The Education and Training

CONSORTIUM

14th Annual Conference

"What's going on?" Research 'on', 'with' and 'from' the further education and skill sector

Friday, 26th June, 2015 at the University of Huddersfield

Hashtag #hudtec15

Conference Abstracts

Contents

Introduction

David Powell, Director, the Education and Training Consortium

On behalf of the Consortium, I'm delighted to welcome you to our 14th Annual Conference. Teachers and trainers working in the sector are now expected to "maintain and update their knowledge of educational research to develop evidence-based practice" (ETF, 2014) and so this year's conference takes as its theme research 'on', 'with' and 'from' the further education and skills sector. We have a range of papers being presented today including:

- Practitioner-led research 'from' the sector;

- Researchers from higher education institutions disseminating findings from their research 'on' and 'with' the sector;

- A case study of how one college is supporting its staff to undertake action research;

- Research 'on' the sector commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation;

- How to use secondary statistical data in teaching and educational research.

This programme of abstracts provides you with an introduction to the research being presented today and will help you find something of interest to you. It promises to be a stimulating day!

David

Keynote speakers

Research in educational neuroscience: Technology as the solution to our biggest problems

Professor Diana Laurillard, UCL Institute of Education

Research on neuroscience can sometimes throw some light on what we need to do in education. The field of educational neuroscience is founded on that belief. However, the findings on how and where the brain processes the information needed for different kinds of thinking are not easily turned into pedagogy. For neuroscience to be able to inform what we do in education we have to look at very specific types of activity. In areas of special educational needs, for example, it can offer some help.

This paper illustrates this in relation to current work on a particular type of SEN, namely 'dyscalculia', a lack of number sense. The neuroscience findings can be used

to identify learners with dyscalculia, and the implications are that learners will need a lot of very specific types of activity. However, supervising this is labour intensive. So the question arises: can technology help?

It can, and the paper will illustrate the kind of pedagogy that can be embedded in educational games, to assist learners with low numeracy to gain a better understanding of how numbers work.

Finally, it looks at ways in which teachers and trainers in the vocational sector can explore and exchange ideas on how best to tackle these difficult pedagogical issues – again asking how technology can help with this as well.

Using secondary statistical data in teaching and educational research

Dr Kevin Orr, the University of Huddersfield

Statistics have the potential to inform and enliven how we all think about the social world. In this session I will examine what we mean by secondary statistical data, the limitations of this type of data as well as the kinds of analysis for which secondary datasets might be used. Importantly, I will argue that the decision to draw on statistical data is informed by research questions and is not associated with any particular philosophy. I will also present a variety of datasets as well as sources of statistical reports that are available for teachers and educational researchers. Come and find out how secondary statistical data can develop your knowledge and practice.

Parallel papers – Session A (12.05 - 13.05)

A1 (Room LS2/12)

Deliberative spaces - the Learning and Skills Research Network

Joel Petrie and Lydia Redican, City of Liverpool College

This presentation will consider how the Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN) represents a "deliberative space" (Hillier, 2015) in an FE sector that is "vastly under-researched in comparison with the data potentially available to it", which contributes to it being overlooked and undervalued (Jameson and Hillier, 2003).

The practitioner based work of the LSRN affiliate College Research Network (in the City of Liverpool College) will be explored, as a case study in the distributed leadership of learning and research.

Finally a new online portal "Research Matters" will be demonstrated, and there will be an opportunity to review its contents and make suggestions for developments to benefit FE sector researchers.

"Time to Talk"

Louise Mycroft, Northern College; and Kay Sidebottom, University Campus Barnsley and Northern College

As teacher educators, we encourage our students to be reflective practitioners; analysing and researching practice, exploring assumptions and developing actions for continuous improvement. The Professional Standards reinforce the role of reflection in outstanding teaching, yet the journals produced are quite often pedestrian and fail to replicate the depth and rigour of classroom conversations. Very often the richest and deepest thinking for educators comes actually through dialogue, with ourselves or others.

Research funded by the Consortium is currently being used to trial a range of techniques for the use of written and spoken reflective dialogue, via a series of workshops for current students, staff and NQTs. Inspired by the works of bell Hooks, Paulo Freire and other social purpose educators, we are introducing teachers to community philosophy approaches, autobiographical and facilitated dialogue and Thinking Environment practices. We are also introducing specific reflective dialogue around the often tricky and unspoken topics of faith, non-belief, racism and identity in education. This presentation will share some of the techniques and explore the findings of the project so far.

A2 (Room LS2/15)

"No research is insignificant": bringing vocational students into the world of research.

Jane Wormald, University of Huddersfield; Dr Nena Skrbic, Leeds City College; Dave Brown, Askham Bryan College; and Rachel Terry, Calderdale College

As the 'research outputs' of lecturers become increasingly important in both further and higher education institutions, there is a parallel emphasis on enabling students to play a role in research-active communities. At the University of Huddersfield the embedding of the concept of student-as-researcher, central to undergraduate curricula (Jenkins and Healey, 2009), culminated in a 'festival' for students on the part-time, 2-year BA(Hons) Education and Professional Development course. These undergraduates are employed as teachers or trainers, mostly mid-career in vocational areas, and study part-time at centres across the North of England.

The festival aimed to stimulate transformational understandings of discipline-specific knowledge and reflected Healey's (2005) research-teaching nexus: students as participants, foci on research processes and problems, on research content and on students as audience.

The festival was built to create an open communicative space in which the three dimensions of practice architecture (Kemmis et al., 2014) were embodied. That is, the 'sayings' (exchange of ideas) of the participants were nurtured through the 'doings' (key notes, papers and informal spaces) of the Festival so that the 'relatings' fostered inclusion. Dialogue played a central role, promoting knowledge as a collective resource and creating 'expansive' learning environments (Coffield and Williamson, 2008, p.10). Small critical dialogue spaces (Habermas, 1984) were facilitated between themed strands of presentations to explore, interrogate and critically consider what had been heard. A wealth of practitioner-based experience, ideas and new connections immediately emerged.

The festival was evaluated in accordance with the a priori categories afforded by the practice architecture framework. A small-scale action research study sought to establish how the sharing of research contributed to the participants' development as reflexive practitioners and to their identity as researchers. The responses closely tied to traditional notions of use-inspired research as being somehow hierarchically inferior to published 'academic' research or theoretical knowing. Through the festival experience, this changed to seeing researchers as 'real people'. Uncertainty of the value and interest of their own research transformed, one student reflected that 'no research is insignificant' particularly in rapidly changing professional contexts. Whilst recognising that undergraduate research may not be at publication stage, proactive approaches to using, discussing and developing teaching and learning through practitioner-research proved individually and collectively significant in enabling change.

A project to embed research-facing practices and experiences is recommended to ameliorate subjective insecurities, promote communicative networks, support academic rigour and encourage discussion and action of research-based change in vocational workplaces.

Mentoring teachers in the Further Education and Skills Sector – the current state and how it can be strengthened

Dr Bronwen Maxwell, Sheffield Hallam University

This seminar will present key findings from research, funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, that sought to provide a comprehensive account of existing, institution-based mentoring for teachers in the Further Education and Skills (FE) sector, and explored the potential for introducing an external mentor support programme. The research employed a sequential mixed method design (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998), comprising an initial systematic review of literature. This then informed: 40 semi-structured interviews with teachers, mentors and a range of other stakeholders associated with the teaching of STEM and other subjects in the FE and Skills sector

across 19 different institutions; and an online survey of teachers of all subjects/vocational areas in the sector. There will be an opportunity to discuss both the research findings and the recommendations made for strengthening mentoring to enhance teachers' subject knowledge, subject pedagogy, and effectiveness, wellbeing and retention. The research report can be found at http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/mentoring-full-report.pdf and qa summary report is available at http://www.gatsby.org.uk/uploads/education/reports/pdf/mentoring-and-coaching-in-fe.pdf

A3 (Room LS2/16)

"Trainee teachers in voluntary teaching posts: roles, rights and responsibilities"

Dr Lisa Russell, and Dr Ron Thompson, University of Huddersfield

Every trainee teacher in a voluntary teaching post has a different experience that shapes their teaching journey. Structural contexts related to teaching employment landscapes, education policy, institutional cultures and circumstances in addition to the trainee teacher's characteristics, motivations and personal situations create a number of interacting variables that affect how teachers train.

Research funded by the Education Training and Consortium aimed to explore how trainees, course tutors and other stakeholders viewed the learning experience of trainee teachers in voluntary teaching posts. Fieldwork was collected from December 2014 – May 2015. Data was collected from a questionnaire completed by centre managers and 23 semi-structured interviews with centre staff, current year 2 volunteer trainees and mentors, plus 2 focus groups of trainee teachers. Voluntary teaching posts can often be successful and offer valuable resources to both the trainee and affiliated institution. A fair balance between a trainee teacher's role, responsibilities and their rights needs to be carefully managed as these can have important implications for a trainee's professional identity.

So what do managers say about class management?

Merv Lebor, Leeds City College

The context of this paper was that after researching issues of classroom management for a number of years, I was asked by managers at different institutions to speak to their staff about strategies for helping to counteract the class management problems tutors faced in many classes on a day-to day basis. The question that emerged was how might managers in the lifelong learning sector support tutors in dealing with these stressful situations. The methodology of this inquiry was to offer qualitative practitioner research which would suggest some recommendations to improve practice on how managers might support teachers in these circumstances. The research methods

aimed to determine managers' perspectives, using a survey to find out a sample of their views. This would lead to two focus groups with managers, opening up a more exploratory discussion, followed by an in-depth interview with an experienced, particularly supportive manager, working with challenging classes. The purpose of this interview was to review a range of strategies that might be used to help managers support staff and students create more effective learning environments. The next stage was to subject managers' suggestions to the views of teachers. The findings from this research showed there were widespread problems in many classes where this research took place. Managers offered a range of localised and wider strategies for supporting teachers in these challenging situations. Offering whole institution approach, training on interventions and opening spaces for tutors and managers to explore these issues in a blame-free environment were some of the recommendations. The tutors surveyed welcomed these suggestions.

A4 (Room LS2/30)

Ethnography: participatory approaches and the role of the researcher

Liz Dixon, University of Huddersfield

Ethnographers study the lived experiences, daily activities, and social/political context of everyday life from the perspectives of those being studied and typically the researcher immerses herself in the natural setting for long periods of time to gain a deeper understanding of people's lives (Buch and Staller 2014).

This presentation draws on the researcher's experiences from a wider piece of research carried out in a hospice, in which the potentially sensitive and complex areas of workplace learning and the nature of relationships between paid and volunteers in a professional workplace are explored. The ethos and values underpinning the project resonate with the researcher's personal value position whereby the research process is collaborative and emancipatory, providing an opportunity for shared participation between researcher and participants. The presentation will consider the challenges and opportunities afforded by this methodology and specifically using participatory methods and reflexivity in ethnographical studies. The session will be relevant to anyone interested in ethnography or participatory research methods.

"HE in FE: a study of adult learners and resistance in higher vocational education"

Kate Lavender, Calderdale College

This paper draws on a study of adults studying higher vocational education (HIVE) programmes in further education colleges, where much of such provision is located. The 2011 white paper 'Students at the Heart of the System' stated that HE should be

available to and enjoyed by people throughout different stages of their lives (BIS, 2011). However, it appears the assumptions that underpin the policy tell a different story, particularly in relation to the development of vocational sub-degree courses to be delivered primarily in FE colleges. The focus of the Foundation Degree, and other HIVE qualifications offered in FE colleges, on meeting the needs of employers leads to a curriculum embedding context-specific knowledge and behaviourist skills for a particular occupational sector, and is arguably based upon a 'master/apprentice' model more appropriate to young people with little work experience (Avis et al, 2001). However, the reasons adults participate in HE are likely to be very different from the traditional student wishing to enter the labour market for the first time. Many Foundation Degree and other HIVE students are in established employment in paraprofessional roles, thus any HIVE provision that has this model at the centre of its development is problematic within a context of lifelong learning.

The paper argues that policies for lifelong learning are responded to differently by different types of student studying in different environments, particularly adult learners. The data informing this perspective was generated from a case study of 8 adult students studying HIVE in an FE college in West Yorkshire. Data was generated by informal interviews and participant observation over the course of the academic year 2013-2014. Using theories of resistance (Giroux, 1983/2001), these different responses are explored by capturing the ways in which students resist practices at the HIVE/FE interface to construct their own version of higher education that 'works for them'. These data suggest that adult HIVE students may reject practices that reinforce a behaviourist version of the 'practical knowledge' valued in FE, over the 'theoretical knowledge' traditionally valued in HE. This is turn may allow them to develop critical skills for change and transformation in their working and wider lives.

So far, the main approaches in adult education research on adult entrants to HE have been to focus on access and barriers to learning (Pegg & Di Poalo, 2013), student identities (Askhma, 2008; Blair, Cline & Wallis, 2010; Stevenson & Clegg, 2013) and transitions (Bamber & Tett, 2000; Fuller, 2007; O'Donnell & Tobell, 2007). This paper contributes to these debates by offering a fresh perspective on how adult students construct HIVE in ways that have not previously been considered. Further to this, it makes a theoretical contribution to adult education research by applying theories of resistance, which have largely only been applied to younger people until now. There may be wider potential for applying these theories elsewhere in adult education research.

Parallel papers – Session B (13.45 - 14.45)

B1 (Room LS2/12)

Are graded lesson observations, the "elephant" in our classroom? An exploration into the views of in-service teacher trainees on lesson observations

Dominic Brockway, Leeds City College

The title of the work was inspired from a teacher trainee who used this expression to refer to teaching observations on teacher training courses. I work with graded lesson observations for trainees as part of recent changes to their course. The reason that teacher training providers now grade learners is in order to demonstrate the progress of trainees. This is a key requirement for the OFSTED regulatory framework. The research question that emerges is how does grading impact on trainees from the perspective of the trainee? The methodology of this inquiry involves qualitative practitioner research to inform recommendations to improve teaching and learning observations practice. The research methods aim to determine trainees' perspectives, using a survey to identify a sample of their views. This includes two focus groups with trainees, opening up a more exploratory discussion, followed by two in-depth interviews with teacher trainees on their perspectives.   The purpose of these interviews was to review a range of strategies that might be used to help observers support staff and students create more effective teaching and learning observations. The findings from this research highlighted key issues with regard to graded teaching and learning observations.   A range of localised and wider strategies are offered to help. Some changes to the approach of initial teaching providers are suggested, in addition to opening spaces for trainees and teacher trainers to explore these issues were some of the recommendations. The trainees surveyed welcomed these suggestions.

Using knowledge of teacher self-efficacy research to develop evidence-based practice in lesson observations

Terry Pearson, Terry Pearson Ltd.

Teacher's self-efficacy has been researched extensively and a teacher's sense of self-efficacy in the classroom is considered to be an influential factor in overall teaching effectiveness. A substantial base of research findings indicates that teachers with high levels of efficacy tend to be more open to new ideas, be more willing to experiment with new methods and be more inclined to persist longer with students who struggle when learning. Moreover studies have found positive associations between teachers' self-efficacy and higher levels of student achievement.

This interactive session will provide a brief overview of some of the key messages which have emerged from detailed studies of teacher self-efficacy in the classroom. The session will employ a practical and engaging style to enable participants to explore how these findings can be utilised to influence the design of lesson observation schemes in their workplaces.

B2 (Room LS2/15)

Taking ownership of your CPD – An approach to encourage practitioner-led action research

Philippa Firth, Kirklees College

Kirklees College began to re-consider methods to re-engage practitioners in planning their own continual professional development (CPD) as feedback indicated a top down approach to staff development. Some practitioners at the College have been undertaking practitioner-led research for a number of years, supported through various funded projects. Having seen the positive impact that practitioner-led research was having on teachers and learners, the College decided to encourage more practitioners to re-think their own CPD and to take control by researching practice and developing skills in their classrooms.

This session considers how the approach worked in practice and the outcomes to date.

Using research to inform your practice

Dr Vicky Duckworth, Edge Hill University

New Literacy Studies and critical approaches to education, offer a potential space for transformation whereby basic skills learners can explore their narratives and society around them. This shifts from a traditional, competency based approach to curriculum design to a culturally relevant, learner driven, and socially empowering model (Freire, 1993; Barton et al 2004; Duckworth, 2013, 14) which takes into consideration the cultural, psychological and educational factors related to the Learners and their lives. Drawing on my own and wider research from the educational and community-based setting this workshop draws on the aforementioned to discuss the power of dialogic communication between teachers and literacy learners whereby learners and communities can ask questions, analyse and subsequently work through effective and meaningful strategies to take agency over their lives, enhancing their situation and empowering them and the local and wider communities. Further to this we will explores the impact of labelling on marginalization and exclusion, and explore and create approaches to designing motivational resources to offer solutions to barriers learners may face that inspire them on their learning journey.

References:

Barton, D., Ivanic, R., Appleby, Y., Hodge, R. and Tusting, K. (2004), Adult Learners' Lives Project: Setting the Scene, Progress Report. Lancaster University: NRDC.

Duckworth, V. (2014), Literacy and Transformation, in Duckworth, V. and Ade-Ojo, G. (eds.) Landscapes of Specific Literacies in Contemporary Society: Exploring a social model of literacy. Monograph, Routledge Research in Education: London.

Duckworth, V. (2013) How to be a Brilliant FE Teacher: A Practical Guide to Being Effective and Innovative. Taylor & Francis Group: London.

Duckworth, V. (2013) Learning Trajectories, Violence and Empowerment amongst Adult Basic Skills Learners. Monograph, Routledge Educational Research: London.

Freire, P. (1993), Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Continuum.

B3 (Room LS2/16)

"But do you have the courage to teach?" Exploring the purpose of Initial Teacher Education for the Education & Training sector

Balwant Kaur, Leeds City College

The education and training sector is no stranger to the often complex and difficult situations that are presented through relentless change. This poses some important questions about the purpose of initial teacher education (ITE) programmes. This was a small-scale research study conducted in a large FE college based in West Yorkshire. The initial musings on the purpose of such programmes raised the following questions: Are ITE programmes merely an instrumental means to a teaching qualification? Or do ITE programmes have a responsibility to address the educational values, moral issues, dilemmas and uncertainties within which trainee, newly qualified, experienced teachers and teacher educators are required to operate?

Biesta (2011) identifies 3 domains of education: qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Using this framework, the perceptions of trainee teachers and teacher educators were gathered to draw conclusions about which domain dominated. This has some potentially significant implications for the development of and longevity of future teachers.

Fear and fortitude: Trainee Teachers and the modern moral high ground

Dr Ian Rushton, University of Huddersfield

At an average age of 37 years, new entrants to the teaching profession in the English Lifelong Learning Sector (LLS) bring with them a plethora of "goods" and values from diverse lived experiences and histories. Yet, this is a site of uncertainty and tension for

many trainee teachers where most are unsure about what can be said, by whom and when in their disparate contexts and organisations, particularly when the twin concepts of ethics and morals bump against the grand narratives of "ethical frameworks" and "modern morality" which pervade the sector. To date, the extent to which trainee teachers work with their value systems as part of their enculturation into the sector plays only a cameo role in current discussions. This paper draws on findings from a longitudinal study of 156 part-time final year trainee teachers attending an LLS teacher education course in the North of England. Drawing on the empirical data, the paper discusses the slipperiness of trainees' values and "goods" when considered as contingent components of the social and political contexts of their teaching practice.

B4 (Room LS2/30)

"Further Education Teacher Educators Project (FETEP): the journeys, pathways, qualifications, professional identities and some statistics

Heather Booth-Martin, Craven College; and Dr John Bostock, Edge Hill University

This project considers some preliminary findings from one of the research methods – questionnaire survey - the routes to becoming a teacher educator, the knowledge that is drawn upon in this role and the ways in which teacher educators view themselves. Using a democratic, collaborative and inclusive approach to research, a variety of research methods – questionnaire, interviews and 'Talking Heads' - are adopted including the use of 'buddy researchers'. Drawing on concepts of situated learning and recontextualisation, the project seeks to identify the knowledge utilised by teacher educators and the extent to which they view themselves as professionals.

What does the FE sector look like? An analysis of workforce data

Charlynne Pullen, the Education and Training Foundation

The Education and Training Foundation collects data on the FE workforce through a Staff Individualised Record of staff in FE Colleges, and surveys about staff in work-based learning, and adult and community learning providers. Here, we look at the data for 2013/14 academic year, considering any changes over the past year and trends. This includes demographic data, what an 'average college' looks like, and turnover and pay figures. We also have new, never-before-presented data on Initial Teacher Education in FE – where it happens, characteristics of new and training teachers, and destination data.