

How can recent research impact our schools for the better?

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Being evidence informed is a moral duty

- Some things work better than other
- We have evidence on what works
- Using this evidence is a social justice issue
- But:
 - We don't know everything
 - Evidence needs to be translated into school and classroom contexts

But do we have the evidence?

- 'Everything works somewhere, but nothing works everywhere' (Dylan William)

Everything works somewhere...



Everywhere works somewhere...



But some things work better than others...



Everything works somewhere, but

- Some things work better than others
- Some things work in more places than others
- Some things work more easily than others
- Some things almost always work
- Some things almost never work

But do we have the evidence?

- We do have evidence on what works
 - A lot of evidence on effective teaching
 - Significant evidence on effective schools
- But:
 - We don't know everything – evidence base differs between areas
 - Evidence needs to be translated into school and classroom contexts
 - Evidence may be contextual: 'what works where, under what circumstances' (Dylan William)
 - But again, some things work under most circumstances, some under few

What does the latest research tell us?

- Three key areas:
 - Effective teaching
 - Cognitive Science
 - Curriculum

Effective teaching

- Not all new research, but some strong classic research being rediscovered, and links to cognitive science made
- Long tradition of looking at the relationship between what teachers do and what children learn
- Strong support for:
 - Direct Instruction (e.g. Rosenshine's principles of instruction)
 - Importance of feedback (Dylan Williams' work)
 - Develop metacognition (see EEF guidance report)
 - Teacher subject knowledge (complicated but key)

Research from cognitive science

- Growing body of research on how we learn
- More and more applications to classroom practice
- Key findings
 - Cognitive load theory (Sweller)
 - Novices v. experts (Kirschner)
 - Generic skills don't exist (Barnett & Caci)
 - Learning is not the same as achieving (Bjork)

The importance of curriculum

- Both effective teaching and cognitive science focus on *how* we teach
- But *what* we teach matters even more
- Curriculum lies at the heart of quality of education, so curriculum research is important (Counsell, Young)
- Some key findings:
 - Importance of sequencing – what are the building blocks we need pupils to have?
 - There are subject-specific ways of knowing as well as content
 - Teachers subject knowledge is key

Accessing the evidence is problematic for schools...



- It is too technical:
 - Muijs (2017). 'Can Schools Reduce Bullying' - 'IGLS estimation was used, all models converged and no non-admissible parameters were generated'
- It is too expensive:
 - e.g. Muijs (2017). 'Can Schools Reduce Bullying' - \$6/48 hrs, \$38 for the PDF
- There is too much of it
 - e.g. >1500 papers on metacognition since 2000

So you need to be selective...

- There is plenty of dross around...
- Key criteria:
 - Validity
 - Reliability
 - Utility
- Not about a single methodology – this depends on the research question

How do we make sense of evidence?

- In light of these issues, *intermediaries* are key
- Trusted translators of academic research
 - Books by academics and practitioners, e.g. Allison & Tharby, Hendrick, Willingham
 - Articles summarising evidence, e.g. Rosenshine (2012): principles of Instruction.
 - Organisations: EEF, Teacher Development Trust, Research Schools
 - Bloggers and websites: e.g. Mark Enser, Christine Counsell, Alex Quigley...
- Can HSGB play a role here?

Final words...

- We know a lot, but often don't apply what we know
- As a profession we must be evidence-informed
- Beware the snake-oil salesmen of education
- There are usually two sides to an argument, but that doesn't mean they are equally evidence-based

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