Digital Technology

Review of evidence on the impact of digital technology on learning (deadline 12 March 2018)

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is commissioning a review of the recent evidence about digital technology and its impact on learning and teaching. We are seeking proposals from research teams able to complete this review by early June 2018. The review will be used to inform the creation of a guidance report about the effective use of digital technology.

Background

EEF guidance reports summarise the best available research evidence on an aspect of teaching and present actionable recommendations for practice. Guidance reports are based on rigorous systematic reviews of research evidence and are produced in collaboration with practitioners. The most recent examples of EEF guidance reports are:

Improving Literacy in Key Stage 1

Improving Mathematics in Key Stages 2 and 3

The outline of the process for producing EEF guidance reports is as follows:

1. The EEF appoints a panel of practitioners, academics, and other stakeholders to support the creation of the guidance report.
2. The EEF commissions a review of the research evidence, based around a series of practical questions related to the focus of the guidance report.
3. With advice from the panel, the EEF will use the evidence review to draft a series of recommendations for practice. The evidence reviewer will be expected to interpret the review findings to help generate practical recommendations, and provide ongoing support during the writing process.

The next guidance report planned by the EEF will focus on the use of digital technology to improve teaching and learning.

Review focus and methods

In 2012, Steve Higgins and colleagues wrote an EEF evidence summary of The Impact of Digital Technology on Learning. That review synthesised the available evidence at the time, and drew together the key messages emerging from that evidence.

We would like a team to update this review, focusing on the evidence that has been published since 2012. Steve Higgins and colleagues can share their information from the initial review; we would not expect you to re-review that, other than to understand how the more recent evidence fits with the previous findings.

The review will synthesize the best available international evidence regarding the effectiveness of using digital technology to improve pupil outcomes. EEF guidance reports are “live” documents that will be updated as the evidence base evolves, hence we would like the review to be completed using an approach that allows it to be easily updated in the future.

The review will focus on the recent research evidence about the impact that digital technology has learning outcomes. In discussion with the team and the panel, we will set some questions we would like the review to consider.
We expect these will include, for example:

What are the different ways that technology can be used to improve learning outcomes? We’d be keen for the team to suggest a typology of different types of technology in their proposals, which we would finalise with the successful team. Which types of use are most effective? For example, is there more evidence for its use with particular subjects or age groups, or types of activity?

What are the characteristics of digital technology use that are most/least effective at improving pupil outcomes?

Is there any evidence of digital technology being used to improve other outcomes (e.g. reducing teacher workload) that lead to impact on learning outcomes?

What evidence is there about how English schools are currently using digital technology to improve learning? If there is a gap here, we may consider some primary research to explore this question. We would be interested in your initial thoughts on this.

We are particularly interested in robust, causal evidence of impact using experimental and quasi-experimental designs, including studies carried out both within the UK and internationally. The quantity of studies available in this field is likely to require a review of existing systematic reviews and meta-analyses, at least as part of a scoping stage. Tenders should outline the proposed strategy for the review.

Specific questions will be determined jointly with the Panel and reviewer, with the aim that they would shape the eventual guidance recommendations.

Timing

The deadline for proposals is Monday 12th March 2018. We are looking to appoint a team the following week, and would expect them to attend a meeting with the Panel in late March to scope the review in more detail. We would expect drafts and frameworks to be shared throughout the review, and that the work would be delivered by early June 2018, ahead of a presentation to the EEF and the Panel in late June 2018. At this stage, a comprehensive draft of the review findings is required; it does not have to be a final, polished review.

We would then expect the authors to remain involved until the end of the year, while the EEF leads on producing a teacher-facing guidance report.

Appointment process

If you would like to be considered to undertake the review, please send a brief outline describing your proposed approach. Please include an overview of your relevant skills and experience, and an estimated budget. Proposals should be no more than 1,500 words, as we expect you to work with the Panel to specify the scope of the review in more detail.

Similar reviews funded by the EEF can be found on the evidence reviews section of the EEF website.

We recognise that different aspects of this review may require different expertise, so are open to joint applications from multiple teams. We are open to applications from teams based outside of the UK but would expect you to be able to attend meetings in London.

We will finalise the specification with the successful team and the final report will be peer reviewed. Report length and budget are open for discussion at this stage. This proposed review is smaller in scope than most previous reviews, as we expect it to focus on the most recent literature.
Please note the funds for this evaluation / research are from the EEF’s fundraising and investment income (i.e. a non-Government source) and that this research qualifies for HEFCE Charity Support Fund criteria.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Eleanor Stringer: eleanor.stringer@eefoundation.org.uk

Please send your proposal to: eleanor.stringer@eefoundation.org.uk by 5pm Monday 12th March 2018

All our published literature reviews are available to read here.

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