

Building school capacity for using evidence through large scale interventions and trial like methods

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Context

- Developing teaching as a research and evidence informed profession (TREIP) profession -a policy priority in UK since 1997
- Supported via research awards, a National Teacher Research Panel, funding for enquiry oriented networks of schools and the development of segmented teacher friendly research resources
- By 2010 over 35% of teachers said they were actively involved in formally supported enquiry....
- Teachers engaged either with the research of others or in their own research – almost always qualitative research or the outcomes of systematic and technical research reviews
- In essence 12 years of investment had awakened a critical mass of interest



Context


- In 2010 The coalition government was interested too – but it wanted to
 - focus on impact – and to
 - strengthen the “science” of teachers’ use of research,
 - remove most government mediation and
 - involve outstanding schools in leading R&D.
- Set up Teaching School Alliances with R&D as core role
- Commissioned a review of research use in policy in general and education in particular from Ben Goldacre (reference)



TREIP and Closing the gap

- Goldacre strongly challenged qualitative research, including teacher research, and advocated focussing on randomised controlled trials
- At same time Government was investing in closing the gap (CTG) for vulnerable pupils via a no of routes. £7m earmarked for continuing professional development
- It combined the 2 in the “Close the Gap test and Learn” a large scale “Randomised Controlled Trial like” programme
- Here randomised, systematic experimentation became the driver for the work of the mediating layer – via TS
- Launched in March 2013- implementation started September 2013





Connecting this example with your context

- How far might enhancing the science of use of research support progress and improvement in your context?
- Are there policy initiatives in your country that might be strengthened by implementing them via “RCT like”, large scale experiments?



Practicalities -The Test and Learn Project

- Government funding (£5k per TS plus the cost of testing)
- Funded and managed via NCTL & delivery partners over 2 years
- 170+ Teaching Schools (TS) are acting as, in part, mini trial managers across the schools they support helping schools cope with testing, identifying sample students/ year groups and selecting interventions –and keeping control schools on side
- TS, have responsibilities for supporting R&D and teacher and leadership development (plus Initial Teacher Education and school to school support).TS are sparsely funded volunteers, working with an Alliance and HE strategic partners
- Approx. 740 schools agreed to participate initially, 630+ still involved



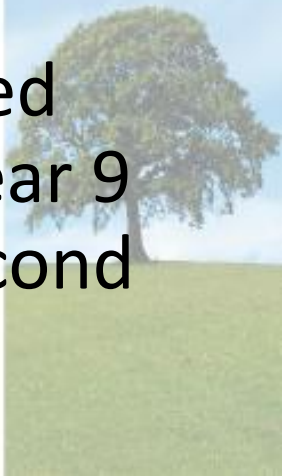
Selecting the interventions

- Consultation aimed to seed recruitment
- Focussed on CTG challenges where research informed interventions might help – which pupils? Which areas of the curriculum? Which teaching skills?
- The kinds of interventions schools would like to try out – key issue was what is an intervention?
- 12 of the 67 resulting interventions identified as manageable by schools in timescales and budget, likely to succeed based on existing evidence and “researchable under trial like conditions”



The interventions

- **First Class @ Number** – intense support for teachers and learning support assistants in year 3
- **Numicon** – CPD in dialling in number relations visually – years 1-5
- **Inference training** – CPD in strategies for developing inference skills as part of comprehension for years 3-9
- **Research lesson study** CPD specifically focussed on closing the gap and literacy early years – year 9 – pre/post test pilot in 1st year, trial runs in second



The interventions

- **Response to Intervention** – CPD via close case analysis and matching research based interventions to specific needs in 3 tiers of intensity focussed in literacy year 5 - 9
- **Growth Mindsets** – CPD in recognising and developing growth mindsets – years 1-9
- **Achievement for All** – a whole school development using a data driven focus on most vulnerable pupils in two year groups as a trojan horse for closing gaps school wide



Discussion

- Normally a single trial designer and manager would control all the work that was distributed across the National College, CUREE, Teaching Schools, CfBT and the intervention providers
- What are the pros and cons of involving policy makers, schools and other partners in this way?
- How might this approach affect
 - Take up - recruitment, retention, dissemination of results?
 - The validity of the data?
 - The growth of research and evidence informed practice?

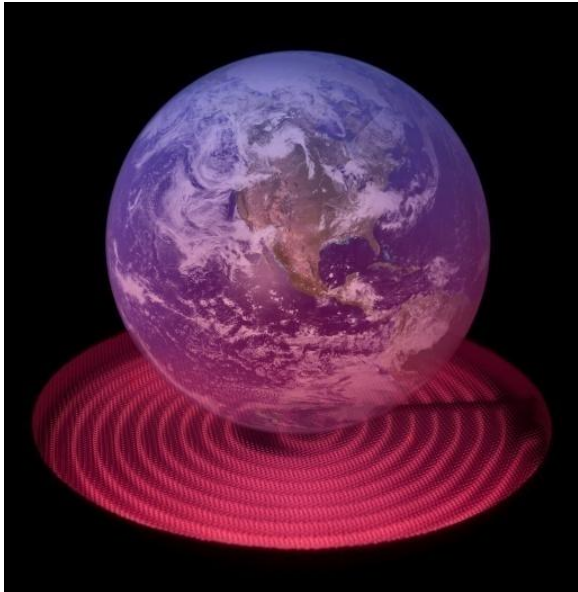


Pluses, surprises, risks and obstacles

- TS and consultation secured high levels of recruitment and high percentage of retention – so far
- Selecting interventions from needs emerging from schools secured ownership and relevance – stopped this feeling like a being “Done to” initiative
- On line assessments have provided powerful diagnostic evidence and are seen as intrinsically useful
- Separating trainers from the trial solved a number of logistical challenges – but hard to know about fidelity
- Schools really do like the rigour or pre post testing



Two worlds?





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