P270 / Education Policy and Multi-Level Governance for Contemporary Democracy: Design, Participation and Implementation

Topic : Policy Design, Formulation & Instruments

Chair : Leif Kalev (Tallinn University)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

This panel examines how policy is designed, discussed, and implemented across levels of governance, from national authorities to municipalities, schools, and community organisations. It brings together three connected areas: the organisation of citizenship education; the role of interest groups and professional organisations in policymaking; and the allocation of school places when demand exceeds capacity. These areas offer a way to examine how public responsibilities are divided, how decisions are made, and how policy arrangements affect institutions, families, and communities.

The panel asks how authority and responsibility are distributed among national, local, and school-level actors. How do these actors coordinate when their roles overlap or their priorities differ? How do national rules interact with local needs and school-level practice? What opportunities do interest groups, professionals, families, and community organisations have to contribute to policy discussions? How do decision-makers weigh competing considerations, explain their choices, and respond when decisions are challenged? What can appeals, court cases, or changes in administrative practice reveal about the relationship between formal rules and their implementation?

The panel considers democracy both as an aim of education and as a feature of the policy process. It focuses on practical questions: who is involved in decisions, how responsibilities are accounted for, and whether rules are applied clearly and consistently. Citizenship education provides a perspective on how schools and other organisations prepare young people for public life. Interest-group participation raises questions about how decision-makers receive and balance policy advice. School-place allocation shows how general rules are applied to particular cases and how families can seek review.

By connecting policy design, participation, and implementation, the panel contributes to research on multi-level governance and contemporary democracy. It will help clarify how education policies move between levels, what supports coordination, and where tensions can arise between national direction and local practice. The discussion also connects education research with wider work in public administration and policy studies on institutional responsibility, stakeholder involvement, administrative decisions, and public accountability.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Policy is designed and implemented by actors working at different levels, including national government, municipalities, schools, interest groups, professional organisations, families, and community bodies. These actors may have distinct responsibilities and priorities, while their roles can also overlap. As policy moves from national rules to local decisions and everyday practice, it may be interpreted and applied in different ways. This panel invites papers examining how multi-level governance shapes education policy and its relationship to contemporary democracy.

We welcome conceptual, empirical, and comparative contributions on the design, coordination, and implementation of education policy. Topics may include:

- The organisation and governance of citizenship education across schools and community settings.
- The division of responsibilities among national authorities, municipalities, schools, and civil society organisations.
- Coordination between levels of government and between public and non-governmental actors.
- The participation and influence of interest groups, professional associations, families, and other stakeholders.
- How policymakers gather, assess, and balance advice and evidence.
- Transparency and accountability in education policy decisions.
- The interpretation of formal rules in local settings, including decisions about school places and other

educational resources.
- The role of administrative procedures, appeals, and court decisions in shaping policy and practice.
- Comparisons of multi-level governance arrangements across countries, regions, or areas of education policy.

Papers may use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. Approaches could include interviews, case studies, policy analysis, comparative research, and the study of administrative or legal documents. We welcome work focused on a particular institution or locality as well as research comparing arrangements across several settings.

The panel is especially interested in contributions that connect policy design with implementation, or examine how responsibilities and decisions are coordinated across governance levels. It will provide a forum to compare research findings and methods, and to discuss how institutions handle differences between general policy goals and local circumstances. We aim to draw lessons about how public authorities and other actors can make education decisions clearly, consistently, and with appropriate opportunities for participation and review.