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Educational Brokerage and Knowledge Mobilization in the United States: Who, What, Why, How?

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Abstract

Although the central role of educational intermediaries that can connect research and practice is increasingly appreciated, our present understanding of their motivations, products, and processes is inadequate. In response, this chapterⁱ reports on a multiple-case study that asks how and why three large-scale U.S.-based intermediaries—Edutopia, the Marshall Memo, and Usable Knowledge—are engaging in brokerage activities, and compares the features of the knowledge they seek to share and mobilize. These entities were deliberately chosen and expected to reveal diversity along these dimensions. Multiple data sources were analyzed, based primarily upon Ward’s (2017) knowledge mobilization framework and Hubers and Poortman’s (2017) three suggested principles for effective boundary crossing in education.

These entities contrasted widely, especially in relation to core knowledge dimensions, enabling us to identify two distinct brokerage types. To conclude, we describe theoretical (how to conceptualize brokerage) and practical (how to foster interactive knowledge exchange) implications. This study also reveals certain innovative mobilization approaches, including skillful use of social media and the production of videos depicting how and why to adopt particular strategies, which we suggest others may wish to emulate or adjust/adapt.

Chapter Overview

The research described in this chapter was conducted based on our understanding that: 1) educational intermediaries that can connect research to practice are of vital importance; but also 2) these entities are at present inadequately understood. To address this knowledge gap, this chapter compares/contrasts three particularly prominent U.S.-based intermediaries—*Edutopia*, Kim Marshall’s *Marshall Memo*, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s (HGSE) *Usable Knowledge*. We have aspired to understand the ways in which their activities and processes overlap and vary. In particular, in conducting this research, we have explored:

1. Why are these entities mobilizing knowledge?
2. What and whose knowledge are they mobilizing?
3. What are the features of their knowledge mobilization (KMb) approaches?

As expected, these entities varied widely both in terms of content and process features of their approaches. Moving past our expectations, we point to two distinctive types of brokerage and we reconnect with literature within and beyond the education sector as we consider implications. In particular, in the discussion we attend to ways in which interactive research engagement might be fostered and expanded in education.

R-P Disconnects, and Possible Roles/Functions for Brokers

This volume’s introductory chapter has provided an overview of some significant and persistent barriers to research-practice ($R \Leftrightarrow P$; hereafter denoted as R-P) connections, and has

positioned intermediaries as offering one promising means of overcoming these barriers and bridging stakeholders operating in separate contexts. In fact, US-based efforts to bridge R-P gaps in education via intermediaries are not new, perhaps beginning with the 1960's launch of federally funded Research Educational Laboratories. A more recent, governmentally funded example is the *What Works Clearinghouse*, which began in 2002 (Farley-Ripple, Tilley, & Tice, 2017). Government support for such efforts, however, has fluctuated across time (for reflections from a 40-year history of involvement and observation of such work, see Louis, 2016).

In the U.S., we have also seen R-P intermediaries arising from educators' demands—the Marshall Memo (*Case #2 for this study*) provides one such example, as does the online newspaper *EdNC*—indeed, some now argue educators' demands for research-based information is at historical highs (Farley-Ripple et al.). We have also seen intermediaries' R-P bridging efforts arising from particular visions—e.g., entities such as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has assumed an R-P connecting position, as has Edutopia (*Case #3*), and we can also include a wide array of advocacy organizations and think tanks in this category—though we believe these organizations have focused more so on influencing practice secondarily, by way of influencing policy. In any case, we concur with Anderson, De La Cruz, and Lopez (2017) that these trends have also coaxed researchers, universities, and colleges (i.e., *knowledge producers* as traditionally viewed: Campbell & Levin, 2012) to consider whether/how to mobilize knowledge as well. Universities' activities and knowledge claims have become more complicated in recent years, and accordingly we are seeing intensified efforts by universities to extend their organizations' research influence (Dudo, 2015; Yettick, 2015), as is the case with HGSE's Usable Knowledge (*Case #1*).

To summarize, then, it appears educational knowledge brokering by intermediaries in the U.S. is presently crowded, complex, and varied, which we also argue has not commanded

sufficient attention. This chapter thus is aimed at least to get us started in addressing this issue, in particular by closely examining three prominent entities which, while operating in different ‘fields,’ are aiming explicitly to mobilize research and other knowledge within educational practice.

Background: Definitions

The key terms/definitions we adopt for this chapter—related to *knowledge mobilization (KMb)*, *brokerage*, and *boundary objects*—align with those as presented in this book’s opening chapter.

How do Knowledge Brokering Intermediaries Mobilize Knowledge?

Recent scholarship regarding R-P brokering in education has provided initial insights into their structure and function, organizational features, roles and activities, and favorable attributes (see Farley-Ripple et al., 2017). Relative to structure, for instance, attention is drawn toward the way in which some individuals/entities can serve to cross R-P boundaries by filling *structural holes* (Burt, 2004) between them. Research has begun to clarify brokers’ activities and attributes. Ward, House, and Hamer (2009) differentiate brokers relative to whether their activities emphasize knowledge management, linkage/exchange, and/or capacity building. Neal et al. (2015) drew from Gould and Fernandez’s (1989) broker typology and identified all five types (e.g., gate-keeper, liaison) in U.S. education. Finally, research within and beyond education has sought to identify effective brokers’ attributes. Trustworthiness has been identified across multiple studies (see Farley-Ripple et al., 2017).

Perhaps most fundamental—but underexamined—is to consider how knowledge mobilizers can vary regarding what and whose knowledge they feature (Ward, 2017). This study thus follows Ward and colleagues (Ward, 2017; Ward et al., 2009), who stress that brokerage might include multiple types of evidence, generated by multiple groups. We also draw from Hubers and Poortman (2017), who suggest specific content shared should flow

from the broker's unique vision. Both views cohere with Gibbons et al.'s (1994) and Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons' (2003) concept of "Mode 2," used to highlight changing trends in knowledge production. In particular, Mode 2 suggests a shift from the traditional academic disciplinary-based linear modes of production (Mode 1) to one where knowledge is generated in an application context. Related to Mode 2 knowledge is the concept of socially robust knowledge. Gibbons (1999) suggests "socially robust" knowledge is that which has not simply originated from quality research but is also likely to be understood and socially accepted. Altogether, we expect that intermediaries' variations on what and whose knowledge stem from unique premises and visions. We further expect these differences will hold implications relative to brokers' reach, popularity, and ultimate success in moving knowledge to action.

Conceptual Framework

For this study, we relied primarily upon Ward's (2017) KMb framework, and also analyzed selected study data in relation to Hubers and Poortman's (2017) three suggested principles for effective boundary crossing in education.

Ward's (2017) framework, developed from a cross-disciplinary analysis of existing KMb models, is organized around four questions: "Why is knowledge being mobilised? Whose knowledge is being mobilised? What type of knowledge is being mobilised? How is knowledge being mobilised?" (p. 1). Answers to these questions form 16 subcategories (see Table 1, presented in this book's opening chapter). Relative to what knowledge, for example, Ward identified three categories and found some models exclusively mobilize one type and others address a mixture: scientific/factual knowledge, technical knowledge, and practical wisdom (a mixture, we argue, means brokerage efforts are more likely to result in applicable knowledge). Regarding whose knowledge is mobilized, Ward discerned five categories and here as well noted that sometimes multiple groups are featured: professional knowledge

producers, frontline practitioners, members of the public/service users, decision makers, and product/program developers. We argue knowledge is more likely to become socially robust when/if various stakeholders are drawn upon. Ward's analytic categories were anticipated to support understanding these entities, and any detected differences were anticipated to hold meaning (e.g., whom does x highlight as expert, and what type(s) of knowledge does x preference?).

To further address questions regarding *what* and *how* knowledge is mobilized, we drew from Hubers and Poortman (2017). Describing effective professional learning networks in education, these authors identified boundary crossing as essential and advanced three principles, framed as questions, for effective knowledge mobilization. They are summarized below:

1. Given the vision for boundary crossing, what content should be shared? For instance, should the knowledge pertain to a specific subject, programs or new approaches, policy, background information, and so on?
2. At what level of detail should knowledge be shared? Specifically, these authors note brokers often remain stuck at the level of informing teachers about certain activities or describing these activities' outcomes. The next level of mobilization, however, involves creating "how-to" schemas and/or explaining underlying principles behind certain strategies (Why should you do it? Why should it work?). Ultimately, they argue, addressing both levels is superior.
3. What knowledge-sharing activities could be used? It is most effective to share knowledge via active personal engagement (and ideally the engagement of others in a risk free trial where the knowledge in question can be experimented with in a safe way). This type of activity is preferred because it gives educators a concrete idea about what is expected. However, it is scarcely employed because of the level

of resources required to achieve change at scale. Besides providing active personal engagement, personal communication can be used (e.g., formal presentations, updates during a meeting, even lunch conversations). However, the most- often- chosen activity, yet least likely to be effective, is written communication (e.g., an e-mail or a staff newsletter item). Written text offers a relatively fast way to reach all colleagues, but colleagues will not always read it and/or may not understand it as intended.

We read behind this discussion an implicit acknowledgment that boundary objects (e.g., flexible artifacts functioning instead of or in addition to personal connections; Star, 1989) are fundamental to knowledge mobilization. Professionals need time to come to understand new knowledge being brokered, and artifacts can enable knowledge to move across temporal and spatial boundaries, providing them with opportunities to visit/revisit it.

Methods

A full description of the methods we used can be found in Malin et al. (2018). In summary, we treated the Marshall Memo, Edutopia, and Usable Knowledge as ‘cases’ of educational KMb, and therefore pursued a multiple case study design. In particular, this design enabled us to investigate the compare/contrast three entities representing theoretically diverse positions/fields. We selected ‘prominent’ cases that included explicit aims directed toward educational *practice* (vs. policy) and core activities including dissemination and/or exchange of at least some research and/or research-based knowledge. We strived to develop a robust and trustworthy chain of evidence regarding these entities’ features in relation to our main research questions. As such, we drew from multiple sources of evidence and underwent processes of reflection, interpretation and challenge as a research team until we were comfortable with our findings and claims.

We proceeded as follows. First, we developed broad, shared understandings of each entities’ features and activities (e.g., origins, missions/visions, staffing, social media presence/activity; Cooper, 2014; see Table Two). We did so primarily by reviewing publicly available information. We then built and analyzed a data set containing at least three consecutive months’ material (e.g., press releases, summaries, Facebook posts, videos) that each entity created and/or hosted and shared, via social media or their products or newsletters. For Edutopia, which was distinctly active across multiple platforms, we focused on content shared via Facebook and YouTube. Identified materials were classified beginning with Ward’s questions and categories. We also drew from Hubers and Poortman (2017) to evaluate entities’ characteristic depth of content (e.g., informational vs. how-to schemas). To address how knowledge was shared first entailed classifying the entities’ dominant approach relative to Ward’s three analytic categories. We also drew from, then extended beyond, Hubers and Poortman (e.g., their distinction between written material and personal connections), noting distinguishing process features for each entity. Further analyzing the how question required further research (e.g., we globally appraised Edutopia’s presence on Pinterest and studied Usable Knowledge’s Twitter activities and following). Finally, we compared our findings against the entities’ explicit vision/purpose statements to discern *why* they were mobilizing knowledge.

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Educational KMb: The Cases

Usable Knowledge describes itself as “a trusted source of insight into what works in education—translating new research into easy-to-use stories and strategies for teachers, parents, K–12 leaders, higher ed professionals, and policy-makers” (President and Fellows of

Harvard College, 2017). Its listed staff at HGSE are Bari Walsh, senior editor, and Leah Shafer, staff writer. All content, including written posts and short videos, are hosted at <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/uk>. Usable Knowledge also disseminates a free monthly e-news- letter to subscribers. It has a Twitter presence (@UKnowHGSE) with 9,042 followers as of September 7, 2017. Its Twitter pro- file indicates its affiliation and focus: “From Harvard University, connecting @HGSE research to practice.” HGSE has a large social media presence (e.g., 150,000 Facebook and 123,000 Twitter followers) and frequently highlights Usable Knowledge and its contents. For instance, on July 14, 2017, HGSE retweeted Usable Knowledge and added, “Follow @UKnowHGSE for strategies on how to improve the school experience for students and teachers alike” (HGSE, 2017). In terms of the credibility of the case, the U.S. News and World Report (2017) appraises HGSE as the nation’s top-ranked education school. HGSE is part of Harvard University, an elite private higher education institution.

The Marshall Memo (2017, n.p.), “A Weekly Round-Up of Important Ideas and Research in K-12 Education,” has been owned/published since 2003 by Kim Marshall. He claims it is the third most circulated U.S. educational publication, behind only *Educational Leadership* and *American Educator*. It is designed to “to keep principals, teachers, superintendents, and other educators very well-informed on current research and best practices” (The Marshall Memo). Initially aimed at school principals, its readership and focus has grown (Malin & Paralkar, 2017). Marshall subscribes to 60+ publications and scans many articles to select “5-10 that have the greatest potential to improve teaching, leadership, and learning” (The Marshall Memo). He develops summaries, providing e-links to original articles when possible. He also highlights a few quotes and usually concludes with some “short items.” It is concise, intended to be readable within 20 minutes. It is delivered by email to subscribers. Marshall also now produces a podcast version. Subscribers also have access to

a website member's only area that includes access to past articles and a searchable archive, which also allows subscribers to see items/articles Marshall has identified as 'classics.' An individual subscription costs \$50 per year, and Marshall offers organizational pricing. There is currently no social media presence.

Marshall works semi-independently, with a part-time assistant and informal support by his spouse. He worked for decades in Boston (Massachusetts) Public Schools, including 15 years as principal. Now, he also operates as an educational consultant. He holds undergraduate, masters, and honorary doctorate degrees from Harvard.

Edutopia is "a comprehensive website and online community that increases knowledge, sharing, and adoption of what works in K–12 education" (George Lucas Educational Foundation [GLEF], 2017). Six core educational principles/ strategies are emphasized: "project-based learning, comprehensive assessment, integrated studies, social and emotional learning, educational leadership and teacher development, and technology integration" (GLEF, 2017). Edutopia initially focused on the use/application of technology within education, and although this remains a priority, the organization's foci have expanded (Edutopia, 2016). It is part of GLEF, a nonprofit foundation established in 1991 by filmmaker George Lucas (GLEF, 2017). Lucas Education Research (LER), the other division of GLEF, is "dedicated to building evidence for what works in K–12 education" (GLEF, 2017). GLEF funds research through LER. GLEF is governed by a 10-member board of directors, and its executive director (since 2010) is Cindy Johanson. Twenty core staff members make up the Edutopia team.

Since spring 2010, Edutopia has taken an online-only approach. Content can be accessed free of cost (Manzo, 2010) from its website (edutopia.org, initiated in 1994). Previously, it published a subscription-based magazine, *Edutopia* (2004–2010), and it developed and distributed instructional/pedagogical videos. The website contains abundant

and organized material. From the site, one can also access YouTube videos it has created and could, until recently, participate in community forum discussions (Edutopia recently retired this online community, noticing comments/community were increasingly occurring on social media platforms; C. Johanson, personal communication, March 21, 2018). The website also describes how someone might write (e.g., a blog post) or provide multimedia that Edutopia would consider hosting. Edutopia's social media presence is large and broad, including on Facebook (over 1.1 million followers on September 6, 2017), Twitter (971,000 followers), Instagram (85,300 followers), Pinterest (104,000 followers), and YouTube (67,300 subscribers).

Mobilizing Knowledge: Types, Sources, Features, and Reasons

Study findings are detailed feature by feature in Malin et al. (2018), whereas in this chapter they are presented holistically by entity. The aim here is to give readers an opportunity to grasp the processes, products, and activities of these different entities. It is not our intention to 'endorse' or 'critique'—in fact, we believe each entity has successfully identified an informational and structural niche—though in discussion we do re-connect with the literature so as to draw out some implications and recommendations.

A principal unstated motivation for Usable Knowledge, it appeared, was to enhance the stature/reach of HGSE; this could be gleaned particularly from noting *whose* knowledge was being featured (primarily HGSE faculty/staff). Consequently, it emerged as having the most traditional orientation, insofar as the knowledge being shared (*what* knowledge) had primarily been produced through university-based research. Their activities were primarily focused on getting research—most often converted into brief, actionable 'research stories'—into the hands of frontline practitioners and others, like policymakers. The guiding logic appeared to be that good research (*what*), emanating from traditional knowledge producers

(who), exists but does not frequently/naturally enough reach those positioned to apply it. For example, as stated HGSE dean James Ryan:

After a day of managing a classroom, grading assignments, and preparing a...lesson plan, a teacher probably isn't going to have time to read a full academic paper. But he or she may have time to watch a brief video on assessments and discover a better approach to prepare his or her students for a test. (Gilbert, 2014)

Thus Usable Knowledge were aiming to fill a structural gap/hole between communities. Largely, then, their activities were tilted toward one-way dissemination methods, from research to practice.

We did, however, note some exceptions to this pattern. For example, through their attachment to HGSE's One and All project, which related to bullying prevention and the promotion of prosocial communities. Using a particular 'tag' on social media, HGSE and Usable Knowledge shared some strategies and guidance that originated outside Harvard. We believe this occurrence might illustrate the ways in which focusing on particular topics/strategies can serve to transform and deepen the content being developed or shared. Usable Knowledge is fairly active via Twitter (more than 2,800 tweets appear to have been made since 2014) and benefits from its attachment to HGSE, which has a large, multiplatform social media presence.

The Marshall Memo appeared to have been shaped by practitioner demands. Marshall focuses on getting (the best new) *research and other ideas* into educators' hands, assuming educators crave such information but have insufficient time and access to otherwise attain it. Important to the memo's success, then, is subscribers' sense that he is comprehensively searching and selecting useful materials (Malin & Paralkar, 2017). Also, he has organized accumulated memo material into a searchable archive, a feature many subscribers appreciate (Malin & Paralkar, 2017). Marshall's activities accordingly also gear toward one-way

dissemination (how) but with distinctly broad search/selection, relative to both whose and what knowledge aspects.

The Marshall Memo featured a mix of knowledge ‘donors’, with about 50% of highlighted/summarized material having been authored/co-authored by academics or other researchers, and nearly 25% by current or former frontline practitioners. Marshall also featured the work of journalists or editors relatively frequently (12.9% education-specific, 7.8% non-specific). Related, in terms of *what* knowledge, Marshall liberally addressed all types, with none being clearly dominant and with much of his selected material itself being ‘integrated’ in nature (e.g., the original material contained scientific/factual knowledge, technical knowledge, *and* practical wisdom). He is especially partial to integrative, broad-spanning (vs. narrowly focused) articles—that is, he favors “the pulled together stuff” while being less taken by empirical articles, which “tend to be too narrow” (as quoted in Malin & Paralkar, 2017, p. 9). These decisions, we interpret, relate to his desire to select and share socially robust knowledge. Malin and Paralkar (2017) provide further information and insights about Mr. Marshall’s selection and translation processes and overall reasoning, and provides an indication of the meaning of the memo to subscribing educators, should readers wish to learn more.

Edutopia, in marked contrast, is predominately user driven—although centrally curated—with most content developed by (articles) or heavily featuring (videos) frontline practitioners and routinely sparking substantial social media activity. Edutopia primarily shared knowledge produced by educators (e.g., 80% of reviewed YouTube videos featured educators demonstrating and describing particular practices/processes). Likewise, more than 50% of the written works (e.g., blog posts) that we analyzed were written by educators, with the next two largest categories being represented by Edutopia staff or contractors (about 17%) and traditional knowledge producers (e.g., professors; about 15%). We viewed these

results as underscoring educators' key roles within the Edutopia community in terms of knowledge and meaning construction. Edutopia's material tended to preference technical knowledge but also frequently highlighted practical wisdom. For example, their videos included first-person accounts regarding *why* (rationale: from front-line practitioners) and *how* (implementation/process) to engage in particular practices. Scientific/factual knowledge was present but in secondary position. For example, "Metrics of Success" are presented at the end of "Schools That Work" YouTube videos. Likewise, research summaries related to each core strategy are housed on the Edutopia website for interested parties to review, but they are not promoted as extensively as are other materials posted there.

Although educators predominated, we also saw Edutopia as providing a platform that could serve to increase connection-making across stakeholder groups (Ward, 2017). For instance, university-based researchers, such as Maurice Elias, have utilized the Edutopia platform to share their research-based ideas. A post Elias (2016) wrote titled "How Do We Measure Social and Emotional Learning?" has been shared via social media nearly 8,000 times, which vastly exceeds the attention researchers typically enjoy when writing solely in traditional scholarly outlets. For another example, professor Nell Duke (2016) wrote, "What Doesn't Work: Literacy Practices We Should Abandon," a blog post that has been shared more than 57,000 times and was featured in Marshall Memo 642. Edutopia's social media reach shrouds the others', as noted. Also, its embrace of nonwritten materials (e.g., videos, imagery) shows some entities have moved beyond written communication and its pitfalls (Hubers & Poortman, 2017). Their ability to do so relates partially to their elevated human resource capacity (e.g., video/production specialists on staff).

We believe Edutopia's user-driven nature substantially explains both its popularity and its abilities to continually evolve. Edutopia, we concluded, ultimately aims to inspire educators to pursue particular strategies and to spread relevant examples and inspiration (e.g.,

how and why to do x; Hubers & Poortman, 2017). It is thus focused on addressing a different structural hole, related to the spread of ideas and strategies especially, although not exclusively, from educator to educator. It has accordingly embraced a model in which educators are positioned as experts in their own right, and its platforms are used to mobilize knowledge educators create. Edutopia appears to embrace the idea that education must continue to evolve and progress, which also means certain educators with new ideas and ways of doing are at a premium. They can be knowledge creators, producing evidence from implementation and demonstrating new and potentially promising areas of inquiry.

Discussion

In this chapter, we have described an analysis of three U.S.-based KMb intermediaries relative to why and how they mobilized knowledge and what and whose knowledge they featured. We found these entities to vary substantially, and we also now suggest they reveal two distinctive types of brokerage. In this discussion, we reflect further on these types, and we suggest implications and future directions.

First, we offer that this study underscores the importance of understanding mobilizers' driving purposes (e.g., see Davies et al., 2015). While each of these entities aspired roughly toward common ends—to change educators' practices and behaviors (Ward, 2017)—we also identified distinct background motivations and distinct R-P connection problems (or structural holes) each sought to address. These nuances were somewhat predictable based on these entities' different social field positions (Anderson et al., 2017) and were key to understanding their overall KMb programs, as Farley-Ripple and colleagues (2017) had suggested.

As noted previously, we take the position that each of these entities has accurately identified specific informational niches, as the 'problem' of connecting research and practice is a complex and many-sided one. We also now suggest Edutopia's model is worthy of some

further reflection here, as it may serve as a stimulus to push our thinking regarding R-P connections. Research–practice partnerships (RPPs; see Coburn & Penuel, 2016, and chapter 11 of this volume), for instance, are proliferating, and they are forward-looking and can be powerful. However, too often embedded even within contemporary discussions about RPPs may be assumptions that they are primarily a means to help educators more readily access and use evidence produced by researchers (e.g., a one-way road; see Farrell, 2017). By contrast, two-way partnerships (as with Edutopia when at its best, we offer) can emerge, in which educators are not mere consumers of research (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 1994; Brown, 2014) but rather are active knowledge creators, leading thinkers, expert identifiers of problems (and productive, energizing trends) of practice, and so on. In such partnerships, traditional knowledge producers presumably need to assume a different stance or position—one that recognizes and honors the creative potential of such arrangements and seeks to participate and add value within them. For instance, researchers could partner with educators to design and test promising new strategies, write compelling articles regarding how their theories or approaches might usefully fine-tune educators’ thoughts or actions and vice versa (and so on). In such arrangements, though, they would no longer occupy privileged positions and might instead need to compete with various others for attention, credibility, and so on. However, insofar as they were able to secure productive entry into the conversation, they would be serving to strengthen R-P connections. For one, by participating in these conversations, researchers presumably would become more in touch with contemporary problems and trends, and could consider tuning their subsequent research activities accordingly.

This study supports and adds to Farley-Ripple and colleagues’ (2017) conceptualization of brokerage in education as dynamic, complex, and diverse. This study tentatively identifies two distinctive types of brokerage: One that is primarily one-way in

nature, enabling the communication of research (and/or other) knowledge to practice communities, and another is two-way, enabling its user community to document challenges and describe emerging trends in education practice. As Davies et al. (2015) summarized, relational and interactive exchanges are increasingly understood as required for knowledge to flow and influence practice. Edutopia thus demonstrates a vast menu of innovative approaches and products that might be emulated by others. At the same time, we concur with Ward (2017) that various KMb approaches can be justifiable depending on one's specific purposes, resources, and so on.

It is also important to note that knowledge brokering (like research production) is not neutral. Brokers must make choices relative to what to feature, and they cannot have full knowledge of all that exists. This study yielded insights into these choices, including how they flow from distinct motivations and how they affect both brokered products and processes. Notwithstanding, recipients of brokered knowledge are not passive consumers. If brokered knowledge is not practically applicable (i.e., Mode 2) and/or does not cohere with professional realities (i.e., lacking socially robustness), it will likely be ignored. Moreover, even trustworthy Mode 2 knowledge will not necessarily be adopted *carte blanche*. Since the late Carol Weiss's seminal work in the 1970s, approaches to using research to inform educational practice have broadly been categorized as having either instrumental or conceptual goals (see Weiss, 1980, 1982). The former suggests a direct link can occur between research findings and action, and the latter suggests research typically guides thinking and will be considered alongside other evidence. Grounded in the argument that conceptual research use is more likely and realistic than instrumental research use (e.g., see Brown et al., 2017), it seems likely that brokered knowledge will only ever inform the decisions of educators rather than steer them directly. As such, brokered knowledge will necessarily be combined by educators with practical and contextual knowledge as it is used.

This study's findings hold implications for educators, intermediaries, and scholars. For educators, this study provides a comparative examination of three intermediaries with large followings and may provide insights into how such entities can be leveraged to expand one's connections to ideas and to enhance practice. Meanwhile, it may be helpful to reflect on the different approaches that are under way and upon the distinct ways practicing educators are being positioned. For existing or prospective mobilizers, this study provides a clear view of the choices that are made and includes description of several innovative practices that might be adopted or adjusted. For scholars, this study provides further insight into intermediaries' vital and varied functions in education. Especially, it is hoped that scholars will continue to investigate the ways in which intermediaries are aiming to fill structural holes and, especially, how, why, and to what effect they are creating boundary objects to join people—spanning both research and practice—and their professionally relevant ideas.

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