

What does this look like in the classroom?

Bridging the gap between research and practice

Hendrick, C., Macpherson, R. (2019). *Co funguje ve třídě?: most mezi výzkumem a praxí*. Translated by Pavla Le Roch. Prague: Universum (Euromedia Group).

Reviewed by Dagmar Sedláčková

It is obvious that the demand for providing higher quality education is constantly increasing, regardless the fact whether growing requirements are caused by general development and technical progress on one hand, or by social needs leading to changes that directly affect the system of education on the other, while this tendency does not take place only in the Czech Republic, but also in any other countries. To speak about Czech educational environment, teachers have been rather under pressure in recent decades and in addition the enactment of inclusive education in 2016 brought a need for extension and increase of their workload as well as competencies, therefore professional development plays even more important role in teacher's work nowadays. Teachers necessarily need to educate themselves for their development and improvement, to look for and to study new approaches and develop skills that enable them to achieve satisfactory results in their work. To accomplish their goal, teachers should not only transfer their expertise to learners, but also create a sufficiently stimulating and motivating environment, they should be able to work with any class effectively unless omission of providing individual approach, they are expected to evaluate learners' results appropriately and justly, by providing functional feedback, and at the same time, with all that has already been mentioned, they should be able to organize their work within their schedule in the way that enable them to find also time for rest and their private life. A helpful solution (though not for everything) can be getting acquainted with latest worldwide research results, as they can offer them an answer to a question: "How to do it?"

Due to a large amount of research in this area as well as due to a difficult accessibility of most of research materials to ordinary teachers and last but not least due to the the lack of foreign scientific publications translated into Czech language I became very interested in a book by Carl Hendrick and Robin Macpherson "*What does this look like in the classroom?:bridging the gap between research and practice*", as it can help

busy teachers easily discover important results of academic research and bring them directly to the classroom. What is more, the book is available in its Czech translation. One of the author's, a teacher Carl Hendric's, need to translate good theoretical ideas into practice probably gave the first impulse to write this publication, and its starting point for processing was based on a partnership with three strategic institutions in Britain (Institute of Education – University of Reading, Institute of Education in London and Wokingham Secondary Federation) and their professionals. The content of the book is based on a research, which started by gathering real teachers' questions. Consequently the questions were sorted and classified into ten fields, each of them representing one topic of each chapter, followed by the authors' cooperation with eighteen leading educators, who gradually answered the questions and transformed the most up-to-date research into classroom tools. The final product is a summary of very effective classroom practice in ten important areas of teaching. This handy book can become a practical teacher's manual in an inclusive class. Dr. David Mitchell, an adjunct professor at Canterbury University in New Zealand, dealt with similar problematics of translating academic research into excellent practice in the classroom, but with a special emphasize on inclusion, in his book "*What really works in Special and Inclusive Education*", published in 2014, where 27 teaching strategies based on EBT (Evidence based teaching) are described. Although the Hendrick's and Macpherson's publication does not primarily focus on education in inclusive settings, because only one chapter deals with special educational needs, the principles stated by these authors throughout the whole book are applicable in any class of any composition of learners and, unlike a number of many foreign stimulating scientific pedagogical publications, this book was translated into Czech language, by Pavla Le Roch in 2019, so it can come in handy also to teachers who cannot speak English. The book has 230 pages and it was illustrated by Oliver Caviglioli.

The book provides ten main chapters, each of them compiled with contribution of two specialists and each devoted to one area of teaching, including: assessment, marking and feedback (Dylan Wiliam & Daisy Christodoulou); behavior (Tom Bennett & Jill Berry); literacy and reading skills (Alex Quigley & Dianne Murphy); special educational needs (Jarlath O'Brien & Maggie Snowling); motivation (Nick Rose & Lucy Crehan); psychology and memory (Paul Kirschner & Yana Weinstein); classroom talk and asking questions in the class (Martin Robinson & Doug Lemov); learning myths (David Didau & Pedro de Bruyckere); technologies (Jose Picardo & Neelam Parmar) and self-learning, which is the last topic and the only chapter that was discussed by both authors and all eighteen specialists included in the research. Every chapter contains introduction to the topic that it deals with, and teachers' questions are consequently introduced to readers and answered or discussed by both specialists from their point of view as a possible evidence based solution. Nevertheless the book is divided into ten chapters devoted to specific topics, the topics and

themes overlap, because all activities involved in educational process are linked to each other, so the topic of assessment, for example, deals also with motivation etc. The summarizing eleventh chapter contains conclusion with six steps leading to effective education plus other steps recommended to teachers and headmasters.

To be more specific about practical ideas that a reader can find in the book, I can state some examples that the book deals with:

The problematics of formative evaluation and feedback, for example, is discussed in the first chapter that is devoted to marking and feedback. A lot of teachers are convinced that they provide feedback in the right way, but the specialists in the book criticize some teachers for not understanding the meaning of it, because it sometimes does not work in the way they do it, it does not lead to better learners' skills and what is more, the way, some teachers do it, often leads to increasing their workload. Therefore the book offers particular tools, how it could be done with less effort and better results. In the case of summative and formative evaluation, there is a nice idea of four-quartered evaluation, including 25% of detailed marking, 25% of self-evaluation of learners, 25% of peer-evaluation and 25% of learners' work together without evaluation, accompanied with a useful advice for effective feedback. The strategy reduces time that teachers spend on evaluating learners' work and enable them to spend more time on lesson plans, for example. The chapter focused on behavior deals for example with issues of punishment and support of creativity and currently often discussed problems with using mobile phones. A topic of learning or teaching methods of reading, expanding vocabulary, increasing reading motivation, errors or cross-curricular language use is discussed in a chapter that deals with literacy and reading skill. Chapter four focuses on special educational needs and the aim is to find the tools, how to motivate pupils and how to work with learners with learning disabilities, behavior and attention disorders, learners with social or emotional problems, foreigners, as well as talented learners. The question being discussed is the use of technologies, providing support measures etc.

During reading the book I, as a teacher, could clearly imagine reality in the classroom, some problems that I, as well as other teachers, face every day and I must say that it enriched me, because although I identify with some procedures in my own practice, the book offers me also new ideas that I can use immediately. Another thing that I appreciate is that not only the book concentrates on well-being of learners, but it also deals with reducing the amount of teacher's workload, the issues that are not often solved in pedagogical publications.

What I miss in the Czech translation of this book is a foreword that opens the original publication, because it clearly and briefly introduces the purpose, what the book is about and what a reader can expect, stating seven key questions for which the book should provide the answers. The questions are not omitted, but placed at the very end of the book in the Czech version. These questions should be asked by

teachers in their practice as well as by politicians, in the case they plan to enact some changes, as it can avoid serious mistakes. They are as follows:

1. *What is the need for change?*
2. *What are the potential benefits?*
3. *What is the evidence base for it?*
4. *What impact will it have on teacher workload?*
5. *What effect will it have on pupil learning?*
6. *Can a pilot be done before the initiative goes whole school?*

(David Laws 2017 in Hendric, Macpherson, 2017, p. 6)

In conclusion the book provides useful material for teachers at any school, it links useful scientific research findings with teachers' work. Teachers can find here inspiration not only on the level of theory, but also practical examples, and ideas from this book can lead to improvement of teachers' work and it can also reduce their workload.

References

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- [2] Mitchell, D., (2014). *What really works in special and inclusive education: using evidence-based teaching strategies*. Second edition. New York: Routledge.

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