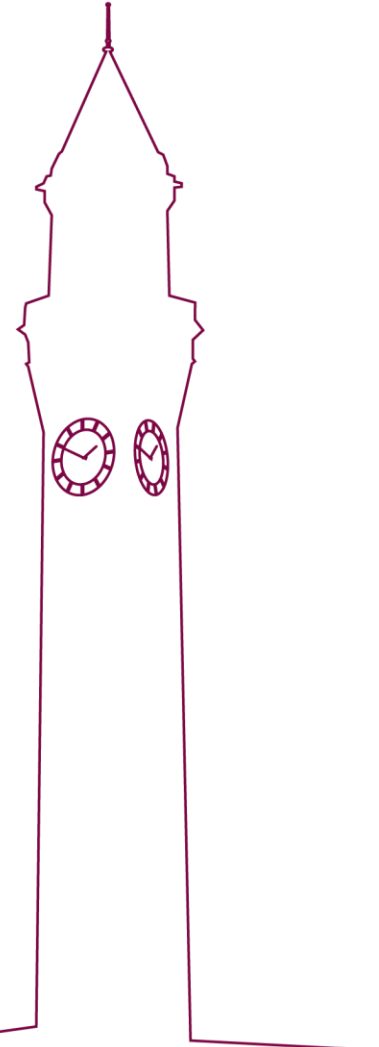




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DEPARTMENT OF
DISABILITY INCLUSION
AND SPECIAL NEEDS

The significance of research in the field of SPLMD: informing good practice



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Swiss Cottage School, 28th November 2019

Why is research important for everyday life?

‘[. . .] often the gap between the theory and what’s unravelling on your kitchen floor is too wide to bridge’

(David Mitchel in Higashida’s, 2013, p. 6)



Why is research important for schools?

Schools should be engaged '*in research to support good practice*'

(Rochford Review, 2016, p. 25)

Teachers are expected to '*use relevant data to monitor progress, set targets, and plan subsequent lessons*'

(Teacher Standards/DfE, 2011, p. 12)



Which is the role of Universities?

- It is the academics' ethical responsibility to ensure that **research is accessible for ALL**
- Push for impactful research and public engagement
- Psychology in the Pub (PiPs) events supported by the British Psychological Society



Why researchers and schools should be linked (Parsons et al., 2013)?

- researchers can help schools ‘use appropriately’ the wide range of data they collect anyway
- working with Universities means that school-based research is subject to rigorous ethical review and the results are disseminated to a wider audience
- schools consist of large cohorts of pupils meaning value for money for funding bodies
- most children spend many years in the same school offering opportunities for longitudinal studies



Educational research

- mainly qualitative in nature
- an often abused term
- underrated

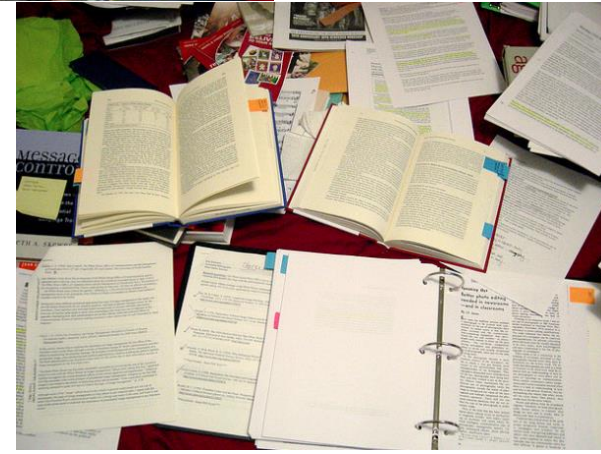


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How educational research might look like?



Why is educational research important?

- Why not to benefit from work that other people have done before and learn from their successes and mistakes?
- Why to invest time and effort to reinvent the wheel?



Why there is limited robust research on SLD/PMLD?

- Low incidence of SLD/PMLD
- Great variability in the characteristics of the SLD/PMLD population
- Scarce financial resources to conduct research
- The challenges of gaining informed consent, especially beyond 16 years old



Recent research on SLD/ PMLD

- **Communication** (Griffiths et al., 2016; Ogletree and Price, 2018; Chadwick et al., 2019; Stassola et al., 2019) **and interaction with others** (Antaki et al., 2017)
- **Quality of life and mental health** (Darling et al., 2015; Beadle-Brown et al., 2016; Walton et al., 2016; Flynn et al., 2017; Vereenoghe et al., 2018)
- **Challenging behaviour** (Griffith and Hastings, 2014; Heyvaert et al., 2015; Davies and Oliver, 2016; Poppes et al., 2016; Sajith, 2017)
- **Intervention studies** (Thompson et al., 2015; Sevcik and Ronski, 2016; Chan and Chien, 2017; Doherty et al., 2018)
- **Parents', carers' and siblings' views** (Luijkx et al., 2016; Weiss et al., 2018; Adams and Jahoda 2019; Stringer et al., 2019)
- **Physical activity** (van der Putten, 2017; Wouters et al., 2018; Bossink and Van der Putten, 2019; Page and Cannella-Malone, 2019)



Recent research on SLD/PMLD (cont.)

- **Social networks for people with SLD/PMLD** (Kamstra et al., 2015) **or their families** (Wilder et al., 2015)
- **Transition to adulthood** (Gauthier-Boudreault et al., 2018; Jacobs et al., 2019)
- **End of life decision making** (Zaal-Schuller et al., 2016; Watson et al., 2017)
- **Voice and self advocacy** (Mietola et al., 2017)
- **Mortality** (Heslop et al., 2015; Hosking et al., 2016)
- **Moral worth** (Vehmas and Curtis, 2017)
- **The role of culture** (Bigby et al., 2015; Bigby and Beadle-Brown, 2016)



Practitioners in the field of SLD/PMLD should

- be critical consumers of research
- use research to improve their practice
- evaluate interventions and strategies which appear to work in practice
- disseminate their findings



Disseminating findings

Lack of communication of research both within and across schools:

lack of time, resources, skills or the belief that research has something to offer to the teacher
(Collins, 2012)

Is it ethical to keep knowledge for us when by sharing it the lives of other people can improve? (Kossyvaki, 2019)



What is needed for robust research in the real world?

- study situated within the broader relevant literature
- clear aims/research questions
- explicit account of the methodology (participants, intervention)
- checklist for fidelity to the intervention
- accuracy of observations (inter-observer agreement)
- generalisation of change/maintenance of change
- ethics
- claims based on findings



Evidence-based practices (EBPs)



What are evidence-based practices (EBPs)?

- **practices with supporting research bases** that meet systematic and rigorous criteria regarding design, quantity, quality and effects
- **all children**, including those with severe and profound learning disabilities, **must be taught both daily living and academic skills using EBPs** (No Child Left Behind Act, 2001)



What do we know about evidence-based practices?

- Although researchers have identified **EBPs** for learners with SLD in some areas (e.g. **reading, maths, science**), there are few to no EBPs identified in many areas for this population (e.g. functional, social, behavioral outcomes) (NSTTAC, 2013)
- No EBPs for learners with PMLD



Some caution against EBPs

- Research evidence should not be privileged over evidence from other sources, especially the experience of professionals, parents and people with LD
- The research evidence should **influence rather than determine** decisions as the evidence alone can never tell one what to do
- It should be explored more carefully how practice can contribute to the scientific knowledge base



Towards a conclusion



Valuable research...

- transforms people's lives and has results which can be directly applied to real world settings
- bridges the gap between academic research and everyday practice at school, home, the community



Shift in research funding

- Universities have now shifted the focus from ‘who has read and cited the research’ to ‘how has it actually changed practice, policy or provision’
- ESRC festival of Social Sciences Event on SLD/PMLD (7th November 2019, Birmingham)
- ESRC doctoral training partnership on PMLD



The role of the UoB SLD/PMLD programme to promote research



For more information on the topic or other research projects

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