

**INVITATION TO TENDER FOR TACTYC RESEARCH PROJECT 2020**

**Overview**

Following on from the success of previous commissioned studies, TACTYC invites proposals for a new research project:

**Systematic literature review of international research evidence on the impact of staff qualification levels in ECEC on the experiences of and outcomes for children and families**

In England in recent years, qualification levels of staff in ECEC settings have fallen owing to a number of pressures faced by individuals and settings, including inadequate funding and barriers and disincentives to training. For example, the number of people undertaking Early Years Initial Teacher Training in England fell steadily from 2,327 in 2013-14 to 595 in 2017-18. Statistically, the numbers of students enrolling onto full time Early Childhood Studies courses has fallen over the past five years and practitioners enrolling onto part-time foundation degrees in early years continues to fall. (HESA; 2017). All of this will eventually have an impact on the quality of practitioners in the early years workforce in years to come. Whilst it is hard to ascertain reasons for this decline, Government priorities in the early years have decreased over the past ten years, salaries remain low and morale across the workforce is low.

In this context, it is important to understand the extent to which staff qualification levels impact on the experiences of young children and on their outcomes, as well as the impact on their families. Further, the Early Years Workforce Commission (March 2020) has been set up to undertake a review of the workforce challenges facing the sector and develop comprehensive and workable solutions. To this end, TACTYC believes that a comprehensive, **systematic review of international research evidence** will provide vital information to support policy planning, lobbying and advocacy. We need clear and thorough evidence from which to discuss possible solutions and pathways.

A systematic review is defined as follows:

‘Systematic reviews aim to find as much as possible of the research relevant to the particular research questions, and use explicit methods to identify what can reliably be said on the basis of these studies. Methods should not only be explicit but systematic with the aim of producing varied and reliable results. … Such reviews then go on to synthesise research findings in a form which is easily accessible to those who have to make policy or practice decisions. In this way, systematic reviews reduce the bias which can occur in other approaches to reviewing research evidence.’ (EPPI-Centre, 2020. Available online [here](https://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/cms/Default.aspx?tabid=67))

It is anticipated that proposals will set out exact methods for this study; will take account of differential funding and regulation requirements across nations and sectors; will recognise the history and status of ECEC qualification levels internationally and in England; will be contextualised against a backdrop of policy agendas and professional debates; will take account of TACTYC’s particular interest in professional development in Early Years. The core, however, will be a systematic review of international research evidence to address the research questions below.

The principal research questions for this study have equal weight:

1. What does international research evidence tell us about the impact of staff qualifications and training:
* on young children’s experiences of ECEC?
* on young children’s development and learning outcomes, long term and short term?
* on families’ experiences, long term and short term?
1. What are the implications of that evidence for policy makers and sector leaders in England?

The project is expected to begin on 21 September 2020 and to reach completion with submission of the final report no later than end April 2021. In light of the Covid-19 situation, TACTYC will consider reviewing dates if necessary.

The maximum funding payable for this work will be £12,000 (inclusive of VAT).

**How to bid for this project**

Proposals should be written in MS Word and sent as an email attachment to tactyc.org@gmail.com. Please write **TACTYC RESEARCH PROJECT** in the subject line of the email.

The deadline for receipt of proposals is **17.00 hours BST on 30th June 2020**. An email acknowledging receipt will be sent within 48 hours of the deadline. Proposals received after the deadline time will not be considered.

**What proposals should include**

In no more than 4,000 words (including any tables / figures but excluding bibliographic reference list and CVs of researchers), proposals should set out:

1. An introduction that explains your interest in this study and motivation for submitting a proposal;
2. Your understanding of the history and current context for qualification levels in ECEC in England with reference to published literature;
3. The scope, design and methodology for the study, including the rationale for the proposed approach and details of the inherent ethical considerations;
4. Evidence of your research experience and expertise, with particular relevance to the focus of this study and your proposed design and methodology;
5. The composition of the research team, their particular roles and contributions to the project and the input of each person (in terms of hours or days per person over the course of the project);
6. An assessment of the potential risks that could jeopardise the progress or successful completion of the project and an indication of how these would be managed and mitigated;
7. A timeline indicating the milestones that are expected to be achieved at different points in the project;
8. A budget that outlines the pay costs per team member and non-pay costs for the project. Please attribute these costs to specific activities or elements in the proposed design for the research;
9. References (excluded from word limit);
10. An appendix containing brief CVs (2 pages max each) for the research team members (excluded from word limit).

**Evaluation of Proposals**

The Executive Committee of TACTYC has designated a working group, which will receive and review all the proposals. Each member of the working group, independently of the others, will evaluate the proposals against set criteria, using a scoring matrix. The evaluation scores and comments will then be collated. Where 2 or more proposals have achieved an equal score, the working group will convene a discussion to reach a decision about the winning bid. TACTYC reserves the right to request additional information from applicants and, if necessary, may invite shortlisted applicants to attend an interview (via an online meeting platform) in the week beginning 17th August 2020.

Proposals will be evaluated against the following criteria:

* Researchers’ motivation and interest in the study (10%)
* Understanding of the context (15%)
* Suitability of the study’s scope, design and methodology (including ethics), rationale and anticipated timeline (30%)
* Experience and expertise of the research team members and their contributions to the project (30%)
* Assessment of risks (10%)
* Value for money (5%)

**Award of Contract and Reporting Requirements**

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of this competitive tendering process no later than Friday 29th August 2020. Where possible, feedback will be provided. TACTYC will issue a contract to the successful bidder, which will set out the payment schedules for the work. The project is expected to begin promptly on Monday 21st September 2020.

The research team will be required to submit monthly progress reports for review by members of TACTYC’s Executive Committee. These reports should indicate what has been achieved and next steps and should highlight any issues or barriers to progress and proposed solutions to overcome these obstacles. It is not expected that a progress report will exceed 1,000 words.

Upon completion of the research, a written report and Occasional Paper will be required. The report will not normally exceed 10,000 words in length and must include an Executive Summary. The report’s cover page should include TACTYC’s logo. A representative of the research team will be expected to present the findings of the study at TACTYC’s annual conference (in 2021) or another event that TACTYC will convene for the purpose of dissemination. All reports, presentations and publications that ensue from the research must acknowledge that TACTYC has commissioned and funded the study. No publication or presentation of the study’s findings should be made before TACTYC has published the final report on its website.

**Peer review**

The final report and Occasional Paper will be subject to peer review and revisions may be requested prior to their publication on TACTYC’s website. It is expected that the report will be in the public domain within one month of TACTYC’s receipt of the final version (if applicable, the revised version).