

# SHOULD WE BE WIDENING THE GAP BETWEEN TEACHING AND RESEARCH?

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It is generally assumed that **the gap between theory and practice**, and more specifically **the gap between research and teaching**, is a **problem**, and that **the gap should be bridged**, either from the side of research, or from the side of teaching, or somewhere ‘halfway’ (e.g., McIntyre 2006).



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**Bridging the gap between research and practice**  
Donald McIntyre ✉  
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DIETRICH BENNER

Das Theorie-Praxis-Problem in der Erziehungswissenschaft und die Frage nach Prinzipien pädagogischen Denkens und Handelns

1980



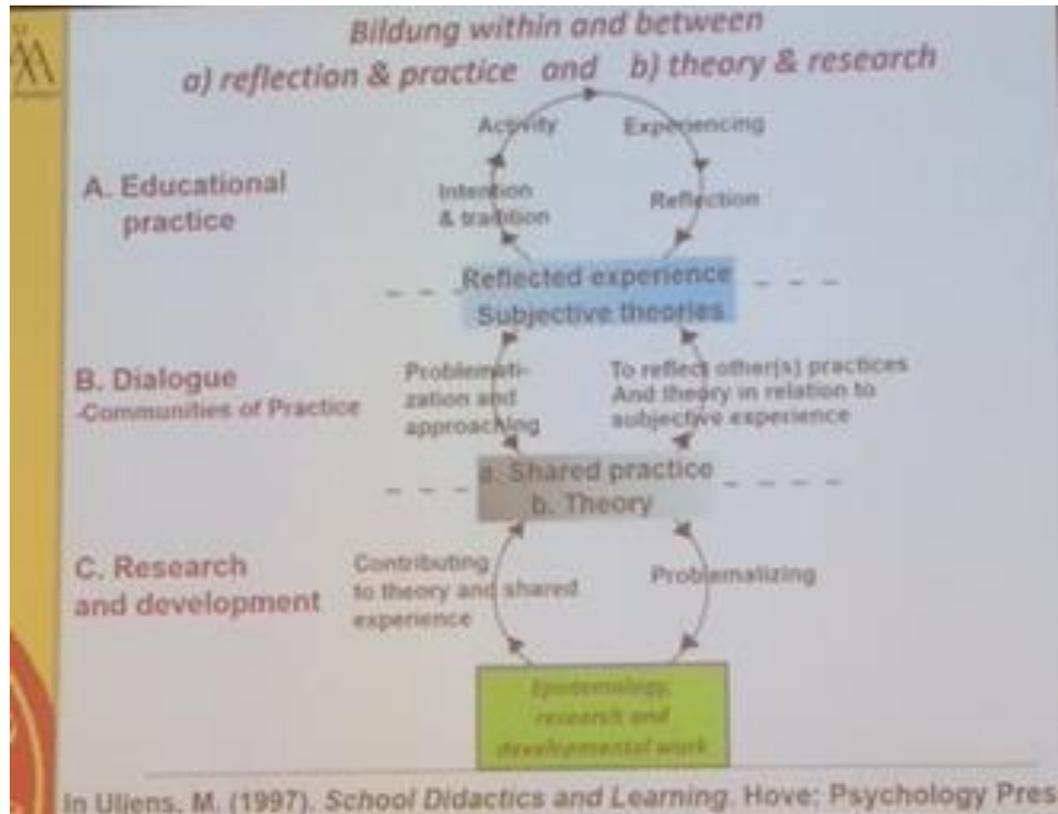
not a new discussion – perhaps **one of the perennial discussions in education**



**However: could and should a case be made for widening the gap?**

**LET'S TRY!**





	Individuelle Seite der Erziehungspraxis	Gesellschaftliche Seite der Erziehungspraxis
(A) Theorie der Erziehung (2) : (3)	(2) <i>Aufforderung zur Selbsttätigkeit</i>	(3) Überführung gesellschaftlicher in <i>pädagogische Determination</i>
(B) Theorie der Bildung (1) : (4)	(1) <i>Bildsamkeit</i> als Bestimmbarkeit des Menschen zur Freiheit	(4) <i>Konzentration</i> aller Praxen auf die gemeinsame Aufgabe der Höherentwicklung der Menschheit
	(C) Theorie pädagogischer Institutionen (1) / (2) : (3) / (4)	

# THE ONGOING PUSH TO MAKE TEACHING INTO A RESEARCH-BASED PROFESSION

a 'starting shot' in 1996

## THE TEACHER TRAINING AGENCY ANNUAL LECTURE 1996

### TEACHING AS A RESEARCH-BASED PROFESSION: POSSIBILITIES AND PROSPECTS

Teaching is not at present a research-based profession. I have no doubt that if it were, teaching would be more effective and more satisfying. The goal of enhancing effectiveness and satisfaction can be achieved only by a combination of several means, of which an adequate research base is just one. It is in my view a singularly important one which deserves to be given priority. However, I shall argue in this lecture that providing that research base will require a radical change both in the kind of research that is done and the way in which it is organised. To make my case I look inside the profession and the research community to examine what we now do; but I shall also look at another profession to detect what lessons can be learned about creating a genuinely research-based profession.

**AND IT HAS BEEN GOING ON AND ON AND ON EVER SINCE**  
IN THE UK AND ELSEWHERE

**SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS (AND IMPROVEMENT) MOVEMENT**

**THE UK TEACHING AND LEARNING RESEARCH PROGRAMME**  
and similar programmes in other countries (e.g. Germany)

**FROM RESEARCH-BASED TO EVIDENCE-BASED**  
or evidence-informed, but the real problem is ‘evidence’ – not ‘based’ or ‘informed’

**ALL THIS INTERTWINED WITH POLICY AND POLITICS – AND MONEY!**

UK New Labour’s ‘Standards and Effectiveness Unit’

US No Child Left Behind

UK Educational Endowment Foundation

**AND WITH OLD AND NEW ARGUMENTS FOR THE TEACHER AS RESEARCHER**

coming out of **action research** – the democratic argument  
and the impact of ‘**medicine-envy**’ – the desire for a ‘strong knowledge base’

**AND ALL THIS SEEMS TO BE GOING IN ...**

**ONE DIRECTION**

# DESPITE EARLY DOUBTS AND WARNINGS

## such as already in 1993

*Educational Action Research, Volume 1, No. 3, 1993*

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### On the Teacher as Researcher

MARTYN HAMMERSLEY  
*The Open University, United Kingdom*

In this paper I want to examine an idea that has been widely advocated in recent years: that educational research should be an integral part of the work of teachers in schools rather than an activity carried out on schools by outsiders. This is the idea of the teacher-as-researcher engaging in action

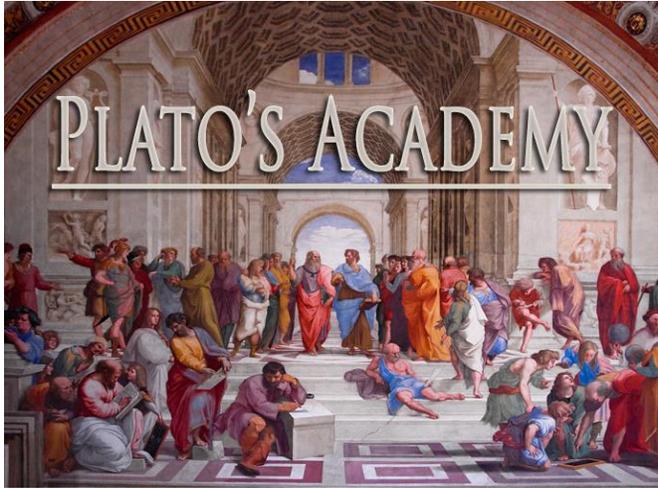
ABSTRACT This article sketches the development of the idea that educational research should be integrated with the work of teachers in schools, in the form

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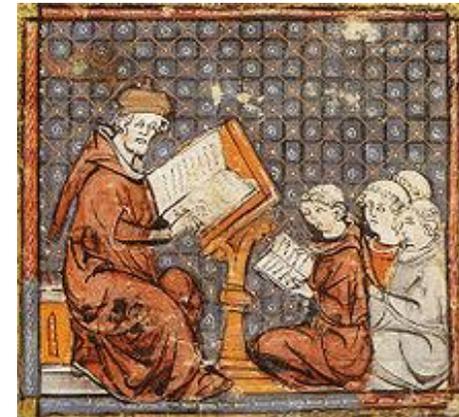
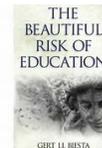
the classroom learning it encourages and for its 'unreflective' character. The conclusion drawn from assessment of these arguments is that, while they have some force, they are not conclusive; and they do not add up to a convincing case for the superiority of teaching-as-research.

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# HOW MUCH RESEARCH DOES TEACHING ACTUALLY NEED?



Is it perhaps (just) a modern obsession?  
Out of a desire for control?  
Out of an inability to endure uncertainty and risk?  
Even if the risk is beautiful?



# AND WHY SHOULD WE NOT BE LOOKING AT MEDICINE? (OR AGRICULTURE FOR THAT MATTER)

because being a student is not a disease (and teaching is not a cure)  
education is not a matter of cultivation (but of subjectification)

but also because the 'success' of modern medicine  
cannot be explained by an apparent strong scientific knowledge-base

but has to do with the **expansion of a particular network**  
and the **incorporation of local practices into the logic of the 'centre'**

so that **local knowledge suddenly begins to work 'everywhere'**

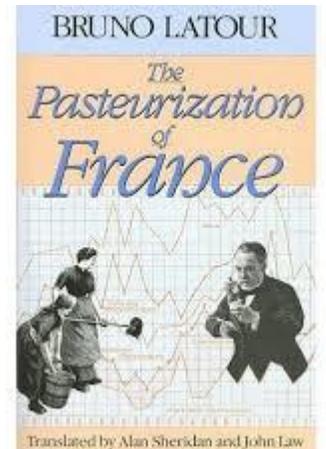
and this insight may actually be quite relevant for our discussion



**the rise of research is resulting in a redefinition of  
education, teaching, being a teacher and being a student**

What does it take to make 'Hattie' work?

**What's the problem?**



# THE 'LOGIC' OF RESEARCH IS NOT THE 'LOGIC' OF TEACHING

the aim of research is to know – the aim of teaching is to educate

**Where and how is the 'logic' of research replacing the 'logic' of teaching?**



**e.g., data-driven teaching:** the logic of pig farming

**e.g., quasi-experiments in the classroom:** intervention and control group

**the more general idea of teaching as an 'intervention'  
and learning as an 'outcome'**



**an input-output logic  
quasi-causal expectations  
the Hattiefication of education  
'what works'**

**also becoming a self-interpretation of teachers and students**  
that the point of teaching is to produce (good) learning outcomes  
that the point of being a student is to produce learning outcomes

# EDUCATION DOESN'T WORK AND SHOULDN'T BE MADE TO WORK

two problems with quasi-causal understandings of teaching



**'working' is a category mistake**

(Böhm 2017: The educational placebo effect)

**and making education work is morally and educationally undesirable**

**WHY?**

**causality occurs in closed deterministic-linear systems**

**What kind of system is education?**

**open & semiotic & recursive**

**How can such systems 'behave' in patterned/predictable/controlled ways?**



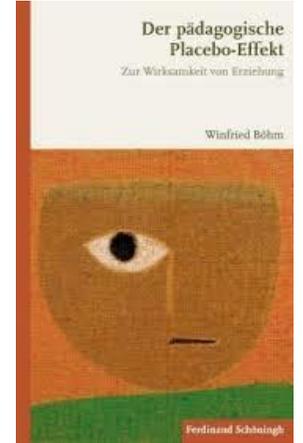
**by reducing openness, semiosis and recursivity**

**which is what (school)education does**

**and this is fine up to the 'tipping point'**

**closed, without scope interpretation and without recursivity**

**where education turns into indoctrination**



## **(THE 'LOGIC' OF) TEACHING IS EXISTENTIAL**

**teaching is not an intervention upon objects but an encounter between subjects,  
aimed at 'enhancing' the 'subject-ness' of students**



**being a subject is an existential matter: "being in relationship with one's freedom"**

**being in a relationship with one's desires**

**not just pursuing one's desires,**

**but always asking whether what one desires is what one ought to desire**

**which is a first-person question – a question for me**

**education (Erziehung) is about arousing the desire in another human being for wanting to  
exist as subject – in the world without being in the centre of the world (Meirieu)**

**encouraging (or seducing) students to 'take up' their freedom as their freedom**

**an "Aufforderung zur Selbsttätigkeit" (Benner)**

**to deny students the satisfaction of not existing as subject (Rancière)**

# **THIS IS NOT ALL THERE IS IN EDUCATION**

**three domains of purpose  
qualification – socialisation – subjectification**

**but these are not ‘things’ produced by teaching-as-intervention**



**but achievements resulting from teaching-as-communication**

**the problem with the language of ‘teachingandlearning’**



**teaching should not aim at bringing about learning but ‘studenting’ (Fenstermacher)  
or ‘pupilling’ or ‘auditors gradually becoming aware of the point of teaching’**

**the intention of teaching is a ‘broken intention’ (Mollenhauer)**



**because it is ‘aimed’ at the student as subject**

# WHAT DOES THIS IMPLY FOR THE 'EYE' OF THE TEACHER

should they have a 'research eye'?

teachers should be able to see possibilities that are not yet actual  
and base their actions upon this, rather than on what is 'evident'

e.g., the role of trust

trust is only relevant if we do not know what the child will do  
we give trust to open a different future for the child  
to put their freedom 'at stake'

teachers should be able not to see what can block the future for the student  
see Makarenko; see the problem with diagnostic thinking & labelling

instead of visible learning, assessment for learning, learning outcomes and so on,  
the teacher's eye should be focused on the unforeseen

see *Pedagogikk for det uforutsette* (Torgersen 2015)

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS (1)

**teaching and research are very different things  
by thinking that they are 'roughly similar' we run a real risk  
that teaching is being taken over by the logic of research**



**so that teaching becomes something else  
and also the teacher and the student become something else**

**this is happening right now and is undermining teaching  
and the position and identity of the teacher and of the student  
and may also be creating 'professional uncertainty'**

**here, then, we should be very wary of bridging or closing the gap  
between teaching and research**

**the classroom learning it encourages and for its 'unreflective' character. The  
conclusion drawn from assessment of these arguments is that, while they have  
some force, they are not conclusive; and they do not add up to a convincing case  
for the superiority of teaching-as-research.**

**this is why we should be wary about the idea of  
teaching as research and the teacher as researcher**

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS (2)

What does that mean for teacher education and development?

the task is to become better teachers

which means getting closer to teaching not further away from it  
just as becoming a better pianist can only be done by playing the piano

**the problem with research is that it creates a distance** (spectator perspective)  
literally and conceptually/metaphorically



**the real work is to make teaching more *thoughtful***  
which raises the question of the intellectual and practical resources



**which must be educational resources, not empirical methods,  
because they need to be connected to the 'point' of education**

DIETRICH BENNER

Das Theorie-Praxis-Problem in der Erziehungswissenschaft und die  
Frage nach Prinzipien pädagogischen Denkens und Handelns

Ich werde hier zu dem massiven Akt einer *lectio interrupta* greifen. Ich möchte jedoch diesen jähen Abbruch mit einer miniaturhaften, gleichwohl außerordentlich nachdenkenswertem Geschichte aus dem alten China etwas abschwächen; ich verdanke ihre Kenntnis Günther Buck. Als der Fürst von We seine Regierung antreten wollte und zu dem Meister Konfuzius um Rat schickte, was er denn zu allererst in Angriff nehmen solle, ließ der Weise antworten: Sicherlich die Richtigstellung der Begriffe. Auf die verwunderte Gegenfrage, ob wirklich die Richtigstellung der Begriffe das wichtigste sein könne, was einer zuerst zu erledigen habe, der sich zum praktischen Handeln anschickt, entgegnete der Meister barsch: Wie roh du bist! Wenn die Begriffe nicht richtig sind, so stimmen die Worte nicht; stimmen die Worte nicht, so kommen die Werke nicht zustande; kommen die Werke nicht zustande, so gedeihen Moral und Kunst nicht. Darum Sorge der Edle, dass er seine Begriffe unter allen Umständen zu Wort bringen und seine Worte unter allen Umständen zu Taten machen kann.

**THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION**