

Using research findings to improve practice



Key issues addressed by the study

- ◆ The study explored
 - what motivated teachers to engage with research
 - the barriers to teachers' use of research
 - factors which linked teachers' research awareness to changes in practice
 - how research was utilised in education and medicine



What motivated teachers to get involved with research

- ◆ Motivating factors included:
 - direct relevance to their interests and needs
 - illustrative activities and case studies that helped them to relate findings to their work
 - support from an expert in using research
 - time to absorb and act on the messages from research



The barriers to teachers' use of research

◆ Barriers included

- the sheer volume of research available
- lack of access to academic journals
- ambiguous results or untrustworthy findings
- jargon and statistics which were difficult to understand
- theoretical or irrelevant research

When research led to changes in practice

- ◆ The two factors that had the biggest impact were
 - resources
 - statutory requirements
- ◆ Consequently, the study recommended researchers aimed to convince policy makers of the value of their research findings

What else helped encourage teachers to use research to improve practice

◆ Other factors included

- collaboration and mutual support between teachers and researchers
- teachers' involvement in the identification of the research focus
- teachers being provided with a context in which they could learn strategies for improvement
- 'diffusion networks' in which recommendations spread by word of mouth



How research was utilised in education and medicine compared

◆ In medicine

- surgeons were the most likely to access research to update their skills
- GPs cited information overload and lack of time as barriers whilst nurses identified inadequate facilities and uncooperative doctors

◆ In education

- teachers on postgraduate courses were most likely to access research

How was the information gathered?

◆ The researchers

- carried out a systematic review of research evidence published 1988-2001
- identified 183 relevant studies and 21 worthy of detailed study
- prioritised findings from the best designed research
- used purpose, design, sample and methodology as their selection criteria
- analysed summaries of each study to build up an evidence base that answered their questions

How can teachers use this evidence?

- ◆ The study indicated that support from colleagues was helpful for translating research findings into practice
- ◆ *What opportunities can you find within your school to discuss research findings with colleagues and experiment with new approaches?*
- ◆ *What opportunities exist near you for dialogue between you, your colleagues and researchers in universities?*

Follow-up reading

- ◆ Study reference: Helmsley-Brown, J & Sharp, C (2003) The use of research to improve professional practice: a systematic review of the literature *Oxford Review of Education* 29 (4)

Feedback

- ◆ Did you find this useful?
- ◆ What did you like?
- ◆ What didn't you like?

Any feedback on this Research Bite would be much appreciated. Please email your feedback to:

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