

ASTON ENGLISH RESEARCH SEMINAR SERIES

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Teachers' beliefs and practices: Approaches to data collection

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In English Language Teaching, as in other areas of education, innovative curricula tend to be imposed without taking into account important contextual factors, chief among which is the receptivity of the target teachers to adopt or adapt the new programme. Unless this is done, there will be a gap between the intended and the realized curriculum (Fullan, 2007). Therefore, an important aspect of curriculum planning should be to investigate the current beliefs and practices of the teachers who have to implement the new programme, and the extent to which they are conducive to the intended curriculum. The past decade has seen a considerable growth of interest in, and empirical investigation of, language teacher cognition but most of the studies reviewed by Borg (2006) have relied on collecting data by means of survey or interview procedures.

Such self report procedures have their value, but they need to be augmented by other data collection instruments in order to ascertain not only what the teachers believe about specific aspects of teaching and learning, but the extent to which their actual teaching practices converge or diverge from those beliefs. In short, a multi-method approach to exploring (language) teacher cognition is essential.

This presentation firstly presents a range of options for qualitative researchers to choose from.

These include questionnaires and surveys, as well as narrative accounts, (recorded) lesson planning sessions, think-aloud procedures, observation, stimulated recall sessions, focus groups, and (audio) reflective journals. The purposes, advantages and disadvantages of these options will be discussed, drawing on the case studies reported and commented on in Barnard and Burns (forthcoming).

It is hoped that the presentation will conclude with a discussion among the participants of their interests in and experience of using these approaches.

References

Barnard, R. & Burns, A. (Eds.) (forthcoming) *Language teacher cognition and practice: International case studies to illuminate methodological issues*. Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.

Borg, S. (2006) *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London, England: Continuum.

Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.