



Education Review

Reseñas Educativas

Resenhas Educativas

February 28, 2024

ISSN 1094-5296

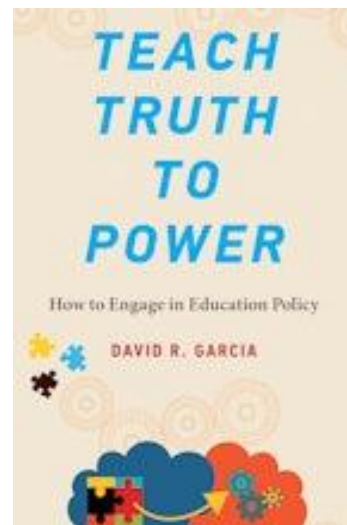
Garcia, D. R. (2022). *Teach truth to power: How to engage in education policy*. MIT Press.

Pp. 238

ISBN: 978-0-262-54322-4

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Within the education research community, longstanding concerns about weak links between research, policy, and practice persist alongside an array of debates, proposals, and concrete actions designed to tighten these relations (see Wyse et al., 2021). Indeed, Malin et al. (2020) note an ongoing global push to bolster research-practice-policy connections in education; but unfortunately, clear positive results remain to be seen in most contexts. Against this backdrop, David Garcia's book, *Teach Truth to Power*, brings a much-needed fresh view of the issue, with a particular focus on enhancing research use in policy and politics. Drawing on his rich experiences, Garcia offers practical, actionable advice and strategies for establishing relationships with politicians, communicating research clearly and concisely, and framing ideas in ways that are likely to resonate with politicians and their constituents. Throughout the volume, Garcia maintains focus on the importance of working toward equity and excellence in education, which adds to the relevance and urgency of the work.



Academics and other researchers and researchers-in-training who wish to influence education policy are the primary audiences for Garcia's book. It should be noted, researchers have different styles and aspirations in this regard. Some focus on conducting basic rather than applied research, some engage in more theoretical than practical spheres, and some seek influence through indirect means, such as working through intermediaries or publishing timely op-eds. This volume is for academics who wish to influence education policy directly—that is, be “in the room” with those who make policy.

Abodunrin, A. S., & Malin, J. R. (2024, February 28). Review of *Teach truth to power: How to engage in education policy* by D. R. Garcia. *Education Review*, 31.
<https://doi.org/10.14507/er.v31.3691>

Countering conventional wisdom, Garcia argues that engaging in the formation of education policy is not a science but a craft that must be learned through practice. He argues that policy engagement is interpersonal and centered on relationships and relation-building. This key point is well supported by a growing body of literature underscoring the processual and relational nature of research use (see Finnigan, 2021). In education policy, according to Garcia, the ideal relationship is one in which politicians and academics come to understand, appreciate, and respond to each other's perspectives, roles, and needs, eventually leading to better policy decisions. Such authentic relationships are especially needed because the status quo has been for politicians and researchers to avoid each other or stereotype the other in unflattering ways (Bogenschneider & Corbett, 2021). Despite these formidable challenges, Garcia maintains, sustained interactions and relationship-building can help bridge these gaps and improve empathy, communication, and collaboration between policymakers and academics.

With uniquely rich and diverse experiences as an education researcher and scholar, educational policymaker, gubernatorial candidate, and trusted policy insider, Garcia is well situated to offer advice to academics seeking to engage with education policy. He is indeed “the perfect person to write this book,” as noted by Jeffrey R. Henig in liner notes. Having once served as the Arizona Associate Superintendent of Public Instruction, Garcia understands what he and his colleagues needed (e.g., in terms of research, other forms of knowledge, relationships) to succeed in their roles. And, as a state-wide political candidate, Garcia discovered which policy issues and frames were of greatest importance to voters and which were not. Now as a publicly and politically engaged academic at Arizona State University, Garcia concludes that if academics are to influence policy, they must forge a path through politics (p. 16).

The first section of the book provides a comprehensive view of the policymaking process, its actors, and how research is or can be used in these contexts. The second section contains practical guidance and tips for researchers seeking to influence education policy. The research and policy landscapes described in this volume are based in the United States, yet the strategies hold relevance in other countries, especially those that are organized similarly (e.g., federal systems like Australia, Nigeria, and Pakistan), with multiple sites of policy action and points of entry.

Garcia rightly perceives education policy in the U.S. as being largely a product of the political process. Politicians and professional staff at the federal, state, and local levels play key roles in setting, interpreting, and implementing policies that shape the education system. These policies cover a wide range of topics, from resource allocations to curriculum standards, assessments, and school regulations. For example, federal policies like the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) outline requirements for states regarding assessments, school accountability, and interventions for struggling schools. At the state level, authority of education is strongest, and policymakers

address all manner of topics from funding to learning standards to graduation requirements to teacher licensure. Local school boards also have influence on policymaking, for instance, by levying local taxes, setting school start and end times, and zoning school boundaries. Furthermore, school staff influence how policies from all levels are implemented. Through policies, these actors shape students' educational experiences and opportunities and academic and social outcomes.

In the first section, Garcia reviews existing scholarships in light of his insider knowledge and challenges some widely held assumptions about policymakers' research use. He identifies a critical oversight in existing research that tends to conflate professional staff with policymakers, noting that while professional staff provide expertise for implementation, politicians set the broader policy agenda. In brief, Garcia argues politicians intentionally operate with "half-knowledge," filtering out what they do not need to know to be able to act. Garcia argues, then, that scholars should communicate in a way that will align with politicians' preferences. More specifically, Garcia recommends scholars should leverage their professional strengths and knowledge while focusing their communications with politicians on the real-world impacts of policies in ways that will help the politicians to develop heuristics that can guide their future decisions and actions. Garcia's suggested approach here aligns with the insights of Bogenschneider and Corbett (2021), who also underline the importance of understanding and tailoring to the specific needs and desires of policy subcommittees.

In the second section, Garcia's recommended strategies for influencing education policy focus on communication and relationship building. The ultimate goal researchers should aspire to, Garcia argues, is to teach and empower politicians to become champions of research themselves. To get there, researchers must first effectively communicate their findings, developing clear and concise messages that demonstrate the value and relevance of their research. Second, researchers must establish relationships and build trust with politicians. Garcia suggests such connections should be made even before policymakers are elected. In doing so, researchers lay the groundwork for future collaborations and ensure their work will be heard and valued by decision-makers.

One practical approach emphasized in Chapter 11 promises to accomplish both of the aforementioned goals: the "research one-pager." This concise document identifies a practical problem, connects the politician to relevant research and findings, and tells politician "exactly what they can do to take action" (p. 181). Such an approach is responsive to politicians' desires and needs, as noted, and thus can play a crucial role in promoting evidence-informed policymaking. Garcia urges researchers to know the local political landscape, recognizing for instance it is a space where many individuals and organizations are competing for influence. In this regard, he stresses the usefulness of finding unexpected allies who can broaden the support base for a cause and bring new voices and perspectives to the table.

Garcia also advises being open to meeting with various politicians, even those with differing party affiliations. The idea here is that common ground can sometimes be found through unlikely alliances.

Although much of the book is focused on what individual scholars can do to influence education policy, we very much appreciate Garcia's focus late in the book on higher education institutions (HEIs). As he notes, although HEIs – and, perhaps especially, colleges of education – have critical roles to play in terms of informing education policy, other entities (e.g., “think tanks and activist foundations;” p. 212) currently often show stronger, more sustained interactions with politicians and consequently appear to be more influential. Universities, by contrast, tend to “engage in policy through research centers that publish politically neutral documents that are of limited utility to the action-oriented politician” (p. 212). Some lone academics may work against existing structures to influence policy, yet overall, higher education systems are not optimally set up to encourage and support this work. Accordingly, Garcia argues HEIs need to be reimagined in ways that place higher value on policy influence as a key goal and contribution. He notes this will entail internal changes like altered tenure and promotion requirements. Uniquely, he also suggests colleges of education should include a “professor of impact” (p. 214) whose job is to influence policy through research and teach students how to succeed in affecting policy. We appreciate these suggestions, sharing Garcia's belief that more needs to be done structurally to set the conditions for research to have larger and more routine real-world impacts.

As Garcia argued in *Teach Truth to Power*, if we wish to ensure an equitable and excellent education for children in the nation's schools, we ultimately need to find ways to better connect research, policy, and practice. In this regard, given Garcia's extensive and wide-ranging experience both in policymaking and in academia, we found him uniquely positioned to offer insights on how researchers can effectively engage with policymakers to shape education policy. He effectively portrayed both the big picture and the operational levels. In the big picture, Garcia explained *why* it is important for researchers to build relationships with politicians and tailor their communications to their unique desires and needs. Then, at an operational level, he was able to share a variety of concrete strategies and examples regarding how to put these principles into practice.

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Education Review/Reseñas Educativas/Resenhas Educativas is supported by the Scholarly Communications Group at the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State

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