Tightening research-practice connections: Applying insights and strategies during design charrettes

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development model; the shopping model; the emergent/opportunistic model). The remaining two models (design experiments; and engineering research) involve more collaboration between researchers and practitioners, and align more closely with knowledge production. Viewing these same issues through a different lens, Nutley, Walter and Davies (2007) describe how research can be used instrumentally (directly, e.g. using research-based guidelines to shape how a specific task is undertaken) as well as conceptually (indirectly, e.g. when understanding derived from research influences policy). Based on their review of how research is actually used in several sectors, they offer concrete ideas for facilitating research use through: shaping the climate for research use; taking a broad approach to dissemination; ensuring interactions between the worlds of research and practice; facilitating access to and engagement with research findings; and supporting the development of skills to use research.

Several of the ideas described above were echoed and enriched during an invitational conference featuring research-practice connections that were viewed as powerful, largely because specific attention is given to relationships as well as knowledge, and to the importance of attending to both the production and use of knowledge. The models discussed included: research-practice partnerships (Coburn, Penuel & Geil, 2013); networked improvement communities (Bryk, Gomez & Grunow, 2011); design-based implementation research (Penuel, Fishman, Cheng & Sabelli, 2011); and the knowledge-building sector (McKenney & Schunn, in review).

Learning goals

This workshop helps participants learn how to tighten research-practice connections in their own work. This main goal is supported by several sub-goals, each relating to specific portions of the workshop, described below.

Through this workshop, participants will:
- Understand main factors and modes influencing research-practice connections;
- Become familiar with several models for connecting research and practice;
- Be able to analyze research-practice connections in terms of knowledge production and use;
- Understand how the work of individuals, as well as communities, can help tighten research-practice connections.

Activities

This highly interactive session features hands-on activities for capturing, analyzing and developing the knowledge, values, and vision of its participants. Through plenary discussion, small group work, and individual reflection, participants will explore and design ways to connect research and practice in their own settings.

Participant preparation

Prior to the workshop, participants will be asked to bring a specific research project in mind; one which they would like to see connected with practice. Through email exchange before the workshop, participants will be asked to prepare a brief (one paragraph) description of the project, as well as their ideas about the connection to practice.

Introduction (20 minutes)

After a brief welcome and overview of the workshop goals and activities, the facilitators will introduce the main theoretical ideas underpinning the workshop. This will help participants become familiar with the main factors, modes, and models for connecting research and practice.

development model; the policy model; the 'long route') and two of which show more characteristics of Havelock's problem solving model (design experiments; and the engineering model). De Vries and Pieters (2007) add an eighth model which shares elements of Havelock's social interaction model and highlights equal collaboration: knowledge communities. Each of these models denotes different assumptions and expectations regarding the roles of practitioners and researchers in the generation and application of theoretical understanding. Taken together, three broad types of research-practice interactions during knowledge production can be distinguished today: RDD, design research and communities.

Workshop structure
To meet these aims, the workshop is divided into two main stages. The first stage is intended to sensitize and inform participants by sharing insights and strategies from existing projects that stimulate fruitful research-practice connections during knowledge production and/or use. Strategies for sharing (emerging) insights will be discussed in terms of: content (focus), form (products and activities), medium (face-to-face, online, etc.) and time (sustained, bursts, frequency, etc.). During the second stage of the workshop, participants will be encouraged to consider, and design, specific strategies for tightening research-practice connections that can be put into action in the short to medium term. Participants may choose to develop action plans related to individual projects, or to a broader (sub-) set of ISLS work. Participants will be involved in design charrettes that will undertake the tasks of: establishing a focus, considering time, determining the form and choosing the media to enhance research-practice interactions in a project that is currently underway or recently completed.

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