



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE  
FINLAND

# Use of evidence in Finnish education policy making

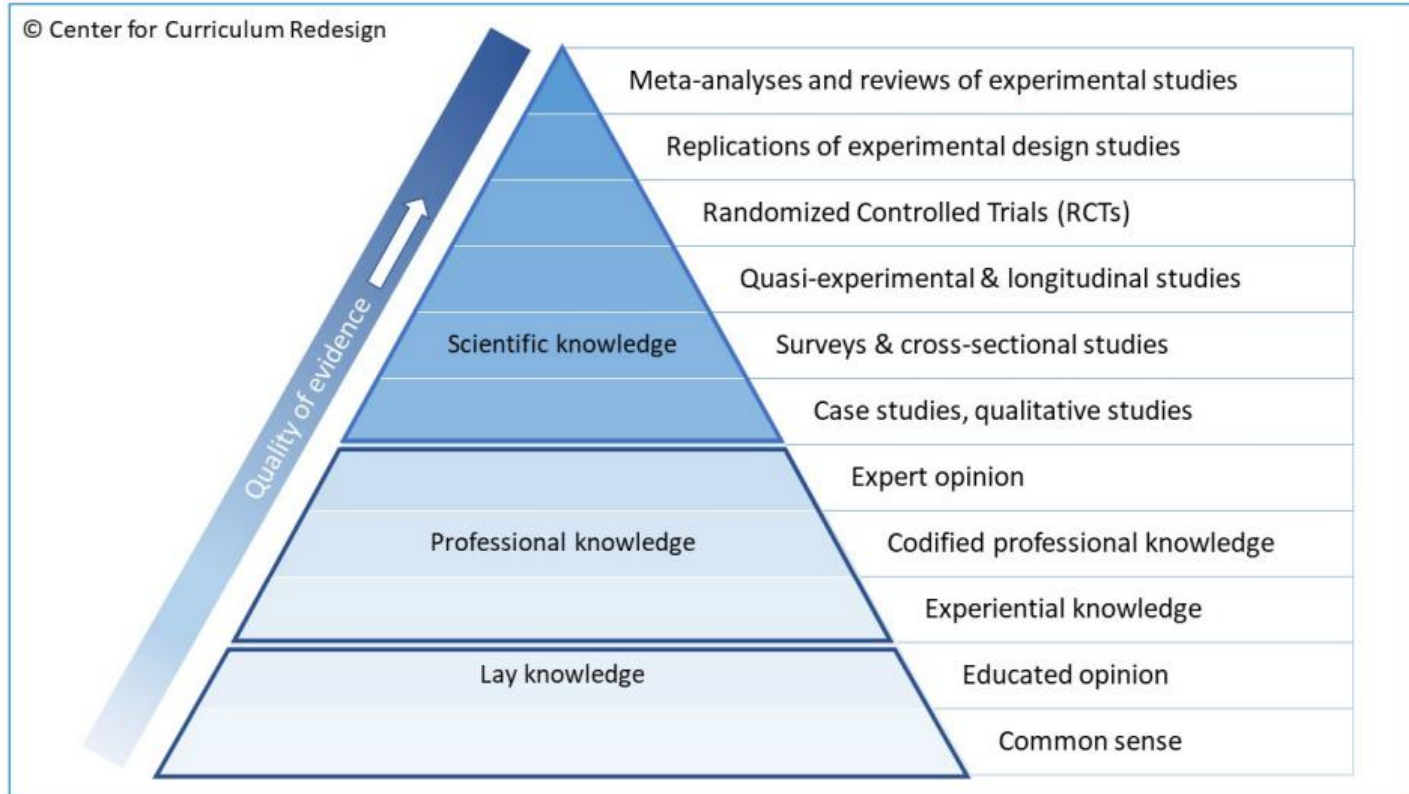
European Union funded Regional Programme Supporting Education Reforms & Skills in the Eastern Partnership region (SER)

Peer-learning workshop on the Use of Evidence in Education Policies, ETF, 29 May - 31 May, Turin

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# What is evidence?

Source: Van Damme, D. (2022), The Power of Proofs: (Much) Beyond RCT's, Center for Curriculum Redesign



# Why use evidence in policy making?

- To evaluate the effectiveness and of implemented policy measures and investments
- To maximize the social and economic impact of policy choices
- To increase trust in and between policy makers, researchers and practitioners

# Challenges on using evidence

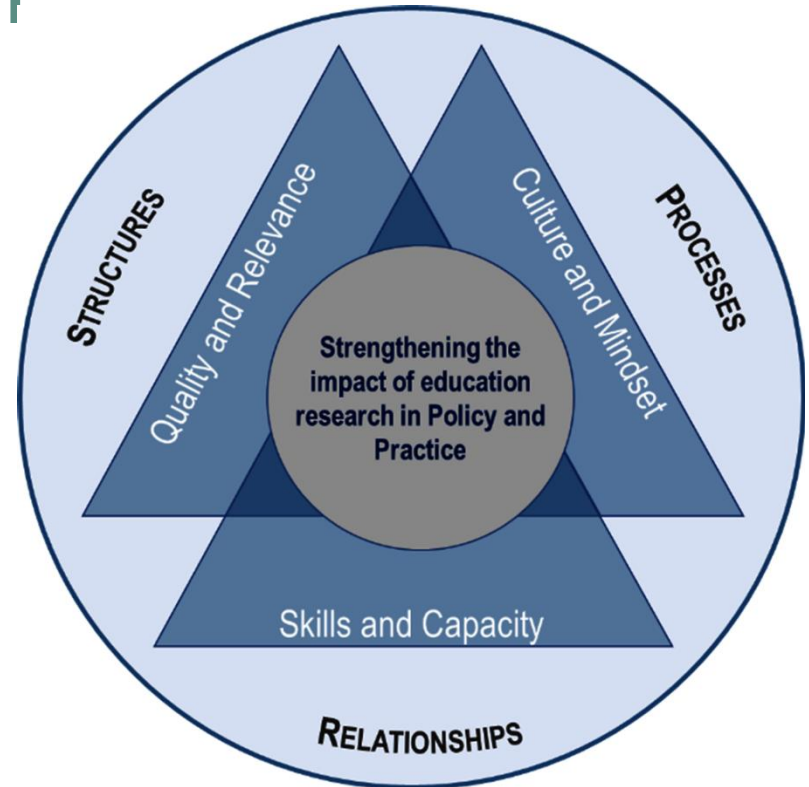
- Policy decisions have complex outcomes, and societal changes affect education. Problems in education often lack a definitive solution.
- Even when evidence is available, it's quality and relevance may be insufficient.
- Decision-making is characterized by a level of uncertainty, however robust the evidence.
- Lack of alignment: the timeframe of the decision-making process often doesn't match the timeframe required for scientific research.
- Educational challenges and policy choices are not purely scientific, they have an ideological dimension as well.

# Systems approach as means to strengthen the impact of education research

- Knowledge transfer shouldn't be linear. Instead, multi-directional taking into account the whole system.
  - If we want relevant and good quality data, data infrastructures should be up to par.
  - Bridge building processes between policymakers, researchers and practitioners promote a positive culture on use of evidence.
  - Deeper relationships between actors increase understanding of each others' perspective.

Source: OECD (2022), Who Cares about Using Education Research in Policy and Practice?: Strengthening Research Engagement, Paris: OECD Publishing, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d7ff793d-en>

Inspired by the QURE framework in Rickinson, M. et al. (2020)



# Ways of using evidence in Finnish education administration

- 1. Information service type use** (for media, citizens and stakeholders - either answered or managed as a self-service through some reporting system)
  - Data source: Vipunen (real-time EMIS data etc.), Statistics Finland public registers
- 2. Operational use** (e.g. background information on funding, foresight and other data produced directly for certain processes)
  - Vipunen, Statistics Finland public registers, Finnish National Agency for Education financial data, separate procurements from Statistics Finland
- 3. Strategic decision-making**, policy analyses and impact assessment
  - Vipunen, Statistics Finland public data, remote access to Statistics Finland micro data, “Data Room”, data from researchers, other data sources ...

# Example 1A, Information service type use: Excel-type reports (Applicants and those who accepted a place in a higher education institution)

Filters

- ▶ Extent of the study pr...
- ▶ Region of study progr...
- ▶ Municipality of study ...
- ▶ Higher education insti...
- ▶ Faculty/campus
- ▲ Column width

1
2
3
4
5
6

Applicants and those who accepted a place in a higher education...

	Applicants expressing first preference	All applicants	Selected
2015	175,563	175,563	58,968
Autumn	175,563	175,563	58,968
2016	190,374	190,374	69,075
Spring	36,654	36,654	9,465
Autumn	167,217	167,217	59,952
2017	191,763	191,766	70,203
Spring	36,378	36,387	11,025
Autumn	168,264	168,267	59,499
2018	200,925	200,937	73,422
Spring	37,884	37,884	12,012
Autumn	176,019	176,031	61,776
2019	207,390	207,390	77,889
Spring	40,842	40,842	12,717
Autumn	180,615	180,615	65,604
2020	228,822	228,822	97,770
Spring	48,681	48,684	17,547
Autumn	197,505	197,505	81,978
2021	248,772	248,772	103,467
Spring	57,051	57,051	19,125

## PivotTable Fields

Choose fields:

Variables

- Accepted a study place
- All applicants
- All applicants (no netting)
- Applicants expressin...
- Enrolled as present
- Intake
- Selected

Variables

- ▶ Application variables

Drag fields between areas below:

FILTERS	COLUMNS
	Values
ROWS	VALUES
Year (start of studi... ▼	Applicants expre... ▼
Term (start of stud... ▼	All applicants ▼
Higher education i... ▼	Selected ▼
	Accepted a study... ▼

[https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/layouts/15/xlviewer.aspx?id=en-gb/Reports/Haku-%20ja%20valintatiedot%20-%20korkeakoulu%20-%20analyysi\\_EN.xlsb](https://vipunen.fi/en-gb/layouts/15/xlviewer.aspx?id=en-gb/Reports/Haku-%20ja%20valintatiedot%20-%20korkeakoulu%20-%20analyysi_EN.xlsb)



# Example 2, Operational use: Background information determining VET funding

## STRATEGY FUNDING

(a maximum of 4% of the total funding)

## IMPUTED FUNDING

((a minimum of 96% of the total funding)

# 70%

## CORE FUNDING

- student-years

### Creates

- preconditions for the future provision of education in all fields and for all students
- a foreseeable foundation for the provision of education and qualifications

# 20%

## PERFORMANCE-BASED FUNDING

- qualifications and modules

### Guides and encourages to

- target education and qualifications in accordance with competence needs
- intensify study processes
- complete qualifications and modules in accordance with the set objectives

# 10%

## EFFECTIVENESS-BASED FUNDING

- access to employment  
- further studies

### Encourages to

- redirect education to fields where labour force is needed
- ensure that education corresponds to the needs of the working life and is of high quality
- provide readiness for further studies

# Example 3A, Strategic decision-making: Two-year pre-primary education trial

## Previous government programme (2019)

- “An action plan will be implemented to strengthen the quality and equality of early childhood education and care and to raise the participation rate. As part of the action plan ... **a two-year pre-primary education will be piloted ... A research project will be created around the trial to monitor the effectiveness and results of the measures.**”

## Preparation

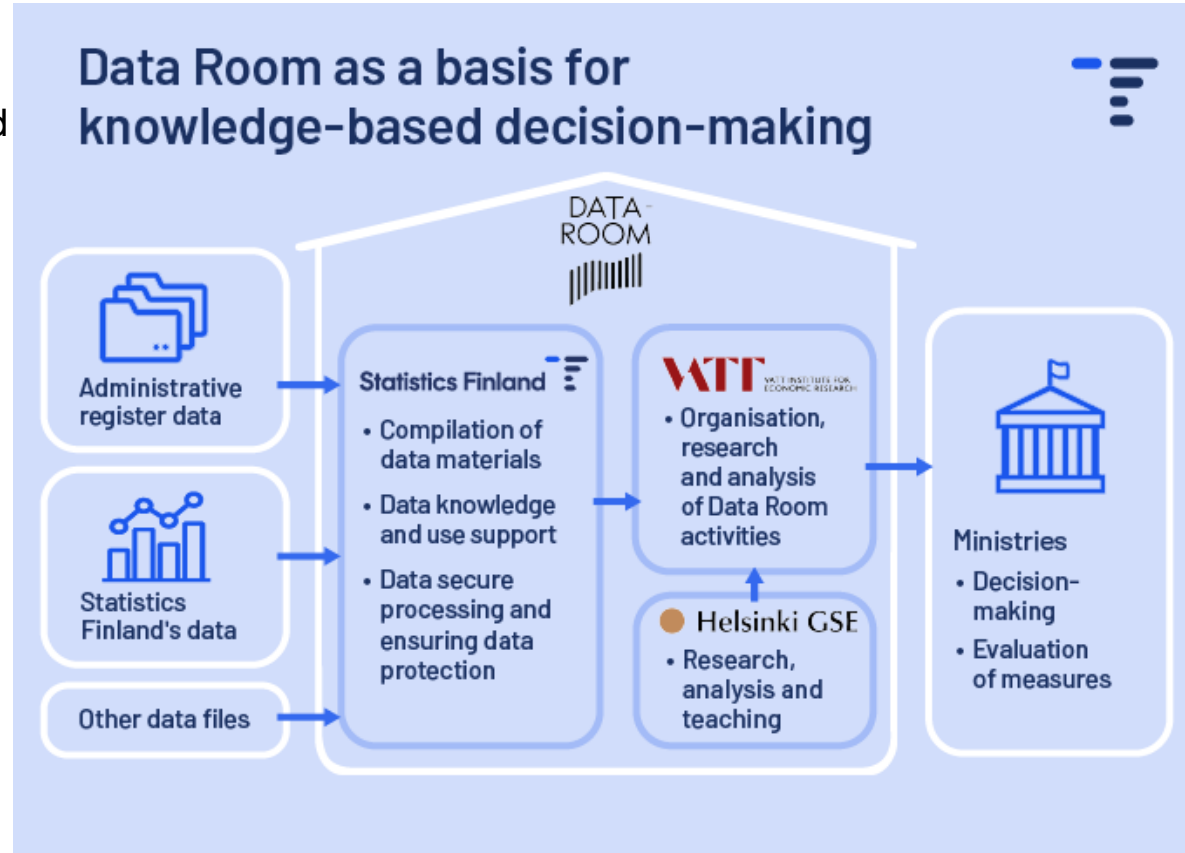
- Extensive research project with researchers from several universities and institutes
- Act on the two-year pre-primary education trial (2020)
- Randomization (target population: children born in 2016 and 2017 in 148 municipalities)

## Implementation

- Two-year pre-primary education in approximately 400 establishments (approx. 15,000 children)
  - Control group: current system in approximately 600 establishments (approx. 20,000 children)
- Follow-up study (interim report 2023, final report 2025)

# Example 3B, Strategic decision-making: Data Room

- Pilot project for the promotion of data driven policy making funded by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- Purpose is to combine the latest individual level registry data to produce **accurate analysis at a fast pace to support decision-making** better and to evaluate the effects of political decisions.
- Different research topics related to economical, environmental and education / labor topics among others. Currently underway is a study on the effects of income limits for student financial aid.



# Example 3C, Strategic decision-making: Policy analyses within the Ministry of Education and Culture

- Day-to-day analyses for policymakers' needs
- Impact assessment of new legislation
- Broader analyses, such as 'Bildung Review' series: an annually published review is to create an overall picture of the extensive administrative branch as a whole  
(<https://okm.fi/en/-/bildung-review-compiles-statistics-and-information-from-educational-and-cultural-administration>)



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