



Inquiring Teachers, Inquiring learners -

Strategies to improve the quality of initial teacher education for teachers in the education and training sector (further education and skills)

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Project approach	3
3. Project Methods	4
3.1 Inception	4
3.2 Review of the literature.....	4
3.3 Partnership meetings and communication	5
3.4 Developing the researcher practitioner	5
3.5 Supporting the partners	5
3.6 Sharing the learning- dissemination.....	6
3.7 Project Evaluation	6
4. Summary of literature review.....	6
4.1 Methodology for literature review.....	6
4.2 The existing evidence for the need for improvement.....	7
4.2.1 Ofsted evaluations of initial teacher education.....	7
4.3 Improving the training of trainees.....	8
4.3.1 Skills and knowledge development.....	8
4.3.2 Mentoring	9
4.3.3 Quality improvement for trainees.....	9
4.3.4 Equality and diversity.....	9
4.3.5 Monitoring and quality assurance	9
4.4 How does being a researcher practitioner contribute to professionalism?.....	10
4.5 How can ITE for the learning sector be professionalised?	13
4.6 Conclusions.....	15
5. Project Evaluation	15
5.1 Introduction	15
5.2 Methodology.....	16
5.3 Methods	19
5.4 Evaluation of the ETF project	21
5.4.1 Level 1: Participants' reactions	21
5.4.2 Level 2: Participants' learning.....	24
5.4.3 Level 3: Organisation support and change	30
5.4.4 Level 4: Participants' use of new knowledge and skills.....	34
5.4.5 Level 5: Student learning outcomes.....	36
5.5 Conclusions.....	38
6 Bibliography.....	41

1. Introduction

The Education and Training Foundation is committed to raising the quality and professionalism of teachers and trainers within the FE and training sector and to support employers in the sector to achieve their own improvement objectives. In December 2013 The School of Education at the University of Derby was commissioned to undertake a project which would contribute to improving initial teacher education (ITE) for teachers in the education and training sector (further education and skills).

This report details the Inquiring Teachers, Inquiring Learners project which was developed to support partner institutions to develop and apply a culture of action research within their organisation. The underlying principle of the project was professionalism and in particular the promotion and development of teachers' professional identities and attitudes as the key to the enhancement of student learning, above all, a vision of the 'inquiring teacher'. Inquiring teachers it is felt are more likely to develop inquiring learners. Teachers are best placed to know about their subjects and their learners' needs within their local contexts.

The project aimed to support partners of the School of Education to develop the skills and knowledge to define and undertake an action research project that would contribute to improving ITE within their context.

The partners for the project were:

- Acorn training, Ripley, Derbyshire;
- Chesterfield College;
- Derby College;
- Rathbone training, Derby;
- Vision West Nottinghamshire College; and
- Stephenson College, Coalville, Leicestershire.

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2. Project approach

The overall aim for the project was to create a culture of continuous career lifelong learning that starts with ITE and embeds an influence on the profession through encouraging others towards professionalism through the utilisation of networks of learning relationships to transfer and create new professional practice. The project approach drew from a number of interrelated concepts specifically focusing on learning and professionalism as described below.

James and Biesta (2007) develop a cultural approach to understanding learning and argue for the transformation of 'learning cultures' in further education. They conclude that all places of learning are particular and located in their own contexts and, whilst there will be similarities, are all unique. Rather than simply accepting imported 'best practice', "... The cultural approach helps us to see that the improvement of learning cultures always asks for contextualised judgement rather than for general recipes."

Ecclestone (2010) proposes a 'problem-based methodology' for continuing professional development (CPD) in which teachers formulate their own problems and questions and undertake 'trial and error' approaches to resolving them. Such approaches might be regarded as expensive and uncertain but they are likely to be more effective than imported solutions. They have the added advantage of restoring, perhaps in small measure, teachers' professionalism and autonomy.

Furlong (1998) argues that, traditionally, the foundations of professionalism have been based on the three themes of information, autonomy and responsibility. These values underpin this project.

- Information – the professional imperative for the acquisition, generation and accumulation of specialist knowledge, understanding and skills for enhancing learning and teaching in the sector.
- Autonomy – teachers have a right and responsibility to continually research and develop their own practice in response to the needs of their context and their learners. This contrasts with the feelings of many teachers, in all sectors, that they are merely deliverers of 'best practice' from external sources and contrasts sharply with exhortations to develop learners who are 'independent enquirers', 'self managers', 'creative thinkers' and 'reflective learners'.
- Responsibility – Coffield (2008) argues that CPD is both a responsibility for all professionals but also a right. Professional, localised and personalised CPD means a move to more teacher autonomy and the recognition that professional teachers, in their specific contexts and subject disciplines, are best placed to recognise problems that need to be solved and to identify opportunities for improvement.

Underpinning the philosophy of the project was the importance of teachers developing practice in local contexts. To achieve this, the project team aimed to create a collaborative framework in which research and knowledge could be accumulated and disseminated across a range of providers. This was not to be perceived as a 'best

practice' model but as a communal approach for sharing practice, adapting, personalising and continuing to improve learning and teaching. The project aimed to establish projects that were responsive to recognised needs, action research, problem-based, accumulative and disseminated wider throughout the sector. To achieve this a methodology was developed that would both educate and empower practitioners to adopt information seeking, autonomy and responsibility within their specific context.

The partners represented a number of providers of ITE and all had existing links with the university. They were selected to reflect the range of organisations working in the education and skills sector. Each partner was allocated a bursary of £3000 for project participation. This funding was to be used to release a minimum of two staff who would contribute to the project and was dependent on attendance at training sessions and meetings, the delivery of an action research project and the production of a research briefing paper.

3. Project Methods

Implicit within the approach to the project was the need to empower teachers/tutors not just with the skills to do the job, but the autonomy to own their teaching and the intellectual engagement to challenge themselves, their colleagues and the sector. This approach aimed to facilitate not just a community of practice but to contribute to the evidence base on which to further build practice.

This project was therefore constructed to add value to ITE through embedding a practitioner researcher focus within both teachers and trainee teachers. This would facilitate partners to participate in knowledge, skills and intellectual endeavour which would develop practice within the context in which they work.

3.1 Inception

The project commenced with an inception meeting with the Education and Training Foundation to discuss the brief and to agree an approach to delivery. Key areas for discussion included parameters for the project, the communication protocol and key delivery dates. This ensured a clear and shared understanding of the project requirements, milestones, reporting schedule and objectives.

3.2 Review of the literature

The first phase of the project was to build on the existing knowledge of the project team and involved a rapid review of the literature. This incorporated a mapping of Ofsted inspection reports from 2010- present to tease out and identify the key issues which have been identified as recommendations to improve ITE. In addition to this, literature was explored which identified good practice and approaches that have been successfully applied to developing the workforce in terms of researching own practice and developing the evidence base within the further education and skills context. The

outputs of the review were used to inform the structure and the development of the project. A summary of the literature review can be found in section 4.

3.3 Partnership meetings and communication

This initial meeting aimed to support the partners in understanding the nature of the project, their commitments and to establish a dialogue whereby areas for research could be explored and discussed. Each partner was expected to provide a brief outline of the research project and how it would benefit their ITE provision. Project meetings were convened on a four weekly basis throughout the life of the project. These provided a forum for discussion of issues and sharing of strategies and approaches to address problems that had arisen.

To provide additional support for the partners, an online blog was established <http://developingtheresearcherpractitioner.wordpress.com/>. This aimed to provide a communication tool for all the project participants. Although this was promoted extensively project partners did not significantly engage with this. Additional web based support was through an on-line repository <http://www.derby.ac.uk/icegs/education-and-training-foundation-action-research-project>. This housed all the resources and materials which were developed for the project. This ensured that the partners had access to all the materials that the project team were using and could use them with colleagues/students in their own institutions.

3.4 Developing the researcher practitioner

A series of four workshops were developed and delivered to partners to help them to better understand the concept of the researcher practitioner and to support them in developing the intellectual and research skills to undertake their research project. The workshops developed addressed the following topics;

- The researcher practitioner – researching your practice, how this contributes to professionalism, developing your professional practice;
- Introduction to research methods – refresher workshop - quantitative and qualitative methods, ethical practice, analyzing data;
- Developing the evaluation strategy – how to evaluate the impact of your research, how can you use what you have found out; and
- Dissemination – writing up your research, identifying opportunities for dissemination.

3.5 Supporting the partners

Partners were offered one to one consultancy, provided by the project team, to support them in achieving their project goals. This offered them an opportunity to share their project to date, discuss their evaluation and consider how they will disseminate within their institution. Additionally it supported the partners in developing their skills in undertaking research as it provided customised tutorial support. The partners were

provided with support in writing their 'research briefing', which contributed to the project dissemination strategy.

3.6 Sharing the learning- dissemination

A key outcome from the project was the delivery of a conference and supporting publications. The conference provided a platform to both promote the ETF project and also to showcase the individual action research projects. The conference was advertised to all the partners' providers and to other learning and skills providers within the region. A research briefing was produced by each partner which presented the action research project and recommendations as to how the learning could be used internally and how external organisations could use the findings within their own context. In addition each partner delivered a workshop at the conference.

3.7 Project Evaluation

The overall project evaluation was undertaken to assess how the project achieved its objectives. This included an analysis of the evaluations conducted by each action research project to assess common and specific impacts. Feedback was sought from the project partners, conference attendees and partner organisations to provide a robust and comprehensive review of the project. This is explored in depth in Chapter 5.

4. Summary of literature review

4.1 Methodology for literature review

The methodology for the rapid knowledge review was based on our own knowledge of the field, database searches of British Educational Index and Expanded Academic supplemented by Google and Google scholar. The review was also supplemented by a review of ITE related material on the Ofsted website in order to acknowledge the main issues identified by Ofsted relating to improving quality in the sector. The following keywords were used:

Keywords: initial teacher education (ITE), teachers, further education (FE), initial teacher training, recruitment, education and training, selection, quality, training, workplace learning, work based learning, continuing professional development (CPD), reflective practice, reflective practitioner, professionalism and vocational education, action researcher and post-compulsory education.

The review was particularly interested in research from the UK and from 2010 onwards after the Coalition Government came to power but used earlier and international evidence that illuminated the main areas of discussion, namely quality in ITE, developing the research practitioner and improving professionalism.

Therefore the reviews main research questions are:

- What does Ofsted identify that needs to be improved for the ITE in the learning and Skills Sector?
- How can ITE for the learning and skills sector be professionalised?
- How does being a researcher practitioner contribute to professionalism? (Specifically in FE and vocational education).

The review of Ofsted inspections used the 2009 overview of 2004 to 2008 ITE inspections as a baseline for identifying issues, supplemented by reviewing Ofsted annual reports and the review of Ofsted ITE in learning and skills completed in 2012. Issues for development were further identified by reviewing all Ofsted provider inspections of ITE for providers since the beginning of 2010. Although a new Inspection framework for ITE came into effect it was decided to include everything from 2010 as changes to the way ITE was inspected did not radically impact on the areas for improvement. The Ofsted review of inspections of the further education and skills sector made a number of changes to the way that Ofsted inspect, which included:

- For an institution to be 'outstanding' overall, it must have 'outstanding' teaching, learning and assessment;
- Grade 3 re-titled from 'satisfactory' to 'requires improvement';
- An institution which receives a 'requires improvement' overall judgment will be re-inspected earlier;
- An institution which receives 'requires improvement' overall at its third consecutive inspection will be judged 'inadequate';
- Inspections will take place without notice; and
- Institutions will be asked to provide anonymised summaries of performance management data of teachers, trainers and assessors (Ofsted, 2012).

The review of Ofsted reports highlight a number of areas for improvement which were not directly addressed by this project. They include the following

- ICT skills,
- VLEs,
- Quality and consistency of mentoring.

However, Ofsted also identified a need for improved CPD and ITE which were directly addressed through the project. In order to identify research relating to professionalising ITE, the review gathered evidence relating to how the training of the sector as a whole could be professionalised. The final section explores the role of developing the researcher practitioner, arguing that only the profession itself can develop solutions that will lead to lasting improvement.

4.2 The existing evidence for the need for improvement

4.2.1 Ofsted evaluations of initial teacher education

Ofsted define Initial Teacher Education (ITE) as all programmes of teacher training leading to qualified teacher status for the maintained sector or publicly funded teacher

training for the further education/lifelong learning sector led by higher education institutions.

Ofsted have completed numerous meta-reviews of evaluation studies looking at the overall quality of ITE. The most influential study was in 2003, which painted a damning picture of ITE quality concluding that FENTO standards provided an unsatisfactory foundation for the professional development of FE. This study also found a huge variation in the quality of teacher training, inadequate support and opportunities for trainees to develop their specialist teaching skills (Lucas, 2013).

As already mentioned, the methodology for the review involved reviewing the 2009 Ofsted four yearly review of ITE covering the 2004 to 2008 inspection period for a baseline to identifying broad issues (although the issues identified in the 2009 report were not used in the final paper unless they were still considered an issue in the later reports). The 2009 Ofsted report found that generally the quality of the training was good, and improving, and the quality of the taught element of training was good and continues to improve.

We then evaluated more recent (2010 onwards) Ofsted annual evaluations and annual reports to identify further overarching issues for ITE. We then used these results to compare the issues raised in all Ofsted ITE provider college and provider inspections to see what issues they identified.

Based on the findings from the Ofsted annual reports, we created a table of issues for ITE. We then used this list as a starting point and added to it following a review of individual inspections of ITE from providers of training from 2010 onwards (30 providers of ITE were reviewed), identified from the Ofsted website. Based on the tables we identified issues that were mentioned on more than two occasions from the review to identify areas for development in ITE which are listed and discussed below.

4.3 Improving the training of trainees

4.3.1 Skills and knowledge development

The Ofsted inspections highlighted concerns about the skills of trainees, in particular they recommended a need to monitor the literacy, numeracy and ICT skills of trainees when they start training. In addition, they recommended that more support should be provided for developing ICT skills, and using Virtual Learning Environments. There were also concerns about how trainees transfer the lessons learned in training more successfully in to their teaching practice and this could be supported by mentors.

The inspections also suggested that students needed to have a better understanding of policy and opportunities from non-traditional opportunities that the sector can offer, such as teaching in prisons.

4.3.2 Mentoring

Ofsted inspection reports revealed a concern about the quality and consistency of mentoring given to trainees (14 inspections referred to this). There was particular concern about the quality of subject specific mentoring to trainees, specifically while on placement. To alleviate this, it was recommended that training providers should offer more training to mentors, monitor more closely the quality of mentoring and create a forum for mentors to share good practice. The inspections also revealed a need to use mentors in course design.

4.3.3 Quality improvement for trainees

A recurring theme was the need for providers to encourage students to aim for the highest standards, with good trainees being encouraged to become outstanding and so on. There were various methods discussed under general quality, but better and greater use of individual learning plans or electronic individual learning plans (e-ILPs) was identified as a way to support this, as was using action plans more effectively. Once issues had been identified, it was also thought that agreement was needed between trainees and their managers and the employer for the issues to be addressed through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) or other approaches that would lead to improvement for the trainee. There was also identified a need to better monitor the take up of CPD by trainers.

A number of inspections identified the need for students to teach in a variety of different contexts to broaden their experience. There was concern about the level of quality and monitoring in students feedback, target setting for trainees and how each were monitored. Concern were also raised that at the end of the course teachers did not set further developmental targets based on the professional standards and to plan the next steps for trainees once qualified.

4.3.4 Equality and diversity

Equality and diversity was raised as a concern in recruitment where it was believed it had to be monitored more closely and colleges needed to encourage more diverse applicants for ITE. In addition, five inspections identified the need to include more equality and diversity issues in classroom practice of students. There was also an issue of retention of students from all backgrounds on ITE courses identified through Ofsted annual reports.

4.3.5 Monitoring and quality assurance

Another consistent theme identified was monitoring and quality assurance, which was a concern on two levels; general monitoring of quality assurance for management purposes and monitoring of students across partnerships. A number of providers of ITE were encouraged to monitor more effectively the use of data and to use quality assurance systems more consistently across their practice. This included monitoring the

quality of self-assessment completed by institutions including annual monitoring. The need to improve or develop progress tracking for students more systematically, and monitoring trainee's achievements was also identified. The accuracy and consistency of data monitoring within partnerships for different groups of trainees was raised as an issue. There was also a general feedback that ITE providers needed to learn and share best practice with other providers to improve practice.

4.4 How does being a researcher practitioner contribute to professionalism?

The research base suggests that developing the researcher-practitioner has a number of benefits to the learning and skills sector practice and professionalism. Speaking generally about the value of researcher practitioner status, Neary and Hutchinson (2009) identify that practitioner research forms a vital foundation in the development of professional practice. Referring to the work of Fish (1998) they identify that professional development and practitioner research are synonymous with each other and that practitioner research leads to the development of critical thinking skills and a more reflective approach to work. However, in order for it to flourish it needs the commitment of practitioners and employers alike to be effective.

A recent review of the role of research in teaching by BERA (2014) highlighted four ways that research can contribute to teacher education, these included:

- The content of teacher education programmes may be informed by research, from a range of academic disciplines and epistemological traditions;
- The design and structure of teacher education programmes;
- Teachers and teacher educators can be equipped to engage with and value research; and
- Teachers and teacher educators may be equipped to conduct their own research, individually and collectively, to investigate the impact of particular interventions or to explore the positive and negative effects of educational practice.

However, they also highlighted that practice across the UK is inconsistent with pockets of excellent practice that is not always shared. The BERA review indicated from international practice that evidence informed practice is a hallmark of high performing education systems, but raised concerns that recent reforms could be eroding the role of research in ITE, in particular the shift away from university-led programmes could impact negatively on research capacity, destabilize staffing and erode funding for applied research and they recommended monitoring to ensure this is not happening. BERA also argued that enquiry-based practice needs to be sustained throughout teacher's professional careers including initial teacher education. They also highlighted that research literacy is one of the three pillars of teacher professional identity impacting directly on the other two pillars subject knowledge and classroom practice (Winch et al., 2013).

Scales et al. (2011) argue that teachers are best placed to know about their subjects and their learners' needs within their local contexts. It is in these local contexts that teacher

development must flourish. The basis for the practitioners' researcher role is that an enquiring teacher is more likely to develop enquiring learners. Scales et al. argue that one of the major benefits of practitioner research is that it can inform policy, however they admit that currently this is in theory and not discernible in practice. Harvey and Norman (2007) indicate that a practitioner researcher needs to display a range of social, cultural and interpersonal skills, as well as a tacit knowledge and understanding of their particular workplace and sector to be successful. Scales et al. (2011) also argue that action research is a very effective method for improving all elements of teaching practice (teaching learning and assessment). In addition it is considered as an important feature in any teacher's role and can be instrumental in helping colleges and learning providers to make informed decisions about policy, practice and programmes.

Herbert & Rainford (2014) suggest a number of ways and models that professional learning can be developed within ITE these include:

- Action research;
- Receiving and/or giving on-the-job coaching, mentoring or tutoring;
- Using distance learning materials;
- Peer networks;
- School cluster projects involving collaboration, development and sharing of experience/skills;
- Personal reflection; and
- Collaborative learning.

One of the ten principles to support more effective further education identified by the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC) Teaching and Learning Research Programme (n.d) was 'Depend on teacher learning' where tutors need to continuously develop their knowledge and skill, and adapt and develop their roles, especially through classroom enquiry and other research. They argued this would help them use their professional judgement to identify "what works," in practice and give them the freedom to innovate, and think creativity in supporting learners' needs.

Murray (2010) argued that the development of teacher educators as scholars and researchers is an essential part of professional development which contributes to the professional learning of individuals. It is also important for ensuring thriving teacher education communities, maintaining research-informed teaching in pre-service and in-service courses for teachers, and contributing to the building of capacity of education research. Murray also argued that in order for the practitioner research to be relevant it needs to meet a number of criteria: it should be relevant to the exploration of current issues from teacher educators' lived experience and practices; it should be generative (i.e. grounded in previous research); well designed; theoretically informed; and capable of generating new insights into the work of the individual and of this occupational groups.

Carmichael and Miller (n.d) explain this further arguing that developing as practitioner researchers in further education, staff are challenged to re-examine the nature of their

practice. It also focuses upon the assumptions, the implicit value-judgements that often affect and direct the ways in which practice operates.

Davies et al. (2007) argue that researcher practitioner activities link closely to enhancing their own personal practice, and guarantee that the research is relevant to the practitioner. This gives the teacher greater sense of ownership and commitment to the project and greater pride when it impacts on practice or policy.

Middlewood et al. (1999) identified that there are three levels in which practitioner research can have an influence:

- Changes of attitude, conceptualisation and understanding of the issues under study;
- Small-scale, specific and local embedding of results; and
- Longer term organisational and culture change impacting on policy and practice.

Percy-Smith (2011) identified five major advantages of practitioner research which included:

- A perceived need to develop a body of evidence that is not just about a particular sector but is also of that sector;
- A need for research that is seen to be relevant to the needs and concerns of practitioners;
- A view that developing practitioners' capacities as researchers enhances their professional status (a particular concern of those in the learning and skills sector and one that is reflected among social workers whose professional standing frequently comes under attack);
- Identification of the role of practitioner research as an aspect of developing 'reflective practitioners'; and
- Contributing to a more general 'research mindedness' involving the development of capacities allowing for more critical reading and interpretation of research and consideration of the implications for practice.

In addition, Elliot (2013) highlighted that practitioner based research can influence, leadership development in post-compulsory education. He argues that this kind of research role of learning will allow leaders to identify the important problems and prepare strategies to address these. This approach would question assumptions, provide practical solutions and seek an ethical values-based justification for their own actions and those of others they lead. This would have the advantage of placing learning and the common good at the heart of institutional strategy and in turn raise aspirations and attainments of colleagues and students. Coleman (2007) described similar findings in a school leadership setting and also articulated the value of the researcher practitioner role in reconceptualising what professionalism means.

Ruddock and McIntyre (2007) highlight that discussions with students about learning methods can lead to improvements in teaching, and in particular that the researcher practitioner relationship with students makes this more effective.

Hillier and Morris (2010) suggest that there has been an increase in research practitioner research through activities such as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL) and the National Centre for Research and Development in Literacy, Numeracy and English for Speakers of Other languages (ESoL) (NRDC) and Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN) and through the action research supported by LSIS (LSIS, 2011). Similarly the Institute for Learning (IfL) (2012) identified that the level of research-informed practice, professional development and thinking within further education has increased following support and promotion by IfL, the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS), the Association of Colleges (AoC), the 157 Group and other partners, including many employers.

However Hillier and Morris (2010) point out that the evidence base is still disjointed and does not currently provide a unified evidence base for the sector comparable to the one that exists in Higher Education. They also highlighted that the Learning and Skills Research Network had created a successful model of supporting practitioner research, through regional activities and national conference, partnerships with higher education and funding through the Learning and Skills development Agency and the Higher Education academy (amongst others). They also point to how similar successful models have been developed abroad such as in Australia with the Australian Vocational and Education Training Research Association (AVETRA). They also highlighted that researcher practitioner research is fundamental to reflective practice which in turn can lead to testing out individual ideas with the goal of improving professional practice and the ultimate aim of helping people learn effectively.

4.5 How can ITE for the learning sector be professionalised?

The evidence shows, therefore, that one way to professionalise the sector would be to promote practitioner research and the development of the research practitioner in ITE. Murray and Male (2005) studied teacher educators based on interviews with 28 teacher educators in their first 3 years of working on Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses in England. Specifically this study showed that, despite having previous successful careers in school teaching, the majority of the interviewees took between 2 and 3 years to establish their new professional identities. They faced challenges in two key areas—developing a pedagogy for HE-based ITE work and becoming research active. They argued that sustained induction support for teacher educators in interpreting and understanding both the HE setting and the particular nature of ITE work was essential. They also argued for a re-assessment of the types of induction that would support a novice or reluctant researcher, a re-consideration of the kind of research that is appropriate and useful for new teacher educators as second-order practitioners to conduct, and a realistic re-appraisal of the research outcomes which can be expected from them.

Percy-Smith (2011) produced case studies to show the positive impact of LSIS funded Research Development Fellowships, and concluded that small investment of funds and support had produced tangible outputs including conference presentations, research papers, journal articles and films, as well as teaching, curriculum and CPD materials. There is also evidence that the projects resulted in discernible outcomes for the individual practitioners involved in the programme such as enhanced knowledge and research skills, and changes to teaching and learning practices within their own organisations. In an evaluation of the same LSIS project Percy-Smith found that the researcher-practitioner role had led to improvement in practice within the institutions and with the potential to influence the sector more widely. In so doing they have contributed to both an increased 'research-mindedness' among programme participants and a raising of the status and profile of research about the learning and skills sector.

However there are a number of barriers to the development of the researcher-practitioner. Hamilton et al. (2007) created a summary of the Practitioner-Led Research Initiative (PLRI), which ran from 2004 to 2006, supporting 17 groups of literacy, language and numeracy (LLN) practitioners in designing, developing and completing hands-on research and development projects funded by the National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC). They suggest that a number of issues are important to the success of practitioner research projects including: paid time for practitioners to engage with the research activities; mentoring and advice in relation to research skills; strong central guidelines and a clear structure to the projects; local peer support, effective project management and good communication between all partners (Norman, 2001, 2002, 2003). Carmichael and Miller (n.d) also identified a number of barriers which include cost, time to research, institutional barriers and the slow time taken to have an impact on practice. In addition to the barriers expressed above, Holden & Smith (2009) looking at vocational education in Australia, found that there was an issue of legitimacy of practitioner research (especially in publication of results) with Higher Education not recognising practitioner based research. Solvason and Elliott (2013a) (2013b) highlight the lack of research culture that exists within the learning and skills sector. However, they argue that based on a centralised model of research activity developed by Shamaï and Kfir (2002) it is possible to share good practice from one college to another (initially from a partnership of colleges into carrying out research), and then to expand gradually into other areas increasing the knowledge base. They also argue that the development of research expertise will also develop the professional identity of the individual, enhancing the professional identity of the sector.

It is possible to conclude that there is a growing evidence base on the value of the researcher-practitioner role in the Learning and Skills sector; however, the evidence base is more limited than that for Higher Education. The main advantages of practitioner based research that impact on professionalism are that it:

- Changes the attitude and develops ideas of the practitioner enhancing their own personal practice;
- Enhances the prestige and esteem of the individual—improving their professional identity;
- Creates research that can solve locally contextualised concerns;
- Supports the development of reflective practice;
- Supports the development of professionalism by adding to the knowledge base; and
- In the longer-term, impacts on organisational and cultural change leading to impacting on policy and practice.

However, there are a number of barriers that need to be overcome to achieve this, namely lack of a research culture, lack of time, lack of support and lack of funding to develop research.

4.6 Conclusions

The review has demonstrated a number of areas where ITE can be improved to enhance the professionalisation of the sector. The review of Ofsted inspections of providers revealed there are still a number of areas for improvement as demonstrated through inspections. However, generally there were less issues identified since 2010 than identified in the Ofsted review of inspection for 2004 to 2008 (Ofsted, 2009) suggesting that the professionalisation agenda had had a positive impact. The review of professionalising ITE highlighted that the overriding issue for the sector is how the sector can drive improvement from within. This could be achieved through the utilisation of the new professional standards by the sector, developing reflective practice further to identifying issues and use practitioner research to create solutions. The final section highlighted the leading role the practitioner-research can have in professionalising the sector but that there are a number of barriers to achieving this.

5. Project Evaluation

5.1 Introduction

The final element of the project was to evaluate the impact. This was accomplished using a multi-method approach which included:

- An online survey undertaken by participants;
- An online survey for participants' colleagues who had knowledge of the project;
- Semi-structured telephone interviews undertaken with a sample of participants;
- Assessments of conference materials and presentations;
- Observations at conference;
- Conference feedback forms and more informal feedback, e.g. emails from participants; and
- Observations at a project workshop.

The following sections outline the evaluation methodology and methods. Later sections discuss the outcomes with reference to Guskey's (2000) five critical levels for evaluating professional development (see below). Conclusions are then described.

5.2 Methodology

As outlined in Chapter 3, the project had three interconnected components:

- Four workshops which introduced the notion of the researcher practitioner, research methods, evaluation methods, and dissemination;
- Consultancy support provided by the project team to enable participants achieve their goals and develop research briefs; and
- Dissemination, both within organisations and to external dissemination audiences, primarily, in the first instance, through the project conference.

It can be seen that the project was well designed, providing participants with the knowledge, skills and support required to identify a research problem, design an action research study, undertake the study, evaluate the study, and disseminate the findings. The question is then: did the project achieve its aim to create a culture of continuous career lifelong learning that starts with ITE and embeds an influence on the profession through encouraging others towards professionalism through the utilisation of networks of learning relationships to transfer and create new professional practice? In order to answer that question, an evaluation model based on Guskey's approach to evaluating the professional development of teachers was developed. Guskey proposed that there are five critical levels to the evaluation of professional development in education:

- Level 1: Participants' reactions
- Level 2: Participants' learning
- Level 3: Organisation support and change
- Level 4: Participants' use of new knowledge and skills
- Level 5: Student learning outcomes

The following table summarises the Guskey's model as it has been applied to this evaluation project.

Table 1: Adaptation of Guskey’s evaluation model to the ETF Project evaluation

Evaluation Level	What Questions Are Addressed?	What are the main tools for gathering information?	What is Measured or Assessed?	How Will Information Be Used?
1. Participants’ Reactions	Why did they get involved? What did they hope to achieve? Did they like it? Was their time well spent? Did the material make sense? Was the leader knowledgeable and helpful? Were the arrangements well made? Were networks expanded?	On-line self-completion survey Semi-structured telephone interviews with participants	Initial satisfaction with the experience	To improve future programme design and delivery
2. Participants’ Learning	Did participants acquire the intended knowledge and skills (relating to professionalism and continuous career learning)? Did participants’ engage in peer learning?	On-line self-completion survey Participant reflections (in interview) Participant action research briefings	New knowledge and skills of participants	To improve future program content, format, and organization
3. Organisation Support & Change	What was the impact on the organisation? Was the support public and overt? Were sufficient resources made available? Were successes recognized and shared? Will changes be sustained? Will impact on student learning be evaluated?	On-line self-completion surveys for participants and their colleagues Semi-structured telephone interviews with participants Participant action research briefings	The organisation’s advocacy, support, accommodation, facilitation, and recognition. Impact on sustainability Impact on dissemination	To document and improve organizational support To inform future change efforts
4. Participants’ Use of New Knowledge and Skills	Did participants effectively apply the new knowledge and skills? How are participants using what they learned? What challenge are participants encountering? What lessons have been learned?	On-line self-completion survey Participant reflections (in interview) Participant action research briefings	Degree and quality of implementation Impact on supply of teachers including those of English and maths and teachers working with learners with LDD.	To document and improve the implementation of program content

5. Student learning outcomes	Have student learning outcomes been assessed? Will any new CDP or ITE programmes resulting for the project assess student learning outcomes?	Participant reflections (in interview) Participant action research briefings	Degree of progress towards measuring learning outcomes	To improve future programme design and delivery
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The evaluation was designed to explore all levels. Given the timeframe of the project it was not always possible to identify impacts on student learning outcomes. However, the evaluation explored whether it was possible for participants to plan to evaluate impacts in the short, medium or longer term.

5.3 Methods

The following data collection methods were used:

- Participants' survey: a self-completion online survey was available to all participants in the programme. This was uploaded to Survey Monkey, an online software package, and the link to the survey emailed to project participants. Questions explored all five of Guskey's critical levels.

The link to the online participants' survey was sent to 18 people who had participated in project workshops and one trainee teacher who also participated in the project (a total of 19 potential respondents). The survey contained 35 questions, including questions on name, workplace, etc. Some questions, e.g. 'Did you find the workshops enjoyable?' (exploring Guskey's Level 1) were answered by a five-point Likert scale (Not at all enjoyable, Slightly enjoyable, Somewhat enjoyable, Very enjoyable, Extremely enjoyable) with an optional comment box. Other questions, such as 'What lessons have been learned by you?' requested open-ended text responses. At the time of writing, 14 responses had been received, including at least one from each partner training organisation and one from the trainee.

- Colleagues' survey: a self-completion online survey delivered to participants' colleagues. Respondents to the participants' survey were asked to nominate a colleague within their organisation with whom they worked on the action research project but who would not consider themselves to be part of the project. Those participants who completed this section provided a name and email contact and the colleagues were sent a link to their online survey which was also hosted on Survey Monkey.

The colleagues' survey contained a total of 17 questions, including questions on name and workplace, etc. All questions requested open-ended text responses. The questions mostly explored the organisational impact of the project (Guskey's level 3).

Seven respondents nominated a colleague. Because of duplication from some organisations, six colleagues were sent the link to the questionnaire. At the time of writing, and despite reminders being issued, only two responses had been received and one had not been fully completed.

- Semi-structured telephone interview: a telephone or face to face interview with project participants, selected by the project manager to

represent each partner, who had been actively engaged in the project and whose action research exemplifies the issues facing initial teacher educators and initial teacher education. These interviews enabled selected participants to focus in more detail on their experience of the project.

The interviews mostly explored Guskey's levels 2 to 4 but also discussed plans to understand the impacts on their learners.

Seven telephone interviews were planned and undertaken, including six with workshop attendees and one with a trainee teacher. The workshop attendees were selected because they had attended each workshop and represented each of the six partner organisations. The interviews were timed to enable online responses to be analysed and for issues and topics raised to be discussed in greater depth. All questions requested narrative responses. The telephone interviews were all digitally recorded and resulting interview notes were assessed.

- Observation at the final conference: including the following:
 - Observation of three presentations, with a focus on how the participants talk about and reflect upon their own professional development and professional practice;
 - Observation of two Keynote speeches; and
 - Observation of the Panel Session

The conference, titled *Inquiring Teachers - Inquiring Learners* took place at the University of Derby's Enterprise Centre on Wednesday 16 July. A total of 47 delegates attended.

Observation notes were taken and an audio recording was made of the Panel Session. The analysis was particularly informed by Guskey's levels 2 and 4 with some reference to level 5.

- Assessment of conference materials: an assessment of the research briefings developed by participants for the final conference. The following eight research briefs were presented at the conference:
 - To study or not to study: how can we motivate ESOL learners
 - Reflect, reflect, reflect: exploring the impact of social media on teacher trainees experience of reflection
 - To identify the impacts on attendance, retention and progression as a result of home visits to learners
 - Does adopting a transformational leadership approach to entry level learners promote independent learning, develop a sense of responsibility and establish moral accountability towards their own learning, plus motivate them to achieve a higher grade than initially predicted?
 - The end of 'ping-pong' questioning - developing techniques for assertive questioning
 - How youth work practice can influence engagement within teaching and learning, impacting on retention and achievement

- The impact of ITE observation processes on the development of observation grade profiles for employed mandatory trainees, employed self-funding trainees and voluntary self-funded trainees
- Ambiguous learning

The research briefings were assessed, with reference to the aims and objectives of the project, in order to provide an insight into the depth of exploration of issues within teacher training. A content analysis was undertaken using Guskey's critical levels as an analytical framework. This mostly related to Guskey's levels 2 and 4 with some reference to level 5.

- Conference and informal feedback. An eight-question anonymous evaluation form was supplied to all conference delegates in their conference pack and a request for them to be completed was made at the end of the conference Panel Session. Most questions were in the form of Likert questions with space for additional comments. Eighteen completed forms were returned (38%) and the data was input into Microsoft excel for analysis. Although mostly related to satisfaction with the conference, the evaluation form also asked questions which addressed Guskey's critical levels 2 and 4. Additional feedback in the form of emails to project staff were also assessed. They mostly address Guskey's levels 1 and 2.
- Observations at a project workshop, 16 June 2014, at the University of Derby, Kedleston Road. Primarily designed to introduce the evaluation project to participants, evaluation of the workshop also related to Guskey's levels 1, 2 and 4.

5.4 Evaluation of the ETF project

This section draws together the findings from the various research methods used. It is structured around Guskey's five critical levels for evaluating professional development.

5.4.1 Level 1: Participants' reactions

Participants' reactions were assessed through a range of questions, primarily from the online survey. Relevant questions included the following:

- Why did you get involved initially?
- What did you hope to achieve when you first started?
- Did you find the workshops enjoyable?
- Did you feel that your attendance at the workshops was time well spent?

Four of the 13 respondents said that they were asked to join the project by their manager, although only one said that to do so was "mandatory". Others volunteered for various reasons, for example one respondent was "*interested in [the] idea*", another volunteered because they were "*keen to work collaboratively with similar organisations and also to support the ETF*", and another wanted to "*enhance my professional practice*". One participant was not initially going to be

involved but *“a colleague volunteered and then pulled out and as I was his line manager I stepped in. Having taken part I am so please to have accidentally fell into it”*.

It is interesting that, although their routes into the project varied, all respondents except one set off with a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve. The exception, although they had volunteered for the project, *“wasn’t sure what to expect or gain”*. One person, whose involvement in the project was made mandatory by their organisation, hoped that the project would *“help me to find employment in the university”*. Others wanted to:

- **Improve their practice**, e.g. *“Deeper learning into my subject area and an opportunity to develop practices”*, *“I wanted to carry out research on an area of teaching and learning that raised further questions and potential for development”* and *“Improvements in teaching and learning practice that can be shared across college”*;
- **Learn from others**, *“Find how others think about teaching and learning”*;
- **Or had multiple reasons for participating**: *“Hoped to network with other lecturers and organisations, gain more knowledge and improve on teaching practices”*, *“I hoped to represent my organisation well, to be motivated, to engage in scholarly activity and mostly to improve practice through action research”* and *“Networking is important and I am interested in producing work that other Colleges can use”*.

Explaining further, during a telephone interview, why they decided to become involved in the project, one participant commented that:

“First of all I now, have an idea, of what research involves in terms of how to do it effectively, so for me it was more for professional development. It was also an opportunity to do something that would impact on our organisation, so it was kind of two-fold really, it was a project to do in collaboration with the university but it would impact the operations of the business, and really to influence change”.

This idea of influencing change links directly to Carmichael and Miller’s (n.d.) assertion that developing as a practitioner researcher challenges staff to re-examine the nature of their practice. The notion of influencing change was cited by others as a reason for getting involved, for example: *“what we wanted to achieve was a change in practice within teacher ed within our organisation”* as was the analogous notion of testing a topic, thus: *“we wanted to see how it would stand up to testing”* and *“I wanted to prove that it worked”*.

For these, and other, participants the challenge of re-examining their practice was an important factor but also, for some, the opportunity arose at just the right time:

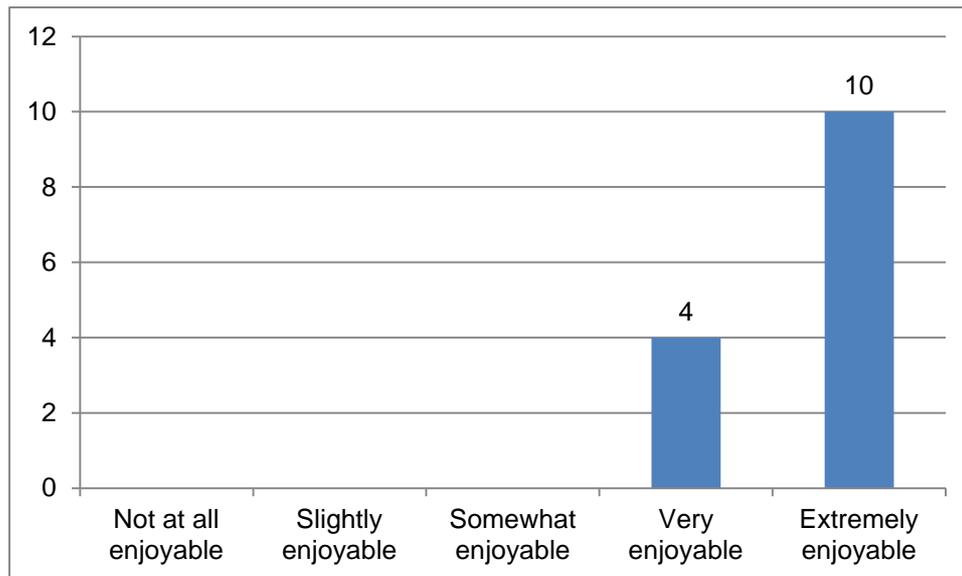
“I was very, very keen to start writing journal articles and doing research papers. I felt that, I’d got my [postgraduate qualification] and I was just ready for some more learning, you know, on a personal note rather than a career note, I was just ready for something... So for me it just fell, really spot-on, at the right time”.

This participant noted further that it was not often that teachers in the Further

Education sector were able to participate in a project of this nature: *“It was quite exciting, a little bit different; we’re not given that opportunity everyday working in FE”* a point reiterated by another participant who said, *“we really enjoyed the opportunity to get involved in proper research. It was very active research, very practical stuff”*.

All participants clearly found the workshops enjoyable as can be seen from the following Figure.

Figure 1: Did you find the workshops enjoyable?

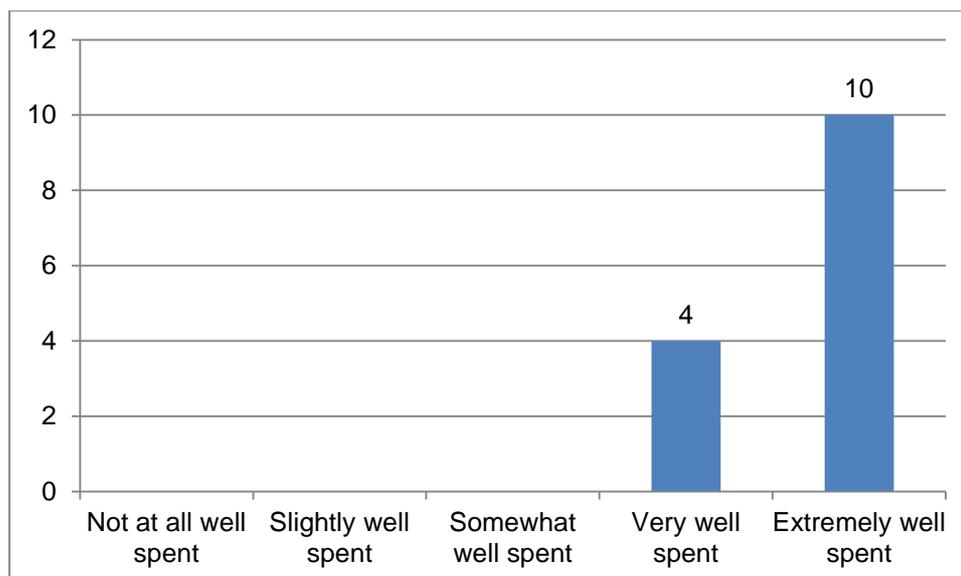


Source 1: Online participants’ survey

Ten respondents found the workshops very enjoyable and four found them extremely so. Comments included *“insightful”*, *“valuable opportunity to share views / ideas and hear other people’s experiences / perspectives”*, and: *“I left ‘buzzing’. I was motivated and used so much of what I learnt from the whole group in my practice. I teach research methods and my students loved to hear about the sessions. if I am ever involved again I would like to keep a blog so that more people can benefit”*.

As can be seen from the following Figure. it was also clear that participants felt that time attending the workshops was well-spent.

Figure 2: Did you feel that your attendance at the workshops was time well spent?



Source 2: Online participants' survey

Only one comment was provided in response to this question, *“it was hard to find time as a manager BUT I attended almost all of the sessions and found them very informative and inspirational”*.

Participants' reactions: summary

After observing a workshop, the final in the series but the only one observed for this evaluation, the evaluator made the following notes:

- Enthusiasm of participants
- Engagement - full
- Willingness to improve practice

It is clear from the quotes above that all were enthusiastic, actively engaged, and wanted to improve practice. All participants reported that they had enjoyed the project workshops and found that attending them was time well spent. It is perhaps striking that although not all participants volunteered for the project, almost all, even those for whom participation was mandatory or were 'volunteered' by a manager, had a reasonably clear idea of what they wanted to achieve. It will be shown in later sections of this report that participants did achieve their aims.

5.4.2 Level 2: Participants' learning

Level 2 aims to find “the relationship between what was intended and what was achieved” (Guskey, 2000, p.122). While Level 1 is about participants' satisfaction, Level 2 aims to identify if the intended knowledge and skills have been acquired. This has been assessed through the following methods:

- Online survey
- Interviews with project participants
- Analysis of research briefs

- Conference evaluation forms
- Observation at the conference

In addition, the factors which might have promoted effective learning are considered.

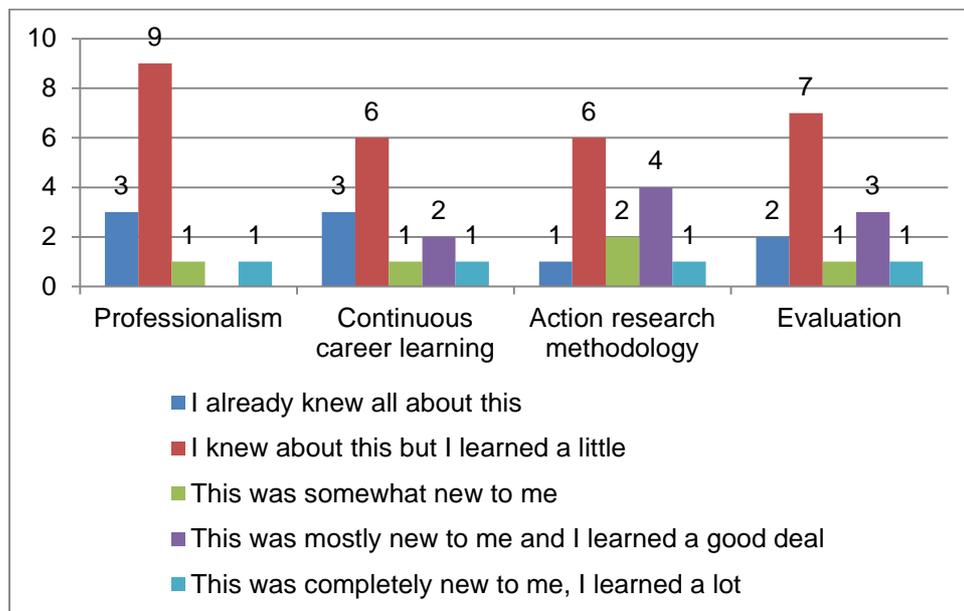
Respondents reported learning in two main areas:

- **Professional knowledge** which would contribute to their practice: “From our project I learnt that questioning is valuable and an under utilised tool” and “How much more important reflection is than I originally thought”; and
- **Action research methods**: “I gained a better insight into the detailed research and presentation required for an effective action research project” and “Evaluation techniques. Library services and action research methodology”.

One participant, reflecting on their learning, stated “I am always willing to enhance my own learning and this [ETF project] has supported me, challenged me and developed my skills”. Another observed that they had learnt, “So much. I really learnt the value of scholarly activity. The knowledge I gained about differing practices, attitudes and values of organisations. I also learnt about the ETF and their role, leading me to further research”.

When participants were asked to gauge the depth of their learning about professionalism, continuous career learning, action research methodology and evaluation, the most common response was that they knew about the topic but learned a little (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Do you feel that you learned more than you knew already about the following?



Source 3: Online participants’ survey

Figure 3 also shows that action research methodology was ‘mostly’ new to four participants and evaluation ‘mostly’ new to three. One participant reported that

all topics were completely new to them. Participants who reported that they already knew all about a topic, e.g. professionalism or continuous career learning, tended to report that they learnt about action research methodology and/or evaluation and vice versa. This shows that the project provided opportunities for all participants to develop knowledge in areas in which they had some or no previous knowledge.

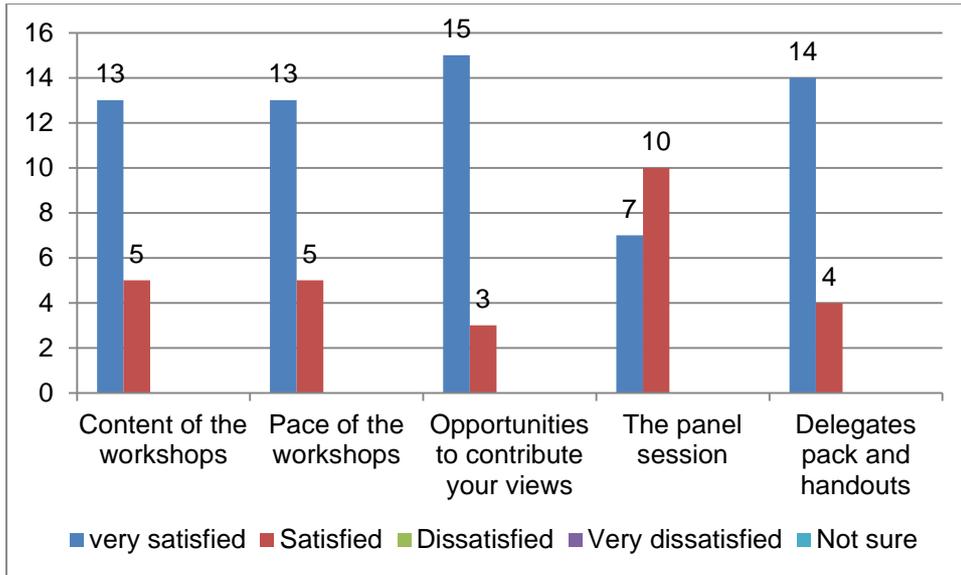
The project was designed to enable participants to identify a relevant topic, investigate it further and then summarise and present their findings. Project research briefings were therefore essentially summaries of participants' learning, not only about the subject matter but also about presenting findings in a succinct manner. A participant reported that this was valuable and that learning would be transferred to their everyday role, they learnt:

“how to create research briefings, I thought that was quite a real good session and I took that back in terms of how we can present things to our senior leadership team in different ways. So if we've got a suggestion or an idea and its factual, how we could present it by creating a paper or a research brief ... now I've got the skills to be able to do that”

It is clear from the research briefings that participants were able to effectively summarise their findings and reflect on their research. One briefing presents the study rather than the findings but that has been supplemented by a fuller research paper. Otherwise, all briefings introduce the topic, explore the rationale and current research in the field, and describe the research project and its findings. Not all explicitly describe the next steps that will be taken with the research, although that is often implied in the findings. Where they do so, it is clear that there is an intention to implement the research findings and to further study the impacts.

A test of the effectiveness of learning is if conference delegates were persuaded that they would be able to use the studies in their practice or their organisations. The following Figure shows that all those who completed conference evaluation forms were either very satisfied or satisfied with the content and pace of the workshops and felt that they had opportunities to contribute.

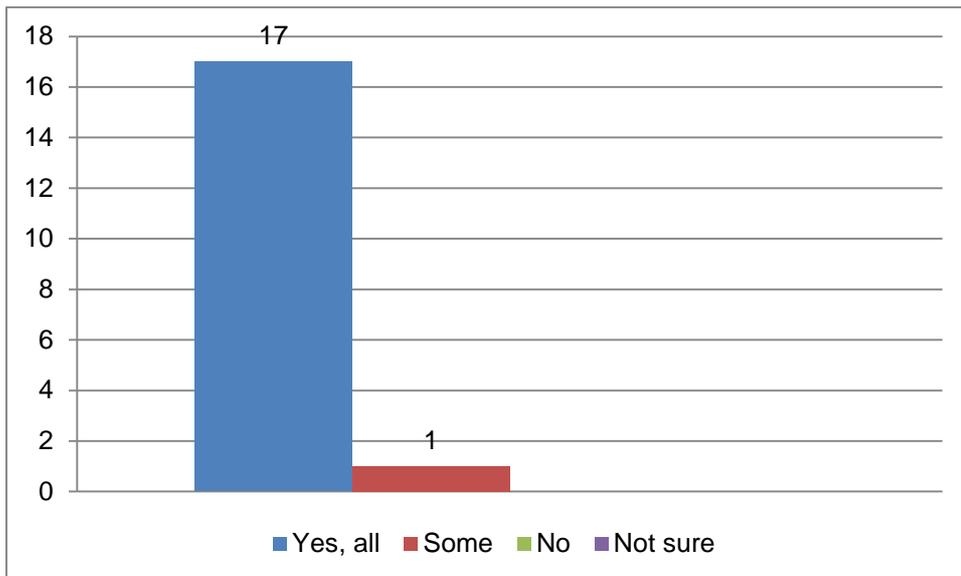
Figure 4: How satisfied were you with the following aspects of the Conference?



Source 4: Conference evaluation forms

All delegates reported that the conference had met all or some of its objectives and was either useful or very useful (see the following figures).

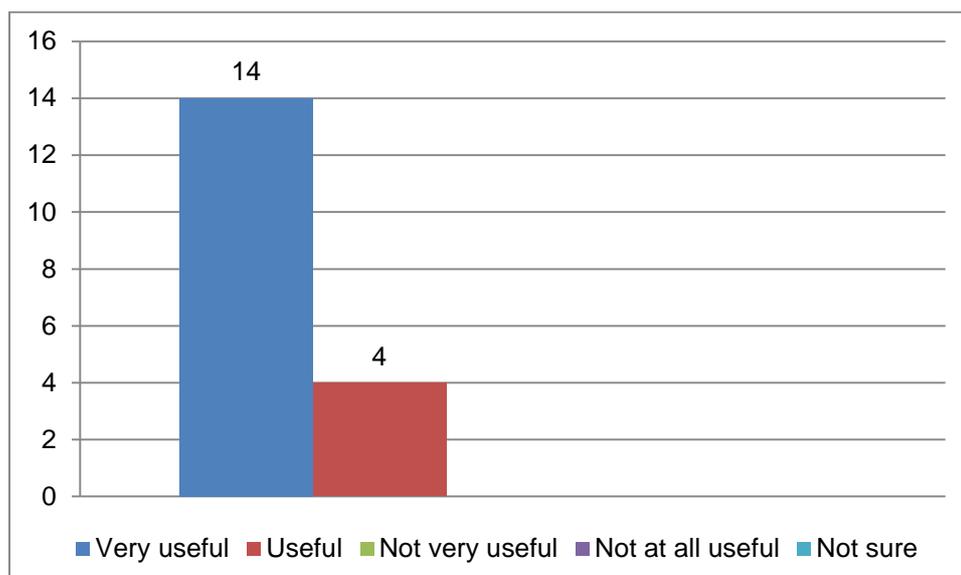
Figure 5: In your opinion, did the Conference meet its objectives?



Source 5: Conference evaluation forms

Figure 6: How useful was the Conference in relation to your current role and/or

interests?



Source 6: Conference evaluation forms

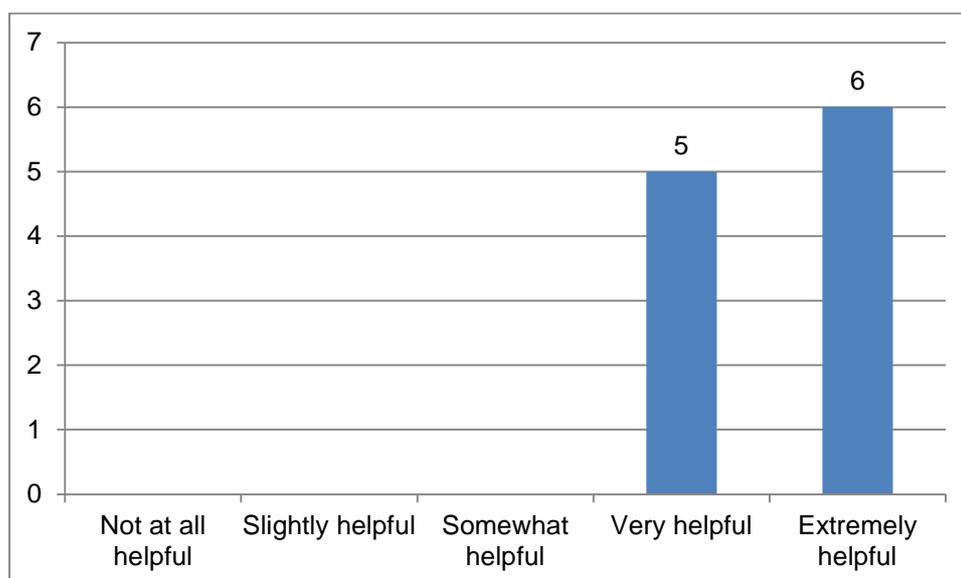
The evaluation forms which were returned covered all conference workshops, that is to say that every workshop was ticked as being attended by at least one person and therefore all workshops are represented in the above responses. All respondents who completed evaluation forms, except one who left the section blank, said that they intended to apply the knowledge and skills from the conference to their work situation or personal development. It should be noted that some who submitted evaluation forms were project participants. The forms were anonymous but a rough, though not accurate, guide is that 13 out of 18 people ticked that they attended three workshops whereas those who were presenting only had the opportunity to attend two (although some might have ticked that they 'attended' the workshop which they were presenting). Nonetheless, it is encouraging that such a high number of delegates (participants or otherwise) intend to apply their learning from the conference in their work or personal development situations.

The evaluator observed three conference workshops and it was clear that those presenting were confident in their knowledge and could clearly explain their research using a range of presentation methods. Questioning in all workshops observed by the evaluator was brisk and it appeared that, had more time been allocated, the discussions could have continued (as many did over lunch and coffee). It is therefore clear that learning, in both subject matter and research and dissemination methods, has been achieved.

What factors might have contributed to effective learning? As can be seen above, many participants were motivated to participate in the project, for example either through personal reasons, such as wishing to become more engaged in research, or professional reasons, such as wanting to improve practice. For some, therefore, it seems that having the opportunity to participate was itself a

motivating factor. Additionally, as is also shown above, there was a very high satisfaction rate with the project. It is also reasonably clear that those who had one-to-one support from the project team (eleven out of fourteen respondents) valued the support and found that it was either very or extremely helpful in terms of delivering their project.

Figure 7: How helpful was that support in terms of delivering your project?



Source 7: Online participants' survey

Comments included:

"Pete was supportive, encouraging and offered advice and guidance, Pete was interested in the overall project and how the project would make an impact to the organisation. Pete spoke as we walked the organisation to staff and students - which was a great opportunity to see / reflect on the project in practice"

And, *"Siobhan was very supportive and also supported me with other employment issues to support my development"*. Others commented that *"guidance was extremely clear and useful"* and that the team were, *"Flexible, accommodating and very supportive"* and *"the team were really flexible and supported by phone, email and one-to-one face to face"*. An email correspondent stated:

"It has been such a brilliant experience. Thank you so much to two of the most inspiring people I have ever met. I was once told every person you meet leaves an imprint on who you are. It's a delight to take a little piece of your knowledge, enthusiasm and inspiration with me".

It appears likely, then, that a combination of personal and professional motivation, supported by an attentive and expert team, encouraged learning to take place. Participants also noted that, although finding time to engage was sometimes a barrier to participation, the delimited nature of the project was itself a motivating factor. The fact that participant's managers were sometimes

involved (as is shown in the next section) might also have motivated participants.

Participants' learning: summary

It is clear that learning took place. The project enabled participants to explore and learn about a topic that was relevant to their professional area and to develop skills and experience in a research methodology which would enable effective investigation to take place. In addition, the project was designed to support participants to summarise and disseminate their research which offered opportunities for reflection and consolidation.

It seems likely that a combination of personal and professional motivation supported by effective guidance promoted learning on the project. The delimited nature of the project, which supported participants to have a clear goal and the 'end products' of a research briefing and conference presentation, probably also aided learning because it required participants to be confident about their topics. Although the project was designed to conclude with the research briefing and conference, it was clear that participants did not view the conclusion of the project as the end of their research. All participants reported that they would incorporate it into their own practice or into their organisations: all online survey respondents answered 'Yes' to the question, 'Do you think you will be able to use the outcomes of your project in the future? The ways they intend to do so are explored further in a later section. The next section explores organisational support, Guskey's Level 3.

5.4.3 Level 3: Organisation support and change

It is shown above that participants joined the project for a number of personal and professional reasons which included aims to improve their practice and to effect organisational change. This section assesses if organisational support has enabled participants to achieve those aims.

There were two levels of organisational support in evidence during this project: organisational support that enabled people to participate, and organisational support to enable change in practice to occur. Both are addressed in this section. A motivating factor for many participants was that the project would enable personal and or organisational change to occur (see above). Individuals can sometimes change their practice without overt organisational support, depending on the degree of autonomy they are able to exercise¹, but in order to promote change at the level of policies, procedures and system, organisational support is a requirement.

¹ See Felstead, Fuller, Jewson and Unwin (2009) *Improving Working as Learning*, Routledge: London and New York for a discussion of the ways that organisations promote or discourage 'discretion'. Discretion is defined as 'the degree of autonomy and responsibility exercised by

In this report, organisational support and change have been assessed through the following methods:

- Participants' online survey
- Colleagues' online survey
- Interviews with project participants
- Analysis of research briefs
- Conference evaluation form

When asked, 'Was the project supported by your employer organisation?' eleven people answered 'Yes' but there were two 'No' responses. However, one of those was from the student learner on placement who was not supported by an organisation, therefore only one of the eligible participants reported that they were not supported. Although a small percentage, this raised questions about the level of support which participants should expect from organisations, particularly given that partner organisations received a bursary. This participant stated that,

"I was never briefed on why the uni contacted [the employer], I was never briefed on what the project was going to be about or who was going to be involved. It was pretty much 'can you just turn up at Derby University for this action research project there that we have been asked to participate in?'"

This participant recommended that if the project is further developed, expectations about organisational involvement and support are clearly set out prior to their engagement.

Other participants reported that one of the main ways that their organisation supported them was by allowing varying degrees of time to participate:

"Allowing time to get involved", "Allowing me to attend", and "They gave me time to carry out the action research". As well as allowing time for the research to be undertaken and/or to attend meetings, some organisations also helped with other activities such as promoting dissemination: *"Time allowed to complete the project. Project findings to be shared with other members of the team for good practice".* While others had the active involvement of directors and managers throughout:

"Regional CPD event - where young people were involved. All front line staff were invited to attend the event ... [Senior Management Team] signed off the project proposal. The Managing Director has kept in contact as well as the Head of Teaching and Learning to offer support".

For most projects, organisations supported with resources such as rooms for meetings, access to telephone and internet facilities, photocopying, etc., and, key to the success of some projects, access to learners.

Although 'time' was the most cited resource offered by organisations to participants, finding sufficient time to fully engage was also considered by interviewees to be the greatest challenge associated with the project. It was clear that the time allocated by employers was less than the time needed for

participants to complete the project. For example, one participant observed, “*I suppose it's having time to be able to put aside to work on it and, you know, really get into it. That was a challenge, going on for six months*”. Another stated that although finding time to undertake their action research was not a problem, because it fit into their everyday practice, “*the issue was the writing it up and having the time to sit there, get my head together, you know, and think about how I was going to write it up and I just literally squashed it in*”. Nonetheless, 12 of the 13 respondents reported that sufficient resources had been made available. It appears then, that, in most cases, resources were made available to support participants in the project, albeit that participants needed extra time to complete all the required components. It can therefore be concluded that, in the majority of cases, organisational support enabled people to participate. The question is then, did the project promote organisational change, and if so, what factors might have supported such change?

Participants were asked, in the online survey, three consecutive questions about impact and change:

- What was the impact on the organisation?
- Will changes be sustained?
- Will impact on student learning be evaluated?

The questions seem to conflate ‘impact’ with ‘change’ but it became clear during the evaluation that different participants had considered ‘impact’ and ‘change’ in different ways. For some, organisational change has occurred, or is expected in the short-to-medium term² but they viewed Impact as something that might occur in the longer term as a result of those changes. As one respondent noted when asked if the project had had an impact, “*Not yet - but the work will be built into organisational CPD*” and therefore changes to organisational CPD could impact on learning and teaching in the longer term. However, for some respondents, organisational change is discussed as being the impact. For example, some participants delivered ITE and were able to effect change and that change was also the impact they sought to achieve. Therefore some participants report a positive impact, e.g. that as a result of the project changes would be made to teaching practice and to CPD as learning is integrated into educational systems although others, even though changes had been made, reported that impact, by which they appeared to mean longer term impact, had not been achieved. Nonetheless, change and/or impact has been identified. One participant stated:

“The impact has been significant. Following the project the staff development sessions delivered to HE sessions at [the organisation] were based on some of the sessions I had with Peter and Siobhan. The event I ran was called the ‘Enquiring Practitioner’. It has highlighted a need for scholarly activity time”.

² For some there has been immediate change but it will not be fully implemented until

Another participant observed that their project, which directly involved student teachers, had had: *“a direct impact on delivery and on students really, student teachers. Because they are given a live research project to be part of, it sets them an example, it gets them engaged in the concept of research and scholarly activity, creates debate, all that kind of thing. And then the obvious other benefit to it was us actually having some analysis of the impact ... on teacher training. It allowed us to do things like curriculum plan differently, to look at inconsistency across courses, and it’s really made me look at how long the programmes are and how we offers the programmes ... whether there’s a better way of doing what we are doing”*

Therefore, as a result of that project, there has been impact at the level of promoting practitioner research, through enabling student teachers to engage in a live research project, and also direct impact on ITE and how it is, and will in the future be, delivered.

All research briefings showed that there was potential for organisational change to occur as a result of the studies, and in some cases change had occurred or there were concrete plans to implement change. For example, one organisation has assessed its safeguarding policies as a result of the research, others have, or plan to, implement new CPD and/or ITE across their departments or whole organisations. Some of the smaller-scale studies, i.e. those with a smaller sample size, suggested that the innovation which was implemented could be effective if implemented across the organisation but it is clear that more research would be needed before organisational change could occur.

It appears likely that organisational change can occur more quickly if senior management are involved in the project, and that view was supported by interviewees, for example, one manager who was involved in the project noted that:

“That’s the advantage of me being in the position I’m in because I can do that, I can more or less decide... I can’t half influence [staff training]. So, we’ve done this project [and] because I’m on the management team, I’ve been able to take interim reports to the management team, I’ve been able to talk about it, I’ve been able to make quite a bit of it”.

The manager observed that as a consequence:

“we’re going to cascade the [technique] training by getting people to actually use it, then, in the lesson observations that we do, were going to be looking at who is using [the technique], talking to students about it. So seeing whether staff are using it and seeing whether students like it.”

The ETF project was successful in recruiting people with managerial roles (nine of the 14 respondents to the online survey indicated that they have management or directorial responsibilities) and were therefore well placed to implement change. Nonetheless, the research showed that all participants took a strategic approach to the project, aiming to improve practice and, potentially, teacher education, through their activities.

Organisation support and change: summary

One participant reported that their organisation had not supported them through the project and observed that, if the project is further developed, expectations for organisational involvement and support should be clearly set out prior to their engagement. All other respondents reported that they had been supported and that resources, particularly time resources, have been made available.

Organisational change has clearly occurred with often significant changes made to policies, CPD and ITE. The evaluation appears to indicate that organisational change can be more readily effected if managers are involved, either directly or through close cooperation with the project. It is not yet clear that the organisational changes which have been achieved will lead to positive longer term impact for the ultimate target group of learners. However, given that innovations are being implemented as a result of action research undertaken within the organisational settings in which they are to be mainstreamed, the potential for positive impact in the longer term appears good. There is clearly an expectation from participants that the organisational changes being implemented will lead to positive impacts in student learning in the longer term and this is discussed further in the following section. 'Level 5: Student learning outcomes' later in this report includes a discussion of plans that are set in place to measure those impacts. Change has also occurred at the level of individual practitioners and this is discussed further in the next section.

5.4.4 Level 4: Participants' use of new knowledge and skills

Evaluation at Level 4 is concerned with if, and if so how, participants in professional development are using their learning. This section has been assessed through the following methods:

- Participants' online survey
- Colleagues' online survey
- Interviews with project participants
- Analysis of research briefs

Guskey's (2000) Level 4 tends to assume that participants in professional development in education are teachers or trainers who will gain knowledge and skills in a teaching method or process which would then (hopefully) be incorporated into their practice. This project was different in that it aimed to promote, in a very practical way, an attitude: that of the inquiring practitioner. Nonetheless, it is useful to assess if participants are using, or given that the project has recently completed, plan to use, the new knowledge and skills which earlier sections of this report showed that participants had gained. Some participants in this project have managerial roles rather than, or, in some cases, as well as teaching roles. As noted above, they have been successful in using their new knowledge and skills to effect organisational change in the form

of changes to CPD and ITE. Those changes might then lead to improvements in teaching and training which will, in turn, improve learning (if participants use their new knowledge and skills) but those improvements will be longer term impacts. Thus, the new knowledge and skills are being utilised, but, in some cases, not to change their own teaching practice but to promote improvements in others in the longer term. This is a key achievement of the project: that it has enabled potential positive change to be cascaded throughout departments and organisations, often at multiple sites, and in one case, beyond the East Midlands region.

However, there have also been changes to individual practice. As one participant observed in their research briefing:

"I am conducting the ... procedure with all my learners who are currently on programme ... This has allowed me to support others and re-engage them back onto the course and ensure that there is a constant communication between ourselves".

Participating in the project workshops also enabled participants to learn from others and to possibly incorporate elements of the methods they were assessing into their practice:

"They were valuable things to explore and maybe going forward in my teaching career I will probably look into a little bit further and apply it to my teaching role".

Another participant observed that:

"The one thing I liked the most about that [ETF] project was that it gives you something tangible. You can leave a meeting ... you can actually use it. For me that's how CPD should be. You should be able to go in [and] get something out of it that you can use with students".

Delegates at the project conference also indicated that they would be incorporating elements of the project into their work situation; all except one stating that that they intended to implement at least one innovation.

However, the main aim of this project, it could be argued, was not to teach teachers teaching methods, but to enable people to participate in, and develop skills and knowledge in, action research, albeit action research which was designed to address teaching or training issues. It is that skill, to be an inquiring practitioner which many participants will continue to use. For example, one participant observed that:

"... it allows me as a practitioner to reflect on my practice and try and think of ways in which it can be improved or changed or certain aspect that are missing which can be kind of targeted more, to look at it and investigate further"

Another participant noted in their research briefing that not only would they continue to use a research-based approach, they would improve the methods used in order to obtain more valid results: *"I would also carry out the research on a more longitudinal basis by observing participants on a 6 monthly basis to monitor their behaviour and determination in working towards their desired*

goals”.

Where a project has led to organisational change, there are clear plans to evaluate the outcomes. Methods of evaluation that will be used include focus groups with trainees and student learners (the ultimate target group), student feedback and reflections. Key indicators that were also mentioned by interviewees were retention and progression rates, as one participant explained, *“If these principles are applied, it will retain more young people and retention in FE is key because if you don’t retain them you lose 50% of your funding. Therefore if we are to apply this practice, hopefully we will see increased retention ... achievement rates will increase as well”*.

Another argued that, *“It [the innovation] does work. And I can actually imagine that if they don’t continue with it they will see negative effects in terms of progression rates”*

The evaluation attempted to assess if the project had implications for teachers in English, maths and those of people with learning disabilities and difficulties (LDD). Typical of the responses was that *“the research looks at the engagement and motivation of trainee teachers who would come from each of those settings”* and that therefore it did indeed have implications and relevance. However, a number of respondents noted that they did not have direct experience of those areas. Although the project did involve some student teachers who worked with people with LDD and in a range of subjects, including English and maths, it can be concluded that the project was successful in enabling participants to use their new knowledge and skills to effect positive change in all subjects and with many learners but that it did not specifically address those areas. **Participants’ use of new knowledge and skills: summary**

It is clear that participants have used their new knowledge and skills gained through this project, either to influence change at organisational level or to improve their practice. It is a key achievement of this project that it has enabled potential positive change to be cascaded throughout departments and organisations. Although clearly a professional development project, the ETF project did not, like some, aim to improve one aspect of practice but rather to promote the use of inquiry to improve professional practice as a whole, for example by improving ITE and/or CPD but also by promoting practitioner research to inform practice. It is positive that the project has been successful in promoting action research as a method to develop practice. However, as Guskey (2000) argues, participants’ use of knowledge and skills cannot be fully assessed immediately after a professional development exercise. It will take time to be absolutely assured that the knowledge and skills gained continue to be used and that they continue to be effective.

5.4.5 Level 5: Student learning outcomes

The final of Guskey’s (2000) levels assesses if the implementation of skills and

knowledge gained through professional development in education has been effective in improving student learning outcomes. As noted above, it is not yet possible to fully assess if there have been such improvements. However, the evaluation was able to assess if there is potential to measure improvements in student learning outcomes and if plans to do so were incorporated into projects. Assessment of Level 5 for this project was achieved through:

- Interviews with project participants
- Colleagues' online survey
- Interviews with project participants
- Analysis of research briefs

It was a key feature of this ETF project that many of the action research projects which were undertaken were designed to assess the impact on the ultimate target group of learners in vocational education and training. Some of the projects were small scale, for example one had two learners initially and another had five, others used larger samples, e.g. one with 109. Nonetheless, all had the ultimate objective of improving learning. Where possible, projects took care to include different types of learners in their sample, for example one action research project involved learners from art and from plumbing courses and included Level 1 and Level 4 learners. The projects used a range of techniques and instruments to assess the impact on learning including feedback, focus groups and pre and post intervention assessments.

When asked in the online survey if the impacts on student learning would be assessed, twelve out of thirteen respondents indicated that they would be. Responses included, "*The impact will be evaluated and has been on a local level with a group of learners*", "*Yes, via learning walks and lesson observations*", and "*Yes, via Lesson Study model*". It is clear, then, that for the majority of projects it was possible to develop plans to measure impact. Some projects have been able to start to measure impact immediately, as part of the action research project, and most have been able to include plans to measure impact on student learning in the longer term.

Although one respondent indicated that impact on student learning "*cannot be judged [because] no evaluation is continually conducted*," further clarification at interview indicated that impact could be assessed through non-direct means such as improved retention and results. Given that, as another interviewee noted, "*retention in FE is key because if you don't retain [learners] you lose 50% of your funding*", it is possible for organisations to triangulate their measurements of impact on student learning, through tools such as learner feedback, retention rates, and improved results, and to gain a full understanding of outcomes for learners.

Student learning outcomes: summary

With reference to the assessment of professional development in education, Guskey (2000) argues that:

“The information gathered at each level is important and can help improve professional development programs and activities. But as many have discovered, tracking efficiency at one level tells you nothing about effectiveness at the next. Although success at an early level may be necessary for positive results at the next higher one, it is clearly not sufficient. That is why each level is important. Sadly, the bulk of professional development today is evaluated only at Level 1, if at all. Of the rest, the majority are measured only at Level 2”.

It is commendable that this ETF professional development project has been able to promote inquiring practice which, the evidence suggests, will be evaluated at ‘higher levels’. All projects have incorporated the assessment of student learning outcomes either as part of the project or as a longer term objective, or both. It therefore appears likely that, when the innovations, CPD and ITE training which resulted from the project are fully implemented, student learning outcomes will be assessed, either through direct means such as obtaining student feedback or through the assessment of retention figures and results.

5.5 Conclusions

This evaluation set out to assess if the ETF project achieved its aim to create a culture of continuous career lifelong learning that starts with ITE and embeds an influence on the profession through encouraging others towards professionalism through the utilisation of networks of learning relationships to transfer and create new professional practice? In order to answer that question, an evaluation model based on Guskey’s five critical levels to the evaluation of professional development in education was developed:

- Level 1: Participants’ reactions
- Level 2: Participants’ learning
- Level 3: Organisation support and change
- Level 4: Participants’ use of new knowledge and skills
- Level 5: Student learning outcomes

This evaluation has shown that the project was well designed, providing participants with the knowledge, skills and support required to identify a research problem, design an action research study, undertake the study, evaluate the study, and disseminate the findings.

It was clear from observation, surveys and interviews that participants were enthusiastic, actively engaged, and wanted to improve practice. All participants reported that they had enjoyed the project workshops and found that attending them was time well spent. It is perhaps striking that although not all participants volunteered for the project, almost all, even those for whom participation was mandatory or were ‘volunteered’ by a manager, had a reasonably clear idea of what they wanted to achieve.

The project enabled participants to explore and learn about a topic that was

relevant to their professional area and to develop skills and experience in a research methodology which would enable effective investigation to take place. In addition, the project was designed to support participants to summarise and disseminate their research which offered valuable opportunities for reflection and consolidation.

It seems likely that a combination of personal and professional motivation supported by effective guidance promoted learning on the project. The delimited nature of the project, which supported participants to have a clear goal and 'end product' of a research briefing and conference, probably also aided learning because it ensured that participants had to be confident about their topics. All participants reported that they would incorporate their learning into their own practice or into their organisations.

One participant reported that their organisation had not supported them through the project and observed that, if the project is further developed, expectations for organisational involvement and support should be clearly set out prior to their engagement. All other respondents reported that they had been supported and that resources, particularly time resources, have been made available.

Organisational change has clearly occurred with often significant changes made to policies, CPD and ITE practice. It is not yet clear that those changes will lead to positive impact on student learning. However, given that innovations are being implemented as a result of action research undertaken within the organisational settings in which they are to be mainstreamed, the potential for positive impact in the longer term appears good.

Participants have used the new knowledge and skills gained through this project, either to influence change at organisational level or to improve their practice. Although clearly a professional development project, the ETF project did not, like some, aim to improve one aspect of practice but rather to promote the use of inquiry to improve professional practice. It is positive that the project has been successful in promoting action research as a method to develop practice.

However, as Guskey (2000) argues, participants' use of knowledge and skills cannot be fully assessed immediately after a professional development exercise. It will take time to be absolutely assured that the knowledge and skills gained continue to be used and that they continue to be effective.

Nonetheless, the project has enabled participants to incorporate methods to assess student learning (i.e. the impact of innovations and changes on the ultimate learners) either at the level of individual practice, at organisational level, or both. This is a key strength of the project.

The evaluation attempted to assess if the project had implications for teachers in English, maths and those working with people with learning disabilities and difficulties (LDD). Respondents mostly observed that the project was relevant for teachers of all subjects and with a wide range of learners and, in some cases

those target groups (i.e. people with LDD and/or learning English or maths subjects) had been directly engaged. However, their engagement was a reflection of the range of learners engaged rather than a result of strategic targeting. Therefore, it can be concluded that the project was successful in enabling participants to use their new knowledge and skills to effect positive change in all subjects and with many learners but that it did not specifically target those working in English, maths or with learners with LDD. It could therefore be beneficial to target recruitment more strategically in order to impact on those areas in the future.

It can be concluded that the project has been successful in promoting a culture of lifelong learning in participants, whether teachers, trainers, or managers, and that that culture has been embedded into individual practice and, for some partners into CPD and ITE within and across departments and, in some cases, organisations. The link between research practice and professionalism appears to have been embedded in participants and within many of the participating organisations. Although the full impacts of the project will take longer to assess, it is commendable that this ETF funded project has been able to successfully promote inquiring practice and it is a key achievement of this project that it has enabled potential positive change to be cascaded throughout departments and organisations. Where this has occurred, or is planned to occur in the short term, it is notable that there was direct input at managerial and directorial level. If the aim of the ETF project is to improve ITE, then this evaluation suggests that engaging managers and directors has the potential to lead to significant improvements.

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