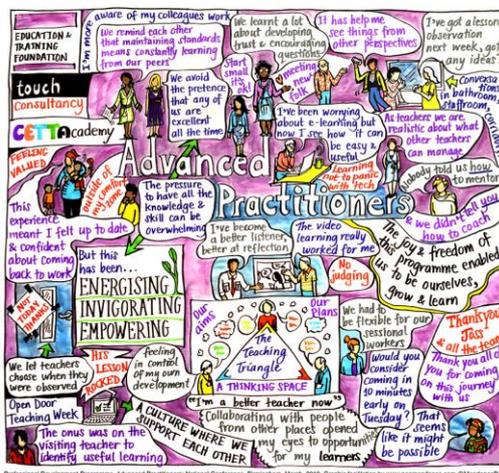# CASE STUDY: EVALUATING THE AP ROLE – TRIANGLES OF EXCELLENCE: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO IMPROVED LEARNER OUTCOMES

EAST RIDING OF YORKSHIRE COUNCIL, EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION AND SKILLS TEAM WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CITY OF YORK COUNCIL ADULT LEARNING

'IT'S BEEN ENGERGISING, INVIGORATING, EMPOWERING.'

April 2019

Graphic facilitation by www.penmendonca.com @MendoncaPen at Advanced Practitioner's National Conference - March 2019

OTLA 4 OUTSTANDING TEACHING LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT, SUPPORTED AND DELIVERED BY
touchconsulting AND CETTAcademy

INTRODUCTION

This case study is from one of 15 collaborative projects, across a range of cross-sector partnerships, that were commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation to support Phase 4 of the Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) programme.

This phase was delivered by touchconsulting and CETTAcademy to evaluate the role of Advanced Practitioners (AP), as defined by Tyler et al (2017)[1]. The projects were intended to explore the functions and values of the AP role within the partnership's quality improvement priorities.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?

The project broadly aimed to use coaching and mentoring to enable the power of improvement through a self-development process for individuals which would then impact positively on colleagues, learners and the organisation. To do this each partnership created a team of APs in line with the AP functions and values, using the Teaching Triangle methodology to develop the delivery team, share good practice and drive quality improvement.

By introducing the role of the AP the aim was to reaffirm the positive culture of collaboration, peer support, self-development and self-reflection leading to quality improvement, relevant continual professional development (CPD) and ultimately better outcomes for learners. There was a focus on developing the skills of the APs before they started developing others which consequently led to positive developments for the whole organisation and an atmosphere of high engagement, increased motivation and renewed enthusiasm.

WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The Teaching Triangles methodology provided a framework for seeing observations as non-threatening session visits and as a platform for development and professional conversations, rather than judgements. In Triangle one, one AP completed a digital skills course to share with others; another AP developed two Padlet walls, one for Functional Skills English& Maths staff to use as a communication tool and another for all staff to share a range of ICT resources.

In Triangle Two, the focus on developing reflective learners included exploring ways to measure learner progress in relation to their starting

> *"It was an excellent time to introduce the AP role to teaching triangles. This reintroduced an emphasis on teaching and learning with an AP at the helm. It also demonstrated that success of the triangles hinges on the teachers being able to choose their development aim."*
>
> Partner Lead, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

> *"I feel inspired to try new things I have seen in observations to benefit my learners."*
>
> Advanced Practitioner, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

> *"The project gave permission for experimentation and provided fantastic opportunities. This included undertaking enhanced reflection with learners."*
>
> Advanced Practitioner, City of York Council Adult Learning

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[1] Tyler, E., Marvell, R., Green, M., Martin, A., Williams, J. and Huxley, C. (2017) Institute for Employment Studies (2017). Understanding the role of Advanced Practitioners, (Education and Training Foundation)

point, covering a range of assessment types and SMART learning outcomes.

During the project the APs practiced the use of Thinking Environments which became fully embedded in coaching and mentoring skills. Other skills which APs developed included enhanced problem-solving abilities.

WHAT HELPED THE PROJECT SUCCEED?

The partnership adopted a collaborative approach where two organisations could work together, learn from each other and offer support. From the start the project was supported by the quality improvement managers from both organisations, who are also experienced teachers. They acted as Project Leads and mentors, and were directly involved in all stages of the project.

Achieving a clarity of vision and shared common goal for the whole AP team and others who were involved in the project was important. This was underpinned by clear, focused project leadership and ongoing support to maintain the focus, keep the momentum and meet the agreed deadlines. This careful planning of actions and deadlines ensured that both organisations followed the collaborative plans but also had some flexibility and freedom to make changes as appropriate.

Communication was key. The project was underpinned by a range of effective communication techniques, including email, telephone, Zoom conferencing, Whatsapp, newsletters and face to face meetings.

Establishing a collaborative ethos and mutual respect where every AP had a voice, was valued and able to contribute to all decisions made was crucial. The unwavering enthusiasm, positive attitude and commitment of individuals involved who believed in the project, invested their own time and good will, and kept it going was central to its success.

WHAT CHALLENGES DID THE PROJECT FACE?

The partners were geographically dispersed, so physical distance was a challenge at times (e.g. when planning to meet up face to face or visit each other's sessions, time and travel had to be taken into consideration), however, the interaction with colleagues was very beneficial. The APs found it to be motivating and refreshing.

"Looking for new ways of applying ICT really helped to explore ways of teaching and learning. These new opportunities lead to me developing better listening and problem-solving skills."

Advanced Practitioner, City of York Council Adult Learning

Extract from the self-assessment form completed by the APs.

"I loved getting together with the like-minded people. It's been so motivating and refreshing!"

Advanced Practitioner, East Riding of Yorkshire Council

WHAT DIFFERENCE DID THE PROJECT MAKE?

The project allowed teachers to increase the use of technology for interactive teaching and learning and reflective learning and teaching strategies. These included the use of ClassFlow software on active panel, which was used for self-assessment quizzes for learners and resources/prompt cards for deeper reflection for learners and tutors.

ClassFlow software is part of the ActivPanel (interactive smart board) where tutors can develop a short quiz to use as a starter activity/initial assessment of the learners' knowledge and understanding and then use it again at the end of the session to measure progress. Similar approaches were aimed at developing the staff's confidence and competence in the use of their own skills, building on gradually on the existing skills and comfort zones.

At the start of the project in June 2018 all the AP team from York and East Riding used a self-assessment form to measure their starting points as APs.

The exercise was repeated in March 2019 to self-assess to measure progress and on average, there was an increase of about 25 percentage points. This represents very positive feedback from the APs participating in the project and having a chance to develop own skills and knowledge, also experiment and innovate as well as support colleagues.

East Riding delivered a CPD session to the staff in which the APs have shared their experience and newly acquired skills in the subject matter.

The laminated colour prompt cards have been introduced in learning centres, in every classroom from April 2019.It is hoped that that they will help learners in formulating reflective comments on learning and will assist tutors in providing development feedback as well as feed forward with suggestions for improvement.

APs gained from collaborative learning and networking opportunities, allowing them to develop their confidence, knowledge and specific skills for the role of AP. This included using mentoring, coaching, reflection, professional conversations, and digital skills.

Leaders welcomed the opportunities for sharing knowledge, experience and practice in order to evaluate own practice and reflect on current processes and strategies in order to inform future planning. Improved staff morale, relationships and positive culture was also reported. This was achieved via a supportive and developmental rather than judgemental, performance management focused approach.

The project findings and some of the key learning have been captured in a short video and were shared with Senior Management Teams to

Click here to access the 'Thinking Environment' Padlet page, used as a part of this project.

Click here to access the 'English & Maths Team' Padlet page, used as a part of this project.

Click here to access the 'What a fantastic year' collaborative planning Padlet page, used as a part of this project.

illustrate the key project activities and impact. This was also a good opportunity to share some of the activities and resources from the AP Toolkit, for instance, regarding the Thinking Environment and reflective models, with the Johari window where feedback is perceived as a tool for changing behaviour.

Further updates are planned in Quality Team Newsletters.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

For further information please visit the Advanced Practitioner OTLA Projects

Padlet page here: https://en-gb.padlet.com/joss1/collabprojects

Or contact:

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Angela Padfield, City of York Council Adult Learning: angela.padfield@york.gov.uk

Click here to view a short video of our AP team sharing their views on key successes.

RESOURCES SUPPORTING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ADVANCED PRACTITIONERS (OTLA 4) – 2018/2019

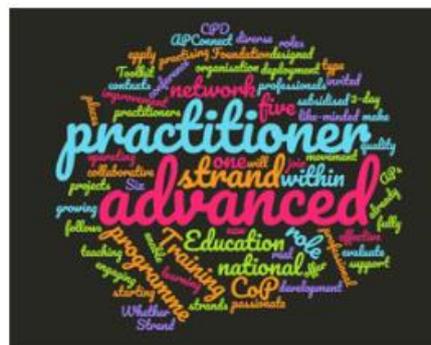CLICK ON THE IMAGE TO ACCESS THE RESOURCE

- Advanced Practitioner Toolkit – Professional Development Cards
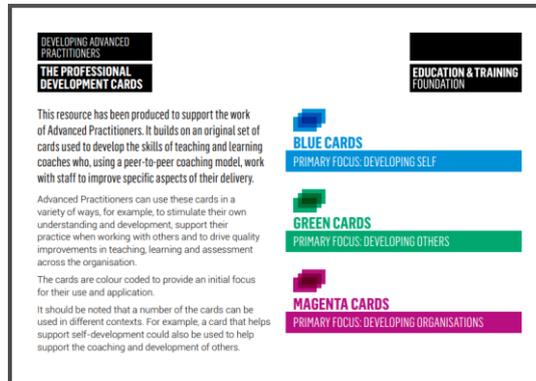
- Advanced Practitioner Toolkit – Practical AP Guides

- Advanced Practitioner Monthly Communications

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