



Language and Literacy
communication, collaboration, co-production



Getting started: Research-practice partnerships in education

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Workshop Aims

- 1) Provide an overview of the benefits and methodological considerations associated with research-practice partnerships (RPPs).
- 2) Provide examples of RPPs.
- 3) Provide a structure and opportunity to consider how your research could be informed by involving practice partners.
- 4) Provide opportunities for everyone to share experiences of partnership working.



Research-practice partnerships in education

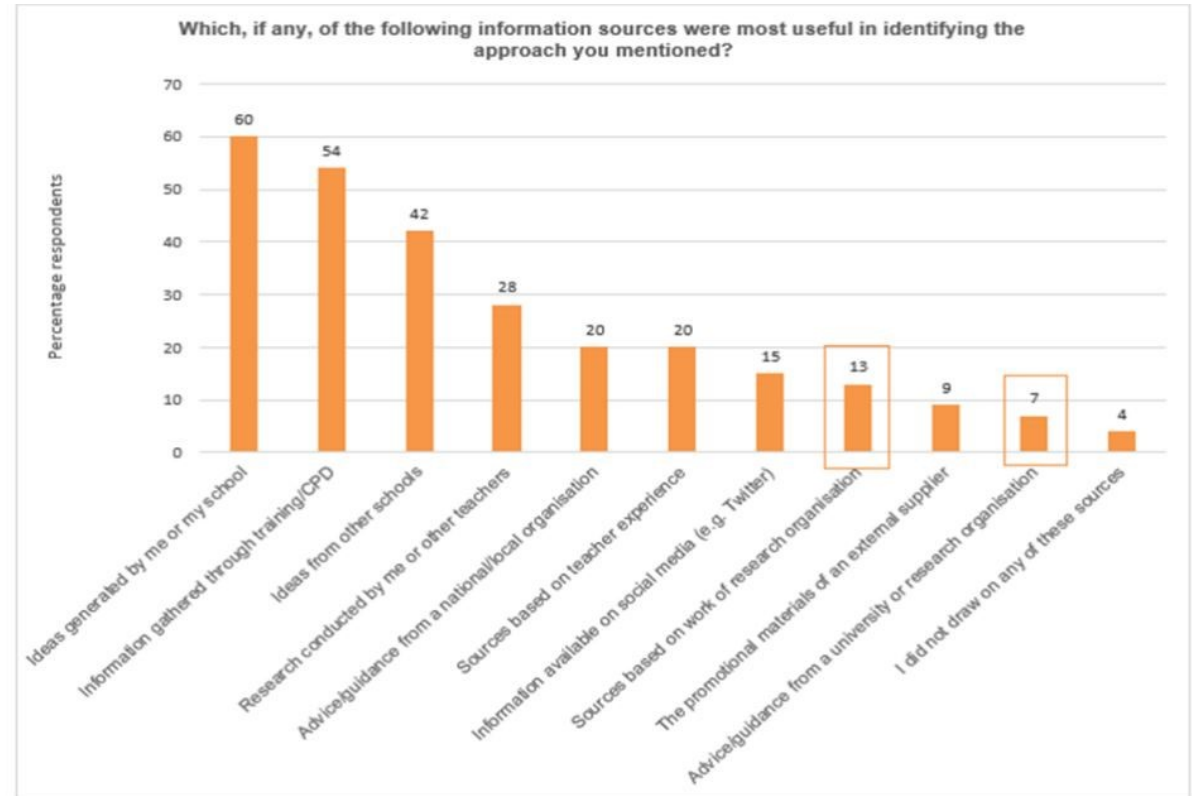
- Collaborative approaches to working which seek to improve children and young people's educational experiences and outcomes, by drawing upon the collective knowledge, expertise and experience available from both research and practice (McGeown et al., 2023).
- Growing interest in the use of research-practice partnerships (RPPs) in education (Sjolund et al., 2022) and examples from different international contexts.
- See recent Open Dialogue for recent discussion:
<https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/bpsper/47/1>



Why?



- Disconnect between University based research and practice/policy (Nelson 2019).
- In Scotland, the research evidence/data practitioners engage with most is school-level data (Lowden et al., 2019).



NFER teacher research use survey, Nov 2017 (N=1,670).
Respondents could give more than one response, so percentages do not sum to 100.

Nelson (2019). Measuring Teachers' Research Engagement. Available from:

https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/public/files/Evaluation/Research_Use/NFER_Research_Use_pilot_report_-_March_2017_for_publication.pdf

Lowden et al., (2019). <https://www.gov.scot/publications/knowledge-utilisation-mapping-study-scottish-education-system/>



Benefits

- Close the gap between research and practice (Steel et al., 2021)
- Educational research informed by the cumulative depth and breadth of knowledge, experience and expertise available (McGeown et al., 2023)
- Research more likely to align with practice/policy priorities (Snow, 2015)
- Implementation considered from the outset / increases likelihood of use (Cai & Hwang, 2021)
- Improves teachers' attitudes towards University based research (Ross & Bruce, 2012)
- Democratises research (Sjolund et al., 2022)
- Supports researchers and teachers' professional development (McGeown et al., 2023)



Methodological considerations

- Different priorities in education research and practice (Donovan et al., 2003)
- Time consuming (Snow, 2015)
- Difficulty attracting funding when project not well specified (Snow, 2015)
- Hierarchical structures/power imbalance (Skipper & Pepler, 2021)
- Work in atypical ways (Coburn & Penuel, 2016)
- Work in very different contexts (Steel et al., 2021)
- Different perspectives on what counts as research, or on programme/intervention content or evaluation (London et al., 2018)
- Communication difficulties (Steel et al., 2021)



Practice partners

Depends on research interests/area

For example:

- Teachers, school leaders, teaching assistants, early years practitioners
- Professionals (e.g., Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists)
- National and community organisations
- Libraries sector
- Publishers, authors

Children and young people



Research-practice partnerships

University of Edinburgh Literacy Lab

- Website: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/>

Current projects:

Love to Read: Primary

Reading and Wellbeing

Reading and Narrative Fiction

Augmented Reality Books

Young People's Reading Project

Love to Read: Reception

Disability Representation in Picture Books

The Writing Lives of Children and Young People

Previous projects:

Growing Up A Reader

Improving Children's Reading

Move and Read

Reading to Dogs

Sharing Stories

BERA Blog Series:

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog-series/to-read-or-not-to-read>





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Reading to Dogs

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Love to Read

Research-practice partnership to create a programme to inspire and sustain a love of reading

Research-practice partnership

Teacher-researcher
co-design



Context

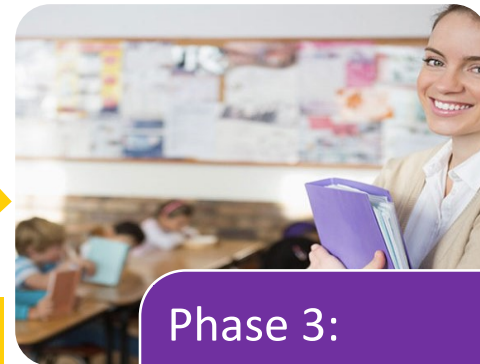
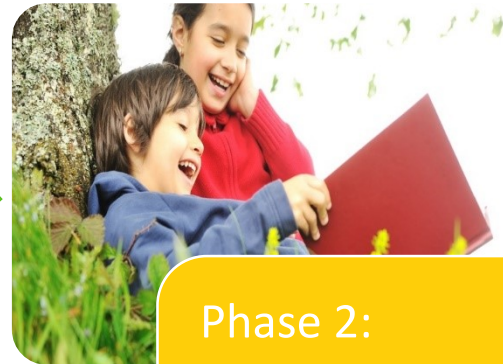
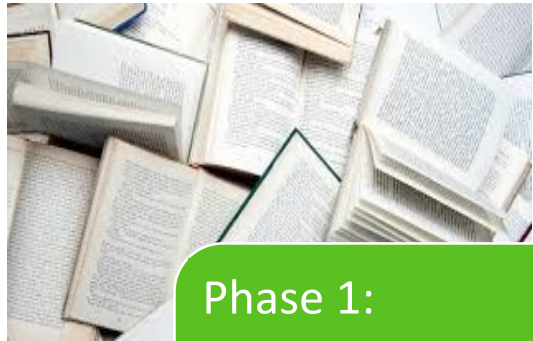
Issue

- Children's reading attitudes and engagement are at an all time low (Cole et al., 2022, n >70,000, since 2005).
- PIRLS (DfE, 2023) demonstrated that percentage of children in England who enjoy reading is lower (29%) than international average (42%).
- Absence of robustly evaluated research-informed pedagogy to increase children's reading motivation and engagement.

Curricula

- The current primary school curricula of England (National Primary Curriculum), Scotland (Curriculum for Excellence), Wales (Curriculum for Wales) and Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum) all cite the importance of focusing on reading motivation and engagement/reading for pleasure.
- Department for Education Reading Framework (2023) highlights importance of reading for pleasure.

Love to Read: Development and Evaluation



Phase 1:
Research input

Literature review:
- Relevant theory/research
- Links with curricula

SIX PRINCIPLES

Phase 2:
Child input

Individual and group interviews (n = 59, 4 UK schools) to seek children's perspectives and experiences.

Phase 3:
Teacher input

- Recruitment of 6 teachers
- Co-design online
- Practice partner input
- PROGRAMME DEVELOPED

Phase 4:
Evaluation

- 6 week feasibility study, 4 schools, 425 pupils
- Mixed methods
- Implementation and effectiveness

Preregistration: <https://osf.io/5ztjk>

Preregistration: <https://osf.io/xsjhc>

Preregistration: <https://osf.io/qvuka>

Phase 3: Teacher input into programme content

- Teachers received research/project overview
- Six online meetings:
 - Introductions and research overview (1)
 - Co-design (2-4)
 - Review of programme/resources (5)
 - Final review of programme/resources (6)



Pre-meeting preparation: Independent written contributions/comments on programme

Online and offline communication

Programme structure

- Underpinned by six research-informed principles: access, choice, time, connection, social and success
- Core and supplementary activities: Teachers decide which to implement based on knowledge of students, class and resources.
- Balance between **fidelity and flexibility**: Fidelity to research-informed principles/duration but flexibility in activities, leveraging teachers' professional, pedagogical and contextual knowledge to improve delivery and outcomes



Teachers and children's perspectives

"Empowers teachers to support other teachers and widest community"

"It is a win-win model, benefitting research, researchers and teachers"

"Erm, I think they should do what we're doing now, they should maybe ask kid's opinion"



Practice partner input

Several stages of the research process:

- Original funding application
- Recruitment and selection of teachers for co-design
- Feedback on research informed review for co-design teachers
- Feedback on the programme
- Input into evaluation of programme
- Feedback on outputs
- Involvement in dissemination (co-presented talks, invitations to speak, etc)



Researcher reflections

- Entire process ran well, although it was very time intensive
- Programme and entire project benefitted significantly from practice partner input
- HOWEVER:
- Practice partner/teacher roles and responsibilities were decided by the researcher.
- Everyone had a shared interest/commitment to the topic
- Research area is one of consensus
- Very specific process/topic/team
- Need more flexibility in outputs in original funding application

Workshop: reflection and discussion

- Consider potential practice partners
- Alignment and influence, but also other considerations

- 5-10 minutes individual time
- 10-15 minutes discussion

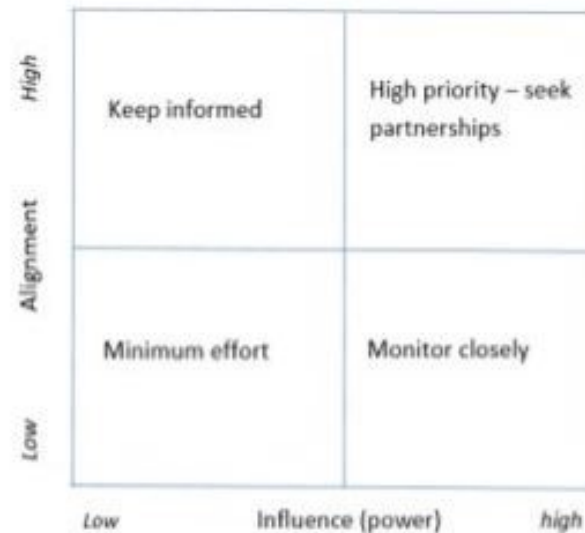


Fig 1. Alignment and Influence matrix.

Example

Desired impact of your research:
Reduce health problems related to alcohol consumption

High alignment strong influence:
Alcohol Focus Scotland

High influence low alignment:
Drink industry

Zoom



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Sharing Stories

Aim: To support families' language and literacy experiences.

Method:

- Multiple meetings between researchers and practice partners
- Researchers created research-informed presentations/ activities which were shared, revised and decided in collaboration with practice partners and family support team.

Programme: Series of ten online sessions between family support workers and families, with researcher input



Funded by Carnegie UK Engaging Libraries, Wellcome and The Wolfson Foundation
Project in collaboration with Glasgow Life

<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/previous-projects/sharing-stories/>



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The Young People's Reading Project

Aim: To understand and improve young people's reading

Method:

- Collaboration between research team, national organisation and Young People's Advisory Panel (n=6) throughout entire project
- Interviews with 59 young people (aged 12-14)

Programme: Four pilot programmes developed and currently being evaluated by SBT



Funded by the Social Graduate School of Social Sciences: Collaborative PhD studentship Project in collaboration with Scottish Book Trust

<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/current-projects/yprp/>



Summary

- RPPs offer consider promise for closing the gap between research and practice

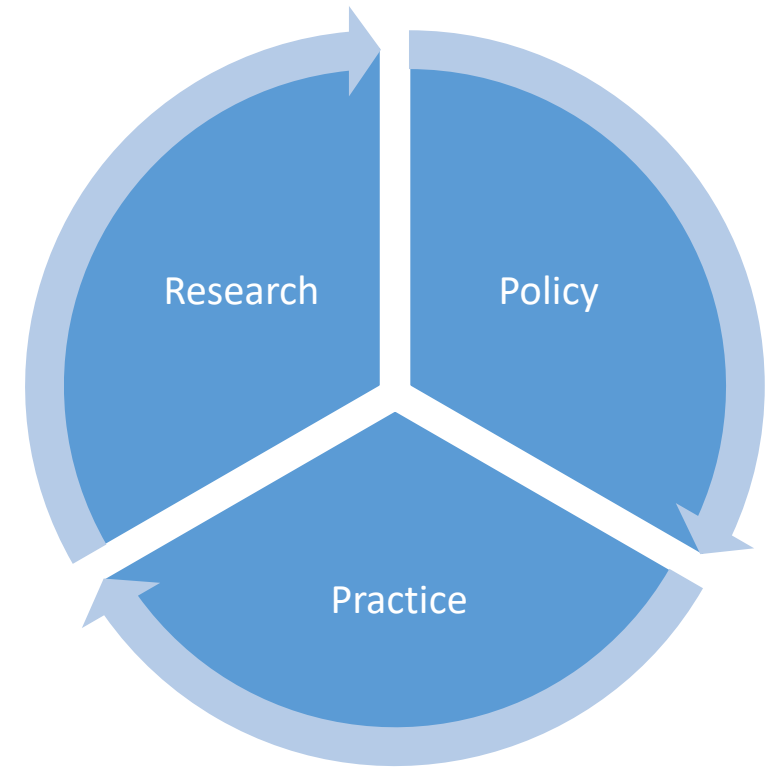
However, challenges/methodological considerations:

- Funding
- Timeline
- Skills and dispositions
- University systems/structures

Action: Consider different practice partners and start to develop new relationships

Policy

- Scottish Government's [Research Strategy for Scottish Education](#) highlighted the need for greater communication and collaboration between all actors within the education system.
- Optimal to have inclusive dialogue across all sectors
- Research more closely aligned with policy priorities: more educationally relevant, more likely to be applied at scale.
- Children and young people's educational experiences and outcomes are optimised, as education is informed by the cumulative depth and breadth of knowledge, experience, expertise.





Work across other contexts:

William Penuel, US:

- <https://www.colorado.edu/education/william-penuel>

Catherine Snow, SERP Institute, US:

- <https://www.serp institute.org/>

Simon Sjolund, Sweden:

- <https://www.mdu.se/en/malardalen-university/staff?id=ssd01>

Opportunity for questions, discussion and sharing own experiences

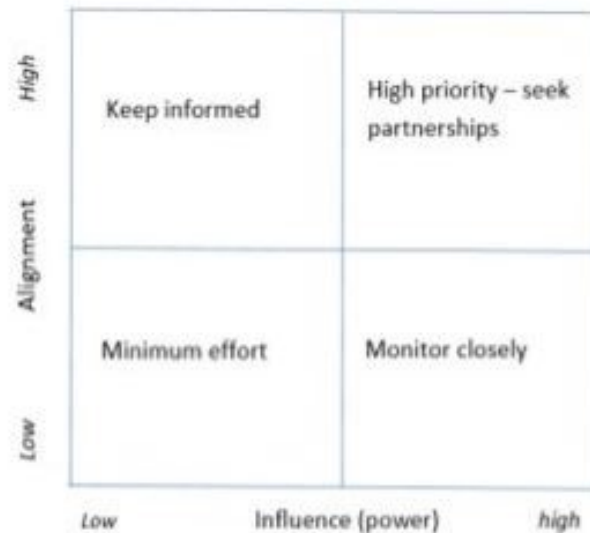


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Example of research-practice partnership

Learning About Neurodiversity at School (LEANS)

- Thursday, 9am – 10.30am
- Gilbert Scott, One A Ferguson Room [Floor 1]
- 04 SES 09: Autism and Neurodiversity in Schools
- Dr Alyssa Alcorn, Professor Sue-Fletcher Watson + team

<https://salvesen-research.ed.ac.uk/leans>

<https://www.mindroom.org/>

LEANS 
Learning About Neurodiversity at School



Thank you for listening



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@UoELiteracyLab

University of Edinburgh Literacy lab:

<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/literacylab/>

Love to Read:

<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/lovetoread/>

McGeown, S. (2023). Research-practice partnerships: Why we need a methodological shift in how we do research. *Psychology of Education Review: Open Dialogue (Opening Article)*.

<https://explore.bps.org.uk/content/bpsper/47/1>

McGeown, S., Oxley, E., Love to Read Practice Partners, Ricketts, J., & Shapiro, L. (2023). Working at the intersection of research and practice: The Love to Read project. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 117, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2022.102134>



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