

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

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The EPPI-Centre is part of the Social Science Research Unit at the Institute of Education, University of London, UK¹



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

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