

Recensions / Book Reviews

Toward Evidence-based Policy for Canadian Education Vers des politiques canadiennes d'éducation fondées sur la recherche

**Edited by / Sous la direction de
Patrice de Broucker and / et Arthur Sweetman**

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**RECENSÉ PAR
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This book, edited by de Broucker and Sweetman, aims at contributing to the current debate on the development and use of empirical research in education in Canada, with a special emphasis on achievement indicators. It contains a series of papers, written in French and in English, presented at a conference held in November 2001 which brought together academics, policy-makers and administrators in education as well as economists.

Firstly, we want to recognize the overall quality and coherence of this conference's proceedings. In spite of its voluminous size (517 pages), the book is reader-friendly and easily "apprivoisé" (tamed). Furthermore, many of the authors, both English-speaking or French-speaking, are recognized experts in each of their fields and to find their work gathered together in one book that spans Canada, as well as Quebec, is, in and by itself, a noteworthy contribution to educational research and practice. Therefore, it will definitely be of major interest to Canadian researchers, practitioners and decision-makers in the field of education.

Although the book focusses mainly on education in Canada, the authors also present an international perspective. Furthermore, while not exhaustive, the multidisciplinary approach adopted by the authors provides a rich and diverse analysis of evidence-based policy-making in education. For instance, it is exceptional for researchers in educational evaluation and measurement to ponder the long-term economic significance of achievement indicators. In this respect, the papers presented by Lemieux, by Green & Riddell, by Ferrer & Riddell and by Riddell are very informative. Also, many chapters are designed in such a way that the systemic complexity of evidence-based policy making is demonstrated. Whether discussing the relationship between policies in education, empirical data and action, or presenting the challenges of decision-making based on a profusion of data available on achievement indicators, or looking at causal relationships that link achievement indicators, teaching practices and student mother tongues; or investigating the current situation with regard to gender-differentiated results in sciences and mathematics or increasing improvements in student academic performance, the book covers many important issues in Canadian education.

At first glance, because a number of chapters address very specific subjects, one might find the immediate effect to be eclectic. However, these chapters, in our view, demonstrate the range and variety of applications for empirical research in education. This is notably the case with Bernard's contribution, dealing with the evaluation of teaching in universities - an ubiquitous subject at a time when post-secondary teaching competency is increasingly questioned. This is also the case with Warburton and Warburton's paper as well as with Wright's comment on the relevance of financing for

disadvantaged students- “a social duty or a waste of public money?”, and with Zhahg's paper and Bertrand's comment on an equitable access to educational resources. In Paquette's paper, we note a mistake that needs to be corrected: the concept of “cultural capital” (*capital culturel*), was created by Pierre Bourdieu in his early work (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964; Bourdieu 1970). This term was then borrowed by Bernstein who redefined it in order to emphasize the fundamental role of one's “linguistic capital”.

Finally, in an era of public funding accountability, this book provides a wealth of vital information, reflections and training on research-based analysis and decision-making in education. Given the strength of the accountability movement in the States and the similar trend observed in Canada, this book could prove to be very useful to graduate students enrolled in educational administration or evaluation programs. It could, in fact, become a major reference work given the fact that such an academic undertaking might again be repeated in the near future.

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