



# Student Voice Illuminates the Way Forward



*"Can you not...teach us the basics of life...tax and that stuff... how to buy a house, mortgages, own our own business, we never learn that in school"*



## Introduction

This study uses the principles of Illuminative evaluation, which is primarily concerned with "description and interpretation" (Parlett & Hamilton 1972 pp10-11), alongside Gilly Salmon's Five-Stage Framework for online learning (2002), to assess the effectiveness of a pedagogical, intervention course at an FE College.

The intervention course, known as Next Steps, was an online, self-study course, aimed at all Level 2 and Level 3 learners. The aim of the course was to deliver the wider skills that learners are required to study such as relationships, internet safety and employability.

## Methodology

The research applies a qualitative approach by using student voice to gain insights into the course by undertaking:

- student focus groups
- one-to-one interviews with students
- one-to-one interview with a member of SMT

In order to understand the relevance and gain perspectives into the aims and objectives of the Next Steps course.

## Key Literature

Parlett, M. & Hamilton, D. (1972) Evaluation as illumination: A new approach to the study of innovative programmes. Occasional Paper No.9, Edinburgh: Centre for research in the Educational Sciences, University of Edinburgh. Available at: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED167634> (Accessed 03/06/20)

Ofsted (2019) *The Education Inspection Framework*. Reference no: 190015. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/801429/Education\\_inspection\\_framework.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/801429/Education_inspection_framework.pdf) (Accessed 18/01/20)

Salmon, G. (2002) *E-tivities*. Oxon: Kogan Page Ltd

## Key Findings

The findings of the research show that the Next Steps course needs development in its main aims and objectives. The representation of student voice has three main findings:

- The online curriculum design lacked the motivational content that is integral to online courses (Salmon 2002). Overwhelmingly, students indicated preference for a more blended approach, with some face-to-face interaction, particularly among the level 2 students.
- The content of wider skills did not meet the learners' needs, in terms of what they consider to be 'real life' skills
- The delivery of wider skills need to adhere to the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (2019), in that they develop the skills that will develop learners beyond the FE environment
- The communication with students on the aims and objectives for the course had been insufficient and left most students with feelings of confusion, disappointment and frustration that, in turn led to poor attendance and low motivation.

## Analysis

Salmon's Five-Stage Framework (2002), outlines Stage One as being 'Access and Motivation', whilst Stage Two is 'Online Socialisation'.

Without an appropriate induction, relevant content or online collaboration, learners were inhibited and unable to progress through the levels and achieve the goal of Stage five 'Development'.

Despite the fact that this research was interrupted by the onset of Covid-19 and the subsequent closing of the college, it is clear from the data collected that, this course could not be successful as an online, self-study model of learning.

## Conclusion & Recommendations

Learners should be consulted when making changes based on assumptions. It is the recommendations of this study that the Next Steps course:

- Develops a more blended approach for level 2 students
- Reviews the course content to ensure that it reaches the wider skills needed in the 'real world'
- Introduces a full and rigorous induction process which ensures that students are aware of the course's structure, purpose & requirements.