



★
IALEI

10 of the
world's leading
education institutes from
6 continents – united
in 1 think tank

★

KNOWLEDGE

WORLDLE

EDGE

#06

Knowledge mobilisation

- > *New IALEI study*
- > *Is the move outside the ivory tower too successful?*
- > *Empowerment of the user*

Education
Alliance
Magazine

THE ROAD TO PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

By JULIA O'SULLIVAN
Ph.D., Professor and Dean
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

* The raison d'être of the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes (IALEI) is not only to provide leadership for educational development around the globe and raise the public profile of education, but also to make recommendations to policy makers regarding critical issues that impact education policy and practice. For the same reason **knowledge mobilisation** – that is the translation of knowledge into service for the common good – is important to IALEI, as it is to educational institutions around the world.

The focus on sharing and use of research knowledge is not completely new. There has been some use of the term knowledge mobilisation to reposition the university as a central institution in the 'knowledge-based economy'. As well, knowledge mobilisation is often linked to innovation and economic development, and is used to discuss highly marketable knowledge areas such as biotechnology. Thus, in many fields, expressions such as 'evidence-based practice' have become exceedingly popular.

Professionals, practitioners as well as policy makers in many countries have recognised the importance and value of knowledge creation and mobilisation in education. The use of new knowledge and its uptake in education policy and practice can have a huge impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools, and we also know from research that a high-quality education can have many positive effects on children, families, communities and societies. Therefore, the knowledge-based economy calls for outward-oriented universities, an effective system of local, national and international institutions and infrastructure that supports knowledge creation and mobilisation.

However, there is still room to create more productive partnerships between research, policy and practice. That is why IALEI raised the question of knowledge mobilisation – an extremely important educational issue with a substantive international relevance – at its annual meeting and research conference in Toronto in June 2011. To build effective practices for mobilising research knowledge in education, IALEI's recommendations point to two possible solutions.

First, faculties of education should be proactive and strategic in communicating and disseminating

“The use of new knowledge and its uptake in education policy and practice can have a huge impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools.”

knowledge they produce and advocating the importance and value of research and its application in practice. This will allow them to make a strong case to governments and the broader education community about the importance of research, knowledge creation and mobilisation. This includes not only research funding and greater use of research synthesis, but also more effective organisation of research and targeted outreach that includes more efficient use of websites and other communication tools to promote and mobilise research knowledge.

Second, universities need to create strategic networks, partnerships and alliances with ministries of education, professional organisations and associations, school districts and educational institutions and leaders at home and around the world. This will allow them not only to communicate and disseminate research knowledge more effectively, but also to be at the forefront of its direct application in practice.

In sum, universities and governments need to work together to make a greater effort to advance research knowledge and its uptake in policy and practice in education. Otherwise, the risk is that knowledge mobilisation continues to rest solely on the shoulders of individual researchers. ■



EDUCATION ALLIANCE MAGAZINE

#6

December 2011

EDITORS

Claus Holm (Executive Editor)
Camilla Mehlsen

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dean Lisete Regina Gomes Arelaro
Dean Chris Husbands
Dean JongWook Kim
Dean Rüdiger C. Laugksch
Director Sing Kong Lee
Director Hanne Løngreen
Dean Julia O'Sullivan
Dean Field Rickards
Dean Julie K. Underwood
Dean Shi Zhongying

TRANSLATION AND PROOFREADING

Lorna Coombs
Marie Lauritzen

CONTACT

IALEI Secretariat
Department of Education, Aarhus University
Tuborgvej 164
2400 Copenhagen NV
Denmark

E-mail: ialei@dpu.dk
www.intlalliance.org

DESIGN

Hiske Jessen

COVER

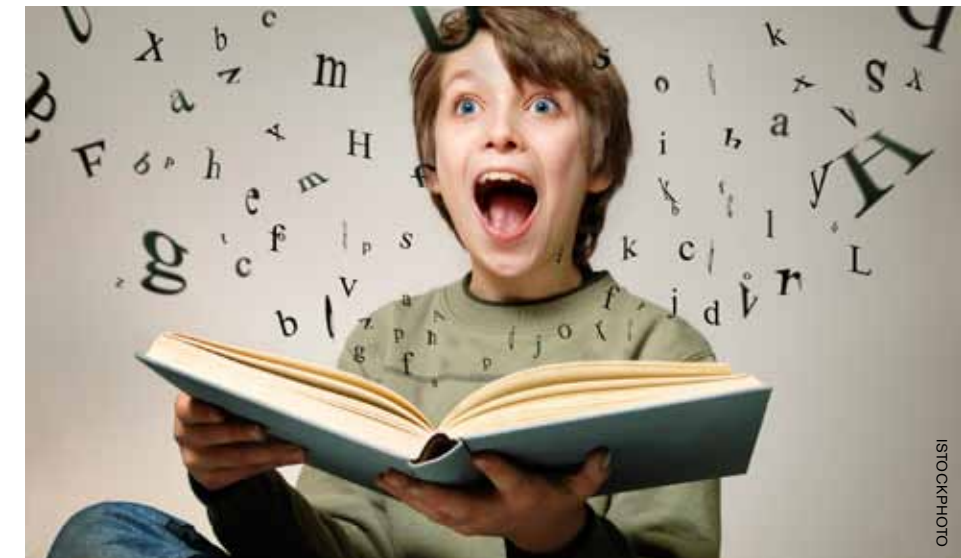
Hiske Jessen

PRINT

P.J. Schmidt A/S



541 006



ISTOCKPHOTO

04 Vox Pop
WHY IS KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION A BURNING ISSUE?

06 New IALEI study
HOW DO WE MOBILISE KNOWLEDGE?

08 Important findings
THE CURRENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION

11 Definition
WHAT IS KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION?

12 Vox Pop
WHAT SUPPORT DOES KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION REQUIRE FROM THE UNIVERSITIES?

14 Relevant research
IS THE MOVE OUTSIDE THE IVORY TOWER TOO SUCCESSFUL?

17 Empowerment of the user
THE USER AND THE UNIVERSITY

22 Q&A
“KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT”

23 Q&A
“THE CULTURE IS MORE READY NOW”

24 Vox Pop
HOW CAN KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION IMPROVE CHILDRENS' ACHIEVEMENTS IN SCHOOLS?

26 Comment
THE GENEROUS UNIVERSITY



Why is knowledge mobilisation a burning issue?

Education Alliance Magazine has asked leading international researchers from the IALEI member universities why knowledge mobilisation in education is crucial today.

TORONTO

Canada

Professor **Ben Levin**
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto

“There is an increasing interest in making good use of research to improve policy and practice. All researchers should welcome this interest, even if it does have some potential dangers associated with it, since the alternative is to base policy and practice on personal opinion and anecdote.”

WISCONSIN-MADISON

USA

Researcher **Sarah Mason**
Faculty of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison

“Knowledge mobilisation is the vehicle for universities to make their core competency – knowledge generation – relevant and actionable in the current technology and information economy.”

SÃO PAULO

Brazil

Professor **Romualdo Portela de Oliveira**
Faculty of Education, University of São Paulo

“First, because education research is under great scrutiny by financing agencies and other areas in the university; second, because it is a new challenge for researchers to consider questions of the practical implementation of research results.”

LONDON

Great Britain

Professor **David Gough**
Institute of Education, University of London

“Education is an extremely important part of all our lives and of society in general. Research can be used to help inform the choices that we make about education. Currently we invest much in education research but do not make good use of this investment. Much of the creative new research is hardly ever read. We need a better balance between investment in primary research and its synthesis and its use.”

BEIJING

China

Dr **Hong Chengwen**
School of Education, Beijing Normal University

“For two reasons: One is that only a fraction of academic research can be mobilised for policy or policy consultation, at least from the perspective of policy makers. The other is that academics complain about the short-sightedness and insensitivity of the policy makers towards research. So the moment that knowledge mobilisation is mentioned, nearly everyone has an opinion about the issue.”

SEOUL

South Korea

Professor **Lynn Ilon**
Department of Education, Seoul National University

“New theories of knowledge show us how collective, collaborative knowledge is the central driver of society progress and innovation. Knowledge is the very source of growth, innovation and change. It is a catalyst. By releasing it, combining it with other sources and building it into networks of knowledge and innovation, knowledge becomes the mobiliser of change – a dynamic rather than a static product.”



CAPE TOWN

South Africa

Professor **Johan Müller** & Dr **Ursula Hoadley**
School of Education, University of Cape Town

“Knowledge mobilisation is a burning issue for two reasons. First, there is a demand for research to become more visible to policy makers, and thus a need to demonstrate its reliability and its value to address worldly problems. Second, policy makers increasingly recognise the need for evidence-based decision making. Knowledge mobilisation is thus a mutually educative process.”

MELBOURNE

Australia

Professor **John Polesel**
Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Melbourne University

“The term knowledge mobilisation is rarely used in Australia. Typically, knowledge transfer, knowledge exchange, knowledge utilisation and engagement are the terms used to describe the utilisation of knowledge outside the bounds of teaching and research. Wallis (2006) provides a useful definition framed around the concept of engagement as ‘knowledge generation, use, application and exploitation outside academic environments’. Overall, the literature on knowledge mobilisation argues strongly for greater engagement with local learning communities, for the need for academics to be involved

in educational change and innovation, and for greater collaboration between nations in global industry networks. This kind of collaboration is needed in order to strengthen the research policy nexus and improve educational policy making and practice across the world.”

SINGAPORE

Singapore

Dr **Teh Laik Woon**
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University

“In a globalised knowledge economy, where universities are expected to play multiple roles and practitioners are required to respond ever faster to the changing environment, the demand for universities to facilitate the production, sharing and application of knowledge becomes stronger and stronger. This makes knowledge mobilisation a burning issue.”

COPENHAGEN

Denmark

Executive Director **Claus Holm**
Department of Education, Aarhus University

“In Denmark, knowledge mobilisation is closely related to competitiveness. Historically speaking, this is a new type of nation state that mobilises the population and the private sector to compete in the global marketplace by means of research and education.”



POLIFOTO

HOW DO WE MOBILISE KNOWLEDGE IN EDUCATION?

How do we ensure that **education research and knowledge** make it to practice so that they can **raise the educational level in the classroom?**

* That was a key question when researchers, politicians and practitioners met at the annual conference of the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes (IALEI) to discuss 'Knowledge Mobilisation in Education Research'. The conference was held at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto in June 2011.

Research teams from the ten IALEI partner universities have contributed to the study by analysing the state of affairs in their particular country. The chair of the IALEI research team, Professor Ben Levin, has been in charge of the comparative synthesis report. Based on the IALEI study, the research team will write a book on knowledge mobilisation, intended for publication in late 2012 by The Policy Press.

IALEI has produced a set of recommendations based on the study's findings – please see page 7.

In this issue of the *Education Alliance Magazine* we would like to share why we believe knowledge mobilisation can improve education around the world – and why universities play a key role in this process. You will meet researchers from various parts of the world: Canada, the USA, Brazil, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Denmark, China, Singapore, South Korea and Australia. You will also meet professionals with expert knowledge. ■

Read more about the study at:

www.intlalliance.org

IALEI Recommendations

The term 'knowledge mobilisation' is just one of a number of terms we use to describe the processes through which research influences policy and practice. Universities play a vital role in the process of knowledge production and use in education in the global knowledge society.

Universities are key institutions which governments around the world can tap for knowledge and evidence to support policy initiatives, as they are typically the largest producers of research in education. They are actively involved in many ways in connecting research to the wider education community.

Knowledge mobilisation is therefore very much needed as a strategic effort, but the process of research knowledge mobilisation is complex. It involves many aspects of the ways universities operate, the structure of governments, school systems, and the various mediating factors and organisations that act in and between researchers and schools.

The International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes (IALEI) makes the following **three** recommendations based on the IALEI study 2011 on knowledge mobilisation:

01

Strive towards greater use of validated research findings in building policy and practice.

IALEI stresses the importance of universities taking a public and proactive stance on the importance and value of research in education and on the role of education in the global knowledge society. To benefit from research and education requires stronger efforts from governments, the research and education sector and the broader community. And it involves not only advocacy for research funding, but also the greater use of validated research findings in education policy and educational practices. To achieve this impact, there is a need of a closer working partnership between the universities and policy makers in educational agencies.

02

Build effective partnerships through open dialogue.

IALEI recommends that universities, individually and collectively, should build ongoing partnerships with international organisations, government bodies and ministries of education, teacher organisations, school districts, education leaders and others in order to increase the connections to meaningful research and its thoughtful application to policy and practice. Through these relationships, research mobilisation will become a more common and expected part of the work of researchers and of universities, as organisations will be better received by the broader education community. Open dialogue with many partners around differing forms of knowledge should be developed to ensure that the work of universities is widely and deeply understood so that it can be used as effectively as possible.

03

Make knowledge mobilisation a strategic target for university leaders.

IALEI recommends that universities' efforts for sharing knowledge become a strategic effort, rather than individual steps. This will require leadership that can transform universities with regard to incentive systems, organisation of research teams and research outreach, greater use of research syntheses, effective use of websites to mobilise research knowledge, and support and infrastructure for research mobilisation. It will also require universities to re-examine the ways in which their graduate and professional development programmes, as well as initial teacher education, build lasting connections between research, policy and practice, so that graduates understand how to create the necessary structures and practices to this end, and that graduates act effectively as bridges between research and practice. ■

THE CURRENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION IN EDUCATION

There is no doubt that **education research contributes to the development of the knowledge society**, but how exactly? A new study from IALEI sets the focus on what universities can do to make education research more influential and how to overcome the current challenges. This article by Professor BEN LEVIN and Ph.D. candidate JIE QI synthesises some of the important findings of the study.

By BEN LEVIN & JIE QI

* In fields such as health, agriculture, transportation and technology, advanced research has progressively and systematically contributed to the development of our economy and society and is, indeed, taken for granted as a key part of these fields.

Although it is largely accepted that education research has the potential to contribute to educational policy and practice in a profound way, knowledge mobilisation in the field of education is still a relatively new area. In spite of the many research efforts taken by people in the field, we are at the early stages of knowing about how best to identify, target and affect the many factors that are key for effective and efficient research use.

Of course, the right options for research mobilisation work will vary from country to country and even between institutions within a country. However, if we want education research truly to contribute to the improvement of national education systems, and ultimately to be integrated into the overall knowledge economy, then it is key to challenge conventional ways of thinking regarding appropriate research mobilisation channels for various purposes.

New IALEI study

Knowledge mobilisation is the annual research theme of the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes (IALEI). The Alliance has brought together a group of acknowledged researchers to study the current state of knowledge mobilisation in education research. The study is based on national reports by the ten IALEI member countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Korea, Singapore, South Africa and the USA.

The ten participating countries vary greatly in terms of the larger policy context and funding channels for research, all of which influence the national enterprise of research and its mobilisation. The diverse features of the political and economic contexts in those countries mean that there is not one overall conclusion to the study. However, there is an overarching question for discussion of this year's research theme: How can we make education research more influential? This question does not call for a simple answer or a quick-fix solution, but it is extremely important to seek answers. Knowledge mobilisation has never been more relevant to the world of education than today and it also has a great impact on the nature of research.

Education has been universally considered as a priority area for capacity building and a foundational field for developing effective and integrated economies around the world. Yet there continues to be concerns about the degree to which education research contributes to education policy and practice. Many of the national reports (e.g. UK, USA, Canada, South Africa, Denmark) point out the criticisms made of education research over the past few decades.

The impact of funding

One issue that emerges from the national reports is the degree to which research in universities should be



“How can we make education research more influential? This question does not call for a simple answer or a quick-fix solution, but it is extremely important to seek answers.”

Ben Levin & Jie Qi

focused on what might be seen as ‘practical’ problems or issues in schools and school systems. Several reports noted the fears of researchers that funding is driving research in narrow directions, to the detriment of the long-term interests of advancing knowledge. Concern about this issue is significant in the US report.

All reports pay attention to the funding of research, but only in a few countries was it possible to quantify expenditures on education research, either generally or in universities. This is an area calling out for further empirical work. What can be said, consistent with earlier evidence from the OECD, is that education research funding remains very small as a share of total education spending. It appears unlikely that research reaches anywhere near 1% of expenditure on schooling in any of the ten countries.

Although funding is an important element in research, we need to be cautious about any assumption that more funding necessarily leads to better research performance. There is very little research concerning the different ways in which research funding programmes are monitored and evaluated, and hardly any evidence of the connection between funding and research capacity. In the article ‘Funding, resource allocation, and performance in higher education systems’ (2003) Liefner compared six well-acknowledged universities in four countries and found that the connection between these two aspects is actually very weak.

In most countries, the government is the largest provider of research funding. For example, in Korea the government funds 28% of all research studies in

education, but provides 66% of the research funding. However, governments do not necessarily fund education research directly. In most countries (Canada, USA, Australia, South Africa, United Kingdom) governments operate some kind of granting council to support research with public funds. In other cases (USA, Korea, Singapore), governments fund research institutes of various kinds, which in turn may contract with universities to conduct research. In a few countries, other organisations are also important funders of research. In the USA, philanthropic foundations play that role, while in South Africa, and presumably in much of the developing world, most of the research is undertaken with external donor funding.

While acknowledging the determining impact of policy priorities on the direction of research, education researchers have to be careful about being too focused on research issues defined only by policy-making and public funding agendas. There is a need for pure or 'blue sky' research. On the other hand, as stated in the Canadian report, there is often public scepticism about public spending on research. In education, research programmes are under pressure to demonstrate value for money. It is relatively easy for the public to criticise research results as vacuous or obvious, as has been the case in the USA and the United Kingdom. When research results are clearly relevant to practice, it enhances the public image of research and therefore contributes to support for funding all kinds of research.

The rise of new technologies

A fundamental change in the research world has been the astonishing impact of new information technologies on the ways that people find and share information, including research information. The US report noted the increasing role of the internet as a vehicle for sharing research. Innovations in technology have changed the patterns of communication as well as the quality and quantity of research dissemination. Online resources and universal access to the internet have contributed to the growth of traditional scholarly education research outlets, such as increasing the number of peer-reviewed and specialised journals, enabling distribution of conference papers, increasing access to digital libraries, and encouraging a proliferation of small publishers. Innovations have also led to an explosion of online dissemination tools and networks: online publishers, digital libraries, blogs, websites, professional networks, specialised information clearinghouses, newsletters, and online versions of traditional print media such as newspapers and magazines.

However, this new capacity is not necessarily well used. Of course all institutions have websites, and all make attempts to share findings from research on those sites. However, that remains a limited view of what is possible. Indeed, on many websites of universities, including some of those in this network, it is very difficult to find out what research is being done, let alone what its implications might be for policy or practice. Growing knowledge about the importance of interpersonal connections in creating research take-up is not generally reflected in the work of universities, which still tend to value products such as reports. Social media, becoming a major means of dissemination of ideas in the broader

society, are still infrequently used as mechanisms to share university research.

The Knowledge Mobilisation research team at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto conducted a study specifically around the strategies used by the faculties of education in large research universities and identified those commonly used, including: traditional academic knowledge dissemination channels (particularly publications and conferences); establishing connections between researchers and potential users; and providing institutional supports and incentives. In general this study found that most universities are staying with traditional forms of academic dissemination, with efforts to reach out to different audiences or in different ways remaining the exception rather than the rule.

The country papers from Australia and South Africa also looked at mobilisation practices on institutional websites and found a similar low level of effort reflected. Two of the IALEI members – London and Melbourne – were found to have more extensive approaches to sharing research, including building them into university reward systems. Systems such as those that are in place in the natural sciences or engineering to support commercialisation of research are notably absent in education, although the US paper speaks about extensive commercialisation of education research in that country.

Research mobilisation capacity

The examples provided by the national reports show that the process of strengthening a nation's capacity in knowledge mobilisation has challenges, in part because there is no agreed definition in the education sector about what is meant by 'research mobilisation capacity'. In other words, to seek ways to strengthen something that itself is hard to define is an extremely complex undertaking. The capacity to make effective use of research is embedded in different levels of the national education system, including individual, institutional and national levels, and involves research producers, research consumers and the various intermediaries that link them.

Based on the country papers, strong research mobilisation capacity seems to require strong leadership, appropriate infrastructure, sufficient funding, effective communication facilities, and the ability to network among researchers, policy makers and other research users.

One of the major difficulties for universities is to have a clear consensus about what should be counted as research dissemination efforts and how to match individual efforts with institutional supports and commitments at the faculty and the university levels. This is an area in which IALEI might produce some leading work. ■

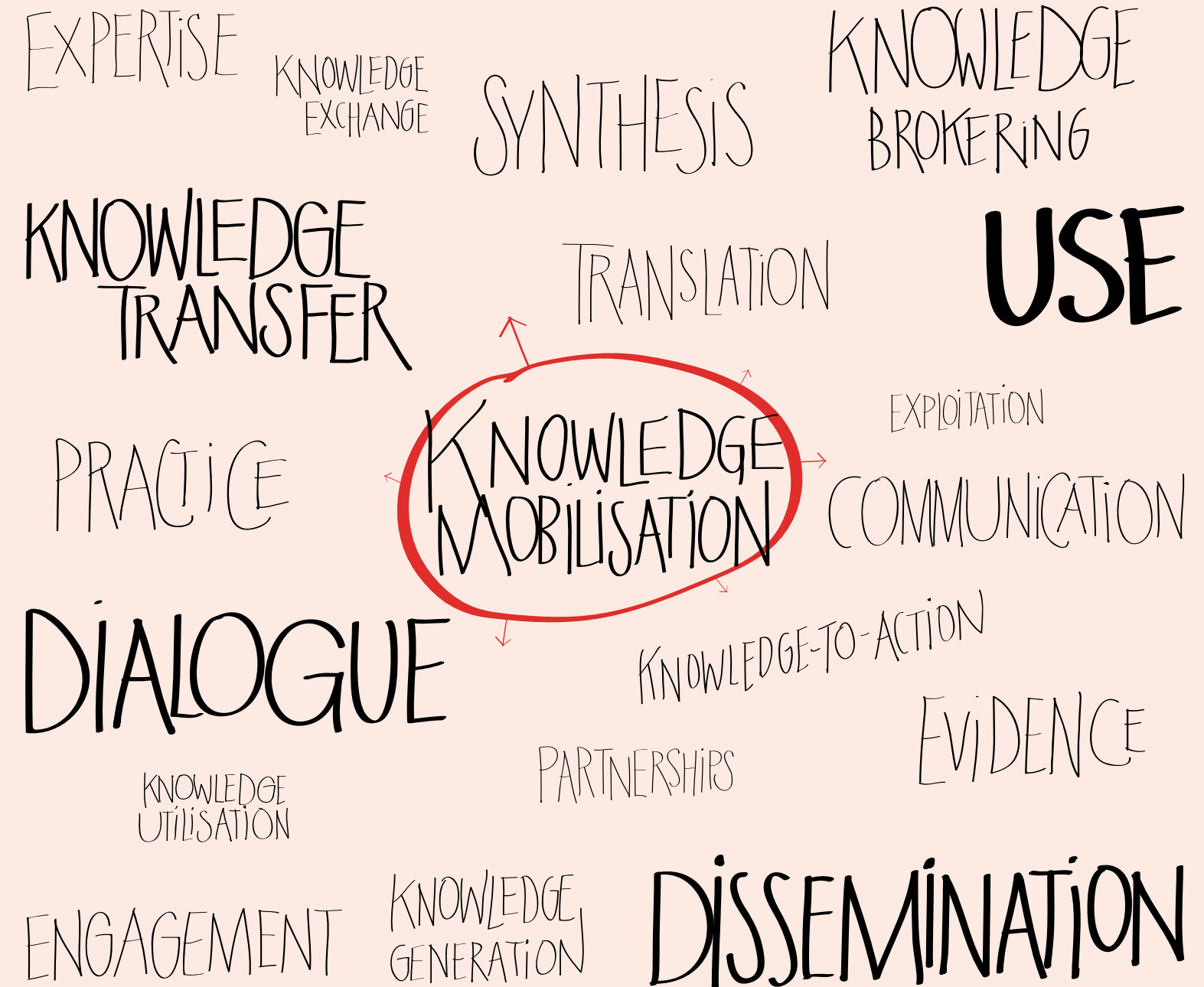
BEN LEVIN
Professor of Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto.

JIE QI
Graduate Assistant, Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto.

What is knowledge mobilisation?



What comes into your mind when you hear the term **'knowledge mobilisation'**? What does it mean? One problem in the field of knowledge and research use is the lack of agreement on basic terms and ideas. As in many other areas of social science, a wide variety of terms and approaches are in use. There are numerous definitions that vary across sectors and disciplines. The health sector often uses the term 'knowledge translation', whereas the business sector uses 'knowledge management', and so on. Regardless of the term, the underlying spirit is the same: *trying to make research matter more in policy and practice for organisational and system improvement.* Here are some of the words related to the term. ↴



SOURCE: WWW.OISE.UTORONTO.CA/RSP/E/KM_PRODUCTS/TERMINOLOGY/INDEX.HTML

What support does knowledge mobilisation require from the universities?



Education Alliance Magazine has asked the IALEI research team to answer that question.



Executive Director **Claus Holm**
Department of Education, Aarhus University

“Knowledge mobilisation obviously calls for ease of access to the knowledge that resides in the universities, but in fact much more than newsletters are required. Knowledge mobilisation calls for far more commitment from the universities. In Denmark, we have two major issues: to make education much more market oriented by changing the focus from academic insight to competence development, and to channel research subsidies to specific projects through calls for proposals rather than as free subsidies to the universities. Taken together, this indicates that knowledge mobilisation is a matter of public interest in mobilising a different and more applicable knowledge production than previously.”

Professor **Johan Müller & Dr Ursula Hoadley**
School of Education, University of Cape Town

“Where knowledge mobilisation works well, for example in medical research systems, we typically find a translation unit which recontextualises the research findings for user audiences. Supporting the establishment of such structures is one way in which universities can support knowledge mobilisation efforts.”

Professor **Lynn Ilon**
Department of Education, Seoul National University

“In an industrial age, universities were a prime source of expert knowledge where researchers and experts formed knowledge. In a knowledge age, universities are centres of learning expertise more than centres of static facts, and researchers must become the primary learners and manage the learning systems that flow around them. Universities need to begin to think of themselves as network entities rather than physical entities. What types of network structures best support knowledge mobilisation? What combination of virtual, social and physical infrastructure is needed to support this? This is the central question for universities to answer in support of knowledge mobilisation.”

Researcher **Sarah Mason**
Faculty of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison

“In education research, knowledge should be produced and consumed in partnership or in networks with practitioners and educators at all levels. I believe that knowledge mobilisation is the entire process of knowledge production and consumption – research, dissemination and use. If knowledge mobilisation is accomplished in partnership, with attention given to the needs of local educational contexts (universities and school systems alike), it is much more likely to be successfully competitive, mutually beneficial, relevant, and consumable to university researchers, educators, policy makers and the public.

The university community will need to consider how a stronger emphasis on research-related products, services and knowledge transfer will affect the institutions’ knowledge development imperative, as well as their service and outreach missions. Education researchers will need to decide how dependent they are on federal funding, and if they are willing to diversify and work collaboratively with researchers from other disciplines, with intermediaries, and with local practitioners. Should university researchers accept these challenges, an optimal balance between traditional academia and the new federalism could fundamentally change the research process and the relationships between universities, government and the public.”

Dr **Teh Laik Woon**
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University

“Universities no longer have a monopoly over knowledge production. At the same time, universities must be closely and directly involved in knowledge sharing and knowledge application. We need to work together with other stakeholders (including policy makers and practitioners) to determine the knowledge worth producing, and then to produce, share and apply this knowledge in close collaboration. In the field of education, much of the relevant knowledge is produced, shared and applied through actual doing, i.e. when researchers and practitioners are directly involved in the process of learning and teaching in classrooms.”



ISTOCKPHOTO

Professor **David Gough**
Institute of Education, University of London

“We require a more strategic approach to research in education and ways to include student, parent and teacher voices (perspectives) in the setting of research agendas in education. It is the people who are making decisions in education who need to be more closely involved in research agenda setting.”

Professor **Ben Levin**
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto

“Knowledge mobilisation is about helping people understand the subject, not impressing them with the importance of the university or the researcher. Universities should recognise that the impact of research depends largely on interpersonal connections and persistence. Much effort to share research knowledge through the internet is wasted because it is passive, depending on people coming to the work instead of taking the work to interested others.

Knowledge mobilisation, like any other activity, takes time, energy and organisation, and universities need to support this work through alternative forms of communication, working with the media, working with third parties to share research findings, supporting plain language writing, and so on.

If graduate students were trained explicitly in how to act as knowledge brokers, they could make a huge contribution.”

Professor **John Polesel**
Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Melbourne University

“There is a clear need for effective knowledge management in the structures, activities and processes used in universities. The need for better management of knowledge mobilisation has been reflected in the findings of various international studies over time, all of which argue the need for more effective linkages, processes and ‘linkage agents’ between researchers and policy actors. Becheikh et al. (2010) focus specifically on the need for ‘linkage agents’ or brokers who can play a role in facilitating co-operation between researchers and the users of research. They go on to propose a framework for considering the role of these intermediary actors, which matches the specific actors (researchers and users of research) and which can identify and link specific kinds of knowledge with specific policy and practice contexts.”

Dr **Hong Chengwen**
School of Education, Beijing Normal University

“Policy makers should spend more time and attention on understanding the research findings. Communication between the two groups of people must be improved and organised so a genuine dialogue can take place.”

Professor **Romualdo Portela de Oliveira**
Faculty of Education, University of São Paulo

“A more aggressive process of publication of results, not only to academic journals, but to the public in general and to policy makers.”

The move towards relevance and practice orientation may go too far.

So says Professor and Head of the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), DIRK VAN DAMME. The tale of economic researchers who lost their reputation after the financial crisis may be cautionary for education researchers.

IS THE MOVE OUTSIDE THE IVORY TOWER TOO SUCCESSFUL?

By TORBEN CLAUSEN

* The financial crisis dealt a blow to many venerable institutions of modern society. Not only long-established banks and financial gurus suffered a harsh fate in the public esteem. Economic researchers have been blamed for not seeing the gathering clouds before the financial storm erupted over all of our heads.

As times were good, economic researchers merely went along with financial engineers on Wall Street, as they developed still more complicated financial products, and “confident in the theoretical underpinnings of their [the financial engineers’] inventions, they reassured any doubters that all this activity was not just making bankers rich. It was making the financial system safer and the economy healthier. That is why many people view the

“There has been a very strong reaction against the ivory tower ... My fear is that this reaction went too far.”

Dirk Van Damme

financial crisis that began in 2007 as a devastating blow to the credibility not only of banks but also of the entire academic discipline of financial economics,” as *The Economist* summed up the position in its 16 July 2009 issue.

Should this story be a cautionary tale for education



researchers as well? Yes, according to the Head of the OECD's Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), Professor Dirk Van Damme.

Great expectations

Education research has been working hard to become more relevant to politicians and more oriented towards practice. This move out of the ‘ivory tower’ has been successful, according to Dirk Van Damme.

“I think there was an ‘ivory tower’ situation a few decades ago. There has been a very strong reaction against that both from the education research community, from governments and from sponsors of education research to have more relevant research. My fear is that this reaction went too far. The problem no longer is the ivory tower.”

Van Damme fears that – in moving too close to the worlds of policy and practice – blindness may strike

education research in much the same way that financial economists may have been blinded by the success of Wall Street.

“This is a risk for social science in general when it tries to be relevant. The main problem is not that economists are subservient to the dominant system. Rather social science in general has a tendency to stay within the dominant paradigm of the present situation.”

When this is the case, research can fall prey to the conventional wisdom of the present day institutions, whether it is ministries and interest groups in the political system or the institutions of practice, e.g. the schools. The move to engage with the world of practice does not have to lead to subservience to any current administration. Van Damme sees the same danger with researchers who take the opposite view and spend a lot of energy on attacking a perceived, so-called ‘neoliberal’ consensus

✘ Economic researchers have been blamed for not forecasting the financial storm because they were blinded by the success of Wall Street. Dirk Van Damme fears that – in moving too close to the worlds of policy and practice – blindness may also strike education researchers.

>

“We need much more research. The education system is not knowledge intensive enough”

Dirk Van Damme

in education policy which to his mind does not exist. All are manifestations of the same basic tendency: to become relevant, not in its own right as research, but instrumental to other purposes.

“These thoughts come across my mind often when I browse the education literature. There is a tendency among schools and representatives of schools to state that most of the research produced is not helpful to practitioners. This may be true, but the challenge is not just to produce practical, useable research. We need much more research. It’s simply a basic quantity problem. I am afraid of using the little opportunities we have to focus on the practical needs of practitioners or the immediate needs of policy makers.”

In other words, there are competing demands on education research, and right now the most important task for education research is to have more and better research that can match other large welfare sectors such as health and social policy.

“I am not at all against the fact that policy makers or practitioners are expressing their needs in terms of knowledge and research. That is valid and important. But they often have exaggerated expectations of the possibilities of research to meet their demands.”

Add to this that the relationship between research and practice is not so benign all the time.

Stepping outside the consensus

Dirk Van Damme tells the story of one of the most influential sociologists of education in the Netherlands, Jaap Dronkers. In his research, he came to the conclusion that mixing native children and migrant children in classes in many cases had a negative impact on the quality of the learning experience for both groups. In a rather polarised political climate, this finding has made proponents of educational reform from a progressive pedagogical world view very uneasy.

“In the past, he was seen as belonging more to the left. He worked on equality in education, and he has published a lot of good research. I don’t know if he has himself become a conservative in his thinking, but his research is excellent regardless of his opinions. He is not giving policy advice. He is not trying to make it relevant. He is just telling us what his research has shown. Policy makers and practitioners can take up the research in developing their own answers, but the answers do not automatically follow from the research itself.”

Van Damme also tells of work in the Netherlands by a committee that was set up by the Ministry of Education. The premise was a ‘blunt statement’ from the Ministry: that most education research is not useful. The commit-

tee was tasked with coming up with a development plan for education research in the country.

The Ministry’s intention was not to dictate the outcome of the research, but there is a risk that this is where you might end up when making a research plan based on this political premise, according to Van Damme. In the end the committee came up with a very valuable report, proposing to develop a development plan for education research, based on dialogue and interaction.

Coming of age

Education research should not head back to the ‘ivory tower’. Relevance in itself is not a bad thing. But the way forward for both research and practice is for research to focus on its own conceptual and methodological core.

“We need much more research. The education system is not knowledge intensive enough. In a reform perspective, we have to make the education system more knowledge intensive. Teachers should become intensive knowledge users, schools should become knowledge centres and learning organisations. We can only do that by producing much more valid research.”

This calls for better knowledge management and knowledge systems in the education sector in order to integrate knowledge from both research and other sources. And education research is well on the way.

“The education researchers of today who have been trained in research methodologies are much better than the researchers of my generation. The quality of research is rising, and not only the quantitative research. So education research has the capacity to become a really mature sector within social sciences. The overall trend is positive, but there are still many needs to meet if you compare education with the health system, where you have an enormous amount of research. We are not anywhere near to talking of a learning science, comparable to, for example, the life sciences,” says Dirk Van Damme. ■

DIRK VAN DAMME

Head of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) at the OECD in Paris, he holds a Ph.D. degree in Educational Sciences and has been Professor of Educational Sciences at Ghent University since 1995. He has been professionally involved in educational policy development for many years, most recently as director of the cabinet of Mr Frank Vandenbroucke, Flemish Minister of Education from 2004 to 2008.

At the annual IALEI conference at OISE, University of Toronto, Dirk Van Damme chaired the World Bank and OECD seminar ‘The Role of Knowledge Mobilisation for Raising the Quality of Education around the World’, along with Elizabeth King, Director of Education at the World Bank.

THE USER & THE UNIVERSITY



Inside the walls of the universities the users are coming into play in a way we have never seen before. **There are many benefits if researchers engage with students**, teachers and other knowledge users. Education Alliance Magazine has asked leading researchers why knowledge mobilisation is about engagement.

By CAMILLA MEHLSSEN

* People power has grown in the last decade – or rather, the power of the user. In 2006, ‘you’ – the user – overtook billionaires and presidents and topped the American *Time Magazine’s* annual list of the most influential people and the Person of the Year award. An editorial from *Time Magazine* explains why the power of the user is rising:

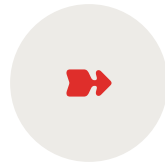
“It’s a story about community and collaboration on a

scale never seen before. It’s about the cosmic compendium of knowledge Wikipedia and the million-channel people’s network YouTube and the online metropolis MySpace. It’s about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes.”

Time Magazine’s election echoes a shift, not just in the technological development from one-way communication to social media but also in business and society.

The user is not just some stupid guy or girl who buys a

>



product or votes every now and then. The user has a voice and it may be a very good idea to listen to it.

The user also plays a greater role in research. Inside the walls of universities the users are coming into play in a way we have never seen before.

Empowerment of the user

There are several tendencies leading towards more user-orientated research. One strong tendency is that we see a 'democratisation of knowledge' and an empowerment of the user these days. Universities no longer have a monopoly on knowledge, partly because the internet has made it possible for everybody with an internet connection to obtain new knowledge.

According to a leading expert in knowledge mobilisation, Professor Sandra Nutley from the University of Edinburgh, the patient is a good example of this trend.

"In the medical world we have seen an empowerment of the patient. Today the patient looks up information on Google and other websites and discusses symptoms with the doctor in new ways," said Professor Sandra Nutley at the conference 'Mobilising Knowledge in Education Research' held by the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes (IALEI) at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto in June 2011.

A research team from the ten IALEI member countries was gathered to share and discuss their findings from a new study on knowledge mobilisation with representatives from the OECD and the World Bank as well as other researchers and practitioners.

At the conference one message came through again and again: universities need to engage more with their users – who may very well become knowledge producers. As stated in the report *Educational Knowledge Mobilisation and Utilisation in Singapore* by the IALEI researchers from the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore:

More recently, there is a recognition that knowledge users, and not just researchers, can and should play an important role in knowledge production and shaping innovation. >

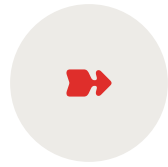
"We always think of the students as passive but they are not at all. If the students engage, they jump."

Professor **Wing On Lee**

✘ **STUDY FRIENDSHIP.** Users can set the research agenda. In a British review researchers asked pupils and teachers what to study – and they chose 'relationships'. The researchers may not have chosen this topic, but 'how to make and keep friends' is a crucial issue for children.

ISTOCKPHOTO





Everyone can potentially benefit from research and be a user of research knowledge – as a teacher, journalist, counsellor, politician, school leader, academic, student, doctor, and so on.

“Knowledge should not be held by a few privileged members and groups in society. Anyone can be a user of research,” says Professor David Gough. He is Director of the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre (EPPI-Centre) at the Institute of Education, University of London. Professor Gough and his colleagues study user driven research production and research use, and he argues in favour of a stronger connection between research and the use of research.

“We require a more strategic approach to research in education and ways to include student, parent and teacher voices in the setting of research agendas in education. It is the people who are making decisions in education who need to be more closely involved in research agenda setting,” he says.

“Many people aim to improve communication of research but this is only a necessary not sufficient condition. We also need to ensure that the research is fit for purpose. Hence the need for user perspectives in driving research agendas.”

Professor Gough tells an example of how pupils and teachers at Hatch End High School in the UK have set the research agenda for a review conducted by researchers attached to the EPPI-Centre. The researchers asked the pupils and teachers what they wanted to know – and they chose ‘relationships’ as the topic for the review. The pupils and teachers wanted to know what schools can do to improve young people’s relationships with each other, with teachers and with their families. So the research team looked in more detail at school programmes that encourage conflict resolution and peer mediation. The research group may not have chosen this topic themselves, but ‘how to make and keep friends’ is a crucial issue for children. It is also a key question for schools, policy makers and pressure groups since many school programmes have relationships at their core.

From product to service

At the conference ‘Mobilising Knowledge in Education Research’, several of the IALEI researchers highlighted the importance of engaging with one of the universities’ key users – the students – in education research. One of them was Professor Wing On Lee from the National Institute for Education in Singapore: “We always think of the students as passive but they are not at all. If the students engage, they jump,” he said.

“The more we do school reforms, the more we find out that knowledge can take place in the classroom. Students and teachers can produce knowledge and not just researchers. Knowledge mobilisation is not top-down. It is about engagement,” Professor Lee said.

The university of previous centuries was indeed top-down and it did not have to care much about how research knowledge was used outside the walls of the university. That has changed dramatically.

According to Professor Sandra Nutley, the use of research is becoming a more important subject for universities. She sees an overall shift in focus from production to *use* – from how research is produced to how research is used. But, according to Professor Nutley, universities are relatively new to this path. There is still a long way to go to become a service university.

“If we stick with the idea that the university has a role of serving society – and not just knowledge for knowledge’s sake – we need to think about ways of operating. At the moment we very much have a model in many countries where we think of research as a product. We produce research. We may involve people in defining our research priorities, etc. but often our main mobilisation activities are – if they occur at all – bolted on at the end. That does not seem to be the best way to have an influence if you want to serve society,” Sandra Nutley says.

“If you try to commission research influence and provide a service that identifies what people need to know and how to help them to apply it, you would work in different ways than most universities do today. Co-production and engagement would not just be an option. It

“In the medical world we have seen an empowerment of the patient. Today the patient looks up information on Google and other websites and discusses symptoms with the doctor in new ways.”

Professor Sandra Nutley

would be inevitable for all researchers,” she says.

Sandra Nutley explains that the whole idea of research being used involves some elements of co-production because of the translation process.

“For universities we will need to think about how you measure productivity. If you take the idea of research being used seriously, you will no longer measure productivity in terms of the number of publications – and counting the university’s products. You will have to think about the nature of the university as a service and the features of a good service,” she says.

According to Sandra Nutley, we need to move from the idea of ‘better packaging’ and ‘better wrapping’ of research to something much more interactive.

“Knowledge mobilisation is a process where context, interaction and ongoing dialogue are important. We

need to work with others to translate research knowledge. Research never speaks for itself. Research has to be translated into the context in which it might be useful. In that process, knowledge becomes refined and contextualised,” she says.

Growing demand for knowledge

Professor Ben Levin from the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto shares Sandra Nutley’s opinion that ‘research never speaks for itself’.

“Just doing research is insufficient. Of course we have to do the research to have any knowledge to be mobilised, but knowledge mobilisation is increasingly becoming a major part of the role of the universities. If we do not have a world in which it is easy for people to find out what kind of research is going on in the universities – and today that is not the case – then we do not get the full value of the research,” Levin says.

“Knowledge should not be held by a few privileged members and groups in society. Anyone can be a user of research.”

Professor David Gough

Professor Levin is author of the book *How to Change 5000 Schools* and leader of the 2011 IALEI research team on mobilising knowledge in education research. According to Ben Levin, there is a growing demand from society for research-based knowledge on education.

“The need for knowledge mobilisation is greater because we have more knowledge. We know more from education research than we did 20 years ago so this research has more potential to make a difference. For example, we know a lot more about how to teach children to read than we used to. We want to make sure that the teachers know that, so they can use effective reading practices. We know a lot more about how to motivate and engage students and how important that is. That is why knowledge mobilisation is important,” he says.

But who has the overall responsibility for mobilising knowledge in education research? The individual researcher, the faculty or the university, the ministry of education or some kind of transnational organisation? Professor Sandra Nutley is known internationally for her work on research use and evidence-based policy and practice and she has a very clear answer: “That is such an important question because today it is often no one’s responsibility.”

The growing demand for knowledge mobilisation does not go hand in hand with the universities’ current priority list, especially not when it comes to research in education.

“If you compare education to other fields of university work like science and technology, you can see that there are quite well-developed mechanisms at the institutional level in universities to connect the work of research-

ers to the larger community. In education we tend to lack those connections,” Professor Ben Levin says. He explains that while universities and faculties of education have a very profound interest in sharing their research and making it available, the mechanisms to do so remain poorly developed.

“By that I mean that the systems and structures inside the university to support knowledge mobilisation are weak. There is a large reliance on the individual researcher as opposed to an institutional endeavour. There is a general recognition in the IALEI country papers that universities can do better when it comes to education research,” he says.

Better infrastructure

According to Professor Levin, universities need to build an infrastructure to support knowledge mobilisation.

“If I am a chemist who develops a new product, the university has patent and spin-off companies, etc. That is all done for me. In education, I have to do it all by myself. There is no infrastructure to support it at all. There is no money for it. It is no one’s job so it doesn’t get done,” he says.

Ben Levin explains that in most of the IALEI countries education research remains a small enterprise. It is not very well funded in relation to the size of the sector, and it tends not to be very well organised either. In most places education research is a lot of small-scale work, he says.

Ben Levin emphasises that universities and researchers should build stronger external connections and more interpersonal connections that make a difference.

“In the academic world everything is about putting things on paper: into writing. But we know that reading things does not change people’s behaviour. If you do research in pedagogies, you want to connect with teachers and associations. One thing we know about knowledge mobilisation is that it is rarely a direct link between a researcher and a ‘research user’. It is a much more diffuse process that works largely through intermediary organisations. Those connections happen largely through events and networks. We need to think in a systematic way to give research a higher prominence in the whole educational process.”

One question leaps out: Where do researchers get the time to engage with practitioners, politicians, the media, and so on? They already spend a lot of time on other activities that are not directly research-related, such as teaching, applying for external funding, and presentations. According to Professor Levin, lack of time is a wrong excuse.

“The best researchers are often the best teachers and the most active ‘research mobilisers’. We found in a recent study of Canadian research education that there is a very clear link: the people who do most peer-reviewed publishing also do the most non-academic communication. They write more summaries and recommendations; they organise more workshops and events, and so on. The people who are most involved with knowledge mobilisation are also the people who are most peer-reviewed.”

If universities had an annual Top 100 list, the ‘Best Researcher of the Year’ might be the same person as the ‘Best Research Mobiliser of the Year’. ■

Q&A

“KNOWLEDGE MOBILISATION IS A HUMAN RIGHT”

Peter Levesque

President and CEO, Knowledge Mobilization Works, Ottawa; and participant at the IALEI conference Knowledge Mobilisation in Education Research, held in June 2011 at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

By CAMILLA MEHLSSEN

* *What is the need for knowledge mobilisation today?*

“If I were to ask you: You invest billions of dollars in something and you are not sure of getting back billions plus, would you keep doing that? One of the core things about knowledge mobilisation is: Are we getting the maximum value from the investments of time, resources, etc. to be able to better understand our world as well as to create innovations? The first part of knowledge mobilisation is about having better value statements of what comes out of research.

The other part regards better relationships between the various sectors. There is always this talk about the ivory tower. My question is: Is the ivory tower locked from the inside or from the outside? It does not need to be locked. If you turn a tower sideways, it turns into a hallway with lots of potential connections. I think in many ways knowledge mobilisation is about creating connections between research, practice, governance and innovation.”

Have the need or the demand for knowledge mobilisation grown in recent years?

“There are different demands depending on the sector. Education is still in its early days. In sectors where the value statements are very easy, there is a great demand. In healthcare there is a great demand for knowledge mobilisation because people are sick or dying. The more research we can move into practice to lower morbidity and mortality, the greater it is used. In areas of business there is a lot of work in knowledge management because you can make a profit. You can create new products, processes and services.

The challenge with education is that it is somewhat isolated. But education is so critical. Teachers in the class-

room are trying to teach skills and aptitudes to students who are going to be in jobs that do not exist yet but will do 20 years down the road.”

What do you hope will be the next big step for knowledge mobilisation?

“One reason that I engage in this practice is that Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says that every human should participate in the cultural life of the community, enjoy the arts and benefit from the results of science. In many ways knowledge mobilisation is a human right, except that it does not always end in practice. I think that increasingly what will happen is that knowledge mobilisation will become a normal practice. There will be more funding for it and more programmes for it. Eventually it will become a normal thing and in 20 years we will say ‘what was all that fuss about knowledge mobilisation back in 2010 or 2011?’”

Which sector is the first mover?

“The field itself emerged out of areas where knowledge is needed really quickly: health, business, the military, the software industry. Education has such an important role because of its scale – everybody is exposed to the education system – and the length of time that people go through the education process. I am 45 and spent almost half of it in some sort of educational institution – from kindergarten to Ph.D. I don’t know if we will have the luxury of spending that much time, as we move into the future and our problems become increasingly intense. Our need to take what we know and put it into practice is accelerating. Education has to be at the forefront of that.”

Is knowledge mobilisation always a good thing?

“Of course not. The social capital that allows community organisations to come together and help each other is also what led the Nazi Party to rise. Not all knowledge needs to be mobilised. The knowledge about how to better torture each other does not need to be mobilised. **It comes down to:** What is the knowledge for?, What is the purpose?, What is the value?, How is it shared? But if we don’t engage in knowledge mobilisation, the full potential of who we are as human beings – and how that is represented by research – is not going to be fully realised.”

Q&A

“THE CULTURE IS BECOMING MORE READY NOW”

Doris McWhorter

Interim Director, Education Research and Evaluation Strategy Branch, Ontario Ministry of Education; and participant at the IALEI conference Knowledge Mobilisation in Education Research, held in June 2011 at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

By CAMILLA MEHLSSEN

* *Why are you interested in knowledge mobilisation in education research?*

“I see the value in teachers, principals, district leaders and policy makers being able to access the best knowledge we have available in order to improve outcomes for students. This has been at the heart of a lot of the reforms at Ontario. The efforts that have been put into being more research-informed and evidence-based have been major factors in terms of some of the gains being made for the students.

I think the culture is becoming more ready now. Teachers, principals, policy makers and trustees are becoming more and more aware of the need to incorporate the best possible knowledge available in order to improve teaching and learning.”

What kind of knowledge do you – or the governments – need the most?

“At the policy level we need to know what kinds of policies are most likely to create the greatest benefits of all types and all subgroups. We need to have the best possible evidence to support our policies in terms of teaching and learning strategies, in terms of assessments, school effectiveness, reducing the achievement gaps and engaging students, parents, community members as well as professionals.”

What do you hope will be the next big step in knowledge mobilisation?

“I think we have already embarked upon some new initiatives that are trying to forge closer relationships between government, universities and school boards through the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research [see information box]. We bring together

partners from a wide range of organisations in order to identify priority needs and mobilise existing forms of knowledge. We are at the very early stage but I see this as one step in terms of moving the whole field forward.” ■

The KNAER – a new knowledge broker in the class



The Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research (KNAER) is a Canadian network promoting the use of research in education. The aim is to strengthen relationships between research, policy and practice in education in Ontario, Canada. The KNAER was established as a collaborative partnership among the Ontario Ministry of Education, the University of Toronto and the University of Western Ontario.

The KNAER will focus on building, advancing and applying robust evidence of effective practices through conducting

research, synthesising state-of-the-art knowledge from existing bodies of evidence and facilitating networks of policy makers, educators and researchers working collaboratively to apply research-to-practice. It will also act as a ‘knowledge broker’ to facilitate and lead the spread of established and new evidence through networks across Ontario’s policy, education and research communities, as well as connecting with national and international networks.

More than 40 projects have so far received funding from the KNAER, among them the projects ‘Bringing research to the classroom: Building a SURE Teacher Learning Community to enhance evidence uptake in schools’ and ‘Knowledge mobilisation on decision making for school improvement: A peer-to-peer network for school principals’.
Source: www.knaer-recrae.ca

How can knowledge mobilisation improve pupils' achievement in schools?



What exactly can a researcher do to facilitate relevant application of the research?

Education Alliance Magazine has posed these questions to the IALEI research team.



Professor **Lynn Ilon**
Department of Education, Seoul National University

“By understanding that even expert knowledge is rapidly being derived from networks, or collective intelligence, schools can tap into a rich source of knowledge and learning.

Researchers can begin to explore this new collective intelligence. Many types of scientists are beginning to change the way they research, build knowledge and share knowledge; knowledge mobilisation takes on an entirely new meaning in a world of networked knowledge building.”

Dr **Hong Chengwen**
School of Education, Beijing Normal University

“Students’ achievement might be improved if they become involvement in the process of knowledge mobilisation, such as joining in the research, involvement in the transfer or application of new knowledge, and help in maintaining contact between researchers and stakeholders.”

Professor **Romualdo Portela de Oliveira**
Faculty of Education, University of São Paulo

“On the one hand the researchers can try to communicate their research to the teachers, and on the other hand the researchers must study problems that are relevant in the everyday life of the teachers.”

Professor **Johan Müller & Dr Ursula Hoadley**
School of Education, University of Cape Town

“In our context, the first major impact can be achieved at the systemic level, if research can shed light on curriculum and pedagogical reform policy at a national level.”

Executive Director **Claus Holm**
Department of Education, Aarhus University

“In Denmark, we have seen a heated debate over the introduction of a research-based teacher education and a need for comprehensive post-vocational training of existing teachers. Thus, knowledge mobilisation means that better-trained teachers give better pupils. Unfortunately, improved professional training of teachers, school managers and pedagogues has not been a political priority, and the attempts to introduce research-based teacher training have failed so far.”

Professor **David Gough**
Institute of Education, University of London

“Many people aim to improve communication of research but this is only a necessary not sufficient condition. We also need to ensure that the research is fit for purpose. Hence the need for user perspectives in driving research agendas. We also need strategies for research-informed practice by individual teachers, school and local authority organisations, and by more general state institutions.”

Dr **Teh Laik Woon**
National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University

“When researchers direct their effort to engage practitioners and policy makers in knowledge production, sharing and application, teachers will improve their capacity and teach better. Pupils’ school achievement will then improve.”

Professor **Ben Levin**
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto

“More widespread use of effective practices would certainly improve pupil outcomes, but this primarily requires partnerships between researchers, educators and intermediary organisations. The main thing researchers can do is to pay attention to these issues and to put some effort into knowledge mobilisation work.”

Professor **John Polesel**
Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Melbourne University

“Faculties and schools of education in Australia clearly see the importance of utilising the findings of research to inform the theoretical understanding of education policy and practice in the broader academic community, the training of teachers through research, pre-service, in-service and community programmes, direct engagement with schools, through collaborative research, trialling of programmes and application of findings, and engagement with school communities and families. Engagement with government agencies, school systems and industry partners in education is also crucial, so that research is utilised to have a direct impact on system-wide policies affecting pupil achievement.”



SCANPIX

The GENEROUS UNIVERSITY

By CLAUS HOLM

* In 1797 French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy suggested the word *ideology* as a term for social sciences. Destutt de Tracy used – and promoted – ideology as a term for the production and communication of constructive ideas. At the same time, he criticised intellectuals who worked with metaphysics and psychology, as *ideologists'* aspiration was anything but contemplative. It was philosophy in action – sheer politics. Ideology was a weapon of control. To rule the world, you need first to understand it! Ideologists leaned on the idea that civil servants with a scholarly background would be able to create a civilised, decent and happy society. Politically, Napoleon was flirting with the ideologists, and he demonstrated his enthusiasm for more action-oriented science in the late 17th century when he closed the universities. He then chose to increase the number of vocational schools and institutions of specialised studies for practical professions (*grandes écoles*). The purpose of these *grandes écoles* was to generate and utilise scientific knowledge for practical purposes.

Without comparison, a couple of hundred years after Napoleon, universities all over the world are once again changing. Research and education are not only expected to comprise largely exclusive and internally justified activities, but also, at the same time, externally justified activities that emphasise generous relationships between universities and the surrounding world. At the head of this change is not a new Napoleon, but the leading idea that the contact between universities and the outside world should be renewed. In other words, while research and education should offer their services to the nation, at the same time the production of knowledge should be an end in itself. This discrepancy corresponds to the disparity between the traditional French and German university forms, but as it is, it may also comprise the disparity between the universities of yesterday and tomorrow, respectively.

A point of orientation for tomorrow's universities might be the wide-ranging conception of generosity which focuses on the mobilisation of knowledge via dissemination and communication. This is already happening, of course; not least as long-established boards of studies translate and transform research results into teaching. More can be done, however. Teaching might change from being defined solely by professional research progress to being structured equally by the competencies required in the given labour market.

Universities could choose to co-operate with journalists to a greater extent to present their knowledge to a wider audience. And universities could establish working relationships with authorities and companies to produce research on specific social problems.

The objective of the generous university is twofold. One is to improve the basis for evidence-based politics and practice. The future labour force, for example, needs to be more research-informed. That is, among other things, future teachers should be able to understand, interpret, criticise and utilise the numerous pieces of research on schools produced today in many countries worldwide. On the one hand, this means that teachers should no longer simply have blind faith in practice and do what they have always done. On the other hand, it does not entail blindly obeying the instructions offered by research. The motto is that good and useful theory is the most practical option. Obviously, though, there is a difference between theory and fitting use thereof.

The second objective is to link research and practice via a range of partnerships. Partnerships consist of asym-

“The motto is that good and useful theory is the most practical option. Obviously, though, there is a difference between theory and fitting use thereof.”

Claus Holm

metrical relations between experts in diverse fields; and a proper system of experts is able to produce and communicate clear explanations for the surrounding world. University representatives need to translate all academic activities, making them comprehensible to representatives from the surrounding world. And then again, it is equally important that practice representatives translate their activities, making them understandable to the universities and thus spawning mutual generosity and partnerships.

In other words, Napoleon's sympathy for the ideologists ended with the gradual disclosure of the pivotal conflict between Napoleonic authoritarian rule and the ideologists' devotion to republican administration ideals. The modern world needs partnerships to which respect for differences is central. Researchers' dedication to research and practitioners' dedication to practice together make up the basis for a dynamic and productive relationship. People go together, because they make up one side of the discrepancy between one and the other. ■

CLAUS HOLM

A Danish expert in knowledge mobilisation and Executive Director of the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes (IALEI), Claus Holm is responsible for the Danish contribution to IALEI's research project on knowledge mobilisation.

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF LEADING EDUCATION INSTITUTES

IALEI

– DEDICATED
TO IMPROVING
EDUCATION
WORLDWIDE

10 of the world's leading educational
institutes from 6 countries –
united in 1 think tank

The International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes (IALEI) is the world's first think tank on education. The aim is to produce new insights and recommendations on educational matters – much like the World Economic Forum does on economic matters.

The Alliance consists of *ten leading education institutes from six continents*: Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North and South America. The Alliance was formed at a summit in Singapore in 2007.

Each year IALEI pursues a theme that has international relevance, based on national reports, a summary report and a conference. The themes so far have been Teacher Education (2008), Education for Sustainable Development (2009), Multicultural Education (2010) and Knowledge Mobilisation (2011).

Read more:

www.intlalliance.org

“In its role as a global think tank deliberating upon, generating ideas and anticipating trends and future scenarios, the International Alliance offers a new dimension of international co-operation.”

Director **Lee Sing Kong**
National Institute of Education, Singapore

* Three goals

The aim of the alliance is to provide evidence to inform policy decisions, secure funding and inspire research and intervention efforts to improve education locally and globally. The alliance will employ the existing strengths of each institution to:

- 1 Raise the profile and quality of education with government, international agencies and the public at large.
- 2 Act as a forum for collaboration in order to address current local and global education issues.
- 3 Be a think tank that generates ideas, anticipates trends and develops future scenarios.



* Education Alliance Magazine

Education Alliance Magazine is a journalistic print and online magazine with articles on educational research, development and application of educational scientific knowledge.

The first five issues have covered 'Teacher Education', 'Leadership in the 21st Century', 'Lifelong Learning', 'Education for Sustainable Development' and 'Multicultural Education'.

The magazine is published by IALEI. The Editorial Board consists of the deans of the ten IALEI member institutes.

* Ten members

The International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes comprises ten of the world's leading faculties and university schools in the field of educational research.

	Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Melbourne University, Australia
	Faculty of Education, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil
	Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada
	School of Education, Beijing Normal University, People's Republic of China
	Department of Education, Aarhus University, Aarhus University, Denmark
	College of Education, Seoul National University, Korea
	National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
	School of Education, University of Cape Town, South Africa
	Institute of Education, University of London, UK
	School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

MOBILISATION

*Knowledge
mobilisation*

www.intlalliance.org

Education
Alliance
Magazine