

NEON Establishing Evidence and Measuring Impact Working Group Meeting Minutes

AGENDA

Presentation 1: National Evaluation and Capacity Building for the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP)- Dr Jatinder Sandhu: CFE

Summary of findings from Year 1

- Undertaking impact and formative evaluation to look at the success of NCOP
- Aims and objectives:
 - Formative
 - Examine effectiveness of design and implementation of NCOP in what context and why
 - Impact
 - Assess consequential changes resulting from diversity of NCOP interventions
- Progress to date:
 - Formative
 - Development of national evaluation framework
 - Online consortia survey
 - Field visit with a selection of consortia to explore local models
 - Review of consortia operating plans and evaluation framework
 - Analysis of jsmail postings
 - Capability building in form of webinars, workshops, advise on monitoring returns and development of specific NCOP portal on CFE website
 - Impact
 - 19 scoping interviews- with HEFCE, tracking organisations and consortia staff
 - Baseline survey rollout- 57,894 pupils inc 28,121 target learners (no. target learners should increase once final cleanse of data is completed)
 - Development of two flagship RCTs
 - Liaison with tracking organisations to facilitate data sharing
- Key findings
 - NCOP is enhancing collaborative working and the development of new partnerships across a variety of different partners
 - Establishing partnerships and recruiting staff has been very time consuming
 - There is scope to improve communication between partners- between lead and partners institutions and between strategic and operational staff
 - There is a balance to be struck between devolved and centralised control
 - Consortia have engaged with 1,200 schools and colleges to date
 - Reaching new schools and colleges not previously engaged
 - More needs to be done to help schools and FEC to understand the targeted nature of NCOP and how it distinct from other outreach activities

- Schools lack of time can be a real barrier to engagement
 - Aligning with curriculum can help
 - Funding and resources to assist with engagement
- Generic and tailored delivery of activities across NCOPs
 - Engaging parents of target learners is key
- Scope to strengthen local evaluation plans
 - Need to embed rather than bolt-on
 - Need specific targets and outcomes beyond overarching programme ones
 - Dedicated evaluation post should be an integral part of staffing models
 - This can allow for the use of quasi-experimental methods and RCTs
- Findings from baseline survey
 - See graphs for breakdown of demographics
- Next Steps
 - Need to capitalise on investment and sustain and develop this for the duration of NCOP
 - Impact of NCOP on student aspirations, knowledge and intentions will be addressed through the follow up survey
 - More case study visits with consortia
 - Paying particular attention to governance
 - Look at how consortia are being innovative- what is different to previous offers
 - Are consortia upskilling staff in schools and colleges to contribute with outreach once NCOP finishes?
 - How are consortia capturing the learner voice: developing outreach, evaluation methods etc?
 - Collating best practice of parental inventions- what has been successful?
 - Look at challenges consortia are facing in terms setting up RCT and other evaluation methods
 - Look at emerging differences between engaging schools and FECs- are different approaches required
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Questions for CFE

- Considerable overlap between formative and impact evaluations- one large team at CFE overseeing the work
 - It's become one large evaluation and a holistic understanding of the impacts that are emerging
 - There are relationships between the formative and impact evaluations
- No plan to do regional analysis of survey responses
 - CFE will speak to team and HEFCE about whether this is possible
- Follow up survey plan guidance due next week
 - To be sent out in September- after a full year after original baseline and allows to gain a proxy measure of Yr13 intentions
 - No changes to the survey- same as baseline
- RCTs
 - BIT been leading on this method
 - Over recruit

- Randomly allocate to control and receiving group
- Baseline at start and end
- Linking to other administrative datasets to align a holistic approach to evaluation and findings.

NCOP- What Consortia would like next:

- More analysis within each dataset
 - Comparison between NCOP and non-NCOP group
 - Comparison using demographics- gender, year groups
 - Analysis at regional level
 - Are the findings going to be made available to share with schools? Is this done to consortia to sort out?

Working Group Discussion 1: The place of evaluation in the new OfS Access and Participation Pan

- More evidence
- Emphasis on collaboration
- Pluralist approach to evaluation.
 - Emphasis on institutions to understand when and what to use
- Helps like half a plan and maybe next year a different structure will be in place
- Change to when evaluation should take place- if we have success why do we have success?
 - Evaluation of learning and teaching- progression from 1st to 2nd year interventions
- Participatory Action Research- using students to help design responses
- Cocreation in designing activity and evaluation is not always possible if students have heavy schedules
- Issues of working collaboratively past access stage in terms of success and progression into the labour market- as this is highly competitive
- Need to evidence what support is available within institutions (evaluation of success) and feed this back to outreach participants (students and parents) to help unpick the myths about what HE is really like
- How can you turn evidence into narrative that affects change?
- Evaluation needs to be embedded into activity- disseminate findings through delivery to influence change
- Sometimes evaluation becomes divorced from delivery of activity and therefore doesn't influence change
- Evaluation should feed into the evidence base and be an iterative process to affect change

Working Group Discussion 2: The Practical or Institutional Constraints on Effective Evaluation (as a group we try and come up with a list of what might inhibit the kind of evaluation we'd want to do

- Often an afterthought and sometimes don't have the time to carry out evaluation properly- not built in the activity
- No time to reflect on evaluation even when it's taken place
- Get activity deliverer to use reflective logs to evidence- using a realist framework to underpin evaluation
- You can't evaluate everything

- Theory driven evaluation – realist methodology- uses qual and quant methods
- Missing from guidance from OFFA as to importance of different levels of evaluation and what can realistically be achieved
- Inconsistency of how we think and what we think about evaluation- the confusion of monitoring and feedback alongside evaluation and research
- How can you effectively evaluate?
- Demonstrating cause and effect is near impossible- especially if we don't know exactly what they have been on and what the influences are (don't necessarily take account things that take place at school level)
 - There can be different levels of causation and the model you subscribe to
- More centralised approach to evaluation with DfE more responsible for data

Working Group Discussion 3: Reflection on discussion and formulate suggested recommendations for the sector / our institutions / organisation / each other on how to respond to them?

- OfS need to give more consistent guidance on how we should be evaluating activity
- Acknowledgement that it takes time to build relationships with schools/colleges and participants especially to development trustworthy sustainable relationships- this needs acknowledging in the sector and that evidencing outcomes will therefore take time
- Using evidence as an outreach tool
- Giving practitioners time and space to use and reflect on evaluation that has been gathered
- Using collaboration as a way of improving effectiveness across institutions to combat:
 - Inconsistency in evaluation
 - Lack of resource
 - Lack of understanding
 - Need to centralise a strategy to embed at an institutional level
 - Learning from each other- no one size fits all
- Toolkit of methodologies on CoP to help share practice
 - Question bank- pick and mix
- Jetpack question bank- questions on confidence and self-esteem
- APP forum- feed into this and invite them to attend a future working group meeting
- Add in resources section to CoP where people can add links to useful articles etc
- Student voice- how do we capture this in activity and as part of the evaluation?
 - Conferences- participatory element to present or help out
 - Young researchers
 - Student councils
 - Digital story telling
 - Using student ambassadors to tell their stories and feed this into activity
- How do we incorporate HE students in the evaluation process- when looking at outreach and student success?
 - Use students to delivery activity- going back to their old schools; those who have taken part in previous programmes
 - Getting feedback from ambassadors- and the impact being an ambassador has on them personally
- How can we students involved governance of activity and evaluation?

- Should we consult students prior to delivery? To get their input in to what they would like to see
- Previous students in receipt of activity at HEIs could be used to get feedback on activities and this could feed in to activity development

Working Group: Next Steps

- Contact OfS and ask them to attend working group to discuss
- Send out CoP