

## Engaging with Research: ECUK TOP TIPS

Remember when engaging with any research or researcher:

- ‘Knowledge’ is all about ideas and explanations that inform our meaning-making.
- ‘Understanding’ is shaped by who we are, our relationships and the worlds in which we live.
- Research is all about creating evidence to find out more (to better understand); to explore, to justify and develop and to create knowledge.
- Research therefore produces evidence to discover, to prove and disprove our current knowledge and understanding.
- Research credibility is both conferred and promoted through the power of the current dominant meaning-making system (discourse), however, it should always be willing and able to respond to informed questioning.
- Individuals can make a difference to the credibility of collective knowledge and understanding. Collective knowledge and understanding can make a difference to the credibility of individuals’ knowledge and understanding. Through interactions and relationships societal progress happens.

So...

1. Don’t be afraid to critically engage and ask questions of any research. We are all researchers, who survive because we can and do create and share meaning-making about the worlds in which we live.
2. Accept research is never without a bias, however unintentional. It is reflected in what is chosen to be researched; how it is examined; what data is considered important to collect and how it is analysed; the way the findings are presented and then used to further personal and collective knowledge and understanding. Therefore, it is important, to *assess the credibility, reliability and usefulness of any*

*research*, to know a little about the research ‘process’ as well as the ‘product’. So, always check out:

- What ‘wonder’ or conundrum drove the research focus
  - How was the need for research of this topic justified in relation to what is already known about this topic
  - When was this research carried out
  - Who carried out this research
  - Was the researcher/research ‘sponsored’ by an industry or an organisation
  - If participants were involved, who were they, where were they from and how were participants selected
  - What data was selected to be measured (and perhaps what was not), how much data was collected,
  - How was the data analysed and then reported
  - In what ways did the research reference the existing bodies of knowledge
  - What has the research contributed to the existing bodies of knowledge
3. Take a look at the ethics that has guided the research. Ethical protocols are drawn up by disciplines and professions\* to consider, eradicate or ameliorate potential harm resulting from research design, participant involvement or the result of the research findings. Therefore, credible research adopts a clear ethical framework that evidences respect, fairness, competency, responsibility and integrity.
4. Finally, remember that knowledge will never complete because meaning-making is a lifelong process relating to people, places and times. However, by examining the process and the product of any research you develop greater critical awareness to make more robustly informed opinions.

\*Useful research resources

The British Educational Research Association (BERA)

<https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018>

The British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (2014)

<https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/BPS%20Code%20of%20Human%20Research%20Ethics.pdf>