



Cross pollination: feeding research into teaching practice

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EAP, research, practitioners

- EAP as a developing discipline
- Research in EAP
- Engaging IN or WITH research
- What do we know about teachers' engagement?
- Facilitating engagement
- What teachers feel about research at the ISLC

EAP: a developing discipline

- EAP as a term first used in 1974 (Jordan, 2003)
- Alexander (2010) describes development of EAP as a distinct field according 4-tier *model of knowledge flows*
 - Specific tools created e.g. diagnostic tests
 - Consultants disseminate knowledge and improve tools/products
 - Professional bodies are established; sharing of knowledge and concerns
 - Standardization of practice; formalized training; research
 - Legitimization of field
- How does the knowledge flow affect teachers?

Two kinds of research

- Teacher research, also described as:
 - Action research
 - Practitioner research
 - Collaborative inquiry
 - Critical inquiry
 - Self study

- Academic research, which might include studies from
 - Applied linguistics
 - Educational research (mainstream)
 - psychology (particularly educational psychology)

Engaging IN or WITH research

- IN research (i.e. by doing it)
- WITH research (i.e. by reading and using it)
- “research engagement has the potential to be a powerful transformative force in the work and professional development of language teachers” (Borg, 2010)

BUT

“such engagement remains a minority activity in our field” (ibid.)

Effects of engagement

- Mainstream education
 - Influence of research on what teachers do (mainstream education)
 - Indirect (through curricula and instructional materials)
 - NOT direct (through reading research)
 - Institutional support is central to any research engagement
 - Complexity of relationship between research knowledge and what teachers do is acknowledged
 - (CUREE – the Centre for the Use of Research Evidence in Education)
- ELT : absence of empirical research exploring this area

Engagement in 1990

- *What's the use of research?* (McDonough & McDonough, 1990)
 - New “ethos of teacher development”
 - New exploration of the “relevance of educational, as well as linguistic and psychological, research and analysis”
 - Concept of “the teacher as, in some sense, a researcher [is] a growing trend”

BUT

- Teachers disinclined to undertake research
- Mismatch between demands and opportunities of teachers and the demands and opportunities of researchers

Factors affecting engagement 1

- Difficulty of access
 - Conceptually and physically (McDonough & McDonough, 1990)
 - Physical access now much improved by technology
 - 85% of teachers surveyed in a study carried out in 2005 said that materials were available (Borg, 2007)
 - Conceptual access still an issue

Openness to Experience and Night-Sky Watching Interest as Predictors of Reading for Pleasure: Path Analysis of a Mediation Model. Kelly, W.E.
<http://zetoc.mimas.ac.uk/wzgw?db=etoc&terms=RN288140398&field=zid>
- Lack of time
- Perceptions of relevance

Factors affecting engagement 2

- Teachers looking for practical ideas
- Academic articles often apparently of no direct relevance
- Mismatch between teachers' experience of the classroom and portrayal of learning and teaching in research articles
- Differences in teacher Discourse and researcher Discourse impede communication

Facilitating engagement 1

- The consumers:
 - In education generally, teachers are advised that they should be able to “read, critique, and evaluate research information themselves”. (McMillan & Wergin, 2010, in Borg, 2010).
 - Educational research is “for the benefit of the field as a whole, not just for a handful of specialists. That is why it is important for you to improve your skills as a consumer of research”. (Shank & Brown, 2007, in Borg, 2010).

Facilitating engagement 2

- Other initiatives:

“research must be translated: to have an impact, research findings need to be adapted to, or reconstructed within, practice and policy contexts. This can involve tailoring findings to a target group” (Nutley, Percy-Smith, & Solesbury, 2003, in Borg, 2010)

- Conferences? PIMS? Research-based EAP materials?

Engaging in research at the ISLC

- Questionnaire
 - Physical access to research publications (paper/electronic)
 - Active research interests shown through
 - subscription to e-mail discussion lists
 - subscription to journal alerts (e.g. TOCs)
 - Active interest in engaging in teacher research
 - Value of the MA ELT (or similar) v. DELTA for specifically EAP teaching
 - Type of text that would be most useful for teacher discussion groups (following Fenton-Smith & Stillwell, 2010)

Questionnaire responses

- Seven respondents (three also interviewed)
 - Physical access to research publications (paper/electronic)
 - JEAP (paper copy is circulated); testers reading testing journals electronically; little other accessing of e-journals
 - Active research interests shown through
 - subscription to e-mail discussion lists (e.g. BALEAP; LTEST -L; EATAW)
 - Mainly limited to BALEAP; EUROCALL also accessed by one staff member
 - subscription to journal alerts (e.g. TOCs)
 - Two members of staff

Questionnaire responses

- Active interest in engaging in teacher research

YES (unanimously) to:

- improve my teaching
- understand classroom processes better (x2)
- aid development more generally
- update skills
- encourage better student involvement
- have my voice heard
- to be able to change things

Questionnaire responses

- Type of text that would be most useful for teacher discussion groups (following Fenton-Smith & Stillwell, 2010)
 - ☐ PowerPoint handout of a conference presentation
 - ☐ opinion piece from a journal
 - ☐ DVD of a conference plenary
 - ☐ book review
 - ☐ published interview
 - ☐ talk by a published author
- No consensus : need for more data

Conclusion

- Has much changed since 1990?
- Is the knowledge flow reaching classroom teachers?
 - Rankin & Becker (2006) found that The knowledge embedded in published research ... is not simply accumulated and then put into action. It is processed and filtered through layers of experience and belief, rendering the outcome far less predictable than a simple transmission model would suggest. Knowledge about teaching and the classroom becomes instantiated only after it has been integrated into the teacher's personal framework –contextualized, as it were, into a matrix of classroom experience and other sources of pedagogical input. (p.336).
- This only happens, though, when reading is connected to analysis of classroom events.

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