

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.”



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 Polese**

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 or publication of results, not only to academic journals, but to the public in general and to policy makers.”