

Masters in Educational Practice (MEP)

Teacher Inquiry Portfolio



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The MEP inquiry projects are based on classroom practice and it's hoped they will inform current practice for all in the education sector and potentially identify areas for further research. All projects have been quality assured by the alliance members and we believe these projects deserve dissemination to as wide an audience as possible.

Alliance Members:



Could DT learning at KS3 be improved by a change in literacy practices?

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Introduction

This inquiry looks at how a change in literacy tasks affects the learning of a year 8 DT class.

Literature

At opposite ends of a literacy instruction continuum are content area reading, that focuses on general study skills to help pupils learn subject matter specific texts, and disciplinary literacy, with its recognition of the specific nature of literacy in the subject areas.

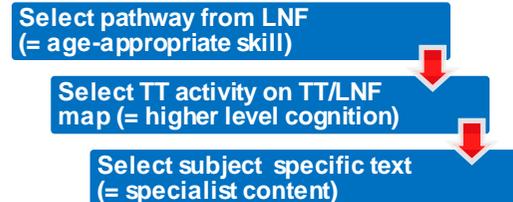
This inquiry takes a middle ground approach, aiming to 'demystify the literacies of disciplines' Brozo et al (2013, p.355) through the foundational skills that content area reading develops, and the expert knowledge of subject teachers.

Inquiry design

On the basis that 'Task predicts performance' Elmore (2008, p.1), this inquiry is designed to be a coherent content-based procedure (Figure 1). LNF pathways with age-appropriate skills applicable to DT were identified and matched with Tactical Teaching (TT) resources, (a general reading programme), using an LNF/TT map. The new TT tasks were then taught over 3 lessons using specialist subject content texts.

Quantitative and qualitative data was collected from a questionnaire and group/individual interviews. TT and original tasks were subject to a content analysis of cognitive demand.

Figure 1 – Content-based procedure



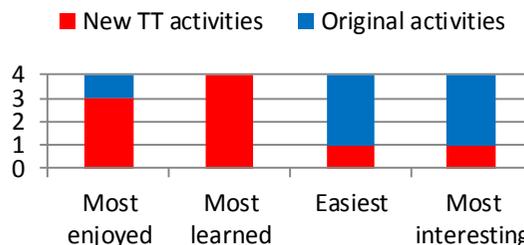
Findings

Interview data: showed pupils were more positive about the new TT tasks than the original tasks but the group was less so.

Questionnaire data: showed that TT activities had slightly more positive but considerably more of the negative rankings from pupils. Pupils gave higher rankings to TT for understanding (most learned), enjoyment and challenge (Figure 2). SEN pupils were much less likely to give negative statements about the TT activities.

Content analysis: concluded that TT had higher cognitive demands than the original DT tasks.

Figure 2 – Questionnaire positive rankings



Analysis

In allowing them to 'explain more', TT activities are placing higher cognitive demands on pupils. This is in contrast to the lower cognitive demands evident in the original tasks, which highlights that many subject teachers need training in literacy instruction. Contradictions in data between interview and questionnaire could simply be that negative views were sought in the questionnaire but not the interview. Also interviews can be influenced by an 'interviewer effect'. The particularly high negative rankings of TT activities is a concern, but is likely to be due to familiarity with the original tasks but not the new TT tasks, a classic 'implementation dip'. Again, literacy instruction training is needed. However, securing all the high rankings for understanding is a significant plus for TT activities, as is the lower incidence of negative statements to TT by SEN pupils. This supports the theory that TT's foundational strategies are helpful to SEN pupils.

Impact

The new TT activities are being taught across the DT department. They are also being shared with colleagues across all departments through a PLC I chair and in my capacity as LNF coordinator

References

- Elmore, R.F. (2008). Improving the Instructional Core. [Online] Available at: http://www.eastbaycharterconnect.org/uploads/7/1/7/6/7176220/improving_the_instructional_core_elmore_2008.pdf [Accessed 4 April 2014]
- Brozo, W.G., Moorman, G., Meyer, C. and Stewart, T. (2013) Content Area Reading and Disciplinary Literacy: A case for the Radical Centre. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 56(5) 353-357