

Project Portfolio 2018

Research and Evaluation Projects

Research and evaluation have always been at the core of our business – and we have been involved with this since Pareas Associates was launched back in 1990. We have managed projects for the education, business and commercial sectors, as well as for public bodies and Government agencies – providing them with data to support their activities and help them identify the directions they want to take. Many of our clients have commissioned us to carry out many different research projects over a number of years. Some of our key client projects are shown below.

EMTA Awards Ltd (EAL)

Presenting the Business Case

Pareas Associates was commissioned to produce the business case for presentation to the EAL Board – and to identify and scope the work required to ensure a smooth transition for the awarding body's qualifications to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). This involved identifying the potential implications for the whole organisation and the steps required to implement the changes. The business plan was subsequently accepted by the EAL Board and the project was approved.

Monitoring and Evaluation (2004-2006)

As the main awarding body for the engineering sector, EAL was keen to introduce a pilot online testing service for the externally assessed elements of its Vocationally Related Qualifications. Pareas Associates provided the 'front-end' customer information – and co-ordinated and monitored the online pilot. Over a 2-year period, we evaluated the progress and success of the pilot for EAL and its centres. This involved interviews with EAL staff and customers and led to the production of a project report, which was used in-house by EAL and distributed to its stakeholders, including the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA). The report also provided a number of learning points for the EAL Business Development team to take forward.

The Open University

10+ Projects in Total

Over the years we carried out more than 10 projects for the Open University (OU), commissioned by their research unit. These included running telephone interviews for their Teaching Courses team to identify the extent of the market for a degree in Primary Education – and desk research for their Health and Social Welfare faculty on the numbers and demand for child and paediatric nurses in the UK. By interviewing employers and using data available from students we collaborated with programme tutors to help redesign the course content of their programme in Computing for Commerce and Industry – and we carried out preliminary research to establish the potential market for the management level Certificate and Diploma programmes in Leisure and Tourism.

We devised and worked on an online survey for the OU – for recent enquirers about their language courses. They were keen to establish why the conversion rate from enquiry to enrolment was not higher and whether this was an issue relating to the courses, or if it was due to the circumstances of the enquirers. We also carried out a telephone survey with 300 students to establish the reasons behind the uptake of one of the courses in the 'Early Years' suite of awards – and we undertook qualitative research to identify reasons why certain programmes were unsuccessful, including finding out why students dropped out and whether they intended to resume their studies.

In addition, we finalised a major report for the OU Marketing team for a project which examined the effect of learner styles on qualification, outcome and progression within the OU Business School. We carried out the initial stages of a readership survey on how students utilised the OU magazine, 'Sesame', to help inform future development, content and format, and we ran focus groups with academic staff to evaluate their use and experience of electronic journals available through their library. We have also carried out research projects on the subject of volunteering and the role of non-executive directors.

Foundation Degree Forward (FdF)

Development of Foundation Degree Frameworks

Pareas Associates carried out a project funded by FdF to produce frameworks for foundation degrees in Hospitality Management, Contract Food Service, Travel Operation Management and Culinary Arts. These frameworks provide the start point guidance from People 1st – the Sector Skills Council – for providers' development of foundation degrees, which are relevant to local needs but also provide consistency on a national basis.

University of the Arts London (UAL)

Working with International Students

UAL has an influential and busy international students' section and Pareas Associates was, over the years, commissioned to carry out a number of projects for them. We ran a study to explore how the pre-sessional English programme organised by UAL's Language Centre impacted on the work of the university and the integration of international students into its programmes.

Another project was to manage the evaluation of the CD-ROM which UAL sent to its new international students together with the offer letter and other documentation. The CD-ROM provided a range of information and we used focus groups to assess its use and value for students. The findings informed a remake of the CD and contributed to a major university retention initiative as well as to UAL's future marketing planning.

We also carried out methodological research. UAL wanted to run a 'First Destination Study' project with its international student graduates – a group with which it was traditionally difficult to keep track. Our focus was therefore to evaluate different methodologies to identify the best approach to track the graduates and enable UAL to carry out its project. We were also asked to undertake an international telephone survey among all UAL agents and the Education/International Directors in British Council offices around the world to establish a range of views on UAL's enrolment, fees and curriculum offer. The findings were subsequently used by UAL to influence the policies and operation of its international development function.

Pareas Associates was also commissioned to carry out a survey of UAL's 'Semester Abroad' students using a sample of past visiting students from the USA who had spent either 1 or 2 terms on one of UAL's programmes during a specific academic year. The aim of the study was to identify the students' experiences while on the programme, to re-establish contact with them to ascertain their future study plans and explore the use of an online survey as a way of carrying out this kind of research. The findings of the research were taken on board and channelled into the course review agenda.

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA)

A Broad Programme of Projects

Over the years we carried out a number of projects for QCA, including managing key stages of the QCA Risk Assessment project – a consultation process to establish what data was available to be used in risk assessment that would feed into a central model. We then provided QCA with a consultation paper and questionnaire which was distributed to all awarding bodies.

We also carried out policy research for QCA exploring the value of a common centre approval process. This was part of a programme of activity to reduce bureaucracy and streamline the activities required of awarding bodies. Pareas Associates undertook a major analysis to explore the common requirements needed for such a process to work – resulting in a report with recommendations of questions to be asked as part of the common process.

In collaboration with QCA we assisted in the update of its 'Common Accord' for awarding bodies, taking into account the most recent developments in the area of vocational education and training. We were also commissioned to manage some internal project work for QCA, the results of which contributed to policy planning and implementation of accreditation procedures. We also reviewed the policy and procedures of the QCA Standards Approval Group and its role in approving national occupational standards.

In the early days we carried out quality assurance monitoring studies for QCA, including the assessment of centres approved to offer 'D32-34' NVQ assessor and verifier units, examining their quality assurance systems and identifying best practice. Through interviews and discussions with key organisations and centres we also reviewed the quality assurance systems of awarding bodies within the horse industry. In addition, we were commissioned by QCA to investigate the views of employers on the need for greater flexibility in NVQs and level of support for a 'core and options' approach – which subsequently led to the introduction of such a system within the NVQ framework.

People 1st

Qualifications and Apprenticeships (Early and mid 2000s)

People 1st, which was the Sector Skills Council for hospitality, leisure, travel and tourism, commissioned Pareas Associates to carry out a number of projects.

For example, we were asked to produce a 'Health and Safety Task List' to set out acceptable tasks and standards in the workplace for those on apprenticeship programmes with the ultimate objective of getting more young people involved. Previously, employers in the sector had been reluctant to take part in apprenticeships because of fears about what young people would legally be allowed to do at work.

We also completed a qualifications mapping and progression routes project in which all available qualifications in the sector were mapped against the functional areas which had already been determined by People 1st. The objective was to establish which areas of learning were not covered by the existing supply of qualifications. In addition, we completed progression schemes, showing individuals' potential movement between qualifications as they progressed towards a career in hospitality. We also produced a report, the recommendations of which fed into subsequent submissions to the Sector Skills Development Agency.

People 1st also commissioned Pareas Associates to establish areas of additional specialist learning required for the 14-19 Diploma. Our work included consultation with key players in industry, and the results were included in the submission for approval of the new qualifications – which was subsequently granted by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.

SEMTA

Communicating with Customers

We were commissioned by SEMTA – the Sector Skills Council for science, engineering and manufacturing technologies – to carry out a major study to identify how well the organisation communicated with its customers. SEMTA's objective was to improve the effectiveness, right across the operation, of its systems, people and ways of communicating and working with its customers and stakeholders.

Employment Service

Working with Disabled People

We were commissioned to determine the fitness of a measure of employability used by the New Deal for Disabled People pilot schemes – and we were also involved in an evaluation of a back to work scheme for long-term unemployed people with disabilities.

National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ)

Pareas Associates was commissioned by NCVQ to manage a number of different projects, including:

- ***Finalising the 'Common Accord'***
Consolidating the findings from working groups, consultations and other sources to produce a publishable document describing the main features of the 'Common Accord' for awarding bodies.
- ***Examining Awarding Body Guidance on Assessor and Verifier Awards***
Reviewing awarding body guidance on the implementation of assessor and verifier units – and comparing that with the guidance issued by NCVQ.
- ***Action Planning and the National Record of Achievement***
Co-ordinating the results from a major national consultation on action planning, producing a report and best practice case studies.
- ***NCVQ Review of Reports***
Reviewing reports from awarding bodies and evaluating quality assurance mechanisms with the aim of summarising the main findings and producing a working paper.
- ***Identifying New Titles for GNVQs***
Working with potential users to identify alternative names for GNVQs.
- ***Review of Top 100 NVQs***
Pareas Associates was one of only 30 consultancies nationwide involved in the review of the 100 most used NVQs.