

The E(A)P of Spelling

Teachers & Students Learning Together

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Overview

- What is Exploratory Practice
- An Example
- Implications and Issues

What is Exploratory Practice?

- Practitioner 'Research'
- Develops understanding
- Does not provide solutions

Meeting Needs

- Departments
- Sponsors/ parents
- **Students**
- **Teachers**

Seven principles for practitioner research

1. Put 'quality of life' first.
2. Work primarily to understand classroom language life.
3. Involve everybody.
4. Work to bring people together.
5. Work also for mutual development.
6. Make the work a continuous enterprise.
7. Integrate the work for understanding into existing curricular practices (minimise the burden, maximise sustainability).

(Adapted from: Allwright & Hanks, 2009: 149-153)

Five Propositions about Learners

Learners are both unique individuals (1)
and social beings (2)
who are capable of taking learning seriously (3),
of taking independent decisions (4),
and of developing as practitioners of learning (5).

(Allwright & Hanks, 2009: 15)

Exploratory Practice: An Example

Different 'agents'

- The Researcher (JH)
- The Teacher (BB)
- The Purpose/ Context (AEUS)
- The Students

The Puzzle

- Do I have any impact at all?

*“... learners will be involved not as objects of research, but as fellow participants and therefore as co-researchers.”
(Allwright, 2003: 129)*

What puzzles my students?

- Why don't my Arabic speaking students seem to be able to spell?

Action Research

- How do you best teach spelling (in an EAP setting) (to Arabic L1 speakers)?



Exploratory Practice

- Why don't the Arabic speaking students in my class seem to be able to spell?



What We Did

- I threw the question back to my students
- I went to Primary school
- I read 'stuff'
- I talked to colleagues & asked them questions
- My students talked & thought & compared & came back with ideas
- We experimented with materials & tasks

Outcomes

Outcome	TEAP Linked
Materials	C1 (Teaching practice)
Workshop	E (Scholarship)
Student relief	B1 (Ss needs); B2
Academic 'training'	A1 (Ac. Contexts); B2
Improved relationships	A1; B2
Better understanding ' Ahmad : yes and I think it's very important because the education is not just teaching, it's teaching from one side and learning from other side' (Hanks 2013 p.188)	B2 (Ss learning)
Contribution to a PhD!	E

What makes this EAP?

When students see their teacher's questions and puzzles, they see a humanised professional. When students can understand a teacher better, they see a chance to open up *their* inner selves as well. As teachers and students gain possibilities for constructing mutual understandings about the classroom environment, practitioners – students *and* teachers – show growth in their intellectual and critical perspectives.

(The Rio de Janeiro EP Group in Allwright & Hanks, 2009: 226)

Issues & Questions

- Discomfort: ‘critical EAP teachers do not know what might emerge but are prepared to help students enact their reactions in a thoughtful, co-operative and communicative fashion’ (Benesch, 2001: 62)
- Scholarship?

New Puzzles

- Individual student: Why do I need to learn to write in English when I'm going to study maths?
- Group of students: Why do students make the dictionary choices they make, when they make them?
- Teachers: Why is it important to engage in scholarship?

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