

English teachers and research: becoming our own experts¹

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Abstract: What is the relation between research and teaching? Are they entirely distinct activities – and should they remain so? What is the relation between research and teachers? Should teachers be positioned as either the objects or the recipients of research that is conducted by specialists, researchers who possess categorically different forms of expertise and equally different perspectives on what happens in schools and classrooms? This paper considers the ways in which education research is conceptualised in dominant discourses and offers the possibility of alternative approaches, informed by different epistemological and ethical understandings.

Key words: research, accountability, English, storytelling, teachers as researchers

I first came across *Becoming our own experts* (Eyers and Richmond 1982) in 1984, when I came to the London Institute of Education to learn to be a teacher. The book is an account of work that was done in the late 1970s by a group of people in and around the English department at a London comprehensive school, Vauxhall Manor. I was excited by it, by the version of teacher identity and of research that it represented. The papers included in it explore the role of talk, in English and across the curriculum, the relation between talk and writing, questions of language and dialect, a case study of reading development, and much more, all grounded in detailed analysis of the language produced in and around classrooms.

But this was not at all what I had anticipated at the start of my pre-service teacher education programme. I really don't think it had crossed my mind that teaching at secondary school would involve any sort of engagement with research – and that wasn't because I was wholly ignorant of what research was. At the time when the Talk Workshop group was flourishing at Vauxhall Manor, I had been engaged in a very different type of research. My version involved, for most of the time, sitting in a university library and reading playscripts – mainly plays that had been performed in London in the decade or so before the closing of the theatres in 1642, at the start of the English Revolution. Even at the time, I knew that what I was doing wasn't proper research, because I shared a house with a couple of other people, one of whom was involved in the real thing. Twice a week, Mark would set off for the laboratory early in the morning with his freshly laundered white coat. He'd return at the end of the day with a new set of data, gathered from measuring the performance of a dog's heart under anaesthetic. The white coat needed washing and the dog was dead, but the cause of medical knowledge had been advanced (Yandell 1999).

Mark's version of research is the one that is instantly recognisable to the person in the street. Research is about conducting experiments in controlled conditions, gathering and analysing data, and thus finding out stuff about the world – about how things work, whether those things are hearts or subatomic particles or, perhaps, pupils. We'll come on to pupils as the subjects – or objects? – of research in a moment. But it is worth acknowledging how deeply embedded, how powerful, this positivist paradigm of research is in the culture. It is a

version of research in which roles are very clearly assigned and boundaries established. It is a paradigm in which there is a stark and extreme inequality of power. The dogs involved in Mark's research couldn't really be construed as participants. The goal of the research was the production of generalisable, objective knowledge about the effect of particular anaesthetics, in specified doses, on the operation of the heart.

Think about the phrase I have just used. The experiments were conducted on dogs, but the purpose was to find out more about the effect of anaesthetics on humans. So, in the noun phrase, 'the heart', the work that is being done by that definite article is really quite significant: it enacts a truth claim about hearts-in-general, even across species. And embedded in this research practice is the assumption that extrapolations can be made from what happens in the controlled conditions of the lab (a lab?), generalised to the conditions of the operating theatre – that is, to operating theatres in general. It is precisely this condition of generalisability that stands as the justification for the death of all those dogs.

Mark's research happened a long time ago. Things have moved on, in medical ethics and also in the field of education. Here, at the leading edge of such research, is part of a recent summary of what is known. It comes from a blog on the website of the Education Endowment Fund (EEF), the main commissioner of education research in the UK today. Published in January 2018, the blog's title is 'Fifteen key lessons learned in the EEF's first six years':

7. **There is a strong appetite for educators to engage with and use evidence.** Up to two-thirds of senior leaders use our Teaching and Learning Toolkit to make decisions, while more than 10,000 schools in England have signed up to take part in one of the EEF's trials so far.
8. **Robust and independent evaluation of high-potential programmes is not only possible, but essential.** Evidence is a crucial tool to inform senior leaders' decision-making and help them identify 'best bets' for spending. Time and money is too scarce to stick with approaches and programmes which do not make a real difference. The effective use of evidence means strategically abandoning ineffective approaches, as well as implementing new ones with positive evidence behind them.
9. **We know enough in key areas of teaching and learning to start making a positive difference now.** While generating new evidence remains essential, in areas such as literacy there is no excuse for not deploying the existing, extensive evidence to support teaching practice – as we are doing, for example, through our £10 million campaign to boost the literacy of primary-age pupils in the North East. Our growing bank of EEF guidance reports gives teachers the best available evidence in a range of key areas.
(Education Endowment Foundation 2018)

Though the field is different and fewer dogs are at risk, the conception of research that is at play here bears some striking similarities to that which informed Mark's research in anaesthetics. Evidence is something that is produced through the operation of specialised forms of activity that can be designated as research. Once produced, evidence is available –

to be used by educators. Evidence is a managerial tool, guiding decisions about spending and the allocation of resources. There are decisions to be made, too, about paths not to follow - and no excuses for not following the right ones. In this hierarchical model of knowledge production and distribution, teachers are positioned as the recipients, but apparently not the producers, of evidence. Their practice is informed by such evidence – or should be. And, given the reach that the EEF now has (over a third of the schools in England have already been, or are about to be, involved in an EEF-funded trial), it is clear that it regards itself as central to the commissioning, production, evaluation and dissemination of research evidence within the field of education.

Strongly marked in the EEF's position on research are its technical-rationalist premises. In all its evaluations of research 'interventions' or 'projects', the key question that is posed is: what impact does this have? And impact, for the EEF, is measured by student attainment. Their interest, in other words, is quite explicitly in effectiveness. The discourse of 'what works' is so powerful – and, in this era of high-stakes tests and performativity, so commonsensical – that it can be hard to step outside the discourse to examine it more critically. But it is an approach which is predicated on quite large – and questionable – assumptions.

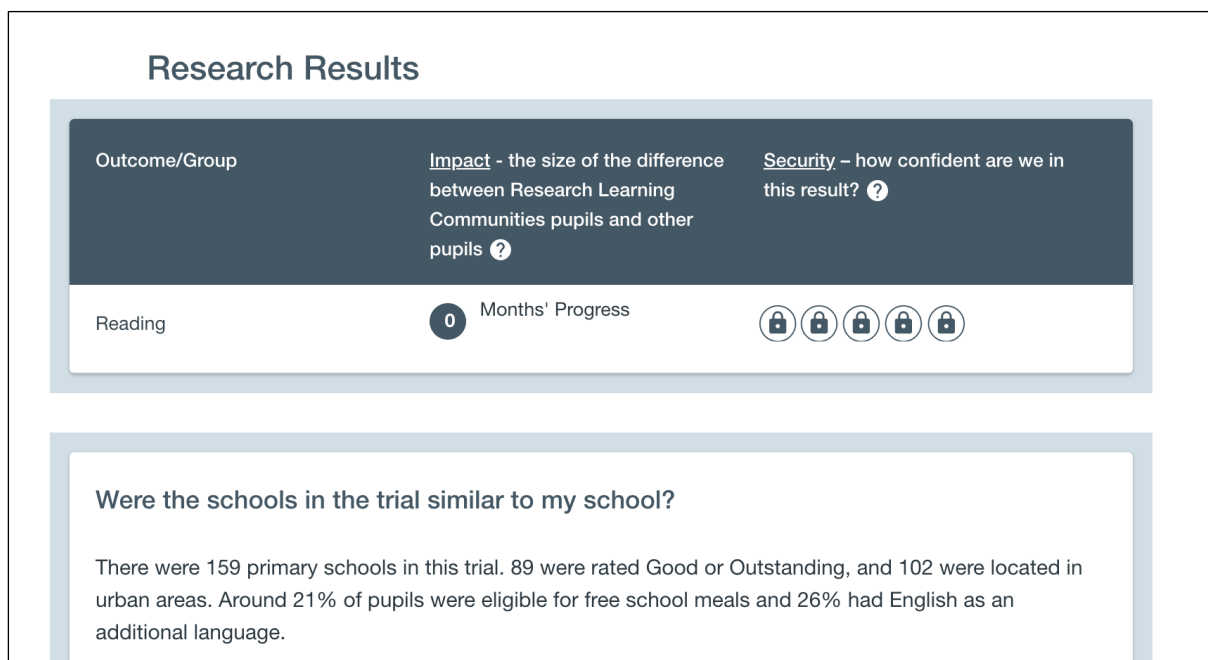
Let me give an example of what I mean. Look at the final paragraph of the EEF blog above. The claim about literacy teaching being an area of already-established knowledge rests on an unacknowledged set of premises about what literacy is and how it might be measured, the most significant being that literacy is a single testable entity: that version of literacy, in other words, that is assessed in England through the Phonics Screening Test and through the Key Stage 2 Reading Test, administered at the end of primary schooling (Standards and Testing Agency 2019a, 2019b; cf. Davis 2013; Yandell 2012). What is excluded from this is complexity or debate about the meanings and manifestations of literacy in different forms and sites – any recognition that literacy might be plural and context-specific. So, in terms of what is known about literacy, what is suppressed or discarded here is half a century of ethnographic research on literacy practices and on the shifts in these practices that have been enabled by new technologies of representation and communication (Brice Heath 1983; Street 1995; Kress 2003; Barrs & Cork 2001; Barrs & Horrocks 2014). At the same time, the EEF's claims rest on a paradigm of research which is quite different from that which informs all the work cited at the end of the preceding sentence. For each of these scholars, research involves careful inquiry into practice and equally careful interpretations of the practice that has been observed, out of which propositions about literacy emerge; for the EEF, on the other hand, the premise of research is an already-established, reified and unquestioned notion of literacy against which the efficacy of any intervention can straightforwardly be measured.

I want to pursue this a little further in relation to the EEF's evaluation report (Rose et al. 2017) on the Research Learning Communities project that they had funded:

Research Learning Communities (RLC) was an intervention that aimed to improve teaching quality and learning outcomes by raising teachers' awareness, understanding, and use of educational research in their teaching practice. Two Evidence Champion teachers from each school attended four RLC workshops with

peers from up to four other schools. ... The Evidence Champions were then required to develop, apply and evaluate school or key-stage wide improvement strategies using the learning from the workshops; and to support other teachers in the school, aiming to raise their awareness, understanding and use of research (Rose et al. 2017, 4)

As the evaluation report makes clear, the foci chosen by the participants were quite varied: growth mindsets, numeracy, feedback, the development of writing (and more). The efficacy of the whole project, though, was measured by comparing the Key Stage 2 Reading Test scores of the participating schools with the scores on the same test of schools in a control group. And, since there was no significant difference in the reading scores, the headline judgement of the evaluation was that the intervention had had no impact. (The evaluation report contains more nuanced commentary and evaluation, including the suggestion that it might be too early to tell what the longer-term effects on teachers' practice might be. Nonetheless, the summary judgement, presented starkly on the EEF website, is: zero impact (see figure 1).



[Insert figure 1 here]

Figure 1: screen grab from EEF website:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/research-learning-co mmunities/>

Compare this version of the relation between research and practice with a passage taken from the first page of *Becoming our own experts*. It is a section in which the editors explain the implications of the title:

The study of language in schools is not essentially to do with the reading of reports or the shaping of policy documents (though the presence of reports and the need

for statements of policy may trigger valuable trends of thought in our minds): a report is too final and a policy statement too pragmatic to do real justice to the subtle and constantly changing interaction within learning which language mediates. Similarly it is true that because looking at language in schools is a critical study of our and the children's contemporary practice, we, the teachers, must become our own theoreticians, our own experts. Our theory, our 'expertise', is in making sensitive inferences about an actual classroom experience, in noticing what is really going on. If the expert in the more usual sense, who stands back a little from the everyday reality of the classroom in order, ideally, to get a wider view of the scene, has a role in this process of discovery, it is simply to help the classroom teacher to discover more fully what is already there. (Eyers & Richmond 1982, 1)

I want to use the contrast between these two texts to explore something about the different ways of conceptualising what research is and how it relates to, or impinges on, or arises out of, the everyday work of teachers. This is not, I should make clear, an argument about whether research matters; nor is it an argument about whether teachers should engage with evidence, or whether teachers should want to 'make a difference', as the EEF puts it. On these questions, at least, there is common ground between the two texts and the positions that they represent.

The central focus, for Eyers and Richmond, is on practice – teachers' and children's: on what happens in the classroom – 'on noticing what is really going on'. The claim that is made here is that neither policy documents nor others' research can substitute, or adequately account, for 'the subtle and constantly changing interaction within learning which language mediates'. The language that is used here may lack the hard-edged managerialism of the EEF, but that isn't because it lacks precision. It comes out of a carefully theorised understanding of both the role of language in learning and the complexity of what happens, moment by moment, in classrooms. In this approach, learning is not reducible to a set of measurable outcomes; to focus on those outcomes at the expense of finding out more about the processes of learning as they are enacted in the classroom would be an abdication of professional responsibility.

I want to emphasise that looking back at work that was done the best part of forty years ago is not an exercise in nostalgia. *Becoming our own experts* is theoretically rigorous, a systematic attempt to reach a better understanding of classroom practice and hence to refine that practice. It recognises that language is not a stable, fixed system but rather a set of resources for meaning-making. It draws on Vygotskian understandings of the irreducibly social nature of learning and of the crucial role of language and other sign systems in mediating learning (Vygotsky 1987; cf. Britton 1987; Bakhurst 2008; Barrs 2016, 2017). Its emphasis on processes – the minute-by-minute processes of what happens in classrooms – is not some woolly liberal reluctance to take responsibility for the hard data of results. On the contrary, it is those apparently hard data that need to be scrutinised and reappraised as dubious reifications – the reduction of complex acts and processes into numbers that fit neatly on a spreadsheet, the transformation of the unfinalisable struggle for meaning into the mendacity of the easily-measurable.

These different concepts of what constitutes evidence are not reconcilable. One works to flatten out local variation, specificity, and valorises those forms of data that are already abstracted from the conditions under which they were produced. The other remains attentive to local circumstance. One is fixated on products, while the other insists on the importance of processes; one attempts to address the question of what works, while the other explores what happens, what and how meanings are made.

What, though, of the way that teachers and teaching are positioned in relation to research? I have already noted that the EEF model, if I may call it that, represents teachers as the recipients of research. There is a congruence between this and the processes of reduction and generalisation: if teachers are to be made acquainted with what is known, digests (of the kind that the EEF produces) are an invaluable aid. This is, of course, an application of what might be seen as the medical model of research. The busy teacher, like the busy general practitioner, cannot possibly read every research paper; what they need are easily accessible, easily assimilable summaries: don't bother with research learning communities because they won't boost your KS2 reading scores. But what I have just said is a misrepresentation. If you look at the EEF website, it becomes clear that the primary audience that is envisaged for such research digests is actually not teachers at all but school leaders. In this managerialist world, it isn't teachers who will make decisions about RLCs or phonics, say, but school leaders. And the implication of this is that research is itself to be conceptualised primarily as a tool of management – a means to ensure the most efficient and effective deployment of resources.

What, then, of the approach taken by those involved in *Becoming our own experts*? As the title indicates, the contrast could not be starker. Research here is an activity undertaken by teachers. In this model, teachers are envisaged as having agency, determining the research agenda and conducting the research (for) themselves. In itself, however, this may not seem particularly remarkable. In the years since the publication of *Becoming our own experts*, there have been countless initiatives aimed, in one way or another, at increasing teachers' engagement with research, often involving teachers as researchers (cf. Hammersley 1997; Foster 1999).² But what has characterised the vast majority of these initiatives has been a separation of teaching from research.

This is manifest in different ways. I'll take one example. When teachers enrolled on master's or doctoral programmes are about to engage in research, they are required to complete an ethical approval form. On this, they detail their chosen research method(s) and the ethical implications of their proposed research on the human participants. There are good reasons for this. It encourages students to think carefully about what they are proposing to do and why they might be doing it, to consider how all the participants might be affected by the research and what their ethical obligations are to those participants. That said, the process always strikes me as somewhat incongruous. It is predicated on a medical model of research. How the researcher is led to consider the impact of the research on the participants is in relation to the damage that might be done. This isn't, of course, as it might be in a drug trial, say, a matter of life and death: very few students are physically harmed by their teacher's involvement in a little light action research. But the emphasis is, nonetheless, on mitigating possible negative side-effects: the discomfort that might be experienced by a school student in a focus group, say. The ethics form doesn't encourage the teacher-

researcher to consider the possibility that their students might rather enjoy the process, or that they might benefit from it in all sorts of more or less intangible ways – that it can become a source of rich learning for them, providing them with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and thus positioning them as, in effect, co-researchers.

What the ethics form also enacts is the separation of teacher and researcher identities. It demands that the teacher-researcher puts to one side much of the knowledge that they already have of the site of their research and of the participants in it. It demands that they inhabit a different discourse. It demands that they represent themselves and the other participants: no longer teachers, colleagues, students, but the researcher and the researched.

This separation is so well-established in the field of education that it, too, has become mere common sense. One of the clearest and most cogent theorisations of this position is offered by Paul Dowling and Andrew Brown, in a book written for teachers who are interested in research. In what follows, I quote from the revised edition (2010). Part of the reason for my focus on this research guide is that it is one that, in its earlier version (Brown and Dowling 1998) I took very seriously in my own doctoral research. It took me a long while to work through my disagreement with it.

‘Our first commitment’, Dowling and Brown emphasise from the start, ‘is to research as a distinctive attitude’ (Dowling and Brown 2010, 1). And the implication of this is that, for a teacher-researcher, there is work to be done in divesting oneself of the teacherly knowledge that one brings to the research process – particularly when the research is conducted in one’s own workplace:

The researcher must also impose principles of interpretation or realisation. Ironically, perhaps, the more familiar a setting may seem, the greater the danger of bringing your own unexamined interpretive frameworks in making sense of what you see. Educational practitioners researching educational practices are clearly vulnerable in this respect. (Dowling & Brown 2010, 50)

Look at the language here: ‘danger’ ... ‘unexamined’ ... ‘vulnerable’. I want to come back to ‘unexamined’ in a moment. It’s clear, though, that research is not to be undertaken lightly or unadvisedly – and that the real danger here is one of contamination – of the purity of the research attitude, the clarity of the gaze of the researcher, being muddied by the legacy traces of teacher knowledge. At the end of their guide to research, Dowling and Brown emphasise the same point:

Academic educational research, as an activity, defines a different set of positions and practices. In particular, the output of academic research is subject to peer review through the procedures of publication in journals and books and through conference arrangements. Furthermore, the nature of this output is always an abstraction from the immediate empirical context of the research. Local contingencies are more or less effectively eliminated through definition and/or control, so that the empirical setting is constituted as a laboratory. Research output is, in other words, relatively context independent, indeed, this is a condition of its

generalisability. The empirical site of educational research is, in this sense, consumed by research and this consumption entails the transformative recontextualisation of the site. Professional educational practice and academic educational research, then, are distinct fields of activity. (Dowling and Brown 2010, 170).

Once more, we might want to attend to the language used here. The 'empirical site' (your classroom, say) is '*consumed* by research'. Really? Research here, as for Mark and his dogs, is defined by its context-independence, its generalisability. The particular classroom, the particular learners, who might have been the source of data, as it were, are left far behind, consumed by the research process. I think I've always been troubled by this, and I'd want to suggest that my discomfort is an ethical one. If that is how research works, it's fanciful to imagine that one can regard the other people involved in the process – the not-researcher people – as participants: they are the objects of research, mere sources of data. And (as with Mark and the dogs) the power relations are starkly unequal.

I have written elsewhere (Yandell 2013, 56) about my uncertainties regarding the anonymisation (or pseudonymisation) of participants in classroom-based research. The assumption, so deeply embedded in research procedures as to have become almost unquestionable, is that preserving confidentiality by masking the identity of participants is ethical – and that any other approach is therefore, quite straightforwardly, unethical. I recognise the difficulty, particularly when the participants are children or young people, of gaining informed consent, and I acknowledge that any researcher must take responsibility for their interpretation of the data they have collected. And yet, when I reflect on my own research, I continue to regret that I have not allowed the school students whose words and work I have attempted to represent to appear in my accounts as themselves, under their own names. I do not believe that any of these students would have been harmed or distressed by anything I have written about them; they might be inclined to think it odd that anyone had invested such effort, and ink, in making sense of the classrooms they inhabited, but I am confident that they would also be rather pleased to see their contributions recognised, and valued. I even wonder if preserving the participants' identities might have helped to keep me honest, reminding me of my responsibility to represent them as carefully, as faithfully, as I could. Is it unethical to contemplate such an approach to research in education?

I also want to quarrel with the central claim that Dowling and Brown make – that teaching and research are distinct activities:

The motivational source for research may, as in the action research tradition, be a question or a problem that arises within professional educational practice. However, if the dialogic relationship between professional and research practice is to be maintained, the nature of the imposition of research upon its site must be constituted as a gaze from another position and employing the practices of another activity. A dialogue, by definition, involves more than one voice. The professional practitioner intending to engage in educational research in the interrogation of their own practices will need to acquire the principles and not merely the trappings of these research practices. This entails a kind of apprenticeship into the practices

of research. This book is intended to stand as a contribution to such an apprenticeship. (Dowling & Brown 2010, 172)

This involves two questionable assumptions: one about the nature of research and the other about the nature of teaching. I have touched on the first above, in suggesting that there might be ethical problems with this approach. But, even if it is possible (or desirable) to leave these ethical difficulties to one side, I am not at all convinced that research necessarily involves the kind of generalisation-through-abstraction that Dowling and Brown envisage. In my own work, and the work of many colleagues across the world, educational research might be envisaged as entailing an attentiveness to the particular, a struggle to represent the specificity of moments of teaching and learning. That these acts of representation are precisely that – and hence can never claim to capture the thing itself – is part of the ongoing challenge of research within the human sciences. And this, too, is an ethical challenge: as Spivak (1988) reminds us, any act of representation involves a political dimension – a claim to represent by speaking for others – as well as a mimetic one (a representing of that which is being observed). But it is a peculiar perversion of the dominant, western tradition of research in these fields that the researcher is encouraged to disregard (or consume) the concrete particulars of experience in pursuit of some disembodied ideal of abstraction (cf. Tolman 1999).

Much more could be said about this, but I want to focus more on the second of Dowling and Brown's assumptions. The version of teaching as a practice that emerges from their argument is a poor, thin thing indeed. It is the teacher as unreflective doer and teaching as the stuff that happens – the stuff that provides the raw material of data. What is missing from this picture is any sense that teaching might be a more complicated activity, involving not only the being in the moment of the hurly-burly of the classroom but also, necessarily, the planning and preparation for the moment and the reflection on it. (There is a temporal dimension to this – that teaching extends beyond the duration of the lesson, as it were – but I would also want to suggest that, particularly as teachers become more experienced, these different facets of teaching can also be simultaneously present in the moment of teaching.) In sharp contrast to Dowling and Brown's picture of teaching stands James Britton's:

If research is seen primarily as a process of discovery, then the day-to-day work of a teacher comes under the term, teachers as researchers. It cannot be said too often that effective teaching depends upon the concern of every teacher for the rationale by which he or she works. ... This requires that every lesson should be for the teacher an inquiry, some further discovery, a quiet form of research, and that time to reflect, draw inferences, and plan further inquiry is also essential. (Britton 1983, 990)

There is more to be said about this – about what is involved in both becoming and being a teacher – in that these processes are not, even in today's micromanaged and individualised neoliberal times, solitary processes. We live in different times from those of the Vauxhall Manor Talk Workshop Group, but teachers do still talk to each other. And when they do, they tell stories (cf. Rosen 1985; Doecke et al. 2000; Doecke 2013; Parr et al. 2015). Such stories entail decisions about how to represent the complexity of classroom interactions.

They thus constitute, even in the most informal contexts, collaborative inquiries into practice.

I want to finish by looking a little at this process, and by making a claim about its significance. Here is an excerpt from an account of recent research conducted in two states in Australia. The researchers were looking at early career teachers and how well prepared they had been by their programmes of initial teacher education. One of the methods that these researchers used was to talk with the teachers whom they were researching – and to listen attentively to the stories that they told:

Teachers are obliged to struggle with the 'real', even when (as the linguistic turn in the human sciences teaches us) language prevents them or anyone from fully grasping it. The stories that early career teachers have told us are all driven by an impulse to understand their experiences, despite the fact that the act of representing those experiences is necessarily at a remove from the moment when the events that inspired their storytelling initially occurred. That very distance between the moment of the narration and the moment when the events occurred is a condition for a deeper analysis of the 'reality' of the world in which they find themselves than would otherwise be possible.

The act of storytelling is a moment in its own right that cannot be conflated with the moment in time when the events occurred. (Allard & Doecke 2017, 283)

Consider how teachers appear in this text. They are seen, I would want to suggest, as fully intellectual, knowledgeable and agentive, acting in circumstances not necessarily of their own choosing, but nonetheless making history. There is a doubleness here that might be taken to echo the doubleness of the teacher-researcher divide that Dowling and Brown insist on; but here the doubleness is in the teachers themselves. They are here represented as having the capacity to stand back from the immediacy of experience, and as mobilising that capacity in order to make sense of that experience. And this, let me make clear, is not at all because the participants in Allard and Doecke's research were keen to become apprentice researchers: what they are doing, in telling stories about their work, is not neatly separable from their work of teaching or from who they are as teachers.

Teachers' conversations do not simply reflect reality but constitute representations of it through which they seek to gain a perspective on all that is happening to them. They actively engage with the rich particularities of situations they have been obliged to negotiate, (e.g. caring about reluctant learners, providing a stable environment, engaging with angry parents, persisting with difficult pupils when other teachers don't), combining those details into their stories in a way that typically resists any simple ascription of meaning, while still seeking to achieve what Ricoeur calls 'a synthesis of the heterogeneous' They are seeking to reach meaning through the act of narration, rather than simply reporting events that pre-exist the storytelling. (Allard & Doecke 2017, 284)

This work is necessarily interpretive. It is concerned with meanings and values as well as purposes. Its interests go beyond 'what works' to confront much more interesting and intractable questions.

I want to return, briefly to the EEF version of research. It is, in a very direct way, focused on questions of accountability. Its version of accountability, though, is the managerialist or neoliberal version – the accountability of spreadsheets and accountancy: the bottom line is prominent in its evaluations of research, since it is forever weighing the effects of particular interventions against their costs (and it has a neat little graphic – rows of pound signs – to highlight this aspect). The alternative to such accountability is not, however, a retreat into some sort of professionalist unaccountability – teacher knows best, or whatever. Telling stories is also a way of achieving accountability: that's what a story is – a rigorous, careful account of what has happened, for which the storyteller accepts responsibility, and for which they remain answerable, both to those about whom the story is told and to their audience.

Notes on contributor

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¹ This essay began life as a keynote lecture, given as part of the London Association for the Teaching of English conference, *Becoming our own experts: research and English teaching*, held at the Institute of Education, UCL, London, 10 March 2018.

² I should come clean. I was one of the teachers whose research was funded by the Teacher Training Agency in the mid-1990s – the initiative which is the focus of Foster’s (1999) analysis. I had been researching the teaching of Shakespeare. In the ‘findings’ paper – a brief summary of the research that the TTA required each of the teacher-researchers to produce – I had described my project as ‘a school-based case study’. In the version published by the TTA, this phrase had disappeared. As I wrote at the time, ‘What I had presented as an account which focused on one department in one school in Hackney was in danger of being transformed into a statement about How to Teach Shakespeare — any time, any place, anywhere’ (Yandell 1999, 41).