

Turning education and skills policy into practice



What does good quality research look like and does it matter?
Sarah Maughan, Director of Research

Changing Education Context

- Standardisation and increasing use of assessment (and other data)
- High stakes accountability framework, with high autonomy (where earned)
- Gradual reduction in testing, and removal of levels, focus of remaining testing on core academic skills
- Increased focus on use of research evidence and 'what works'

Shift in Research Culture

From

- ‘How do we make this intervention as good as it can be?’

To

- ‘Is this intervention the right one?’

Good research ...

Provides evidence that:

- There will be an improvement in academic achievement
- Allows different interventions to be compared, i.e. the results can be put on the same scale
- Demonstrates how an intervention should be implemented with fidelity
- Shows how much an intervention will cost to implement

‘Gold standard’ Research

- Randomised control trials
 - Traditionally used in medical research
 - Being used much more widely in education
- Pupil premium toolkit

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/toolkit>

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Other 'Good' Research

- NFER Evaluation Policy
- <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/publications/99943/99943.pdf>
- Include a wide research methods repertoire
 - Stage of development, e.g. start with a small scale trial
 - Nature of implementation, e.g. for national roll out an RCT is not possible
 - Proxy measures, e.g. attitude data

What works is not enough

- In what sense(s) does it 'work'?
- What works for whom, under what circumstances?
- How does it work?
- To what extent have the aims been achieved?
- Should we invest resource in this intervention?

What Influences Teacher Behaviour? *AlphaPlus*

- Research evidence?
- National Centre for Social Research Bristol
- <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/cubec/migrated/documents/pr7.pdf>
- Recruitment, training and continuing professional development
- Leadership, peer influence and school policies
- Inspection and guidance

Do Teachers Use Research Evidence? *AlphaPlus*

Some do

- Gaining a greater profile through Royal College of Teaching
- Professionalisation of teaching
- More useful and accessible research evidence

And

- Still what is appropriate in their context
- What is recommended by people they respect
- What ties in with their ethos and values

Conclusion

- Good research evidence should be available
- ...but it is not enough

- Need a professional workforce
- Who can select appropriate evidence
- And use it effectively in their context

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