

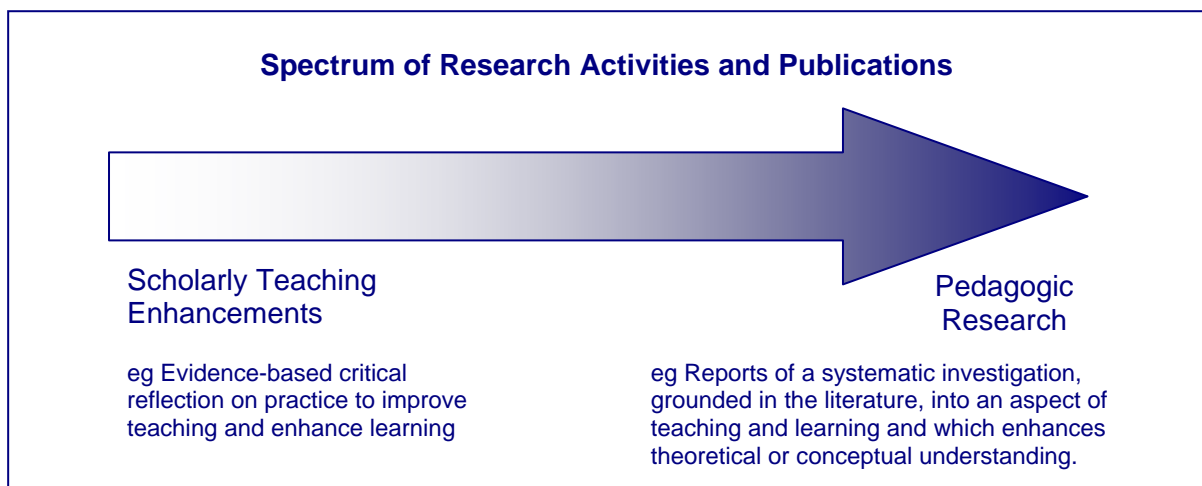
What is Pedagogy?

Essentially pedagogy is about teaching and who is taught (Walker, 2006). However, pedagogy is a contested term (Cannon, 2001). Stierer and Antoniou define pedagogy as 'the processes and relationships of learning and teaching'. (2004: 277). Booth on the other hand uses pedagogy "to signify particular sorts of meetings between students, teachers and knowledge, where there is an intention to learn. Pedagogy is less encompassing than 'education' which can include institutions, political and professional regulations, and the needs and demands of society, as well as pedagogy." (2004:22) Some people prefer to use the term androgogy to describe the education of undergraduates, who are, of course, adults (Brookfield, 1986, Knowles, 1984, Smith, 1996; 1999).

Doing Pedagogic Research

Doing pedagogic research means using various research methods to understand and investigate how best to enhance teaching and students' learning. It means being aware of 'the teaching and learning literature', relating what occurs to what is understood by good practice and what is suitable in a particular context. The research methods used can be qualitative (eg interviews, focus groups) or quantitative (eg questionnaires) or a mixture of both. You may decide to draw on different methodologies in designing your research and analysing your data.

As suggested by the figure below, there is a broad spectrum of research articles that you can engage with in order to examine your practices and improve student learning experiences. Prosser (2005) provides advice on the distinctions between these activities.



Can it count towards the RAE?

Please note that only some activities are considered RAE-able. The RAE document says that: "Pedagogic research in HE will be assessed where it meets the definition of research for the RAE. It is research which enhances theoretical and/or conceptual understanding of:

- *teaching and learning processes in HE*
- *teacher and learner experiences in HE*
- *the environment or contexts in which teaching and learning in HE take place*
- *teaching and learning outcomes in HE*
- *the relationships between these processes, outcomes and contexts."*

p.14 RAE 2008 Panel Criteria and working methods
<http://www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2006/01/docs/gintrogens.pdf>

Reports of studies providing descriptive and anecdotal accounts of teaching developments and evaluations do not constitute pedagogic research. Pedagogic research is firmly situated in its relevant literature and high quality pedagogic research makes a substantial contribution to that literature.

Why Engage in Pedagogic Research?

Recent attendees at a pedagogic research workshop for engineering academics were asked "How might engineering students benefit if their lecturers know about and do some pedagogical research?"

Their response was that *lecturers will be able to:*

- *Make informed judgements about the best ways to present material to encourage student learning.*
- *Respond appropriately if students have problems in learning*
- *Teach more effectively*
- *Evaluate and adopt, where appropriate, new teaching methods*
- *Conduct evidence-based discussions with colleagues about teaching practices, with a view to inspiring others to prioritise this area.*

A lecturer who engages in pedagogical research is in a position to optimise his/her teaching to her/his students' needs and requirements and also to go beyond the present state of pedagogical knowledge and add to it her/himself precisely in her/his own teaching field.

BOOTH, S. (2004) "Engineering education and the pedagogy of awareness". IN BAILLIE, C. & MOORE, I. (Eds.) Effective learning and teaching in engineering. London, RoutledgeFalmer.

BROOKFIELD, S. D. (1986) "Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning", Milton Keynes, UK, Open University Press.

CANNON, R. (2001) "Pedagogy: a point of view". Teaching in Higher Education, 6, 415-419.

KNOWLES, M. (1984) "Andragogy in action", San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

PROSSER, M. (2005) "Supporting the Student Experience: a scholarly approach". Academy Exchange, 2, Autumn. 8-9.

SMITH, M. K. (1996; 1999) "Andragogy", the encyclopaedia of informal education.

STIERER, B. & ANTONIOU, M. (2004) "Are there distinctive methodologies for pedagogic research in higher education?" Teaching in Higher Education, 9, 275-285.

WALKER, M. (2006) "Higher Education Pedagogies: A Capabilities Approach", Maidenhead, Berkshire, UK, Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.



engCETL is keen to develop a community of pedagogic research practice in the East Midlands and provide opportunities for those starting out to learn more.

We are actively involved in the East Midlands Pedagogic Research Network, which exists for CETL staff working in pedagogic or educational research. For more information visit <http://www.eastmidlandscetls.ac.uk/pren/>

We have also held several workshops to develop and share practice.

Want to know more?

As a starting point to read up more about learning and teaching theory for engineers see the Higher Education Academy Engineering Subject Centre's quick review at <http://www.engsc.ac.uk/er/theory/index.asp>

For a wider view, Mike Healey of the University of Gloucestershire has put together a list of references focusing on concepts, theories and methods. These and other lists of references can be found at <http://resources.glos.ac.uk/ceal/resources/litreview.cfm>

Or visit engCETL to talk to one of our Pedagogic Research Associates.