

# Problems in knowledge mobilisation: how knowledge changes when it moves between contexts

James Thomas<sup>1</sup>

Frankfurt  
4 March 2013

The EPPI-Centre is part of the Social Science Research Unit at the Institute of Education, University of London, UK<sup>1</sup>



# Outline

---

- Evidence to inform policy
  - In academic terms
  - In non-academic terms
- Discussion...

# In academic terms...

---

- The review was a systematic, unbiased, scientifically robust summary of the current state of evidence
- Contains understandable limitations in terms of evidence that it is possible to gather currently
- Requires further interpretation regarding the applicability of the links between findings and policy / practice

# Beyond the academy...

---

- The review received a mixed reception with responses polarised along the lines of people's pre-existing views
- Clear that the review did not address many of the issues around which debate centred

# Burdon of proof?

- There are many levels and definitions of what is expected in terms of proof in different contexts
- E.g. legal, philosophic, scientific
- Each has its own assumptions and operational definitions (e.g. the most probable event, reasonable doubt, and beyond the shadow of a doubt)
- Some of the differences between the systematic review and other arguments may be due to these different epistemologies

# Discussion..?

---

- Can systematic reviews adjudicate between opposing positions around which debate centres? (Should they be expected to?)
- Is there a place for theory in this debate?
- Independence of review was questioned: should systematic reviews not be conducted by those with a record of primary research in the area?
- In an uneven landscape of different requirements and understandings about what constitutes 'proof', where does scientific evidence sit; does it require translation into different models of proof?

## Thank you

SSRU website: <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/ssru/>  
SSRU's EPPI website: <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk>

Email  
[j.thomas@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:j.thomas@ioe.ac.uk)



**The EPPI-Centre is part of the Social Science Research Unit at the Institute of Education, University of London**



**EPPI-Centre**  
Social Science Research Unit  
Institute of Education  
University of London  
18 Woburn Square  
London WC1H 0NR

Tel +44 (0)20 7612 6397  
Fax +44 (0)20 7612 6400  
Email [eppi@ioe.ac.uk](mailto:eppi@ioe.ac.uk)  
Web [eppi.ioe.ac.uk/](http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/)