Bridging the Gap between Educational Research and Practice: A Qualitative Study at Superior University Lahore

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Abstract: *This qualitative study attempts to investigate the current disconnect between applied educational studies and professional practice. The study focuses on the requirement that academic researchers give policy implementation in the area of education more consideration. Ten faculty members from two private colleges were chosen as participants for semi-structured interviews using a simple random sample technique. With the aim to enhance the role of research in developing and improving professional practices in higher education, it aimed to gain knowledge about the issues and possible solutions. The study's conclusions help to clarify the problems with practice-based research in the educational setting and have important ramifications for upcoming policy creation and implementation.*

Key Words: Bridging the Gap, Practice-based Research, Evidence-based Practice, Knowledge Mobility

Introduction

The goal of education is to provide students with excellent instructional and educational experiences. To find evidence-based practices that may enhance or eliminate competent practices in educational settings, this endeavour depends extensively on educational research. The gap between education studies and how they can be implemented in real life, nevertheless, continues to be a source of worry. This discrepancy is a substantial obstacle to ensuring that the insightful knowledge generated from research investigations is successfully transformed into real advancements in educational practices (Elliott,

2016). Many authors and academics have emphasized the necessity for academic researchers to focus more on how practice and policy are applied in education. Despite the abundance of information available, there has been no improvement in general educational results and day-to-day instruction (Kang & Anderson, 2018). This study aims to identify the elements that influence the discrepancy between practice-based research and professional educational practices. This study aims to shed light on potential ways to bridge this difference by examining the difficulties and obstacles preventing the efficient application of research findings. A deeper comprehension of these problems will help in the creation of

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evidence-based approaches that can greatly influence instructional practices and educational systems (Elmore, 2019). The results of this study have important ramifications for those who decide educational policy as well as scholars and practitioners. This study will aid in the creation of focused interventions to close the gap and promote evidence-based decision-making in educational settings by identifying the main barriers that prevent the use of research in practice. It will be possible to gather insightful perspectives on how educational institutions may support a culture of research application and collaboration among educators from faculty members who are actively engaged in both research and teaching.

This study also aims to answer concerns raised by certain authors on the prominence of evidence-based practices in educational settings. This study promotes a more systematic and intentional integration of research results to produce significant gains in educational outcomes by underlining the significance of closing the gap between research and practice (Sutcher et al., 2017).

To sum up, this study aims to add to the continuing discussion about how to improve the influence of educational research on professional practices in education. This research intends to enhance evidence-based decision-making, thereby benefiting students, educators, and the educational community as a whole by examining the difficulties and potential solutions to fill the gap between research and practice.

Objectives

The objective of the study is to analyse the gap between educational research and practice.

Literature Review

To improve student learning outcomes, educational research findings must be incorporated into classroom activities. The disconnection between study and practice has, nonetheless, remained a problem in the realm of education. This study of the literature

discusses numerous tactics suggested in the literature to help the conversion of research knowledge into useful application in educational settings, as well as the causes causing the gap and their effects (Hargreaves, 2017). The discrepancy between educational research and practice has received widespread recognition in the literature on education. Researchers have pinpointed a number of causes for this mismatch, such as various study contexts, limited practitioner-researcher collaboration, and communication difficulties (Coburn, 2018). When attempting to successfully adopt research-based practices in their classrooms, educators frequently run across roadblocks. These obstacles may be caused by things like a lack of finances, a lack of time, aversion to change, and competing priorities (Datnow & Park, 2017). Many strategies have been put forth to close the gap between research and practice, highlighting the significance of professional growth, collaborative collaborations, and evidence-based decision-making (Darling-Hammond & Rothman, 2018).

Method of the Study

A qualitative approach was used in this research. The aim of this study was to qualitatively explore the bridging gaps between educational research and practice.

Population

A population is defined as "a set of components from which we want to draw conclusions," as stated by Scheaffer et al. (2006) in their research. The population of the study consisted of all senior faculty members of private sector universities in the Lahore province of Punjab.

Sampling and Sample

The sample of the study was collected by using a simple random sampling technique. Two private universities were chosen, along with single disciplines (education). Ten (10) senior faculty members were chosen randomly from two education departments of two private universities.

Data Analysis

Possible Identified Gap

According to Teacher Perceptions Gaps

1. The lack of relevance, accessibility, and usability of research findings for practitioners.
2. The lack of communication, collaboration, and trust between researchers and practitioners.
3. The lack of critical reflection and evaluation of research evidence and its implications for practice
4. The lack of relevance, accessibility, and usability of research findings for practitioners.

It depicts the possible perception of a gap between educational research and practice. Research findings often lack practical relevance, accessibility, and usability for practitioners, hindering their effective application in real-world settings.

Communication gaps and a lack of trust between researchers and practitioners hinder fruitful collaboration and the critical evaluation of research evidence's impact on practice.

Overall, it was revealed that a disconnection was found between research and practice. It was fueled by irrelevant and inaccessible findings for practitioners, compounded by communication gaps and lack of trust, hindering meaningful collaboration and critical evaluation of the research's real-world impact.

Thematic Analysis

Table 1

Sub Theme	Respondent Suggestions	% Percentage
Context Development	Developing more context-specific, problem-oriented, and participatory research methods that involve practitioners in the design, implementation, and dissemination of research.	(N=30, 88%)
Professional Development	Enhancing the capacity and motivation of practitioners to access, interpret, and apply research evidence in their practice through professional development, mentoring, and networking.	(N=30, 85%)
Connection Development	Creating more platforms and opportunities for dialogue, feedback, and exchange between researchers and practitioners, such as conferences, journals, newsletters, blogs, podcasts, etc.	(N=30, 75%)
Cultivate culture	Fostering a culture of inquiry, innovation, and improvement in educational settings that values and supports the use of research evidence for decision-making and problem-solving.	(N=30, 95%)

Table 1 depicts the sub-themes of faculty members' suggestions to bridge the gap between educational research and practice like 'context development' professional development' 'connection development and cultivating research culture in students.

Discussion

Adopting context-specific, problem-oriented research methodologies that involve practitioners in the study process is one strategy to close the research-practice divide. Studies that are directly relevant to the difficulties and demands encountered in educational settings might result from

collaborative research projects in which academics closely collaborate with educators, administrators, and other stakeholders (Coburn, 2003). The research-practice gap must be closed by increasing practitioners' ability and desire to obtain, analyse, and utilise research evidence. Teachers might be equipped to incorporate research findings into their teaching tactics by participating in professional development programmes that emphasise evidence-based practises, research literacy, and critical appraisal of research (Bybee, 2002). It is crucial to create avenues for productive dialogue and cooperation between researchers and practitioners. Online platforms, conferences, journals, newsletters, blogs, podcasts, and other venues are used to disseminate research findings and promote conversation (Friedman, 2019). The key to closing the gap is to foster a culture that values and encourages the application of research-based evidence in educational settings. By encouraging educators to experiment with evidence-based practices and creating an atmosphere where research is seen as a tool for ongoing improvement, schools and educational institutions may foster this culture (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). A multifaceted strategy is needed to close the research-practice gap in education. Education stakeholders can cooperate to maximise the potential of research in enhancing educational outcomes by putting context-specific, participatory research methods into practice, offering opportunities for professional development, creating forums for discussion, and fostering a culture of inquiry. To build an evidence-based educational system that benefits both researchers and practitioners and ultimately improves the quality of instruction and students' learning experiences, it is crucial to close this gap (Coburn, 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, fostering a collaborative and supportive culture of inquiry, while involving practitioners in context-specific research and enhancing their capacity to access and apply evidence, can bridge the research-practice gap and promote meaningful change in educational settings.

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