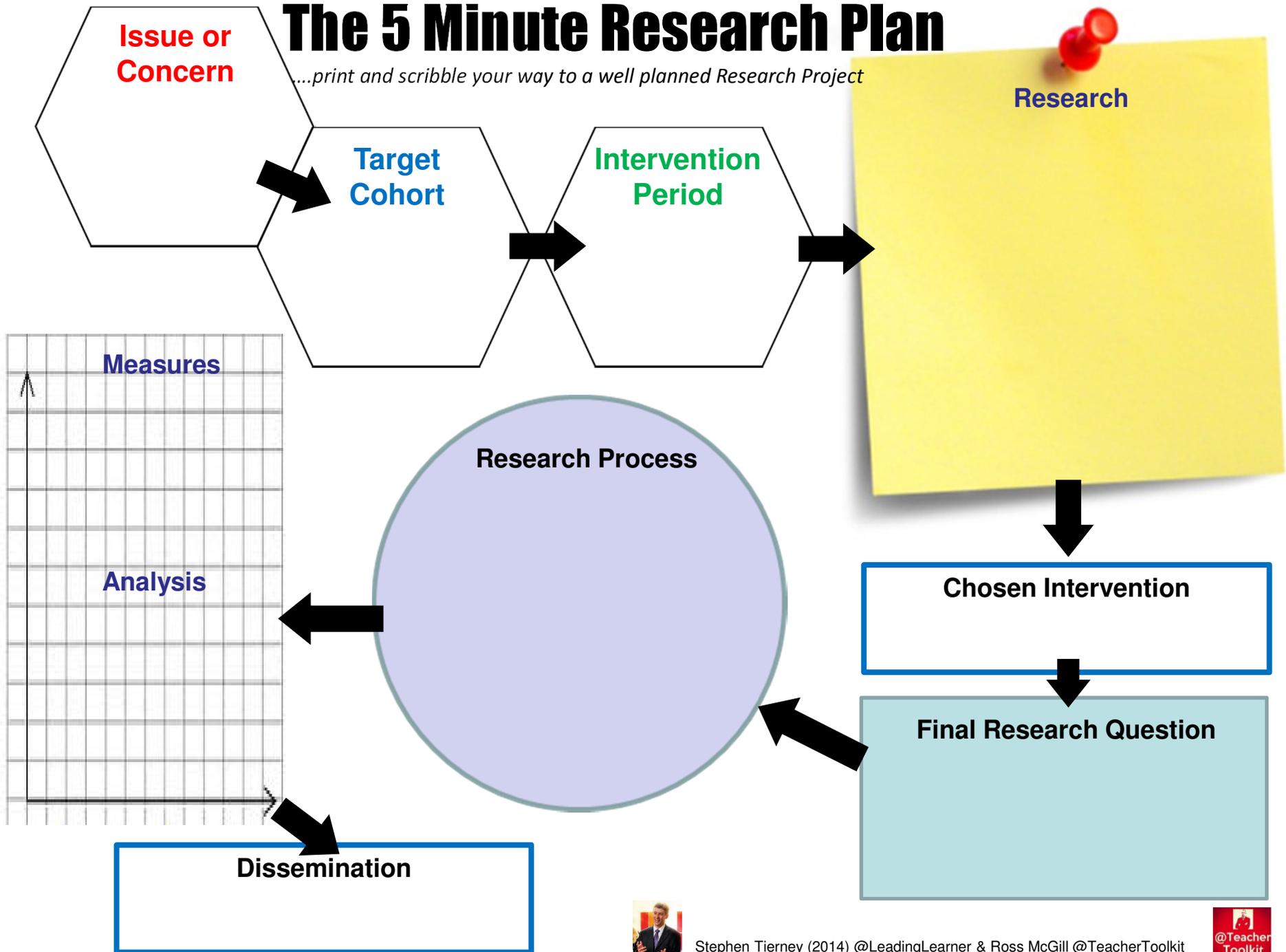


The 5 Minute Research Plan

...print and scribble your way to a well planned Research Project



Context – (What each area means?)

Issue or Concern

There are two ways to think about the issue or concern:

What is going quite well that I would like to go even better?

“The quality of feedback I give students is pretty good but it is still not having the impact I want.”

“The value added for CLA/FSM students in RAISE is in line with expectation but what could we do to make it sig+?”

What is really a problem and needs to improve?

“The behaviour in my classes is a real problem, students just aren't learning.”

“The Best 8 (Capped Average Point Score) for High Ability Student by Prior Attainment is sig- (blue) in RAISE. We have to do something about this.”

Target Cohort

It is very important to narrow down the research focus to a target cohort. Remember, this is a small scale piece of research often class room based, though for some leadership qualifications it can be across a department or whole school.

Intervention Period

There is no hard or fast rule for the period the intervention will run for. Typically projects, including for some involving external accreditation, run for between six to twelve months. This includes the initial research, implementation of a particular programme and writing up the findings. A good rule of thumb is to think about allocating times in thirds. So for a six month programme, there would be two months for initial research, two months for implementation and two months for writing up.

Research

This can be one of the really interesting and fun elements of the programme. What different ideas can you find about possible ways to impact on the particular issue or concern you want to address? Keep a note of the key ideas that are of interest to you.

The research can be from the academic – research books and papers; alternatively it could be from a course or INSET day, blogs or other schools or simply ideas from and discussions with colleagues about what they are doing. As you intend to disseminate the research it is important to keep a note of the different sources you have got the ideas from and reference them in your final write up.

Having done your research it is important to narrow down all the options to a **chosen intervention**. It may be you have a number of different interventions that you are interested in and quite excited about. It is important to be disciplined. Just implement one at a time and see the impact before looking at another one.

Context – (What each area means?)

Final Research Question

This is an important moment in the whole plan – a poorly expressed research question or one lacking focus will produce problems further down the line. Try using the following template to help you devise your final research question:

I/We intend to implement <chosen intervention> with <chosen pupil cohort, subject & topic> to investigate whether it has <add impact you hope to achieve> because <state your reasons>.

Research Process

You need to think through and make a note of the main methodology you are going to use in your research. The following will have an impact on your research process. :

- Is the intervention classroom based or outside of normal lesson time?
- Will you be the sole person involved in the research project or is it a collaborative approach in terms of planning, implementing and evaluating?
- What measures are you using?

Measures & Analysis

This can be one of the most difficult parts of the research plan for teachers. Sometimes people set off without a clear idea of what they want to measure or how it could be measured. Think about whether your measures are going to be quantitative (numbers based) or more qualitative (descriptions or discussions). It is not unusual to measure both but you must ensure that your measures are reasonable and manageable alongside the other work you have to do. Remember to get a baseline measure before you start the intervention.

Some examples of quantitative measures are tests and examinations (don't be afraid to use the same one as the baseline and final assessment), tally charts recording behaviours or incidents you want to measure (e.g. shouting out in class) or surveys (for example student voice responses to particular questions). One way of analysing a quantitative measure is using effect size.

More qualitative measures would involve direct observations by a colleague just describing what s/he saw in a particular lesson or interviews with students. Care needs to be taken here to ensure there is a particular area or set of areas you want the colleague to focus on. The same is true when devising questions to use when interviewing students. These records can be very useful in identifying reoccurring themes or responses which will help you determine whether the chosen intervention is having an impact.

Context – (What each area means?)

The final thing to think about is whether you will include a control group in your analysis. This is considered good practice in research. The control group will have all the same measures taken but there will be no intervention with this group. This can sometimes cause a bit of a “moral dilemma” for teachers as they feel they are denying one group a potentially positive experience that another group is having. Another way to think about this is that until you are sure that your chosen intervention does have a positive impact it would be too risky to involve a higher number of students. If the chosen intervention does have a positive impact then it will be shared and spread so all students may benefit from it.

Dissemination

Increasingly the action research work completed by teachers in the classroom will form part of the wide body of evidence that will influence what happens in schools. With the proliferation of blogging, a trend that is likely to continue, it is possible for teachers to make their work available to an international audience. A number of schools are sharing teacher-led research through in-house magazines, TeachMeets or market places as well as staff or departmental meetings. Don't underestimate the interest from colleagues in the work you have done and also in the process you went through to gather your finding. It is important for you to consider the best way to disseminate your work and include this within the #5MinResearchPlan.