

Making evidence count for the busy teacher



Why do we need to be evidence informed?

- A moral duty
- A social justice issue
- Credibility as a profession

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

Accessing the evidence is problematic...

- 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

So you need to be selective...

- Be aware of author ideology and goals:
 - E.g.: 'Body-Soul Rooted Pedagogy which: 1) construct education politically, 2) enact schooling as decolonization/empowerment, 3) center epistemologies, multiliteracies of marginalized groups, 4) foster critical frameworks navigating oppression, 5) engage social action pedagogy, and 6) engender hope, well-being'
- Often less clear-cut, and not exclusive to one political/ideological orientation
- Everyone has ideological position, but this becomes a problem when it dominates research agendas and practices

So you need to be selective...

- Often worth following the money...
 - Studies on iPads funded by manufacturer
 - Studies on play funded by toy companies
 - Studies on textbooks funded by publishers
 - Studies by organisations on themselves
- These may still be valuable, but bias may creep in

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. Muijs et al (2014): State of the Art in research on teacher effectiveness
 - Organisations: EEF, Teacher Development Trust, Research Schools
 - Bloggers and websites: e.g. Mark Enser, Christine Counsell, Alex Quigley...

How do we make sense of evidence?

- However, the same caveats apply:
 - Who are the authors?
 - How do they judge evidence?
 - What is not reviewed?
- What does the 'other side' say?

A systemic issue...

- Not just teachers, but ITE and policy (and inspection!) need to be research-informed
- Professional development is key:
 - Research literacy
 - Up-to-date knowledge
 - Support from SMT
 - Give teachers time
- Professional development approaches themselves need to be research-informed
 - Who assures quality of CPD?

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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