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**Pedagogic Research Guide**

**Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice 2017-18**

**Module 3: Researching for Enhancement**

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# **Part 1:**

## **a. What’s the issue relating to learning and teaching practice that you might want to research?**

*What’s your rationale for this choice?*

*Why have you chosen to address this issue?*

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*Would studying the issue enhance the practice of teaching and learning in your subject area or School? Would exploring your issue have wider implications and ramifications for the students, the staff, or the institution?*

*Please describe how undertaking this research will enhance learning and teaching and why you have chosen to explore this area.*

*Are you personally interested in the area? Have you reflected on it during your time here? Is it a live issue?* *Is it about assessment and feedback, digital technology, inclusive practice, achievement?*

**

## **b. Background Literature: What studies/research already exist in this area to help inform your thinking?**

*Are there any gaps in the literature which inform your rationale? Any policies or practice frameworks to which your research proposal idea might contribute?*

*Why is this idea relevant? Is there a wider context / sector that this fits?*

*Are there some classic texts on academic practice which could inform your thinking?*

**

## **c. What is the aim of the project?**

*You need to look at your own practice or an element of it to see if it can be improved.*

*What is your research question (or questions) – general and more specific…?*

*Your question(s) should provide the framework for your research project and keep it focussed.*

*There are generally four kinds of general questions involved in social research which act as good starting points for projects - each of them involving different kinds and degrees of complexity and each leading to different kinds of inquiry.*

*What’s the situation…?*

*What’s going on here…?*

*What happens when…?*

*What is related to what…?*

*This leads to more specific questions…*

*Examples:*

*What’s the situation…? How many BME students are attaining good degrees?*

*What’s going on here…? Why are staff not marking across the full spectrum of marks?*

*What happens when…? What are the consequences of changing our Induction programme from one week to an extended model?*

*What is related to what…? What are the relationships between low tariff entry and student experience on my course?*

*The end point of the project should be to provide an objectively decidable answer to your question.*

**

*To what extent do you consider this question to be answerable? What do you think the expected outcome might be?*

**

## **d. What are the objectives of the study?**

*How would you evaluate each of the objectives? Would there be an output for each objective?*

*What will be your measures of success (these can be qualitative or quantitative)? And what will be the deliverables and outcomes (if appropriate)?*

**

*Would the findings be sustainable - i.e. if you are applying for funding would the project have some sort of influence after the funding has ended? Is it going to replace a previous approach or provide a new way of doing things? Will it help to contribute to a University strategy/policy? Will it be rolled out to other colleagues?*

**

# **Part 2:**

**a. What’s your paradigm? (epistemology): i.e. the philosophical analysis of the nature of knowledge – the theory underpinning knowledge and meaning**

*How does it align to the learning theories you have already studied?*

*The choice of research practice depends on the questions that are asked and the questions asked depend on their context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).*

*If you are a positivist you might think that valid knowledge can be obtained through a scientific approach, you might choose a quantitative method. i.e.* ***positivism*** *as a paradigm.*

*However, if you favour a more social constructivist view (relativist) you might believe that meaning is subjective. You might have multiple perspectives gained through interactions with others and you would be more likely to choose a qualitative research method that explores themes and is about being interested in people, their ideas and how they inter relate and about generating theory and finding patterns of meaning i.e.* ***interpretivism*** *as a paradigm. Meaning is constructed by each of us in a different way.* ***Realists*** *sit somewhere in between – they consider it is possible to assess quantitative and qualitative research against common criteria of quality, particularly criteria of relevance and validity (see d).*

**

**b. Methodology: What approach would you choose?** **Qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods?**

*Research methodology is a strategy or plan of action that shapes our choice and use of methods and links them to the desired outcomes (Crotty, 1998).*

*What is the best way of answering your question? There may be a place for some quantitative research methods within pedagogical research but really it is the emphasis on understanding human behaviour that is particularly important and pedagogic research primarily sits within the social sciences.*

*How do people make sense of the world?*

*For example, some of the common approaches might be: participatory action research, appreciative enquiry, evaluation research, narrative enquiry, grounded theory, ethnography, case study.*

**

**c. Methods**: **You’ll need to critically evaluate these and why they suit your pedagogic research**

*Strategy and design:*

*Quantitative - e.g. questionnaires, psychometric tests, diagnostic tests, rating scales, data, structured interviews.*

*Qualitative - e.g. rich data from surveys, focus groups, interviews, qualitative observation.*

*Mixed tools e.g. semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.*

*Sample: w**ho would you study and why? What’s your sample, how many, how selected? What’s its composition and why?*

**

*Data collection: how are you going to collect your data and why (will some methods and tools be unsuitable for certain situations?) - consider the survey, focus groups, diaries, document interrogation, group interviews, statistics, interview, observation using a structured observation schedule?*

*What do you think the best way is to do it?*

**

*How will you analyse the data systematically ?*

*Content analysis if qualitative ? Which software (if any?)*

*Statistically - if so, how?*

**

## **d. Pedagogical Research: What about the validity/trustworthiness?**

*Can you ensure transparency, triangulation, respondent validation, generalisability? How might you do this?*

**

# **Part 3:**

**Pedagogical research requires working with individuals and, as such, it is important that it is undertaken in an ethical manner that protects participants from harm and the research from anything that might question its merit and worth.**

## **What ethical issues do you need to consider when doing pedagogic research?**

*What might the issues be, especially if working with students and colleagues? Are there any hidden agendas?*

*Think about whether the participants are voluntary? Nature of informed consent? Confidentiality? Storage of data? Risk?*

**

*Do you need to apply for ethical approval?*

[*https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/staff/Research\_Ethics.htm*](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/staff/Research_Ethics.htm)

**

**b. Financial issues**

*Would you need funding to do this project?* *From whom might you seek funding - who would do the project?* *Roughly how much might it cost? Do you need additional teaching space or room hire for workshops? Might any staff support be required? Any general resources required? Would dissemination cost anything? Match funding from the University?*

**

**c. Rough timeline for your project** - *to start and finish in one academic year****.***

**

## **d. Dissemination strategy**

*Who is your audience? Who could use the research? How might different audiences impact on the proposed dissemination?*

**

*Is it dissemination for awareness, engagement, understanding, action or promotion?*

*Make sure your message is correct depending on your dissemination aim.*

**

*Would you disseminate findings just at the end or during the project?*  *Could you blog or tweet throughout - would that be appropriate or useful?*

**

*Suggest a journal for which your research might ultimately be suitable …. Why?*

**

**e. Consideration of impact and risk**

*What factors might prevent your project from progressing or being successful?*

*Consider their impact and mitigate against those effects.*

*Who are the beneficiaries of this project and how will the findings impact on them?*

**

**Acknowledgement:**

Light bulb pictures - <http://kwl617.deviantart.com/>

Quill pictures - <http://greywriter.deviantart.com/>

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