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The 'untidy' world of teacher educator collaboration

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Inspiring tomorrow's professionals



Overview

- Introduce myself and my research
- Some tentative findings and conclusions from the 'untidy' second stage of an action research cycle
- Share and discuss a viewing frame that I have developed to support student teachers' engagement with teacher educators' use of modelling



My study

- Action research study that adopts a **second-person approach** (Chandler and Torbert, 2003, p.142)
- Focuses on Lifelong Learning teacher educators' use of modelling within an in-service teacher training programme
- Collaborating with a team of teacher educators based at one further education college
- Conceptual and analytical framework is Kemmis et al.'s (2014) twin notions of ecologies of practices and practice architectures
- Using **stimulated recall interview** (with teacher educators); **semi-structured interview** (with teacher educators); **focus group** (with teachers' students); **materials** from filmed classes, and “**teacher talk and conversations**” (Hardy, 2010, p.131) as my data collection instruments



Aim of the research

- To work **collaboratively** with a **team of teacher educators from a further education college** to examine the use of modelling in their practice

Seeking to answer four research questions

- How do teacher educators from the further education sector use modelling with their student teachers?
- What factors affect the use of modelling by teacher educators from further education colleges?
- What are In-Service student teachers' perceptions of modelling as a teaching method and how does it help them learn how to teach?
- What happens when teacher educators work collaboratively to improve the 'pedagogy of teacher education'?



Account shaped by notions of

- “Messiness...refers to complexity, unpredictability, difficulties and dilemmas” (Adamson and Walker, 2011, p.29)
- Murray’s (2012, p.20) suggestion that “Teacher education as a field belongs to what Schön (1987) characterised as the ‘swampy lowlands of professional practice’...”
- “...the segment is a small segment in a much longer journey” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p.228);
- “Making visible the complexity of narrating an “untidy’ world (Lather, 1997)” (Segall, 2002,p.170)



The second cycle...

- 3 participants in the first cycle: one withdrew, the other two were not teaching on the programme at the site;
- New teacher educator had joined the team...
- Proposal for new teacher educator to co-teach a session with their mentor, who is an experienced teacher educator, the Team Leader and had been involved in the first-cycle;
- Project bid to secure additional resource for in the words of the Teacher A (who is the Team Leader): **“in terms of team teaching, we’re not really = well it’s economic considerations, isn’t it? I know that our Dean wouldn’t allow it.”**
- Discussed Loughran and Berry’s (2005) paper ‘Modelling by teacher educators’ as a prelude to the planning of a lesson for a group of first year in-service student teachers.



Policy landscape (Kemmis et al. 2014, p5) of teacher education in Lifelong Learning

- “**De-regulated**” as a result of Lingfield Report in 2012;
- Curriculum has been described as “**factorised** to a **set of standards** and constructed as a programme of **strictly controlled and managed** teacher training, with an emphasis on **assessment, measurement and accountability**” (Lawy and Tedder, 2009, p.53)
- “In the dominant model of public sector professionalism today... if unexpected events do occur, it must be due to inadequate preparation or human error” (Derrick, 2010, p.149)
- “What usually happens is that the curriculum is fairly **content driven** rather than process driven” (Teacher C)
- “It’s a very tight structure and I’m also a bit anxious about making sure that they are **getting value for money**, as it were. So whatever we do needs to be making sure that it involves them in genuine development of their thinking and skills and so on.” (Teacher C)



Working collaboratively

“Teachers will not take up attractive sounding ideas, albeit based on extensive research, if these are presented as general principles which leave entirely to them the task of translating them into everyday practice – their lives are too busy and too fragile for this to be possible for all but an outstanding few. What they need is a variety of living examples of implementation, by teachers with whom they can identify and from whom they can both derive conviction and confidence that they can do better, and see concrete examples of what doing better means in practice.” (Black & Wiliam, 1998, pp15-16)



Untidiness in this study?

- Whose work is this? My EdD, our research, their practice?
- “But I don’t want it to be me telling you about what the changes should be but rather you thinking about your own practice and analysing your own practice and identifying aspects of it that you feel might be worthwhile developing and then for us to try to do that together in whatever way you think we might need to do that. How does that sound?” (Researcher)
- “That sounds fine” (Teacher A)



More untidiness?

- “significant tensions” (Murray, 2012, p.19) exist between the pedagogic and research roles of teacher educators;
- Time to meet up, plan the project and review the data with the participants creates dilemmas and tensions;
- Participant involvement creates dilemmas too. “Yeah, because you’ve got an interesting position in there as well so how important is it in your write up to state that Teacher D is a new teacher educator and I’m her line manager? That is what we want to step away from really.” (Teacher A)



Dilemmas...

- Teacher A “this is looking back and I would say – this is just my point of view – that I think that meta-commentary should – and this ties in with Teacher E point about the viewing frame – it should occur conterminously with the lesson at really key points and we decided that we wouldn’t do that. Teacher D was concerned that it would interrupt too much. But to try it differently in that way when it is still fresh in their minds would be quite interesting.
- “We’ve done it in the past and what happens is they go off and trying to bring them back //” (Teacher D)
- “It’s about tight time parameters, isn’t it?” (Teacher A)
- (Extract from Stimulated Recall Interview, July 2014, p.6)



Extract from transcription of the de-brief in filmed class

- Teacher A “...Um, can I ask about chronemics?
[Teacher A holds her finger up as she asks the question, then there is laughter from the group and Teacher A smiles] Chronemics. There is something about//”
- “A lot of what you say I don’t understand,” Student 1 replies.
- (Extract from film of class in February 2014. Starting at time 1.02.45 and ending at 1.02.52)

Why write about “the mess”?

- “Mess needs to be articulated, firstly, because it is there...If accounts of research omit descriptions of the messy areas experienced by so many researchers, descriptions of research remain incomplete and do not offer a true and honest picture of the research process. Secondly, denial of existence of mess may undermine the confidence of researchers who find themselves ‘in a mess’...Thirdly...I believe mess must have a purpose, the identification of which became central to my deliberations. If descriptions of the processes of engaging with mess remain unreported in methodological accounts, its existence not acknowledged despite its endemic nature, its purpose would be lost to open debate and discussion.” (Cook, 2009, p.279)

Three findings to consider...

1. “a person can only imitate that which is within her developmental level” (Vygotsky, 1978, p.34);
2. The use of modelling assumes that trainee teachers already possess the required language, what Freire (1996) calls the ‘dominant syntax’, and theoretical knowledge to engage with a teacher educator as they ‘unpack’ their practice (Loughran and Berry, 2005), and this can either ‘sustain or suffocate’ its use as a teaching strategy (Kemmis, 2014, p.50).
3. “Effective approaches to professional work...need to encompass the ‘messiness’ and ‘untidiness’ of people’s lived experiences.” (Derrick, 2010, p.150)



Schön (1987, p1)

- ‘In the varied topography of professional practice, there is the high, hard ground overlooking the swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. **In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution.** The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to individuals or society at large, however great their technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner must choose. Shall he remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to prevailing standards or rigor, or shall he descend into the swamp of important problems and non-rigorous inquiry?’



Implications for teacher educators working in the Further Education and Skills sector

- Induction needs to introduce them to the pedagogy of teacher education;
- Their professional development needs to then sustain their exploration of the pedagogy of teacher education;
- Availability of sufficient resources to explore peer teaching strategies and alike.



A viewing frame

- A structured way for student teachers to engage with implicit and explicit modelling within a session?



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