

HOW TEACHERS' VALUES AND EPISTEMIC BELIEFS GUIDE THEIR USE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH FOR PRACTICE

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Abstract

Interest in better understanding the influences on teachers' uptake and use of published research has increased, in concert with a growing emphasis on the use of evidence-informed practices in educational settings. Little attention has been directed, however, to the way in which teachers' epistemic cognition may influence their uptake and use of research to inform their practice. In this qualitative study, we explored the socio-epistemic beliefs and values that may guide teachers' preferences and use of sources of knowledge for their practice. Building on previous research, we investigated teachers' epistemic beliefs, such as beliefs about the certainty of knowledge and the processes by which knowledge changes, and asked how these beliefs might relate to teachers' attitudes towards educational research as a source of knowledge for their practice. Twenty middle- and high-school teachers in a variety of subject areas were interviewed over Zoom about their epistemic beliefs related to research use using a semi-structured interview protocol. We drew on the *AIR Model of Epistemic Cognition* (Chinn, Rinehart & Buckland, 2014) to point to several aspects of epistemic cognition that may be key to understanding teachers' research use, such as values and epistemic aims. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013), and we first coded the transcripts, then organized them into themes. The analysis reveals that teachers' values place their students front and center, and other epistemic beliefs relevant to research use appear to be intertwined with, or subordinated to this central value of student success. For example, with few exceptions, participants articulated the belief that teachers' own direct observations of individual students is a much more reliable process for generating evidence and knowledge about "what works" than conducting research with a large number of students. As this example shows, the findings of this study shed light on the complex set of beliefs and values that may underlie teachers' attitudes and use of educational research for their practice. Implications of results of this study for communicating educational research findings to practitioners will be discussed.

Keywords: *Teacher cognition, teacher beliefs, research use, research utilization, epistemic cognition.*
