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How can teacher educators
encourage teachers to engage with
research?

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What is research engagement?

Engage *with* research (e.g., read scholarly articles, attend conference talks on research)

Engage *in* research (e.g., practitioner inquiry in the classroom)



1. Teachers can be helped to broaden their conception of research.

What is research?

Consider the following teacher scenarios and decide whether you would classify them as:

- Definitely research
- Probably research
- Probably not research
- Definitely not research

(Borg, 2007)



Scenario #1

A teacher noticed that an activity she used in class did not work well. She thought about this after the lesson and made some notes in her diary. She then tried something different next lesson and this new activity was successful.

- Definitely research
- Probably research
- Probably not research
- Definitely not research



Scenario #2

A teacher read about a new approach to teaching writing and decided to try it out. He video-recorded his lessons, collected examples of his students' writing and analysed this information. He then presented his results to his colleagues at a staff meeting.

- Definitely research
- Probably research
- Probably not research
- Definitely not research



Scenario #3

Two teachers were interested in each other's approaches to teaching. They observed each other's classes once a week for three months and made notes about similarities and differences they perceived in the two approaches. They discussed their notes and together wrote an article about what they had learned from the experience for the national teaching association newsletter.

- Definitely research
- Probably research
- Probably not research
- Definitely not research

For me, research is basically finding out something that I either have an interest in and I didn't know about before, or just learning something new about my students (Coombe, 2018)



Empirical research is the **systematic approach** to finding **answers to questions** (Hatch & Farhady, 1982)

- Asking appropriate questions
- Employing systematic approaches
- Generating possible answers



2. Research engagement can be a form of professional development for all teachers.

Research writ large – the idea of having a hypothesis and being able to generalise – is not suitable for teachers who might need a very specific application of research. I think **the core of research is available to everybody (Graves, 2018)**

Teacher-initiated research is research *by* teachers *for* teachers and their learners (Smith, 2018)

Teacher research statements

Consider the following statements about teacher research and decide to what extent you agree with them and why:

- Fully agree
- Mostly agree
- Mostly disagree
- Fully disagree



Statement #1

Effective teaching cannot dispense with empirically-based knowledge. To do so would amount to accepting (legitimising even!) the fossilisation of the profession in conservative practices, derived from our collective experience (Kostoulas, 2018)

- Fully agree
- Mostly agree
- Mostly disagree
- Fully disagree



Statement #2

Research is another way of **generating knowledge for themselves**... Research allows teachers to take a different stance. They become learners of what they're doing as well as the protagonists of it (Graves, 2018)

- Fully agree
- Mostly agree
- Mostly disagree
- Fully disagree



Statement #3

Research enables me to know **what's going on here so that I can...solve problems in my classroom, teach more effectively, and achieve better outcomes for my students (Nunan, 2018)**

- Fully agree
- Mostly agree
- Mostly disagree
- Fully disagree



Q & A

3. Teacher educators can help develop teachers' attitudes, beliefs and skills in relation to research.

Exemplary empirical research starts with excellent questions...

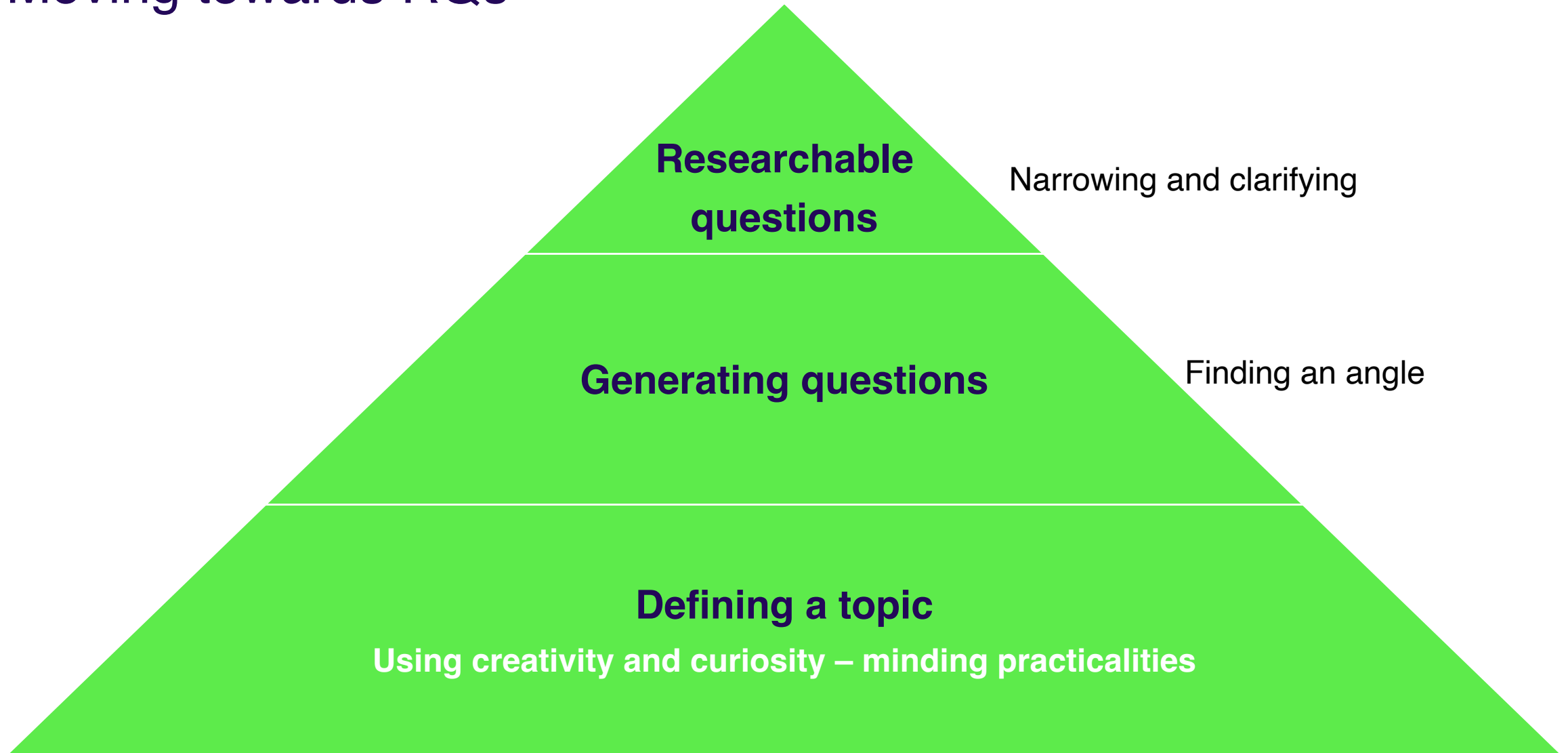
A good RQ is the foundation of a study. It should:

- Define the investigation
- Set the boundaries of your study
- Provide direction

But good RQs take time to formulate well and it is not a straight-forward journey...

Moving towards RQs

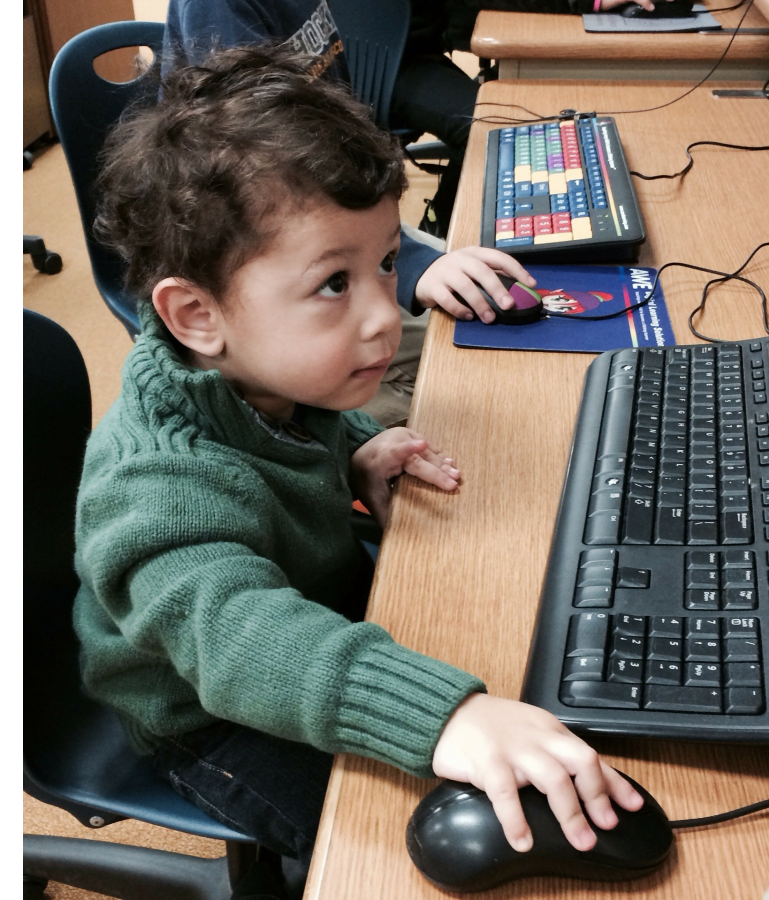
(O'Leary, 2017)



Narrowing the scope

Help teachers to:

1. Consider their personal experiences – What puzzles them?
2. Turn a familiar idea on its head
3. Think about a gap in the existing literature
4. Think creatively about their topic – use metaphor, images, etc.
5. Create a mind-map to look for connections
6. Think of any cases of uniqueness/exceptions
7. Think of what they do not know



Formulating researchable questions

Researchable questions can generate ideas, open up pathways and **can be answered through the research process!**

They are also **do-able in practical terms given time, financial, ethical and expertise issues.**

Formulating effective RQs

Help teachers to come up with good questions.

- Interesting and worth investigating
- Interconnected meaningfully
- Avoid loaded terms, don't make assumptions, and set appropriate boundaries and focus
- Unambiguous wording
- Binary questions are limiting
- 'Why' questions cannot be answered objectively. First ask what?, how? and then why?



Let's pull apart a bad RQ

Do girls learn languages more easily than boys?

- Too broad – needs narrowing down
- Which girls and boys? All...? Cultures, age, social class, level of proficiency, schooling context, etc.
- Types of boys/girls to be compared
- More easily – in what ways?
- In what skill areas?
- Yes/no answer format



Key takeaways

- 1. Teachers can be helped to broaden their conception of research.**
- 2. Research engagement can be a form of professional development for all teachers.**
- 3. Teacher educators can help develop teachers' attitudes, beliefs and skills in relation to research.**

Thank you!

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