CEBE Position Paper – Spring 2010

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Based on contributions from CEBE stakeholders, 2009/10

Coalition for Evidence-based Education

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CEBE Coalition for Evidence-based Education

Executive Summary

Overview

This document sets out a position paper and work plan for the *Coalition for Evidence-based Education* (CEBE) – an alliance of researchers, policy makers and practitioners who are interested in improving the way research evidence is used, and exchanged, across the sector. It describes the rationale behind CEBE, discusses its aims and objectives and sets out a preliminary plan of activities and actions for this group*.*

Background

We are entering a period of more local responsibility in education, with current policy moves towards decentralisation. In this environment, practitioners will more than ever require accurate, useful and accessible information on 'what works' for children, in what contexts and at what costs. Nevertheless, despite an increasing body of useful evidence in education, and many notable initiatives to improve knowledge exchange, there are still significant challenges in linking research evidence to widespread decision-making.

A connected evidence-using system

In the UK today there are dozens of independent organisations and initiatives that could describe themselves as working in 'evidence-based education'. This includes research groups that produce evidence (academic, government and NGOs etc), review groups that synthesise evidence, brokers that interpret evidence, and a multitude of different ways of accessing and engaging with evidence. These organisations work across different fields (policy, teaching/learning, social and emotional learning etc), different educational phases (primary, secondary and FE), and adopt a range of different approaches and methodologies.

Although collectively, many of the necessary components and areas of expertise are in place to deliver evidence-based education, large-scale impact is limited due to fragmentation in the system. A key aim for CEBE is increasing the connectivity and coherence across different elements of this evidence-using system. Two paths need to be pursued simultaneously:

- activities that encourage strategic collaboration between existing bodies and initiatives

- practical initiatives to identify, and fill, gaps in the current infrastructure

CEBE has been developed collaboratively to enable it to make progress on both fronts. The intention is to amplify, not replace, current activity, and so scale up evidence-based policy and practice in the UK.

CEBE programme – getting to work

The most effective way of achieving progress will be through joint action, rather than through extended discussion, and thus, CEBE's work will be based around a series of practical projects.

Three potential areas of activity are proposed:
   i.   Influencing policy for evidence-based reform
   ii. Identifying and developing necessary infrastructure for evidence utilisation
   iii. Practical CEBE knowledge exchange activities

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By drawing on a broad spectrum of educational stakeholders, we anticipate that CEBE can generate outputs that accurately reflect what is needed to improve knowledge brokerage across the profession.

A series of potential projects is put forward for discussion (Appendix A). This includes:

1. *'Decentralisation Plus': the role of evidence in a decentralised education sector* – a policy project exploring the role of evidence in a more localised education system.

2. *A review of UK evidence-based education in the current policy environment* – mapping the landscape of evidence-based education in the UK, including a feasibility study of a NICE/SCIE model for education.

3. *Community of Specialists proposal* – an initiative to link policy makers, practitioners and press/media to research expertise across the field.

4. *Education Evidence Service proposal* – a live/interactive service where practitioners and policy makers can put forward practical questions and be guided to appropriate research evidence.

5. *Demonstrating a 'proof-of-concept' for a connected brokerage system* – providing a network of schools with supported brokerage to a package of high-quality research resources.

6. *Examples of evidence use in practice* – events which combine the current 'state of play' of evidence on a pedagogy/curriculum topic with examples of evidence-use in real world situations.

In addition to new proposals, an 'open source' model is proposed for CEBE where coalition members contribute their own projects under a collective CEBE umbrella. In doing so, CEBE could become a forum for bringing together related activity to improve knowledge brokerage from a variety of sources, perspectives and inputs.

CEBE Organisation

As a coalition, CEBE needs to combine the interests and motivations of many disparate organisations and individuals. To achieve this requires willing partners and an agent to bring them together productively. CEBE activity (including preparing funding proposals) will be carried out by teams of organisations, according to the issue in hand. A central secretariat will be needed to make this happen.

A provisional organisational model for governance, administration, communications, membership, funding, and financial accountability for CEBE is presented.

Introduction

What CEBE stands for – Evidence-based Education

Imagine this scenario…

The headteacher of an inner-city primary school is stuck. She has just had a meeting with her senior management team to discuss how they can do more for their struggling readers. On the positive side, everyone has contributed really well and come up with some great ideas. Her deputy has suggested that they should provide one-to-one tutoring, but she cannot be sure that the expense is worth it. The literacy leader is certain he has heard of a scheme that recruits volunteers from the community to do the same thing – he is positive he had read it in a magazine somewhere. The SEN co-ordinator thought it might be a problem with the way they are teaching all children to read, and maybe they should look for something that was more effective across the whole school. Now, to add to the confusion, her School Improvement Partner is on the phone, telling her about a really exciting pilot project running across the authority, which is using a new computer programme to help those who are struggling.

These are the types of questions that are faced every day by schools and colleges across the country, whether they are choosing a new literacy programme, developing a behaviour management strategy, or deciding to introduce a new approach to social and emotional learning.

Yet, as we begin a new decade, it is clear that education still lacks the necessary infrastructure to provide practitioners with the information they need to support their professional decision-making. Inevitably, too many important decisions about educational practice are made by best guesses and are overly influenced by politics, marketing, anecdotal evidence and tradition. This results in a series of pendulum swings in education, where new ideas and practices are enthusiastically embraced, found wanting and abandoned, only to be rediscovered in cycles.

It must be possible to do better than this - to be able to build on the knowledge and expertise held within research and practice so that we can stand on the shoulders of previous progress.

Evidence-based reform in education means enabling practitioners to combine their professional expertise with the best available evidence from research, in order to make informed decisions about their practice. In an evidence-based system, a body of reliable and relevant evidence on 'what works' would be available across a wide range of subjects, pedagogies, educational stages and contexts. Educators would be able to engage with this information in a variety of formats and be able to apply this knowledge to their everyday practice. Systems would be in place to capture the key questions and new ideas emerging from practice and feed this back to develop further, relevant research.

It is important to clarify what we mean by evidence-based education. Evidence-based education is not 'cook book' teaching nor is it about prescribing what goes on in schools from a position of unchallenged authority. It is about integrating professional expertise with the best available external evidence from research, to improve the quality of practice. Professional judgements will always be needed to use the findings of research in the context of individual schools and classrooms.

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A policy of local responsibility

It is clear that we are heading into a period of decentralisation in education, with all political parties competing to divest Whitehall of the powers they've acquired over the last 20 years or so. If parties deliver on decentralisation, it will mean teachers will have increased freedom to decide how they organise their timetable, how they group children, which teaching materials to use and, most importantly, what teaching methods to adopt.

Devolution will mean that teachers will be able to choose from a myriad of different teaching programmes and approaches, with various levels of effectiveness, but all of which claim to be successful. How will they know if the claims made by publishers, academics or advocates for a given approach are true? What, or who, can they rely on to give them accurate and tested information about what works? How can they guard against being prey to anyone with an idea to sell?

Devolved power must go hand-in-hand with an obligation to make informed decisions; otherwise we will just reinvent the wheel again and again. Teachers must know what has been proven to work and in what circumstances. They must be able to trust the evidence. They have the professional skill to make sound judgements about what is best for the children they teach, but they need to be given the information and tools to do the job.

This document sets out a position paper and work plan for the *Coalition for Evidence-based Education* (CEBE) – an alliance of researchers, policy makers and practitioners who are interested in improving the way evidence is used, and exchanged, across the sector. It describes the rationale behind CEBE, discusses its aims and objectives and sets out a preliminary plan of activities and actions for this group.

It has one simple overarching principle: *to empower educators with evidence*.

Building on previous progress

Recent years have seen rising public interest in the evidence surrounding practice and policy developments in a number of fields. In healthcare, news reports highlight controversies such as the rationing of an expensive drug treatment or the likelihood of a flu epidemic. In environmental science, the evidence base around climate change is debated, and in social care the use of evidence for detecting child abuse is in the spotlight.

The way in which evidence is generated differs enormously in these situations: from observations by inspectors, through trials in clinics, to laboratory studies. Yet across these fields there is an increasing collective public awareness of the role that evidence plays in guiding policy and practice, and greater scrutiny when this evidence is ignored.

Where the natural sciences offer powerful evidence – on climate change or medical treatment for example – public and professional interest has led to the creation of major structures for assembling, assessing and applying evidence. For example, the *National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence* (NICE) constantly reviews research on the effectiveness and safety of medicines and medical procedures to help healthcare professionals and government make informed choices to maintain health [1]. Likewise, in social care policy and practice, the *Social Care Institute for Excellence* (SCIE) draws on a range of evidence on key social care topics to produce guidance for practitioners [2].

Inevitably, these advances have spread into the field of education, with considerable interest in the development of evidence to guide policy and practice in recent years. In 1995, a report by the *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development* (OECD) highlighted the importance, across

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all developed countries, of using evidence more centrally to inform educational practices [3]. In 1998, the *Department for Education and Employment's* (DfEE) review of educational research concluded that the actions and decisions of policy-makers were insufficiently informed by educational research [4].

This DfEE report led to two significant government-backed initiatives: the *National Educational Research Forum* (NERF) and the *Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre* (EPPI Centre). NERF brought together individuals and organisations from research, policy and practice to develop greater coherence, co-ordination and relevance across the range of research activities [5]. It reported on the feasibility of a *National Evidence Centre for Education*, which could mirror the functions of NICE/SCIE in producing evidence-based guidance. The EPPI Centre, established at the Institute of Education, London, has led the development of a database of empirical research and carries out systematic reviews of this and other research [6].

More recently, the *Strategic Forum for Research in Education* (SFRE) has been established by BERA, bringing various research, policy and practice stakeholders together to examine the state of the research system across the UK, including its use and impact [7]. Internationally, there are significant innovations in Canada, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Denmark and the US, all of which have been described in detail elsewhere [8,9,10].

So where does that leave use today? A wealth of different backgrounds and perspectives in education means educationalists across the sector have different experiences of using evidence, and contrasting ideas about its ingredients, value and usefulness. This means that underneath the generic term of 'evidence-based education' there are, in fact, many different views on what the concept of evidence-based education actually means [11]. Crucially, in the UK, there is no independent body that coordinates the accumulation, synthesis, interpretation and dissemination of evidence in education, as in social and health care.

In its place, there are dozens of independent organisations and initiatives that could describe themselves as working in 'evidence-based education'. This includes research groups that produce evidence (academic, government and NGOs etc), review groups that synthesise evidence, brokers that interpret evidence, and a multitude of different ways of accessing and engaging with evidence. These organisations work across different fields (policy, teaching/learning, social and emotional learning etc), different educational phases (primary, secondary and FE), and adopt a range of different approaches and methodologies.

A substantial amount of expertise has accumulated in this process and CEBE aims to draw on the experience, interest and learning that has developed. However, we also recognise that we are a long way from delivering an efficient evidence-based system that serves the needs of user communities. Although collectively, many of the necessary components and areas of expertise are in place to deliver evidence-based education, a lack of co-ordination and connectivity means much of the existing work takes place in relative isolation. Therefore, one of the underlying motivations behind CEBE is to provide a collaborative space to develop a more consensual picture of what an evidence-using culture could look like. It is worth looking in detail at why and how CEBE will work in this way.

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A VISION FOR CEBE

Why is CEBE needed?

A preliminary set of CEBE seminars, over 2009, explored the way in which knowledge is exchanged, and research evidence used, across the sector.

The intention was to capture a snapshot of where we stand in terms of evidence-based education today, by drawing on insights from practitioners, researchers, policy makers, teacher trainers, knowledge brokers and others (see Appendix E for a list of contributors). The key themes and insights that have arisen from these discussions have been the foundations on which this CEBE Position Paper is based.

The programme of events was as follows:

1. 'Introducing CEBE' – A preliminary meeting that proposed CEBE as a forum for developing collaborative approaches to evidence-based education.

2. 'Making Policy: Integrating Research and Evidence' – A parliamentary seminar that discussed the challenges, and opportunities, in incorporating research evidence in policy processes.

3. 'Using Evidence in Practice' – A seminar that investigated the interface between research and practice, and discussed steps to link research evidence to school/college decision-making.

4. 'Action and Next Steps' – A plenary session that drew together the key themes and actions from previous discussions.

Collectively, these meetings provided some important insights on how evidence currently informs policy and practice decision-making in the UK. (For further details, see notes from these meetings, Appendices B-E).

One overriding theme emerged from these discussions: **that despite an increasing body of useful evidence, and many notable initiatives and efforts to improve research use in education, there are still significant challenges in linking research evidence to widespread decision-making.**

These challenges relate to both the interface between research and policy, and research and practice. For example, when looking at the way research evidence is used to inform policy we heard that,

> *"There isn't an ongoing relationship between research and ministerial policy making - they impact on each other at sporadic points in time. There isn't a natural point of contact and evidence has to push for notice rather than being there naturally…. Evidence-informed policy would benefit from more sustained and systematic interactions between researchers and policy makers."*

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When we investigated the relationship between research and practice, a similar picture emerged.

> *"Schools often rely on gut instinct and a 'suck it and see' approach to see if a particular approach or programme works … We need more effective ways of letting schools know what works, in what context, at what cost."*

This difference between the concept of evidence-based practice, and the reality of how evidence is used in day-to-day decision-making, is certainly not restricted to education. It is so widely recognised that a whole field of 'translational research' has emerged, investigating the adoption and implementation of evidence-based policy and practice [9, 12, 13].

The emerging findings from this work generally support the conclusions of the CEBE discussions. For example, a recent study by the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, in the US, interviewed 65 influential leaders across policy and practice to find out how, when and under what conditions they refer to research evidence to inform their practice. Their principal finding was that policymakers and practitioners did not mention research evidence as often, nor discuss it as strongly, as other sources of information [14]. Similarly, studies that have looked at the uptake of programmes and procedures in social care show that approaches with strong evidence of effectiveness continue to be underutilised, compared to strategies with no apparent empirical support [15].

It is therefore in addressing the way research knowledge is exchanged and used across the sector that CEBE can be most productive.

In this way, CEBE complements the concurrent SFRE initiative, which is examining the state of the research system in the UK (including research funding and use) and suggesting how it should be reformed.

A connected evidence-using system

A key theme that has arisen from the preliminary CEBE discussions is the importance of effective *brokerage* in education, as a link between the creation of research knowledge and its application in policy and practice settings. Sin *et al* define brokerage as "individuals or organisations that bridge the evidence and policy/practice divides" [16]. In this context, many of the organisations that contribute to CEBE operate in this domain.

Knowledge brokerage is a complex issue, concerned with the connection between knowledge production and use, when the producers and users have different roles and responsibilities. For brokerage to function effectively, multiple elements of an evidence-using system must be brought together. The main elements of an evidence-using system are described in the following paragraphs, and illustrated in Figure A:
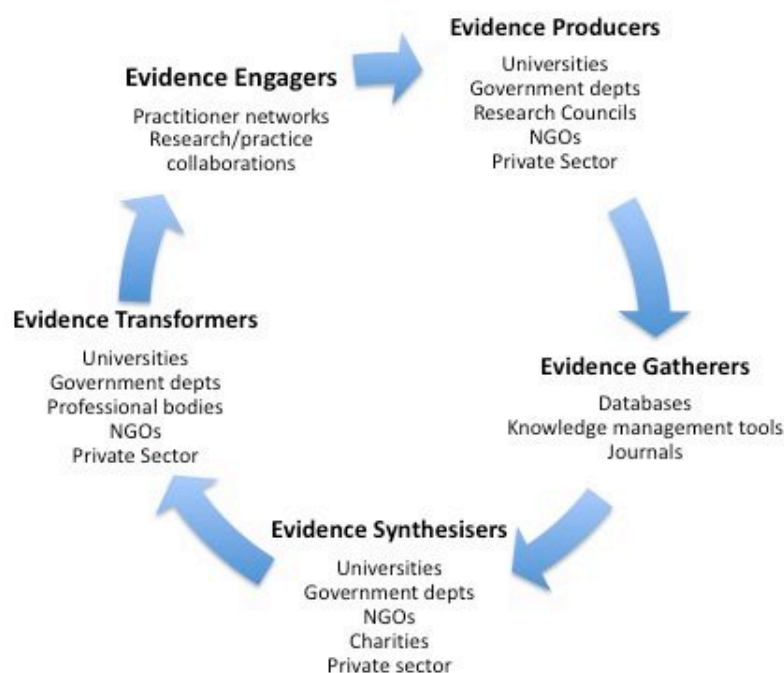
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Figure A. Elements of an evidence-using system in education

a) *Producing useful evidence*

The starting point for an evidence-using culture is, clearly, the production of useful research evidence in the first place. Here, there are hundreds of organisations in the UK (and thousands internationally) producing research evidence of some sort be they university groups, government departments, programme developers, NGOs, schools/colleges or others. This leads to the question of 'What counts as useful evidence?' – something that has dominated discussions around evidence-based education in the past and has, at times, stalled progress.

The CEBE position on this question is that research evidence must be 'fit for purpose'. In other words, what counts as evidence depends on what is being asked and for what purpose. If you are interested in *how* or *why* a particular approach works, or developing theory, then a broad range of evidence will be useful, including observations, case studies, surveys and other non-experimental research. If the question is about measuring *effectiveness* or direct *impact*, the key evidence will come from experimental studies and trials. This is especially relevant to education, where the complex social issues being studied mean a combination of different research methodologies is essential.

Independent of this pluralistic attitude towards evidence, it is crucial that the research agenda is driven by the needs of users, and drawn directly from engagement with policy makers and practitioners. One theme that emerged from CEBE discussions was that there is a relative shortage of rigorous, empirical evidence about 'what works' in terms of curriculum, pedagogy and wider school reform. Thus, we would support calls for more widespread impact evaluations in education research, which are coming from academia [17,18], practice [Appendix D] and policy settings [19,20]. This work, however, must sit as part of a rich and varied evidence base that is appropriate to the needs and interests of research users.

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b) *Identifying/ gathering evidence*

In the UK, larger scale studies are mainly carried out by universities, private sector and independent research organisations. They may be commissioned by government and its agencies or by a host of smaller organisations serving particular constituencies and topics. Smaller scale studies are carried out by a large number of organisations including schools, colleges and FE centres. To comprehensively gather reports from the hundreds of such organisations is a significant task. Including evidence from other countries multiplies this. In response, a number of search tools, databases, and directories have emerged that aim to draw research evidence together and improve access to the evidence base.

Examples of activity by CEBE members:

- the Education Evidence Portal (EEP) enables research from 25 organisations to be easily searched.

- the Teacher Training Resource Bank (TTRB) provides overviews and links to research for trainee teachers and teachers involved in professional development.

- the Current Educational and children's services Research in the UK (CERUK) database provides a directory of current education and children's service research projects.

c) *Assessing/synthesising evidence*

The task of assessing and synthesising research evidence is huge. In order to be useful to educators, it is preferable that individual studies are not considered in isolation, but interpreted in the context of reviews, which take into account other similar studies and provide an overview of the state of evidence in a particular area. Research that is intended for practical use needs to be assessed not only for its scientific quality but also for its utility.

In this context, systematic reviews are particularly powerful tools, in that they use a defined and transparent set of criteria to produce reviews that are accountable, replicable and updatable. This enables us to better understand what we know already and what needs to be investigated in the future. For some questions, narrative reviews, policy reviews and other summaries are most appropriate.

Examples of activity by CEBE members:

- the EPPI Centre conducts systematic reviews across a range of education topics.

- the Best Evidence Encyclopaedia (BEE UK) provides a series of best evidence reviews on educational programmes for primary and secondary education.

- other producers of systematic reviews include the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE), Nuffield Foundation, Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) and many independent academic reviewers.

d) *Transforming research knowledge and producing guidance*

Very little education research evidence gets used in its original form – a process of knowledge transformation needs to occur to interpret the findings for the context of research users. Policy makers and practitioners are looking for evidence about impact/outputs, clear implications for practice, and an understanding of the rationale underpinning the approach being studied.

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Materials for research users need to be clearly written, in an appropriate language, tailored to the audience (teacher, governor, school leader, policy maker etc) and available through a variety of channels and formats. This itself is a significant task, requiring dedicated time, resources and skills that are not always available, or valued, in the research community [13].

Alongside the evidence itself, research users also require rich, logistical information on implementation (training, materials, costs, management) to be able to take this evidence and apply it in real world contexts.

Examples of activity by CEBE members:

- CUREE produces a monthly *Research for Teachers* resource for the General Teaching Council, *Inside Evidence* for LSIS and the *The Research Informed Practice Site* (TRIPS) for the DCSF.

- IEE produces a magazine *Better: Evidence-based Education*, which provides accessible overviews of research developments organised in pedagogy and curriculum themes.

- a large number of public, voluntary, academic and private organisations produce guidance for policy/practice from research findings (DCSF, National College, GTCE, TDA, QCA, NFER etc)

e) *Engaging research users*

An important theme to emerge from the CEBE stakeholder discussions is that research use is very much a social process, based on trust and personality as much as practical usefulness. This observation is strongly supported by emerging research on knowledge exchange, which shows that informal networks and direct contacts are key predictors of research use. Thus, strategies that encourage linkage and exchange with research users are most likely to be effective [13].

During CEBE stakeholder discussions, we heard of a number of excellent examples of research/practice collaborations where educators are working directly with researchers to apply evidence-based practices to their local context.

Examples of activity from CEBE members:

- Birmingham City Council and Dartington Social Research Unit are developing and evaluating a social and emotional learning programme across 57 schools.

- Fife Council and Durham, Stirling and Dundee Universities have developed and evaluated peer learning strategies across 120 primary schools.

- C4EO is using a network of Sector Specialists to engage children's service providers with the outputs of its systematic reviews on Every Child Matters themes.

The system works both ways

It is important to point out that whilst this evidence-using system is presented in the context of transfer of knowledge from research to practice, the whole process also works the other way around. Policy makers and educators need to inform research just as much as research needs to inform policy and practice. To effectively capture the expertise and questions from practice we need to gather insights from educators, synthesise them in combination with other inputs, interpret them for the context of research and engage these insights with a receptive research community.

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CEBE strategy – Joining the dots

The various elements of an evidence-using system need to work together harmoniously if effective use is to be made of evidence on a larger scale.

As highlighted above, CEBE members are represented across all elements of this system. However, in general, individual efforts tend to focus on one or two particular elements of the system with insufficient connection to the others. Organisations that do work across larger portions of the entire system – evidence production through to engagement – tend to focus on a specific pedagogy/curriculum/sector focus (eg Dartington Social Research Unit: child health and development, C4EO: Every Child Matters themes). All initiatives tend to operate on a relatively small scale, reaching only a minority of practitioners or policymakers.

Much can be gained from connecting these elements more coherently. For example, a 'missing link' identified in CEBE discussions is a more systematic mechanism for generating advice and guidance from the outputs of systematic reviews [Appendix D]. Likewise, initiatives that provide access to the evidence base (TTRB, EEP etc) would be more effective if they were linked to a large-scale evidence-synthesising function. Across all phases, the multitude of resources and findings needs to be brought together more effectively and communicated more clearly.

Therefore, a key aim for CEBE is increasing the connectivity and coherence across different elements of this evidence-using system. Two paths need to be pursued simultaneously:

• activities that encourage strategic collaboration between existing bodies and initiatives

• practical initiatives to identify, and fill, gaps in the current infrastructure

The collaborative nature of CEBE means it is ideally placed to make progress on both fronts. The intention is to amplify, not replace, current activity, and so scale up evidence-based policy and practice in the UK.

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CEBE Activities

A CEBE programme – Getting to work

An effective CEBE strategy needs to work at multiple levels – from creating a receptive policy environment to directly demonstrating effective brokerage in action.

The most effective way of achieving progress will be through joint action, rather than through extended discussion, and thus, CEBE's work will be based around a series of achievable practical projects.

Three potential areas of activity are proposed:
  i   Influencing policy-making for evidence-based reform
  ii   Identifying necessary infrastructure and generating proposals
  iii. Practical CEBE knowledge exchange activities

By drawing on a broad spectrum of educational stakeholders, CEBE should generate outputs that accurately reflect what is needed for improved brokerage across the profession.

The sections below describe a programme of potential projects that have been put forward in CEBE discussions – further details on these proposals are available in Appendix E. These are by no means exclusive, or in any way conclusive, but aim to reflect a picture of the type of work CEBE could accomplish. The hope is that over time, CEBE members will contribute additional ideas and proposals, and agreement is made on which projects are most promising, offer the greatest impact, and are most achievable.

i. Influencing policy-making

Significant evidence-based reform in education cannot occur without a receptive political environment. Therefore, CEBE plans to work both independently, and with policy-facing organisations, to influence government and political parties. The aim is to become an authoritative, non-partisan source on the status of evidence-based policy and practice in policy circles, particularly focusing on research use and knowledge brokerage.

Encouragingly, there is significant interest in advancing evidence-based reform in education at the political level. Within the last year, both the *Children, Schools and Families Select Committee* and *Science and Technology Select Committee* have released reports advocating a more central role for evidence in policy and practice decision-making [20, 21]. Influential think-tanks such as *Demos* and *Policy Exchange* are also exploring the way in which evidence informs education, and have made relevant policy recommendations [19, 22]. At the government level, there are many concerted efforts to link the research, practice and policy communities more effectively.

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Nevertheless, despite these advances, there are considerable challenges to linking research evidence to policy decision-making. During CEBE discussions we heard how, at present, evidence feeds into policy in a rather haphazard way, based on informal networks rather than a continuous and interactive relationship. More systematic mechanisms are required for engagement where policy makers and researchers can work through policy issues in a more strategic and collaborative manner. Initiatives of this type are now emerging in other countries, providing innovative models of practice [8].

Project 1. 'Devolution Plus': the role of evidence in a decentralised education sector

A policy project exploring the role of evidence in a more localised education system. See Appendix E for details.

Project 2. A review of UK evidence-based education in the current policy environment

Mapping the landscape of evidence-based education in the UK, including a feasibility study of a NICE/SCIE model for education. See Appendix E for details.

ii. Proposing innovative new infrastructure

Whilst many elements of a coherent evidence-using system *are* available, CEBE also recognises that there are gaps in the infrastructure where new initiatives would greatly benefit knowledge exchange.

A number of practical proposals have been put forward during preliminary CEBE meetings to be discussed for further development. Given the importance of direct engagement between researchers and research users, *a key area of focus is on network-based approaches to knowledge brokerage*. As there is a relative paucity of evidence in this area, we would aim to research and evaluate any CEBE projects in order to provide more detailed understanding of social knowledge exchange processes [13].

Project 3. Community of Specialists proposal

An initiative to link policy makers, practitioners and press/media to research expertise across the field. See Appendix E for details.

Project 4. Education Evidence Service proposal

A live/interactive service where practitioners and policy makers can put forward practical questions and be guided to appropriate research evidence. See Appendix E for details.

iii. Practical CEBE knowledge exchange activities

Perhaps the most useful output CEBE can deliver is directly demonstrating a connected evidence-using system in action, through a series of practical, collaborative projects.

Any CEBE brokerage activities should clearly be driven by the needs of practitioners, and therefore, linked at an early stage to communities of practice. There are numerous different networks that could potentially be useful in this regard eg National Teacher Research Panel (NTRP), General Teaching Council of England networks (GTCE).

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Project 5. Demonstrating a 'proof-of-concept' for a connected brokerage system

Providing a network of schools with supported brokerage to a package of high-quality research resources. See Appendix E for details.

Project 6. Co-constructed examples of evidence use in practice

Events which combine the current 'state of play' of evidence on a pedagogy/curriculum topic with examples of evidence-use in real world situations. See Appendix E for details.

An 'open source' model for CEBE - Aligning independent projects

Whilst new activity will be a central aspect of CEBE's work, we also recognise that a huge amount of important work is already taking place to improve research use in policy and practice.

Therefore, in addition to new initiatives, a more radical proposal is to adopt an innovative open source model for CEBE, where coalition members contribute additional projects to a suite of collective brokerage activities.

How might this work? Projects would be run in the same way as usual – the development, funding, running and reporting all conducted independently. However, projects would be co-badged under the CEBE umbrella and contribute to its overall work. In doing so, CEBE becomes a forum for bringing together related activity to improve knowledge brokerage from a variety of sources, perspectives and inputs.

For example, the IEE, LSIS and Social Market Foundation are currently running a policy project investigating political approaches to developing evidence-based practice in light of current policy shifts towards decentralisation (see above). Under the proposed open source model, this project would exist as both an independent project for these groups, but also feed into discussions, communications and published outputs from CEBE.

The benefits for CEBE are that it generates a larger body of work, encourages collaboration and creates a more coherent picture of a connected evidence-using system. The benefits to individual organisations are that it stimulates knowledge sharing and professional learning from each other's work.

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CEBE Organisation

As a coalition, CEBE needs to combine the interests and motivations of many disparate organisations and individuals. To achieve this requires willing partners and an agent to bring them together productively. CEBE activity, including preparing funding proposals, will be carried out by teams of organisations, according to the issue in hand. A central secretariat will be needed to make this happen.

Membership

It is not proposed to formalise membership of CEBE – either for individuals or organisations. To do so would entail creation of unnecessary bureaucracy and impediments for organisations that cannot formally join, or would have to follow formal approval procedures to do so. Instead it is proposed that organisations and individuals are simply associated with CEBE through their contributions: some would attend events, others collaborate on projects, others maintain contact via newsletters. The key consideration is to maintain an up-to-date mailing database so that everyone is informed about opportunities. People would be referred to as contributors to or participants in CEBE activity rather than as members of an organisation.

Relationships with other organisations

Promoting CEBE to other organisations or individuals who may be interested in joining will be a shared responsibility of all members. The secretariat will need to be responsible for publicising CEBE formally and pursuing suggestions from contributors. Links to other organisations and networks that are developing evidence-based policy and practice should also be fostered, both by contributors and the secretariat. The secretariat would have the responsibility for keeping an up-to-date record of these connections.

Secretariat

The role of the secretariat will include:

- identifying opportunities for collaborative projects
- communicate about them across the coalition
- facilitating bidding processes
- tracking activity and communicating with members
- being a central point-of-contact
- supporting the steering group

This role has been played, to date, by the Institute for Effective Education (University of York) and a small sum has been provided by the university to support this (under HEIF funding). It would be sensible to continue this arrangement at least during the early formative stages of the coalition.

Communications

A key factor in maintaining successful collaboration across a coalition of parties is the quality of consultation and communication. In addition to regular group emailing, the secretariat will need to provide a regular newsletter, electronic discussion forums and a website. It will also need to facilitate

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face-to-face meetings, workshops and seminars. The secretariat will need to coordinate CEBE wide activities, whilst particular combinations of organisations and individuals would need to coordinate particular joint bids, projects and activities.

Administration

Specific tasks will include:

- Organising meetings – booking and paying for venues, agreeing dates, inviting delegates, co-ordinating agendas, circulating supporting paperwork and notes.
- Providing supporting office functions – maintaining a mailing list and contact details, providing a point-of-contact for enquirers and office support for CEBE projects and proposals.

Finance and accountability

At least in the early stages, it would be difficult for a coalition to provide accountability for financial transactions. It is therefore suggested that any collaborative projects should be run under the umbrella of CEBE, but formally managed by one of the collaborating organisations. Accountability for finance and performance would be the responsibility of that lead organisation.

The secretariat would be accountable for its actions and performance to the steering committee. It would also need to report on finance and effectiveness to the body that is funding it (initially the University of York)

Governance

The strategic direction of CEBE would need to be the responsibility of a steering group, comprising representatives of the main organisations wishing to be active in the coalition plus some individuals with significant relevant expertise. The steering group would have decision-making powers, under clear terms of reference and a process would need to be established to identify members. The secretariat would carry out the will of the steering committee.

To date, CEBE has been led by an ad hoc advisory group, comprising Bette Chambers (IEE), Phil Davies (Oxford Evidentia), Marilyn Leask (University of Brunel), Andrew Morris (independent), Estelle Morris, Jonathan Sharples (IEE) and Robert Slavin (IEE).

It seems sensible to continue to keep the central core of CEBE small, so that more time and effort can be put into the activities of CEBE, rather than into its management. With this in mind, the organisation should continue to be led by a small steering group, but activity would be shaped by smaller task groups set to take forward particular projects, plans or thinking. Views are sought from parties wishing to be active in the coalition about how to formalise the composition of the steering group.

The steering group would meet quarterly and operate in between via electronic communications and teleconferencing and would have responsibility for CEBE operational activities, particularly:

- Agreeing the key priorities for CEBE activity
- Agreeing and monitoring a budget for the secretariat
- Seeking sponsors and funders to maintain core activity and develop the programme
- Discussing possible new CEBE activities and events

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Funding

To date, those who have participated in CEBE have kindly donated their expertise, time and travel expenses. There now needs to be a way of funding the continuing activities of CEBE. This funding should be separated into

- core activities
- projects and proposals

Core activities

There is a need for some limited funding for the core activities of CEBE (particularly the external expenses incurred by the secretariat, such as room bookings and catering for meetings, newsletter/website production, etc). CEBE has already benefited from a grant of £13,000 through the HEIF scheme at the University of York. There are two major options for future funding, which are discussed briefly below.

Support from a single major funding organisation – seeking medium-term financial support for CEBE from one funder would be easier to administer, and allow plans to be developed with confidence. However, CEBE does not fit neatly into the funding criteria for many such organisations. Also, there may be a feeling that if CEBE has one, major funder, the independent, collaborative nature of the coalition may not shine through as clearly.

Multiple funders – The Science Media Centre has a potentially interesting funding model, which involves multiple funders donating no more than 5% of the total. Any contribution is gratefully received, no matter how small. This would express very clearly that CEBE is a joint project, with many supporters. However, it would be more difficult to manage, and there are not as many potential contributors within the education sector. Adjusting the maximum level of support to 10% would probably be a useful start with this.

The next steps would be for some preliminary discussion of a funding model at the next CEBE meeting, to be followed by more detailed budget proposals to be produced by the strategy board/secretariat.

CEBE Projects and Proposals

Ideas for joint funding bids could arise from anyone associated with CEBE. Usually these will involve collaboration between organisations, occasionally a single organisation may wish to associate its work with the coalition. As CEBE is not a constituted body and will have limited resources at its core, the main effort in securing funding for projects will come from organisations associated with CEBE. Bids will need to be made formally by a particular organisation, but the networking capacity of CEBE can be used to find partners, develop thinking and assemble complementary skills. The role of the secretariat will be to facilitate this process.

In the early days particularly it will also be possible for projects that organisations have in the pipeline could be "double-badged" with CEBE to indicate that they are consistent with CEBE's aims. The steering committee would need to confirm that this is the case.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Prospective CEBE Projects.

Project 1. 'Devolution Plus': the role of evidence in a decentralised education sector

Background

It is clear we are moving into a period of more local responsibility for decision-making in schools. Following the announcement of the gradual phasing out of the National Strategies, Ed Balls has proposed "a significant devolution of power and responsibility to our schools leaders, matched by strengthened school accountability". Likewise, the Conservatives have promised "opening up access to information and introducing choice and flexibility through decentralisation".

However, behind the rhetoric on the role of evidence in empowering professionalism, there is, at present, very little policy on the way in which this is going to be delivered. There are no clear plans to develop a comprehensive infrastructure that can capture and disseminate evidence effectively. Understandably, this issue is receiving increasing profile in the national press [23, 24].

Proposal

In light of these issues, the *Institute for Effective Education* (IEE)*, Learning Skills and Improvement Service* (LSIS) and *Social Market Foundation* (SMF) have proposed a policy seminar, exploring the role of evidence in a decentralised education sector. The aim is to bring leading political figures together to discuss how best practice can be disseminated in a system of lighter central government intervention. Politicians and leading figures from policy (eg think-tanks, DCSF) and practice-based organisations (eg NAHT, ASCL, NUT, teachers) will be invited.

The seminar will address questions such as:

- Is there a tension between devolution and ensuring that education is evidence-informed?

- What will flexibility mean for schools in practice?

- What is necessary to make sure that educators are equipped with the best evidence on effective pedagogy, programmes and curricula?

- Should we have an independent body in education that coordinates the accumulation, synthesis, interpretation and dissemination of evidence? If so, what should it look like?

The seminar will be held in Westminster and the outputs captured in a written report, generating publicity and exposure across the national press and media. The key messages from this meeting will then be taken forward through follow-up activity with the next government.

Status – Funding secured and project planning underway. Provisionally aiming for a pre-election event in early Spring.

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Project 2. A review of evidence-based education in the current policy environment.

Background and Proposal

There has been significant amount of activity in evidence-based reform over the last decade, and it would be beneficial to capture the status of evidence-based education in the UK in a comprehensive review. As well as providing an important account of recent progress, such a review would also provide a useful foundation from which to build CEBE's future work.

Issues the review would aim to cover include:

- Mapping the landscape – An overview of the key bodies involved in making up an evidence-using system
- An overview of incentives to adopt evidence-based practice – training, accountability mechanisms, financial incentives etc
- The role of government in delivering an evidence-using system
- A historical and international perspective
- An overview of political developments, such as current policy moves towards decentralisation and phasing out of the National Strategies
- Looking at evidence-based reform in healthcare, social care, social justice and other fields.

The last of these points is particularly relevant to CEBE. A recurring theme that arose across all CEBE discussions was to explore the role of an independent body in education that could co-ordinate the accumulation, synthesis, interpretation and dissemination of evidence - mirroring the roles of SCIE and NICE in social care and health care [See Appendix B-D].

This suggestion is certainly not new, having been a key output from NERF discussions between 2002 and 2006. However, the issue is currently under increased focus, given the current policy moves towards decentralisation [19, 23]. A key role of this review, therefore, would be to thoroughly investigate the feasibility, and applicability, of a NICE/SCIE model in education.

Project 3. Community of Specialists

Background

As previously discussed, the research evidence about evidence utilisation shows that evidence gets used in social contexts, not by linear transmission, but through a dynamic and mediated set of interactions between knowledge producers and research users [13]. In this context, personal relationships and direct contact are central to determining the uptake and use of research evidence in practical settings.

During CEBE discussions, we heard how developing links between policymakers/ practitioners and researchers can be a major barrier to knowledge exchange, and how interactions are often serendipitous. In response, it was proposed that we need more systematic mechanisms for engaging researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

Proposal

A distinct role that CEBE could play is hosting a *Community of Specialists* – a network (and taxonomy) of education research expertise across the country, covering different education topics, approaches and methodologies. This initiative would provide an initial point-of-contact for research users, linking policy makers, practitioners and press/media to appropriate research expertise across the field. For researchers, it would seek to actively promote researchers' contributions towards a broad variety of

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policy, practice and media activities. Sin *et al* have described this type of brokerage as 'matchmaking' [16].

This *Community of Specialists* would mirror the function of the *Science Media Centre* (SMC) based at the Royal Institution, which successfully provides the UK press/media with access to hundreds of natural science researchers in response to breaking news stories.

CEBE is well placed to develop a *Community of Specialists*, drawing from the broad spectrum of research expertise across the CEBE network. The directory of UK research developed through the Research Assessment Exercise (managed by HEFCE) could provide a further opportunity to build this database.

Project 4. Education Evidence Service

Linked to the *Community of Specialists* proposal is a recommendation to explore the development of an *Education Evidence Service.*

Background

During CEBE discussions we heard how there is a danger of overload of information and ideas being presented to schools from many different sources, including government, the press (national and professional), professional bodies, conferences, commercial marketing and research.

This challenge was recently captured in an EU Commission review on 'Evidence-based policy and practice' [8]:

"As the amount of data and information rises, often without quality appraisal, it is becoming increasingly difficult to pick up important research, interpret it correctly and link it to knowledge already available"

Unsurprisingly, school leaders report that 'gut instinct' plays an important role in decision-making, and a key aspect of leadership involves working out what to ignore and what to pass on [Appendix D]. It is also clear that teachers and policy makers are faced with practical challenges which don't necessarily relate to the way research evidence is presented.

Proposal

Explore the role of an *Education Evidence Service* (EES) through CEBE, where policy makers and practitioners could put forward practical questions and challenges and get answers drawn out of the best available evidence.

This would be a live, interactive service (virtual and face-to-face) where practitioners/policy makers could submit questions around evidence, and be guided to appropriate research evidence using existing networks and resources. Where possible, evidence would be drawn from a directory of systematic reviews and high-quality narrative reviews, with an emphasis on research that had been transformed for a practical context.

One potential strategy would be to trial such an initiative in an area where there are considerable challenges in translating research for practice and it is difficult to access reliable evidence (eg. 'Brain, Mind and Education'). Another strategy could be to pilot and develop such a service across a small network of schools.

A number of questions arise when considering this proposal, including:

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- How would an EES fit with existing initiatives to broker evidence to research users (eg. TTRB, EEP, The Key, GTCE *Research for Teachers*)? Would it be able to build on existing initiatives?

- Who would operate such a service, and make decisions on what evidence to broker?

- How would it deal with issues where evidence is ambiguous?

Project 5. Demonstrating a 'proof-of-concept' for a connected brokerage system

Background

CEBE partners are now able to provide a package of world-class research resources, focusing on robust evidence of 'what works' in school contexts. This includes, amongst others:

- systematic reviews on maths, literacy and school reform programmes (eg BEE reviews)
- systematic reviews on pedagogy/practices (eg EPPI reviews)
- evaluative research on approaches to social and emotional learning (eg Dartington Social Research Unit)
- robust indicator systems for schools, and evaluative research on pedagogy (eg CEM centre)
- systematic reviews relating to Every Child Matters themes (eg C4EO)
- websites and magazines on evidence-based practice (*Better* magazine, *Research for Teachers*)
- knowledge management tools for accessing the evidence-base (eg EEP, TTRB)

Proposal

CEBE could demonstrate a 'proof-of-concept' for evidence-based reform by providing a network of schools/local authority with supported brokerage to a package of high-quality research resources.

This would involve a number of steps:
- Working with schools/LA professionals to identify areas where provision would like to be/could be improved
- Establishing where useful evidence is available to inform decision-making in these areas
- Guiding practitioners to the best available evidence/personnel, making use of existing networks and resources.
- Transforming the research evidence for the context of that specific local practice.
- Providing practical information on implementation (training, management, costs) in addition to evidence.
- Supporting professionals to implement evidence-based solutions effectively.

Project 6. Co-constructed examples of evidence-use in practice

Background

During preliminary CEBE meetings, we observed an excellent presentation of evidence used in practice by a team from the Fife Peer Learning Project [26]. A researcher provided an overview of the evidence-based on peer learning, whilst local authority representatives and teachers provided practical perspectives on developing and using that evidence in their local context.

This co-constructed approach provided both useful evidence supporting peer learning, plus a window onto the way that evidence can be used in practice. It also captured the notion of evidence-informed professionalism by drawing on inputs from both research and practice.

Proposal

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Replicate this model with similar events and presentations, which combine the current "state of play" of evidence on a particular aspect of pedagogy/curriculum with practical examples of evidence-use in real world situations.

These events could take a variety of approaches - face-to-face conferences, seminars, webinars, podcast or a mix of approaches. The consistent element would be the translation of an evidence base into practice and opportunities to engage researchers and practitioners.

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Appendix B – Notes from 'Introducing CEBE' meeting – University of York, 30 April 2009.

A number of themes emerged from the discussions:

Communication

- Require a common language for communication between policy makers, practitioners and researchers.
- Invite the media to some of these coalition events? Develop a rebuttal service for the press.
- Make use of and link up the various media resources – Teachers TV, TTRB (e-Librarian), EEP, TES etc
- Ideas need to be communicated in a simple and trusted way. This information may build on a larger more sophisticated foundation but not everyone needs to know this.
- Is an assumption that if we can do better research and communicate it better then all will be fine. Know that is not true. Bad relationships need to be looked at – there is contempt on all sides.
- Recognise that teachers work with practical, enacted knowledge – research findings need to be present in this way. Need a dialogue for teachers to understand the research in the nature of their context. Start from where they are.

Intermediation

- Make better use of special advisors and government analysts as intermediaries between research and policy.
- Academics are often not the best communicators of their research. Need intermediaries who can translate the research into the context of the research-user. Target the right research at the right people at the right time.
- Research-users require contextualized summaries (see above)
- Very little guidance for practitioners on where to look for evidence – What's to be trusted? Where do I go? We should investigate a national infrastructure to link up research findings and explore third-party brokering services.

Integration

- Informal networks and personal contacts play a key role in influencing policy. Recognise that policy makers inevitably value relationships with researchers with whom they have had a positive experience.
- Influence on policy can happen through many different routes – from high-profile advisory boards down to day-to-day contacts. Need to explore all of these different routes.
- Need to discuss with policy makers when and how they are using research and their notion of research evidence.
- Need to explore incentives for the uptake of evidence-based programmes and practices
- National policy (top-down action) is required to support the development and expansion of action and partnerships at the practice (bottom-up) level.
- Need to evaluate different dissemination mechanisms. Build an evidence base of which approaches work best in which contexts.
- We should collect and document examples of effective research-policy and research-practice partnerships.

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- Alliance will only work if its constituents value it. Have to be clear about its use and honest about how much time we can commit.

Appendix C – Notes from 'Making Policy: Integrating Research and Evidence' meeting. Portcullis House, Westminster. 20 July 2009

A number of themes emerged from the discussions:

Relationships

- Evidence-based policy at present leans more towards evaluating and amending existing policy rather than using evidence to inform new ideas and policies. This is reflected in the allocation of resources for research within the DCSF.
- Nevertheless, there are some good examples of where longer term research has directly influenced policy e.g. EPPE project and subsequent focus on early years provision.
- There isn't an ongoing relationship between research and ministerial policy making - they impact on each other at sporadic points in time. There isn't a natural point of contact and evidence has to push for notice rather than being there naturally. Research often hits policy makers and ministers by surprise and is often inappropriate or too politically dangerous to act on immediately.
- It is not easy to discuss evidence with a minister when that evidence challenges a particular policy initiative. Subsequent application of this research evidence is much less likely.
- We require a more continuous and interactive engagement between policy makers and researchers. This would ensure more appropriate policy questions and answers are produced. This includes improving relationships between government's internal research and ministers.
- DCSF is working hard to develop evaluations more collaboratively with researchers prior to designing a pilot programme.
- It is only relevantly recently that policy makers have become more involved in policy around pedagogy, through initiatives like the National Strategies. Previously, policy has focused more on structure, finance, allocation of resources, priorities etc.
- Evidence around learning and pedagogy needs greater independence from the political process. As in health, independent bodies (like NICE and SCIE) should play a greater role in supporting practices in schools and decision-making in policy.
- Alternatively, *if* politicians are involved in determining and influencing pedagogy, they need to be closely engaged with the research evidence underlying those policies.
- There is political consensus emerging that decision-making in education should move more to the local level. The potential role of evidence in a more decentralised system is much greater, as local decision makers take on greater responsibility for policy.
- A wide range of research-proven programmes should be available. Government should provide incentives for schools (financial or otherwise) to use proven practices and programmes.
- Use of evidence in practice relies heavily on structures to transform the evidence into practice (e.g. National Strategies), as much as the evidence per se. These structures can provide systemisation of pedagogy in practice.
- It is important to note some of the successes there have been where research evidence has become much better integrated with policy. For example, the large international body of knowledge about the impact of sustained CPD.
- The influence of research evidence on policy is not just confined to central government policy, but also has impact on government agencies and delivery bodies (QCA, TDA, BECTA etc).

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- Incentives for teachers that provide greater engagement in research, such as the Masters in Teaching and Learning, should be welcomed.

Communication
- There are formal processes for research and established systems for policy making. How do those two systems interact and link together? Good research means very little without interpretation and implementation. We need to develop more formal processes which transform the outputs of the research to the needs of research users and enable greater input from research users into research design - a system of knowledge exchange. Have seen this kind of process, to some extent, take place in the C4EO programme.
- It is not always obvious for policy makers how to interpret or apply research knowledge or findings. There has to be additional translation into the policy context. It is not always clear how the research evidence fits with other factors.
- Researchers do not always write research reports in a language policy makers can understand.
- Evidence around effective programmes and practices has to made more easily accessible and in more actionable formats, based around direct engagement with research users.
- Policy makers need to work hard to present clear policy questions that can be answered by research evidence. Researchers need to focus on answering those specific questions.

Intermediation
- Analysts at DCSF (professional analysts, economists, statisticians, social researchers) play a key role in interpreting internal and external research for policy makers - setting it alongside other research on similar topics and translating it to policy contexts and language.
- Need to replicate examples of successful intermediary bodies which provide timely and coherent overviews of research evidence to research users (such as the Science Media Centre and Royal Society in the natural sciences).
- There are an increasing number of tools available for accessing the evidence base (EEP, TTRB, CERUK, TRIPS database etc) but much less available for appraising the evidence base on a whole.
- Should explore the formation of a NICE/SCIE equivalent which frames its work around specific questions, formulated by practitioners and policy makers, and then makes that evidence readily available. Take care to learn from the successes and mistakes of NICE and SCIE.

Appendix D – Notes from 'Using Evidence in Practice' meeting – Institute of Education, London. 9 November 2009

A summary of ideas and comments that emerged from the discussions:

Research/practice partnerships
- Effective partnerships between research groups, local authorities and schools can generate direct outcomes for the classroom that can immediately impact on learning, as demonstrated in the Fife Peer Learning Project. Successful partnerships require commitment and coordinated input from a broad range of stakeholders and a high level of organisation and support.

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- Examples of research-proven practice, like the Fife Peer Learning Project, should be treated as live demonstrations of things working. People could not only read the research, but see it in action. These cases studies would present the research evidence and also contain the rich, logistical information on how that evidence can be applied in practice (eg guides on training, curricula materials, management etc).

Scaling evidence-based practice

- There is a lack of mechanisms by which the outputs of reliable, systematic research can be captured and disseminated widely to most schools.
- We need effective ways of letting schools know what works, under what conditions and at what costs.
- We need to explore the development of a national agency which would frame its work around specific questions, formulated by practitioners, on the effectiveness of pedagogical methods, curricula materials, practices and programmes. Transformation of this information into summaries that are credible, accessible and contextualised for practice.
- Changes in infrastructure are less likely to occur without explicit support at the ministerial level. A political move towards decentralisation, at present, offers an opportunity to lobby for evidence-informed practice.
-

Communication and brokerage

- Informing practice with evidence should involve empowering professional decision-making by making appropriate evidence available, not telling schools what to do – authoritative, not authoritarian.
- Personal relationships and direct contact between researchers and practitioners are often central to determining uptake and use of evidence in practice – it is a social process. These interactions are often serendipitous and would benefit from more systematic network-based brokerage.
- Mechanisms are required whereby practitioners can ask practice-based questions and get answers drawn out of evidence. Often the research evidence is not framed in a practical context and appropriate language, and requires transforming for use.

Contextual barriers to using evidence

- There is danger of overload of information and ideas being presented to schools, without reliable quality appraisal. Schools often rely on gut instinct and a 'suck it and see' approach to find out if a particular practice or programme is effective in a particular school context.
- Finding enough time to engage deeply with research and evidence is a major barrier for practitioners. External pressure on schools means they are often reluctant to try new things. School leadership involves filtering out appropriate information and working out what to ignore and what to pass on.
- Applications of evidence-based programmes and practices often require small-scale trial projects in individual school settings to determine if it will work in the local context.
- Practitioner research is a powerful way of invigorating practice and demonstrating local applicability. Nevertheless, schools should not necessarily have to be involved in research to be active users of research evidence.
- Recognition that Ofsted represents a key driver for change in schools. However, Ofsted criteria are not always commensurate with evidence-based practice. Building a focus on research evidence into the inspection framework would be a powerful way of driving change.
- It is sometimes too easy to rebrand existing practice under the latest buzzword, rather than implement something different. We have to better understand the barriers to applying evidence and initiatives effectively (too hard? little support? etc).

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- We need to create an appetite for research and evidence – there needs to be pull as well as push factors. In this context, single days of professional development are not effective. It has to be ongoing.

Appendix E – Contributors to CEBE meetings 2009/10

To be completed

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