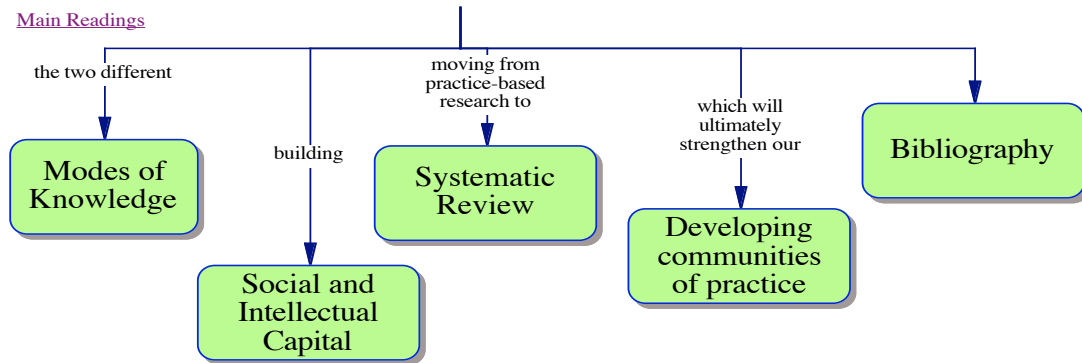


Work-Based Knowledge, Evidence-Informed Practice



*Reviewed by Rob Clarke, MA in Education
March 2004*

This is a really stimulating and thought-provoking paper that raises more questions than it answers. Even though this paper is quite academic and theoretical, it highlights some of the historical and political values-positions underlying the recent push towards practitioner work-based research as opposed to research conducted by academics. It looks at two types of knowledge construction, building schools capacity to develop their 'social and intellectual capital' through systematic review and how all of this helps us to develop true communities of practice.

Modes of Knowledge

There are two types of knowledge that are generated by the two forms of research the author discusses: Mode 1, which is academic and not highly transferable and Mode 2, which is at the grass roots and involves teacher-as-researcher. Avis believes that the second type of research is much 'richer' and that it addresses the immediacy of practice, which can lead to educational improvement.

I believe that we need both and that the author is perhaps trying to put forward his views based on current trends in this type of thinking (David Hargreaves has written extensively about this). He explains that much of this thinking has come from the drive in business (and also politics) to increase efficiency and effectiveness- which is essentially driven from political agendas.

Are we mechanising research too much and trying to search for other ways and just in reality applying traditional ways of analysing things to attempt to create a new 'research package'? I guess the bottom line is that what we are looking in to isn't just a science, but it is an art as well as a human condition- it is therefore extremely difficult to mechanise and research! What are the ways in which we can 'delve into' the creativity and imagination and power of truly great teaching and learning?

Developing communities of practice

Our communities of practice will eventually develop from more and more teachers and practitioners 'tinkering' with their everyday work. I would imagine this could involve learners as the fundamental developers of practice-based research, as well as their parents and carers.

Social and Intellectual Capital

Avis believes that if we are able to develop systematic review and practitioner-research into our everyday lives in schools, then we will be well positioned to build our organisation's 'social and intellectual capital'- or it's ability to become what Senge calls a 'learning organisation' (The Fifth Discipline, 1990). Underlying the organisation's ability to develop this is the notion of trust.

Systematic Review

The idea of systematic review comes from people such as David Hargreaves who talk about teachers 'tinkering' with their practice in an ongoing way. Hargreaves calls for a more systemised approach to this tinkering which will eventually lead to what has been termed 'systematic review'. I wonder if this is just putting something into new packaging rather than inventing something completely new and would be interested to read more about this topic.

Bibliography

Avis, J. Work-Based Knowledge, Evidence-Informed Practice and Education. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, ISSN 0007-1005 Vol. 51, No. 4, December 2003, pp 369-389

Senge, P.M. (1990) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*. New York: Doubleday.