

'Get them in; get them interested?' Investigating effective strategies for motivating and engaging young LLN learners

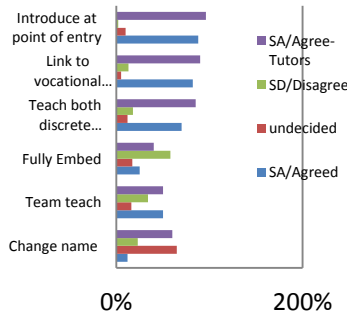
Background to study & aim:

Many of our young learners are in and out of education and short-term employment, trying to find either a course that offers real chance for progress or a permanent job and are finding neither (Wolf's report). English and maths are fundamental to their employment and education prospect, but they seem to be oblivious to this and are either not attending classes set up to help them improve their LLN skills, or when they do, are not motivated or engaged. "Low standards of literacy and numeracy among the young have left the economy exposed to competition from India and China" (Sir Terry Leahy). The aim of this research was to uncover learners' impactive attitudes & disengagement with LLN classes; explore different models of promoting and delivering LLN and identify what will be most effective in increasing the opportunities to enhance teaching, learning and retention amongst young Barking and Dagenham College (BDC) learners while developing their LLN skills

Data Collection and analysis

- 260 students and 10 tutors (out of 40) responded to questionnaires designed to find answers to the research questions. These were analysed and responses summarised using common themes and ideas
- 4 LLN tutors and 2 vocational tutors attended 3 research workshops to review and analyse our current and other teaching models and make suggestions/recommendations on what could work in our unique situation. Findings and recommendations have been included in the research report
- Two main suggestions were trail-tested on a small scale: sharing information on LLN with learners during initial interview and joint planning and teaching embedded lessons – summary and analysis of interviews with participants also included in report.
- A training session was organised for LLN tutors to explore embedding LLN in vocational schemes of work and the possibilities of collaborating with vocational tutors to deliver the revised curriculum.

What the people thought..



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What the learners' said...



- Groups too large and complex (E1-L2) therefore 1-2-1, small group support not effective

- No time for collaborative planning, thinking or sharing of ideas or resources.

- Learners are being made to believe developing LLN skills are not important to their course or future

- Tutors working as separate entities instead of one team- and learners know this!

- Some vocational tutors do not have the skills or embed LLN

What the tutors said & What came out of the workshops

"Working as a team" was scary and time consuming at the beginning but was worth it: ideas, resources, lesson objectives were shared; relationship and confidence built. Tutors learnt more about what their colleagues did.

- The beginning might be 'rough but working collaboratively will save time eventually.

- Learners enjoyed embedded sessions- wanted more!

- A vocational tutor felt the need to develop his maths skills and attended classes with his learners- learners felt challenged and impressed!!

Recommendations

Point of entry:

- The college website, prospectus and initial interviews must make expectations to develop LLN skills clear to intending learners.
- LLN must be advertised as an integral part of the course, not an add-on.

Timetabling:

- Apart from the apprentice programme, young learners should not be timetabled to do 2 or 2.5 long days in college.
- LLN classes should not be at the end of the long day, just before lunch or on a day learners are not in college.
- LLN sessions should be at least 1.5 hours and should include contextualised and embedded sessions

Working as a team- presenting a united front:

- Planning, teaching, monitoring, evaluating and managing of the curriculum need to be done as a team- and learners must 'see' this.
- LLN tutors must be actively involved in what's happening in their curriculum area and should be part of the initial screening and interview process.
- Sharing ideas, resources and good practice; peer observations (including LLN tutors going into vocational classes and vice versa) for the purpose of identifying good practice - should be deliberately built into the curriculum area's CPD
- Training and support (including time) should be given tutors as they engage with the initial challenges of working collaboratively
- Embedded lessons and team teaching should be encouraged- where appropriate- as this will help learners see their course and tutors as one

Supporting Learners:

- LLN learners should be taught or supported in groups streamed according to their LLN, not vocational, abilities
- Embedding LLN in vocational courses should be actively encouraged, even if it means team teaching embedded lessons.
- First support learners get should be in their discrete FS lessons.
- LLN learners who are struggling in the discrete or embedded classes should then be referred to a structured drop-in centre. Attendance should be made compulsory and followed up FS tutors, vocational tutors and Learning Support Staff (LSAs) should work as a team to identify learners' needs and how effectively to support them in the drop-in centres

Team teaching trial- tested

Result and other recommendations shared with management and other colleagues



Go-ahead given by management to trial-test some other recommendations

SELLING LLN

Introducing LLN courses and programmes to learners on open days; during initial interviews and induction and including information in course handbooks

PRESENTING A UNITED FRONT:

Training LLN and vocational tutors on how to embed LLN; tutors working together to plan sessions and develop resources; tutors will be jointly involved in induction process

And the story so far ...

TIMETABLING ISSUES:

Timetabling for LLN programmes now being done and monitored centrally

SUPPORTING LEARNERS

On-going training on teaching, learning and support strategies for vocational and LLN staff; collaborative support will be given through discrete and embedded sessions and by using embedded and contextualised resources

Monitor effect of recommendations on the teaching and learning experiences

Next steps

Encourage proactive use of peer observation and support as a form of CPD

Trial-test streaming learners according to abilities

Monitor effect of recommendations on learners' attendance, retention, engagement and success

Advertise LLN programmes on the college website

Continue training and support for tutors

Get more vocational tutors to buy into embedding and collaboration and use them as ambassadors for their sectors

Strength of the project: The research has, for the first time, enabled a formal platform for learners focussed input – eg 260 LLN learners were interviewed or questioned and the analysis of their responses has engendered recommendations for new ways of planning, delivering and time-tabling LLN.

- Support from management meant that recommendations could be trail-tested
- Opportunities were given by the college to try out some of the recommendations on a small scale and based on the success, these will be trial tested on a wider scale in the new session. Other areas of development have been identified and would be explored in the near future.

Limitations of the project: Time limitation meant questionnaires were administered to less than 10% of young LLN learners and only 10 tutors returned theirs.

- Questionnaires were given out in LLN classes instead of vocational, so learners with very poor attendance would not have taken part in the research.
- Even though a few of the recommendations, such as team teaching and planning embedded lesson, were trail- tested (all others can only be tested at the beginning of the session), it is difficult to make a judgement on the outcome because of the short trial period.
- Some of the learners who participated in this research might not be in college next session making it difficult to monitor the effect of these changes on their attendance, engagement and progress.

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