



Language and Literacy
communication, collaboration, co-production



Research-practice partnerships and co-design as a route towards educational improvement

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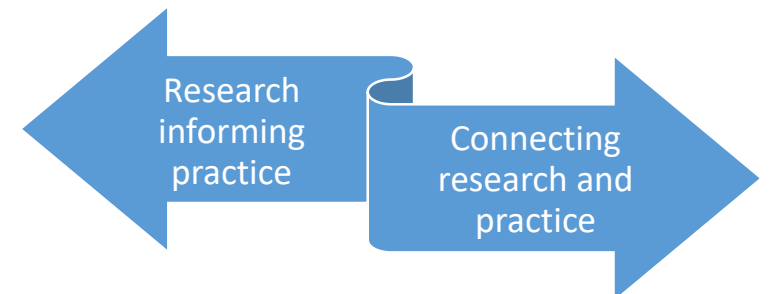
BERA, September 2023





Research-practice partnerships in education

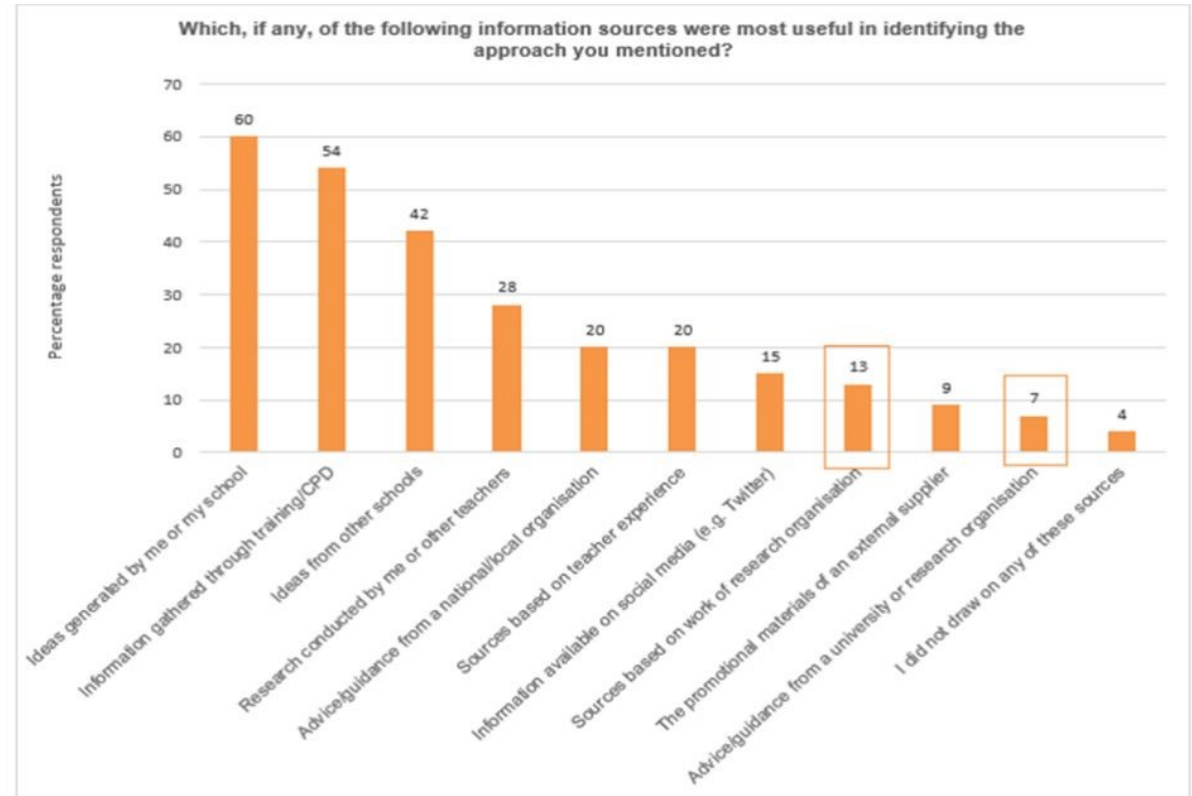
- Collaborative approaches to working which seek to improve children and young people's educational experiences and outcomes, by drawing upon the collective knowledge, expertise and experience available from both research and practice (McGeown et al., 2023).
- Growing interest in the use of research-practice 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)



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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Love to Read

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

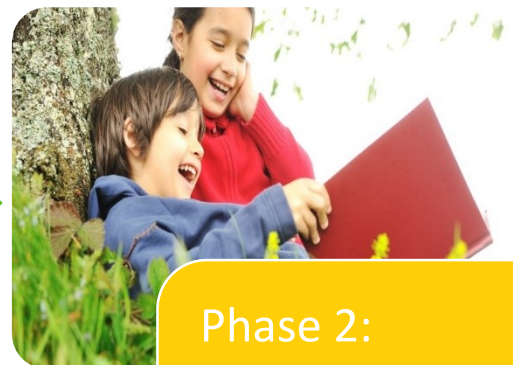
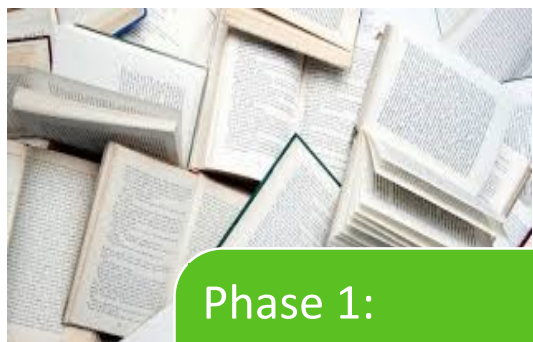
Research-practice partnership

Teacher-researcher
co-design

Love to Read: Development and Evaluation

Development

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/expert 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

Open research:

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

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

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

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



Summary

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

However, methodological considerations:

- Funding
- Training
- University systems
- Infrastructure



Thank you for listening



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University of Edinburgh Literacy lab:

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

BERA blogpost:

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/better-together-research-practice-partnerships-in-education>

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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