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« Promoting Innovation in English Schools: the role of school governance »

This paper develops a framework for use in the analysis of effects of variation of governance on innovation in schools. The framework is used to evaluate recent policy change in England which has presented 'greater freedom for schools' and local networks' as methods of increasing innovation in schools.

Current debates about the merits of market and state governance have generally concentrated upon the consequences for pupil attainment, inequality and the efficiency of resource allocation. Arguably, the effects of particular types of governance on innovation within the schooling system are more important to the overall effectiveness of schooling over time. We analyse the different models of governance which have been favoured in recent English schooling policies, concentrating upon the incentives to innovate and transfer knowledge.

Policy makers keen to increase rates of innovation in schools will need to take careful account of the complex interactions between policies on competition, school funding and regulation and local representation that are likely to impact on incentives and capacity for innovation. One possible policy response would be to make part of the recurrent grant to schools dedicated to innovation and knowledge transfer. If schools were required to be accountable for how this money was used and the outcomes in terms of innovation, then continuation of this funding could be made dependent on a review of their past achievement.