

The Politics of Knowledge

Why Education Research Does (or Does Not) Influence Education Policy

Frederick M. Hess

The American Enterprise Institute

May 21, 2007

The collected papers from this conference are available online
at www.aei.org/event1455.



EDUCATION **SECTOR**

Independent Analysis, Innovative Ideas

Empricized Ideology Research and School Choice

Andrew J. Rotherham

“The Politics of Knowledge: Why Research Does (or Does Not)
Influence Education Policy

American Enterprise Institute

May 21, 2007

Two Choice Questions

- (1) What range of educational choices should government finance?
- (2) What are the effects stemming from the various choices policymakers can make regarding educational choice?

Three Issues

- Politics
- Research Debates
- Role of the Media

Politics

- Ideological
- Organizational
- Framing and politics matters more than evidence

Research

- From descriptive to inferential
- Big debates, small effects
- Improved the research but coarsened the discourse
- Key challenges: Data availability, peer review, incentives for researchers

Media: The Translators

- Nature of journalism v. social science
- Challenges for journalists:
 1. Time-bound nature of stories
 2. Complicated studies
 3. Contentious advocacy debate, no disinterested observers, confusing cues

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Research has mattered relatively little to the trajectory of the choice debate
- Research can inform discrete aspects of the choice question and secondary decisions that policymakers must make
- More training and support for media
- More attention to research quality and data issues from the research community

The Politics of Knowledge

Why Education Research Does (or Does Not) Influence Education Policy

Frederick M. Hess

The American Enterprise Institute

May 21, 2007

The collected papers from this conference are available online
at www.aei.org/event1455.