The Education & Training Foundation

Outstanding

TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT

emfec group

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FOREWORD BY PAUL EELES

At a time of rapid change for education and skills providers and when teaching and learning has been a major focus for Ofsted inspections, the EMFEC Group is delighted to be working with the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) to support the continuous improvement of teaching, learning and assessment.

We have, in the East Midlands, worked hard to establish collaborative partnerships as a way of sharing ideas, skills and experiences for the benefit of all providers and their learners. I am pleased to see that the collaborative structure we have established is being used to support a cohesive approach to the sustained improvement of teaching, learning and assessment across the region.

Our partnership with the Nottingham Trent University has introduced a culture of research not often seen in the Further Education sector. It is clear to see, however, that the enthusiasm with which this has been met by all partners has driven the shared desire to improve the teaching, learning and assessment experience for practitioners and learners.

The education and skills sector has a pivotal role in developing a skilled workforce and in ensuring that the skills needs of businesses, both large and small, are met by a first class vocational education system. I look forward to continuing our work with the ETF and with all providers in the East Midlands to create a sector that is truly outstanding.

Paul Eeles | Group Chief Executive

INTRODUCTION BY SIMON FENELEY

The Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) project is a collaborative response to the need to explore ways in which TLA can be improved for both the practitioners' and the learners' benefit.

Delivered by a strong partnership of 50 providers from across the sector, innovative and, in many ways, experimental activities are putting the "wow" factor back into TLA through an ethos of shared endeavours and an Action Centred Research approach that provides a framework to identify, test and implement new approaches to TLA. Activities have also proved the importance of and need for shared continuing professional development (CPD) models, peer support, coaching, mentoring and the use of technology (by both practitioners and learners) to help achieve outstanding TLA.

Supported by the School of Education at Nottingham Trent University (NTU), the Action Centred Research approach provides a rich bank of transferable evidence, data and resources that can be shared across the wider sector at a national level. By asking the qtuestion "what does outstanding look like" research data collected and collated by NTU begins to explore what outstanding TLA looks like to different people at different times.

It is too early to track and prove impact on inspection grades, but early data and partners' feedback suggests a positive impact on practitioners and on the way that individuals are embracing collaboration and peer support. Project partners have risen to the challenges of working across different geographical locations and within mixed-economy partnerships to produce evidence, methodologies and resources that will provide the sector with a lasting legacy and the real opportunity for sustained impact on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The education and skills sector has a pivotal role in developing a skilled workforce and in ensuring that the skills needs of businesses, both large and small, are met by a first class vocational education system. I look forward to continuing our work with the ETF and with all providers in the East Midlands to create a sector that is truly outstanding.

Simon Feneley | Project Director

RESEARCH PARTNER

A team of researchers from the School of Education at Nottingham Trent University (NTU) have worked with a range of Vocational Education and Training providers, to conduct a meta-analysis of the provider-led research projects that were commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation and delivered by the EMFEC Group. The provider-led projects have generated a wealth of valuable data and resources, which the NTU team have investigated in order to perform a macro-analysis across all activities to test theories, assess impact and draw together key conclusions. A number of important findings have already emerged from the analysis, highly encouragingly, the institutions they helped to support having been able to form successful research partnership, and have provided numerous examples of outstanding teaching and learning practice taking place within the East Midlands Further Education sector. The Practitioner-researchers who took part in the project have also revealed an array of other positives outcomes. These included: the opportunity to build positive and collaborative relationships with other professionals and learners, that the research process presented the chance to evaluate their practice with others, and that the projects provided an impetus to be creative and innovative in developing strategies to help learners. Accordingly, the NTU research team's preliminary findings suggest that the provider-led research projects have the potential to enhance the student experience, and result in the widespread transfer of outstanding teaching learning and assessment practice. However, more precise information about the lasting legacy of the provider-led projects will require supplementary longitudinal research.

The team from NTU have also been investigating what a shared understanding of outstanding looks like within the Further Education and Skills sector. To this end the research group have consulted with a range of officials, teachers, trainers, students and employers to identify what outstanding means to them. In conjunction with specialists from EMFEC, the NTU School of Education has designed a survey

to gather information from practitioners concerning their views of outstanding teaching, learning and assessment, which has produced some informative quantitative and qualitative data. The results from the survey reinforce the value of the provider-led projects, with 96 percent of providers supporting the proposition that outstanding teaching learning and assessment can be achieved by the sharing of experience, expertise and collaboration amongst practitioners.

In addition, NTU researchers have conducted interviews, focus groups and social media discussions with key stakeholders from across the sector. A number of key premises have emerged, including the importance of inspiring and engaging learners, the need to stretch and challenge learners while making this process enjoyable, and the necessity of providing practitioners with the ability to reflect upon what works well within their professional practice.

Themes such as these can help to facilitate an interpretation of outstanding that is a collective aspiration throughout FE and the wider community. However, if we were to have a single 'headline' finding at this stage it would be that outstanding teaching, learning and assessment is emotional and spatial – that is, what is outstanding in one time and space might not be in another.

Dr. Andrew Clapham | Lead Researcher

The Education & Training Foundation

SUPPORTED BY THE EDUCATION & TRAINING FOUNDATION

The Education and Training Foundation was established to support and champion excellence in the further and vocational education sector. As part of this work in Autumn 2014 we commissioned a range of contracts to promote and achieve outstanding delivery and facilitation of teaching, learning and assessment.

The sector-led programmes aimed to:

- support colleges and training providers of all types in achieving their own improvement objectives.
- identify and share contextualised examples of successful high quality delivery which results in excellent outcomes for learners and employers.
- explore collaboration and shared endeavour approaches as a more effective form of continuing professional development for practitioners, leaders and managers.

Contracts were subsequently awarded to three projects focused on specific regions led by: South Essex College, AoC London Region and EMFEC. The research carried out by those projects has identified many examples of expertise, effective pedagogy and outstanding practice. Emergent evidence is showing that the programmes are having a positive impact on quality markers in these institutions. Some of this work is described in the case studies in this publication and resources which have emerged from all three projects will be made available on the Excellence Gateway following completion of the activities.

Burton & SOUTH DERBYSHIRE COLLEGE

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

Fiona Hanson, Head of Quality and Performance
fiona.hanson@bscd.ac.uk

PROJECT PURPOSE

To investigate the impact of the coaching and mentoring staff development model.

METHODS

Both qualitative and quantitative data were used due to scope of the investigation.

Burton and South Derbyshire College

TO DEVELOP COACHING AND MENTORING TO SUPPORT OUTSTANDING TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Our partners were chosen for their interest in coaching and mentoring, and for the fact that they are a diverse range of providers using different observational processes.

1. The Derbyshire Network, a not for profit organisation and the leading training provider network in the East Midlands.
2. North Nottinghamshire College, a General Further Education College
3. Chesterfield College, a General Further Education College
4. Derbyshire Adult Education Service, a provider of Adult Community Education
5. New College Stamford, a General Further Education College

PROCESS

A range of case studies were used to research the impact of coaching and mentoring, specifically where impact can be most effective; from staff not meeting college expectations, outstanding tutors, and staff wishing to train as coaches. Coaching and mentoring has been clearly defined and the impact and longevity of elected interventions and development practises measured and evaluated as part of this research project.

EMERGING IMPACT

PROVIDER	# STAFF ENGAGED IN COACHING PROCESS	% STAFF WITH A POSITIVE CHANGE FOLLOWING COACHING	# STAFF ENGAGED IN MENTORING PROCESS	% OF STAFF WITH POSITIVE CHANGE FOLLOWING MENTORING
Burton and South Derbyshire College	1	100%	1	100%
The Derbyshire Network	2	100%	0	0%
North Nottinghamshire College	1	100%	1	0%
Chesterfield College	5	80%	0	0%
Derbyshire Adult Education Service	2	100%	0	0%
New College Stamford	17	76%	0	0%

CASE STUDY

Following a formal observation, a tutor for the Foundation Degree in Dance graded as Exceeding College Expectations became passionate about coaching. The tutor elected to engage in coaching and in mentoring for personal development over a five-week period. The tutor received two intensive coaching sessions together with periods of reflection and research.

This case study illustrates the positive impact of the Burton and South Derbyshire College development process on a member of staff, and also follows the mentoring and coaching journey that was devised and implemented to give the tutor a deepened understanding of coaching. The extended input and introduction to strategies have been further developed through application in the classroom to assess the impact on learner engagement, motivation, and success. The coach and member of staff agreed on the desired outcomes and a plan was presented on how these aspirational needs could be met.

The core method for measuring success and impact of coaching in education was through qualitative methods. The tutor was interested in deeper learning, and also in gaining a greater understanding of what coaching is, including the role of a coach and the impact of coaching. The plan was executed using a mixture of deliveries, namely; mentoring and instructional coaching, teaching, and finally through the tutor becoming a coachee and going through the process of being coached. The member of staff was then asked to complete weekly directed study, weekly application of learning, and weekly reflective accounts. The key focus of the research was to look at the perceptions and impact of the newly adopted developmental performance model for maintaining standards of teaching, learning, and assessment at Burton and South Derbyshire College.

> "The changes came from me. This was an epiphany! I was not given a list of "must-do" tasks to meet a college target. Instead, I felt empowered to invest some time in me!"

The findings from the coaching case study were:

- An individual cannot be coached if they are not open to it. It is not a process that can be done to or put on people, and it requires that the coachee be receptive, honest, and authentic to himself or herself.
- There is conflict in the role of the observer also undertaking the role of feedback and coach. An observee can struggle with this process and finds it difficult to disassociate with an old cultural process and then embark on a new developmental one.
- "I think the change from observer to feedback would have been ok, and the change from feedback to coach would have been ok, but observer to coach is odd to experience".
- The new developmental process and the support offered through coaching and mentoring positively impacts staff performance and staff's happiness in their role. The tutor seems to experience a sense of empowerment and rekindles themselves with their passion.
- The tutor made changes to her teaching practice and career: "The changes came from me. This was an epiphany! I was not given a list of "must-do" tasks to meet a college target. Instead, I felt empowered to invest some time in me!"
- The tutor had an interest in coaching as pedagogy as she wanted to use the skills and some of the techniques within lessons, with learners. "I gained some skills. I read some books. Some colleagues thought I had joined a cult when I began practising the techniques around the office, but I did not care. This change is something I am committed to, and I am glad I have been given the time and space, via the observation process, to focus on my development."

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

A range of providers were involved in the research project to include an ethnic mix, gender mix, and age mix of learners and practitioners. Research methods were varied to ensure inclusivity of activity that offered a range of options to the practitioner in developing outstanding teaching, learning, and assessment.

Central

COLLEGE NOTTINGHAM

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

Joanne Shirley, Head of Training and Learning Technologies
joanne.shirley@centralnottingham.ac.uk

PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the project was to research how 16-18 year old learners prefer to learn via online delivery.

METHODS

Online surveys, focus groups (interviews) between practitioners, learners, project lead, and partner leads were used during the investigation. The results were exported to CSV where percentages could easily be calculated from the data.

We are Central

Central College Nottingham

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF ONLINE LEARNING

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

1. Confetti Creative Nottingham, a Further Education Provider with experience working with lead online learning
2. Street League, a not for profit organisation where learners had no experience using online learning
3. Nottingham Fire and Rescue, where learners had no experience of using online learning
4. EMTEC, a vocational training provider partnered to include Apprentices

PROCESS

Different types of online delivery and assessment methods were investigated, including online interactive content, Articulate storyline, online activities, quizzes, and forums. Gaming activities were developed to identify how specific styles of online learning engage different types and levels of learners. We also researched what type of curriculum delivery lends itself well to online learning, and which elements can successfully be delivered online. The research will help to determine how use of online and technology can contribute to "Outstanding". The project also explored the advantages and disadvantages of purchasing online content versus in house development.

EMERGING IMPACT

The results clearly demonstrated that a high number of learners enjoyed undertaking online learning.

Bright colours/pictures, videos, interactivity, and instant feedback kept learners engaged. Learners preferred to listen to content as opposed to reading it. Although this is positive, it could be disadvantageous to the development of English skills, in particular reading. However using audio provided differentiation and addressed different learning difficulties.

When online learners were tested on their knowledge and understanding – statistical information was retained as well as knowledge and understanding. Specifically the use of bold and numbers were remembered. Learners had a clear understanding from the online content when researched into the Equality Diversity and Inclusion online learning. This learning was very bright, with cartoon-type video content as well as text, audio, Youtube video clips and interactive activities. This variety and combination of learning content really kept the learners engaged.

Almost three quarters of the learners said they would be able to undertake the learning without tutor guidance, with almost all learners having access to the internet outside college. This leads us to believe that learners are happy to learn independently via online content.

Slightly fewer Level One learners enjoyed the online learning but, despite this, they had a slightly higher percentage of compatibility with their learning style (90%). This statistic may lead us to not shy away from developing online learning for lower level of learners, but rather focus on how learning is presented. For example, Level 1 learners were more inclined towards teacher/ tutor involvement as opposed to independent study. This would suggest online learning is suited to Level 1 learners but in a supported environment.

Almost three quarters of learners felt that the implementation of Moodle in year two of their studies has been of benefit to their education.

"At the end of term one students prepare for an individual practical assessment to demonstrate their ability to operate a studio effectively. This is the first year we have had the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) available and students were encouraged to use the VLE as a revision aid in the lead up to the assessment: "

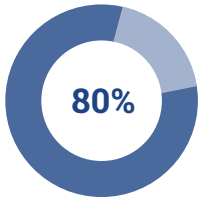
One work placement learner felt that although it had benefits, they preferred tutor led delivery. They felt that online content had too much writing, and they did not like spending so much time studying on their own. However, they felt that the online learning was good for revision, just not for teaching a topic from scratch.

From 65 learners who undertook Construction Health and Safety Interactive Learning formative assessment, 40 learners scored 80% or more and 33 learners scored 80% or more on the first set of 25 multiple choice questions25 learners moved on to question set two with 26 learners scoring 80% or more. This compares higher to paper based marked questions. The School of Construction now intend to deliver this unit in this format from September 2015.

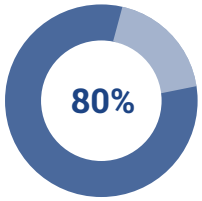
EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

A range of providers were involved in the research project to include an ethnic mix, gender mix, and age mix of learners and practitioners. The project provided the opportunity for 'hard to reach' learners to undertake a type of learning they had not experienced previously. The project also engaged with more mature learners up to the age of approximately 35.

said they enjoyed the online learning

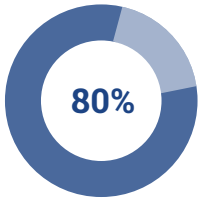


said they liked the instant feedback



said they like pictures

said it was suitable for their learning style



said they could undertake the learning without a teacher present

said they would like to undertake more of this type of learning

CASE STUDY

Street League learners are aged 16-25. They are considered 'hard to reach' and don't/can't/won't engage in the mainstream education and employment routes for a variety of reasons.

The Street League 10 week intervention programme teaches maths and English as well as employability qualifications and work experience. The programme is built around a simple idea: that football can change your life. Through the sport, learners improve soft skills like confidence, teamwork, communication, and general fitness, and very quickly learn to co-operate and make the most of their time.

During previous Street League intensives, traditional teaching methods were used to varying degrees of success. It was identified that IT skills were missing in the programme's skill set. As such, The Employability Skills workbook was replaced by interactive online content for this project. This was hosted and accessed via Central College's VLE.

We developed a 'Graphic Adventure' for the learners using Articulate, and placed the activity somewhere between a game and a real-life simulation. This online experience was evaluated with one group of learners (approx. 12), in addition to three practitioners. The practitioners also benefitted from taking advantage of Central College Nottingham's online staff development through their staff VLE.

All the Street League learners responded well to the online gaming type content, and preferred it to the traditional Employability Skills workbook. The online learning was very colourful and interactive. Street League learners felt it was suitable to their level of learning and that they would be comfortable undertaking the learning without a teacher present. As a result of this pilot and research, Street League would welcome the opportunity to develop further online learning.

The research concludes that learners enjoy learning online and would like to have more opportunity for using online content.

Derby COLLEGE

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

Matt Bromley, Group Director: Teaching and Learning, matthew.bromley@derby-college.ac.uk

PROJECT PURPOSE

To study collaborative professional development involving a group of teachers (a quad or a triad) planning, teaching, observing and analysing the impact of a new teaching and learning strategy.

METHODS

For the purpose of this project the focus was on Lesson Study only, a collaborative model where a group of teachers plan research lessons together, observe and reflect on learners' progress. This enabled staff to focus on a particular aspect, working to bring research into practice and aid the beginnings of planning with each other how to practice research methods and impact learners.

DERBY college

LESSON STUDY – BETTER TOGETHER

PROCESS

The organisations identified a learning-focused research question that related to the college's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, their own area's quality improvement plan, and individual performance management targets. The organisations then decided on their joint overarching aim and planned to implement a teaching and learning strategy.

The teachers met together during Team Time (weekly CPD) to research, design and plan their teaching, learning or assessment strategy and hypothesise the impact on learning. During, or as soon as possible thereafter, the research lesson took place and was observed, and the 'target' learners were assessed and interviewed by their allocated observer. Stimulated recall questions were used to explore the learning in more detail.

The organisations met again to reflect on the effectiveness of the strategy. This Lesson Study cycle was repeated approximately three times. The organisations then shared their progress and findings via a blog, presentation, and/or report. Generally, the organisations focused on a single teaching group for the duration of the project.

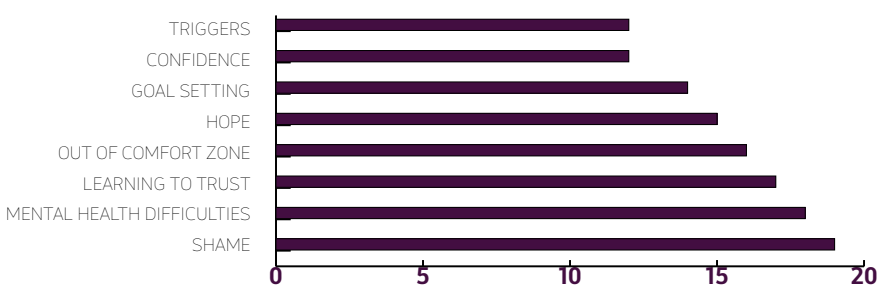
PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

1. Rolls Royce, a blue-chip international employer with a large apprenticeships provision
2. University of Derby, a higher education institution with a well-respected school of education and links to all levels of education provision
3. First Steps Derbyshire, a charity with strong links to the community

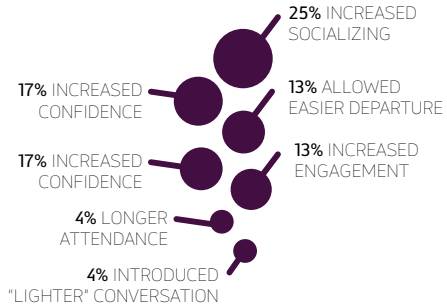
EMERGING IMPACT

Results were qualitatively collected through verbal and written statements. Categories were determined by similar words in key comments or phrases. For example phrases with the words happy, enjoyable or positive were categorised under the heading "Increased Positivity". Comments were organised by the question they answered. Below are the charts that show the results of this categorisation based on the Triad Observation forms.

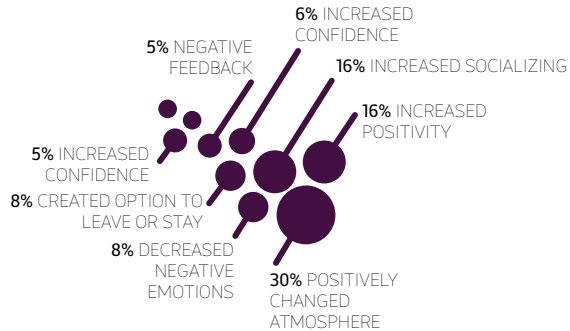
NUMBER OF ATTENDEES OF GROUPS SELECTED FOR REPORTING



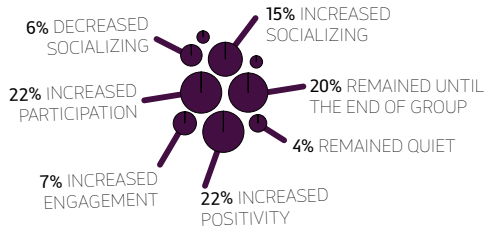
HOW DO YOU THINK THE CHANGES MADE IN THE SESSION HAVE IMPACTED USERS?



HOW HAVE THE CHANGES IMPACTED ON THE SESSION?



HOW WERE THE FOCUS SERVICE USERS?



CASE STUDY

The changes implemented had a positive influence on all group members. These included a positive atmosphere within the group room, increased socialising amongst group members, and increased positivity from attendees.

The Focus Service Users (FSUs) were perceived by staff and volunteers as appearing more positive, possessing increased levels of participation within the group, and additionally the FSUs remained in the group past the regular checkout time. Although it was noted there was lower participation or engagement from the FSUs occasionally, feedback was mostly positive.

> Users appeared more positive and possessed increased levels of participation within the group...

In terms of the impact these changes had on the FSUs, we noted increased socialising, confidence, and engagement. Additionally, it was noted that the changes meant that the FSUs who needed or wanted to leave earlier could do so without any self-perceived awkwardness or difficulty.

Consideration of other variables must be noted before cause and effect claims can be made in regards to these results. An extraneous variable that was considered by the researcher was the categorising of terms. This meant the researcher bias was present and meant that the results of this report are highly dependent on the researcher's interpretation on the words/phrases presented by the staff and volunteers reports.

Additionally, with support groups such as this a strong consideration must be placed on the FSUs state of wellbeing. The individual characteristics and personal daily experiences of the FSUs must be highly considered as influencing factors to their behaviour in the group, and therefore the outcome of these results.

Findings indicated that where delivery was in smaller groups, learners were able to show greater understanding and needed less nurturing. Where groups were larger and of a higher level, the learners needed more reassurance

but were able to produce work of a good quality after receiving these reassurances.

Individual project results are still forthcoming as the Lesson Study projects are still ongoing.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The Lesson Study project at Derby College has involved a range of learners including English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), mixed ethnic groups, British White, male and female, and ages ranging from 16 to adult. Groups were mixed in terms of ability levels with some showing fairly low language ability (Entry Level 2). Within one particular area, learners were from deprived backgrounds and identified as previously in receipt of free school meals.

The groups were academically and cognitively able and, in the main, very quiet with some learners lacking in social confidence. In the ESOL groups particularly, certain learners dominated responses to whole class questioning and some learners were shy/reluctant to engage in learner talk or verbalise their responses to teachers' questions. Across the other groups, responses to questions varied from offering answers to being approached for an answer, but, in the main, responses were stronger from the higher level groupings. All staff tried a variety of questioning techniques including pair, small group, and whole class activities to invoke encouraging verbal responses.

Derbyshire

ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION SERVICES

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

Vikki Trace, Quality and Performance Manager,
vikki.trace@derbyshire.gov.uk

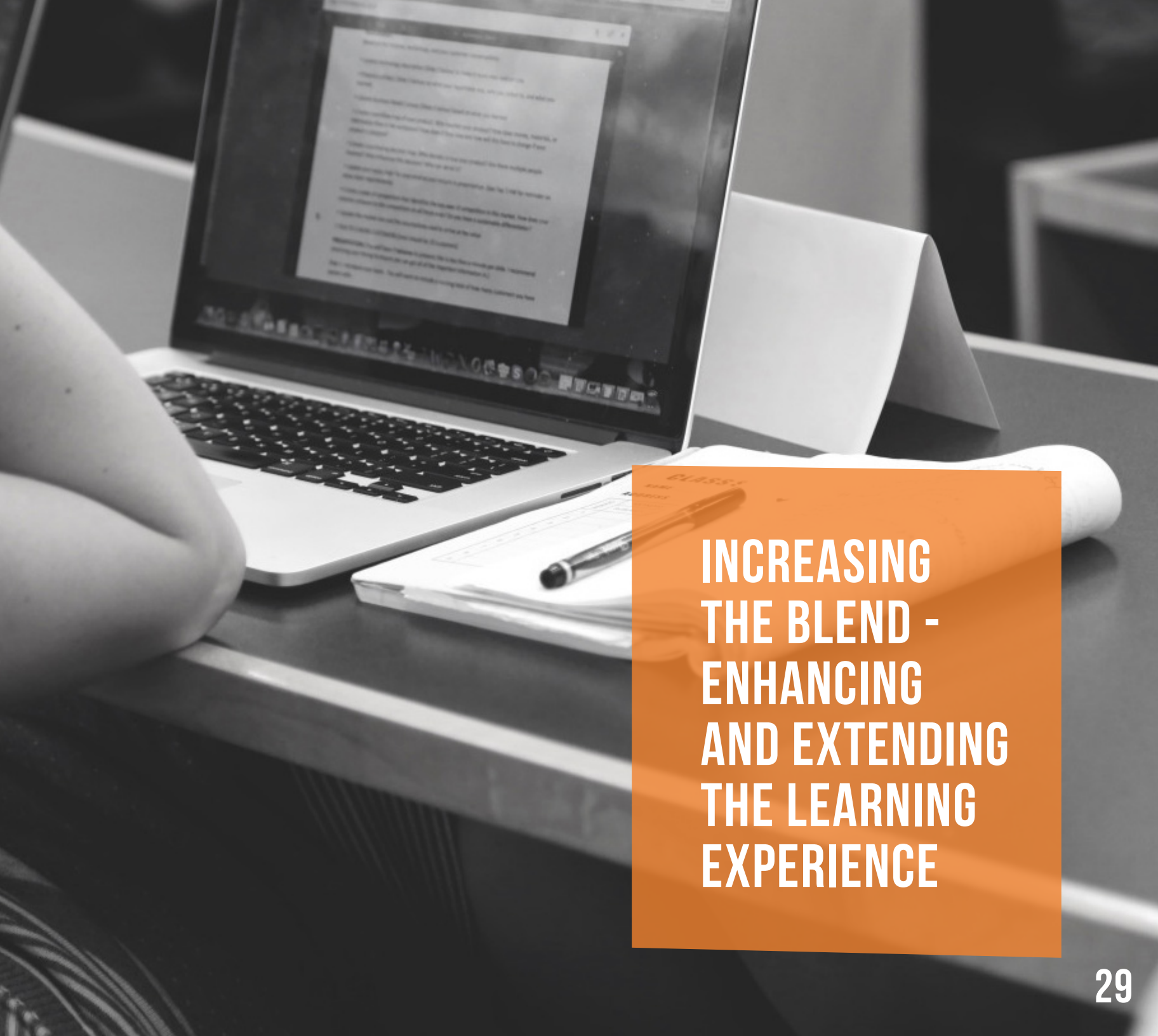
PROJECT PURPOSE

To encourage Teaching and Learning practitioners to explore, experiment and improve their confidence and skills in effectively using e-technologies to enhance and develop their Teaching, Learning and Assessment practice.

METHODS

All partners agreed to develop and lead two blended learning CPD mini projects with Teaching and Learning practitioners and coaches within their own organisation. A quantitative initial assessment tool was developed with the intention that all practitioners completed the assessment prior to any blended learning intervention (training or coaching). The initial assessment showed the starting point of the practitioners prior to any development/ learning/coaching intervention and post intervention.

DERBYSHIRE County Council
improving life for local people



INCREASING THE BLEND - ENHANCING AND EXTENDING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

PROCESS

Four blended learning workshops were developed and delivered to Teaching and Learning practitioners across all partners. These workshops included:

1. An e-trees Games Based Learning workshop, with twelve practitioners attending
2. A Screencast-o-matic learning workshop, with thirteen practitioners attending
3. A Maths and English Blended Learning workshop, with six practitioners attending
4. A Maximising your VLE workshop, with twelve practitioners attending

A Moodle page was set up for all project participants on DACES Moodle site to be used as a communication tool, to share information/practice/tools developed, and to be used as a blended/flipped learning resource for practitioners involved in this project.

All practitioners taking part in the projects were asked to develop blended learning resources/approaches, appropriate for their learning groups, using techniques they had learned in the workshops and with the support of a coach, if required. They were also asked to trial the blended resources with their learners, gain learner feedback and reflect on whether the new resources/approaches had a positive impact on their learners.

All Teaching and Learning practitioners taking part in the project were asked to submit a project proposal that outlined the blended activity they would be developing and the learner group they would trailing the resource with. Practitioners also completed an activity form, which outlined the activities that had taken place to develop and trial the resource with learners and they also completed a reflective log/report.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

All partners belong to the East Midlands ACL PRD group and have worked together on projects over a number of years.

1. Leicester City Adult Skills Learning Service
2. Derby City Adult Learning Service
3. Nottinghamshire County Council Adult Community Learning Service
4. Leicestershire County Council Adult Skills Learning Service

EMERGING IMPACT

160

practitioners engaged

446

learners engaged

52

case studies

68

resources produced

CASE STUDY

32 CPD Joint Practice Development mini projects took place with all Teaching and Learning practitioners stating that they had further developed their online skills and learned new e-skills which would help them to create effective online resources for their learning groups.

Six new online games were developed and successfully trialled with learner groups. Practitioners developed online maths and English resources, which they used successfully with their learners. Practitioners also developed Moodle pages, Padlets, Hot Potatoes, and Screencasts for their learners to access, which have been used by learners and commented on positively.

Tutors reported that they felt supported and developed their own skills extensively during the project.

Tutors reported that they felt supported and developed their own skills extensively during the project. Clear guidelines of commitment and expectations were clearly outlined and all practitioners participating in this project signed a working agreement. Some practitioners accessed coaching and mentoring during the project, which gave them a supportive environment in which to practise their new skills.

Senior management buy-in from all of the partners was critical to the outcome of this project; the partners were already well acquainted with each other as they have worked together for a number of years. The relatively close geographical vicinity of the providers meant that it was easy for participants from all providers to access the training workshops that took place in Derbyshire and Leicestershire.

All Teaching and Learning practitioners (tutors, managers and coaches) involved in the project have been very receptive to taking part in the Blended Learning workshops, accessing coaching/mentoring and technical support, where required, and have been keen to further develop their e-skills to produce

blended learning resources relevant to their curriculum/ subject area. The practitioners found peer working especially supportive and this format will continue to be used post project. Finding convenient timings for meetings was sometimes difficult but email and phone support was used so tutors didn't feel they were working in isolation.

Tutors from partner providers were hesitant to use the online forum and especially that of another service (Derbyshire), and some partner tutors found the uploading of resources wasn't easy due to the size of files etc. However, Derbyshire tutors found the Moodle site particularly useful for accessing online documents, sharing experiences and developing blended resources.

The key outcome from the mini projects has been that learners who have taken part in the project trials of new online resources felt positively about accessing and using the resources. They felt it has benefited and enhanced their learning experience.

All partners felt that one of the main challenges of the project was the short time frame for carrying out action research, as tutors needed to be first trained in effective blended learning approaches, then develop a blended learning resource, accessing coaching and mentoring, where requested, and finally trial with their learners and get feedback from them how they fared using the new online resource.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The project was open to all ACL practitioners across the East Midlands partner shires. 80 practitioners participated in the project, 75% female and 25% male, which is a representative sample of the tutor workforce across the partners. The practitioner cohort included those who support the most vulnerable learners – these included ESOL tutors, MFL tutors, 14-19 tutors, English and maths tutors, ALDD tutors and those delivering community learning to adults with mental health issues, and rurally isolated learners. The tutors taking part in the project felt that they were better able to meet the needs of their learners now that they could create online interactive materials for their learners to access.

Grantham

COLLEGE

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

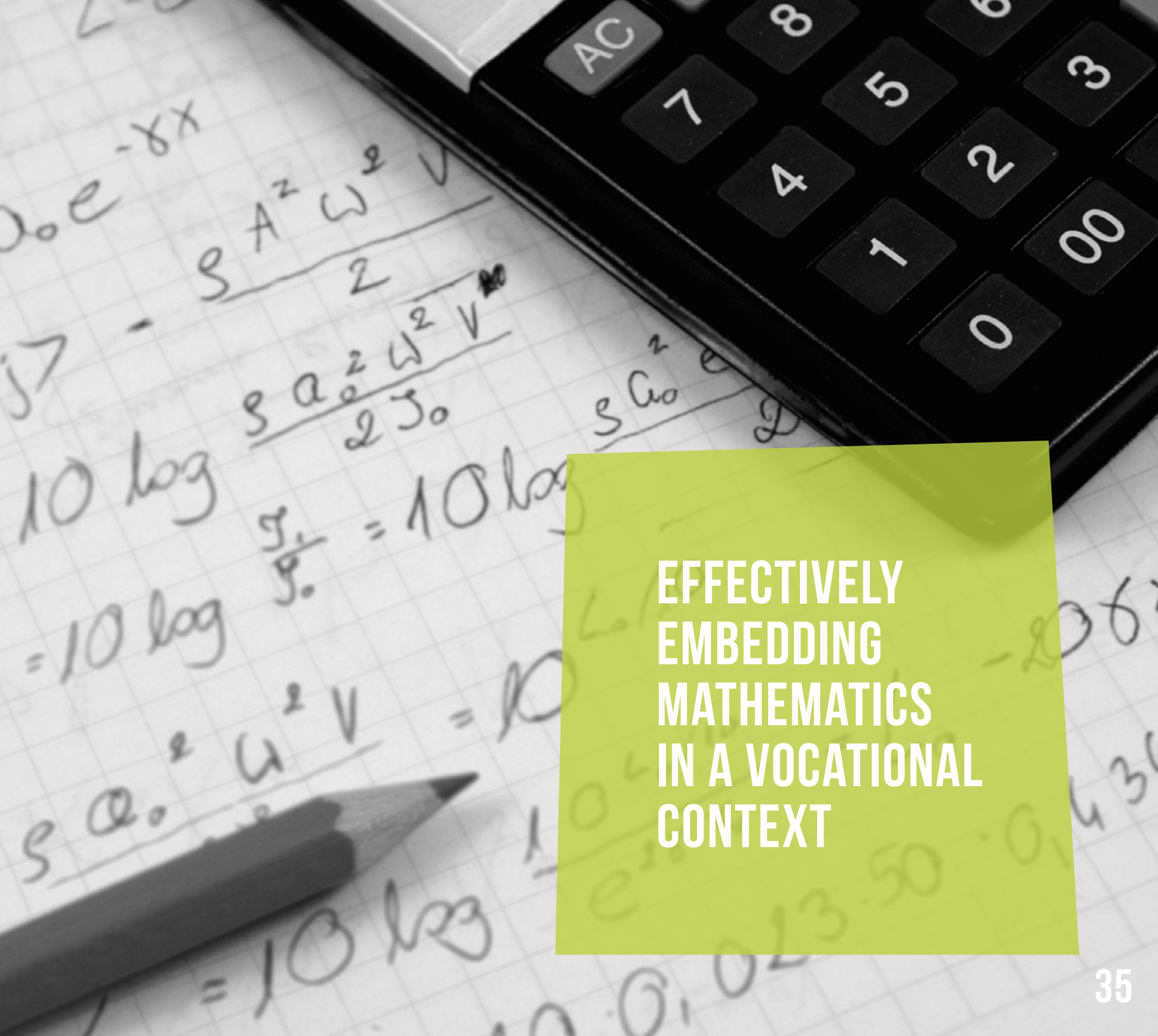
Paul Cartwright, Maths Specialist,
pcartwright@grantham.ac.uk

PROJECT PURPOSE

The aim of the project was to identify and share practices that are effective in embedding mathematics within a vocational context. The impact of this would not be short term but would positively influence maths success rates in 2015/16 and beyond.

METHODS

Qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gather and analyse data to establish a picture of effective embedding of maths across the partner colleges, and to compare this with national research.



EFFECTIVELY EMBEDDING MATHEMATICS IN A VOCATIONAL CONTEXT

METHODS

QUALITATIVE DATA WAS GATHERED BY THE FOLLOWING MEANS:

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with maths, vocational and management staff with the aim of gaining perspectives on topics such as degree, nature and effectiveness of embedding maths, and barriers to embedding.
- Data was collected from 15 lesson observations carried out across the three partner colleges. All observers used the same template when recording information during lessons i.e. a form designed and agreed on by partners at the initial team meeting. Key to the effectiveness of the lesson observation process was the choice of lessons to be observed, and the choice of criteria to be looked at within lessons.
- A literature review examined three academic reports in order to provide a wider context to the project and its findings.

QUANTITATIVE DATA WAS GATHERED BY THE FOLLOWING MEANS:

- Desk research into the general lesson observation results and Functional and GCSE Maths success rates was carried out with the purpose of providing context to findings resulting from observation data.
- Analysis of qualitative data was gathered from lesson observations. This analysis quantified the degree of learner engagement and impact upon end of year maths success and investigated correlations between these and various elements of the lessons.

PROCESS

Key outcomes from the 15 lesson observations:

- Learner engagement in maths was high in 87% of the vocational lessons.
- Maths terminology used was predominantly describing numeracy i.e. fractions, percentages, measurement as opposed to more abstract topics such as algebra and geometry.
- The predicted impact on success in Functional Maths was 'high' in 47% of the lessons.
- The predicted impact on success in GCSE Maths was 'low' in 100% of the lessons.

The observed lessons that were judged to be effective included applications of maths that had been pre-planned, were subject relevant, and were well explained to students, mainly on an individual basis. Based upon the testimony of staff interviewed during this project and confirmed by the literature, lessons of this nature were more likely to occur when close collaboration between vocational staff and maths staff took place and when vocational tutors possessed the necessary time and confidence to give sufficient consideration to integrating maths within their subject. An important caveat to this summarising statement is that the phrase 'positive impact on maths success' is used in the context of Functional Maths only. This project did not find evidence to suggest that any form of maths that is currently integrated within vocational lessons would have any real benefit to students' success in GCSE Maths, considering the more abstract nature of its curriculum.

EMERGING IMPACT

The conclusions drawn from this project came too late to influence maths success rates for 2014/15. The benefit of this research will be that outcomes will be used to share good practice. i.e. 'what effective embedding of maths in a vocational context' looks like. Also, the finding that current practice has very little predicted effect upon GCSE Maths results will be used to develop new strategies to better target GCSE topics. Therefore impact will be judged by 2015/16 maths results.

CASE STUDY

This study combines lesson observation notes of two hairdressing practical sessions, one at Boston and one at Grantham. Both sessions followed the same format: students were working individually with clients recruited from friends, family or members of the public in order to gain authentic industry experience. In both sessions the tutors split their time between supporting and assessing the students and this included their maths knowledge in the context of the hairdressing tasks being practised.

The Boston session focused on hair cutting and the maths involved focused on angles, conversion between inches and centimetres and time calculations.

The topic of the Grantham session was hair colouring and the maths elements were ratio and units of capacity and length. This session demonstrated an extremely effective use of a series of laminated A4 cards to determine the white to colour ratio; select the strength of colour and calculate the colour product to bleach ratio. The latter activity involved an innovative chart used to convert millilitres of product to millimetres of its containing tube.

Both tutors were enthusiastic and confident in explaining the maths elements and assessing their students' understanding of this maths. Both made use of the large mirrors on their students' work stations as whiteboards. Worked calculations and relevant measurements remained on the mirrors for ongoing reference during the treatments.

All students appeared thoroughly engaged in their hairdressing tasks and the embedded maths. They seemed to regard the two learning elements as one and the same.

Both salons also displayed maths subject posters and other evidence of maths embedding such as client appointment timetables and staffing rotas.

All students appeared thoroughly engaged in their hairdressing tasks and the embedded maths. They seemed to regard the two learning elements as one

and the same. A range of providers were involved in the research project to include an ethnic mix, gender mix, and age mix of learners and practitioners. Research methods were varied to ensure inclusivity of activity that offered a range of options to the practitioner in developing outstanding teaching, learning, and assessment.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The five main practitioners involved in this project ranged in age from early 20s to late 50s. One was female; all were 'white British'. Four were maths graduates recently recruited into FE through a national funding scheme. The approximately 150 students taking part in lesson observations were aged 16-19, evenly split male/female and approximately 90% 'white British' with the other 10% being mainly East European. This ethnicity reflects the local area. One observed session featured a Learner with Learning Difficulties or Disabilities group.

The impact of this project on equality and diversity will be on how the outcomes inform future embedding of mathematics in vocational contexts, thereby hopefully improving success rates in Functional Maths and GCSE Maths. This impact should be viewed in the context that "around three quarters of full time students who have not achieved a maths GCSE grade C or above by the age of 16 enter FE colleges" (EFT, 2014, p8) and, as quoted in the Wolf Report, "300,000 18 year olds leave education without level 2 maths qualifications".

leicester COLLEGE

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

Stewart Foster, Director of Quality Improvement, sfoster@lec.ac.uk

PROJECT PURPOSE

Leicester College had been involved in an internal peer review where managers reviewed activity in Curriculum Areas other than their own. This was a very successful exercise in sharing professional practice and the DELTA bid aimed to emulate this sharing across GFE colleges.

METHODS

Two staff from each of the partner colleges would visit each other and 'view' a series of teaching sessions. Thus, each college would visit 3 other colleges using 6 staff (2 per college). When staff viewed a lesson they had an agreed document to complete that allowed comments to be made as to what during the lesson being viewed was 'exceptional' practice.

Leicester College

DEVELOPING EXCEPTIONAL LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT - DELTA

PURPOSE

Leicester College had been involved in an internal peer review where managers reviewed activity in Curriculum Areas other than their own. This was a very successful exercise in sharing professional practice and the DELTA bid aimed to emulate this sharing across GFE colleges.

The project was planned to enable the partner colleges to view exceptional Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LT&A) in each college.

The Learner View of what constitutes a 'great' lesson was also sought through discussions with learners during the viewed sessions and through the administration of a questionnaire.

METHODS

Two staff from each of the partner colleges would visit each other and 'view' a series of teaching sessions. Thus, each college would visit three other colleges using six staff (two per college). When staff viewed a lesson they had an agreed document to complete that allowed comments to be made as to what during the lesson being viewed was 'exceptional' practice.

The sections of this document related to:

- Challenge
- Assessment
- Innovation
- English and maths

With a section for 'other' comments for observations about what was seen.

A group of learners from each college completed a survey seeking their views on what constituted a 'great' lesson. A five-level Likert scale was used for the survey – Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree and Strongly disagree. The prompts were based on the topics in the viewer record.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

The partners were General Further Education (GFE) Colleges with which Leicester College had prior links:

1. Chesterfield College
2. Derby College
3. Vision West Nottinghamshire College

PROCESS

24 staff from the partner colleges were involved in the viewing of 33 teaching staff.

Following the viewings, meetings with managers were arranged to discuss how the partner colleges approached common issues.

In total 96 staff were involved in being viewed, as viewers or in the resulting discussions.

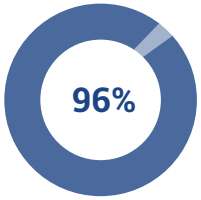
Over 150 learners were involved in the project, either through being asked for their views during the sessions or through completing a survey.

EMERGING IMPACT

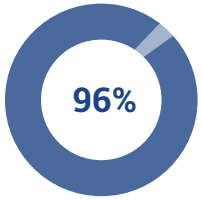
There were 175 responses recorded by the viewers from the sessions they viewed.

43 of these responses (25%) related to effective questioning techniques contributing to the exceptional lesson. A further 35, (20%) commented on the impact of challenge and the engagement of the learners. Other themes also occurred but these were of a much lower frequency.

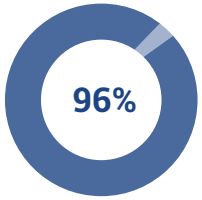
The prompts scoring the highest overall satisfaction score (Strongly agree and Agree) in the Learner Survey were:



The teacher checks that I am learning



I feel involved in lessons.



The teacher is knowledgeable.

The viewers saw questioning, challenge, and engagement as key ingredients of an exceptional session. The learners wanted to be involved and engaged and have their learning checked (in addition to having a knowledgeable teacher).

There would appear to be significant areas of agreement between what the viewers felt contributed to an exceptional lesson and what the learners felt made a great lesson.

CASE STUDY

The original project had two separate but related activities. The first was the viewing of exceptional learning, teaching and assessment, and the second was reviewing the leadership of exceptional learning, teaching and assessment.

Due to time constraints, only the viewing of exceptional learning, teaching and assessment took place. However, during the period when the viewers were in the other partner colleges, arrangements were made for the viewers to meet managers from the college being visited.

The participants felt that this sharing of professional practice was extremely fruitful. A number of colleagues said that this had affected the way they approached their work in their own colleges.

lincoln COLLEGE

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

Pete Jackson, Group Director: Advanced Practitioner,
pjackson@lincolncollege.ac.uk

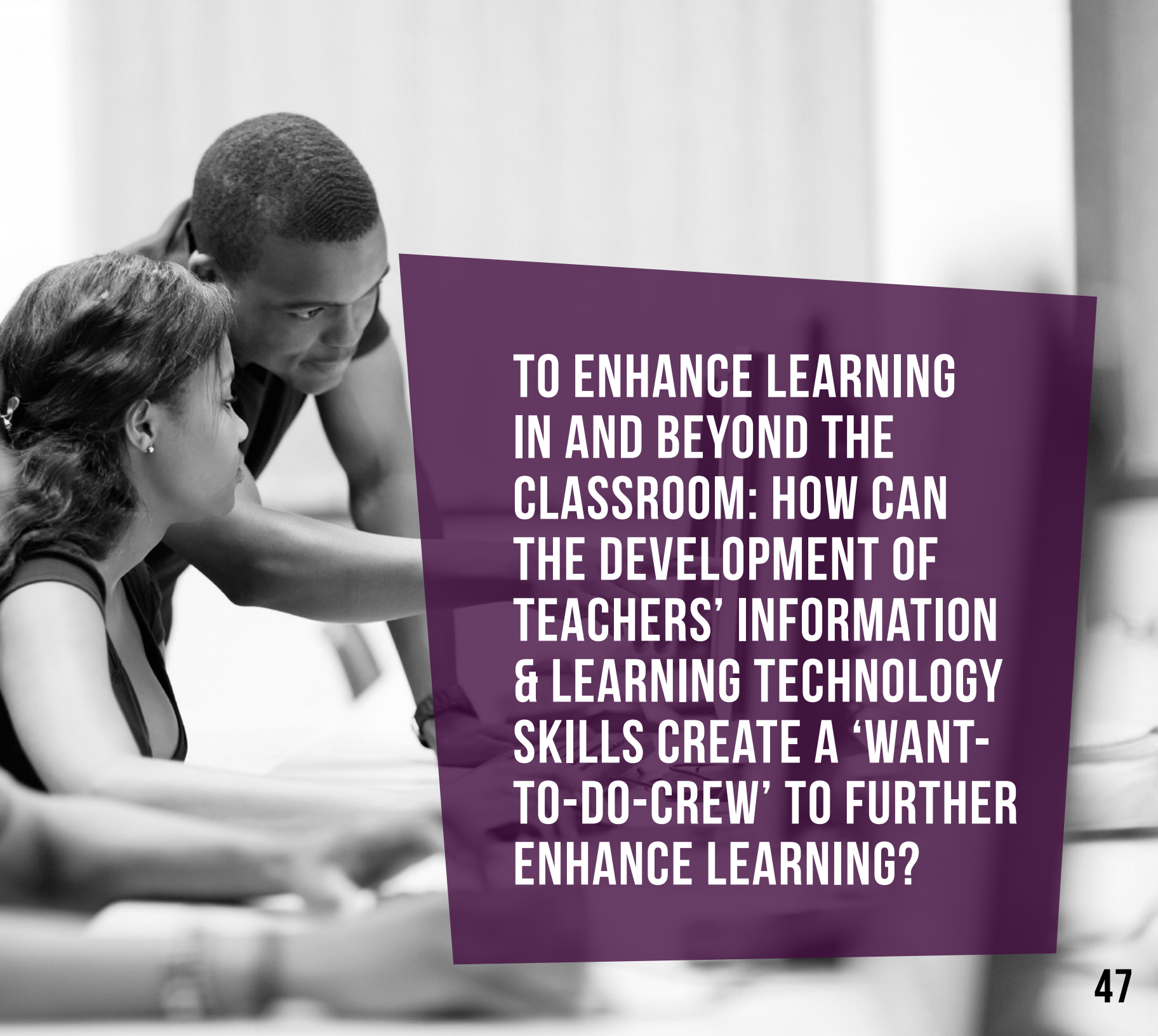
PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the project was to identify current Information and Learning Technology (ILT) skills amongst teaching staff and to look at ways to improve confidence and use of ILT both in and out of the classroom environment.

METHODS

We conducted initial staff surveys and arranged specific staff training and development sessions aimed at meeting specific ILT and confidence needs.

Lincoln College



TO ENHANCE LEARNING IN AND BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: HOW CAN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS' INFORMATION & LEARNING TECHNOLOGY SKILLS CREATE A 'WANT-TO-DO-CREW' TO FURTHER ENHANCE LEARNING?

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

1. Linkage College, a specialist further education college for young people aged between 16 to 25 years. The college provides development opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and autism.

2. Children's Links, a national charity providing amazing services for children, young people and families since 1993. They reach more than 60,000 children and young people every year.

3. Siemens, a leading global engineering and technology services company providing innovative solutions to help tackle the world's major challenges in the areas of electrification, automation and digitalisation. Siemens were chosen as partners for the project because of their expertise in industry.

4. Grantham & Boston Colleges, while not actively involved with the project are keen to look at the findings.

PROCESS

Ofcom (2014) reported that 98% of 16 – 34 year olds now have access to the Internet via mobile devices. The project identified how this advance has come about. It identified that teaching staff need motivation, training and a robust IT infrastructure as a starting point to modern teaching techniques with web 2 designed online teaching materials.

Staff involved in the training sessions included all of the 83 teaching staff from within the school of Construction and Engineering at Lincoln College. Linkage conducted staff development with 15 teachers and Children's Link worked with six teachers and assessors. It was difficult to say how many learners were actively involved in the project, as the material has been made available outside the classrooms.

EMERGING IMPACT

Impact to date has seen an increase in confidence with teaching staff's use of ILT, and a good level of interest from teachers outside the project area. This increase in confidence has developed into a desire to use new software packages in order to meet learning requirements identified during the project. YouTube and video editing software is the most recent development from the initial Blendspace software.

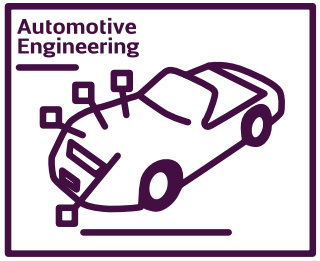
We anticipate the findings and methods used during the project to be rolled out to other subject areas and to the Group as a whole. Another idea is to use the better quality online material as part of a blended approach for Level 3 courses from September 2015.

Learner comments included using the Blendspace material for 'revision', 'outside the classroom', 'look at it the night before to familiarise yourself then you can be ready for work the next day' and 'home study'.

Post-it note responses collected after a session taught to a group who rarely use ILT in the classroom confirmed that the session was 'fun', 'interesting' and 'good'.

Data from the second survey to staff conducted three months after the start of the project showed 76% of respondents now having a 'good' level of confidence with using cloud-based software such as Blendspace and QRStuff. Comments from respondents mention the 'use of iPads to link to Blendspace for students', 'link to quizzes etc. via ProProfs' and 'creating several Blendspace projects for learners to engage with in classes. Workshop learning environments were mentioned as developing 'more QR codes on equipment in the workshop to show correct use of equipment'. Hurdles or barriers to teachers' use of ILT were seen as 'Wireless/WiFi being available and constant', 'time to develop online material' and 'having an IT system that is fit for purpose'.

CASE STUDY

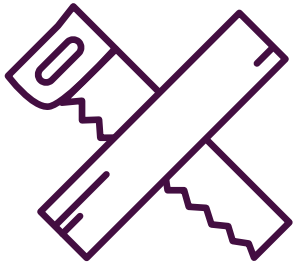


CAMPAIGN POSTERS

The use of Apps on mobile devices was at the core of the project. Initially large posters were sited in corridors and in workshop learning areas. QR codes were used and linked to Blendspace Storyboards. Learners were encouraged to scan the codes that relate to the subject they were studying. The code automatically opened the internet and showed the documents and videos housed in the Storyboard.

CARPENTRY LEARNERS

These Storyboards contained material relating to qualifications with stretch and challenging subjects such as Functional Skills. For example, the Carpentry and Joinery department Storyboards demonstrated how to cut joints such as bird's mouth joints on roof trusses. Additional information on how to calculate the angles within the triangle of the roof truss were also shown.



EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

LEARNER SUPPORT QR CODES

The QR codes and introduction documents were collected together as books relating to each subject area. These books were then used for revision and individual study.

The project identified that learners were better at using mobile devices than most teachers. However, learners weren't always aware of QR code scanners, but they quickly picked it up and shared experiences of downloading them from the App store.

Equality and Diversity was embedded in Blendspace lessons in the careful selection of materials reflecting the wider community. Blendspace lessons were accessible to all learners with the use of personal devices or computers and laptops. Anyone without access was given an equal opportunity to participate. For example, at Lincoln College a class set of iPads were made available for those who did not have their own smartphone or tablet. This allowed all of the group members to take part and engage in the session.

North

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

John McMahon,
Learning Technologies Coach,
jmcmahon@nnc.ac.uk

PROJECT PURPOSE

To identify opportunities and address barriers to the sharing of outstanding practice in the use of social media in TLA.

METHODS

The project was designed to generate qualitative data by means of semi-structured interviews with educational professionals, a private Facebook group used as a collaborative workspace and testing ground, and a focus group.

North Nottinghamshire
COLLEGE

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE FUTURE OF FURTHER EDUCATION

METHOD

The project was designed to generate qualitative data by means of semi-structured interviews with educational professionals, a private Facebook group used as a collaborative workspace and testing ground, and a focus group. Inductive mode analysis, with a primary focus on meaning, was then used to identify key themes of resistance, acceptance and advocacy in relation to the use of Facebook in teaching, learning and assessment. Contextual data was taken from existing research findings and pilot studies. A parallel research project which focused on learner response was also referenced.

Due to the short time available, and the relative inexperience of the research team, an ad hoc approach to analysis was adopted as suggested by Qualitative Data Analysis by Miles and Huberman (1994). The research tool set was refined as the project evolved, with final analysis being in the form of systematic coding of data in order 'to identify patterns and formulate potential explanations for these patterns' following Brinkmann & Kvale (1999).

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

1. Create Skills, a private training provider with a track record of highly engaged and effective development work.
2. Boston College, a Further Education (FE) college with a breadth of experience in social media and Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA).
3. Charnwood Training Enterprises, a training provider using social media as a tool for recruitment.
4. Rotherham College of Art and Design, a FE college that has been exploring ways to collaborate on research and resource development.

PROCESS

1. Initial work group established for project parameters and objectives
2. Action research training provided for core group members
3. Research and evaluation processes finalised by core group
4. Interviews and initial analysis held with teachers, support, management and senior leaders
5. CPD sessions provided for the use of social media
6. Coding and analysis finalised by project lead
7. Focus group finalised report findings and recommendations
8. Online CPD course released and promoted nationally

EMERGING IMPACT

SENIOR LEADERSHIP INVOLVEMENT:

Key areas of risk, organisational inertia, and identification of what really makes a positive impact were established and shared. Strategic decision making in the use of social media and safeguarding were based on the evidence from this report.

DELIVERY STAFF INVOLVEMENT:

Teaching staff responded enthusiastically to CPD sessions, and several projects began the planning stage. Several collaborative projects were also supported by the use of Facebook as a shared workspace.

An open online CPD course based on project findings also began the development phase, to be launched after final feedback from research leads has been assessed.

CASE STUDY

The practitioners were enthusiastic early uptakers of learning technologies but were frustrated by their intranet and VLE. Slow connections and frequent dropouts meant that they were unable to use learning technologies effectively. Their solution was to use Facebook. The Retford team delivered outstanding TLA, which was effectively supported by learning technologies in spite of ongoing systemic and infrastructural barriers.

STARTING POINT & OBJECTIVES

'I had no experience of using Facebook in TLA. My personal objectives were to be able to reach students outside the classroom more effectively and use it to showcase good practical work with the group.'

'I did not have any expectations more than reaching the students outside the classroom with announcements and changes. I went into the trial process with an open mind as I was unsure how receptive students would be. Having seen it in action at Bradford, I knew it was especially effective with regard to last minute work placements as it was a quick easy way to reach all students in one place.'

BARRIERS

'The setup process was a little messy. I never created a closed group before and I did not realise that you didn't need to friend the students to invite them to the group. The internet connection also caused barriers, for example Facebook was blocked at the P16 centre which limits the use of Facebook in sessions. Once set up was complete and the group was running, there were very few problems.'

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

'For me the use of Facebook this year has been a real asset to the delivery of the makeup qualifications. It has definitely been easier to connect with the students and share good practices. If anything my L3 group are a little too dependent on it and only bring things/do things if prompted on Facebook!'

LATEST OBSERVATIONS

'We have not had the official report but the observer commented that she liked the use of Facebook/Social media in the session. Students were encouraged to continue uploading evidence through the session (if possible) and after. Learner feedback has been positive - they like the reminders posted the day before sessions. The sharing of photos is good too. It promoted a team feeling with the group. The L3 group also used the site to post questions and share information they found useful.'

'We reached the students more efficiently. I would not say that attendance was better with the use of Facebook, but the use of social media aided in the delivery of a course and improved the students' learning experience.'

'A training session on start-up and using closed groups would definitely be beneficial.'

The project was open to all ACL practitioners across the East Midlands partner shires. 80 practitioners participated in the project, 75% female and 25% males, which is a representative sample of the tutor workforce across the partners. The practitioner cohort included those who support the most vulnerable learners – these included ESOL tutors, MFL tutors, 14-19 tutors, English and maths tutors, ALDD tutors and those delivering community learning to adults with mental health issues, and rurally isolated learners. The tutors taking part in the project felt that they were better able to meet the needs of their learners now that they could create online interactive materials for their learners to access.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

When used well, learning technologies can overcome economic, cultural and geographic barriers. They can personalise learning, enabling students to choose when, where and how they learn. Learning technologies can enable learners to work together and build a learning community. They can provide a space for teachers to develop and share resources.

Nottinghamsh

TRAINING
NETWORK

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

Karen Hodgson, CEO
and Natalie Gregory, Quality Officer,
natalie@ntn-wbl.org.uk

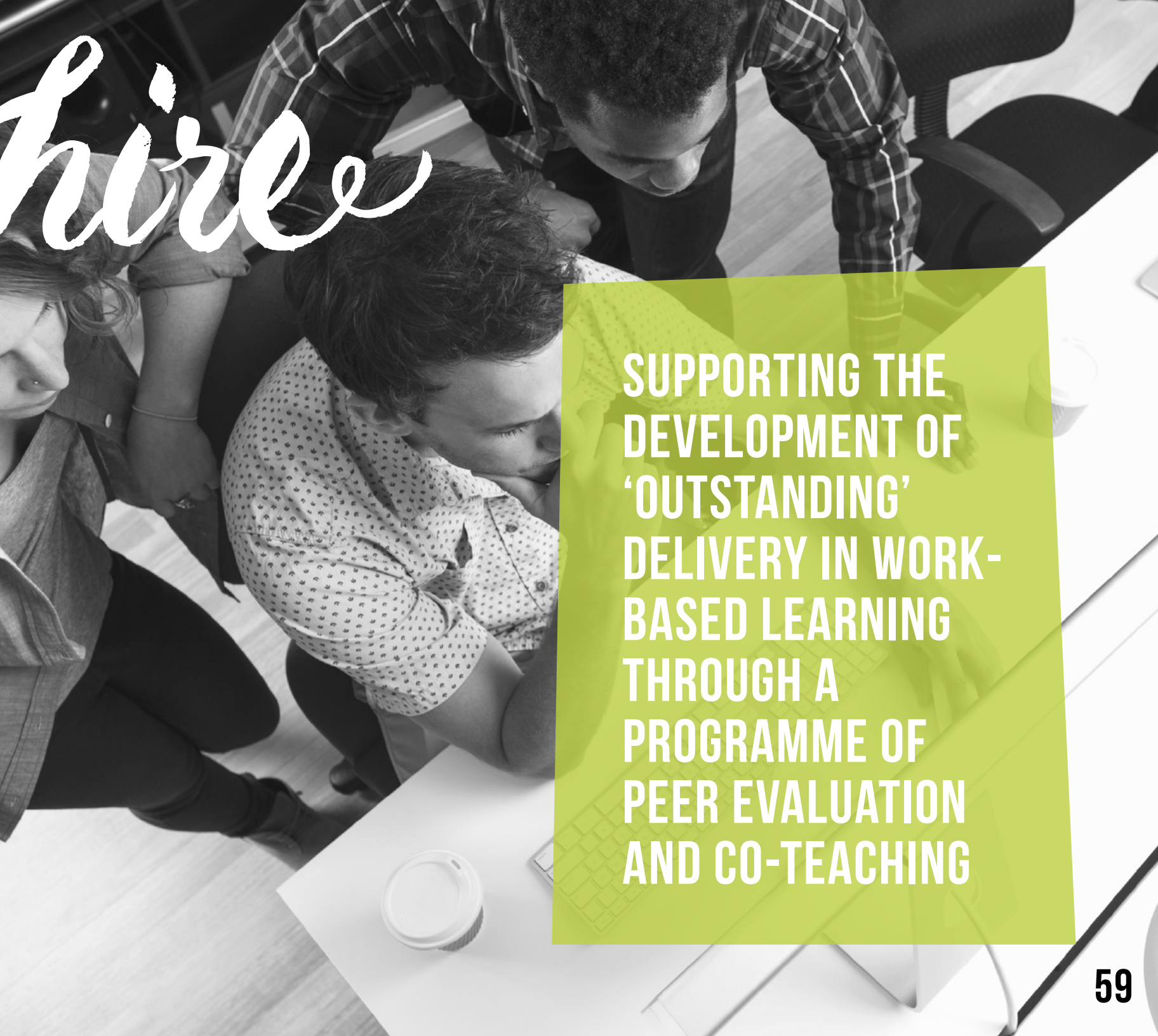
PROJECT PURPOSE

The expected outcomes from this project were improved learner satisfaction within Work Based Learning across the partners and our network, with an eventual increase in achievement and retention on Apprenticeship programmes and other provisions as a direct result of outstanding teaching and assessment and a well established peer group, with links across a range of post-compulsory training providers.

METHODS

Each member of staff 'buddied up' with a colleague from another organisation that was a partner of NTN and carried out an observation of each other's delivery. The session did not have to be with an NTN funded learner, but the learner must have agreed to the visitor attending the session.

ntn



SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF 'OUTSTANDING' DELIVERY IN WORK-BASED LEARNING THROUGH A PROGRAMME OF PEER EVALUATION AND CO-TEACHING

METHODS

Each member of staff 'buddied up' with a colleague from another organisation that was a partner of NTN and carried out an observation of each other's delivery. The session did not have to be with an NTN funded learner, but the learner must have agreed to the visitor attending the session.

The observation was a peer-based exercise and not a formal assessment of each other's practices. The idea was for the observer to witness a practice that they could adopt. An observation guidance document was provided, although practitioners could use one that they felt more comfortable with. A feedback form to complete with the learner was also provided. Finally, when the observations were complete, each practitioner was required to complete an evaluation form to reflect on their experiences.

In addition, some organisations carried out internal peer observations; if two practitioners were taking part then ideally they would carry out observations on each other, and subsequently share the other's practice.

This project is still in the early stages therefore statistics are not available yet.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The group of practitioners taking part in this project were diverse in both teaching and industry background. They taught a wide variety of students from entry level pre-employment to higher level Apprenticeships based in a variety of geographical locations. The demographics of these locations heavily influenced the groups who participated in the training. However, every effort will be made to gather evidence from under-represented groups in the future so that we can better understand how to provide fully inclusive programmes. Equality and diversity is a key theme in delivery that will be reflected upon in the project. Learner feedback will be gathered to establish whether their individual needs are being met.

Stephenson COLLEGE

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

George Caplan, Quality Manager
gcaplan@stephensoncoll.ac.ukt

PROJECT PURPOSE

The project aimed to:

- Enable teachers to engage with design professionals such as web developers to produce high quality learning materials.
- Review the use of these materials through peer observation.
- Evaluate the design process.
- Analyse the learner experience.

METHODS

The project used structured interviews with teachers and assessors who were involved in the design process. This allowed for qualitative analysis of the perceived value of design, functional skills specialists, and the production of vocationally contextualised learning materials.

Stephenson College
Excellence and innovation in learning

THE USE OF EXTENDED LEARNING COMMUNITIES TO CREATE CURRICULUM RESOURCES TO SUPPORT OUTSTANDING TEACHING AND LEARNING

METHODS

The project used structured interviews with teachers and assessors who were involved in the design process. This allowed for qualitative analysis of the perceived value of design, functional skills specialists, and the production of vocationally contextualised learning materials.

Teachers' use of these learning materials was observed by their peers. Partners used their own internal process, documentation and protocols. Peer observation training was facilitated by the lead partner and focused on making judgements on the quality of learning supported by the use of evaluative language.

Learners were surveyed and attended a focus group to ascertain levels of satisfaction and to identify strengths and areas for design improvement.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Our partnerships involved three colleges and a private training provider. These were selected to ensure good coverage of different subject areas, types of qualification pathway and modes of delivery.

1. Bilborough College
2. Burton and South Derbyshire College
3. Central College Nottingham
4. The Derbyshire Network

PROCESS

JANUARY 2015

- Project coordinators in each college met. Matching of curriculum areas based on need and project theme.
- Project Managers briefed curriculum staff on process and outputs. Template flyer and email sent to all partner colleges to gain interest in project from teaching staff.

FEBRUARY 2015

- Design template of standardised pre-teaching survey questions sent to partner colleges to evaluate.
- Project timeline of key activities shared with partner colleges.
- Lead college offer of road shows at partner colleges to promote and assist with project and clarify information.
- Deadline for interested teaching staff to get involved and forward information to Stephenson College.

MARCH 2015

- Partner colleges informed of training date for peer observation and standard procedures.
- Each partner college met with own team to discuss development of own teaching material with embedded theme.
- Practitioners met with professionals e.g. web designer/animation/film company/publishers.
- Partner colleges wrote and finished task/topic material.
- Email sent to all partner colleges with contact details of all specialists to contact regarding developments of their project.

APRIL 2015

- Pre-teaching survey links sent to all partner colleges, in addition to login username and password to access results.
- Partner colleges used new teaching materials within teaching sessions. Peer observations commenced. Partner colleges were sent standardised questions to collate quantitative and qualitative evidence within the peer observations for focus group with learners and the internal review with the teacher.

EMERGING IMPACT

Developing learning materials to embed mathematics and English within vocational curriculum is a successful strategy to engage learners. However peer observation feedback demonstrates that unless due consideration is given to learners skill development in this area; vocational teachers do not have the prerequisite knowledge to address a vocationally based question. Vocational teachers therefore need further training on teaching and assessment strategies to be able to give learners the 'tools' to acquire literacy and numeracy skills. Equally, the design of learning resources must include steps or worked examples that show processes to be followed and build learners skill base if they are to be used independently.

Students generally enjoyed using IT based resources. Resources were highly interactive and were a source of reference for students, both within the lesson and in subsequent learning activities. The design of mobile Apps to support learning was problematic due to cost and the type of platforms used. The different phases in development of such resources could be time consuming and are likely to hinder roll out on a wider basis. Where there was a mass market for resources to promote English and maths, economies of scale enabled a more generic resource with some vocational context and increased functionality.

Peer observation was effective in supporting and encouraging teachers and assessors to be reflective practitioners and to learn from each others' experience. Observation training was effective in ensuring that observers gave constructive and evaluative feedback. Several discussions took place around the balance between constructive criticism and the need to be supportive in this type of observation. Desk-based evaluation of peer observations showed that well designed resources used in the sessions as a result of the project were a contributory factor in developing a high quality learning experience. Survey evidence from learners showed they enjoyed these sessions and valued the type of resource.

CASE STUDY

Resource development meetings - involving both vocational teaching practitioners and commercial design professionals - were highly productive in creating suitable resources. Design professionals were able to give specific guidance on product functionality that led to further discussion on how each resource would meet student and organisational needs. For example, the various platforms available to develop mobile Apps were considered and constraints highlighted. It was suggested that a web based product might be more cost effective, and changes in content would be easier to make. Practitioners spoke of the 'energy' created by this process and the ability to 'influence the development of teaching resources from the design stage' or rather to control 'bespoke' solutions where current materials proved insufficient to support learning. These meetings were constrained by the time available and further discussion took place after each meeting.

Staff were actively engaged at all stages of product development. Staff were observed reclaiming the creative space, and ideas flowed throughout these meetings; for example, they suggested a humorous approach to developing a guide on progress reviews for work-based students and a video to show learner characteristics of both unsuccessful and successful reviews. All staff highlighted the benefit of allocated 'thinking time' in order to create high quality learning materials.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

Learning materials were developed with due consideration for the active promotion of equality and diversity. For example, the Beauty App produced as an interactive tool to show the structure of the skin referred to pigmentation of various skin types. Equally, materials developed to embed English and maths using vocational scenarios were written and designed to challenge social and cultural stereotypes.

An inclusive approach was taken to the organisation and management of the project. For example peer observation training was delivered at an accessible time to part-time assessors with childcare responsibilities.

Vision

WEST NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE

LEAD PARTNER CONTACT

Lee Hazeldine, Learning Consultant: Digital Technologies,
lee.hazeldine@wnc.ac.uk

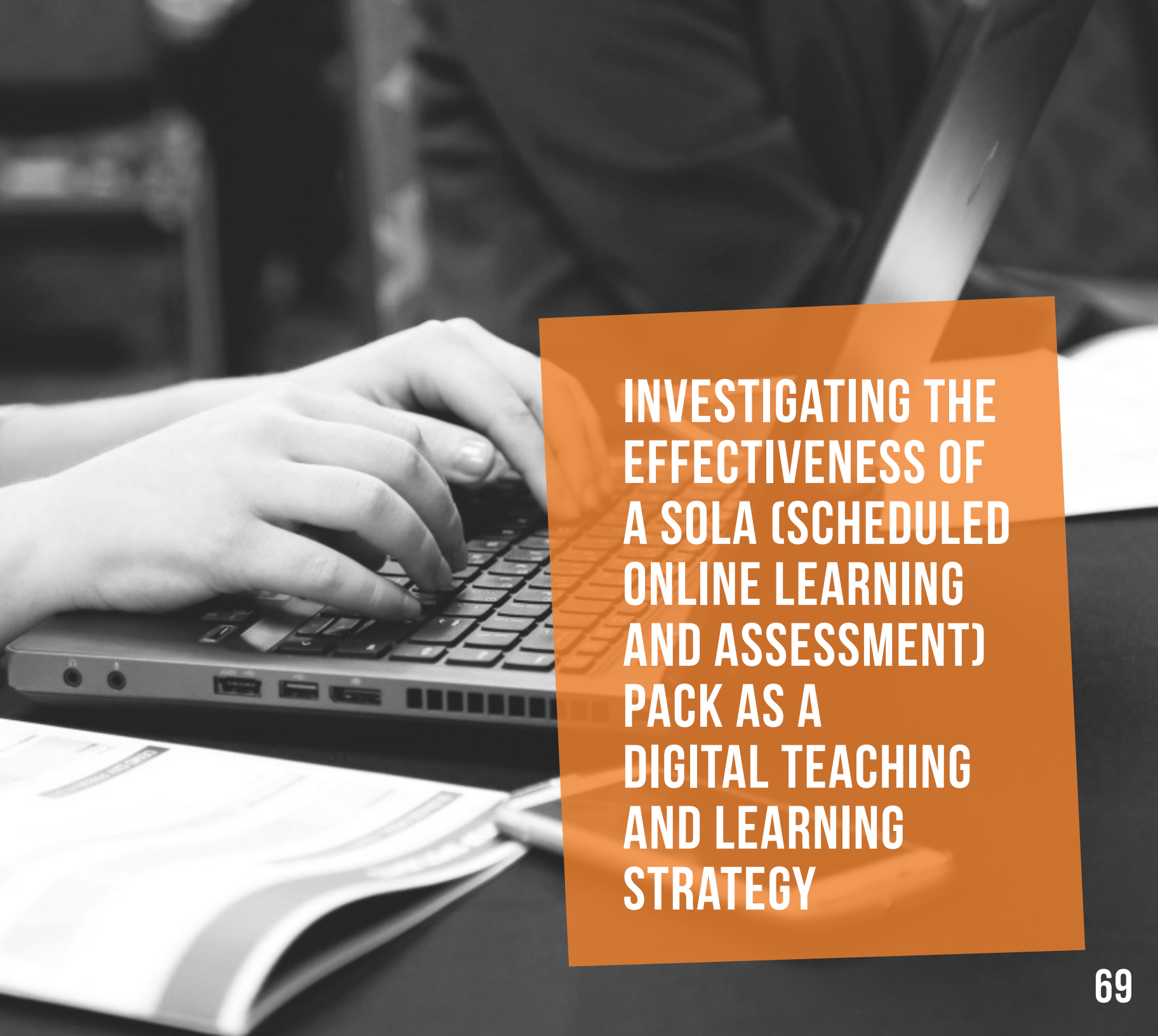
PROJECT PURPOSE

The project aimed to identify the extent that a SOLA (Scheduled Online Learning and Assessment) pack is an effective strategy for independent learning and delivery within the further education sector.

METHODS

The effectiveness of a SOLA pack was evaluated via a qualitative examination of student and training provider perceptions of digital learning strategies, digital media applications and technology platforms. These perceptions were assessed with regard to the accessibility and versatility of SOLA packs, their ability to engage learners through a range of learning styles and levels, and their ability to effectively inform and develop training practitioners' teaching and learning practice.

VISION
West Nottinghamshire College



INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A SOLA (SCHEDULED ONLINE LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT) PACK AS A DIGITAL TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY

PROCESS

The project was conducted through the generation of three SOLA packs targeted at three stakeholder groups: delivery staff, learners and employers.

A target setting SOLA pack enabled delivery staff to experience online learning, as well as supporting upskilling in relation to target setting. This SOLA pack was hosted on the Moodle platform. Following the SOLA pack experience, a short structured questionnaire was used to gather feedback.

A second SOLA pack was created around the generic 'wider learning' e-safety topic that enabled a variety of learners to participate. This SOLA pack was delivered in two versions: the Moodle based format and a multiform format.

A final SOLA pack was delivered to support employers who have learners engaged in workplace learning (NVQs and apprenticeships) to understand the safeguarding agenda and their role and responsibility in relation to safe learning. As employers do not have access to Moodle, the multiform version of the format was used.

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

1. Leicester College
2. Trackwork Limited

EMERGING IMPACT

Results demonstrated that 70% of students using the multiform SOLA pack model and 100% using the Moodle version believed that the format was easy to use. 100% of both tutors and learners felt the multiform version was engaging and stimulating, compared to 75% in relation to the Moodle model. Despite this positive response, there were clear areas for improvement to be made in terms of the ease of use and the ability to convey information effectively. 30% of learners felt there was too much text in proportion to interactive content within the multiform version, and the Moodle model was criticised because it contained too much repetition of content.

Despite an evident awareness of the benefits of blended learning, students were found to have a clear preference (86%) for a classroom-based teaching and learning experience. Although students considered the SOLA pack format to be engaging and stimulating, in many instances learners felt there is no replacement for face-to-face contact between tutors and learners.

83% of tutors felt that a mixed strategy would be most beneficial for learners. It was felt that a more fluid relationship to blended learning might be beneficial, one that was more sensitive to the types of engagement students already have within social media networks. The passivity of the Moodle model was also highlighted as barrier to differentiate different learners' needs. As the results indicate, a relatively low 64% of students and 57% of tutors thought the SOLA packs effectively checked their understanding. A reliance on multiple-choice answers and a formal approach were identified as restraints upon learning.

In terms of meeting tutors' needs, 100% felt that the 'Tutor Resources' section equipped them with the means to develop a digital resource, however, a lower 57% thought the format gave tutors confidence in such production. Whereas the tutors considered the format accessible with developmental links that were easy to follow, they felt that time and an additional support network would be beneficial factors in building confidence for digital strategy production.

CASE STUDY

The delivery of the SOLA pack model allowed stakeholders to engage with a new method of teaching and learning. The subsequent surveys allowed stakeholders to ascertain a variety of benefits and deficits with the model. Feedback from the survey identified clear areas for development for the delivery of effective blended learning in the future.

One recommendation was to include a live online forum that allowed peer-to-peer and learner-to-tutor interaction, similar to the benefits of classroom-based teaching and learning. Another recommendation was to reduce the amount of textual information in favour of visual and kineasthetic interactive approaches. The reduction in the amount of textual information would have the benefit of making blended learning more engaging and accessible, whilst still providing clear routes for higher learning.

In addition to the tutor resources currently available within the SOLA pack format, the survey results indicated that a means to access advice should be included via an online forum. To be effective, the provision should effectively harness a range of available technologies that signal the need for assistance to mobile devices or emails regularly used by designated staff members.

Finally, the results suggested that institutions should provide appropriate levels of time for tutors to develop their SOLA pack digital strategies. An institutional recognition of the importance of blended learning should be incorporated within staff development sessions, allowing allocated periods where tutors are required to experiment with digital resources and generate effective digital teaching and learning strategies for the curriculum. This recommendation should move towards narrowing the recognised gap in digital literacy between delivery staff and their learners.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The sample of students surveyed was chosen across a range of learning levels informed by student group profiles. The selected cohort of learners reflected a cross-section of gender and included some learners with additional learning needs. The survey feedback has identified areas for development that would clearly improve the provision of differentiated learning that stretches and challenges students with a variety of learning styles.

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For further information relating to the Outstanding, Teaching and Learning Assessment project please contact:

Simon Feneley, Project Director
EMFEC Group
Robins Wood House
Robins Wood Road
Nottingham
NG8 3NH

Tel: 0115 854 1616