

<p>Institution: University of Cambridge</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: UoA29</p>
<p>Title of case study: Improving the teaching of English in secondary schools</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) Professor Cooper's research on Shakespeare and Chaucer, and the links between them, has fed directly into the continuing professional development (CPD) she undertakes with secondary school teachers, raising their interest and changing their practice. The CPD is delivered through lectures and workshops supported through The Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI), an independent charity created by the Prince of Wales. Teachers have reported excellent outcomes as a result of Professor Cooper's research programme, most notably a renewed enthusiasm both for them and their students arising from their use of this rich course material in their teaching, and its introduction of new ways to engage students. Teachers also reported that as a result of undertaking Professor Cooper's courses the attainment of their students improved.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) Professor Cooper has held the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance English at the University of Cambridge since 2004. This combination of early modern and Middle English as her research base is unusual in itself leading as it does to Cooper studying four hundred years of literature. Most scholars are still cautious about crossing the invisible boundary between the medieval and early modern periods and Cooper's approach has yielded unique insights. Her research is particularly associated with the study of romance, and the continuities between medieval and renaissance writing, culture and thought.</p> <p>Cooper's pre-2008 publications concentrated on Chaucer and the Middle Ages, but the more recent work cited here and used in the teacher development exercises concentrates on the massive impact that late medieval culture was still exercising on the Elizabethan age, not least Shakespeare, most notably in her major study of <i>Shakespeare and the Medieval World</i> (2010). This examined how continuations of medieval culture into the early modern period forged Shakespeare's development as a dramatist and poet. The study showed that, although Shakespeare is thought to epitomise the English renaissance, his world was still largely a medieval one. <i>Shakespeare and the Medieval World</i> demonstrated how medieval culture pervaded his life and work, from his childhood to the dramatisation of Chaucer in <i>The Two Noble Kinsmen</i> three years before his death. The institutions of the world he lived in, like its topography, were still largely as they had been in the Middle Ages. The richly layered language he spoke and wrote had been forged over the centuries since the Norman Conquest. The genres in which he wrote, not least historical tragedy, love-comedy and romance, were medieval inventions. A high proportion of his plays have medieval origins and he kept returning to Chaucer.</p> <p>The research shows, for example, that while the mixing of tragedy and comedy found in Shakespeare's works would have incited bitter hostility among Elizabethan theorists such as Sidney, who expected drama to keep them separate and obey the unities of time, space and action specified by Italian commentators on the recently-discovered <i>Poetics</i> of Aristotle, and widely ascribed to him, Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights deliberately adopted the freedom that medieval principles of theatre allowed and that academic criticism resisted. The research examined relationships between the trajectory of fortune and the structure of tragedy, again concluding that Shakespeare's 'vision of tragedy' was grounded in medieval ideas and concepts even if he then chose to reject them.</p> <p>In 'Poetic Fame' (2010) Cooper shifted focus back on Chaucer by showing how critical attitudes to him changed and developed in the course of the sixteenth century, as the grounds of our own understanding of his work were established. 'Choosing Poetic Fathers: The English Problem' (2011) is a study of how Chaucer re-set the English tradition of poetry by locating himself so firmly in the Classical and European traditions (as the first vernacular poet to do so.)</p>
<p>3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references) 1 Helen Cooper, <i>Shakespeare and the Medieval World</i> (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010).</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

The reviewer in *Shakespeare* described this as 'a very impressive, very important book, whose range and – one hopes – impact extends far beyond the rather modest introductory series in which it appears... a very important book'. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17450918.2012.705885>

2 —————, 'Choosing Poetic Fathers: The English Problem', in *Medieval and Early Modern Authorship*, ed. Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne, Swiss Papers in English Language and Literature 25 (Tübingen: Narr, 2011), pp. 29-49 (Chaucer a central figure).

3 —————, 'Poetic Fame', in *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, Twenty First Century Approaches vol. 2, ed. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 361-78.

All outputs can be supplied by the University of Cambridge on request.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Professor Cooper's research on Shakespeare and Chaucer, and the links that she has demonstrated between them, has fed directly into the **continuing professional development (CPD) she undertakes with secondary school teachers**, with the aim of using this research to raise their interest and to assist in changing their practice. Teachers have reported **improved attainment** as a result.

Lectures and workshops based on this work have been delivered by Professor Cooper since 2007 through The Prince's Teaching Institute (PTI), an independent charity created by the Prince of Wales. The PTI aims to help 'teachers to rediscover their love of their subject' and improve their teaching of it. [1] Professor Cooper presents her research to audiences of between 30 and 60 teachers and students. These have included lectures on *Hamlet*, 2008, 2010; Chaucer, 2009; Shakespeare's theory of drama, 2010; *Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice*, 2011; *King Lear* and *As You Like It*, 2011; Shakespeare on Comedy and Tragedy, 2013. Sections from *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* on the development of the language and of metrics from Middle English forwards (ch. 1, pp. 34-41), generic inclusiveness (ch. 2, especially pp. 42-54), stagecraft (ch. 3), the tragedy of fortune (ch. 5, especially *Hamlet* and *Lear*), comedy and romance (ch. 6), and Shakespeare's Chaucer (ch. 7), have also been used in preparation of PTI material for her lectures on both Shakespeare and Chaucer.

Through the repackaging of Cooper's research for classroom application, teachers are offered alternative ways of thinking about:

- genre and generic freedom;
- the freeing up of drama from the limitations of character and style, from high tragedy or middle/low comedy to a drama based on all of humankind
- new ways of thinking etymologically about Shakespeare's language, and how he deploys its various historical layers with their different kinds of connotations;
- how to integrate Elizabethan, and by extension modern, ideas of stage practice and performance with contemporary theoretical frameworks.

The programme is evaluated regularly by the PTI who have provided data to demonstrate impact on teachers' professional and personal development, and on student outcomes. (Data were gathered from the 2011 and 2012 cohorts.) The immediate beneficiaries of Professor Cooper's research are those teachers who have been on the programme. Whilst it has not always been possible to isolate the specific response to Professor Cooper's input, it is clear that her work is well received by teachers. Typical comments are as follows: 'Helen Cooper's lecture was informative, challenging and engaging. The course itself has re-ignited my enthusiasm for the subject'; [2] and 'Helen Cooper was genuinely inspirational — a legend!' [3]

A number of teachers have also reported that the materials provided by Professor Cooper are useful to classroom teaching: 'Helen Cooper's lecture was a *delight*, really clear and stimulating. Very strong too in terms of practical application of ideas in the classroom' [2]. Another writes: 'One

of the projects that I've undertaken as part of PTI involves a Shakespeare club, and this is the area where I plan to expand for the next three years — so a lot of the things you said about “playing” at Shakespeare really struck a chord with that side of things. ... It's really energised me ... to hear your ideas yesterday and apply them back to teaching'. [4] And another: 'I really found that I came away from the course having learnt a lot about Chaucer. This will enable me to deliver this knowledge to my students; they will be the ones who benefit.' [5]

It is these students and school pupils who are the ultimate beneficiaries of the research. PTI evaluation data shows that for years 2009 to 2011, between 91 and 98 per cent of teachers who participated in the programmes agreed with the statement '*I believe that within six months this approach will be having an impact on my pupils.*' [6] There is evidence that the lectures enabled teachers to raise the pupils' attainment. In a substantial report on the impact of the PTI's CPD on classroom practice, one long-serving teacher (former Head of English, now Lead Teacher for Gifted and Talented Students at his Community College) described the experience in his school as follows:

The AQA Spec. B orders for Literature A level require a coursework response comprising of two essays, one on modern tragedy and one on Shakespearean tragedy. Both pieces must explore how the plays adhere to or differ from tragic convention ... Professor Cooper's lecture directly informed many of their responses and was frequently named in their reference lists. Although the lecture was about *Hamlet*, many of its ideas were also useful to students studying other plays....

ALPS is an external analysis system that seeks to compare the effectiveness of teaching by comparing the 'value added' to students from like schools.... As can be seen, the students achieved very highly...

As with GCSE results, it is impossible to prove a causal link, but as can be seen there is a clear jump from 2009 (before the use of the Cambridge materials on tragedy) to 2010, and this jump was maintained in 2011. [5]

Another PTI Evaluation reports that in 2011–12 1,075 teachers attended a PTI professional development event (880 in 2010–11), and some 2,560 teachers and their students attended a special series of lectures at the Royal Institution in June/July 2012 to mark 10 Years since the first Summer School. As a result, approximately 145,000 pupils benefitted from the PTI's activities in the period under review. [7]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] <http://www.princes-ti.org.uk/AboutUs/>

[2] Letter from person 1 (Co-Director of the PTI), including PTI feedback, 24 November 2011.

[3] Letter from person 1, including PTI feedback, 1 July 2013.

[4] E-mail from person 2 (Teacher, Heathland School), 5 July 2011.

[5] Impact of Cambridge University Academic Impact into Prince's Teaching Institute Teachers' CPD on Classroom Practice – A Case Study: English Department, Sawtry Community College. (nd)

[6] E-mail from person 3 (Senior Operations Manager, PTI), 23 Oct. 2012.

[7] The Prince's Teaching Institute. Trustees' Report for the year ended 30 September 2012 (Prince's Teaching Institute, 2013).