EDUCATION & TRAINING FOUNDATION

Establishing and Leading Project Research Teams

(to enable Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment)

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Contents

Welcome to the OTLA (NE & Cumbria) Programme

The purpose of this booklet is to help project leaders to plan your project through providing an overview and understanding of the wider programme. Although it is aimed at meeting the needs of project leaders, we hope that it will also be accessible and informative for all participants engaging in this collaborative endeavour.

Everyone working or learning within our sector is incredibly busy, and the materials in this booklet are intended to provide a framework to assist you in the journey towards investigating, enabling and celebrating Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment.

We hope that this booklet provides some tools and templates to clarify what is expected from you, and to simplify your journey by providing a clear focus on your project goals together with pragmatic suggestions about how your ambitions for learners can be realised in the realities of everyday teaching and learning. So we hope that this booklet provides reassurance about prioritising what is important, and freeing your energies from any distractions.

We know that everyone on this programme has volunteered, or been invited to participate, because they are committed to making a difference to learners' lives. Our responsibility is to ensure that your precious time is effectively deployed in realising your ambitions for your learners, and we hope that the materials in this booklet will enable you to fulfil your potential with your plans. This is a collaborative project at every level; please let us know if you can suggest any additions or improvements.

The OTLA (NE and Cumbria) Team

1. Establishing and supporting a team

All project teams have evolved, amalgamated and developed from different starting points, and there is no one best way to facilitate a collaborative endeavour. However, much of team-building is intuitive, and requires you to make fine professional judgements as unique challenges and opportunities present themselves.

To provide a degree of reassurance as you try and progress your project, you might take confidence in drawing upon findings from the Teacher Development Trust's "Developing Great Teaching" which reviewed successful practitioner development projects and identified several principles underpinning successful CPD initiatives. (You will identify most of these principles from your own experiences, and hopefully they will provide a measure of encouragement when planning a framework for your team):

- One-off CPD events are rarely effective. Where possible, it's important to organise a **rhythm** of CPD support and follow-up. Practitioners are more likely to commit to changes in their teaching when they can meet with other practitioners to plan changes and then return to discuss how they worked in practice.

- Practitioners are inevitably busy, so will miss vague deadlines. Part of creating the collaborative rhythm is ensuring that practitioners can attend all project meetings. Can you disrupt the mundane routines of teaching by moving outside the institution or arranging to provide team meals to provide a shared sense of purpose for the project? What incentives will help practitioners rediscover their sense of professional excitement?
- Make sure that practitioners have time to discuss new practices with other practitioners. If we want practitioners to take on board new practices, they will need to critically examine their assumptions about how their students learn. They are more likely to engage with new ideas if they are validated by other progressive practitioners with whom they identify.
- The most successful changes in practice adopted formative assessment which enabled practitioners to see the impact of any changes which they had introduced.
- Research can give practitioners permission to change their practice. To help research make an impact, try to ensure that any guidance from research is illustrated by concrete examples of the research in practice which can be evaluated by groups of practitioners.
- External specialists can provide motivation for change. However, they are most effective when they act as regular coaches and mentors for practitioners to sustain their rhythm of professional development (rather than disappearing after one-off expert inputs).

The OTLA team are here to help you plan for effective collaboration. We can provide external specialist support in subject development, pedagogical approaches, research strategies and reporting your research. Build on our structure, and let us know where we can support your team-building and development!

2. Helping teams to plan productive projects

Within your project, you will have partners who will be working together in experimenting with new ways of teaching and supporting learning, in gathering evidence about the effects of these experiments, and in sharing what you discover with others beyond your project.

You will be leading your teams in conducting "collaborative practitioner-led action research". This research process will typically involve teams reaching a shared understanding of what the project is about and then planning agreed changes to improve current practices. It becomes research because we gather evidence of our changes and share it with others in the community.

What's different about "collaborative practitioner-led action research"?

The distinguishing characteristic of "collaborative practitioner-led action research" is captured by Jean McNiff, who suggests that

- Conventional research asks, "What is happening here?"
- Collaborative Practitioner Action Research asks, "**How can we improve** what is happening here?"

Thus, the emphasis in "collaborative practitioner-led action research" is in prioritising making changes for learners, and reporting on the effects of these changes. We aim to produce useful knowledge from our projects which is usable by other practitioners. In much traditional educational research, professional researchers would seek to develop knowledge about teaching by considering a wide range of tests and observations, and then arrive at principles for other practitioners to apply in practice. In your project, your priority is to test new approaches in practice, to modify these changes in response to feedback from everyone involved in your teaching situation, and then to share what you have learned from your practical experiments, so that other practitioners can consider adopting and adapting these approaches, and professional researchers can arrive at a more informed appreciation of what might benefit learners in different teaching contexts.

In appendix 4 you will find a "Getting Started" planning framework to help individuals and teams of practitioners to begin the process. This planning sheet is intended to act as with an initial working document to focus discussion and identify opportunities for development. There are questions that are especially important in practitioner research:

- "What aspect of your practice would you like to change?"
- "How do you know that it needs to change?"
- "How will you know that you have achieved your intended improvements?"

In everyday teaching, practitioners rarely plan gathering evidence of their teaching. Classrooms and workshops are incredibly busy, and practitioners necessarily make implicit judgements about the continuing progress of their learners. However, in practitioner-research we actively search for the types of evidence of learning that would persuade other practitioners (and your team) that changes to your teaching situation are worth considering and developing within their own practice.

3. What counts as trustworthy "evidence" of improved practice?

One of the challenges for practitioner research is that development activities can conclude when practitioners feel that they have a better understanding about their classrooms and workshops, but it can be difficult to show to other practitioners the effects of such change, such as whether the students' learning gains or changed behaviour has been sustained in the long term.

Annual results from retention, progression and achievement can be useful "corroborating" data which indicates that overall developments have occurred, but it is difficult to confidently ascertain the contribution which specific interventions in lessons may have made to resolve a particular issue (e.g. retention) that was an institutional concern and that may have already been addressed through variety of responsive initiatives across an organisation.

The most credible validation of the relative success of a particular experiment may be evidence which would enable other hard-working practitioners to relate to what was happening in your classroom or workshop and to make judgements about the success of your new strategies as offering them an intelligent approach to explore with their own learners.

We suggest that where you are planning any change, that you work with your colleagues and team to design into your project some activity that will enable learners to demonstrate the effects of the change on their learning. This may be a test, a classroom or homework exercise, an observation by a colleague, or it may be a focused discussion with learners. More convincing evidence would be a combination of these activities, so that you can be confident that your interpretation of events is secure.

We aim to help you experiment with providing a more rewarding experience for your learners, and then collecting evidence that will convince other practitioner teams to adapt such strategies in their own setting.

The value of your research is that other practitioners and organisations can relate to what you tried to do and what you achieved. All research projects conducted with integrity will be successful – if you can provide convincing evidence that what you did was intelligent but doesn't actually work in your setting, then you will have helped other practitioners and learners on the journey to find a better way.

For ideas about what combinations of evidence might prove trustworthy to practitioners, it may help you to judge the credibility of the various types of evidence listed on the attached exercise **(see Appendix 1 - Useful and Usable Evidence)**

4. Collaborative Approaches for Successful Projects

Traditional researchers often adopt rigid research “methodologies”, and practitioner researchers can sometimes become intimidated by conventional stereotypes about what “Research” will require of them.

However, Practitioner Action Researchers don’t have the luxury of being able to stand outside of the situation and employ objective research methods. Practitioners have to use the evidence at hand in the teaching situation - e.g., completed class work, attendance registers, comments from classroom discussions, lesson plans, insights from colleagues, assistants, etc. By using evidence from the teaching and learning situation, practitioners improve the situation and focus on central, relevant issues. This informal information which is everywhere in classroom and workshops can become research evidence when it is systematically collected and shared with other professional practitioners for discussion.

Becoming a creative practitioner researcher

In investigating what is happening as you introduce changes in your teaching, you may well discover that you’re creating your own research methods. In experimenting with your teaching to meet the needs of your learners, you will probably make your own modifications to established research methods. For example, a discussion with three SEND learners focused around their video-diaries would be a novel and responsive way of conducting a “focus group”. (This is a similar process to you developing your unique teaching style, so perhaps it’s not that surprising.) If you devise simple but practice-friendly ways of providing trustworthy information from learners or colleagues, don’t think that it’s not an ‘approved’ method and therefore can’t be trusted; remember, practitioners need to develop methodology suited to research ‘on the hoof’.

Action research methods and collaborative learning

It is very difficult for action research not to lead to collaborative learning, because your actions will change a social situation. In explaining what you’re trying to achieve to those involved (usually learners and colleagues), their responses and feedback inform and influence your actions. As you reach an improved understanding of your situation and your role in it, your changed activities are likely to influence their responses and subsequent actions.

As well as using direct data from the learners or learning exercises, you may also share your personal observations of what is happening in the learning situation with colleagues and teams. Trusting a colleague or friend to respond to your interpretation of your teaching might perform a number of functions; it may:

- Enable the other practitioner to identify constructive solutions to your problems;
- Stimulate the other practitioner to think about his or her own teaching;
- Improve the relationship between you and add a new dimension to your educational discussions.

Collaboration is fundamental in these projects as it encourages staff and students to learn

from each other. It also prevents action research from becoming too subjective and partial. Collaborative methods increase opportunities for “triangulation”, whereby those directly involved in the research - the students, together with possibly a colleague or "critical friend" - are invited to contribute their perceptions and improve the research process and outcomes.

Encouraging practitioners and learners to contribute to the research

The simplest type of collaborative research might involve:

- A practitioner or trainer agrees an experimental session plan with a colleague.
- The practitioner then experiments with the new approach and collects evidence of the learners’ activities in the session.
- The practitioner studies this “evidence” of the students’ activity and uses that as the basis for reviewing the value of the experiment with the students in the following class.
- The practitioner then discusses with his or her colleague how the planned experiment was effected in practice; what the students did in the lesson and their feedback on the teaching and the student tasks.
- As a result of these discussions with the colleague, they plan the “next steps” for the practitioner’s experimental approach.

In an experiment like the one above, there is credible “evidence” from the practitioners’ planning and next steps; the students’ completed activities; notes from discussions with the students; notes from the planning and next steps discussion with the practitioner’s colleague.

These provide further trustworthy triangulation from the practitioner’s, colleagues’ and students’ viewpoints; from the three stages in the research process (before, during and after the lesson). It is all easy to collect and can easily be customised to meet the needs of your particular learning context.

(You can easily strengthen the rigour and effectiveness by arranging for a colleague to observe the session, providing a feedback worksheet activity for the students; agreeing to observe your colleague teaching a similar lesson, etc.)

The most important aspect of collaboration….

Collaboration provides an invaluable emotional function. Because researching one's practice often highlights a "performance gap" between your planning and what actually happens, it may feel as if you, the practitioner, are somehow inadequate and therefore it helps to have the supportive feedback of a colleague or friend (not necessarily in the same area of work) to prevent you from either being too self-critical or, more frequently, from hiding from the problem. Collaborative working provides an emotional foundation which enables constructive insights to be accepted and translated into improved action. It can be particularly powerful if two colleagues carry out parallel action research experiments and assist each other.

Collaborative research becomes collaborative learning!

5. Research-Informed Teaching (Practitioners Using and Contributing to Published Research)

"Research Informed Teaching" includes:

- Practitioners researching in their own classrooms and workshops.
- Practitioners using helpful research findings.
- Practitioners testing Researchers' suggestions in classrooms and feeding back their experiences

Historically, practitioners can be dismissive of published research, with researchers considered to be out of touch with everyday practice, and producing unreadable research articles that are written about practitioners rather than for practitioners. However, there are some useful developments on the research front, with professional research associations producing summaries of research that are designed to be helpful to practitioners by providing suggestions about key research findings in summaries (see, for example the Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit), reports of research on the Excellence Gateways' website, and the Teacher Development Trust "2 minute reads". (All weblinks for these can be found in Section 8 "Accessible Resources").

Often, such research comes from the school-sector, but this can still be very useful, as it enables practitioners to consider whether the ideas and practices are actually relatable to the post-16 contexts.

As well as established sites, there are a variety of practitioner-friendly sites which provide topical discussion of practitioners' concerns. David Didau's site, The Learning Spy, provokes focused and entertaining reflection on challenges experienced in the classroom, and acts as a strong supporter of practitioner-led developments. The key benefit of such sites is that they act as "portals" which tend to link other teachers to a range of viewpoints and stimulate a facet of professional discussion.

Why should Research Team Leaders encourage practitioners to engage with research?

- It may save practitioners wasting valuable time by providing shortcuts and usable resources from previous research.
- It may save practitioners wasting effort in trying ideas that are intuitively attractive but are impractical or have negative consequences.
- Published research can be very powerful in giving practitioners "permission" to experiment with practice and to try improvements (especially when they might feel constrained by traditional institutional cultures and peer pressure).
- Published research can be highly motivating by providing a professional reference group and identity for practitioners whose daily grind has led to them having a limited self-image as "just a teacher".

The Role of the OTLA Programme Facilitators

- One of our roles is to ensure that practice-based research feeds back to researchers.

6. Effective reporting of the team's classroom experiments

In the academic world, "doing research" is often confused with producing a report of the research. In practitioner-led action research, learners' experience is most important, but the value of the research can then be fully realised by providing an accessible account of the experiment and the practitioner's findings. Practitioners' reports detailing the realities of classrooms and workshops enjoy great credibility with other teachers and often lead to wider change.

If practitioners engaged on the projects can be encouraged to produce focused two-page case-studies (reports) of their experiment, then collating these will provide the project leader with a comprehensive and very manageable foundation for the eventual report. (Further guidance will follow for Final Report writers following the interim review process.)

We suggest the following format for reports of experiments and practitioner-research:

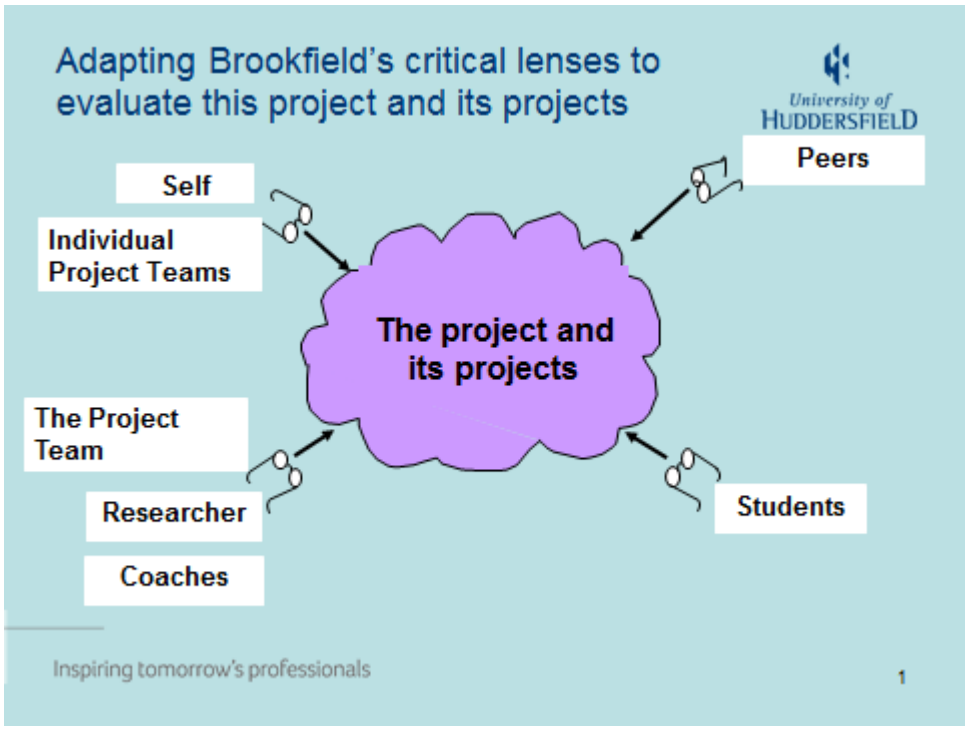
- Summary
- Headline Findings
- Brief sketch of the learners
- What went well in the experiment
- Changes to initial plans
- Any surprises/ significant learning from the experiment
- Next steps
- References (relation to other research)

An example of a case-study is attached. The "headline findings" are prioritised in a style that is followed by an explanation of the background. The teaching and learning context for the research is central to other practitioners choosing to apply the findings to their own practice. Practitioners should briefly describe the context of the study, the changes that were made and how the practitioner tried to capture the realistic outcomes of the experiment.

7. OTLA (NE & Cumbria) Evaluation Framework

This project primarily seeks to evaluate with key stakeholders, namely the teachers and managers and their students, their experiences of the OTLA project and its impact in terms of OTLA. To do this, it adopts an on-going, everyday approach to evaluation which involves in the process the Project Team with overall responsibility for this piece of work, the individual project teams, the researcher, the coaches, and the students. Each of these groups will plan in time to contribute to the relevant stages of the evaluation process, including design, implementation, outcomes and sustainability. This approach and process will provide an overall evaluation for the Education and Training Foundation, who are sponsoring the project, and will be informed by eight focused evaluations that consider the project and its contribution to OTLA. These evaluations draw on seven different perspectives. This approach is represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: A Brookfieldian lens approach to evaluation



The eight forms of evaluations and when they will be happening.

Before the project commenced

1. Evaluation of the design of the OTLA project by the researcher

On-going

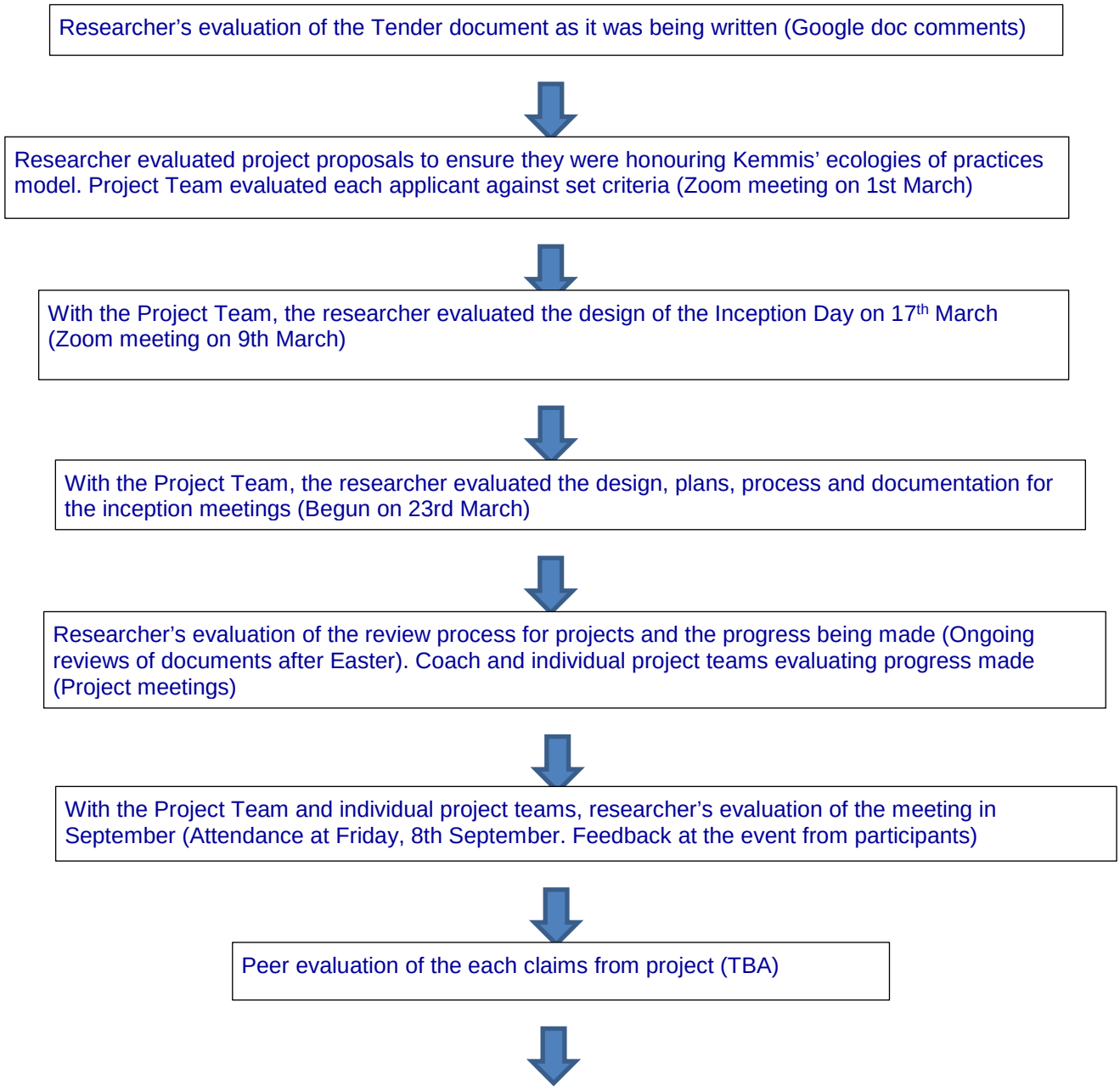
2. Evaluation of the design of the OTLA from individual project teams' perspectives;
3. Evaluation of the design and implementation of the OTLA project by the researcher and Project Team;
4. Evaluation of the contribution of the project to OTLA by individual project teams and their coaches and possibly their students;

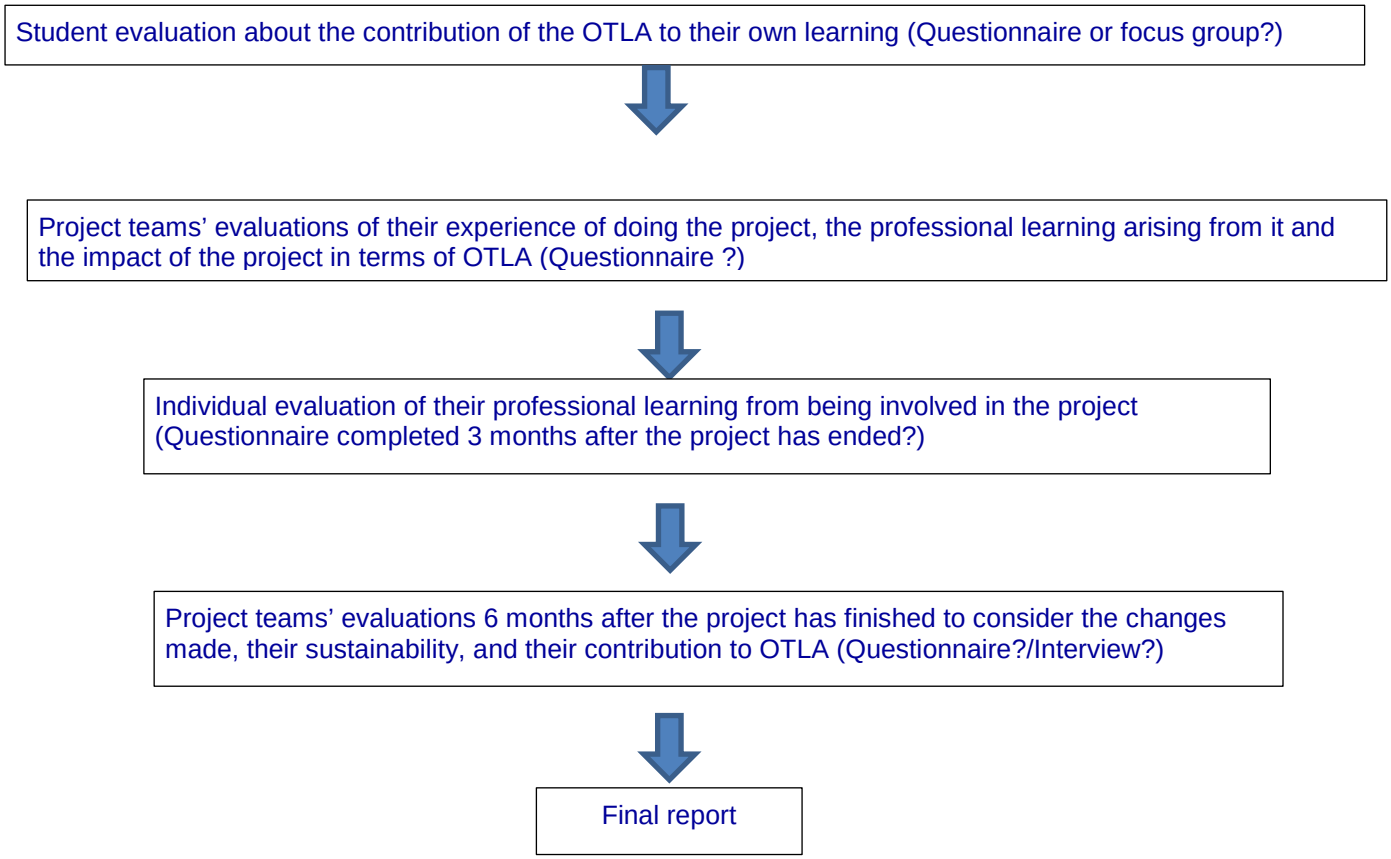
Conclusion

5. Peer evaluation of the outcomes from the individual OTLA projects;
6. Student evaluation concerning the difference the project has made to their learning;
7. Evaluation of the impact of the OTLA project by the researcher/coach?
8. Self-evaluation as a result of undertaking the project and the professional learning arising from this;

The evaluation of this OTLA project began at its design stage and has been consciously written into it the project timeline. Figure 2 represents the key sttages of evaluation, how it will be done and who is involved.

Figure 2: Evaluation timeline




Student evaluation about the contribution of the OTLA to their own learning (Questionnaire or focus group?)
Project teams' evaluations of their experience of doing the project, the professional learning arising from it and the impact of the project in terms of OTLA (Questionnaire ?)
Individual evaluation of their professional learning from being involved in the project (Questionnaire completed 3 months after the project has ended?)
Project teams' evaluations 6 months after the project has finished to consider the changes made, their sustainability, and their contribution to OTLA (Questionnaire?/Interview?)
Final report

8. Ethics for Practitioner Researchers

(Protecting Your Learners, Your Colleagues and Yourself)

In formal educational research, professional researchers might be expected to get approval for their research. However, most practitioner experiments are an extension of everyday professional practice for which ethical approval would not be required. Practitioners who are trying to improve students' learning experiences by introducing new teaching, learning and assessment strategies, will be exercising their professional judgement and operating within the normal duty of care and safeguarding principles. Most practitioner experiments are unlikely to require additional ethical permissions or protections.

However, in publicising the actions of your experiments, you may require the informed consent of your learners or of colleagues if you wish to use data or materials which relate to their involvement in your research or in participating in interviews. Confidentiality and anonymity must always be assured.

It is also especially important to consider that there may be implications for colleagues from your research. We all have sensitivities and vulnerabilities, and changing the accepted way that colleagues teach could be seen as implicit criticism. Please don't refrain from making improvements, but do use all your emotional intelligence when sharing your changes across the institution.

Do be aware that research which invites students to discuss their experience of positive and negative learning may become personalised; preface any such discussions with clear invitations to students to discuss strategies, but not personalities. This will avoid colleagues questioning your professional integrity, and ensure that your attempts at encouraging whole-organisation approaches are not counter-productive.

Please also make sure that the Senior Management has approved your research focus. Getting this agreement not only avoids derailing your research, it may also improve your career prospects.

If you are unsure whether your research would require your participants to give consent, please raise this concern with a member of the OTLA team who will advise. Should you need to gain informed consent, there are consent forms which are easily adapted in appendix 6.

9. Accessible Resources for Busy Practitioner-Researchers

Some teachers will begin their research guided and motivated by their research team. However, as practitioner-led action research is responsively developmental and opens up new avenues as the team's understanding develops, the portals and texts below are valuable introductions to worthwhile discussions about evidence-based teaching and learning.

Portals

The following websites are all recommended first-stops for new practitioner-researchers exploring evidence-based teaching (including guidance on "How to Do It"!) In each case there are search tools to help you focus on your teaching interest and encounter practitioners from across the teaching and learning who share your interests (as well as your challenges and opportunities….)

The **Education & Training Foundation** site is an excellent starting point especially for Maths & English and its use in Vocational contexts http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/research/practitioner-research-support/

The **Excellence Gateway** website also provides useful links to sector research and previous OTLA projects http://improving-teaching.excellencegateway.org.uk/

The **Education Endowment Foundation** has a toolkit which collates useful summaries of research from "meta-reviews" on a range of teaching methods. Much of their info draws on studies from different sectors and countries, so their summaries on strategies provoke useful reflection for post-16 practitioner-researchers to consider how their advice might need to be adapted. https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit/

The **Teacher Development Trust** is an excellent starting point to explore teaching strategies. A really attractive feature is the presentation of "2 minute reads" – with links and references – which are of real use to practitioners, such as "Nothing Works Everywhere" http://www.practitionertoolkit.me/tag/practitioner-development-trust/

David Didau has a stimulating and accessible site – The Learning Spy – which regularly reviews strategies from "metacognition" through to "formative assessment" and "digital technologies". This site has links to all the current debates, and attracts unusually intelligent feedback from practising teachers who are realistically constructive. This site is a haven for practitioners aspiring to "Develop deep and critically informed knowledge and understanding in theory and practice". Click and search… http://www.learningspy.co.uk/

James Atherton's site is based around FE teaching and presents lively insights. Although this site ceased publishing at the end of 2015, it remains very searchable and is entertainingly irreverent. The writer has taught in post-16 classrooms and

constructively offers a practitioner's research-informed perspective
http://www.doceo.co.uk/index.htm

Pearltrees provides access to a range of FE teacher-friendly reports and resources which were designed for similar ETF practitioner-led projects
http://www.pearltrees.com/t/action-research/id9810914#l447

Many practitioner-researchers find **Geoff Petty**'s work to be practically accessible. His "Evidence-Based Teaching: A Practical Approach" is helpful – much of the content can also be found on www.geoffpetty.com/ He also has some excellent guidance for Team Leaders to guide "Supported Experiments" on the homepage

Nick Rose has collated an intelligent evidence-based site with many useful prompts, from "Ethics" through to "resilience" and "behaviour" debates
https://evidenceintopractice.wordpress.com/

Books

For those who prefer reading books, **Jean McNiff**'s practitioner site has a free downloadable introductory booklet http://www.jeanmcniff.com/ar-booklet.asp, and this supplements her new text "Action Research: All You Need to Know" published by SAGE.

David Hopkins (2008) A Teacher's Guide to Classroom Research 4th Ed (Berks: Open University Press) is very helpful and teacher-friendly, especially chapters on 'Why Classroom Research', 'Developing A Focus', 'Observation' and 'Data Gathering'. A good introductory text that can provide a starting point for those wishing to study Action Research in more depth.

Appendices - Associated Templates and Activities

1) Useful and Usable Evidence Activity

Useful and Usable Evidence?

You're responsible for a large Services Dept which has not achieved good results in their Maths outcomes. You're planning a departmental project to improve students' performance when using Maths in their Hairdressing assignments. Part of the project involves encouraging pairs of students to set relevant Maths questions for classmates.

Which of the following types of evidence might best help teachers judge the usefulness of the 'problem-setting' approach?

Evidence relating to teachers

1. A pie-chart showing the proportion of teachers agreeing to take part in the project.
2. A chart showing Hairdressing teachers' attendance at regular project meetings.
3. Classroom resources produced by teachers to encourage students' problem-setting.
4. Hairdressing teachers' level of attendance at lessons requiring Maths input.
5. Teachers completing a "What Went Well / Even Better If" worksheet half-way through the project and sharing findings in a discussion facilitated by a trusted colleague.
6. Teachers' lesson plans and their evaluations of the problem-setting sessions.
7. Teachers' ratings of their project progress against the Professional Standards.
8. Hairdressing teachers' retention data.
9. Research resources recommended as useful by teachers.
10. Hairdressing teachers agreeing to share their experiences at whole college CPD events.

Evidence relating to students

1. Students' levels of attendance at the series of lessons.
2. Student retention data.
3. Students' submission rate for assignments.
4. Student achievement rate in assignment tasks.
5. Students' discussion of their assignment homework
6. Students' video-diaries about their Hairdressing course
7. Teacher's reports of students' levels of engagement in problem-setting classes.
8. Selected comments from students' completion of an online questionnaire.

9. Selection of students' positive feedback comments on post-its left after classes.
10. Statistical data gained from end of lesson evaluation forms
11. Pairs of students completing a "What Went Well / Even Better If" worksheet half-way through the project.
12. Reduction in disciplinary incidents in Hairdressing lessons.

Evidence produced by others in the team

1. A Hairdressing colleague's personal feedback after they have observed one of the sessions.
2. A Hairdressing colleague's written feedback after they have observed one of the sessions.
3. The Project Leader's observation of a teaching session.
4. A Maths colleague's observation of a teaching session.
5. A Learning Support Assistant's notes about a student's progress
6. A Maths colleague reviewing the students' assignment tasks and noting where there might be opportunities to develop the problem-setting approach.
7. A colleague discussing the students' "WWW/EBI" comments with a small group of the students and producing bullet-points of this discussion for the Hairdressing teachers to consider.
8. A colleague discussing the teachers' "WWW/EBI" comments with a small group of the teachers and producing bullet-points of this discussion for the Hairdressing students to consider.
9. A colleague discussing both sets of "WWW/EBI" comments with a group of students and teachers together and producing bullet-points from the discussions for other teachers to consider.
10. Senior Management Team report on the project for governors.

2) Needs Analysis Planning Sheet for Project Leaders

Leading a teacher-research project: what do we need?

1. *What initiatives do we want to develop? (What is already happening?)*
2. *What evidence would indicate the success of the initiative?*
3. *Who can be involved? (Who is "research ready"? Who might be "biddable"?)*
4. *What are the best ways to fully involve learners?*
5. *Besides teachers and learners, who else might help?*
6. *What might get in the way of this being successful?*
7. *How can we create a "rhythm" of activities to support teachers' commitment?*
8. *What specialist help might be useful? For leaders or team-members?*
9. *Is there any accessible literature or resources that you think might prove helpful?*
10 *Can you suggest any other support that would be useful?*

3) Timeline activity

Timeline for Project Planning

Date	Activity	Project Meetings, Development and Dissemination Activities
March 17	Programme Inception Meeting	
March 20th - April 7th	Project Initiation Meetings	
April - July	**TLA Development Activities**	
June 30th	Interim Report	
July 31st	Interim evaluation & review	OTLA Team Responsibility
Sept 8th	Interim dissemination event/ Final term preview	
Sept - Nov	**TLA Development Activities**	
Oct 31st	Final Project Report	
November	Final Dissemination Event	
December	Final evaluation submitted to ETF	OTLA Team Responsibility

4) Experimenting with Your Practice: Getting Started

Experimenting with Your Practice: Getting Started

1. What aspect of your practice would you like to change? (And how do you know that it needs to change?)
2. What can you do to bring about this change?
3. How will you know that you have achieved your intended improvements?
4. Who might work with you to help you make this change?
5. What support will be needed to make this change happen?
6. Who might try my experimental approach with another group?

5) Template / Sample 2-page Practitioner Research Report

Helping Hairdressing Students' Confidence When using Maths

V Sassoon, Kirby College

Summary

In this experiment, I attempted to build Hairdressing Level 2 students' confidence when using everyday maths for calculating common salon procedures, and in determining ratios in chemical-based treatments. In each of two sessions, I worked through the Maths exercises and set three short problems for the group. After they had completed these "teacher-set" tasks and we had worked them through as a class on the Board, I then asked the students to work in pairs to devise three questions of their own making to challenge the rest of the class. I then collected in their questions and I selected one from each pair to write on the board as a whole-class challenge. When it came to going over the answers, I asked the pair who had set the question to come to the front and lead the explanation of the workings for each problem.

The following week, the group completed an assignment which included similar Maths tasks for which I believe that I had more fully prepared them. After marking their work, I returned it to the learners and asked them for their views on the value of the paired exercises.

Findings

- Although the Maths activities took much more of the lesson than I would normally plan, the students said that they had enjoyed the session.
- My Maths colleague noticed that the students' attitude was positive and constructive in this class and they were willing to get involved in the question-setting.
- All of the students eventually submitted the assignments for which they had been prepared and all had made meaningful attempts at the Maths exercises.
- There was evidence of progress in the number of assignment tasks submitted on time (10/ 10, up from 7/10) and the number of students passing the tasks. (9/10, up from 6/10).
- Four of the ten students had failed (or failed to submit) the Maths tasks on their previous assignment. Following the question-setting, three of these four passed both the costing and the ratio exercise. The Maths support team have offered to work with the student and also to show me how to support him more effectively in class.
- Although the extra student practice seemed to have helped students' confidence, one student still needed additional support from Maths Learning support.
- I didn't need to prepare as much work for the class as most of the session involved monitoring the students' problem-setting. However, I did feel more

stressed as I worried that I might not be able to explain Maths properly if anyone got into difficulty.

- Students said that they enjoyed checking their ideas with each other in planning the problems and several said that they had learned different ways to calculate ratios from their partners
- However, some others said that they found that other students explaining from the front and showing different ways to do calculations was sometimes confusing in the whole class exercise and they didn't like to ask questions in front of the whole group.
- My Maths colleague had reviewed the questions that I collected from the learners and showed me where it was apparent that two students didn't understand the principle of ratios.

Background information on the class

The group (9 females and 1 male) aged 16-17 are a pleasant and lively Full-time Level 2 Diploma in Hairdressing group who frequently demonstrate a degree of resistance to any mention of Maths, even though the majority of the group actually enjoy a reasonable level of competence with basic Maths and can complete all the maths tasks in assignments. They enjoy their Hairdressing course, and there has been unusually 100% retention on this programme.

What went well in the session

I was very pleased with the positive atmosphere in the group, with the students responding well to their being expected to create their own Maths challenges for peers. I had been worried that they might complain about spending the whole lesson doing Maths, but they said they enjoyed having a task which they could work on together. All the groups came up with questions, and although noise levels were high, it all seemed to be acceptably on task

I had explained that I would be conducting a teaching experiment as part of a research exercise, and they seemed both flattered and intrigued that they would be participating. As I had explained this, they seemed quite relaxed when my Maths colleague observed the session

Changes to my plans

- Following feedback from the students and my Maths colleague who had been observing, in the next session, I re-arranged the timing of the question-setting exercise.
- This enabled me to take some time in reviewing the students' questions and to go over them with my colleague from the Maths dept. She was able to point out which questions were the better ones to illustrate different scenarios, and she also advised me how to organise the selected questions so that the Maths would be scaffolded.

Any surprises/ significant learning

- I was surprised that one of the more able students who was confident at calculations was having difficulties in capturing the principles of calculating ratios
- Working with a colleague from the Maths Dept. really improved my confidence to encourage my students to raise any difficulties they may have with Maths.

Next steps

- I will experiment with problem-setting in pairs in their Hairdressing theory lessons, and I will re-arrange pairings to ensure students get the opportunity to work with different students
- I will also make sure that different students present feedback and working-out in so that both people in a pair demonstrate their understanding in the class.

Research used

Swan M (2005) *Improving learning in mathematics: challenges and strategie*s (DfES: London)

6) Code of Ethics (including Confidentiality & Sharing)

Sample Ethics Form

Please also see the BERA Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2011).

Name of Project:

Researcher(s)

Dear (name of participant),

I would like to invite you to take part in an action research project, which I am doing with (name of group/ organisation/ people involved). I want to explain why I am (/ we are) doing this research and what it would involve for you. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the project?

Brief sentence about the purpose/ summary of your action research project.

Why are you asking me to take part?

Brief sentence about why you want this person to participate

Do I have to take part?

Explain that participation is voluntary

What will taking part involve for me?

Outline:
How information will be collected
What participants need to do

How long it will take to take part
What access will the participant have to the data?
Who else will have access to the data?
How will the participants' anonymity be protected?

What will I have to do?

Signing of consent form, turning up to the session etc.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Outline the possible benefits. Do not make unrealistic claims.

Thank you for reading this information sheet.

Your Name

Sample Consent Form

Title of Project:

Name of Researcher(s):

	Please initial box
1. I confirm that I have read and I understand the action research information sheet	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary	
3. I consent to the interview/ session being audio/ video recorded	
4. I agree to take part in the action research project	

Name of Participant:

Date:

Signature:

7) Professional Learning and Development Framework Self Evaluation Activity

Educators in the project team (teachers/ trainers, support workers, managers and assessors) will be asked to do two things:

1. Choose which of the 20 Professional Standards relates to their work on the project. The standards are listed below:

Professional values and attributes

Develop your own judgement of what works and does not work in your teaching and training

1 Reflect on what works best in your teaching and learning to meet the diverse needs of learners

2 Evaluate and challenge your practice, values and beliefs

3 Inspire, motivate and raise aspirations of learners through your enthusiasm and knowledge

4 Be creative and innovative in selecting and adapting strategies to help learners to learn

5 Value and promote social and cultural diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion

6 Build positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues and learners

Professional knowledge and understanding

Develop deep and critically informed knowledge and understanding in theory and practice

7 Maintain and update knowledge of your subject and/or vocational area

8 Maintain and update your knowledge of educational research to develop evidence-based practice

9 Apply theoretical understanding of effective practice in teaching, learning and assessment drawing on research and other evidence

10 Evaluate your practice with others and assess its impact on learning

11 Manage and promote positive learner behaviour

12 Understand the teaching and professional role and your responsibilities

Professional skills

Develop your expertise and skills to ensure the best outcomes for learners

13 Motivate and inspire learners to promote achievement and develop their skills to enable progression

14 Plan and deliver effective learning programmes for diverse groups or individuals in a safe and inclusive environment

15 Promote the benefits of technology and support learners in its use

16 Address the mathematics and English needs of learners and work creatively to overcome individual barriers to learning

17 Enable learners to share responsibility for their own learning and assessment, setting goals that stretch and challenge

18 Apply appropriate and fair methods of assessment and provide constructive and timely feedback to support progression and achievement

19 Maintain and update your teaching and training expertise and vocational skills through collaboration with employers

20 Contribute to organisational development and quality improvement through collaboration with others

2. Self-assess current practice against the statements from the 'Professional Learning and Development Framework' (PLDF)* - this will be sent out to each individual educator on the programme as an online form to complete.

* This is a new Professional Standards tool, which OTLA participants will be trialling.