

Research and Special Educational Needs: Setting an Agenda for Future Development

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Why research?

- **Approaches to educating children with SEN often built upon a limited evidence base and founded upon an unsystematic dependence on trial and error.**
- **Innovation in schools often remains at a parochial level through lack of evaluation or effective dissemination.**
- **Policy and developments in special education have often been implemented without attention to an evidence base to inform change**

What should research do?

Challenge our ideas and understanding with regards to learning and teaching for pupils with SEN

Seek to verify the efficacy of the approaches deployed and assist in modification as necessary

Evaluate those procedures, processes and practices that are implemented with an intention of promoting pupil achievement and attainment

Promote the development of enquiring teachers and other professionals by engaging them at the heart of the research process

A focus upon factors that shape effective learning

Project IRIS (Inclusive Research in Irish Schools)

- **POLICY**
- **PROVISION**
- **EXPERIENCE**
- **OUTCOMES**

POLICY

To what extent does policy impact upon educational provision, experiences and outcomes for pupils with SEN and those who work with them?

What are the limitations of the potential impact of policies which are intended to address a diverse population of learners in a broad range of educational provision and contexts?

What are the intentions of policies ? Are they interpreted in the same way by different interest groups?

PROVISION

How does provision impact upon the lives of children – academically, socially, emotionally?

Does the current pattern of school provision meet the needs of all pupils? (how are those needs defined?)

How do current models of school resourcing impact upon learning?

How well equipped is our current professional workforce to address a complex and changing population?

EXPERIENCE

What do parents and pupils expect from schools? Where do these expectations originate and how are they being addressed?

What do pupils tell us about their learning experiences – both during and after their schooling?

How do the experiences of schooling prepare pupils for their adult lives?

OUTCOMES

How well do the pupils in our schools do?

What works in teaching pupils with SEN? Why does it work? How do we know?

What do pupils need to learn? Who should decide?

How can progress, attainment and achievement be identified, measured and deemed appropriate?

Recent and on-going research

Ware, J. et.al. (2009) *The Role of Special Schools and Classes in Ireland*

Lindsay, G, & Desforges, (2010) M. *Procedures used to Diagnose a Disability and to Assess Special Educational Needs: An International Review*

Marschark, M. (2009) *Best practice models and outcomes in the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing children*

Cooper, P. (on-going) *An International Review of the Literature of Evidence of Best Practice Models and Outcomes in the Education of Children with Emotional Disturbance/Behavioural Difficulties.*

Mc Guckin. C, & Shevlin, M. (on-going) *Access and Progression Experiences of Students with Special Educational Needs Moving from Compulsory Education to Further and Higher Education.*