Assessing the Impact of Teacher Education

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Key Questions

▪ What do we mean by the 'impact' of teacher education?

▪ What strategies can be used to collect information about such impact?

▪ What precautions are required in drawing conclusions about the impact of teacher education?

Levels of Impact

▪ Reactions
▪ Learning
▪ Behaviour
▪ Results

(Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006)

Impact Evaluation Strategies in Language Teacher Education

Strategy	Examples	Procedure
Questionnaires	Scott & Rogers (1995)	Compared beliefs questionnaire responses at start and end of programme to examine its impact.
Journal writing	Johnson (1994)	Studied trainee journals during practicum to understand impact of training.
Observation	da Silva (2005)	Observed trainees and compared their behaviours to ideas promoted on programme.
Interviews	Cabaroglu & Roberts (2000)	Interviewed trainees at different points of programme to assess changes in their beliefs.
Repertory grids	Sendan & Roberts (1998)	Used repertory grids at different stages of a programme to study development in trainee's personal theories.
Concept mapping	Farrell (2006)	Used concept maps at start and end of TESOL methods course to examine its impact on trainees.

Evaluating the Validity of Conclusions About Impact

Example 1

At the start of a course on teaching writing, the teacher educator (TE) gave participants (Ps) a questionnaire about their beliefs about teaching writing. At the end of the course, Ps completed the same questionnaire again. A comparison of the two questionnaires showed that at the end of the course Ps' beliefs were more closely aligned to those promoted on the course than they were at the start. The TE concluded that the course had been successful in changing Ps' beliefs.

Example 2

Following a course on teaching grammar, trainees were asked as part of their assessment to prepare a lesson plan for a grammar lesson with a defined group of learners. The TE found that most of the lesson plans reflected the discovery approach to grammar promoted on the course. The TE concluded that the course had impacted on trainees' beliefs and behaviours.

Example 3

A few months after the end of a programme, a TE visited some of the graduates in their schools and observed their lessons. Only a minority were observed to be teaching in a manner which reflected the communicative principles promoted on the TE programme. The TE concluded that the programme had had little impact on the graduates' beliefs and behaviours.

Example 4

At the end of a one-day workshop on using group work in language teaching, the TE asked Ps to complete a questionnaire in which they evaluated several aspects of the course. Ps' ratings were generally high. The TE concluded that the Ps' had enjoyed the workshop and that many of them were likely to use group work more frequently in their own teaching.

Example 5

During a practicum, trainee teachers were observed on several occasions putting into practice certain methodological ideas promoted on their programme. The lecturer observing these trainees concluded that the programme was having an impact on trainees' beliefs and practices.

Example 6

At the end of a course on learning theories, trainees were asked to construct concept maps of the content covered on the course. On analysing these the lecturer found that many students were able to recall the key issues covered and the relationships among them. The lecturer concluded that students had learned the material covered on the course.

Further Reading

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Johnson, K. E. (1994). The emerging beliefs and instructional practices of preservice English as a second language teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 10*, 439-452.

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