

Exploring the Field – Evidence-informed practice (EIP)

Introduction

For the purposes of the book, we define EIP generally as *any form* of professional practice that is informed by *any* research evidence, usually alongside practical evidence. We refer readers back to the broad definitions of research, evidence and theory we provide in Chapter 2 as well as our discussion of the continuum between research and practice; these highlight the potentially large variety of forms that EIP can take. This diversity makes the job of describing the community and work of EIP unfeasible for us, as this would involve surveying all use of research and evidence across the entire education sector. Instead, we focus here on some of the more visible organisations supporting EIP. Some are linked to WW, some are not. In short, in this section we provide a brief overview of prominent EIP organisations rather than the content, method or practice of EIP in the profession, which is far more fluid, multifarious and complex.

Let's start with a high-profile example: in England there is a practitioner-led education research conference called ResearchEd. While ResearchEd does produce 'outputs' such as a magazine and books (and a very good YouTube channel), they are primarily known for generating a community in which researchers and practitioners (and researcher-practitioners) can discuss research, exchange knowledge and advance EIP. Similarly, the EEF (discussed as a leading example of WW) run a Research Schools Network, which hosts conferences and brings practitioners together for events and continuing professional development and learning activities (Gu et al., 2020). Both of these tend to include a mixture of WW and EIP thinking (see below): to the degree practitioners are being given guidance about what 'the evidence says' and seeking to implement it, they are engaged in WW (or evidence-based practice); to the extent to which the evidence forms part of a practitioner-led conversation about effective policy and practice, they are (by our definition at least) engaged in EIP.

Evidence-informed Practice Organisations and Ecosystems

There are many organisations that sit between research and practice. Some have bridging research and practice as their main purpose; others do so as a subsidiary function. Connecting research to practice is done through the synthesis, filtering and communication (or 'mobilisation') of research evidence and through knowledge exchange between research and practice (e.g., collaboration on applied research projects) (see Breckon et al., 2019; Nelson & O'Beirne, 2014). Organisations which include a research function include the government Department for Education; Ofsted, the inspectorate in England; examination boards; trade unions; subject associations; education publishers and many more. Organisations with expertise and a more dedicated focus on supporting evidence-informed practice in England include the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) (Perry was a former employee and is now an associate), Evidence Based Education (EBE), the Durham

University Evidence Centre for Education (DECE) and the (sadly recently closed) Institute for Effective Education (IEE) to name just a few. There are many examples of centres, institutes and networks supporting EIP internationally such as the Knowledge Network of Applied Education Research (KNAER) in Ontario, Canada, The Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) based at John Hopkins School of Education in the US (known in part for their *Best Evidence in Brief* e-newsletter), and many more organisations of varying specialism, function and profile. EIP activity is frequently organised through networks such as the Warwick Teacher Researcher Network based in at the University of Warwick¹ (where we work) or school-based groups (e.g., as described in Tinsley, 2021).

EIP organisations compete, cooperate and co-exist in a complex organisational landscape – the politics and economy of which are beyond our present focus. As such, what the EIP community looks like is region- and country-specific (see Brown & Malin, 2022). In the book we mostly have in mind the system with which we are most familiar: England. It would make for a very worthwhile research study to map out and compare EEI, WW, and EIP communities and work by region, and examine how different research ‘ecosystems’ vary internationally and why. We apologise for the somewhat England-centric description of the main factions of the Evidence-Informed Education field. Our engagement with international research communities suggests that the methodological issues we discuss throughout this book are inherent to the opportunities and challenges of Evidence-Informed Education everywhere. We suspect, however, that other systems – given their differing political, organisational and cultural circumstances – will have achieved greater or lesser levels of integration of the various factions and perspectives on Evidence-Informed Education research and will feel the challenges of research and evidence-informed improvement we discuss more or less acutely.

Suggested Reading by Theme

Evidence and Education

- Brown, C., Malin, J., Amatullah, T., Blossing, U., Brown, M., Chinas, C., ... & Lai, M. K. (2022). The Emerald Handbook of Evidence-Informed Practice in Education. Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Coe, R., & Kime, S. (2019). A (new) manifesto for evidence-based education: twenty years on. <https://evidencebased.education/new-manifesto-evidence-based-education/>
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¹ <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/cte/professionaldevelopment/trn/>

- Langer, L., Tripney, J. S., & Gough, D. (2016). The science of using science: Researching the use of research evidence in decision-making.
- OECD. (2022). Who Cares about Using Education Research in Policy and Practice? <https://doi.org/10.1787/d7ff793d-en>
- Rickinson, M., Cirkony, C., Walsh, L., Gleeson, J., Cutler, B., & Salisbury, M. (2022). A framework for understanding the quality of evidence use in education. *Educational Research*, 64(2), 133-158.
- Wiliam, D. (2019). Some reflections on the role of evidence in improving education. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 25(1-2), 127-139.

Leadership, Schools and School Improvement

- Allen, B., Evans, M., & White, B. (2021). The next big thing in school improvement.
- Cain, T. (2018). *Becoming a research-informed school: Why? What? How?*. Routledge.
- Gordon, N., & Conaway, C. (2020). *Common-sense evidence: The education Leader's guide to using data and research*. Harvard Education Press.
- Greany, T., & Earley, P. (Eds.). (2021). *School leadership and education system reform*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Gu, Q., Hodgen, J., Adkins, M., & Armstrong, P. (2019). *Incentivising Schools To Take Up Evidence-Based Practice To Improve Teaching And Learning; Evidence From The Evaluation Of The Suffolk Challenge Fund. Final Report*, July.
- Jones, G. (2018). *Evidence-based school leadership and management: A practical guide*. Sage.
- Pegram, J., Watkins, R. C., Hoerger, M., & Hughes, J. C. (2022). Assessing the range and evidence-base of interventions in a cluster of schools. *Review of Education*, 10(1), e3336.
- Wiliam, D. (2016). *Leadership [for] teacher learning: Creating a culture where all teachers improve so that all students succeed*. Learning Sciences.

Policy and Ecosystems

- Cowen, N. (2019). For whom does "what works" work? The political economy of evidence-based education. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 25(1-2), 81-98.
- Godfrey, D. (2017). What is the proposed role of research evidence in England's 'self-improving' school system? *Oxford Review of Education*, 43(4), 433-446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2017.1329718>
- Gu, Q., Rea, S., Seymour, K., Smethem, L., Bryan, B., Armstrong, P., Ahn, M., Hodgen, J., & Knight, R. (2020). *The Research Schools Network: Supporting Schools to Develop Evidence-Informed Practice*. In: London: Education Endowment Foundation.
- Nutley, S. M., Walter, I., & Davies, H. T. (2007). *Using evidence. How research can inform public services*.
- Shepherd, J. P. (2014). *How to achieve more effective services: the evidence ecosystem*.

- Sjölund, S., Lindvall, J., Larsson, M., & Ryve, A. (2022). Using research to inform practice through research-practice partnerships: A systematic literature review. *Review of Education*, 10(1), e3337.
- Rycroft-Smith, L. (2022). Knowledge brokering to bridge the research-practice gap in education: Where are we now?. *Review of Education*, 10(1), e3341.

Teachers and Professional development and learning

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- Lemov, D. (2010). *Teach like a champion: 49 techniques that put students on the path to college (K-12)*. John Wiley & Sons.
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Further References

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- Tinsley, K. (2021). A culture of practitioner research: Growing teacher expertise. *Impact: Journal of the Chartered College of Teaching*, 1(13).
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