

The Evidence-Based Edit

Welcome!

...to the May issue of The Evidence-Based Edit, your essential, concise guide to cutting-edge educational research tailored just for you!



In Research... Applied we walk the halls of pedagogy, asking if Bloom's Taxonomy is a foundational pillar or a ghost from the past. Featuring diverse staff voices, we debate whether the famous pyramid empowers mastery or acts as a straightjacket for subject logic. We also interrogate Sweden's 'Digital U-Turn' - are we truly innovating to empower, or simply automating the death of focus?

Don't let the research end here. Join Luminate's first 'Post.Script' on 18th May - an open, unfiltered forum to tear apart the research and turn theory into practice. Your voice belongs in the debate!

Triumph with Tech!

UCL (2019) research confirms it: active learning is the ultimate engine for achievement.

But in an FE landscape crowded with apps and platforms, are we igniting learner brains or simply overloading them? Discover how to cut through the 'digital noise' to ensure technology scaffolds mastery rather than masking it.

Read more on Page 3.

New and Ongoing Research



The Zig-Zag to Mastery

Can you identify an "unresolved success" where the process revealed more about your craft than a perfect result would have?

Discover how 2024 research redefines mistakes as "unresolved successes". Learn why modelling professional risk-taking is vital and how 'The Academy of Unresolved Successes' empowers you to transform adventurous inquiry into collective mastery.

Read more on Page 3.

Research... Applied.

Bloom's: Practical Necessity or Theoretical Ghost?

While Bloom's Taxonomy (1956) is Education's "common language," critics like [Doug Lemov](#) and [David Didau](#) suggest we have misused it for decades. They argue the omnipresent pyramid creates a hierarchy where mere knowledge is denigrated. Crucially, the original [1956 Handbook](#) featured no pyramid; Bloom intended a sequence of goals, not a value judgment. He framed knowledge as the "necessary precondition" for all skills - a foundation, not a hurdle to jump over.

This foundation is vital for Dimitrios Georgalis (Maths & Science, Leeds Sixth Form), who believes we "*overthink the verbs*" at the expense of subject logic. In STEM, the taxonomy can feel like a straightjacket: "*If you're asking a learner to evaluate an equation, is that 'Evaluation' or just standard mathematical process? Sometimes we try to fit the subject to the taxonomy.*" For Dimitrios, depth comes from interconnected nodes in a schema, not just picking a verb from a toolkit.

Conversely, for Rory Enright (ESOL & English, Harrogate College), the power lies in precise vocabulary. He argues action verbs provide "*pinpointed guidance*," using a toaster analogy to move learners beyond description ("*it is red*") into evaluation ("*it is cheap to run*"). Joy Binstock (Business, Printworks) maintains the hierarchy mirrors biological reality: "*To recall it is the foundation... In the brain, that is a hierarchy because the amount of connections required is different.*" Modern T-Level and BTEC design requires this rapid move from recall to conceptual application, making the taxonomy a reflection of professional competence.

Initial Teacher Education is moving toward a mixed model, partly driven by shifting inspectorate expectations. In the recent ITE inspection, Ofsted stated that Bloom's was no longer relevant in its traditional, hierarchical application. Joe Wearing (ITE, University Centre Leeds) explains that their approach is evolving to better support trainees' development:

"At Luminate ITE, we have moved away from the traditional view of Bloom's Taxonomy as a strict hierarchy where knowledge is viewed as 'lower order.' While the action verbs remain a useful tool, we now emphasise a broader pedagogical approach, incorporating the [SOLO taxonomy](#) and the [Dreyfus model of skill acquisition](#)..."

This shift distinguishes descriptive tools from prescriptive traps. As [Adam Boxer](#) warns, changing a verb doesn't guarantee challenge if content demand is absent - a point reflected in [Government Qualification Design](#) guidance. If we removed all Bloom's command verbs from tomorrow, would the actual cognitive demand of change, or would we just be forced to describe the required knowledge more clearly? Ultimately, a taxonomy must serve the subject, not the other way around.

Is the research right?

Join our online 'Post.Script' forum on 18th May!

Register your interest [here](#).



Active or Overloaded: Leveraging the Digital Advantage

UCL's (2019) research provides a powerful mandate for the FE sector: active learning is the engine that closes attainment gaps and drives learner achievement.

The findings champion a shift from passive observation - such as listening to a lecture or watching a demonstrational video - toward "learning by doing." When technology acts as a scaffold, it transforms activities like quizzes, learner presentations, and group discussions into high-impact cognitive events. By using digital tools to facilitate role-play, experiments, and collaborative problem-solving, we move learners beyond consumption and into the construction of durable, long-term memory. However, technology should be a window into the lesson, not a wall. The goal is to ensure the mental effort is spent on the problem-solving, not on figuring out how to use the software. Within our high-stakes funding landscape, this precision is vital.

When the balance is right, tech-enhanced active learning provides the scalable, immediate feedback that acts as a lifeline for all cohorts striving toward mastery. When reviewing our most successful tech-enhanced sessions, what specific markers indicate that learners are thinking deeper, rather than just moving faster?



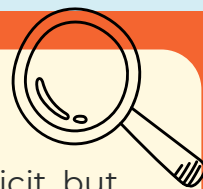
The Zig-Zag to Mastery

Momentary inaccuracies are not endpoints of deficit, but essential catalysts for mastery. 2024 research suggests shifting focus from outcomes to processes transforms the 'stigma of the stumble' into a deliberate learning destination.

Narciss and Alemdag (2024) demonstrate that a positive "error climate" predicts higher achievement and reduced learner alienation. Interactive feedback focusing on the "how" and "why" of an inaccuracy fosters the deep cognitive

processing required to avoid recurring slips. Furthermore, "deliberate erring" can facilitate better integration of complex information than learning from correct examples alone. Just as learners require a supportive climate to thrive, our professional craft demands the same courage. Modelling resilience requires shifting from safe, repetitive routines toward adventurous inquiry.

Enter **The Academy of Unresolved Successes**, a collection of transformational 'near-misses' presented in open, honest reflection for shared discovery. Through a series of collaborative interviews, the evolution of a teaching intervention is tracked, ensuring that the 'zig-zag' path of progress is fully understood and shared, presenting individual experiences as a collective body of knowledge. This strengthens our staff's ability to adapt and innovate within the complex landscape of FE.



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Cognitive Load or Creative Liberty? The Great Digital U-Turn

Sweden's decision to hit the 'emergency stop' on classroom digitalisation marks a vital interrogation of how cognitive focus is protected in an age of infinite distraction. As documented in a recent [BBC report](#), this policy shift challenges educational leaders to bridge the gap between evidence-based research and the strategic reality of modern teaching, asking whether the future of education is found in a return to the past or in more intentional innovation.

The BBC's investigation into the Swedish U-turn highlights declining PISA scores and warnings from researchers like Dr. Cecilia Knatley regarding screen-based cognitive load. Teacher Karina Mikel describes a shift from a 'digital-at-all-costs' culture to a state-funded reclaim of textbooks, noting that students often find deeper focus when laptops are put away. Learners agree, observing that analogue tools force a learner to "do it all yourself," whereas screens can trigger a 'distraction chain' that pulls an entire classroom off-task.

While the Swedish retreat highlights the risks of unstructured technology, many global leaders - including the UK, Singapore, and Estonia - suggest the solution lies in pedagogical intent rather than removal. The [Department for Education](#) and [Jisc](#) suggest that technology should not be a default, but a specific tool to dismantle barriers. This is mirrored in the [TLA Impact Framework](#), which shifts focus toward "purposeful integration."

In environments like ESOL, digital tools serve as an essential bridge to independence. When AI provides real-time accessibility support for SEND and High Needs learners, it moves from being a distraction to a critical tool for equity. As Professor Stenliden warns in the BBC report, a total retreat to paper risks a digital divide where learners lose the opportunity to master responsible and ethical AI use, a core requirement for the modern workforce.

For Further Education leaders, the Swedish case is a reminder to audit the "why" behind the Wi-Fi. Quality assurance must move beyond digital presence to digital *impact*. Following [Gatsby Foundation \(2025\)](#) advice, technology must be a pedagogical attribute that enhances efficiency without compromising the deep, critical thinking required for vocational and academic excellence.

If screen time is reduced to boost literacy, how could educators ensure learners remain competitive in the AI-driven labour market championed by the [Association of Colleges](#)? Conversely, how can "high-focus" analog moments be created without losing the independence digital tools provide?

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