



Learning Teaching: Reimagining the Profession

Teaching the Practice of Teaching: Approximations of Practice

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2 Dilemmas of Teacher Education

- How to identify quality teaching
- How to ensure that every child has access to teaching of a consistently high quality

Content of Presentation

- Module introduced in MIE to respond to the challenges named
- Term “practice”
- Describe the module in Marino
- Chance to do what the students do on the module
- Assessment of the module
- Research questions we have about it

Practice

- ≠ theory
- Do something repeatedly
- Medical practice
- Practices
- High leverage practices/core practices

High Leverage Practices

Practices that are “most likely to equip beginners with capabilities for the fundamental elements of professional work and that are unlikely to be learned on one's own through experience... [They are] practices in which the proficient enactment by a teacher is likely to lead to comparatively large advances in student learning” ([Ball, Sleep, Boerst, & Bass, 2009, p. 460](#))

Sample High Leverage Practices

- making content explicit through explanation, modelling, representations, and examples;
- leading a whole class discussion;
- setting up and managing small group work;
and
- communicating about a student with a parent or guardian ([Teaching Works, 2013](#))

Approximations of Practice

- “Opportunities for novices to engage in practices that are more or less proximal to the practices of a profession”
- Try complex practices in a relatively safe or controlled setting
- Role plays of simulations
- Representation, decomposition, approximation

Representation, decomposition, approximation

- Representation: videos, lesson plans, live
- Constituent parts
- Approximate with peers and in schools

Professional Learning in Other Fields

- Airline pilots, Medical doctors, Dentists, Clergy, Lawyers, Hairdressers
- Role play, analyzing a written case, simulations, and rehearsals

How We Interpreted the Idea of Approximating Practice

- Module on reconfigured B.Ed. Programme
- Identified 4 high leverage practices
- Created video representations of each practice
- Team of 5 instructors and 110 students
- Met twice a week (plenary and schools)

Observation Records

- Identify teacher actions that make up the high leverage practices (research, video representations)
- Shared them with students
- Use them for planning
- Help students in observation of peers
- Decide if actions were present or not present

Try Completing an Observation Record

- These are being changed for this year
- Imagine that you're a first year student and that you're observing a peer who is teaching in a classroom.

How this Approximation Differs

- School Placement/Teaching practice, micro-teaching
- Specific, detailed criteria for assessment
- Requires peer observation and feedback
- Reduces complexity of teaching
- Instructor observes every student approximating at least once every three weeks
- Explicitly connects college work with work in schools
- Connects with similar research being conducted in other countries

Assessment

- Formative: Observation record
- Summative:
 - Based on OSCE
 - 20 minute lessons
 - Grading

Research on the Module

- How can high leverage content be integrated with the high leverage content ([Teaching Works, 2013](#)) be integrated with high leverage practices?
- How should the pass rate of the assessment be determined?
- How can the validity and reliability of the assessment be determined and improved?
- Are the practices being approximated the optimal ones? Are they of the right grain size?
- How can the relationship with schools in relation to the approximations be improved?
- To what extent do students transfer what they learn on other modules to the approximations of practice and to what extent do students transfer what they learn on the approximations of practice module to school placement?
- How do you ensure that that students can re-assemble and integrate the practices they have learned in lessons taught on school placement?
- How can the module be scaled up within the institute so that it can be transferred to other programmes of initial teacher education?

Limitations

- Logistically, teaching the module is complex and expensive compared to other modules with a similar ECTS credit value.
- Schools must agree to host us at a time that coincides with the college timetable.
- Students must travel independently to the school.
- Having fifteen additional people in a classroom can be disruptive and they take up room.
- We bring along our own set of stools which are stored in the school for the period of time that we spend there.
- Students prefer approximating with children than with peers but initially they are not ready to do so, and extending the period of time student teachers spend in schools is difficult.
- Students are limited to approximations which are relatively short (typically 8 minutes long) and sometimes this leads to abrupt changes for children in the class.
- Although it would be desirable to meet with students immediately after their time in the classroom, this has not proved possible with current configurations.

Final Words

- Introduces students to the practice of teaching very early in their programme.
- Students gain experience in schools in small chunks prior to a longer period of school placement.
- Instructors receive almost immediate feedback on how well students have grasped aspects of practice that have been introduced and instructors can respond to students relatively soon after the lesson.
- Students develop a collegial relationship with their peers, which is a part of professional practice that can be difficult to develop in other modules.
- Children in the schools have the opportunity to encounter new content or have known content consolidated in a series of intensive mini lessons.