



The impact of longitudinal research

The policy impact of *Germany's National Education Panel Study*

The NEPS at glance:

The National Education Panel Survey is based at Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories (LifBi) at the University of Bamberg.

Funding: From 2009 to 2013: the NEPS is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) as part of the Framework Program for the Promotion of Empirical Educational Research

From 2014-present: the NEPS is funded by the BMBF (50%) and the German Federal States (Bavaria: 25%, other states: 25%).

Duration: 2009-present

The National Educational Panel Study (NEPS) is one of the largest longitudinal studies in Europe and has been a fundamental source of data for studying competence development, educational trajectories and its underlying mechanisms.

Germany's National Educational Panel Study

Germany's Federal Ministry of Education and Research, in response to the needs for longitudinal data to answer policy-relevant questions and to provide evidence-based advice to the Ministry, has funded the first phase of NEPS (2009-2013) and remains its major backer since then. NEPS data have been extensively used for measuring and reporting educational achievements in Germany.

National education monitoring

Germany's Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs has promoted NEPS as a part of the comprehensive strategy for national education monitoring. The strategy aims at ensuring that political action on educational issues is data-driven and research-oriented to promote higher educational attainments in Germany (OECD, 2014).

Evaluating and informing educational reforms

In 2011, the **German Research Foundation** established Priority Programme, "Education as a Lifelong Process", to support NEPS-based research from 2012 to 2019. Within the Programme, two projects conducted by the NEPS team has informed policymakers about the impact of federal educational reforms in two Federal States – **Thuringia and Baden-Wuerttemberg**.



The wider impact of *Germany's National Education Panel Study*

The German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina (2016) stresses three key functions served by longitudinal studies:

- they are the most fit to documenting the changes happening in societies over time;
- only surveying the same individual over time social scientists are able to deduce the correct cause-effect relationships among significant aspects of peoples' lives
- longitudinal surveys are an excellent tool for monitoring and forecasting and are hence a fundamental ally in policy-making.

NEPS data are used for monitoring and reporting on the state of German's educational system (see the *Report on Vocational Education and Training (2017)* for a recent example in English language).

Assessing the Effects of Educational Reforms

The NEPS team has conducted two projects assessing and informing policymakers about the effects of federal educational reforms.

The former examines the organizational reform study of the upper Gymnasium level in **Thuringia**.

The latter focuses on the G8 reform study in **Baden-Wuerttemberg** where "the introduction of the eight-year high school stream was considered controversial by politicians and the public, partially because of the lack of empirical data supporting the decision" (Hübner et al., 2017).

Using data from NEPS, the researchers find mixed evidence of the impact of the reform on students' achievements and wellbeing.

Monitoring Education in Germany

NEPS is part of the comprehensive strategy for educational monitoring promoted by Germany's **Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs** (KMK).

- In this context, the Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories, which carries out NEPS has been founded in order to provide relevant longitudinal data.
- NEPS collaborates to write the report "*Education in Germany*" which provides a detailed picture of the conditions of the German educational system every two years (Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories, 2018).



Germany's National Education Panel Study

NEPS

National Educational Panel Study



The National Educational Panel Study (NEPS) is a longitudinal study on education in Germany from 2010 and is one of the largest panel studies in Europe.

NEPS follows more than 60000 participants belonging to six cohorts (and additional 40000 context persons) and aged 0 to 67 years are surveyed on a yearly basis.

The six cohorts include: infants, 4 year-olds enrolled in kindergarten, 10- to 11-year-olds attending fifth grade, 14- to 15-year-olds in ninth grade, first-year undergraduate students in higher education, and 23- to 64-year-old adults (NEPS, 2012).

Collecting data on six cohorts covering all educational phases has made NEPS one of the richest panel studies in Europe.

The scientific community and German policy-makers both strongly agree that longitudinal studies are the only ones to reconstruct how educational attainments unfold over the life course and how they relate to critical transitions in each person's educational path (Wissenschaftsrat, 2013).

NEPS is located **at Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories (LifBi) at the University of Bamberg**. The study is currently managed by Prof. Dr. Cordula Artelt and was previously managed by Prof. Dr. Hans-Günther Roßbach from 2012 to 2017. The Consortium is composed 20 partners from Germany in a multidisciplinary cluster of academic excellence.

Approximately 46 million euros were spent for data collection costs, while the personnel costs amounted to around 14 million euros (Wissenschaftsrat, 2013).

Research references

Davis-Kean, P, Chambers, R, Davidson, L, Kleinert, C, Ren, Q and Tang, S (2017) *Longitudinal studies strategic review*, Economic and Social Research Council. UK: London

Federal Ministry of Education and Research (2017) Report on Vocational Education and Training, Bonn: Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina (2016) The relevance of population-based longitudinal studies for science and social policies, Halle (Saale): s.n.

Hübner, N. et al., 2017. The G8 reform in Baden-Württemberg: competencies, wellbeing and leisure time before and after the reform. *Zeitschrift für Erziehungswissenschaft*, 20(4), pp. 748-771.

Leibniz Institute for Educational Trajectories, 2018. www.lifbi.de.

Blossfeld, H.-P., Maurice, J. von & Schneider, Thorsten. (2011). The National Educational Panel Study: Need, Main Features, and Research Potential. In Blossfeld, H.-P., Roßbach, H.-G. & Maurice, J. von. (2011). *Education as a lifelong process. The German National Educational Panel Study (NEPS)*. Wiesbaden, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, pp-5-17.

Nutley, S, Davies, H and Walter, I (2002) *Evidence based policy and practice: cross sector lessons from the UK*, University of St Andrew's, UK: St Andrew's

OECD, 2014. *Education Policy Outlook – Germany*, s.l.: OECD.

Wissenschaftsrat, T. G. C. o. S. a. H., 2013. *Anlage: Evaluation Report on the National Educational*

EuroCohort is a proposed European longitudinal survey of children and young people's wellbeing

Growing Up in Europe: EuroCohort

EuroCohort will directly benefit children and young people by collecting both objective and subjective wellbeing measures which will be used to ensure that social policies are evidence based. Major themes covered in the survey include: *Inequality, Learning, Digital Life and Lifestyle*.

The survey is currently being developed through the **European Cohort Development Project (ECDP)**, led by the Policy Evaluation and Research Unit at Manchester Metropolitan University in the UK.

Funding: The study is funded under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 7770449.

The aim of EuroCohort is to provide deep, insightful, comparative and longitudinal data on the wellbeing experiences of children and young people across Europe. By doing so, researchers, governments and others might better understand – and take steps to improve – youth's life chances, outlook, happiness and wellbeing.

The Potential Impact of EuroCohort

To understand whether and how EuroCohort might have such impact, researchers from Manchester Metropolitan and University of Bologna (UNIBO) have developed a series of impact case studies. These examine the policy impacts that other longitudinal surveys have delivered.

These impact case studies explore how and in what ways these studies have effected government policies, by asking three important question:

- *How did the survey affect policy?* Did survey analysis directly lead to new or changed policies? Did it contribute to wider discussions on the need for policy change?
- *What type of knowledge or insight did the survey provide? Did the survey provide insight into social problems?* Of what policy interventions worked and did not work? Of how to make policies more effective?
- *Was the policy effective?* Is there any evaluation or other research evidence that the policy was effective and had a positive effect in the ways intended?

