-driven views of accountability (Judged in terms of the market).
7. Despite strong resistance from educational institutions and professionals, there has tended to be a convergence towards a process whereby values, criteria and procedures from the world of production are transferred, imposed or borrowed by the education and training sectors.
8. Education and training is experiencing a series of tensions coming from economic and political spheres. Whilst, some of these tensions can be creative and give rise to genuine innovations, others can considerably disrupt existing arrangements and do not contribute to innovations.
9. Many opportunities for innovation are related to the introduction and deployment of ICT in education and training, particularly when it is embedded in well organised pedagogic practice and institutional arrangements.
10. A balance between student-centred approaches and more teacher-centred education is still an unresolved ‘big issue’ in the schools sector.
11. Overall, pedagogic innovation is a less developed aspect of innovations in education and training.

Key Recommendations

The study made the following recommendations: -

1. Policy-makers’ decisions should be informed at a more general level by the reforms and innovation cycle of each country/sector.

2. Foster innovative networking and partnership arrangements by: -
 - a) Encouraging public institutions to support the setting up and running of innovative partnerships, and facilitating their medium and long-term sustainability.
 - b) Granting more autonomy to higher education institutions for modification of their internal structures. In particular fostering university-industry partnerships in critical scientific-health-industrial sectors is a key need.
3. Develop current efforts being made in the higher education sector by: -
 - a) Networking public centres (e.g. museums, libraries) and facilitating easy access to such resources for home-based students.
 - b) Developing new territorial multimedia resource centres as student meeting places and self access resources.
 - c) Supporting pedagogic research in virtual teaching.
4. Address the needs of schools as a whole by: -
 - a) Revising national curricula and encouraging the integration of current worthwhile innovations.
 - b) Supporting the teaching profession in their efforts to develop the school model.
 - c) Changing the curriculum to allow full institutionalisation and integration of ICT.
 - d) Developing new evaluation and accountability models that make the school more responsive to society as a whole.
5. Encourage the use of ICT in both schools and higher education institutions by: -
 - a) Revising the national curricula and programmes to encompass online teaching and learning.
 - b) Encouraging institutions to envisage and implement inter-departmental re-design and collaboration, including collaboration between teachers, domain experts, animators and other rapidly emerging teaching functions, both within and between institutions.
 - c) Encouraging the setting up of joint programmes between institutions (both schools and universities).
6. Improve continuous vocational training and skills updating by: -
 - a) Defining wider frameworks, which allow both employees and unemployed to benefit from the training on offer.
 - b) Encouraging collaboration between educational and training institutions and private sector companies.
 - c) Strengthen the position of older and low skilled employees in the corporate setting.

Specific policy recommendations related to social disadvantage and on the provision of training for unemployed and disadvantaged groups: -

7. Improve the position of organisations and community centres providing training and other services to the unemployed and disadvantaged within the tendering processes by: -
 - a) Increasing the representation and involvement of small providers for the disadvantaged in decision-making structures and bodies.
 - b) Providing information and training to small providers and associations about how to access and bid for funds, and how to manage projects.
 - c) Encouraging and facilitating greater collaboration and association among the small organisations and centres providing for the disadvantaged.
 - d) Encouraging innovation at the level of organisational arrangements and partnerships.
8. The principles of efficiency and need should be combined, and needs-based policy decisions sought, so as to ensure that providers closer to the unemployed access the funds available.
9. Induce work through the provision of worthwhile quality training by: -
 - a) Combining current Labour Market Supply Efficiency & Labour Market Performance Indicators with new Labour Market Indicators such as Job Gaps Indicators and Wages Gap Indicators.
 - b) Designing and delivering worthwhile, quality training for the unemployed and disadvantaged.
 - c) Replace 'job-inducing' training schemes with quality training programmes.
10. Improve the funding and monitoring of training initiatives for the unemployed and disadvantaged by: -
 - a) Setting up a funding framework, which provides both stability and efficiency.
 - b) Using both quantitative and qualitative measures as indicators of performance.

Further Information

Full title of study – “Looking at Innovations in Education and Training.” (November 1998)

[Full report, Summary Partner details](#)

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