

**Hosting research in school:
securing benefits for schools, teachers and researchers**

**A consultation document from the
National Teacher Research Panel**

Hosting research in school: securing benefits for schools, teachers and researchers

Introduction

Is it possible to carry out research so that the process benefits the school, the teachers and/or the pupils involved as well as potential future readers of research?

Yes - for example, the “Ways Forward with ICT” research project (Higgins et al, 1999) proved to be of real benefit to case study teachers and their schools. But this isn’t always the case. Not all researchers know what issues help or hinder schools and not all schools know what to expect or what to ask for. The questions contained in this paper aim to help close these gaps.

Benefits

If schools, teachers and researchers explore the nature of research plans and questions fully:

- Plans and communication about the research project from researchers have more chance of fitting in smoothly with the grain and pressures of school life;
- Teachers, schools and researchers are likely to learn from the process as well as the outcomes of research projects; and
- Teachers, schools and researchers will be able to consider the implications of research for practice over a longer period.

Questions to tease out potential benefits

The questions address 6 specific issues:

- aims and research questions
- conduct of the research
- practicalities
- funding
- design; and
- dissemination

The research aims and/or hypotheses

Question 1

Are the aims and research questions clear and comprehensible?

Question 2

Are there potential benefits to:

- your pupils, now or in the future;
- other pupils now or in the future;
- existing or future teachers;
- existing or future parents;
- the school now or in the future;
- the profession as a whole; or
- the wider community;

in having these research questions answered, and/or in the process of answering them?

Question 3

Have other teachers or schools had an active role in identifying these questions? If not is there scope for you to help refine them?

Conduct of the research

Question 4

Is there a code of practice for the ethical conduct of the research? Are there assurances about:

- whether the school and/or teachers will remain anonymous;
- whether the contribution of the school and the teachers is to be acknowledged and how;
- how the data collected about teachers, teaching and learning or other aspects of school organisation are to be checked with those involved in generating them.
- *For example, will teachers who are interviewed have access to records of the interview? Will the teachers or the school have a chance to comment on profiles draft questionnaires, Proformas, Interview schedules?*
- whether the sample will target a range of teacher effectiveness and how is this to be defined. If so what will teachers need and want to know about how their work is being evaluated?
- whether the teachers and/or the school have chance to comment on written outputs;
- how disagreements about data or reports will be negotiated and reconciled; and
- whether there are proper arrangements for observing pupils and for parental permission?

Practicalities

Question 5

Are you clear where the research is coming from and going to?

Question 6

Does the timescale allow you and the team to prepare the ground, comment on interview and observation schedules and comment on draft outcomes?

Question 7

Can this be managed so that it fits as well as possible into school routines?

Question 8

If classroom observation is needed, how will it be negotiated with teachers?

Question 9

If judgements are to be made about teacher effectiveness, is the evidence to be used sound? How is such information to be handled ethically to help those involved? Will there be feedback capable of informing the practice as those involved, contributions to school improvement or to the evaluation of specific programmes or activities?

Question 10

Are there clear plans for collecting data? Are these practical? Is it clear when and how activities are to be conducted? If teachers are to be involved how will their classes be covered?

Question 11

If teachers are to be consulted or interviewed are there plans for making sure there is good notice, an appropriate location for meeting and a streamlined approach to paperwork?

Question 12

What thought has the team given to keeping bureaucracy to a minimum?

Funding

Question 13

Are you satisfied that the research funding is sufficient to allow:

- the research to be completed effectively;
- the team to resource all teacher time involved including out of hours interviews when teachers may in effect be acting as consultants;
- teachers who are contributing from across several schools to meet each other at appropriate times and to network so that they can learn from the experience;
- your school to have access to an appropriate number of copies of draft profiles, reports and final outputs?
- your school to be involved in testing, replicating or interpreting outcomes if you want to (assuming the study reaches useful conclusions)?

Question 14

Are you satisfied funding comes from a reputable source?

You may also wish to consider the following questions or you may know/trust the researchers well enough to accept that all is well in this area.

Is this a well designed study?

Question 15

Are the questions clear – how will the data being collected help to answer them?

Question 16

Does the study build effectively on previous research? Can the team provide a user friendly summary of existing research that might be useful in school?

Question 17

Has thought been given to collecting sufficient, rather than too much evidence?

Question 18

Will the study look for evidence that contradicts as well as evidence that confirms a hypothesis?

Dissemination

Question 19

Will there be time to test interim and preliminary findings with teachers and with other academic researchers?

Question 20

Are the team effective communicators with the audience they seek to inform? Will there be teacher-friendly outputs such as classroom materials or vivid case studies as well as academic papers? If schools and/or teachers haven't been identified as a target audience should they be?

Question 21

Has enough time been planned for dissemination and for considering the implications of the research on practice?

Question 22

Are there particular and additional arrangements for dissemination to your school?

Consultation responses should be sent to:

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