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**University of Northampton
Learning and Teaching Conference
22 May 2014**

Teaching teachers to understand and undertake research: trying to make ‘Research Methods’ work

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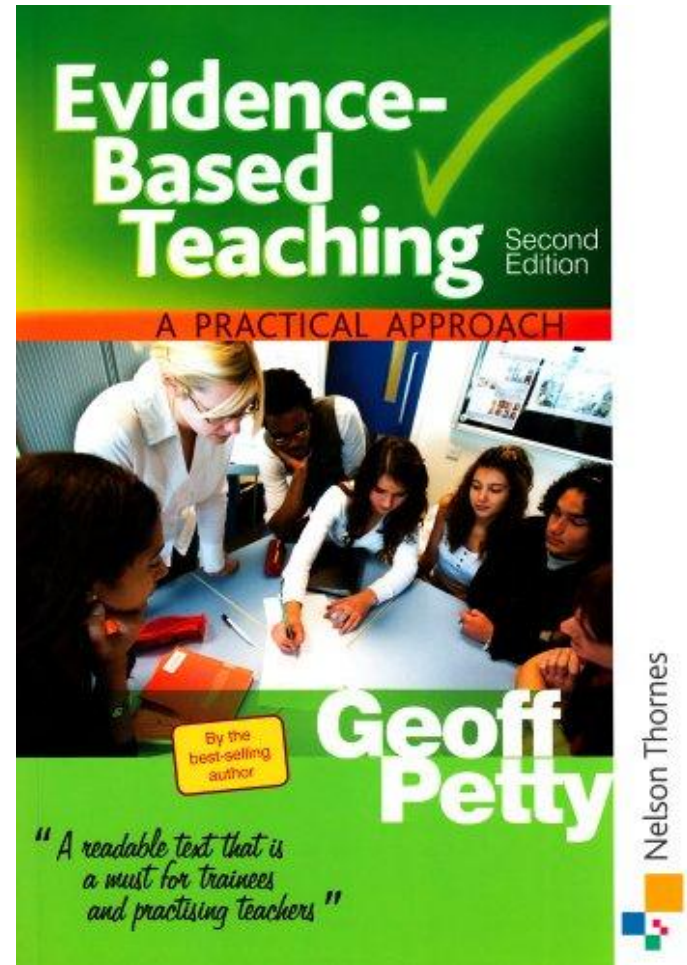
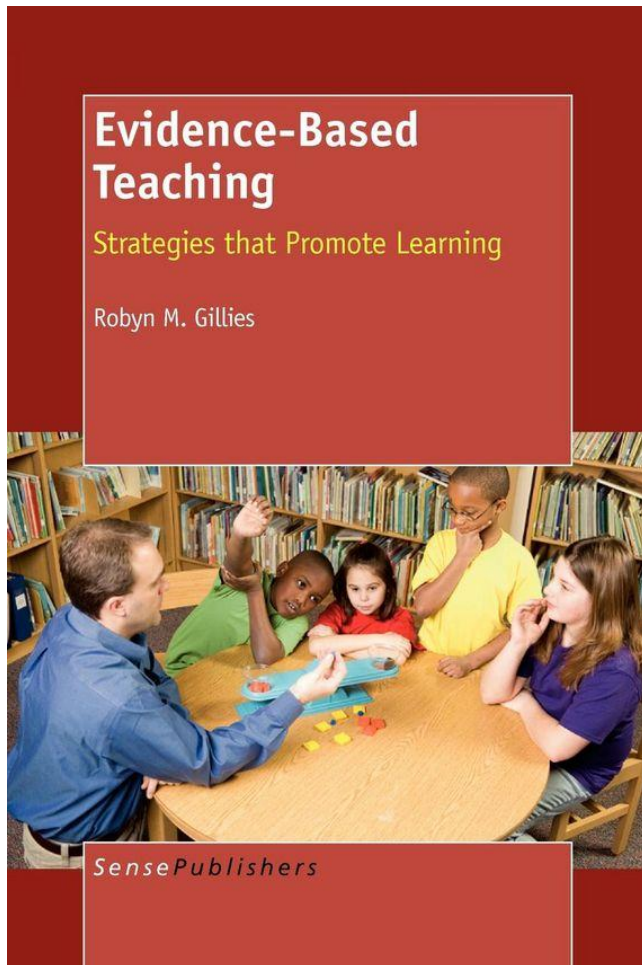
Why do teachers need to know about research?



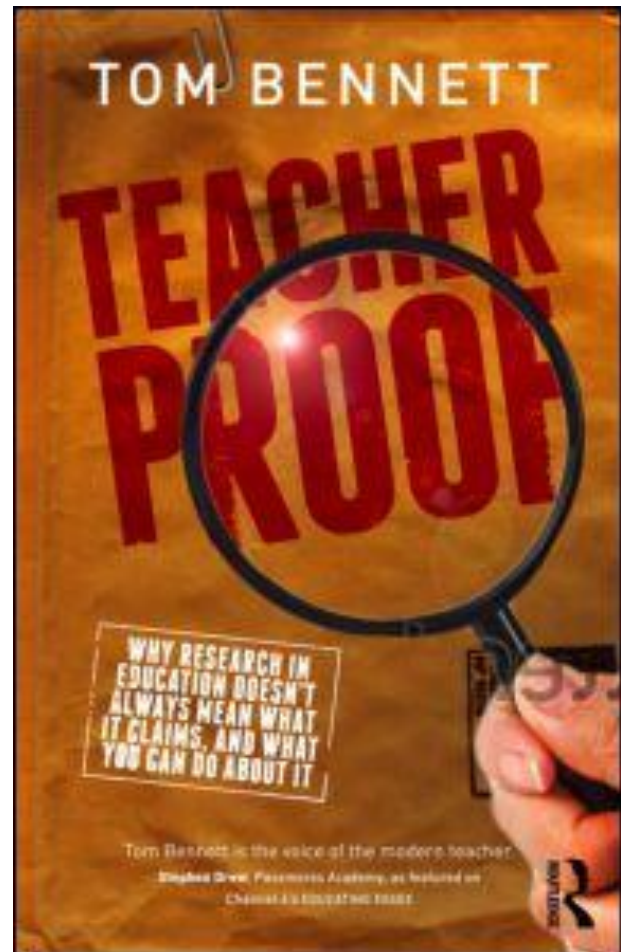
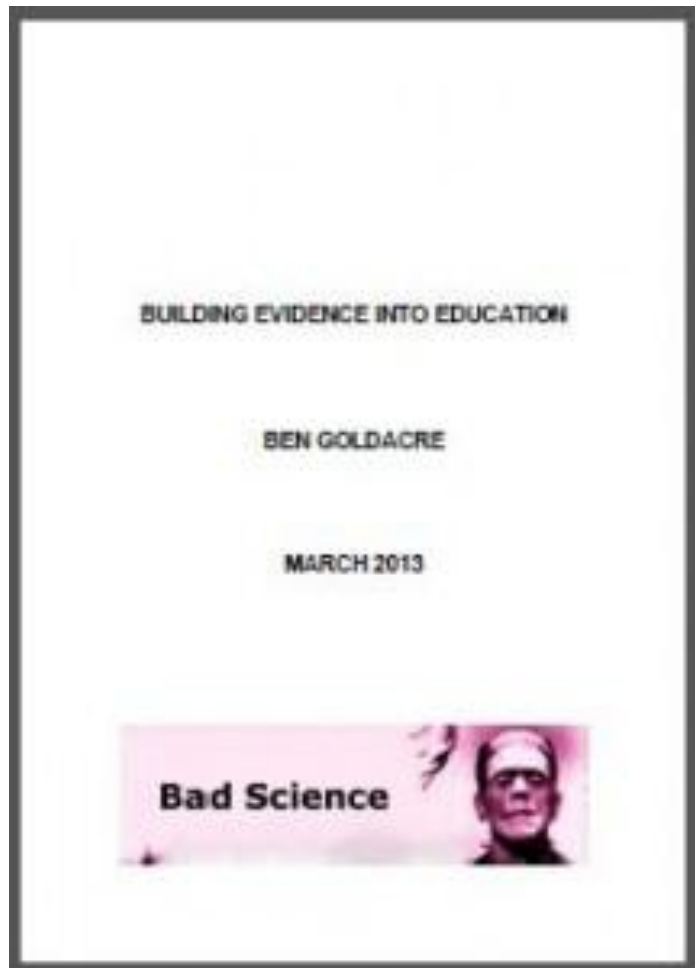
An evidence-based profession

- Need for teaching to be based on sound evidence & research (hopefully) goes without saying
 - Teaching and Learning Research Programme
 - shared results of academic research
 - shared government-commissioned research
 - Evidence Based Teachers Network
 - Books such as...

An evidence-based profession

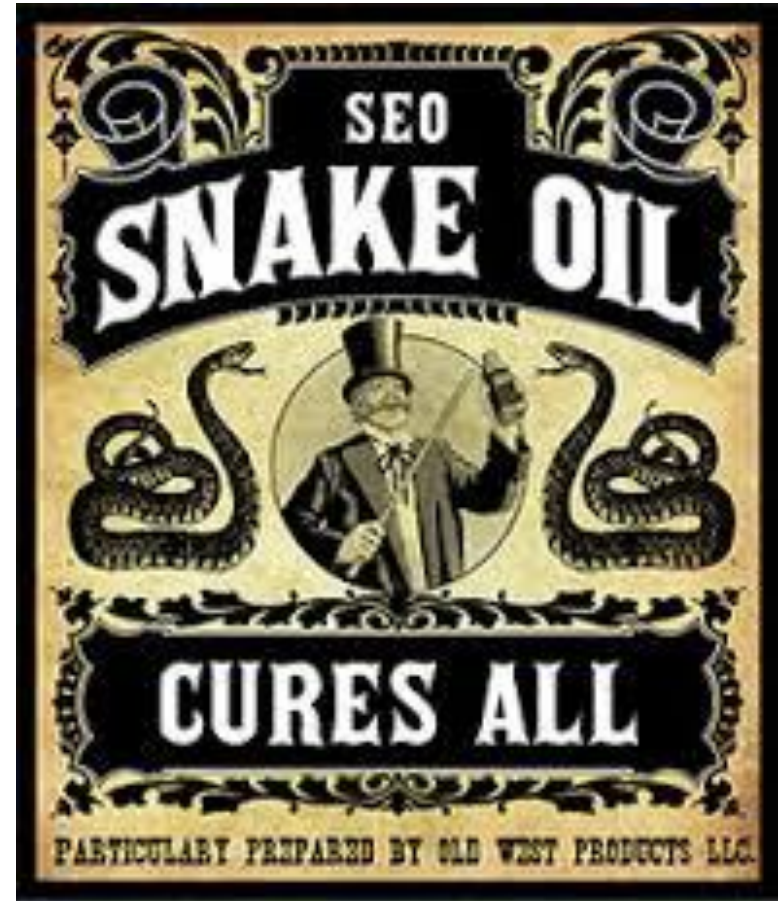


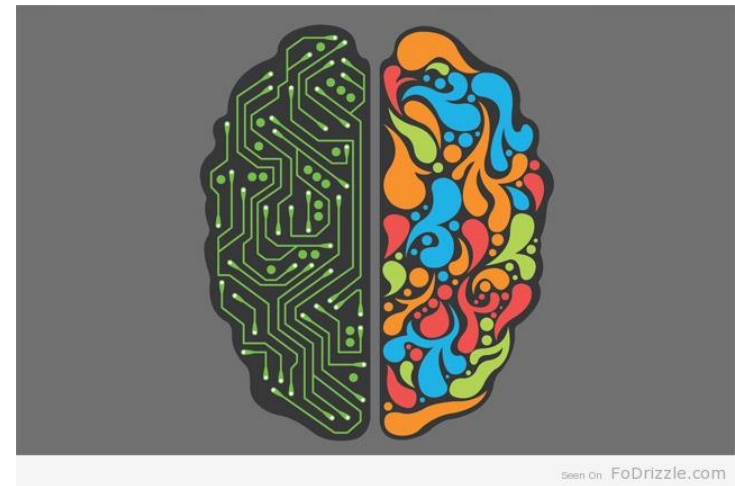
An evidence-based profession?










An evidence-based profession?

- Ben Goldacre (2013) calling for a 'revolution' re use of evidence in practice (particularly re quantitative research, RCTs)
- Myths about learning & unsubstantiated approaches common

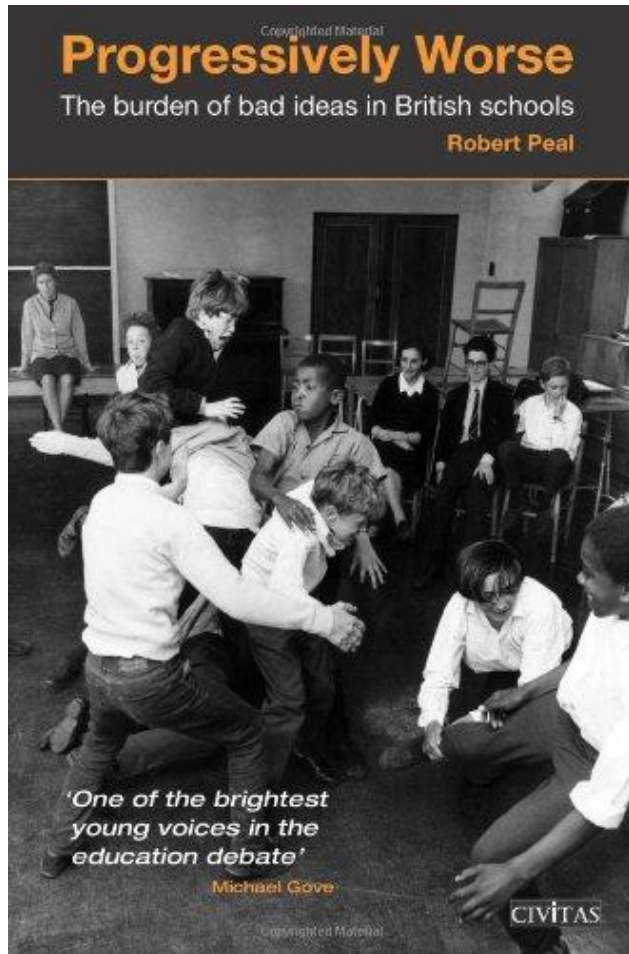




Learning Styles

<p><u>Visual</u></p>  <p>* You prefer using pictures, images, and spatial understanding.</p>	<p><u>Musical/Auditory</u></p>  <p>* You prefer using sound and music.</p>	<p><u>Verbal</u></p>  <p>* You prefer using words, both in speech and writing.</p>	<p><u>Physical/Kinesthetic</u></p>  <p>* You prefer using your body, hands and sense of touch.</p>
<p><u>Logical/Mathematical</u></p>  <p>* You prefer using logic, reasoning and systems.</p>	<p><u>Social</u></p>  <p>* You prefer to learn in groups or with other people.</p>	<p><u>Solitary</u></p>  <p>* You prefer to work alone and use self-study.</p>	<p>What is your learning style?</p>

An evidence-based activity...or a political football?

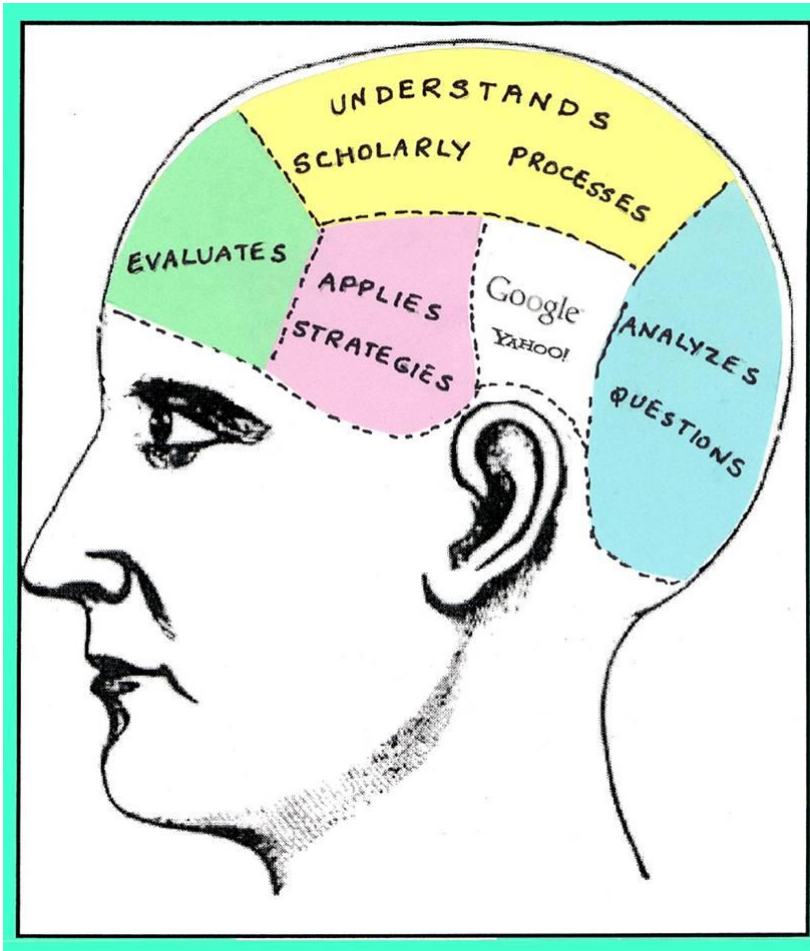


This chart represents the
teaching
experience of
most people
making decisions
about education.



som_{ee}cards
user card

Research literacy



- Clear need for teachers to be 'research literate'
 - to make informed judgements about approaches and claims
 - to use data collection/analysis systems effectively
 - To evaluate impact of their own teaching

BUT...

BUT...

- Teachers, head teachers and education advisers report finding accessing, evaluating and using research challenging (Williams & Coles, 2003)
- More concerned with 'classroom fit' (e.g. applicability of topic) than validity, reliability, methodology or evidence
- Long-standing antipathy towards research – education academics viewed as lacking credibility as not engaged in the 'real work' in the classroom (Joram, 2007)

“The knowledge base keeps growing, but this doesn’t mean necessarily that educational practitioners know about it, value it, or apply it in their work.”

(Gall et al., 2007.)

Research Methods

- HE courses (at UG & particularly at PG level) – key tool for developing research literacy in teachers...but again...
 - evidence in literature of antipathy towards research – *‘It’s not my job, it’s not part and parcel of what I’m paid to do (Williams & Coles, 2003).’*
 - little in literature identifying HOW to teach teachers about research
 - more about
 - lack of common and clear research/pedagogic culture
 - barriers to learning (especially re quantitative methods)
 - fears and anxieties (especially re quantitative research)

School of Education



- High demand for Research Methods training as part of Level 7 courses BUT...
 - concerns that module content was boring and of little relevance to students
 - ‘pitched too high’
 - off-putting for students and staff
 - staff reluctant to teach (especially re quantitative methods & analysis)

So...focus of project

- What content needs to be taught on a Level 7 Research Methods module in Education?
- How can the content be made more accessible, flexible and relevant?
- Need to ensure that it...
 - can be taught both by ourselves or colleagues
 - can be taught in a variety of formats (traditional one session per week to intensive)
 - is fully updated to include more recent reading and research
 - utilises a wider range of appropriate teaching methods to increase flexibility and accessibility and meet university expectations with regard to blended learning

Methodology

- Evaluation-focused action research
- Data collection:
 - surveying students
 - reflective diaries
 - interviewing colleagues
 - benchmarking module content against other universities

Activity to date

- Benchmarking via internet search & personal contact completed and course content updated to include
 - emphasis on mixed methods
 - Focus on quantitative research literacy
 - More in-session activities/lectures ‘flipped’ to pre-session preparation
- Updated content to link to relevant, staff-conducted research
- Delivered module in traditional form Spring 2014; being delivered in intensive format Summer 2014 x 2
- Full evaluation July 2014

What have we found so far? (1)

- Increased satisfaction with some aspects of course presentation, e.g.
 - Introduction to Educational Research
 - Understanding, presenting and analysing quantitative data
- Continued resistance/antipathy to some aspects of research –very functional approach
 - *“Action research –does not relate to what I want to do.”*

What have we found so far? (2)

- Flipping' the classroom not a successful strategy with busy professionals (including colleagues) with heavy teaching/marking workloads
- Varying response to some innovations, particularly re e.g. Ashoka Changemaker content
 - *“Askoka Changemaker session was superfluous – what was that about?”*



*Thank you
for listening*



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