

## **Are ‘experts’ guiding education reforms?**

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New York, Feb 21 (IANS) — Certain so-called “education experts” are often cited in news stories and blogs more because of their media connections, backing of influential interest groups and their expertise in education policy, researchers from the University of Illinois said.

Some prominent interest groups are promoting reform agendas and striving to influence policymakers and public opinion using individuals who have substantial media relations skills but little or no expertise in education research, the researchers said.

“Our findings suggest that individuals with less expertise can often have greater success in media penetration,” said the authors of the study Joel Malin and Christopher Lubienski.

To examine possible links between individual’s media presence and their levels of expertise, the researchers compiled a diverse list of nearly 300 people who appeared on the lists of experts prepared by several major education advocacy and policy organisations including the conservative American Enterprise Institute and the liberal National Education Policy Center.

The researchers added to their sample a handful of scholars not on those lists but who are prominent and influential in the field of education.

They found that affiliation with a policy or advocacy organisation substantially increased an expert’s media presence. People associated with the American Enterprise Institute were nearly 2.5 times more likely to be cited in education media.

Likewise, experts were 1.78 and 1.5 times more likely to be mentioned in blogs if they were affiliated with Cato Institute or the American Enterprise Institute, respectively.

On the other hand, possession of a doctoral degree was associated with 67 percent fewer blog citations and 60 percent fewer newspaper mentions, which indicates that academic researchers with empirical expertise in education are often far removed from popular and policy conversations, the authors said.

Researchers who want to see the impact of their work beyond the academic community must become more adept at communicating via traditional and new media. Otherwise, policy changes in education will be guided more by ideology and agendas than by research, Malin and Lubienski said.

The study was published in the journal Education Policy Analysis Archives.