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Hidson, Elizabeth (2023) Recognising the impact of teacher educators on developing research culture with trainee teachers: the Sunderland Reflective Action in Education project (SunRAE). In: International Research Culture Conference 2023, 25 September 2023, University of Warwick and online.

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Recognising the impact of teacher educators on developing research culture with trainee teachers: the Sunderland Reflective Action in Education project (SunRAE)

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Background and context

International teacher education via distance learning

This project was developed in response to the challenge of building a community of research-informed practice when working remotely and a/synchronously with PGCE trainees across different international time zones. It can best be imagined as a student research conference, journal and podcast integrated into the PGCE (DL) at the University of Sunderland. ↓

What were (are) our aims?

1. RESEARCH CULTURE

Schools' partnership links with university ITT can support their first steps into becoming a research-active school. We wanted to foster a reciprocal research culture, building on our team motto of "distance not distant".

2. DISSEMINATION

We wanted to create a platform to showcase effective practice internationally. With 600+ trainees per year there is real potential for knowledge exchange.

3. PEER-LEARNING

Students are hungry for real-world examples of educational research that has an impact in schools and regions like theirs. By promoting student research through the SUNRAE project, we wanted to help our students to learn from their more knowledgeable peers in previous cohorts.

4. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT:

Student engagement has traditionally been challenging for our off-campus students. We wanted to harness the momentum provided by hybrid learning to dissolve the barriers to student engagement. →



The challenge of 'under the radar' teacher educator innovations

The Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) undertaken for the BERA Close-to-Practice (CtP) report of 2018 highlighted an absence of high-quality studies that 'addressed the research of academics with responsibilities for initial teacher education (ITE)' (Wyse et al, 2021, p. 1480). Put simply, no relevant studies were found that reported on CtP research done by teacher educators.

Despite these academics being in a symbiotic relationship with schools, and despite them initiating, supervising, and assessing school-based research assignments on undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research courses, this uniquely positioned group of practitioner researchers does not typically produce CtP outputs that are recognised in terms of national or international reach and significance: their innovations are 'below the radar' (Perry et al. 2017, p. 28).

In seeking to attract recognition of initiatives that contribute to developing research culture, this poster showcases the SunRAE project. The project won a Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Award 2021/22 and the funding was used to set up an open-access journal platform, university-hosted WordPress website, and develop a podcast series. →

SunRAE progress so far

- The project began in the 21/22 academic year.
- We have now run two annual online conferences, in June 2021 and June 2022, inviting guest speakers, colleagues and students to present and share their learning; planning for the June 2023 conference is underway.
- The first volume of the journal was published at the end of 2022; the second is in production.
- We worked with staff and students on the MA in Radio, Audio and Podcasting and the Sunderland Creatives Agency to develop the podcast series and edit the episodes, strengthening cross-faculty collaboration.
- 24 episodes of the podcast have now been published, with further episodes in production.
- Our close-to-practice, participatory and practitioner research culture continues to develop... ↓



Further aims and developments

- 1 FULL PURPOSEFUL INTEGRATION**
- use our innovation to its maximum effect
- 2 SUPPORT STAFF ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT**
- enhance staff and student research culture
- 3 SHARE OUR LEARNING JOURNEY**
- get out from under the radar! ↓

References and links

Perry, E, Boylan, M., Booth, J. and Coldwell, M. (2017). 'Connecting research and teacher education: quality enhancement for ITE Partnerships'. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

SunRAE: Sunderland Reflective Action in Education – conference, e-journal and podcast project: <https://wp.sunderland.ac.uk/sunrae/>

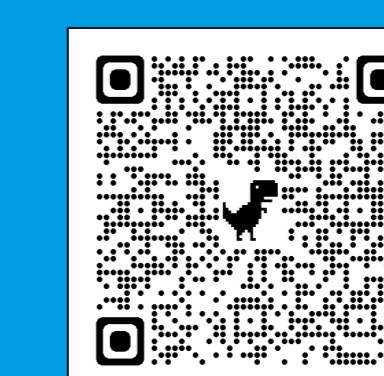
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