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## **By The Sector, With The Sector, For The Sector: Implementing Intelligent Action In The English Further Education System**

Lawrence Nixon, Maggie Gregson

*University of Sunderland, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, United Kingdom*

### **Background**

This paper describes and offers a preliminary evaluation of an innovative model of joint practice development being used to support research and capacity building in the Further Education System in England and Wales. The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) and the Institute for Learning (IfL), have funded a national research development fellowship scheme based on joint practice development that was devised and delivered by teacher educators from the Sunderland University Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training.

### **Research Questions**

The paper reviews the initial phase of this project and investigates the potential of this model of joint practice development model to establish democratic spaces where there is room to discuss, design and implement research informed practice and richly evaluate its impact.

### **Methods**

The paper reports on data collection and analysis of soft and hard indicators of impact. These research methods are used to investigate the impact of the joint practice development model on participants and local organisations. This model is operationalised through a series of workshops that allow participants to interrogate their original understandings of a local problem and its proposed resolution. Joint practice development was framed by peer assessment and establishing a dialogue between the understanding of the problem and the relevant academic literature, research methods and ways of clearly 'representing' findings. Participants were also supported to collect 'soft' and 'hard' indicators of the impact of their intervention as a basis of further discussion and refinement of action.

### **Frame**

The impetus for the project came from the recent call for research by, with, and for sector and a range of contemporary research: Michael Fielding's work on joint practice development, Gert Biesta's work on intelligent transaction and educational values and John Elliot's work on educational research, evaluation and democratic rationality. The paper defines key features of this joint practice model in relation to this research. It also reports on the practical shape of the project describing how practitioners from across the country attended three staged residential workshops that were structured around addressing locally defined problems and evaluating the impact of the intervention chosen.

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Elliott, John (2006) 'Educational research as a form of Democratic Rationality'. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 40:2, 169-185

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### **Research findings**

This project aimed to generate more refined understandings of local educational problems and thereby stimulate more intelligent and effective action while also nurturing the kind of collaborative research community necessary to sustaining thoughtful action. The paper reviews the initial phase of this project and presents indications of the positive impact of the project toward achieving these ends. The paper also identifies barriers and challenges associated with this approach to continuing professional development and identifies areas for further theoretical and practical research. This paper thereby contributes to the ongoing debate about how best to nurture and sustain education for democracy.