

ECAD4019 Professional and Pedagogic Studies:

Researching the Learning: what, how and why am I teaching?

Session 4:

Empirically based and theoretically based literature.
Academic reading strategies.

Yr Athrofa Research Dispositions

Being sceptical

- Understand **empirical evidence** in contested fields
- Being aware of political, economic and social drivers for 'evidence'

Being ethical

- Knowing and using ethical principles of research
- Understanding **positionality**

Being a skilled researcher

- Understanding **qualitative** and **quantitative** methods
- Be able to construct an argument based on evidence
- Employing **critical reading** skills

Being part of an inquiring profession

- Proactively contributing to a range of audiences
- Actively engaging with the inquiry and findings of others

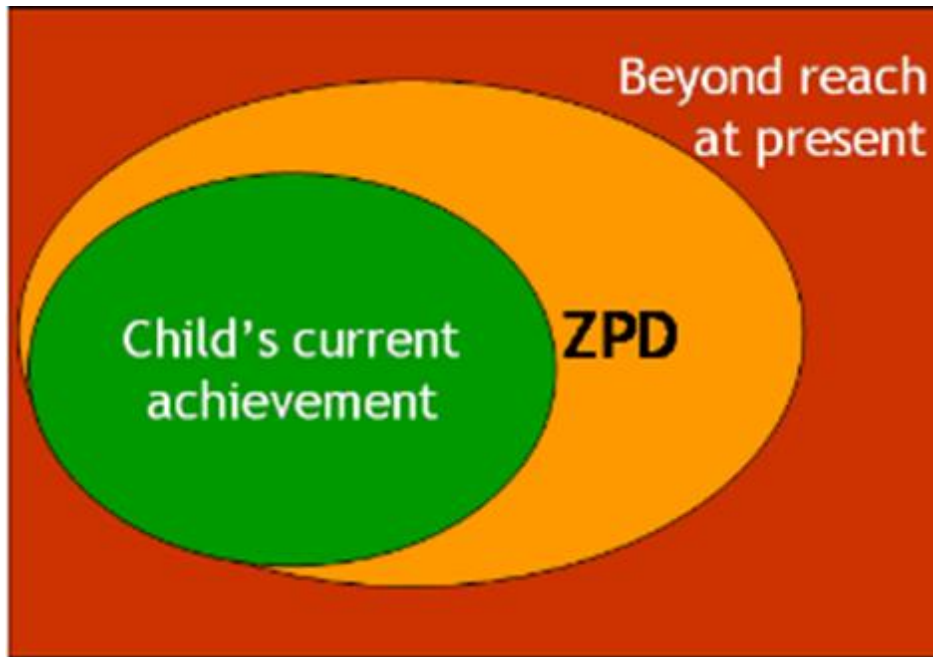
Session Aims



- To understand the differences between empirically based and theoretically based literature
- To develop academic reading strategies

How do people acquire new knowledge and skills?

A theory...



Zone of Proximal Development – Lev Vygotsky

- People learn by being guided by those who are more knowledgeable (MKO)
- Social interactions will allow learners to practice and observe their skills
- Scaffolding, or supporting activities provided by the teacher will help learners through the ZPD

Abstract

Within the current standards-based framework of early primary education, teachers must negotiate the integration of assessment with traditional, developmental orientations to teaching and learning. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine teachers' approaches to early primary assessment within five different school contexts: public, independent, Froebel, Waldorf, and Montessori. Data were collected from 12 kindergarten to Grade 2 teachers through in-depth interviews followed by ethnographic observations of eight classrooms. Data were thematically analyzed to identify core approaches to assessment across the contexts related to the following themes: (1) diverse conceptions of assessment, (2) commitments to student-oriented assessment, (3) knowing children through a practice of observation, and (4) assessment of academic standards. Underpinning these assessment themes was the fundamental commitment of early-primary educators to whole-child teaching and assessment. The article concludes with suggestions for future research that explore the intersection between teaching and assessment in play-based pedagogical contexts, alternative educational approaches, and systems of high accountability, with the aim of supporting teachers in bridging developmental and academic priorities in the early primary grades.

Keywords: early primary education, elementary education, assessment, evaluation, teacher practice, observation, Froebel, Waldorf, Montessori, independent, public

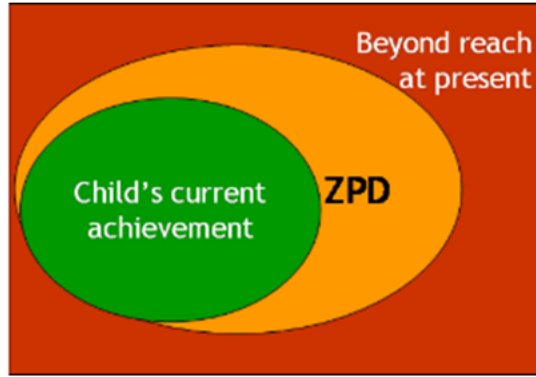
Theoretical or Empirical?

- The focus of **theoretical** literature is on theory rather than on application
- **Empirical** literature deals with original research based on experience and observation, rather than logic

Now let's return to Vygotsy's ZPD and the abstract from the research paper...

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Empirical research

- The word **empirical** refers to the collection of data using evidence that is collected through observation or another research tool
- **Empirical research** is based on observed and measured phenomena and derives knowledge from actual experience rather than from theory or belief

How do you know if a study is empirical?

- Read the subheadings within the article, book, or report and look for a description of the research 'methodology'



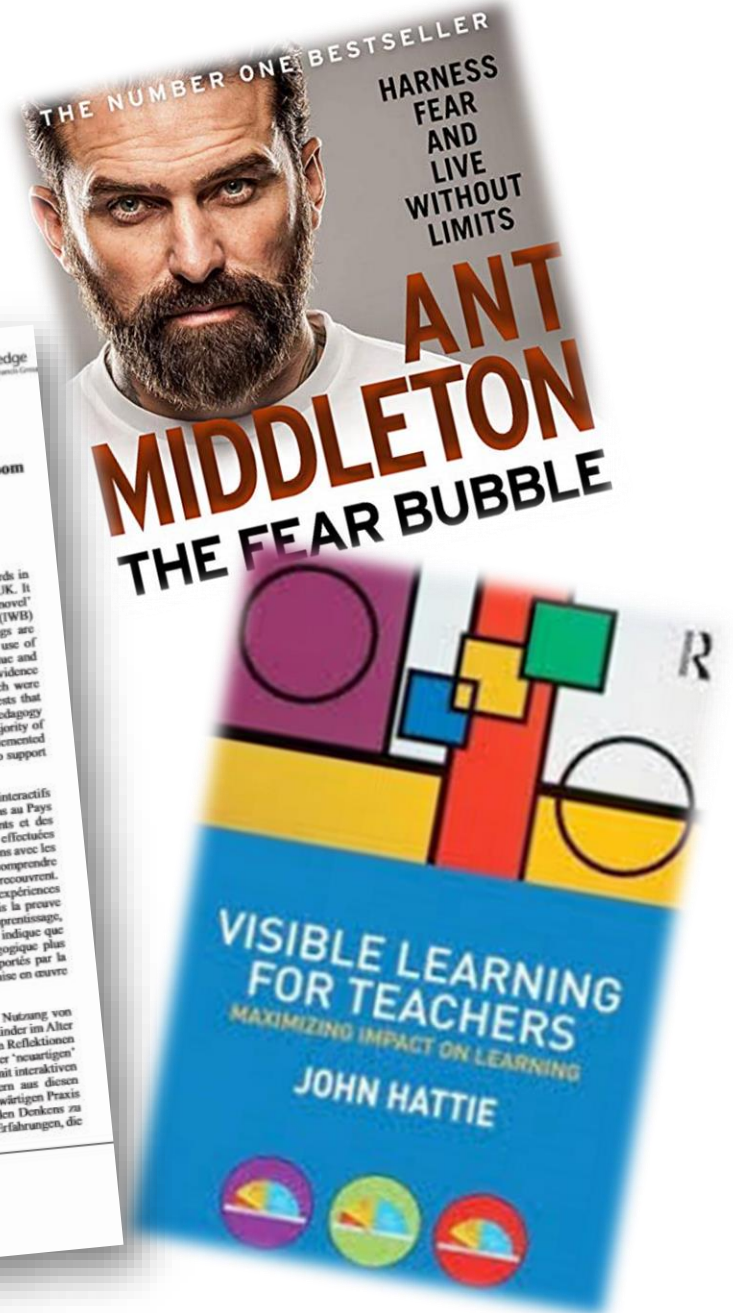
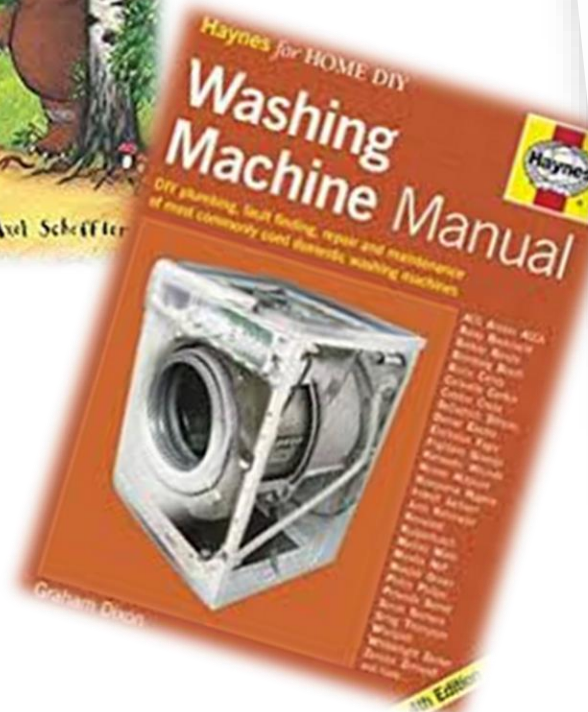
Types of empirical research

Empirical research can be conducted and analysed using **quantitative** and/or **qualitative** methods

Quantitative	Qualitative
Used to gather information through numerical data. Used to quantify opinions, behaviours or other defined variables. Some of the commonly used methods are surveys, polls, etc.	Used to gather non-numerical data. Used to find meanings, opinions or underlying reasons from subjects. Sample size is usually small. Popular methods for collecting qualitative data include focus groups, interviews, experiments, etc.

Academic reading strategies

Reading is just reading... or is it?



Critical reading

- Ask questions about the text as you read it – what are the ideas, arguments, problems, observations, findings and conclusions?
- Is there engagement with relevant, up to date research?
- What do other writers say about the topic?
- How appropriate are the methods of investigation?
- When reading text containing an argument, try to **evaluate** if it is well supported. Explore the evidence – does it convince?
- What assumptions are being made, if any?

Being selective and making the most of your reading

- Before you start reading, it's good to think about your purpose for doing so – are you looking to develop background knowledge of a topic or are you looking to answer a specific question?
- Academic texts are not meant to be read cover to cover!
- Read **actively** (not passively) – notes, mindmaps, connections to other readings?
- Encouraged to go beyond reading lists and find own material
- You cannot read intensely for hours – divide your time

Journal, year, volume,
page numbers



Author(s) and institution



Abstract (purpose)
Read first



Skim – does it contain
relevant headings?

Scan – search for relevant
information and specific
terms

OXFORD REVIEW OF EDUCATION, 2016
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Implementing curriculum reform in Wales: the case of the Foundation Phase

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ABSTRACT

The Foundation Phase is a Welsh Government flagship policy of early years education (for 3–7 year-old children) in Wales. Marking a radical departure from the more formal, competency-based approach associated with the previous Key Stage 1 National Curriculum, it advocates a developmental, experiential, play-based approach to teaching and learning. *The learning country: A paving document* (NAIW, 2001) notes that, following devolution, Wales intended to take its own policy direction in order to 'get the best for Wales'. Building on a three-year mixed methods independent evaluation of the Foundation Phase we discuss in detail the aims and objectives of the Foundation Phase, including the context to its introduction, the theory, assumptions and evidence underlying its rationale, and its content and key inputs. We then contrast this with how the Foundation Phase was received by practitioners and parents, how it has been implemented in classrooms and non-maintained settings, and what discernible impact it has had on young children's educational outcomes. The paper concludes with a critical analysis of the policy process and identifies a number of contextual issues during the inception of the Foundation Phase that has, it could be argued, constrained its development and subsequent impact. We argue that these constraints are associated with an educational policy landscape that was still in its infancy. In order for future education policy to 'get the best for Wales' a number of important lessons must be learnt.

KEYWORDS

Wales; Foundation Phase;
early years education;
policy implementation;
developmentally appropriate
practice

Introduction

The Foundation Phase is the statutory curriculum for all 3–7 year-olds in the maintained and funded non-maintained¹ education sectors in Wales. It represents one of the 'flagship' education policies of the first ten years of the Welsh Government following parliamentary devolution in 1999. The Foundation Phase is symbolic for three reasons. First, it demonstrated a commitment to the use of the 'best' international evidence for education policy-making. Second, it constitutes a radical departure from its predecessor, the National Curriculum Key Stage 1, both in terms of curriculum and pedagogy. And third, it provided one of the first examples of how the education system in Wales differed from that of England following devolution. The Foundation Phase is also a very important example of education policy in Wales because of its scale—it universally applies to all primary schools and funded

Title



Key words



Main body of text



Look at the examples of readings on the next few slides... Let's approach them in a critical manner:

Assess whether the texts are
empirical or theoretical.
**Qualitative, quantitative or
mixed methods?**



Changing the home literacy environment through participation in family literacy programmes

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Abstract

This paper presents findings from a study of family literacy provision in England and focuses on the effects of family literacy programmes on the home literacy environment. The fieldwork took place between September 2013 and December 2014 and involved 27 school-based programmes for pupils aged between 5 and 7, and their parents. The study used mixed methods, which involved observations of family literary sessions, a quantitative pre- and post-survey of 118 parents, and pre- and post-telephone qualitative interviews with a sub-sample of 24 parents. Building on previous theoretical work, the study conceptualises the home literacy environment into four areas (family resources; parental literacy behaviours and attitudes; parental beliefs and understandings; and family literacy activities and practices). The paper develops understandings of how parents translate and implement messages from family literacy into the home setting, and it shows how participation in these programmes leads to changes in family literacies across all four areas identified.

Keywords

Home learning environment, family literacy, home literacy environment, parent-child interactions, reading practices, shared reading

<https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/doi/pdf/10.1177/1468798417745118>

Are we asking the right questions? An analysis of research on the effect of teachers' questioning on children's language during shared book reading with young children

Rosalind L Walsh

Macquarie University, Australia

Kerry A Hodge

Macquarie University, Australia

Abstract

A review of 20 experimental, shared book reading (SBR) interventions using questioning strategies with preschool children was conducted. The studies were analyzed in terms of their quality, focus, and the questioning strategies employed. Although there were few methodological concerns about the studies conducted, treatment fidelity and replicability of the reported interventions are raised as issues needing attention in future research. The impact of questioning strategies on language and pre-literacy skills tended to be a focus of the reported studies, with little investigation of the development of children's thinking skills through questioning, and there were few attempts to analyze children's responses to different types of questioning techniques. Across the reported studies, there was also a lack of consistency around the terminology associated with different kinds of questioning. The article concludes with discussion of implications for the use of questioning techniques in early childhood education practice and argues for research into the impact of different questioning techniques on children's cognitive development.

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<https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/doi/pdf/10.1177/1468798416659124>

“It ain’t ‘nah’ it’s ‘no’”: Preparing preschoolers for the language of school

**Colleen E Whittingham and
Emily Brown Hoffman**

University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, USA

Joseph C Rumenapp

Judson University, Elgin, USA

Abstract

This research presents reflections from focus group discussions with childcare providers and parents of preschoolers in one African American community situated within a large Midwestern city in the United States. The purpose of this study was to examine parents’ and childcare providers’ conceptions of literacy and language related to school readiness. During these conversations it became clear that both parents and providers engage in a number of practices to prepare children to use the standard variety of English privileged by mainstream schooling. Participants verbalize the dual importance of encouraging all language development for young children while explicitly teaching the uses of language as situated in a larger social context. Both parents and providers discuss the need to build a bridge for children between the English varieties used at home and the standard English valued by schools. In light of these findings, the authors problematize common conceptions of ‘school readiness’ as unidirectional and discuss implications for children entering school settings where language varieties are undervalued.

Keywords

Adult/child talk, community literacy, early childhood, ecological perspective, home and school discourses, home–school practices, language development, language use

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Directed Task 4

Create a **word bank** that you can add to throughout this module.
Start with the following...

Term	Meaning
Empirical research	
Theoretical research	
Qualitative data	
Quantitative data	

*Add other terms you come across
during your readings*

