INTUITION RESEARCH



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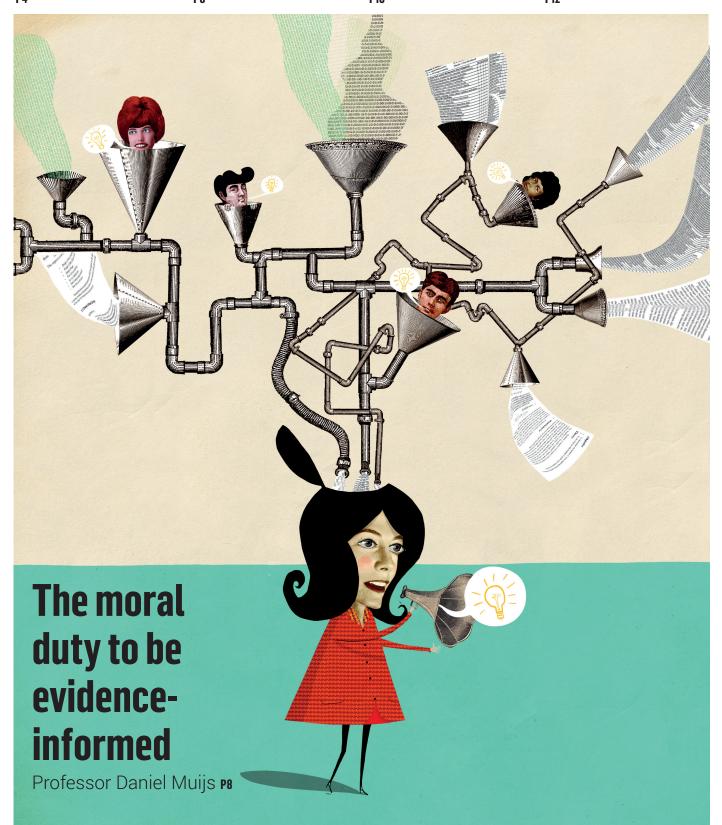
An inTuition supplement for practitioners interested and engaged in education research

Spring 2019 set.et-foundation.co.uk

Using research in a work-based context

Advanced Teacher Status research Addressing FE's 'wicked problems'

Investigations in e-learning



RESEARCH IS SO VITAL FOR US ALL

Practitioner research has had a life-changing effect on teachers, their networks and their learners. Its importance cannot be underestimated. By Lynn Hart

recently joined the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) with responsibility for providing the strategic and operational leadership of professional development programmes. My previous roles in senior leadership, quality enhancement and teacher training, and, of course, starting out all those years ago as a teacher in the FE sector, have all been informed and influenced by research and evidence-based practice.

Being asked to write this foreword was both an honour and a challenge. It gave me the opportunity to reflect on the importance of research, regardless of the role in the FE sector.

In my current and previous roles I have been impressed by the life-changing effect of practitioner research on teachers, their networks and ultimately their learners. The value and volume of practitioner research within the sector is inspiring. ETF activities and projects, such as the Outstanding Teaching Learning and Assessment (OTLA), Professional Exchange Networks, Teach Too, Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS), and Advanced Teacher Status (ATS), support this.

My own practitioner research, as part of an MA in Education many years ago, informed my working life. My dissertation, on mentoring and coaching, led to a clearer understanding of how research supports the capacity building needed in the FE sector. I wish that the ETF's Practitioner Research Programme had existed all

More recently, while leading an ETF OTLA Collaborative Project, I witnessed advanced practitioners, and the practitioners they supported, finding the 'space' to develop research-informed strategies through supported experiments.

The importance of all types or practitioner research on self-efficacy, development of professional identity and, more widely, on the institutional culture cannot be underestimated.

Increasingly, leaders of learning in FE are looking to foster a 'learning culture', driving capacity and succession planning for our sector for many years to come. This features heavily within the ETF Strategy, where leadership programmes seek to provide support, networking, and of course research-informed practice for leaders of all levels.

How refreshing it is to see this philosophy underpinning the proposed Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF), which is currently out to consultation, where pedagogical knowledge features as an expectation and judgement of the quality of learning (see page 12 in your main inTuition).

Exploring the new EIF caused me to consider the ETF Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers, and the degree to which they reflect practitioner aspirations. So, I conclude by suggesting that we celebrate the Professional Standards' fifth birthday and applaud their aspirations, in which practitioners aspire to "develop deep and critically informed knowledge and understanding in theory and practice, applying theoretical understanding of effective practice in teaching, learning and assessment drawing on research and other evidence".

Lynn Hart is executive director of professional development at the Education and Training Foundation.



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DIGITAL To read unabridged versions of the articles in this Research Supplement visit: set.et-foundation.co.uk/intuition-35spring-research-supplement

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membership.communications@ etfoundation.co.uk The Society for Education and Training, 157-197 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 9SP Editor: Alan Thomson alan@createpublishing.uk.com

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EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF RESEARCH WITH A RANGE OF PRACTITIONERS

Our supplement looks at everything from apprenticeships to inclusion and motivation, and asks: How can we apply research to practice effectively to make a difference to learners? By Gail Lydon, Lorna Lindsay, Colin Forrest

elcome to the 2019 in Tuition Research Supplement. It has been curated by a team of SET members with a wide range of perspectives and approaches to research. Our inspiration for this curation theme came from the input made by David Russell, the Education and Training Foundation's (ETF) chief executive, to the 2018 ETF Practitioner Research Conference.

David said: "What really matters is the application of research to practice... because, in truth, neither practitioner research nor big research, in its own right, makes any difference to learners. When teachers understand and apply research - big or small to proven effect, that's what makes the difference."

We took the views of practitioners as our starting point by probing their perceptions of the impact of research on teaching and learning. It is important to note that the notion of impact is contested. Some understand research impact in terms of hard data, such as student retention and grades, whereas others see it as being more concerned with 'softer' indicators, such as increased capacity for, and confidence in, research, and in belonging to a research community.

Lorna Lindsay, a sector expert on apprenticeship and technical reforms, presents a suite of research impacts located in employerfacing, work-based settings. Impacts on learners are explored, as is the interplay between research and the development of professional expertise and skills.

Implications for policy developments relating to an academic/ vocational divide also emerge. Lorna also comments on research impacts that have their origin in digital learning, including opportunities for personalisation and its relevance in enhancing employer engagement.

We explore inclusion, mental health and resilience as the third setting where our participants highlight examples of research impact. We accessed a rich insight into the relationship between research and enhancing staff and learner well-being, learner engagement and motivation.

Gail Lydon is one of the first in the country to achieve Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) and she presents a collection of research impacts linked to attaining mastery. The use of theory, reflective practice, action research, and critical reflection all emerge

In their contributions, Suzanne Savage, Professor Vicky Duckworth and Emily Barrell all describe their own personal research journeys. In doing so they also reflect on how

their perspectives on research have the potential to enhance engagement with research in others through, for example, #REimagineFE and the Transforming Lives research.

Professor Daniel Muijs, Ofsted's head of research, highlights several implications for those undertaking research in, and on, the further education and training sector. This includes the importance of engaging critically with research evidence and some of the barriers associated with this. Daniel signposts the importance of brokers and mediators in these contexts.



We accessed a rich insight into the relationship between research and enhancing staff and learner well-being, learner engagement and motivation.

The contributions of Dr Gary Husband, president of the Association for Research in Post-Compulsory Education (ARPCE), and Sam Jones, at Bedford College, build on Daniel's point in illustrating the significance of networks and collaboration. In doing so, Gary and Sam build a powerful case for research.

Our concluding piece draws together the research impacts from our contributors. In doing so, we acknowledge that the use of research is not universal across all parts of the sector, and explore and address the barriers experienced by colleagues working with independent training providers in particular.

We go on to blend perspectives from school settings with those of the contributors to make explicit what the key enablers may be for enhancing the use of research findings in further education. The British Education Research Association's (BERA) exploration of 'close to practice research'

Unabridged supplement contributions, with full references, are available on the SET website (see link at the top of this page).

Gail Lydon, Lorna Lindsay and Colin Forrest are curators of the inTuition Research Supplement





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WORK-BASED RESEARCH MAKES SUCH A DIFFERENCE FOR VOCATIONAL TEACHERS

Using research in a work-based context, day to day, can help practitioners develop and improve their practice, says Lorna Lindsay.

esearch should not be seen as an exclusive club for college or higher education institutions: you don't have to be in an academic environment to identify personal development through research.

That is why we interviewed practitioner researchers based in independent training providers as well as those working closely in delivering apprenticeships, traineeships and study programmes.

Louise Ford's piece on using context in vocational teaching (see right), in which she developed a teaching model - what she calls The 3C Approach, Using Concept to Convey Context - has been adopted by her organisation to fully embed maths and English in all vocational provision.

The Education and Training Foundation's (ETF) Outstanding Teaching and Learning Assessment (OTLA) apprenticeship projects engage providers not previously involved in practitioner research. The projects demonstrate that there is real value in raising awareness of the Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers, even though some may say that not all elements are relevant in work-based learning.

The North East & Cumbria OTLA report identified that there was a consistent commitment to support participants in achieving the Professional Standards, demonstrating a strong awareness of the need for practitioner-researchers to articulate achievement.

There is still much work to be done to encourage apprenticeship tutors to understand and adopt the standards and see the relevance of practitioner research. The wide range of OTLA projects enables



the sharing of good practice through a community of practice and publication on the Excellence Gateway. Resources on the Gateway include a free webinar that can help dispel the myths around research being a heavyweight, academic-only pursuit.

The final report of the ETF-funded emfec project in partnership with Nottingham Trent University, Provider Led Research Project Reviews 2016, states that the goal of outstanding delivery in workbased learning is to "provide delivery staff with the opportunity to consider their own practice and the learner journey, and use this to aid destination-focused planning in their delivery".

The following pieces outline some key elements of practitioner-based research in a work-based learning environment. Full-length versions of these abbreviated articles can be found on the SET website: set.et-foundation. co.uk/intuition-35-spring-researchsupplement



Lorna Lindsay is an ETF associate and director of Magna ETA Ltd, a training and development and roject management company.

A CONCEPTUAL ROUTE TO UNDERSTANDING MATHS

By Louise Ford

As part of my Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) programme, I conducted research into the benefits of applied contextualised maths in learning within post-16 study programmes and apprenticeships, and it had a profound effect on the way I teach. It has given me validation for embedding vocational context and continues to boost confidence.

> I developed a teaching model which captured the 'milestones' encountered by learners when learning a new concept, aided by the use of contextualised learning. I call my model The 3C Approach -Using Concept to Convey Context. This technique helps learners bridge the gap between the practical activity and the

theoretical maths involved.

I am now leading a project in my organisation which fully embeds maths and English across the vocational provision.

This project is being conducted by a team of vocational and educational tutor champions. It ensures we are successfully providing a learning journey that encompasses cutting-edge vocational education that is sought after by today's employers.

The approach has enabled learners to recognise the value and relevance of mathematical skills within their profession and has made them more aware of their own ability to achieve success.

This research has begun to address one of the main areas that teachers are faced with in a vocational setting: to what extent does contextualising learning work, and does this creative way of teaching provide any additional benefits for our learners?



Louise Ford is an English, maths and ICT tutor for PM Training and is an undergraduate in Human Bio sciences. She was among the first cohort of practitioners to complete ATS (see inTuition page 24 for more details).

PRACTITIONER RESEARCH **OFFERS A CHANCE TO EXPLORE**

By Louise Doyle

There are 10 Outstanding Teaching learning and Assessment (OTLA) apprenticeship practitioner research projects being conducted by a range of organisations, including colleges, independent providers, local adult education, and end-point assessment organisations. While the individual focus for each project differs, the collective aim is the pursuit of new knowledge which can inform outstanding apprenticeship delivery. Their outputs and research case studies will be published in March.

Good practitioner research is most concerned with creating reflective space to explore existing problems and challenges, consider why they may be occurring and test new ideas that may result in a different outcome to what we currently experience. It can be an individual pursuit or, in the case of the projects, one that engages a group of practitioners undertaking research in their work context.

Here are some practical considerations that can be used to support others to undertake meaningful research in their own setting:

- 1. Open the conversation with the organisation and peers, and address insecurities with those who see research as being an intellectual activity only undertaken by academics.
- 2. There is a challenge in defining the research question, but it should be seen as a learning opportunity; moving a statement of intended output to one of inquiry.
- 3. Set realistic expectations for the time, effort and energy to undertake research.
- **4.** Use the ETF Professional Standards as a CPD baseline to identify and review individual development; consider how they can inform HR practice.
- **5.** Review the plethora of data, publications and information available to inform or support the research brief.
- 6. The confidence to fail is critical to encourage exploration without limits. Too much focus on the end result risks research becoming a vehicle for tactical change.



ouise Doyle is a senior associate with the Strategic Development Network and has been heavily involved in the Future Apprenticeships programme. She is currently a mentor on the ETF OTLA programme supporting apprenticeships

DETAILED STUDY OF CURRICULUM CONTENT AIMS TO IMPROVE THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

As part of the University College Birmingham's (UCB) Curriculum 2020 project, four of the constituent schools - Business, Food, Sport & Creative Services, and Education - have undertaken a careful analysis of curriculum content, consulted with leading industry specialists on the demands and challenges of modern-day industry practices, and conducted a rigorous internal skills audit across each of the teaching teams to develop a comprehensive and targeted CPD plan.

The key driver of Curriculum 2020 is the impact the project will have on student experience, satisfaction and, importantly, the competitive advantage of the students when they enter employment.

It is hoped that learners will be better prepared for real, current challenges in the workplace as the teaching staff will be acutely informed through strengthened professional development and research findings from industry.

The Curriculum 2020 project will evolve throughout the remainder of the academic year. The effective collation and dissemination of research undertaken by staff in industry will be carefully managed to ensure all information is effectively analysed and utilised.



Amy Hollier is director of teaching and learning enhancement at University College Birmingham (UCB). She has an MBA and is a Principal Fellow of Advance HE, formerly the Higher Education Academy. UCB's Curriculum 2020 project, which aims to improve their approach to the delivery of technical education, is supported by the Education and Training Foundation's (ETF) Teach Too initiative.

ACHIEVING ATS OPENED THE DOORS TO THE POSSIBILITIES OF ACTION RESEARCH

By Dr Stavroula Bibila

During the Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) programme that I completed recently, my mentor, colleagues, students and trainees helped me see that action research involves taking a good look at the past to establish ourselves in the present, so that we can further our knowledge of who we are, and more importantly, of where we wish to be in the future.

Achieving ATS gave me the opportunity to become an action researcher. It would have been hypocritical if I was to advocate to apprentices the power of action research without having witnessed it first-hand. It gives me pleasure to think I can now share my reflective practice experiences with apprentices and professionals from a variety of sectors.

The ATS unlocked teaching and research possibilities, including searching for, discussing and writing about how to link personal growth, professional development, and professional and apprenticeship standards. It gave me the chance to become an advanced professional and offers teachers the chance to reflect, cooperate and make changes professionally. I am fortunate to be involved in a work-based academic project and look forward to the next leg of my professional journey.



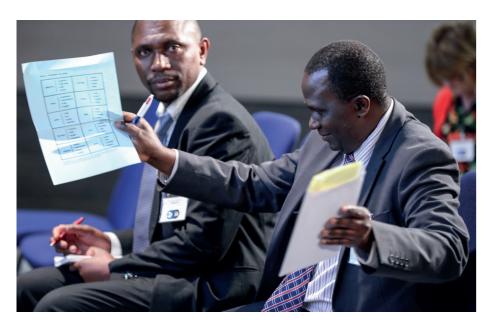
Dr Stavroula Bibila is a work-based degree apprenticeship tutor at Leeds Trinity University. Using her previous experience gained in cooperative development (CD) whilst working on her PhD, Stavroula was able to introduce this concept to her colleagues and trainees to cultivate a non-judgmental work environment among peers.











SHARING THE INSIGHTS FROM RESEARCH WORK

'FE colleges have led the way in listening and responding to the voices of their students and of local employers. but there are other voices that deserve to be heard: the voices of tutors. Politicians are convinced of the efficacy of student voices in improving TLA, yet they remain deaf to the voices of those who have the most power to enhance the quality of TLA: educators.' -

Coffield, F. (2017) Will the Leopard Change its Spots? London: UCL IOF Press.

On these pages Gail Lydon shares research findings from practitioners/managers working across the sector who were among the first to gain Advanced Teacher Status (ATS).

The ATS portfolio must demonstrate mastery in teaching and/or training, and one element of this is the production of two case studies or a piece of research. These varied responses to research – their own and the research they read and engaged with during the process – ably demonstrate the power of research to impact on practice, learner outcomes and providers.

The authors come from different backgrounds, work in different contexts and have varied experience of engaging with research, but all have used the ATS process to support their own research journey.



Gail Lydon is a Fellow of SET. She holds ATS and a Masters in Education degree. She is an experienced researcher and Regional Specialist Lead for the ETF.

BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN PEOPLE

By Elaine Battams

Undertaking the Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) and the research project proved to be quite a journey, not least because my advanced learning practitioner (ALP) role came under threat of redundancy. During the interview that secured my role, I discussed my research findings and made suggestions to develop the ALP role.

As Didau (2015, What if everything you knew about education was wrong?) points out, we must be careful making assumptions in teaching and learning: "Just because we have encountered something before, doesn't mean we can't discover new depth and meaning to it." When stretching and challenging others, it is often about using what they have and moving it in another direction.

What I have learnt is that it is vitally important to get to know the person and find out what will help them to engage and develop in their own way. I considered how to support my colleagues more effectively by empowering them to try out different ways of thinking and different strategies. The research helped me to do this by finding out staff perceptions and what they wanted in terms of support.

The early signs are that staff are becoming more receptive to support, and less threatened by working with an ALP.

I see the way forward within the college as developing a culture in which teachers feel that they can have support on any aspect of their work, not just when there is a problem. They must feel that it is all right to make mistakes as long as they learn from them, and there must be a move away from a blame culture. Teachers must be encouraged to become more exploratory and reflective and to know that there are ALPs to help and guide them.

Our principal designate has given very supportive feedback on my recommendations and is supporting a second cycle of action research. I am hoping that there will be some positive outcomes, with teaching staff feeling more supported and valued.



Elaine Battams is an advanced earning practitioner at Barnfield College.

GAINING TRUST WITH COLLABORATION

By Joyce Chen

My small-scale research investigated how a collaborative method of professional learning might have an impact on teaching and learning in the context of FE colleges.

In order for people to develop, they need to feel good about themselves and to be motivated to change. This reflection prompted me to look at how using joint practice development (JPD), which encourages lecturers to work collaboratively to share ideas, and to plan, implement and evaluate together, might help to improve outcomes for teaching, learning and assessment.

The JPD model (Fielding et al, 2005) enabled me to gain trust and build relationship with colleagues and managers whom I work with in the Faculty of Technology at the College of West Anglia. There was an improvement in staff morale and motivation. Colleagues felt that they were supported with mutual respect and were able to discuss ideas and explore strategies together without feeling obliged to do so.

Reports from external consultants

showed improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Our college self-assessment report 2017-2018 shows the overall judgement on teaching, learning and assessment changed from 'requires improvement' to 'good'. The key summary from the report states: "Staff are confident to debate and discuss ideas and strategies to continually improve teaching, learning and assessment." Ofsted's 2019 report judged the college 'good' overall.

I continue my journey of engaging lecturers in professional development and learning. I know that by using JPD within the faculty I am working with, a professional learning community has developed. Although it is still early days, with time and consistent implementation of JPD, this community will grow stronger and become sustainable and influential.



Joyce Chen is a lecturer in ofessional development and eacher education at the College of West Anglia. She is doing an MPhil,

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE IN PRISON: LEARNERS' VIEWS

By Dr Alison Drew

One of my motivations in undertaking Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) was to take the opportunity to take a step back from my practice and devote some time to reading, research and reflection.

My role with St Giles Trust involves training prisoners (peer workers) to deliver professional advice and support services for other prisoners. I have been encouraging my learners to become reflective practitioners in their advice and support roles.

By visiting different prisons and interviewing learners in focus groups, I could see the benefits of a variety of methods of reflection. Themes that emerged from the focus groups related to both the challenges and the benefits of reflection for peer workers in prison.

Research brought to light the benefits of reflective practice for learners' personal development and well-being, provided they are encouraged to identify their strengths as well as areas for further learning. The focus group discussions suggested that using a model such as Gibbs' reflective

cycle was helpful for learners, preventing unproductive rumination about incidents and encouraging objectivity.

My own reflective practice has been informed through critical reflection, with its emphasis on illuminating and potentially challenging assumptions about power relations. Power imbalance is inevitable in prison, but there are still possibilities for learners to experience empowerment as they train to assist others through advice and support.

My research has also been an impetus for discussion with colleagues, in prison and community-based projects. Those teaching in the community have felt that the findings apply to learners in community as well as prison settings, as those in the community deal with similar challenges and share the same need for effective self-care in work placements.



Dr Alison Drew achieved a PhD in nistory and worked in the US in criminal justice in a voluntary capacity. She now works in women's risons for St Giles Trust.

'WHAT DO YOU ALREADY KNOW?' – A STARTING POINT

By Sallyann Wright

During my ATS I completed two case studies to consider Dylan Wiliam's challenge: "Under what circumstances does this work?" I focused on the effect of building learner confidence through positive verbal feedback, linked directly to GCSE English exam criteria.

My starting point was 'what you already know' and I always focused on the positive. This was very powerful. I would then support students to apply this to an English skill relevant to the exam.

This method requires the students to be familiar with the exam assessment objectives. Students explain why they have gained a mark, requiring them to analyse and justify their work.

Students composed their own authentic exam paper. They chose the texts, worded the questions and created success criteria (all in line with the exam board specifications). Their peers then shared and 'sat' these exams, and marked each other's work, thereby building confidence as they analysed the work and gave feedback.

The impacts of my research:

- Effective verbal feedback;
- Increased learner involvement;
- Improved success rates 89 per cent (national average for resit is 33 per cent);
- Transferable to colleagues within department:
- Desire to undertake further research in developing verbal feedback skills;
- Colleagues are now using this approach with other resit students.

While reading for ATS, I explored Ross McGill (2017) and Daisy Christodoulou (2014), who, inspired by Hattie's research (2008) into direct instruction, busted the myth that teacher-led instruction is passive.

I applied this theory to positive feedback and would like to further my research to raise the profile of verbal feedback and improve outcomes for students through powerful feedback that speaks to them and not at them.



Sallyann Wright is an English lecturer and Level 4 CET tutor at Dudley College.





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WHY RESEARCH IS SO VITAL FOR AN **EVIDENCE-INFORMED PROFESSION**

Learners, and society, are short-changed if our sector doesn't use the best possible evidence for its work. Being evidence-informed is a moral duty and a social justice issue, argues Professor Daniel Muijs.

ecoming evidence-informed is a moral duty. As a sector, we should make use of, and develop, the best possible evidence for what we do. If we don't, and are therefore potentially using unhelpful practices, we are short-changing our learners - and ultimately society – as we forego the benefits of the knowledge and skills those learners could have developed.

Being evidence-informed is a social justice issue. Formal education is of particular benefit to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, who are least able to draw on the resources and cultural capital of their home environment.

This issue is especially important in the further education and training sector, which is not just an engine of local and regional economies, but also an engine of social justice. When successful, the sector gives local people the

chance of meaningful employment; it targets the most disadvantaged and isolated people in the community; it insists that ordinary young people who live in social housing in Tower Hamlets or Hull or Merseyside should have the same chances as their wealthier peers from leafier suburbs.

It is therefore important that we, as practitioners, engage with evidence, both as producers and as consumers, and use the best available evidence to inform our practice.

It is not true that there is no evidence of what works in education. We know very well, for example, how we can teach people to read, or how to effectively model new skills.

And while it is true, as Dylan Wiliam (2006) has stated, that "everything works somewhere, but nothing works everywhere", it is equally true that some things work better than others, some things work in more places than others, some things work more easily than others, and some things almost always work and some things



almost never do. We need to be aware of the best evidence on effective practice in our field. But this is often hard. Much of the most robust evidence is published in academic papers. These are often too technical. Here is an excerpt from one of my papers: "IGLS estimation was used, all models converged and no non-admissible parameters were generated."

How on earth are we supposed to know what that means if we are not steeped in the jargon of specific statistical techniques?

Accessing research is often too expensive: the article that excerpt comes from can be yours for around \$6 (£4.50) for 48 hours or \$38 (£30) for the PDF.

And, in many fields, there is too much evidence. A review I did of research on self-regulated learning a few years ago turned up more than 1,500 papers written since 2000. That said, in some areas of further education and training, particularly subject-specific practices, there actually isn't enough evidence!

We also need to admit that not all the evidence we





see, or are presented with, is of high enough quality or relevance. We need to be critical consumers of research and evidence, not least to ensure that we don't continue to keep using thoroughly debunked practices such as the 'learning pyramid' or 'learning styles'. We need to know whether the evidence we are presented with is of high quality, is robust, is rigorous and is valid.

We also need to consider whether it translates to our context, which is not a given if the research has been conducted under very different circumstances. Think, for example, of the difference between a strictly controlled laboratory in which a lot of research on learning is conducted, and the rather less readily controlled workshop in which we may want to apply it.

All of this makes it hard for the busy practitioner to directly access and judge the evidence. This is why it is so important that we work with mediators and brokers who can make the link between theory and practice -for example, by providing us with more accessible summaries of findings in a particular area. This is of course where organisations such as the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) and the Society for Education and Training (SET) come in – and if you have not yet done so, I would advise you to check out the resources in *inTuition* and its Research Supplements and online communities, and access papers in SET's online research library.

One challenge for the sector is that, as mentioned earlier, the evidence is variable in quantity and quality across fields and subjects. This, alongside the need to translate evidence into context, means that as well as being consumers of research, it is often useful for us to be producers of it.

Producing research can sound daunting, but often guite small-scale practitioner research projects or miniexperiments with your own students are very helpful and relatively easy to set up. You can, for example, divide your learners into two groups to test an intervention or use an action research cycle approach to look for solutions to a particular problem.

One thing that needs considering, when you do research yourself and when you look at research done by others, is to heed the importance of ethical practice. Look at ethical guidelines, such as those of the British

Educational Research Association, before conducting research. As a profession, we need to be evidenceinformed. Research does not have the answers to all of our problems, and it always needs to be translated into our own context if it is to work.

However, where we have strong research evidence, using it is going to give us a far better chance of improving outcomes and life chances for our learners than following the outdated and discredited creeds of the snake-oil salesmen of education.



Professor Daniel Muijs is head of research at Ofsted and is a visiting professor at the University of Southampton.



- Wiliam, D (2006). Speech to the ETS Europe Breakfast Salon. Download the paper at tinyurl.com/y5fx8pk8
- British Educational Research Association (2018). Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, fourth editon www.bera.ac.uk

SIGN UP FOR THE ETF'S RESEARCH PROGRAMME AND ANNUAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

Applications are now open for the Education and Training Foundation's Practitioner Research Programme 2019.

Offered in partnership with the University of Sunderland (SUNCETT), the programme provides dedicated research support at MA and MPhil Level. The closing date for applications is 16 September 2019 (see link below).

And registrations are also open for the ETF's Annual Research Conference on 1 July.

The event, held at Mary Ward House, in London, is the highlight of the year for the fast-growing research community in further education and training. Register now to avoid disappointment via the link below https://www.et-foundation.co.uk/research/practitioner-researchsupport/

SET OFFERS A HUGE RESEARCH DATABASE

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The database, powered by EBSCO, offers exclusive online library access to articles from more than 1,300 education journals, 530 e-books and monographs, and 2,300 education-related conference papers.

Additionally, EBSCO's specially-curated selection of articles on teaching, leadership, career development and personal development will provide the latest advice and information to help you develop your employability and management skills. To access SET's online research library you need to be a member. Then it is simply a case of logging in and clicking Research under the Publications tab.

If you are not currently a SET member, join now to access the full range of member benefits. Joining is easy and only takes a few minutes at set.et-foundation.co.uk

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'THE DEDICATION THAT DRIVES US'

The three pieces on these two pages offer different examples of routes into teaching and research in the FE sector. Three professionals from the sector describe their personal research journeys and the importance of research in developing their practice. We encourage you to read the full pieces on SET's Research Supplement page (see link, top of page 11).

THE CHALLENGE OF 'WICKED PROBLEMS'

By Emily Barrell

For me, educational research is cumulative, multi-faceted and reflects a myriad of stances. Research is an opportunity to study the thinking and conclusions of others and it builds new ways of making sense of my experiences in the world. In doing that, it changes the way I think. Research enables me to make educated choices in my professionalism.

My first real experience of research, not associated with my initial teacher training, was with the Education and Training Foundation-funded SUNCETT Research Fellowship Programme, where I researched learner motivation rather badly. Despite that, it still gave me the research bug, and set me on a journey.

Just like any real-world explorer, I followed sometimes seemingly obscure research pathways until I came to interdisciplinary subjects, including policy and planning studies. It was here I came across the idea of 'wicked problems', which Rittel and Weber (1973) identified as a complex problem for which there is no one simple answer. This research piece provided a language I could use to explain the tensions I was finding as a teacher and as a leader in FE.

- 1. Identifying any one barrier for a learner would often suggest a possible solution, but multiple possible solutions were possible.
- 2. There are often unintended consequences in teaching choices, sometimes good and sometimes bad.
- 3. Good teaching professionals base their decision making not on a whim or a quality tick sheet, but on something more profound and implicit.
- 4. Decisions, even supposedly simple ones, invariably involve elements of ethics and moral choice.

Cilliers (2004 p26) argues that "ethics and choices not only abound but are intertwined" in school leadership. Leadership is not the sole domain of 'official' leaders in further education; teachers act as leaders within their classroom, and they make choices based on moral and ethical decision making. Their value systems are at the core of their work.

I have moved on from Rittel and Weber, and my doctoral thesis sits within the intertwined paradigms of complexity and pragmatism. I hope to create an alternative way of thinking about education and our sector which is responsive to the ethical and moral choices we make as professionals and gives due recognition to the consequences of the complexity of our sector. A wicked problem? Certainly, but one which research has given me the tools needed to pursue it.

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Emily Barrell is product development manager at the Workers' Educational Association (WEA).

'MY ENLIGHTENING JOURNEY FROM MIDWIFERY TO TEACHING'

By Professor Vicky Duckworth

I am the first generation of my family to go to college and university. I was brought up in a council house; I earned a wage from 13 at the local supermarket café on a Thursday and Friday evening, and all day Saturday. I loved work and earning a wage that I'd treat my mum with.

At 16, I left behind the local comprehensive school where I'd spent most of the day staring out the window. I couldn't wait to be grown up, working and earning full-time. Without any qualifications I went to the local factory on a Youth Training Scheme (YTS).

The monotony set in and I knew I had to try another way. A short bus ride away was my local further education college and here I thrived, felt valued, and felt that I belonged. I often bring to mind those teachers and feel inspired and thankful. Those teachers, with their implicit and explicit drive for social justice, turned around my life by caring, by being interested in my success. From college I moved onto training at the hospital for a career as a registered nurse and then a midwife.

My transition from midwife to teacher was mediated by a degree. I never imagined I'd do a degree, never thought about it really. But I had thought about travelling, a lot. On my travels I met people from all walks of life and through travelling we escaped our past; we were all on the same footing. We shared the same hopes and aspirations.

It made me realise that those people I imagined I'd have nothing in common with often had much the same humour, enthusiasm, and guest for life as me. Travelling and meeting so many different

people inspired me to do a degree and voluntary work in literacy. I wanted to make a difference to the lives of people who had been brought up in communities like mine. I still do.

My upbringing, along with my relationships with other educators and students, has impacted on me as an adult educator. As a critical educator/researcher, I seek to develop my practice through the research and reflect a critical pedagogy, providing a curriculum which is culturally relevant, learner driven, and socially empowering.

Critical education can open up spaces for a more equitable approach where a more level playing field is established for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. As educators I would argue that we need to recognise and address the historical and contemporary disparities that exist in the structural inequalities between the learners and their lives, for example class, gender and ethnicity. We need to find critical emancipatory spaces to give them a voice and empower them, their families and communities.

The threads of research are weaved from my childhood and I am deeply committed to challenging inequality through critical and emancipatory approaches to education, widening participation, inclusion, community action and engaging in research with a strong social justice agenda.



Professor Vicky Duckworth is a reader in education, MA co-ordinator in Post Compulsory Education and Training (PCET) and the schools university lead at Edge Hill University.

CHANGING COURSE AT A CROSSROADS TO GET IMMERSED IN RESEARCH

By Suzanne Savage

I'm still trying to get to grips with Ofsted's claim of research "paucity" in the further education and skills sector. I can confidently say that FE-based research is positively flourishing right now, and I'm proud to have made some small contributions.

My own research journey began as a teaching and learning coach at a small FE college. Governors tasked me and a colleague to increase the number of action plans completed by college lecturers. I recognised this was an opportunity to nurture deeper, authentic reflection and learning among our staff, but it would be an enormous investment of my own time to meet with and support every lecturer. The governors only wanted increased numbers of completed action plans, but I wanted to understand if these efforts made a difference in supporting professional learning and improving the working lives of our lecturers.

At this crucial crossroads, I learned about the Research Development Fellowship (RDF) sponsored by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). This seemed the perfect opportunity to learn how to use research to understand my own practice. My college did not see it that way. The feeling was that the research might benefit me, but not the college. So I used my annual leave and found my own teaching cover for the lessons I would miss when attending RDF residentials.

Despite that rather inauspicious beginning, I fell in love with the research process. Taking time to reflect on my coaching practice, finding ways to understand impact, and developing my own theoretical approaches made me a more effective practitioner.

The enriching experience of the RDF gave me a hunger for doing research. I made the difficult decision to leave the FE sector, at least temporarily, to undertake a PhD under the supervision of Professor Matt O'Leary, at Birmingham City University (BCU). I am examining the role of video in observations of classroom practice in both schools and colleges. I have been fortunate to support research by FE practitioners in a variety of ways. I helped found the Reimagining Further Education conferences, now in their fourth year, and am their main organiser.

A special edition of the journal, Research in Post-Compulsory Education, was produced by participants after the first conference, and I have just finished guest editing a special conference edition of the open access CSPACE Journal. As a result of last year's working group on research and scholarly activity, convenor Sam Jones has set up the Bedford College Group Research network, which shares research and scholarship across postcompulsory education. I've also been pleased to support the #FEResearchMeet movement.

There's never been a better time for FE practitioners to engage in research. Contact me on Twitter @teachersavage if you need support. Let's keep making a big noise about FE-based research.

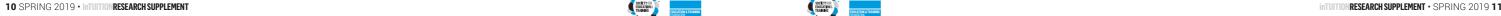


Suzanne Savage is a doctoral researcher in the Centre for the Study of Practice and Culture at Birmingham City University.











Our ideas about how we can promote equality and celebrate diversity within

What we do with our equality and

diversity learning

Tonics or issues we would like to learn

more about

PERSONALISING THE E-LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The Research portal of the Excellence Gateway states that the rapid changes in the use of technology in education, training, work, and in society at large, led to many practitioner-researchers choosing learning technologies as their research themes.

There have been a number of digital Outstanding Teaching Learning and Assessment (OTLA) projects funded by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF). The latest nine, covering a variety of topics, were completed in December 2018. Reports can be found via the ETF website.

Many projects focused on investigating blended learning approaches. A number of organisations considered specific e and m-learning tools in terms of supporting learning outcomes.

We present summaries of two projects here. Wendy Coley's literature research concluded that the advantages of using a

ENGAGING WITH E-PORTFOLIOS

By Iona Wallace and Louise Carr

Although an e-portfolio is not new for a number of qualifications, the course teams and tutors have adopted a specific teaching and learning approach to support students and trainees who are curating, creating and communicating their e-portfolio content.

This approach aims to embed the features of 21st-century skills into aspects of building the e-portfolio by providing opportunities to engage in critical thinking, communication, creativity and collaboration.

Feedback from the course design teams is that the pedagogic changes, and engagement from most trainees and students, along with the depth of reflection, have been positive, and we are looking forward to developing these aspects further in the coming modules. The team is also interested in how examples of practice are being chosen and what this might illustrate about individual trainee approaches.

Some lecturers see the added benefit of developing their understanding of another teaching tool, which is also either being used by their students or is potentially available for them to use with their students. This research has enabled a link to Moodle and an increase in use in other areas.

There is a rich research culture at West Kent college, which is effective in blending HE and FE practice. Regular research days are held for sharing research approaches and outputs with all teaching staff. These include supported experiments and action research in every department.



ona Wallace, a lecturer in education, and Louise Carr, an advanced learning practitioner, work in the Hadlow College Group, using e-portfolio platforms to support reflective learning practices and promote a 21st-century skills approach

across various levels, courses and campuses.

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) include increased flexibility, productivity and enhanced personalisation.

Looking at developing e-portfolio models, Iona Wallace and Louise Carr found that their curation suited a constructivist learning model. However, the course design teams also recognised that in order to make progress to the higher order reflective practice skills, the activities would need to be actively facilitated and scaffolded.

Using technology is not new in education. The sector has responded by adopting the recommendations of the Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (FELTAG), which has driven research work, along with internal development priorities and a general need to meet learners' development needs and expectations.

EXPLORING ASSESSMENT ONLINE

By Wendy Coley

At the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London (CONEL), plumbing teachers on different sites share online guizzes (auto-assessments) and videos with each other's learners. Sharing resources promotes collaboration between colleagues, saves them time, and provides the opportunity to gather feedback from a wider range of learners.

Most plumbing learners in this study used the Moodle Mobile app to access the VLE, while a plumbing e-book enabled learners to revise from their phones while commuting and on breaks at work. The videos of all the practical plumbing demos were accessed frequently and the teacher let learners access them in the workshops. This reduced the need for the teacher to repeat generic instructions and enabled personalised instruction.

Digital feedback is being used in an OTLA project led by Havant & South Downs College in collaboration with Westminster Kingsway College and CONEL (both part of the Capital City College Group). The learners submit work online and the teacher provides screencast assessment feedback, recording their screen and voice as they assess the learners' work. This is being compared to other forms of digital feedback.

The OTLA project and associated activities proved to be a central vehicle for embedding research-informed approaches across the organisation. The findings of this research and case study also informed the college-wide e-learning strategy, with the approaches transferable to other curriculum areas.



Wendy Coley is a teaching skills adviser at the College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London (CONEL), with an MA in eLearning, and has diverse experience in apprenticeships, working with employers and on T Level implementation.

The VLE Moodle platform is available to all learners but not used wildly in the construction department.



LIVING AND LEARNING-REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING ABOUT EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY, MENTAL HEALTH, RESILIENCE, AND INCLUSION

Three contributors provided rich insights into the impact of research in these areas.



Dr Vicky Butterby is the Equality and Diversity (E&D) lead at Darlington Learning and Skills Service and has completed a PhD exploring issues of loss with marginalised young people using storytelling and arts-based methods.

She discusses how action research illuminated learners' perspectives on E&D in an ETF-funded Outstanding Teaching Learning and Assessment (OTLA) project undertaken with Bishop Auckland College and South West



Jennifer Lindsell teaches media studies and graphics at Joseph Chamberlain College and is doing an MA in Art and Education. She explored the impact on her own mental health of sketching for a few minutes every hour for a

week. This became a release for her and demonstrated the potential for teachers and students alike.



Fionnuala Devers is an English Lecturer at London South East Colleges, with a master's degree in screenwriting. Her research informed a curriculum change to enhance resilience for students re-engaging with GCSE English. She

draws on Dweck's growth mindset, metacognition, critical analysis, layering, and the work of Professor Debra Myhill and King's College London's 'Let's Think in English'. Finn acknowledges the crucial support of her college principal, Sam Parrett OBE, the senior leadership team, the Teacher Development Unit and her colleague Claire Callow.

All three researchers were clear about the impact of their research on learners as well as wider organisational change. Vicky's adopted a constructivist approach in drawing out learners' views on Equality and Diversity using prompts (see images, right).

These prompts allowed impact to be analysed from learners' perspectives. Vicky and colleagues needed to assess if a perceived increase in staff confidence to promote E&D translated into learners' everyday experiences. Some struggled with the terminology of E&D, preferring to talk about what was 'fair' or 'unfair'. Others discussed how E&D contexts helped them challenge prejudice within their own communities.

Vicky and colleagues found the positive evaluation questions, 'What can we do with our learning?' and 'What can we teach others about?', created a motivating (and unusual) sense of responsibility in their learners.

Evaluation thus became an energising aspect of learning and development, rather than an afterthought that would have little meaning for future action.

Jennifer identifies broad impacts from her research: "It is so important to continue looking at, and completing research on the topic of mental health within the education system. Teachers need support in this area, as well as new coping mechanisms to help them, not only to stop them leaving their careers, but to help them realise how easy it may be to improve their mental health. Students need support to help them to continue their studies, understanding the struggles of life a lot more, and have the means to move forward from

Fionnuala reports that, over three

learners developed a positive mindset and attitude to learning, as well as a positive ethos in the classroom. This improved self-belief and self-esteem, and generated more positive attitudes towards English. Students explored their identities and attitudes in projects. Their interest levels were enhanced by digital media, like street photography.

Vicky's, Jennifer's and Fionnuala's enquiries are grounded in their own practices and challenges for their learners, colleagues and organisations. Their findings have significant potential for policy makers and other agencies. Walifa Rasheed-Karim (2018) and Matilda Battersby, for example, take this policy narrative further. (Matilda's research was commissioned by SET). Many readers will also be aware of the 2015-2018 BIS/DfE Community Learning Mental Health Research (October 2018).

struggles they have." academic terms, a small cohort of



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RESEARCH IN FURTHER EDUCATION: WHY WE MUST MAKE A FUSS ABOUT IT

If FE wants a powerful voice in deciding its purpose and place in society and education, a policy to build research capacity in the sector is needed, say **Dr Gary Husband** and **Sam Jones**.

Dr Gary Husband:

I left further education (after years of teaching and management positions) specifically to try and secure funding for research work within FE. Paradoxically, I had to leave FE to increase my chances of securing funding to conduct research in that very sector. With a few notable exceptions, funded FE research is not carried out by people who work in FE.

Sam Jones:

As a researcher in FE I am pleased that practitioners are starting to raise their voices; the Dancing Princesses books are a notable example, as are movements like Tutor Voices and Research meets. both of which are sector-led movements. Increasing numbers of FE staff are convening for, or involved in, the Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN), and sharing their research at conferences like the Association of Research in Post Compulsory Education (ARPCE) and the British Educational Research Association (BERA). There are changes within colleges – my own college has a research network and a blog, and it provides me with paid PhD study leave.



• McDonnell, M. and Grubb, W. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/ pubs/reports/2009/R4026.pdf





Dr Gary Husband is a cturer in education at he University of Stirling nd Sam Jones is an advanced practitioner at Bedford College.



https://bcgresearchnetwork.wordpress.com/

ne possible future is that further education research is thought of in the same way as research conducted in universities. FE-based research would inform those areas relevant to it - for instance: commerce, industry, leisure, health care, engineering and so on.

This sort of work is rare in FE, but it does exist. There are examples of colleges leading the world in areas such as solar-generated power and electrification of fleet vehicles. FE, by its very definition, is filled with experts from many industries, many of whom are able to provide the bridge between industry and researchers. There are also distinct opportunities to enhance the learning of students through their own engagement with research work.

We hold the view that those working in FE know and understand its purpose and the role it fulfils within education. If research is being used to shape the sector, decide its future and inform the decisions made about it, then the expertise of those working in it should be given primacy.

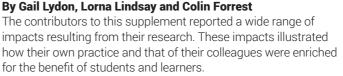
If FE wants a powerful voice in deciding its fate, remit, purpose and place within society and education, then informing that debate through the creation of new knowledge and understanding developed at the heart of the sector potentially offers more than observations conducted from outside.

The problem of access to training and the understanding of the important theoretical underpinnings of good research can be mitigated either through strong research partnerships with universities, or through development and retention of individuals within the sector.

When considering policy on vocational education McDonnell and Grubb (1991) conclude that while inducements such as money are popular policy levers, it is capacity building that tends to be the mechanism that is the most successful.

We argue that what is required is a policy of building research capacity within FE. This may require a change in culture in the sector to allow researchs to consider wider questions than simply 'what works for teaching, learning and assessment', and within universities a change to consider ways of engaging with colleges to co-create research.





Our curation was enhanced not only by our contributors but by those who engaged in interviews, including Colin Bentwood, director of the Strategic Development Network, and Jacklyn Williams, education author and consultant.

REFLECTIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Organisational culture and leadership

Many contributors benefited from considerable organisational support to engage with research, and significantly, research that made a difference to their learners. Elements included: support and inspiration from peers and managers, protected space and time, and sponsorship for higher degrees. Engagement with initial teacher education (ITE) provision was often important too. The notion of scholarship also emerged.

Capacity building

Many of the research impacts reported had their origin in action research approaches. Several contributors were from SET's first cohort to achieve Advanced Teacher Status (ATS), building on the Professional Standards where pedagogical mastery is coupled with the development of high-level research skills.

Multiple research journeys were described, such as progressing from Research Development Fellow through Masters and M.Phil degrees to doctorates. SET's Practitioner Research Programme, partnering with the University of Sunderland, is significant here.

Several contributors held PhDs, but did not see their research training as complete. For example, engaging with action research emerged as a significant enhancement to highly refined portfolios of research skills.

Mediation and brokerage

The research impacts described by the contributors often had their origins in collaborative practice. The influence of a rich and growing ecosystem of research networks and communities emerged as important in supporting individual and collective research journeys.

These groups invariably centred in exploring the interplay between research evidence and teacher practice. A wide range of approaches was important here, but all involve some degree of brokerage and boundary spanning (Forrest and Morris 2018).

A wide range of ETF programmes, including the Outstanding Teaching Learning and Assessment (OTLA) programmes, contributed to fostering the development of research.

Looking forward

In undertaking the curation, it was clear that FE research is alive and well and we hope that the contributions bring this to the surface. Challenges emerged for us too. There is no neat route or pathway that provides an exemplar of a research journey for others to follow. In addressing multiple priorities, the learning and skills sector is so diverse that it is unsurprising that the research journeys of FE practitioners are more complex than reflected in the toolkits for the schools' sector.

The importance of shared and collaborative spaces for fostering research in further education emerged strongly. Such entities owe much to Joint Practice Development and its advocates and resonate with the emerging findings from the BERA close-to-practice research project. Here 'close to practice' is defined as research that "focuses on issues defined by practitioners as relevant to their practice, and involves collaboration between people whose main expertise is research. practice, or both". We were fortunate that the curation resulted in rich contributions from all three groups.

Capacity building for research

- The nature of research
 - Action research
- Teaching and research mastery Advanced practitioners
 - Professional Standards
 - OTLS and ATS
 - ETF Practitioner
 - Research Programme
 - MA and MPhil
 - PS Research maps
 - HEA and SET fellowships

Practitioner researcher – making a difference

Organisational culture and leadership

- Time and space for research
- Scholarship
- Sponsorship of higher degrees
- SET corporate membership
- NFER Research Mark
- Research self-assessment toolkits

Mediation and brokerage between research and practice

How research impacts on teachers

 Research communities and networks Networking the networks, LSRN, SET, CCT, ARPCE

- Research Meets #reimagineFE
- Research Journals, inTuition, SET research library
- Mentoring and mentors, OTLA, PEN, Teach Too
 - Close to practice research









