

Action research for new teachers

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Plan

- The complexity of teaching
- The nature of action research
- An example
- A couple of conclusions

The complexity of teaching: an analogy

Driving

- Looking ahead
- Steering
- Accelerating
- Braking
- Changing gear
- Using mirrors
- Indicating intentions
- Responding to situations
- Using gadgets
- Working out what is going on in other drivers' heads

Teaching

- Planning
- Explaining
- Assessing
- Modelling
- Adapting for individual needs
- Providing feedback
- **Questioning**
- Listening
- Managing behaviour
- Using gadgets
- Working out what is going on in learners' heads

How do we improve our teaching?

- Engage with published research
- Observe others
- Receive mentoring
- Attend lectures and other training
- Discuss teaching and learning with others

- Learn from ourselves ...

Action Research

- Action research is NOT doing an action and seeing what happens.
- Action research is researching your own actions (explaining, modelling, providing feedback, questioning etc) and improving your practice as a result.
- Think 'Actions Research' ...

Action Research

- Action research is only research if it involves the analysis of evidence about your practice.
- Action research is only action research if it enables you to evaluate the detail of your practice.
- Think 'micro-evaluation'.

Action Research

- Action research is researching my own actions:
 - Examining the detail of my practice
 - Evaluating the impact of my practice
 - Soul searching
 - Improving my practice as a result

Action Research

- Action research is driven by your values and beliefs about teaching and learning.
- For example, who do you think should ask the most questions in your classroom?

Children's
intellectual
engagement

Graph to show the relationship
between the number of questions
that teachers ask and the level of
children's intellectual engagement,
according to Wood (1986)

In summary: the more
questions teachers ask,
the less children think

Number of teacher questions

A challenge for our BEd students

- Devise a 30 minute lesson related to germination and teach to a group of Y2 children *to promote curiosity*
- Encourage children's talk and questions through regulating *their own* questions and talk



Focused analysis of transcripts

- Number of questions
- Types of questions
- Children's best responses/comments
- Children's most limited responses
- Cringe moments
- Missed opportunities



Review and next steps

- Student teachers realised that:
 - They had asked dozens of questions
 - They had few strategies to avoid asking questions
 - They didn't like silences.
- Student teachers set targets for improvement in their practice, based on their own evaluation and analysis of transcripts.



Children's questions

- How do plants get their colour?
- Why do plants close up sometimes?
- Why do plants have so many roots?
- How long does it take a plant to grow?
- How does the seed get its food and drink?
- Where do seeds come from?
- What are the hairs on the leaves for?
- Why do leaves have veins?
- Why are there a lot of lines on the leaf?
- Why do plants grow so slowly?
- Why did it look like a road map (leaf)?
- How do plants move?
- How do plants drink?
- The cress roots could be weaker than the bean roots
- Will the size of the root make it stronger?
- Why are plants green?
- Why do plants need leaves?

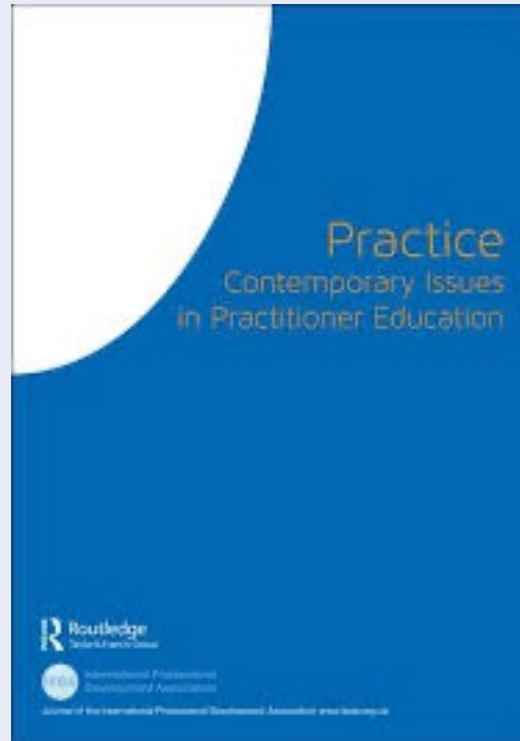
Student teacher learning about teacher questioning

- *Don't fill every silence with a question: enjoy silences*
- *Don't dominate the children's thoughts*
- *Allow children time to respond*
- *Listen to children's responses*
- *Use statements instead of questions: good statements can be just as good to promote thinking*
- *Ask the children if they have any questions: sit back and listen*
- *Think before you ask!*
- *Allow time to really take in the children's comments before rushing to respond.*

Student teacher professional learning

- Student teachers didn't just improve their approach to questioning but also their approach to their own professional learning.

Open-access article in *Practice*



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Conclusion 1

The medium is the
message

(McLuhan in Postman and Weingartner, 1969)

Conclusion 2

To change and improve
practice, research the
detail of your own
actions

(Forster and Eperjesi, 2021)

Thank you

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