#354 - Implementing what works for "what works" centres: A Case Study of the Australian Education Research Organisation

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Objectives/aims We will share what we have learned as an organisation about putting the research literature on what works for "what works" centres into practice, based on our experience of setting up and scaling up the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO). Our aim is two-fold: (1) to further disseminate and build shared understanding of the seven common reasons why evidence translation efforts falter; and (2) to provide practical guidance and tips for others in the implementation community who are setting up and/or scaling up a "what works" centre.

Methods

In 2021, just as AERO was being established, we commissioned the Centre for Evidence and Implementation to undertake a desktop review of "what works" for evidence intermediaries and the barriers and enablers to implementing evidence in education. We used this report to inform our set up and scale up over the first two years, constantly referencing and referring to the findings as we made key decisions.

We will then undertake discourse analysis of our operations and governance documents to reflect on our efforts to implement the key findings of the desktop review. This will include board papers, quarterly progress reports to Ministers and the Board, monthly project reports, Exec meeting minutes, internal communications, staff feedback, etc. We will "rate" AERO's success in avoiding each of the seven common reasons why evidence translation efforts falter, offering reflections on what we could have done better, and suggestions on what we need to do in future. Based

on this case study, we will then draw generalisable insights for others setting up and scaling up what works centres.

Main findings

The desktop review identified seven common reasons why evidence translation efforts falter:

1. Limited, if any, attendance to effective and sustainable implementation
2. Lack of credibility with the field they are seeking to influence
3. Presence of rigour but lack of relevance in the evidence they share
4. Slow pace with which evidence is shared
5. Insufficient awareness of how frontline practitioners, including educators, understand and use evidence
6. Inappropriate skills and competencies in their workforces
7. Insufficient attention to and understanding of how to influence the policy process

Our discourse analysis and reflective discussions are planned for July 2023 to coincide with the kick off of planning for AERO's next triennial Strategic Plan. We expect honest and pragmatic reflections, and that AERO has done well in avoiding some of these common reasons, and not well in others. We also expect to share learnings about how some of these common reasons are better within Management's locus of control, while others are critically dependent on the "what works" centre's authorizing environment and governance structures.