

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning – why it matters and how we might nurture it

Research-curriculum-practice

- A complex relationships in many different contexts
- No less so in England
- Conflicting views on research and practice:

Teaching is a craft and it is best learnt as an apprentice observing a master craftsman or woman. Watching others, and being rigorously observed yourself as you develop, is the best route to acquiring mastery in the classroom. (Gove, 2010)

DFE list of priority questions in 2014:

“What are the most effective ways of ensuring that knowledge from research influences teaching practice?” (DfE, 2014, p.9).

- **Conflict implicit in the division between research and teaching in HE?**

Teachers' professional knowledge – Winch et al. (2013)

“ practical understanding and know-how, a good conceptual understanding of education and teaching, and the ability to understand, interpret and form critical judgements on empirical research and its relevance to their particular situation” (Winch et al., 2013)

- ‘**Engineering model**’: research can give “specific and immediately applicable technical solutions to problems”
- ‘**Moderate enlightenment model**’: “research is one among several sources of knowledge on which practice can draw. Moreover, the use made of it properly depends on practical judgements about what is appropriate and useful”

(Hammersley, 2002)

Training or education?

- A key component of Teacher Education in high-performing countries (e.g. Finland) is the development of knowledge of research and about research (Tatto, 2013)
- BERA/RSA (2014) report also emphasises the value of research and enquiry at all stages of teacher development

To be at their most effective, teachers and teacher educators need to engage *with* research and enquiry – this means keeping up to date with the latest developments in their academic subject or subjects and with developments in the discipline of education.

Teachers and teacher educators need to be equipped to engage *in* enquiry-oriented practice. This means having the capacity, motivation, confidence and opportunity to do so.

A focus on enquiry-based practice needs to be sustained during initial teacher education programmes and throughout teachers' professional careers, so that disciplined innovation and collaborative enquiry are embedded within the lives of schools or colleges and become the normal way of teaching and learning, rather than the exception

(BERA/RSA, 2014, p.6)

Barriers

- Research inaccessible, physically and linguistically
- ‘A mismatch between teachers’ narrative experience of classroom life and the portrayal of learning and teaching they encounter in research papers’ (Borg, 2010, 413-414)
- Expectations of immediate ‘pay-off’ (Sinclair, 1982) and absolute ‘proof’ of effectiveness (Ratcliffe et al., 2004)
- More useful to think of research supplying ‘pedagogic proposals’, ‘provisional specifications’, ‘transformation not transmission’ (Ellis, 1997, p.83, p.88)

And the MFL curriculum?

- Does it draw on research as a ‘quick fix, cookbook practice or the provider of readymade solutions to the demands of modern education’ (Davies, 1999)?
- Danger of curriculum that cherry picks selectively from research rather than promoting the establishment of ‘a set of principles and practices which can alter the way people think about education, the way they go about educational policy and practice, and the basis upon which they make professional judgements and deploy their expertise’ (Davies, 1999, p.111).
- Selectivity combined with personal ‘values’ or preferences?
- Potential danger of conflicting priorities

The National Curriculum for MFL (2014)

Learners should:

- speak with increasing confidence, fluency and spontaneity, finding ways of communicating what they want to say, including through discussion and asking questions
- ..and continually improving the accuracy of their pronunciation and intonation
- Pupils should be taught to: identify and use tenses or other structures which convey the present, past, and future as appropriate to the language being studied

Transformation not transmission

- Engagement with ‘theory’ can help teachers ‘make deeper sense of their work (new ways of seeing)’ (Borg 2010, p. 414)
- ‘**Mediation**’ (Cordingley, 2008) - transformation of knowledge from research into classroom practice through methods that help teachers see parallels between research reports and their own learners
- **Grassroots** driven rather than top-down – teachers need to draw out own relevance and see a need (Erlam, 2008)
- ‘teachers develop by studying their own practice, collecting data and using **reflective processes** as the basis for evaluation and change’ (Mann, 2005: 103)
- **Changes in pedagogical beliefs** are important for changes in practice (Borg, 2011), but change in practice ‘seals’ belief change (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002)
- Importance of regular **feedback and support** (Guskey, 2002) and **collaboration** (Mann, 2005)

Impact on student learning

- Parr et al. (2007) - large-scale intervention, 13 schools
- CPD initiative for the teaching of first language literacy - engagement with theoretical, research-based readings on literacy development.
- Large gains in teachers' knowledge of how to teach writing and of the process of writing after the professional development
- Teacher knowledge strongly related to students' gains in writing.
- Short et al. (2012) - content-based language teaching, ESL
- Learners taught by teachers who had received research-based professional development reached significantly higher levels of achievement in reading, writing, and speaking

Collaboration: Professional Development Consortium in MFL - Project aims

- To work with teachers and teacher educators to **close the divide** between research-based principles for effective language teaching and learning, and the current MFL curriculum and pedagogy
- To exemplify how eight research-based principles can be applied successfully in the classroom
- To help teachers and ITE tutors to then apply these principles in their own teaching

Eight principles

Principle 1 ORAL INTERACTION

Target language input is essential for learning but it can be made more effective if learners are encouraged to check the understanding of it by asking questions of what the teacher is saying or asking the teacher to repeat.

(Negotiation of meaning; primacy of input)

Principle 2 ORAL INTERACTION

Learners need to be encouraged to speak spontaneously and to say things that they are not sure are correct

(Output hypothesis (Swain, 1995); pushed output)

Eight principles

Principle 3 ORAL INTERACTION

Less spontaneous oral interaction should nevertheless be of high quality. By high quality we mean including substantial student turns; adequate wait time; cognitive challenge [e.g. by requiring a verb phrase or subordinate clause]; appropriate teacher feedback; nominating students rather than waiting for volunteers.

(Research on questioning, learner-teacher interaction, IRF)

Principle 4 ORAL INTERACTION

Students should be explicitly taught strategies to use when faced with communication difficulties. These should be used alongside techniques for developing their oral fluency, such as repetition of tasks and chunking of pre-learnt words into whole phrases.

(Research on fluency development)

Eight principles

Principle 5 READING AND LISTENING

Learners need to be taught how to access a greater range of more challenging spoken and written texts, through explicit instruction in comprehension strategies and in the relationship between the written and spoken forms.

(Research on decoding, comprehension)

Principle 6 FEEDBACK

Learners need to develop their self- confidence and see the link between the strategies they use and how successful they are on a task.

(Self-regulated learning theories – Zimmerman, 2013)

Eight principles

Principle 7 WRITING

Writing should be developed as a skill in its own right not just as a consolidation of other language skills. For this to happen students should frequently write using the language and strategies they already know rather than resources provided by the teacher (e.g. textbooks, writing frames, dictionaries, etc.)

(Macaro, 2001, 2007)

Principle 8 (underpins all other principles)

The principal focus of pedagogy should be on developing language skills and therefore the teaching of linguistic knowledge (knowledge of grammar and vocabulary) should act in the service of skill development not as an end in itself

Methodology

- Collaboration with Consortium schools to develop teaching materials and activities to translate the Principles into classroom practice
- Materials used with learners, lessons video-recorded.
- Recordings edited and annotated
- Samples of pupils' work, pupil interviews

Methodology

- Materials disseminated at 7 national workshops
- Co-delivery by university and school PDC members
- Teachers, ITE tutors, policy makers, curriculum and course book writers attended (including 241 teachers from 144 schools, 34 ITE tutors from 28 universities).

Methodology

- Post-workshop, teacher participants asked to implement the Principles in their own schools, and ITE tutors into their PGCE programmes.
- Distance support provided by project staff
- Project blog (www.pdcinmfl.com)

Impact

- Questionnaires before and after each workshop (Times 1 and 2), and six months later (Time 3) – Likert scale responses to each Principle
- Questions about planned and actual implementation of the Principles in teaching and work with trainee teachers.
- Comparison group of 50 teachers who did not attend the workshops.
- Written reports (11 teachers and 4 ITE tutors)

Findings

- Comparison group responses did not differ significantly from those of the workshop group at Time 1, but did at Time 2 (all Principles) and at Time 3 for three Principles, being less in agreement with all Principles than the workshop group at both Time 2 and Time 3.

Findings

- Reports, emails and interviews show high level of incorporating Principles into practice in schools and ITE programmes (e.g. Nottingham, Sheffield Hallam, Sussex, Portsmouth, Birmingham City, Newman, Birmingham, Newcastle)
- Around 66,500 hits on project website
- From around 140 countries



Taking things further: French Language Education: Unlocking Reading (FLEUR)

The research team



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Participating schools



FLEUR – taking things further

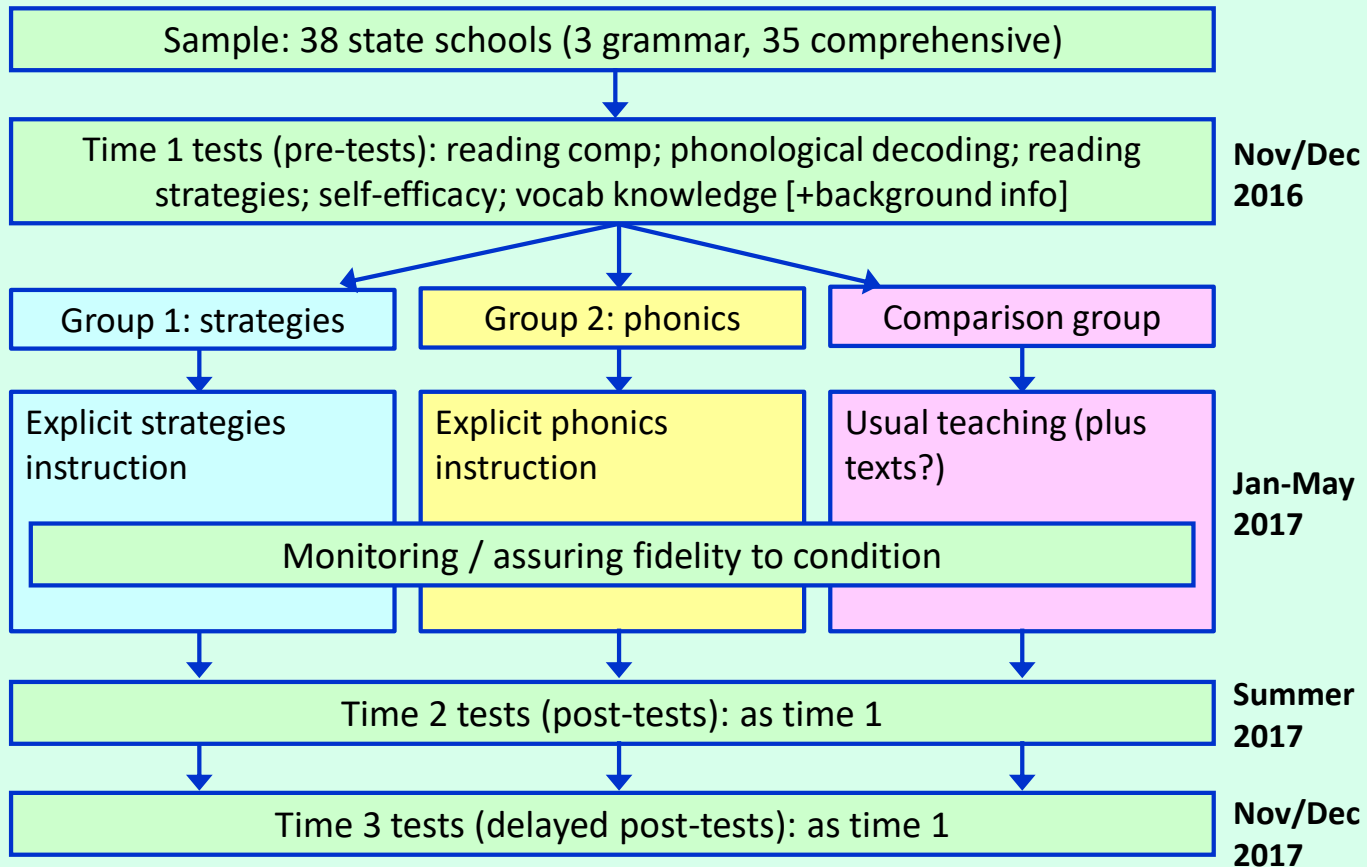
Partial replication of a previous study of reading instruction (Macaro & Erler, 2008):

- Same texts used by three groups of Yr7 learners of French:
 - ❖ Strategies group: provide ‘challenging’ texts to allow and support strategic behaviour
 - ❖ Phonics group: to provide practice in decoding specific GPC in a communicative context
 - ❖ Comparison group: texts only
- Crucial component: teacher involvement in planning interventions, learning how to evaluate outcomes; teacher development (confidence with teaching reading, understanding of teaching reading, understanding of and attitudes towards educational research)

Sample session for teachers

- Background to the FLEUR project:
 - Research and practice in MFL
 - Approaches to research in education and SLA
 - The relationship between research and practice
 - The ‘state of play’ in MFL (and reading in particular)
 - Some key previous studies which the FLEUR project draws on
 - Overview of the FLEUR project: the design of the study
 - Break into individual intervention groups
- Designing / refining the interventions: pedagogical approaches and materials, including a discussion of proposed ‘pedagogical texts’

FLEUR study design: overview



Sample activities

- In pairs / small groups, think about the design of the project study.
- What are some of the key 'threats' to the validity of the findings? What kinds of problems might arise that would weaken the evidence we collect in relation to our research questions?
- For the threats you have identified, how might these be addressed / prevented / mitigated?

Preliminary 'findings' from FLEUR

- Commitment and enthusiasm from teachers
- Impact on their practice
- Impact on learners
- Wanting continuing contact with similar projects
- Several teachers then took part in current AHRC Creative Multilingualism project

Implications

- Engagement with professional learning rather than just participation in developmental activities needed for growth (Timperly, 2008)
- ‘teachers develop by studying their own practice, collecting data and using reflective processes as the basis for evaluation and change’ (Mann, 2005: 103).
- Changes in pedagogical beliefs are important for changes in practice (Borg, 2011)
- Importance of mediation (Cordingley, 2008) for the transformation of knowledge from research into classroom practice
- Importance of collaboration between researchers and teachers