



Getting Started with Evaluating Impact

What is impact? - Transcript

Interviewee

Dr Sue Brindley

University of Cambridge

So, I'm Dr Sue Brindley, I work at the Faculty of Education. And my particular interests there are in practitioner research, and impact is part of the work that I am looking at and researching with teachers.

How would you define impact in an educational context?

It's a very interesting word, it has become a bit of a shibboleth. It has become something which sounds scary, and large, and numbers. It's actually just to do with change. What makes a difference, and how do we know it has made a difference? And that's really all the questions that we need to ask ourselves.

Why do you think talking about impact can be challenging for teachers?

It's not simple in itself though is it? Because if we look at change, and we think about the types of change, change can be good, it can be average, it can be negative. So, there's a whole stretch of ways that this could actually be quite complicated. But I think probably one of the most complicated things is that we ask ourselves too big a question. So, we look at what is assessment, we look at what is feedback? And a hard part, but an essential part of understanding impact, is to get that to the point where it's a question that you can actually answer. It's really specific, it's small, it's focused, and it's doable.

We as teachers will often reflect, and we'll think about a whole class, and we'll think about a range of things as we walk out of the door. And it's normally associated with the comment to ourselves of 'I could have done that better', because we're quite critical as a profession. But actually, that large landscape kind of effect is not helpful if you really want to understand what change is being brought about. So, challenging is the idea of reducing it down to a small, and focused idea, which is what you're going to investigate.

