

# Putting the pieces together: How practitioner research improved the employability of students studying Maths and English

## Why are we investigating this research question?

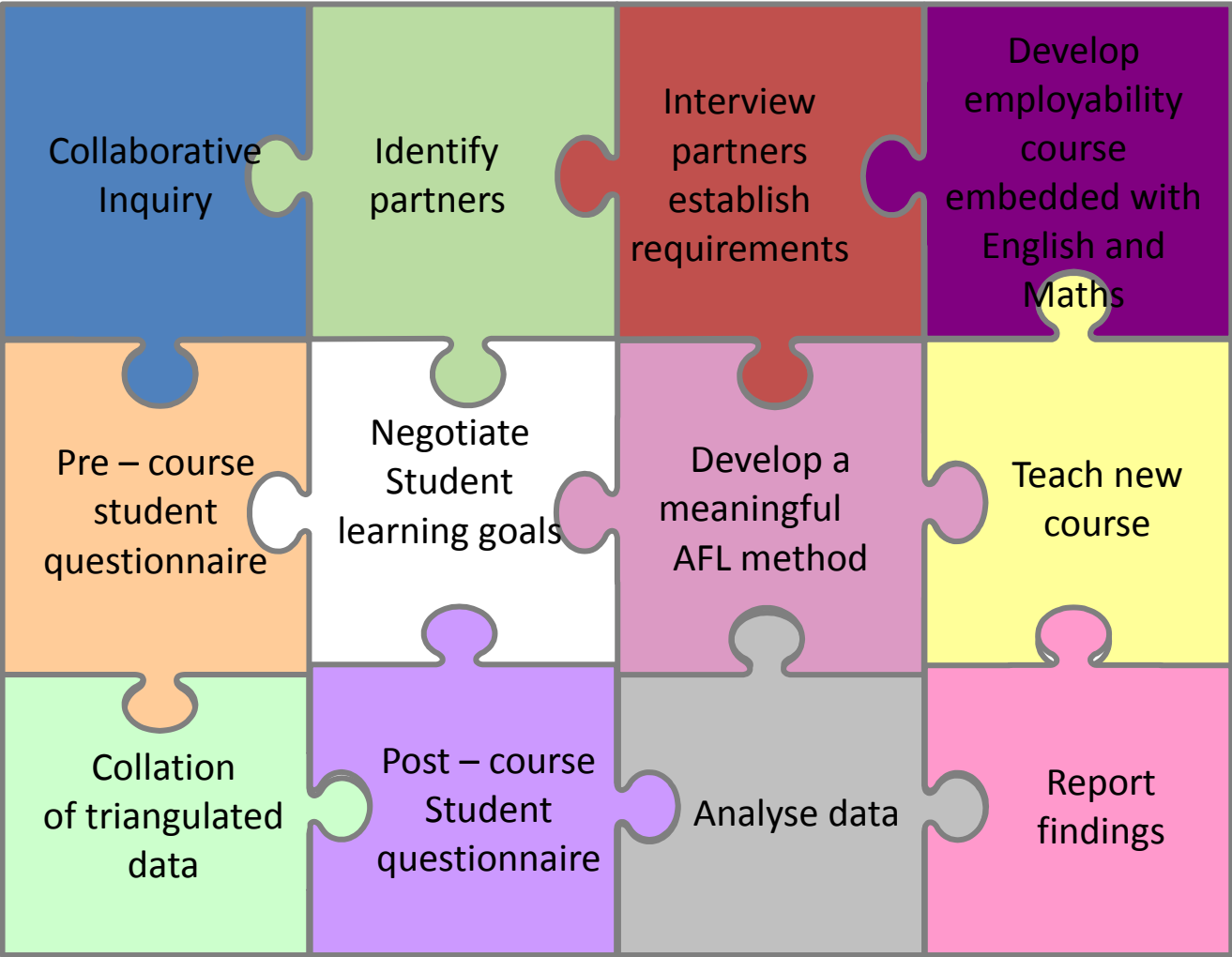
- To improve employability skills within English and Maths courses
- To identify the needs and expectations of partner organisations
- To identify the needs and expectations of students through effective goal setting(Kwang, 2003)
- To develop a sound and successful strategy for Assessment for Learning in our organisation (Stiggins&Chappuis,2005)
- To develop and use a meaningful assessment method
- To develop cross – curricular collaboration

## Data collection and analysis

- Collaborative Inquiry used, between partners, tutors and students(22 participants)
- Use of triangulated evidence ensuring validation of data through cross verification of sources
- Sampling strategies of interview, questionnaire and observation of use assessment for learning method
- Production of quantitative statistical data, derived from qualitative methods
- Thematic analysis of interview data

## Project Researchers:

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## Findings

- Collaboration between partner, student and tutor has greater impact on validity of the research and findings
- Pre – course collaboration with partners establishes meaningful learning criteria for all
- Tutor and student achievement rates are positively affected by sharing of good practice
- Clear understanding of learning goals by tutor and student dramatically increases achievement rates and personal efficacy
- Use of a meaningful AFL method encourages the concept of ownership and self efficacy
- Use of AFL empowers students, encouraging their participation in continuous access to descriptive feedback
- The powerful technique of triangulated research provides a detailed and balanced view of the findings, by studying the complex and rich elements of human behaviour from a variety of standpoints

## Recommendations

- Collaborative, cross curricular (and partnership) conversations should be employed to provide mutual observation of, and insight into teaching and learning
- Tutors should use a more holistic approach to assessment which ensures all parties are exposed to the strengths of AFL
- Tutors should be encouraged to act as 'critical friends' in informal peer observations
- Students should be encouraged to act autonomously, working with the tutor, using evidence of their own progress to understand what comes next in goal setting and achievement

'I want a course that does everything, really! One which helps the students get in to employment by developing their workplace skills, but also improves their English too.' (WEA partner organisation)

'Individual Learning Plans/goal setting are a waste of time and a meaningless paper exercise.' (LDD Practitioner, February 2013)

'The tutor talks about learning goals ...in the group...I understand them better than if someone...says just get on with it.( Entry 1 student)

'I feel much more confident in relating individual module goals to student's interests and this has led to greater achievements.'(LDD Practitioner, April 2013)