

# Research, teaching and time: teacher practices and possibilities

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## Abstract

Issues around the relationship between teachers and research have long been a topic of debate in the literature (Bartels, 2003; Borg, 2009, 2010; Erlam, 2008; Hall, 2023; Korthagen, 2007; Levin, 2013; Lightbown, 1985; Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017; McIntyre 2005; McKinley 2019; Medgyes, 2017; Nassaji, 2012). There is a relationship between research and educational practice but it is complex and nuanced. Teachers engage with research through teaching, using research, often indirectly, to inform their professional practice. This paper argues that an explanatory framework (Maton, 2014) that can account for this complexity is required to understand the relationship between research and teaching; knowledge from sites of knowledge production such as university research centres is recontextualised by state education departments and educational publishers before being incorporated into classroom discourse (Bernstein, 2000; Maton, 2014). The paper then argues that a teachers' professional life cycle (Huberman, 1989) must be considered to ensure any more direct engagement with research is likely to be of benefit. Finally, the paper argues that teachers as practitioner researchers presents a possible way of more closely linking research and educational practice.

**Key words:** knowledge, pedagogic discourse, professional life cycles, practitioner researcher

## 1. Introduction

Issues around the relationship between teachers and research have long been a topic of debate in the literature (Bartels, 2003; Borg, 2009, 2010; Erlam, 2008; Hall, 2023; Korthagen, 2007; Levin, 2013; Lightbown, 1985; Marsden & Kasprowicz, 2017; McIntyre 2005; McKinley 2019; Medgyes, 2017; Nassaji, 2012; Paran; 2017; Rose, 2019; Sato & Loewen, 2019, 2022). While there is a relationship between research and educational practice, this relationship is complex and not always clearly articulated or understood. To explore these issues, this paper will first define different types of research, discuss their intersection with teaching, and outline implications for English language teachers. One way teachers engage with research is through teaching because the knowledge in the syllabus has come from somewhere. In the

language classroom, this might be knowledge about language (KAL) and knowledge about pedagogy, which teachers access through pre-service courses or professional development activities. In addition to this engagement with research through professional practice, teachers also engage in research as a component of formal study or by becoming a practitioner researcher. However, I argue that the issue of time is essential for such endeavours to be successful. This means both time and support to engage in such research while also managing other day-to-day teaching responsibilities, but also embarking on such projects at an appropriate time in a teacher's professional life cycle. If these considerations are met, I argue that the role of 'practitioner researcher' offers professional possibilities that can benefit teachers, their learners and their institutions.

## **2. Research and teaching in education**

A useful distinction may be made between primary research, which involves a researcher's active participation in generating research data usually for the purpose of knowledge production, and secondary research. Secondary research involves the summary or synthesis of data and studies published by others. This can result in a systematic review of existing literature or a meta-analysis of published studies. However, professional teachers also engage with research when they consult a grammar reference or dictionary, use a published syllabus or prepare their learners for an assessment. This relationship with research is often indirect or tacit. Teachers also engage with the research of others through reading, attending professional development events and completing formal study.

### **2.1 Professional development: Teachers reading research**

In a recent study, Hall (2023) sought to uncover the reported practices and attitudes of English language teachers towards published research and identify those who reported reading or being interested in research and research-oriented publications. One of the research questions was: To what extent do the teachers report that they read research – in both its original published form and through other research-oriented professional literature. From the responses of 696 teachers (working in a range of contexts around the world), 47.3 per cent reported reading research about language teaching and learning 'often', with 35.5 per cent indicating that they 'sometimes' read research; 14.8 per cent reported 'rarely' reading research, and just 2.1% of the surveyed teachers reportedly 'never' accessed research-oriented literature about ELT (Hall, 2023, p. 21). These results clearly suggest that teachers are interested in research. While these teachers should be commended in their engagement

with published research, teachers who do not read research articles also engage indirectly with research. Planning and delivering effective lessons involves, often indirectly, drawing upon research. The intersection between knowledge as reported in published articles, and the practice of teaching is complex and requires a more nuanced understanding of the processes at play. A model that enables such a nuanced understanding is described in Section 2.3 below.

## **2.2 Professional practice: teachers using research**

Most teachers engage (often indirectly) with research through the processes of teaching (or ‘knowledge reproduction’) because the knowledge ‘content’ of their lessons has come from somewhere outside of the classroom. In the language classroom, knowledge about that what (e.g. KAL) and how (methodology e.g.) of teaching is often encountered on pre-service courses, teaching a syllabus or preparing lessons. The reflective model (Wallace, 1991, p. 15) combines ‘received knowledge’ (that derived from empirical studies) and previous experiential knowledge, while recognizing the benefits of reflective practice. A teacher may be seen to first plan, and then experiment and observe, reflecting on the results before planning further action informed by these experiences in the classroom. The teacher is using their professional knowledge and classroom experiences to inform their future teaching. Therefore, there are several similarities between the daily work of a teacher, particularly a reflective practitioner, and that of a researcher (Wallace, 1991). Researchers engage in similar activities, albeit in a more systematic manner, initially formulating research questions, then seeking to answer them, and finally expanding beyond the local context by sharing their results publicly (Barton, 2005, p. 33). While a teacher might profitably adopt this dual role of teacher/researcher, it is important to consider where the teacher is in their career.

## **2.3 Research, knowledge and teaching**

One model of the relationship between knowledge and teaching has been proposed by Bernstein (2000) and further developed by Maton (2014). Teaching and learning practices and processes occur within a system of social relations. However, these practices of teaching and learning and their associated social system are different from those of research. Bernstein outlines the implications for how knowledge is brought into a relationship with other knowledge and is used for the purpose of teaching and learning in the sociological concept of pedagogic discourse, “a principle for delocating a discourse, for relocating it, for refocusing it, according to its own principle” (2000, p. 32). This recognizes the fact that a particular

lesson is about a particular subject but the knowledge has come from somewhere outside of the classroom and in this process the knowledge has changed. Such recontextualized pedagogic discourse always involves values from outside the discipline that is being transformed into pedagogy. From this perspective, in a physics, chemistry or psychology lesson, pedagogic discourse “is not physics, chemistry or psychology [...] it cannot be identified with the discourse it transmits” (Bernstein, 2000, p. 32). A key to understanding the pedagogic discourse of the classroom is Bernstein’s notion of “the pedagogic device” (2000). Bernstein's concept of the pedagogic device is “a model for analysing the processes by which discipline-specific or domain-specific expert knowledge is converted or pedagogized to constitute school knowledge (classroom curricula, teacher-student talk, online learning)” (Singh, 2002, p. 572). The pedagogic device is the combination of procedures through which knowledge becomes classroom talk and curriculums. Bernstein's model enables us to describe the macro and micro structuring of knowledge (Singh, 2002, p. 571).

Bernstein (1990, 2001) proposes that the pedagogic device contains three main fields of practice. These are fields of knowledge production, recontextualization, and reproduction. These fields are arranged to reflect the relationship between knowledge production, recontextualization and reproduction and recognize that “recontextualization of knowledge cannot take place without its production, and reproduction cannot take place without recontextualization” (Singh, 2002, p. 574). Consequently, the reproduction of knowledge usually occurs in primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions; the recontextualization of knowledge occurs in government departments of education and training, curriculum authorities and teacher education institutions (Singh, 2002, p. 574); the production of knowledge occurs mainly in institutions of higher education and private research organisations (Bernstein, 2000).

The field of recontextualization is positioned in-between the fields of knowledge production and reproduction. This field consists of two sub-fields termed the pedagogic recontextualizing field (PRF) and the official recontextualizing field (ORF). The ORF is created and dominated by the state and its agents while the PRF consists of teachers, educational institutions and publishing houses (Bernstein, 2000, p. 31-33). More specifically, the PRF is comprised of “university departments of education, together with their research” (Singh, 2002 p. 576) and “specialized media of education, weeklies, journals, and publishing houses together with their readers and advisers” (Bernstein, 1990, p. 192). Agents within the

PRF compete to control procedures for constructing pedagogic practices (Singh, 2002, p. 576). Bernstein identifies a distinction within the pedagogic recontextualizing field between specialized sub-fields of the educational system, curriculums and student cohorts (1990, p. 198). When attempting to understand the intersection between teaching and research, it is crucial that the complexity of the social practices involved can be teased apart and studied. While teachers engage with research in both direct and indirect ways, how knowledge from research is incorporated into classroom teaching and learning involves complex processes of repurposing and transformation (Singh, 2002, p. 577). In addition to these complex social processes, the nature of teachers engagement with research also requires the consideration of time.

### **3. Time: career stages and the professional life cycles of teachers**

Careers develop in life stages (Levinson et al, 1976) with individual cycles of exploration, establishment, mid-career and late career (Greenhaus et al, 2019) and the work-related stages of apprentice, independent career, mentor and sponsor (Dalton & Thompson, 1986). Similarly, a teacher's career has been modelled as progressing through various stages, or professional life cycles. (Fessler, 1985; Huberman, 1989; Steffy, 2000; White, 2008). In Huberman's model of teachers' life cycles (1989, 2001) there are three main stages: 1) Novice; 2) Mid-career; 3) Late-career. Drawing on the literature Huberman identified the following themes for each stage. In the Novice stage are the themes of survival and discovery as early career teachers become familiar with teaching. The trend is then towards stabilization, as teachers overcome self-doubt. Mid-career stage teachers typically are more confident and themes that emerges for this stage include experimentation and activism. Teachers entering the second decade of their careers report going through a period of reassessment as they review past work and future plans. Late career teachers report serenity and "a gradual loss in energy and enthusiasm is compensated for by a greater sense of confidence and self-acceptance (Huberman, 1989, p. 35). In addition, themes of conservatism and, finally, disengagement, either serene or bitter (Huberman, 1989, p. 35), emerge. These phases are not linear in time, with teachers transitioning between phases (Huberman, 1989; Fessler, 1985), and late career teachers become novices "if faced with a totally new and exotic teaching assignment [...] new courses, textbooks, methods or technology" (White, 2008). Whether a teacher is considering engaging more directly with research or even adopting a role of practitioner researcher (as discussed in Section 4 below), careful

consideration of the teacher in their own professional life cycle is important. Time is crucial. First, sufficient time to engage with a project. Second, the right time in their career to benefit most from this.

#### **4. Professional possibilities: practitioner research**

Practitioner research is a broader term that describes research conducted by those who also work in a professional field, in contrast to research conducted by full-time academic researchers. Practitioner research is located somewhere between the professional's everyday practice and the work of researchers, starting from an everyday perspective in a local context, but ultimately moving beyond this to share findings publicly. For English language teachers, this means investigating their classrooms and workplaces, something they may already be doing through their professional practices. However, there are some important differences. While reflective practice (Wallace, 1991) discussed above is essentially a private matter, practitioner research makes this process public, bringing the practitioner's knowledge into the public realm to be shared with other stakeholders and influence other research, professional practice and the practitioner's own continuing professional development.

Shulman has identified one of the challenges that researchers face as entering "the heads of practitioners, to see the world as they see it, then to understand the manner in which experts construct their problem spaces, their definitions of the situation, thus permitting them to act as they do" (1987, p. 375). Practitioner research can overcome this challenge through the dual role of the practitioner researcher. By switching between the roles of practitioner and researcher, the worldview and problem spaces can be made explicit through description and explanation; what to investigate is framed and guided by the practitioner adopting the role of researcher, bringing a critical perspective to their practices.

Practitioner research is on the increase (Mitchell, Lunt & Shaw, 2010, p. 7) with practitioners from a range of professions including social workers (Shaw & Lunt, 2012), adult literacy educators (Simon, Campono, Broderick, & Pantoja, 2012) and groups of practitioners in early childhood settings (Skattebol, & Arthur, 2014) as well as English language teachers (Scott & Hafenstein, 2020) all engaging in workplace research projects. Practitioner research offers clear benefits in terms of understanding real-world contexts and potentially improving

practice. It places the researcher's current practices and relationships at the centre of the research endeavour and it makes these a central concern.

Many of these benefits, including gaining access to situations, people and their thoughts and actions, but also some challenges originate from the same source: the position of the researcher. What can in some respects be regarded as a strength, namely the practitioner's access to situations, people, and their thoughts and actions, is simultaneously the source of a number of problems associated with practitioner research. These problems include balancing work responsibilities with the demands of a research project. Therefore, practitioner researchers must maintain an awareness of the various demands of each role, particularly when these conflict, and act to ensure a balance between their responsibilities as a practitioner and a researcher.

One strength of practitioner research is the foregrounding of professional knowledge. Professional knowledge in these real-world contexts encompasses the broad area of knowledge required for effective professional performance. This complex and changing body of knowledge plays an important role in how practitioner researchers examine their own contexts and practices. Maingay (1988) draws a distinction between ritual teaching behaviour and principled teaching behaviour. Ritual teaching behaviour is unthinking, divorced from the principles that inform it, and involves no awareness by the teacher of the rationale behind their actions. In the case of principled teaching behaviour, the teacher is aware of the theory behind their classroom decisions and actions. The following four related areas of professional knowledge are relevant to this discussion: propositional knowledge; process knowledge; personal knowledge; and value-based knowledge (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007, p. 26). Propositional knowledge relates to the theoretical foundation of professional practice, while process knowledge is concerned with the skills and actions that individuals employ when working. Personal knowledge refers to self-knowledge and past experiences that people can bring to bear on their work practices. Finally, value-based knowledge relates to personal beliefs and ethical values. These four areas make up professional knowledge.

To give an example, an English language teacher working with learners in the classroom may draw on the four areas of professional knowledge outlined above when focusing on developing students' pronunciation skills. Research might exist which could help the teacher to understand the difficulties that learners often encounter or guide their teaching

(propositional knowledge). They will also draw on their classroom skills when teaching the lesson (process knowledge); they could take their previous experience of teaching pronunciation into consideration (personal knowledge), and they may have views on which accent or variant of English is most appropriate for the context (value-based knowledge).

In order to make professional judgments, practitioner researchers draw on all four of these knowledge areas and not just propositional knowledge. However, practitioners do not always have access to sufficient breadth of research literature, particularly when compared to full-time researchers, in which case judgments are then based on the other knowledge areas that are available to them (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007, p. 27). Decisions are not made in isolation but rather in a specific context involving associated relationships between stakeholders; both the context and these relationships also affect the judgments that a professional makes (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007, p. 27; Martin, 1999). The context may limit autonomous practice and, where this is the case, it is also likely to have an effect on autonomous research (Fox, Martin & Green, 2007, p. 27). For example, social workers must work within the relevant legal and regulatory frameworks and thus they are unable to practice completely freely. Correspondingly, any teacher research project would be constrained by similar requirements.

## **5. Opportunities and challenges of practitioner research**

Practitioner research presents both opportunities and challenges. Reflecting on a three-year practitioner-led research initiative, Hamilton (2006) makes three observations. The first is that even a small amount of research funding can have a significant impact on individuals and their organizations. Individuals feel that their status and knowledge is validated, while organizations benefit from ideas generated by the research which can be used to inform training and management strategies. It also strengthens the validity of findings produced by more traditional research and suggests new directions and perspectives for future research. Practitioners are more likely to engage with research if they have direct experience of the research process, and the research they value most highly is that which involves other practitioners (Hamilton, 2006, p.16). Second, practitioner-led research can be extended by embedding it into initial teacher training courses and professional development courses. This ensures that the benefits identified above are realized. Third, the networks developed through practitioner-research initiatives should be linked with other networks from similar projects to facilitate sharing of findings and ideas.



Practitioner researchers must also be aware of the demands they place on others, including taking up colleagues' time. Colleagues' good will towards a research project may quickly disappear if they feel that excessive demands are being placed on their time and adding to their workloads. Alternatively, perceptions that too much time is being spent on the project at the cost of time spent on work-related tasks may lead to resentment, particularly if colleagues have to take on extra work or responsibilities as a result of the research project.

Obtrusive observation is another issue for teacher researchers. When observing colleagues, a teacher researcher should ensure they do not create extra work for the professional by disrupting the flow of events through asking questions or engaging in conversation with participants during the observation. Workplaces are dynamic and demand the professional's full attention. For example, classrooms can be regarded as complex environments (van Lier, 2004; Burns & Knox, 2011) with up to a thousand interpersonal exchanges involving the teacher taking place each day (MacLeod & McIntyre, 1977, p. 188). Shulman believes that classroom teaching "is perhaps the most complex, most challenging, and most demanding, subtle, nuanced, and frightening activity that our species has ever invented" (Shulman, 2004, p. 504). The teacher is therefore likely to be busy assessing and responding to the constantly evolving demands of the classroom and will not appreciate unnecessary distractions from an observer. The teacher's focus should be on the lesson and the learners, not on an observer or a research project. In addition to these issues, the observer hopes to avoid affecting the lesson through their presence. The notion that good data requires systematic observation but the very act of observation contaminates the data is called the observer's paradox (Labov, 1970 cited in Ellis, 2008, p. 119). This can be minimized by the researcher remaining unobtrusively attentive and maintaining a positive and supportive attitude towards those being observed.

The case for observation is clear. When working in the classroom, teachers are often so absorbed in procedures that they cannot observe interactions and the processes of learning in real time but "[b]eing an observer in the classroom, rather than the teacher, releases us from these concerns and affords us the freedom to look at the lesson from a range of different perspectives" (Wajnryb, 2012, p. 7). For a practitioner researcher planning to observe their own practice, there are several means to record data, such as digital recorders or video cameras. These devices can be set up and switched on at the start of a lesson and then left to record, allowing the practitioner to concentrate on completing their work. Reflective practitioners usually reflect after an event rather than in the moment, and a practitioner

researcher needs to approach their research in a similar manner. Responding to dynamic environments demands the practitioner's full attention, so this is not the best time to be considering when and how to collect data. For example, deciding when to take photos to capture data in the middle of a lesson might change the practitioner's behaviours and the flow and structure of the lesson.

Another challenge is that practitioner researchers might be too close to the research context to be able to step back and view it objectively. Their worldview and interests may be so closely aligned to their professional field that it is difficult for them to distance themselves from these and view the working context critically. One advantage that traditional researchers have is that they are outsiders, bringing objectivity to the research context. What the practitioner views as everyday and usual, the outsider may view as interesting and unusual, which leads them to question professional norms, assumptions and behaviours. This objectivity is encouraged through practitioner research, so while it may be more challenging for the practitioner researcher, it is certainly possible and their involvement in practitioner research might suggest a desire to achieve this objectivity and gain access to the insights and understandings that follow. In addition, it is this familiarity with the context and professional practices that conversely give the practitioner researcher an advantage over an outsider, particularly when it comes to investigating the demands made of professionals and their responses to these as they go about their working lives.

For example, a working teacher may investigate their own classroom to examine their own day-to-day practices and judgements, in order to make these explicit and understand them. The same teacher who becomes a practitioner researcher investigating their own organization and their place within it will likely produce a different study, with different research questions, data, analysis and findings. When observing or interviewing colleagues, shared knowledge exists between the practitioner researcher and their peers. This shared knowledge may be unknown to outsiders who do not work in the same context, and therefore it can be regarded as hidden or tacit. The practitioner researcher must acknowledge this when preparing for and conducting their research. Recording what is obvious to them and their colleagues could be relevant for an outsider to be able to understand opinions and actions. For example, in an interview with a colleague, the practitioner researcher may find it necessary to ask a question to which both the researcher and the interviewee know the answer. The question becomes useful when it reveals insider knowledge that an outsider needs to know in

order to fully understand an event or issue. These dual roles and the constant transition between them present a challenge. The role of practitioner researcher as “both insider and outsider, and as moving between the two, is sensitive and frequently difficult to sustain” (Shaw, 2005, p. 1238). This raises complexities for the practitioner researcher to understand and manage. The practitioner is neither just a teacher nor just a researcher but somewhere between the two, meeting their professional commitments while also retaining a research perspective.

Research expertise traditionally resides with professional researchers and universities. It is in partnership with researchers and their organizations that practitioner researchers can find support to help them in areas where their knowledge and skills may be lacking. Some formal qualifications like a postgraduate qualification might involve a research project that would provide this support. In addition to academic degrees, there are other schemes that support teacher research, such as the Cambridge English – English UK Action Research Scheme, the Cambridge University Press Teacher Research Scheme (Borg & Sanchez, 2015, p. 6) or the Action Research in ELICOS program (Burns, 2014, p. 6). These schemes recognize the support that practitioners need when conducting research into their workplaces and practices.

Researchers evaluating a three-year Practitioner-Led Research Initiative (PLRI) noted that practitioner researchers involved in the project appreciated the support they received. This included briefing days at the host university, on-site visits, midpoint residentials and dissemination conferences (Hamilton et al, 2007, p.20). While some practitioners had previously completed tertiary studies, they felt their relationships with university staff during the project differed from their previous experiences of research. They reported feeling part of a research community. In addition to the pressures and expectations that accompanied this change in identity and sense of inclusion, this also gave them first-hand experience of the challenges of research. The research project “not only provided them with the textbook rules but also the ongoing fixes and ‘tricks of the trade’ which are needed to complete a research project” (Hamilton et al, 2007, p.20).

In addition to the above demands, a practitioner researcher must also find time to write up their research and make it public. Finding time to write up research during a busy working day is another challenge associated with practitioner research. While many professions

support and encourage professional development, it is difficult to give practitioners the stretches of uninterrupted time enjoyed by professional researchers. Making the research public might take the form of an article in a teachers' magazine or journal. While some academic journals, such as *Language Teaching Research*, have long-standing sub-sections devoted to practitioner research and the occasional issue devoted to it (Johnson, 2016), most academic journals do not and practitioner researchers may face challenges publishing their research. Again, articles take time to prepare. An alternative is to deliver a paper at a conference but this requires additional resources to attend. While some employers might have a professional development budget, this will not always cover conference fees and additional costs of travel and accommodation. This adds to the challenges of making practitioner research public.

## **6. Practitioner research and academic research**

Some researchers have identified a gap between university-based researchers and practitioners, expressing concern about “a disconnect between the theories proliferated from universities, and what we regard as the no-less rich perspectives generated by practitioners who conceptualize [the field] from the locations of diverse classrooms and communities” (Simon et al., 2012, p. 5). Practitioner research can offer a means of reconciling researchers' theories with those of practitioners, who have an understanding of ideas from their own workplaces and communities. These practitioner theories arise from encounters with learners' intellectual and emotional needs (Simon et al., 2012, p. 7) and provide a contrast with traditional researchers' perspectives. A traditional researcher engaged in classroom-based research may observe such encounters but will not be part of the practitioner-learner relationship. While a researcher can interview participants, their knowledge and conceptions will differ from those of a practitioner, highlighting the different perspectives of researcher and practitioner. While research methods and methods of data collection and analysis may be similar, along with means of reporting their interpretations of the data, each type of researcher has a very different relationship with the study participants. Pincus (2001) summarizes this difference as the teacher's “day-to-day responsibility for decisions about taking action which will have a direct impact on the lives of their students”, a responsibility that a traditional researcher does not have. Because a practitioner has to fulfil this responsibility, it means that “a practitioner researcher's understandings cannot be separated from the pragmatic goals that those understandings simultaneously and inextricably construct and serve” (Phelps, cited in Pincus, 2001). A teacher, nurse or social worker's understandings

are bound up in their own work practices; thus, practitioner research informs and is informed by these perspectives that are more difficult for traditional researchers to access.

This highlights a key attribute of most practitioner research, namely its ability to learn from the local, “autochthonous theories within a given context” (Simon et al., 2012, p. 8). An inquiring stance into practice encourages ongoing questioning of these contextually-grounded understandings. Investigations are often sparked by dissonant moments that lead to data collection and analysis and reference to relevant research. Here, ‘dissonance’ means an event or occurrence that creates a disturbance for the teacher and makes them feel uncomfortable (Pincus, 2001). Wallace concurs with this view by noting that “[i]t is (or should be) normal for professionals to reflect on their professional performance, particularly when it goes especially well or especially badly ... It is also possible for this to happen while the process of professional action is actually proceeding” (Wallace, 1991, p. 13). However, the outcomes generated by practitioner research often diverge from those of traditional research. This has led some academics to view practitioner researchers in their practitioner-as-researcher work “as outside, or at least on the margins of both research *and* practice – an uncomfortable but creative marginalization” (Shaw & Lunt, 2012, p. 207). Instead of producing overarching frameworks or broadly applicable methods, the outcomes, while publicly shared, are aimed at improving understandings and teaching in a particular context (Simon et al., 2012, p. 8) and leading to contextually-sensitive understandings and pedagogies. Practitioner research can offer “specific and textured accounts of the epistemic, ethical and political promise of everyday teaching, learning and activism” (Simon et al., 2012, p. 10) and therein lies its strength and its value.

However, when such studies are developed using explanatory frameworks, such of those of Bernstein (2000) and Maton (2014) outlined above in Section 2.2, the findings of a particular, context-sensitive study can take on relevance to researchers and practitioners in other contexts. Sites of teaching and learning are places where knowledge is contested because “[p]rivileged and privileging pedagogic texts created in the field of recontextualization, such as curricular schemes and textbooks, [are] transformed again as they [are] appropriated by teachers and converted into modes of common or shared classroom knowledge in interactions with students” (Singh, 2002, p. 577). To understand the intersection of teaching and research, and its implications, we need a robust explanatory model that can account for the indirect and tacit relationships between research and teaching.

## 7. Conclusions

There is a relationship between research and educational practice, but it is complex. While some teachers engage directly with research through reading research papers, others engage indirectly through the professional practice of teaching. Adopting the role of practitioner researchers offers potential benefits to teachers themselves, their students, pedagogic practices and policies. However, time is essential in two senses. Firstly, teachers require time to engage with a research project and be supported through it. Secondly, this additional role of practitioner researcher should occur at an appropriate time in a teacher's professional career cycle to maximise the benefits to teachers, their learners and institutions.

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