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Toward Knowledge Mobilization

Language as a Means to Convey Compatibility

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Knowledge mobilization is crucial for educational transformation to increase equity for students. To support this work, we examine the nuanced factors involved in effective knowledge mobilization.¹

Knowledge mobilization is the process of moving knowledge to where it will be most useful.² This process is iterative, multidirectional, and often collaborative and co-productive.³ *Knowledge brokers* connect otherwise disconnected individuals or groups and are important for knowledge mobilization.⁴

Whether educators and policymakers mobilize and implement resources or new ideas depends on the degree to which they are perceived as compatible with their values, experiences, and needs.⁵

Knowledge brokers need to use effective language to convince their audiences of the compatibility between mobilized resources and their values, experiences, and needs.⁶

This study examines some of the ways knowledge broker organizations leverage language to engage educators and policymakers, answering the research question: *How do knowledge brokers leverage language to mobilize knowledge for educational improvement?*

Data & Methodology

Our study examined the experiences of five well-known, equity-focused organizations in the United States working to broker evidence-based resources into different levels of education systems—from classroom teachers to state-level policymakers. We inductively coded 18 hours of interviews to establish themes. Through member checks, we ensured validity and provided an opportunity for participants to add nuance to the findings.

Findings

Our analysis revealed that these effective knowledge brokers were conscious of the ways in which they leveraged language in their work. Through language, knowledge brokers learned about their audiences' values, experiences, and needs and the contexts their audiences were working in. This understanding helped them to know what resources their audiences needed and how to hone their language and messaging to convey their resources' compatibility. To convey compatibility, they considered three interrelated factors.



Compatibility across Different Learning Stages

Knowledge brokers sought to understand their audiences conceptually and meet them where they were in their learning.

In a "face-to-face experience with real users... you can't help but learn, *this is ... their real problem.*"

"The more complex the thing you're trying to spread, the more [audiences] think, *I don't want to do this anymore.*"

Compatibility across Regions and Contexts

Knowledge brokers considered regional and contextual differences communicated by audiences and signified through language.

Some terminology was considered "too political" in some states.

One knowledge broker designed their resources in an "agnostic way" to be "adaptable" to many contexts.

Compatibility across Different Professional Identities

Knowledge brokers knew that their audiences' professional identities were relevant to the perceived compatibility of resources. *Professional identity* refers to people's ideas of how to be, act, and understand their work.⁷

One knowledge broker described how educators "adopt identities," such as being an equity-focused educator, that help engage with their content.

Depending on their identities, people implemented resources differently. Some resources were "getting some pickup... in some good ways and some problematic ways."

Looking Ahead

Using language with intention when mobilizing knowledge to practitioners, administrators, and policymakers helps convey compatibility between resources and the intended audience's values, needs, and experiences. By doing so, knowledge brokers are able not only to disseminate their resources, but also to work toward shifting mindsets and practices and building capacity.⁸

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