Putting research to good use to improve our teaching methods

A paper on how educators can make research work for them was presented at the annual EAPRIL conference. It offers ideas about evaluating education and improving performance.

_EA_ **Gregson**

EAPRIL (the European Association for Practitioner Research on Improving Learning) was founded in 2009 and has enjoyed expansive growth in members and conference participants. In 2014, EAPRIL merged with the former European Training and Development Federation and extended its scope to welcome research from the field of learning and development in organisations. EAPRIL encourages new and more experienced researchers, interested in practice-based and practitioner research, to collaborate and interact with each other by building on shared knowledge and experience – the aim being to enable them to contribute to the development of both practice and research.

A number of the Education and Training Foundation’s (ETF) previous practitioner researchers from the Research Development Fellowship (RDF) and Exploratory Research programmes successfully presented their research at EAPRIL conferences. These include Michael Smith and Paul Roberts (Barking & Dagenham College), Celia Clarke and Frances Devlin (City of Sheffield College) and Dr Sam Broadhead (Leeds Arts University).

The EAPRIL Annual Research Conference 2017 was hosted by Häme University of Applied Sciences, in Hämeenlinna, Finland, from 29 November to 1 December 2017. I presented a paper I wrote in collaboration with the ETF’s Paul Kessell-Holland, called _Research Based Teaching: a starting point for educational improvement?_ This article offers a summary.

The paper presented the findings of research funded by the ETF in England. The research was supported by the University of Sunderland’s Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (SUNCETT). The study involved more than 200 practitioner-researchers from further, adult and vocational education institutions across England.

**IMPROVE PRACTICE**

It described how a series of research development workshops, provided by SUNCETT, had enabled sector practitioners – supported by the ETF’s RDF and Exploratory Research programmes – to systematically investigate and improve their practice through evidence-based and research-informed research.

Research outcomes from the RDF programme included a research paper and a research poster alongside the opportunity to have their work accredited as an integral part of a Masters Module in Advancing Pedagogy. Research outcomes from the Exploratory Research programme were presented in the form of a research poster. Practitioner-researchers from both programmes presented the outputs and findings of their research at the ETF’s Annual Research Conference in London.

SUNCETT conducted an overall analysis of the research outcomes from the RDF and Exploratory Research projects. This included scrutiny of the following data from the study:

1. Critical incident analysis
2. Practitioner researcher case studies
3. Practitioner and learner accounts of their experiences of their research
4. Research papers
5. Research posters
6. Evaluative data from research development workshops.

**REFERENCES**

To activate these one-click links, and all other links in the magazine, log in to SET and access your interactive digital edition of _iNTUITION_.