



# **BOOK OF ABRACTS FROM: EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOUNDATION ANNUAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE 4<sup>th</sup> JULY 2017**

Conference Theme: Practice As Research in Education

# Welcome David Russell

Welcome to the Education and Training Foundation's Annual Practitioner Research Conference 2017.

At this event, we will be showcasing the research carried out by our Research Development Fellows (RDFs), Exploratory Research Project Practitioners for Teachers of Maths and English as well as other projects supported by ETF over the last year.

We hope you will join us in celebrating the achievements of each of these sector practitioners as they share the outcomes of their research with you.



David Russell  
CEO, ETF

The Foundation works collaboratively with SUNCETT and other organisations to support practitioner-research and to help sector professionals improve their practice in research-informed, systematic and structured ways. One of the key principles underpinning the Foundation's approach to educational improvement for our sector, is that teacher-led research helps to develop both teaching professionals for the future and an evidence base for all practitioners and leaders to access and learn from.

I hope the research presented today will offer practical insights into approaches to improving teaching, learning and assessment across the sector, and that this event will provide you with opportunities: to extend your professional networks, take away new ideas for change innovation and improvement, and encourage you to play your part in contributing to our vibrant and growing ETF Community of Research and Practice.

*David Russell*

July 2017

# Opening Address

## Paul Kessell-Holland

On behalf of The Education and Training Foundation (ETF), I am delighted to welcome all delegates and visitors to The ETF Annual Research Conference 2017.

The conference is a key activity in the ETF year, because it builds the capacity and celebrates the research outcomes of teachers and educational leaders in the FE and Skills sector as they work to improve teaching and learning across the sector through practitioner-research.



Paul Kessell-Holland  
ETF Head of Partnerships

I am delighted that we have a such wide range of research topics and research interests at this event to share with you today. With approaching a 100 delegates, from a wide range of educational settings across England in attendance I hope you will take this opportunity to meet as many of them as possible.

This year will see the launch of new MPhil and MA opportunities sponsored by ETF. These opportunities have been developed in collaboration with the University of Sunderland Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (SUNCETT), who have been working with the sector for the past eight years to build the RDF programme. I hope this conference encourages you and your staff/colleagues to make the most of these exciting initiatives designed to help you to conduct your own practitioner-research in the sector, as well as learn from the good work done over the past year.

*Paul Kessell-Holland*

July 2017

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# Fiona Algar and Pamela Marshall

## Exeter College

**Title:** Building Bridges Not Walls



### **Abstract**

*Our research initially focused on effective teaching and learning strategies, with a starting focus on independent learning and meta-cognition. As the research progressed, its collaborative nature, along with some unexpected findings, moved us to the subject area of Joint Practice Development (JPD), as an effective strategy for the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers .*

*In the current context of FE where there is increased focus on examination, there is a need to plough through content to prepare for final exams. In response to learners often starting at college without a strong set of study skills, we aimed to continue the philosophy of a JUMP strategy which we had been working with. This was an acronym aimed to encourage the learners to meet a basic set of expectations which were to join in and be active rather than passive learners; to utilise the knowledge they already have; consider transference of skills, to manage their learning and begin to identify ways they learnt well as individuals. All of this with a view to enabling them to reach their potential. This ethos was intended to be used when planning sessions and activities. It also aimed to enable learners to become more capable of identifying a range of skills that best fostered independent and successful learning.*

*Focusing on Level 3 learners in both academic and vocational contexts in a large FE College, we conducted research with two 'A' level teaching groups and one BTEC group.*

### **What we did:**

- *Learners were asked to keep journals to reflect on their learning in order to provide insights into their study habits and their views on what worked well and what did not.*
- *We met to identify and put into practice different teaching strategies at different points.*
- *We planned a session outline, using the JUMP ethos as a backdrop that then allowed the subject content to be inserted, regardless of what the subject was.*
- *We then observed each other delivering the session and met to reflect on the learning that had occurred.*

*There were some interesting findings regarding the effects of our strategies on learners' perceptions of their learning and of our teaching as well as some mismatch between lecturers and students perceptions on work being carried out independently. This finding is in itself worthy of further research.*

*The most valuable finding in our research project has been the difference it made to us as practitioners. It gave us real space to share our skills and knowledge, reflect on our teaching, become more creative with strategies, more open to feedback from learners and peers, and ultimately, more confident. So, whilst the initial research question was 'What are the effects of JUMP on Level 3 learners?' the question has really become – 'What are the effects of JUMP on lecturers? And how should JPD move forward to support exceptional teaching through CPD?' What we found has interesting suggestions for future CPD within the FE sector in that JPD for staff is a successful way for practitioners to reflect upon and improve their practice.*

**Key Words:** Joint Practice Development; Continuing Professional Development; Reflection.

# Beata Babule and Celia Geen

## College of West Anglia

**Title: Planning 2gether: Using Collaborative Planning Practices to improve the quality of new teachers of Maths and English**

### Abstract

*The college aims to improve learner achievement on Functional Skills and GCSE programmes by ensuring that the teaching standards for English and maths match or exceed those of the college. Currently there is a significant turnover of new teachers in the programme area which has an impact on teaching and learning. For the period 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015, the turnover rate for all voluntary leavers was 11.4% (658 employed - 75 leavers). In the period 1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015, 37% of staff who chose to voluntarily leave the college had been employed for less than 2 years (38% last year) In real terms this was 28 members of staff. Of these, 21% were lecturing staff (39% last year).*

*This small-scale research study explored teachers' experiences of classroom practice in the early stages of their careers.*

*The study found that newly appointed teachers report that their experience of initial stages of classroom delivery throughout the first academic year as being challenging in terms of preparation of resources and choice of delivery strategies. They feel they would benefit from more targeted and structured support from senior colleagues, mentors and teacher trainers. This could be deemed to have an impact on standards of teaching and staff retention in the programme area.*

**Key Words:** Collaborative planning; teacher training; mentoring



**Exploratory Research Project  
Practitioners**

**Martell Baines**

**Leeds College of Art**



**Title: The dilemma of the increasing under-representation of male students in art and design education'**

**Abstract**

*Male students have become a growing minority in the student population in further and higher education. The numbers of male students studying art and design further and higher education from all of socio-economic groups had fallen year on year. Widening participation policy makers advise specifically addressing the under-representation of white working class boys entering higher education.*

*A series of **professional conversations** was conducted with people I encounter through my role as a Widening Participation Manager in a specialist art and design institution, contacts consisted of professional peers, networks, groups and policy makers.*

*The findings were that systemic changes to the compulsory education curriculum has adversely affected the numbers of male applicants, not only to Art and Design but to higher education as a whole. A range of factors emerged in literature review and conversations:*

- Pre-16 compulsory education curriculum that develops creative skills has been systematically squeezed out of the timetable.*
- The English Baccalaureate subject choices for GCSE permits only one arts subject to be studied.*
- The emphasis on subjects of Science, Technology Engineering and Maths 'STEM', as opposed to 'STEAM', excludes art as a developer of creative problem solving skills, something that is valued by employers.*
- Family and influencers hold negative perceptions of creative industries as a viable career, this influences the young person's subject choices for progression.*
- Due to an individual's life experience, socio-economic, home and educational environment, a young person may be disadvantaged when applying to study creative subjects if they have not acquired sufficient 'cultural capital' within their 'habitus'.*

*Emergent recommendations are; modify the content of outreach programme design to attract boys to participate in creative subjects. Target interventions with influencers; the young peoples' parents or carers. Enhance professional development of art and design teachers so they address the gender imbalance sooner in the young persons' education pathway. Finally to achieve an equitable approach refine targeted interventions to reach the most disadvantaged of both genders.*

**Keywords:** outreach design, widening participation, under-representation of males, art & design

**Research Development Fellow**

**Vivienne Banner**

**Heart of Worcestershire College**



**Title: Using a stylistics approach to teach the reading component of the GCSE English Language Examination**

**Abstract**

*An Ofsted report issued in March 2016 in relation to the educational establishment where I work identified English as an area for improvement. The report stated that “learners do not succeed well or develop the skills needed to achieve all their learning goals”.*

*Further to this, it was noted within a cohort of learners taking the GCSE examination in June 2016, that marks for responses in the reading paper of the examination received a lower mark than responses in the writing paper. 34% of students who sat the examination received grade A to C for reading, while 97% received grade A to C for writing; 31% received grade A in the writing paper, whereas only 3% received grade A in the reading paper.*

*This small-scale practitioner-research study included an initial informal survey of students entering the course in September 2016 . Findings revealed that learners feel that they do not have the knowledge to approach the reading questions, and lack confidence in formulating responses to examination questions.*

*Furthermore data from the study suggests that understanding of how writers work can improve students’ writing skills (Watson et al, 2014). Therefore it is argued that it would be beneficial to explore in greater detail how learners’ responses to the reading paper may be improved, with the aim of improving responses both in the reading and the writing papers. In the future.*

**Key Words:** Teaching English; examination responses; reading.

**Exploratory Research Project  
Practitioner**



**Tina Boon**  
**Kirklees College**



**Title: The CPD (Silent) Voice**

**Abstract**

*Good teachers want to improve and good colleges invest and support them to do so. However, the effectiveness, purpose and impact of CPD is often not spoken about in the same terms by both groups or sometimes even spoken about at all. The project reviews the current mix of CPD (Continuous Professional Development) in a large FE College across two departments. The purpose of this practitioner led research was to see how teachers felt about the value of their CPD, what helped them turn good ideas into good practice and how they felt they would then maintain this.*

*Description*

*The project has been in three phases. All staff were given a CPD questionnaire with the opportunity to comment on usefulness of activity, how it has influenced their practice and to give suggestions how it could be improved in the future. This was then further discussed as part of individual PDRs, in team meetings and at internal training events. Some of these conversations have been developed into case studies to illustrate the key positives and conflicts that trying to meet the needs of individuals and satisfy the demands of a large organisation can present (Pring). The final phase of the research was to develop suggestions on how to refine the CPD opportunities, tailor them more effectively and look at ways of developing communities of practice rather than silos of individual, unconnected effort (Brookfield).*

*Critical Reading*

*The motivation for the project was influenced by the work of O'Leary initially, particularly the idea that measuring performance can actually limit teacher development rather than drive it. Development of teachers is a gradual and difficult process described in the work of Gurskey and maintaining focus on the small but significant changes that make the biggest difference is what we should be aiming for according to William. Gregson et al's work on collaborative learning, JPD suggest a model for making these changes happen and stick.*

**Key Words** : Professional development, collaboration, accountability vs autonomy

**Research Development Fellow**

**Kay Bushnell**

**Worcestershire County Council**



**Title: Prevent: Here to stay, so what should we do about it**

**Abstract**

*This small-scale research study aims to investigate suitable methods for effective implementation of the Prevent duty within community learning through curriculum design. The Prevent duty, and British Values, are currently highly contentious topics throughout the education sector, causing difficulties and anxiety for many, from teachers to senior leaders.*

*This research explores how the Prevent duty and British Values could be embedded into curriculum design, so that they are no longer a cause for concern or time-wasting. This was achieved through the creation of subject-specific activities and resources, which were used in several Functional Skills English and Functional Skills Mathematics groups, belonging to three Adult Learning Tutors.*

*Research findings show that embedding the Prevent strategy and British Values into subject-specific activities and resources can be a highly effective method for meeting the Prevent strategy. The students were enthusiastic about the topics used, and the data reveals that the activities increased students' knowledge of British Values and issues that relate to the Prevent strategy. While this was a small project, which only involved three teachers and 69 students, the findings indicate that it might be beneficial to replicate the project with other groups, studying different subjects, in different organisations, and even in different parts of the education system.*

**Keywords:** *Prevent, British Values, curriculum design*

**Research Development Fellow**

# Jamie Holman and Joanne Conlon Blackburn College



**Title: Reading ART, Writing ART**

## **Abstract**

*The project aims to address the gap in English language skills between vocational and academic art curriculum that emerges after the transition from Level 3 vocational Art and Design (FE) to Level 4 academic Art and Design (HE).*

*The current Level 3 qualifications do not include critical and contextual modules which are important for the transition to Level 4.*

*Academic writing is a staple of undergraduate modules and assessment and culminates in a written dissertation at Level 6. Level 3 and 4 diploma curriculum does not assess critical engagement in the same manner, but relies instead on annotation or research and reflection of practice. Learners write a proposal and evaluation of their final unit (assessed at Level 4) but are limited in their exposure to academic language as used by practicing artists and academics.*

**Key Words:** Art and Design; English; academic writing

# Catherine Cox and Karen Glencross

## CableCom Training Ltd



**Title: Embedding Equality and Diversity ..... How difficult is it?**

### **Abstract**

*This research was a result of difficulty in locating suitable evidence to prove the embedding of Equality and Diversity within the curriculum during the Ofsted Inspection in April 2016. As a result, we wanted to know more about current practice of embedding Equality and Diversity in the organization. Research methods include the holding focus groups through staff CPD, feedback through questionnaires, observation of teaching and learning, learning walks, learner feedback and anecdotal feedback.*

*The Research:*

*This initial research idea posed a number of questions including*

- *was it a curriculum design problem?*
- *was it lack of staff ability to create opportunities in the curriculum?*
- *was it lack of staff training and expertise which was stopping people?*

*As a result of the research, issues emerged which prompted us to look at our own planning and assessment practices within the organization, in an attempt to identify opportunities to address Equality and Diversity. Some of the reasons staff gave for preventing them planning effectively, was a lack of time, and an inability to distinguish between the roles of trainer and teacher. The negative aspect of the responses prompted further investigation.*

*Findings:*

- *A failure to plan effectively for all learners at all levels*
- *Different approaches to assessment and planning in each location impacting on the learner experience*
- *Inconsistent planning documentation across all locations*
- *A lack of understanding of Equality and Diversity*
- *An inability to plan an effective curriculum*
- *'Over-teaching' including additional activities which do not add value*

*Conclusion:*

*Having examined the findings, a number of practices need to change within the organization to improve the teaching, learning and assessment experience. Some of these changes are crucial to the organization having the capacity to improve practices. It has been recognized that in order to do this, a structured framework needs to be in place allowing teachers to aspire to improve their own personal practice.*

**Key Words:** Curriculum planning; Equality and Diversity; Assessment

# Dr Paul Demetriou-Crane

## Havering College of FE



**Title: I Can Take it Better Coming From You**

### **Abstract**

*The overall aim of the research is to investigate the effectiveness of peer assessment and feedback as a teaching and learning approach for pre-service ITE trainee teachers. My research questions consisted of the following:*

*To what extent has peer assessment and feedback helped trainees understand what is considered good work and why and thereby increased their ability to achieve?*

*To what extent has it developed their self-confidence, independence and self-direction as learners?*

*To what extent have their experiences of peer assessment and feedback modified their previous knowledge and understanding of them ?*

*The project involved 28 pre-service trainee teachers on a PGCE course developed skills in peer assessment and feedback via a series of formative micro –teach sessions which they gave in their PGCE class over a 14 week period using a rubric consisting of group selected criteria . The impact of the interventions was measured using self-evaluations from the trainees' questionnaires and focus groups. The results suggest that many trainees felt that peer assessment had made them better classroom practitioners and more adept in assessment for learning. They also believed that it developed their meta- cognition, motivation and confidence in teaching in front of their peers. Over all, the results suggest that by training trainee teachers in peer assessment and feedback it is possible to develop them as learners and as teachers and to advance approaches to teaching and assessment for learning and hopefully raise achievement in classrooms.*

**Key words:** Pedagogical change ; peer-assessment; teacher education

**Research Development Fellow**

# John Cooper and Louise Kazimierczyk

## Sussex Downs College Eastbourne

**Title: ESSENTIAL 8 – an allusion to mastery for GCSE Maths Resit**

### **Abstract**

*Our College learner success rate for C grade and above at GCSE maths was 10% in 2015. After initiating an approach which centred on a Mastery based 8 topic programme for the final 4 months, our 2016 result was almost 15%. This increase is against a backdrop where many comparable FE colleges saw a marked decline in % passing. The Mastery concept appears to suit certain learners more than others however.*

*Whilst the Essential 8 is rolling out to 500 learners this year, this small-scale research study investigate the profiles of the learners who benefit the most from it.*

*Collecting data on gender, prior attainment and vocational course, will allow us to identify if the approach is suited to some more than others and share that information so other organisations may better serve their learners too.*

**Key Words:** Mathematics; mastery; practitioner-research.



**Gary Crawford**

**Southampton College**



**Title: Putting the FUN back into FUNctional skills Maths**

**Abstract**

*In 2013 the government stated that young people studying at college and did not gain a grade C or above in Maths and English, must re-sit their GCSE or study an alternative pathway (Functional Skills). This came after concerns raised from employers about the falling standards in English and Maths when recruiting new employees.*

*This means that learners who did not enjoy Maths at school have to continue studying this even though they have little interest and motivation. We have seen a drop in success results in Maths as well as poor attendance. As a teacher in Functional Skills learners come to lessons with a negative attitude a very low confidence in their own ability. This small-scale study explores how creating a positive learning environment and different teaching techniques can help build confidence and motivation in Maths as well as improving the positive outcomes.*

**Key Words:** Mathematics; motivation; learner confidence.

**Exploratory Research Project  
Practitioner**

**Chris Donnelly**

**Havering Sixth Form College,  
London**



**Title: Formative Assessment in Practice: a study of teaching and learning in Music at Level 3**

**Abstract**

*Through the work of Hattie (2012) and Wiliam (2011) this small-scale research study focuses upon my attempts as a teacher to use formative assessment and feedback in my own practice and the effects of this upon students' ability to improve their own work. It includes a narrative account of my own experiences of the educational problem and the dilemmas I encountered in attempting to address it through engagement in educational research*

*This study also sheds light upon other critical factors in educational practice worthy of continuing research and further investigation. These include theories and concepts of student motivation, the impact of students' levels of literacy upon their learning and the pedagogical practicalities and issues involved in slowing the pace of learning.*

*This study also reports the findings of a second investigation into feedback techniques with a second group of students. The aim of the second study was to identify how I might improve my own teaching methods together with an exploration of the potential and challenges of putting the principles of formative assessment into practice in the context of my own work.*

**Key Words:** Formative assessment; music education; practitioner-research.

**Havering Research Development  
Fellow**



# William Doust

## Community Learning Partnership



**Title:** Is this on or are you having me on?

### Abstract

**Question:** *What happens when you are imposed with a technological approach & process that attempts to integrate technology into teaching and learning in a manner which runs counter to the findings of peer-reviewed educational research ?*

**Answer:** *You end up in an unpredictable cocktail of good-intentions, challenges, and un-intended consequences. This is our community learning story and an attempt at a post-mortem.*

*The intent of this research was to give a voice to the learner experience and reaction to the imposition of a “Moodle” technological integration approach Vs our pre-moodle existing and tested technological integration approach (learner centred). The research was a micro-teach that integrated feedback immediately after the two activities. Never before had we experienced such a “technological perfect storm” in our community learning context. We discovered more about “humans” pulling together as one with the tutor to cobble together a solution that worked to their benefit. This study answered more questions that we initially envisaged.*

*As Laurillard ( 2008, p. 9) put it: ‘Technology works best when it has to meet a challenge; and worst when it is a solution looking for a problem’. Our learner centred rationale (pre-,Moodle) was re-affirmed by Costa (2008, p.123): ‘Curious as it may sound, technology, should be the last element to consider when it comes to designing learning contexts with the support of the social and participatory web. Web tools should be regarded as elements to support the educational process; a medium through which learning can be fostered rather than a purpose in itself’ . She proposed four factors/elements when designing teaching and learning that integrates technology: 1. Who are the learners with whom I will be working? (p. 124); 2. What Do I want learners to learn and achieve? (p. 124); 3. How do I want the learners to engage with their learning? (pp. 124-5); and 4. What Technology can I use to create a stimulating learning environment? (p. 125).*

*Last but not least human factors that were hidden from plain sight revealed how trust empowers learners to earnestly feedback and support a tutor who has their best interest at heart! Even in a technological storm.*

**Keywords:** Community learning, tablets, android, moodle, blended learning

**Research Development Fellow**

**Alice Eardley**

**City of Oxford College / Activate Learning**



**Title: Employer Involvement in GCSE English**

**Abstract**

*In the context of my practice, students undertaking English GCSE re-sits often struggle with motivation and engagement. While, last year, 47% of students resitting English GCSE achieved a C, a result well above the national average of 33%, there remains room for improvement, especially given that many students retake the exam twice or even three times while they are at the college.*

*The aim of this research is therefore to establish if basing a portion of the GCSE English teaching on a 'real world' project provided and supported by a local employer will boost engagement, motivation, and ultimately exam results, by demonstrating to students the practical applications of the literacy skills they are developing.*

**Key Words:** English; employer engagement; work-based learning.

**Exploratory Research Project  
Practitioner**

# Tim Galashan and Iain Evans

## Derwen College



### **Title: Don't Count on Counting**

#### **Abstract**

*This small-scale research project aims to compare and contrast established approaches to teaching functional mathematics; working with pre-entry level learners in a residential specialist college setting.*

*Research methods involved the comparison of two different approaches to the teaching of mathematics together with an evaluation of each approach. This study considers whether either or both of these approaches could wholly or partially be implemented within the specialist college's current study programme.*

**Key Words:** Mathematics; Special Educational Needs; practitioner research.

# Lisa Gill and Gary West

## MPCT



**Title: Should I Stay or Should I go...?**

### **Abstract**

Biesta argues that,

*'...education is not just about knowledge, skills and dispositions. Through education we also represent and initiate children and young people in traditions and ways of being and doing, such as cultural, professional, political and religious traditions (Biesta, 2015).*

*When a person is considering preparing for a career in a uniformed service, particularly a career in the armed forces, there are aspects of this future role that may be in personal conflict with societal norms. Using Biesta's multidimensional theory of educational purpose (2010), this small-scale study explores the tensions experienced when preparing learners for a uniformed services course and in particular the dichotomy of Biesta's concepts of socialisation and subjectification. This study focuses upon these issues in relation to curriculum development, specifically in the form of an induction programme and supporting resources.*

*The Induction phase is a critical element of any curriculum. In this phase learners are exposed to organisational culture, expectations and norms, which can be in contradiction to personal beliefs and experiences.*

*This small-scale project uses Biesta's domains as a framework for analysis, giving a unique insight in to curriculum planning in this under-theorised area of work. The initial direction of this research focused on the relationship between an induction programme and qualification success rates. As the research developed, the focus has shifted to consider theoretical applications within induction programmes.*

*By modelling up Joint Practice Development (Gregson et al. 2015), we collaborated and tested ideas with practitioners and managers over a 12-month period; resulting in an induction resource that aims to close the gap between subjectification and socialisation.*

**Key Words: Uniformed Services; induction; Joint Practice Development (JPD)**

**Jackie Harrison**

**Havering Sixth Form College,  
London**



**Title: Creating environments for teachers to learn: exploring an alternative approach to educational improvement and the continuing professional development of teachers.**

**Abstract**

*Extensive research has been conducted into high job satisfaction, improved productivity and how this can be applied to an educational setting.*

*This small-scale practitioner research study focuses up on how professionals working in a 6<sup>th</sup> form educational setting in East London, can be 'caught in the grip of a picture', Frith (1856 -1858) in relation to approaches to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of teachers.*

*The study highlights shortcomings in conventional approaches to improving teaching and learning through CPD events and conferences where external 'experts' are invited to advise teachers how to improve their practice.*

*This study draws attention to how such approaches tend to undervalue/overlook in-house expertise and collaborative capacities for improvement. This research suggests that the grip of conventional approaches to teachers' CPD may be inhibiting the growth of in-house CPD and the growth of more collaborative professional relationships.*

**Key Words:** Continuing Professional Development; practitioner-research; collaboration.

**Havering Research Development  
Fellow**

# Jemma Harvey

## Exeter College



**Title: What Leadership and College Cultural Factors are Affecting Good Quality Delivery of GCSE English at Present**

### **Abstract**

*The original topic for this project was a focus on timetabling issues affecting GCSE English students' achievement, engagement and attendance at a large FE college in the South of England. The students' achievement on GCSE English programmes had met national benchmarking data repeatedly, but the students' engagement was generally low. Attendance and engagement problems in English were not always tackled effectively by the students' parent faculties, often taking months to rectify.*

*It became apparent that timetabling was a symptom of the issue, rather than the core problem. The students' negative attitudes and behaviours in English were becoming more overwhelming as the academic year went on. I began to wonder whether cultural factors surrounding the students had a role in the difficulties being experienced by English teaching practitioners. Channelling Sherlock Holmes, I put on my deerstalker and asked a new question: what leadership and college cultural factors are affecting good quality delivery of GCSE English?*

*The overarching findings from surveys and case studies show that there are issues in staffing attitudes that affect the students re-sitting GCSE English, although these are not necessarily derived from college leadership. The data also suggests that the current 9-1 GCSE qualification is widely regarded as being inappropriate for the learners, and the skills taught are perceived as unnecessary, certainly within the scope of the students' working lives after leaving FE; however, it was noted that the majority of those surveyed felt that English was still a relevant topic in vocational subjects. This would also suggest that a different type of English qualification, perhaps a higher-level Functional Skills qualification (L3?), or a more contextualized form of English Language GCSE, developed in collaboration with vocational teams, would meet the learners' practical needs and interests.*

**Key Words:** English; student attitudes; curriculum content and design.

**Research Development Fellow**

# Gemma Johnson and Rosemarie Davies

## The Manchester Growth Company

**Title: Access to Higher Education: Putting the Practical Magic Back**

### **Abstract**

***'It is the view of the Ministry that a theoretical knowledge will be sufficient to get you through your examinations which, after all, is what school is all about.'***

*(Dolores Umbridge, Head of the Ministry of Magic, 2007)*



*This paper focuses upon the experiences of staff and students on Vocational Access to Higher Education programmes located within the HE provision of a large independent training provider. The research involved 70 Access to Higher Education Students and 15 teachers across 4 programmes. The initial focus of the research was to explore the learning environment and its role in developing curious and critical learners. Analysis of the work of Coffield (2009 & 2014) led to an appreciation of the significance of trust and the extent to which it shapes relationships between staff and students. This resulted in an exploration of different perceptions of trust and of Hargreaves' (2012, Coffield 2014) 'Dimensions of Trust Survey'. An adapted version of the survey was issued to staff and students with the preliminary findings followed up with focus groups. The survey findings highlighted differences in perception of the nature of trust; the focus groups revealed that relationships between staff and students were fragile.*

Of the findings, the most significant were that the students reported feelings of injustice regarding the implementation of rules; dedicated students felt burdened with additional responsibility for their underperforming peers during group work activities. A further significant finding was that students did not feel heard when expressing concerns about their learning.

Preliminary findings indicate that tensions within education are inevitable because some factors are beyond the control of the practitioner. Education should be a magical experience; it should be about imparting knowledge, building curiosity, inspiring individuals to see learning as a lifelong process. If practitioners can appreciate the role of trust, understand that external factors can damage it and manage to maintain professionalism amidst all of this, then they will have the ability to create an inspirational learning environment built upon a solid foundation of professionalism. (ETF Professional Standard 'Build positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues and learners').

**Key Words:** Trust, relationships, professionalism, creativity.

**Research Development Fellows**

**Helen Johnson**

**Havering Sixth Form College,  
London**



**Title: The Thinking Project – Creating Positive Thinking in Level 2 Mathematics**

**Abstract**

*The raising of the participation age and introduction of compulsory re-sits for GCSE students has led to an increase in post 16 students taking GCSE and other level 2 mathematics qualifications. The challenge here is to motivate these students, who have failed their mathematics qualifications at least once. Attendance, engagement and motivation amongst these students tends to be poor, affecting their potential to achieve good qualifications in mathematics. This can affect their progress and life chances, particularly in a changing job market, where STEM skills are becoming increasingly important.*

*My research is a small-scale study into the efficacy of a process called ‘The Thinking Project’, developed in the USA by Rachel Pickett and Linda Dellet. The Thinking Project is based on The Work of Byron Katie, Inquiry-Based Stress Reduction (IBSR). The Thinking Project is based in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and ‘mindfulness’, working with students to develop an awareness of thought.*

*Students learn to identify and question thoughts, and to see situations through multiple perspectives, to engage with their inner and outer worlds with more honesty and resilience. My research was a trial of these resources, in an effort to create positive thinking in Level 2 mathematics.*

*I trialled this resource with a variety of post 16 Level 2 mathematics re-sit students, upper and lower sixth, with GCSE grades from G to D. I worked alongside a teaching assistant and shared the resource with various staff members, to gain insight into effectiveness. The evidence I gathered showed students taking ownership of their thoughts and actions, and tackling problems from new perspectives. It also highlighted potential limitations of the Thinking Project approach.*

**Key Words:** Mathematics teaching; critical thinking; practitioner-research.

**Havering Research Development  
Fellow**



# Lola Lasekan

## My Turning Point Internship, Study and Employability and Organisation



**Title: Crafting Stars**

### Abstract

*Craft still does exist... Craft is your security in rough water. Craft is in every job done well. There is public obligation and a duty in all of this to practice our craft well'.*

**(Jake Gyllenhaal, Actor, BBC Andrew Marr Show February 2016)**

*This small-scale research study funded by the Education and Training Foundation and in collaboration with Sunderland University, explores key issues, challenges, opportunities in promoting more participation in work based learning and making New Apprenticeships 'good' in practice. Sainsbury (2016) underscores the importance of the new Apprenticeships in England and regards them as a crucial factor in the development of the workforce.*

*In the 2016–17 House of Commons Report, the Government' set out its vision is for New Apprenticeships, arguing that they should 'be available across all sectors of the economy and at all levels'. This study considers how the new Apprenticeships in the Kent area can be made 'better' in practice - creating and crafting vocational stars of the future.*

*However, imagining a successful New Apprenticeship programme in the future is not easy because their have been so many policy failures in the past (Wolf, 2011, 2015).*

*Following Gyllenhaal's vision of craft if we can make the New Apprenticeships 'good' in practice then it may still be possible to see a new vocational world in which we can the crafted stars of the future; in which there are much-reduced number of young people struggling with lack of direction, depression, unemployment, confusion, anxiety and isolation in their lives. A world in which a new generation of effective craft workers can emerge and flourish, giving way to better work based learning programmes based upon Joint Practice Development (Fielding et al 2005, Gregson et al 2015) and increase participation in work based learning for all.*

*That is what is at stake here ...no more...no less!*

**Key Words:** Vocational Education; work-based learning; apprenticeships.

**Research Development Fellow**

# Kathryn Lavender and Joanne Lockwood

## Calderdale College, Halifax

**Title: Emerging Voices (Developing Academic Voices)**

### **Abstract**

*College HE offers multiple pathways for students to gain higher education qualifications. As well as offering sub-degree provision such as Higher National Diploma's and Foundation Degrees, colleges are increasingly providing full honours degrees and top-up degrees. Central to most UK honours degree is the final demonstration of student knowledge and scholarship in the form of a dissertation, and this is true in colleges also. However, at present very little attention is paid to the main form of pedagogical interaction that occurs during this process – the supervision relationship – in either university HE or college HE. Given the vocational and practice focus of most college HE provision, and in the context of this research, early years education, it could be argued that students find this long standing academic tradition hard to engage with.*

*This research sought to bridge the gap between students vocationally orientated prior learning experiences and the new demands of their top-up degree by developing a model that would enable students to consider the impact their research may have in practice, using collaborative supervision with experienced sector professionals, and a narrative enquiry approach to exploring its effects. This paper argues that it is not enough to consider student engagement with research as requiring contextualisation within the workplace, but engagement as a learning concept that is fraught with issues of power, time and space. This research offers a new conceptual framework for understanding engagement with research that could contribute to understanding how students experience this essential aspect of undertaking a degree in the context of college HE.*

**Key Words:** College HE, HE in FE, supervision pedagogy, undergraduate research, student engagement



# Lesley Littlewood and Sonia Miller

## NOVUS

**Title: Evaluating project based learning to identify factors that improve outcomes for learning**

### Abstract

*“I now realise that education is at the heart of [the prison system]. If you’re really going to change things then education has to be central to rehabilitation and reform, and be seen as fundamental to a prison’s success.”*

*Dame Sally Coates, Coates Review, 2016*

*Our internal quality processes identified that while our success rates may be good, there was an over-reliance on traditional teaching methods and too much teaching to the test. The problem was an over-emphasis on the qualification domain and insufficient on socialisation and subjectification (Biesta 2010).*

*As a result a national practitioner-led maths and English initiative was developed - ENiGMA. A communication process was devised and project based learning events were created to support tutors in offering creative and engaging learning opportunities across all areas of curriculum. An ENiGMA Moodle was also established to share resources, with a recognition that an inclusive approach was needed, to suit the differing needs of individuals.*

*The project aims to carry out evaluation, using a case study approach through evidence gathered from National Fair Play Day, National Poetry Week and Rio 2016, three projects from the Novus ENiGMA enrichment calendar.*

*Evidence is collated from feedback gathered from establishments who have participated in the events and includes learner voice, tutor voice and photographic evidence of events and activities.*

*We believe that the events were successful due to the communication network, disseminated from national meetings, and that the structure of ENiGMA regional leads and establishment reps supported this. It has been particularly successful where managers have recognised the importance of promoting English and maths, allowing individuals to take responsibility for pro-actively developing the events on a local level, and overcoming barriers in their own establishment.*

*Where ENiGMA has had the most effect on teaching and learning we have seen a more creative and engaging approach to English and maths.*

*Recommendations from the study include that a project based learning approach to improving delivery requires support and an effective communication process.*

**Key Words:** Project-based learning; offender learning; English and maths.



# Alison Longden and Claire Kelly

Northern College, Barnsley



**Title: FAB 3: Emerging Voices (developing academic voices)**

## **Abstract**

*The concept of FAB began in 2014 when a chance observation of educators with folded arms on the back row during a digital literacy staff training session, led to a series of action research projects to understand the Folded Arms Brigade. Through these projects a FAB Model of Digital Resilience, aimed at developing teacher digital literacy, has been developed and subsequently evaluated. The purpose of this research is to test out the model in another area of learning: academic writing. The aim is therefore to develop trainee teacher resilience in their own academic voice, verbal and/or in writing, by moving from private to public domains, through interventions based on the FAB Model of Digital Resilience.*

*The research strategy is based on a phenomenological approach, with students' experiences being at the forefront, and within the framework of action research. The study was conducted at an Adult Education and Community college in the North of England with all participants being trainee teachers on either an in-service CertEd/PGCE.*

*The pedagogical interventions such as writing boot camps, academic literacy and teacher identity workshops, have indicated that the FAB Model of Resilience can be applied to improving levels of academic writing. However, we are unable to conclude whether these interventions have significantly impacted on the resilience of trainee teachers' academic voice. Not least because progress through the model has been considerably slower than when applied to the use of 'tech'. It is therefore recommended that these interventions are continued, and a further research is undertaken next year to determine the significance of time.*

**Key Words:**Teacher Education-Teacher identity- Academic Skills- Resilience

# Andy McGill and Sally Reeve

## Lincoln College

### **Title: Post 16's Motivation 4 Maths**

#### **Abstract**

*Ofsted chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw has repeatedly hit out at standards of English and maths provision in colleges and was quoted as saying "Youngsters who don't do very well at 16 often don't do very well two years later, particularly in English and maths where the results are pretty poor."*

*Additionally, another year of disappointing maths results has been witnessed nationally, with only 29.5% of students aged 17 or above (post-compulsory education) attain a grade C. This has obvious implications on our learners' futures and employability but also impacts on the success of Study Programmes.*

*The ultimate aim of this study is to identify what the motivation levels are for students within post compulsory education undertaking either GCSE or Functional Skills maths with the intention of using the data to design strategies that can combat the issues raised.*

**Key Words:** English and maths; motivation; Study Programmes



**Matt McKenzie and  
Laura Shipley  
South Cheshire College  
&  
Canterbury College**



**Title: Inception: How to Start Your Lesson Effectively in Post – 16 English**

**Abstract**

*The aim of this small-scale research project is to explore different ideas to engage learners and to promote the importance of English and Maths in post-16 education. Students' self-belief is mostly negative when they start attending post-16 education and many teachers believe that the main battle: is learner engagement. It is essential for teachers to ensure engagement takes place as this is the imperative component of the lesson.*

*The project explores different methods for engagement and the different techniques that can be used in the classroom for students to become more engaged with English and Maths, as this is vital for their futures.*

*This research is needed to find methods for students to have the most effective teaching and learning that they can have but to also enjoy English and Maths. It is important for students to succeed but for them to enjoy the learning process and the lessons prepared.*

**Key Words:** Learner engagement ; English and maths ; effective teaching and learning

# Harry Newman and Patrice Miller

## Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College

**Title: Sports Score with Literacy**

### **Abstract**

*There is a distinct lack of support for English teachers who want to embed and develop numeracy skills in English lessons. It is an expectation that English teachers should simply 'embed' and develop numeracy in their teaching.*

*This small-scale research study aims to collect and analyse opinions and experiences of colleagues in relation to the above. The study also looked at current research evidence around the issue. Data from the study suggests that there is limited supported available for English teachers wishing to develop higher order numeracy skills. It also found that teachers of English often lack the confidence to improve their numeracy. These research points to a reluctance among teachers to embed and develop numeracy in English lessons.*

*However the sector needs to engage more teachers in this research and produce clear strategies that are tried and tested and ultimately encourage teachers to use them in their practice. This study suggests that research and practice in the field of cross curriculum planning largely developed in the schools sector could might help to increase teacher and learner confidence in using and applying mathematical concepts outside the maths classroom.*

**Key Words:** English and maths; cross-curriculum planning ; teachers' CPD.



# Adrian Pegg and Joe Carr - Holland

## Gateshead College



### **Title: Seeing Through the Clouds**

#### **Abstract**

*FELTAG (2014) sought to nurture a culture of technological change in the sector, many providers in FE had knee jerk reactions to shifting curriculum delivery onto virtual learning environments with major concerns over practitioners needing to have digitally literate role models. The ETF called for the establishment of a climate where trainee teachers (and established) practitioners are given encouragement to experiment with learning technology (ETF, 2014).*

*In order to comply with policy drivers and guidelines from OFSTED a North East FE college initiated the trial of using different VLE platforms simultaneously. The purpose of the study was to capture the experiences of (us as) two teacher educators as we used different VLEs and pedagogical approaches. The research uses a narrative approach to capture the experiences of ourselves as teachers using different VLE platforms and the impact on Level 3 to Level 6 learners.*

*This paper reflects our self-educated and sometimes muddled journey into the world of VLE's.*

*The initial findings show a distinct contrast between VLE's and a clear embracing of Google Classroom as a preferred platform, by teachers and learners alike in enhancing all aspects of Biesta's Domains of Education (2010). Our experiences included (unexpected) synergy with learners using Google Classroom and feelings of frustration and a lack of engagement with Moodle. However, moving forward we found that we had underestimated the other constraints in choosing a VLE platform in meeting legislative and regulatory requirements. So in the 'battle of the VLEs (for us at least) - the jury is still out.*

**Key words:** Curriculum design; VLEs ; teacher CPD.



**Sarah Peters**

**Hull College**



**Title: I can write clearer now the pain is gone: using writing circles for the ‘righting’ of E3 ESOL writing**

**Abstract**

*ESOL students at college often struggle to achieve in formative and summative assessments and final exams, particularly in the Writing mode, beyond the Entry Levels.*

*Exam achievements for 2015/16 stood at 60% for Levels 1 and 2 compared to 93% for the Entry levels.*

*Progress towards becoming fully functional in English and eligible for GCSE courses and/or other progression routes is limited. Most of the college’s ESOL students will not be able to succeed at GCSE C grade and this is a barrier to Higher Education and employment .*

*The college provides a workshop for ESOL students to access academic support for their GCSE course.*

*The aim of this small-scale research project is to use a Writing Circle to enhance this support provision to help develop autonomous and fluent writing, awareness of cultural references, study and social skills, progression through the levels and exam pass rates.*

**Key Words:** ESOL ; Writing Circles; progression.

**Exploratory Research Project  
Practitioner**

# Graham Pitchforth

## Kirklees College



**Title: Fear and Loathing in Digital Learning**

### **Abstract**

*The focus of this small-scale, practitioner-research study is, 'Exploring the possibilities and challenges of FE assessment for learning, in a blended learning context'.*

*Adoption of effective digital learning strategies has been a long-term struggle for many FE providers. The project was inspired by current government focus on digital literacy in learning.*

*This research paper adopts a multidisciplinary approach, and aims to recommend effective strategies for increasing both learner and practitioner engagement with digital blended learning.*

*Marketing theory and concepts are a key focus of this study, placing emphasis on content writing and communication.*

*Learner 'self-handicapping' as discussed by Hattie, (2012) is identified as a major challenge in executing a successful digital learning strategy. Marketing theory is used throughout the study to explore how potential of both learners and employees 'self-handicapping' is limiting when faced with digital learning tasks.*

*The research was conducted across three large general further education college sites (GFE). The sites have a combined approximate of 14,000 students. The college centres are located in the Yorkshire and Humber Region, and are set in multi-cultural towns. The college's populations reflect this with approximately 20% of learners coming from minority ethnic heritage groups.*

**Key words:** Digital Learning; Blended Learning; cultural change.

**Research Development Fellow**

**Greg Poole**

## **Hull Training and Adult Education**



**Title : Generation GCSE - How best can we support learners re-sitting or returning to GCSE**

### **Abstract**

*The overall aim of the project is to improve our delivery of GCSE English and the performance of the students by exploring the motivations, ambitions, previous experiences and recent achievements of our learners.*

*The study seeks to understand how we can better recognise what could be successful for any particular group of learners. Involved in this process includes looking at recent school leavers and their grasp and attitude towards the subject and qualification.*

*Alongside this, the study aims to review learners returning to the subject after some years away – these students may be learners who have taken recent qualifications, up to degree level. Or it could be people who are returning to learning after some years away.*

*This research is needed due to the breadth and diversity of the cohorts of learners currently seeking to gain a GCSE .*

*Recent policy imperatives have resulted in teachers of GCSE English and maths teaching learners with a vast array of skills and a wide range of experiences. This placing new demands on teachers working in Adult Education and Training contexts in terms of the variety entry levels and life experiences of students in relation both to pedagogical approaches, assessment strategies, curriculum content and design. This small-scale, practitioner-research study offers a contribution to understandings of the current experiences and CPD needs of teachers of GSCE working in Adult Education and Training contexts.*

**Key Words:** GCSE English; pedagogy ; teacher CPD

**Exploratory Research Project  
Practitioner**

# Ruth Richardson

## Heart of Worcestershire College



### **Title: Can Informal Learning Count as Evidence in a Formal Qualification?**

#### **Abstract**

*In an increasingly informal world, learning is no exception, as budgets are reduced and time becomes more precious, greater emphasis is being placed on the informal learning that we undertake. While it is difficult to quantify and despite our acceptance of the way our learning environments are evolving, we still crave acknowledgement of our development. Unfortunately without a set standard to benchmark it against, it is harder to demonstrate to others what we have achieved.*

As Cameron (1963) states:

*‘Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.’*

*So can we measure informal learning as part of a formal qualification? Is this a way of showing that what we have been doing meets a common standard? We could just stick to traditional methods of gaining qualifications, but with constant reductions in budget and limited time available to study, informal learning as a concept is likely to remain.*

*To test these questions the Subject Mentoring Process on the Certificate in Education and Training is used as the focus of this study. The study demonstrated that there are possibilities for harnessing informal learning and using it as evidence in a formal qualification, but consideration has to be given to curriculum planning and the assessment process to ensure its success.*

*The study also found that there also needs to be some structure in place and some commitment from the learners, concurring with the model initially introduced by Marsick and Watkins (1990) for enhancing informal and incidental learning*

*This small-scale, practitioner-research study has opened up the possibility of introducing the concept of informal learning as an integral part of other qualifications and this is to be trialled in the next Academic year.*

**Key Words:** Informal learning; mentoring; teacher-education.

**Research Development Fellow**

# Lynne Taylerson

## Real Time Education Ltd



**Title:** 'All in This Together?'

### **Abstract**

*This study asks, Can there be altruistic, inter-organisational collaboration on curriculum development in a time of intense competition in the FE and Skills sector?*

*This research sought to facilitate collaboration, bringing together twelve smaller Skills Providers in a Joint Practice Development (JPD) partnership working on effective embedding of a current sector priority, digital skills. This research uses a phenomenological, case study approach to document the successes and challenges of collaboration in a competitive climate.*

*A needs analysis determined which digital skills were most relevant to learners and how confident tutors were developing them, sourcing resources and facilitating discussions. There was high confidence and readily available resources reported for safeguarding-related digital topics but scant knowledge and fewer materials on positive digital identity such as digital citizenship and literacy.*

*A suite of free, Creative Commons Licensed suggested starter resources was produced and circulated to participants as dialogue opening documents and to consider, pilot, refine and provide feedback on the resources through meetings with leadership teams and at discussion and launch events with tutors.*

*Despite early enthusiasm, once the skills sharing ethos of the project was fully explained four providers withdrew, unwilling to share expertise and resources with direct competitors in their region and areas of specialism. Overcoming initial reticence, two organisational teams and one inter-organisational collaborative network formed successfully and conducted valuable Joint Practice Development.*

*One real win from the project is that an ongoing network has formed between four small independent providers with the possibility of this increasing to eight in the future. They have made tangible plans to share expertise and collaborate on curriculum planning and resource design.*

**Key Words:** Digital Skills; Joint Practice Development; curriculum development ; employability, inclusion; citizenship; work-based learning.

**Research Development Fellow**

# Sean Stubbs - Tyler

## Havering Sixth Form College, London



**Title: Exploring how Communities of Practice can use Situated Learning to facilitate success and enrich student lives**

### Project Overview

*This paper presents the findings of a practitioner-led, action research project supported by a sixth form college in England as part of the college's approach to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and educational improvement. The project focuses on how Communities of Practice, Wenger (1991), can be organised to engage students in Situated Learning as part of a fulfilling educational experience, underpinned by enduring educational values.*

*Building on the work of Lave and Wenger, this study aims to explore the socio-cultural dimensions of learning in Communities of Practice in the context of Film Studies Education including the extent to which Situated Learning can facilitate mastery of knowledge and skill.*

*Inspired by personal experience of degrees of learner growth that take place during the Duke of Edinburgh exhibition, I designed a London film location field trip, one of a series of interventions implemented during the 2015-2016 academic year. What follows is an ethnographic study and narrative account of this educational intervention. The methods of Case Study are employed in the context of this research, Bassey (2003) to bring shared experience of the field trip to life. The aim here is to capture stages in the creation of a Community of Practice and to illustrate the dynamics of how they function. In addition, this paper attempts to identify the impact of Situated Learning upon fulfilling the primary ethical responsibility of all educators, namely to nurture, enrich and enhance the intellectual identity of the individual (Bernstein, 2000). This study also attempts to discuss how Situated Learning can enable success academically as well as holistically enrich the lives and future learning trajectories of the cohort.*

*Through application of contemporary philosophies of education, as defined in Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity (Wenger, 1998) this study endeavours to view Communities of Practice from an ethical, anthropological and cognitive perspective to allow for meaningful reflections in identifying and understanding the teaching and learning that took place.*

*Preliminary findings from this small-scale, practitioner research study point to significant improvement in success rates for the course, as well as an increase in students wishing to progress to higher education and/or a career within the sector.*

**Key Words:** Communities of Practice; situated learning; practitioner-research.

# Amanda Wayling

## Brooklands College



**Title: We need talk about feedback: implementing reflective practice in the lesson observation process**

### **Abstract**

*This research examines the impact of changes to the lesson observation and feedback process in a further education college. The changes in process include a more holistic and collaborative approach. Lecturers are encouraged to reflect on their own professional development through collaborative reflection, self reflection and professional conversations. The observer invites the lecturer to take part in a professional discussion about teaching and learning and then to take part in collaborative action research.*

*The research draws on primary sources including, interviews, workshops and questionnaires. It also draws on existing academic work in reflective practice, specifically action research. The findings suggest that providing a meaningful space for lecturers to communicate and collaborate can create a positive and creative environment for teachers. The findings also suggest that 'buy in' to reflective practice and action research by lecturers will be effective if the process is supported by the college systems and that trust is established between lecturers and managers .*

*Examination of the new observation process over one academic year suggests that a more formal implementation of the action research rolled out across college using coaching and mentoring as a supportive tool may be instrumental in improving teaching and learning.*

**Key Words:** lesson observation : feedback processes; professional discussion

**Research Development Fellow**

# Julia Wright

## Thurrock Adult Community College



**Title: Being Human: Developing Resilience and Tenacity through Connectedness**

### **Abstract**

*Mental health difficulties cost the UK economy an estimated £70-100 billion every year. However, public spending is focused almost entirely on coping with crisis situations, with little investment in the prevention. Although this is a national problem, there is a need to identify what contribution our community college could make to build the resilience and tenacity of our learners.*

*Once committed to pursue the research, adversity hit, my own resilience was tested and I reached out to the community for help. Life had been galloping along quite nicely and it was a shock to discover that things had to change, and quickly. This could happen to anyone. Just imagine -it could even happen to you! I became part of the project, as a learner, and have used my experiences and the methods of narrative inquiry to tell the story of this research.*

*My key findings identified how difficult it is to be a carer and how vulnerable they are to becoming mentally and physical unwell. I observed the dangers of isolation as people felt it their individual and personal responsibility to be resilient and tenacious. I learnt that relationships and networks can foster the sense of collaborative resilience and tenacity. I was surprised to see evidence of 'cosy communities' becoming debilitating, stuck and preventing personal growth. I realised that plans to help learners to develop resilience and tenacity must be responsive to individual and collective needs and not a naïve, pre-arranged agenda of what I (or indeed anyone else) felt would be the solution.*

*Educators have a responsibility for the wellbeing of our learners and the wider community. Through partnerships, joined up thinking, responsive curriculum design and opportunities for individuals to connect and grow, we can contribute to building the collaborative resilience and tenacity of our learners in a community of living and of practice in which we can all thrive.*

**Key Words:** mental health; individual and collective tenacity and resilience ; communities of practice.

**Research Development Fellow**



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