

Inspiring leaders to
improve children's lives



National College
for School Leadership

Schools and academies

Research and development kitbag

How to use the kitbag

Resource

How To Use The Research And Development Kitbag

1. Why a kitbag on research and development?

The rationale behind devising a kitbag to capture best practice in Research and Development was in part to assist the first cohort of 100 Teaching Schools in setting up and delivering this work and in recognition of the opportunity they have to help shape the landscape of R and D in their own schools and across their alliances.

There is a wealth of literature available on Research and Development projects which can at first seem quite daunting for leaders in schools, who often have little capacity to set up Learning Communities but who realise the value that R and D can bring to improving achievement, sharing good practice, developing staff collaboration and who understand the importance of taking everyday classroom and school-wide practice and unpicking the theoretical base that underpins those activities.

This kitbag will also support schools in contributing to next cohort of teaching schools in order that incremental improvements can be seen as the teaching schools' journey unfolds.

The provision of a kitbag means that leadership is more readily distributed across the organisation, sharing responsibility for developing sound pedagogical practice by giving worth and value to staff room conversations and everyday dialogue; capturing the fugitive and potentially transient discussions that occur informally. The kitbag is about intentionality and not leaving it to chance the notion that colleagues in all contexts can learn from each other.

"As Michael Huberman (1995) puts it, 'There is a "discussion culture" among teachers... interspersed with timid attempts at the level of actual implementation... To get from a peer discussion to its enactment in one's classroom is a phenomenal leap.' What we are after is knowledge transfer, by which I mean that a teacher successfully puts into practice something new that has been learned from another teacher."

Hargreaves, D (2010) Creating a self-improving school system

2. So what's in the kitbag?

In the kitbag you will find an interesting mix of suggestions, frameworks, questions, examples, guidance and tips:

We have offered a framework for setting up R and D in your own school context or across your alliance or between a group of schools

We have produced a document suggesting guidelines as well as hints and tips rather than a tight framework or a "to do" list in recognition of the need for schools to work within their unique context and flexibility of approach and outcomes. The guidelines are predicated on a notion that the best starting place for this work is a consideration of beliefs and values rather than simply outcomes.

There is also the underlying ideology present in the documents that Modelling through the use of NLP techniques results in the possibility of excellence for everyone not just for the few and that change is sustainable indeed transformational when not solely based on superficial

observations but the recognition that uncovering and exploring beliefs around people and structures, allows us to replicate and then repeat behaviours and form habits that will be enduring.

If we believe in the integrity of practitioner based research then we can allow for flexibility in considering colleagues choices of projects, recognising that even when what is proposed may not immediately fit with the development plan or external initiatives, it may well open a door to a future we cannot see.

3. How have we set this out?

In devising this guidance document we began by composing key headings which we felt would provide a framework for pre research thinking, mindful also of the need for it to be accessible, relevant and readily applied. The choice of headlines developed out of interviews with staff within the CLF who were responsible for leading on practitioner research, colleagues who'd engaged in research projects and feedback from the other schools involved in the kitbag project. The responses to these interviews and discussions led to a list of key questions that we feel provide a useful starting point.

You will also see from the case studies that some or all of these questions are addressed by the schools in the analysis of their school's projects.

This process is organic so we intend to continually review the appropriateness of the questions and guidelines framework as more case studies become available and more schools become engaged with research; but we also felt that it was important not to grow the list of starting questions beyond what was manageable in these initial stages.

We've also included a list of useful teacher research-focussed websites provided by UWE for colleagues who would like to use their research project as a starting point to gain accreditation or to explore their initial findings further.

4. Why include Case Studies and research papers?

Information regarding the preparation and planning for the setting up and delivery of practitioner research is essential in laying down the fundamentals of principles and values, understanding purpose and protocols, consideration of outcomes, good practice in supporting the early stages of staff involvement, participant groupings, incentives for participation, action planning and review. However we also believe that it's crucial that before embarking on a programme of this kind the inclusion of case studies and exemplar material of what can be achieved can be inspirational and can provide a source for tracking back to a useful starting point.

The National College exists to develop and support great leaders of schools and children's centres – whatever their context or phase.

- Enabling leaders to work together to lead improvement
- Helping to identify and develop the next generation of leaders
- Improving the quality of leadership so that every child has the best opportunity to succeed

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