

## Simon Sommer

### Bringing Research into real world-settings – the outspoken, not hidden Agenda of the Jacobs foundation

The conference organizers have courageously defined the role of research funding foundations as **“enabling without influencing the agendas”**. At least, I think, this should have come with a question mark at the end. If we look at the self-descriptions of foundations we will soon understand why there is good reason for this question mark: virtually all research-funding foundations strive to set and to change agendas. At the Jacobs Foundation, we are a little less audacious and define our mission in the area of research funding as follows:

*“We are committed to identifying and supporting high-quality research carried out by world-leading scholars on the development of children and youth. We want to advance this field because we understand that research is crucial not only in order to identify and better understand the challenges and opportunities for children and youth, but also to build solid evidence for intervention, policy, and practice.”*

As a relatively small foundation, we found our niche in systematically motivating researchers and practitioners to work together. We are convinced that research plays pivotal roles in the development, evaluation, refinement and dissemination of interventions and programs for children and youth. Research-based developmental models have to provide the framework for successful interventions and programs as they are developed. These models can then be tested, and ongoing research can lead to a series of refinements of the interventions and programs. Research can also provide essential information about who the programs succeed with and who they do not, and newer types of scientific intervention research can rigorously identify factors which can bridge the research-to-practice gap, maximizing the effectiveness of interventions, programs, and policies when they are disseminated into real-world settings.

Conducting such intervention research, translational research, and mainstreaming research in cross-organizational team requires academics to leave the comfort-zone of their labs and to face real-world problems (which is far more difficult for a lot of them than one would think!). This is not a hidden agenda, it is an outspoken one. As a small Foundation we have the liberty but also the need to be selective.

If there is interest in the audience, I will also be able to discuss the large-scale investment into Jacobs University made in 2006 and relate it to the workshop questions.