

Education at Scale: The Research Picture

Hannie Kirkham and Sam Derby look at recent research into education at scale to identify emerging trends.

Three key themes of education at scale

Over the last six months, we have read numerous reports examining aspects of education at scale. A few of those reports are highlighted in this edition of Education Insights (see pages 7, 9 and 17), but how do those sit alongside wider research?

Stepping back from the details of the interviews and articles featured in this edition allows us to identify three key themes around education at scale: providing frameworks for implementation, growth by geographical hubs, and teacher retention. Each theme adds to a wider picture of evidence about education at scale.

Providing frameworks for implementation

Rather than an organisation mandating a particular approach or resource, the 'framework' approach provides detailed support for implementing education at scale but still devolves responsibility to the school level.

NFER's report on MAT provision for SEND¹ makes the point that 'MATs are investing heavily in staff training, drawing on both in-house resources and external providers', giving an evidence-led framework in which a professional can make autonomous judgements (read more on page 17).

The Chief Executive of the River Learning Trust, Paul James, gives an insight into what this framework looks like in practice (p. 11): the RLT's centralised approach to sharing expertise enables their schools to implement a 'distributed leadership of SEND' in their setting. Similarly

Ark is increasingly taking a 'codification' approach: showing schools what good practice looks like, and providing a framework to support them (see p. 12).

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in the same geographic area find staff collaboration comes more easily and has more impact – and in terms of cost, it's more efficient when central staff can be shared.

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