

How will learners' engagement be affected if I link learning to real-life?

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Rationale

The Developing the Young Workforce Report states its aim is to reduce Scottish youth unemployment by 40% by 2021. The programme is closely aligned with the Scottish Attainment Challenge and states that all young people, between the ages of 3 and 18 should be given the opportunity to develop their learning and understanding of the skills needed to gain lasting employment. This falls in line with the eight indicators of wellbeing, particularly 'Achieving' that are detailed in the Getting It Right For Every Child approach (Scottish Government, 2012). In addition to this, the SQA Skills Framework for Learning, Life and Work states that it is important for young people to have skills and attributes such as a positive attitude to work in order for them to thrive.

In order for learners to value their time spent in the classroom, they must see a link with the world outside of school. Scottish Government states that it is the responsibility of the teacher to deliver a curriculum that engages young people in discussion regarding the skills and responsibilities placed on employees and that encourages young people to consider a more diverse range of career opportunities (Education Scotland, 2015).

Aim

The aim of this Professional Enquiry was to establish what effect, if any, linking learning to real life situations will have on learners' engagement.

Methodology

Research was carried out with an S5/6 class over a period of four weeks. There are six learners within the class, only one of whom is studying Design and Manufacture at Higher level this year. Methods used to collect information on individual thoughts and engagement included observations, learner feedback and questionnaires.

During the initial lesson, learners were given a short questionnaire that had been tailored to suit a Design and Manufacture class and were asked to consider each question before answering (appendix 1).

At the end of all future lessons within the enquiry, learners were given skills assessment sheets and were instructed to identify what skills were used that day. They were then asked to identify any skills that had been used in other classes. Following this, learners were asked to create a spider diagram illustrating their career aspirations and to complete research to identify the skills needed to pursue a career in this field.

During week three of the intervention, the learners visited an external training provider who specialised in training young people as part of Modern Apprenticeships. The class underwent Site Health and Safety and Electrical Installations training and were given a chance to sit an industry accredited certification. During this visit, the trainer discussed the skills required for obtaining a Modern Apprenticeship and observations were made during practical tasks to determine whether learners' levels of engagement or contribution were affected. These findings were then logged and compared with previous lessons.

During the final lesson of the intervention, the class were visited by the schools' Skills Development Scotland advisor and were given a chance to discuss with them their career aspirations and subjects that they had chosen to study. The learners were encouraged to participate in a discussion where they identified the skills that were used in Design and Manufacture and were asked to complete a spider diagram detailing their preferred career, and to determine whether they were linked with those developed by studying Design and Manufacture (appendix 2).

Following the final lesson, learners were asked to complete the initial questionnaire again (appendix 1). The purpose of this was to ascertain whether or not their view of the subject differed to the views held prior to the intervention.

Findings

From observations conducted throughout the initial observation and by collating the findings of the questionnaire, it was evident that learners were only able to identify when subject specific skills were being utilised. For example, when asked 'Do you think you can apply the skills you have learned in Design and Manufacture outside the classroom?' 84% of the respondents stated that they could not as they did not wish to pursue a career in a design or engineering related role.

In further lessons after learners had viewed and discussed the SQA Skills Framework (appendix 3), 67% of the respondents were able to identify that some literacy and numeracy skills were utilised during their time in the classroom and in the workshop and that an example of them using numeracy skills was when measuring and marking accurate dimensions on working drawings.

Following the class visit to an external training provider where they were given practical experience of fibre optic installations and site Health and Safety training, learners were observed and it appeared that they were keen to work in partnership with each other to solve problems and achieve a common goal. At the end of the visit the learners were once more given a copy of the SQA Skills Framework and were asked to identify a time that day, if at all, when they had used a skill under each of the five headings. 100% of the learners asked were able to identify a skill that had been used under each of the different headings.

Following the intervention, 100% of learners were able to identify skills required for their chosen career that had also been identified as those that were developed by studying Design and Manufacture.

The feedback taken from the final questionnaire showed that following the industrial visit, learners were more aware of the skills that they were developing in class and when asked 'Do you think you can apply the skills you have learned in Design and Manufacture outside the classroom?' 100% of them stated that they could and 84% were able to identify what these were.

Conclusions

This was a limited enquiry, undertaken over a short period and therefore the results are not conclusive. However, this enquiry suggests that learners' engagement is affected positively when learning is linked to real life situations. This study has highlighted that by making learners aware of the non-subject specific skills they will develop in the classroom, their engagement with the subject is impacted positively and they take more responsibility for their learning which further benefits their classroom experience.

Implications for Future Practice

Through professional dialogue, reading and the research gathered during this enquiry it is apparent that linking learning to real-life has a positive impact on learners' engagement.

In my future practice, I intend to ensure that learners are continuously made aware of the different skills that they are developing and the impact that these will have both in the classroom and the wider world. This enquiry has shown that when learners are made aware of the skills that are required within the world of work and are encouraged to identify how these skills are developed within a classroom environment, there is a positive impact on their engagement and they are more inclined to value the time spent studying in the classroom.

Bibliography

Education Scotland (2015). *Developing the Young Workforce: Career Education Standard (3-18)*.

Skills Development Scotland (2012). *Career Management Skills Framework*. pp.7-12.

Scottish Government (2011). *Career Information, Advice and Guidance in Scotland A Framework for Service Redesign and Improvement*.

Scottish Government (2012). *A Guide to Getting It Right For Every Child*.

Appendix 1

Practitioner Enquiry Questionnaire 1 – Design and Manufacture N5

Please complete the following questions, circling your answer where appropriate:

1. Do you enjoy studying Design and Manufacture?
2. What Skills do you learn in Design and Manufacture?
3. Do you think you can apply the skills you have learned in Design and Manufacture outside of the classroom?
4. In what way do you think studying Design and Manufacture can prepare you for life after school?

Appendix 2 – TBC

Appendix 3



SQA's Skills Framework:

Skills for Learning, Skills for Life and Skills for Work

This framework has been developed for use in the National Qualifications development programme in support of Curriculum for Excellence.

The main skill areas are:

1 Literacy	This is the ability to communicate by reading, by writing, and by listening and talking.
2 Numeracy	This is the ability to use numbers to solve problems by counting, doing calculations, measuring, and understanding graphs and charts. This is also the ability to understand the results.
3 Health and wellbeing	This is the ability to take care of yourself and others, and to be responsible for your learning and welfare. It includes managing your feelings, developing a positive and active attitude to life, and building relationships with others.
4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship	This is the ability to develop skills, understandings and personal attributes — including a positive attitude to work, to others and to the world's resources.
5 Thinking skills	This is the ability to develop the cognitive skills of remembering and identifying, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating.

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Main skill	Skill subsets
1 Literacy This is the ability to communicate by reading, writing, and listening and talking.	<p>1.1 Reading Reading means the ability to understand and interpret ideas, opinions and information presented in texts, for a purpose and within a context. It includes handling information to make reasoned and informed decisions.</p> <p>In the context of qualifications, 'texts' are defined as word-based materials (sometimes with supporting images) which are written, printed, Braille or displayed on screen, and which are presented in a way that is accessible for the intended audience. Texts which allow learners to demonstrate these skills are most likely to be non-fiction (ie functional and transactional) in nature.</p> <p>1.2 Writing Writing means the ability to create texts which communicate ideas, opinions and information, to meet a purpose and within a context.</p> <p>In the context of qualifications, 'texts' are defined as word-based materials (sometimes with supporting images) which are written, printed, Braille or displayed on screen. These will be technically accurate for the purpose, audience and context. Texts which allow learners to demonstrate these skills are most likely to be non-fiction (ie functional and transactional) in nature.</p> <p>1.3 Listening and talking Listening means the ability to understand and interpret ideas, opinions and information presented orally for a purpose and within a context, drawing on non-verbal communication as appropriate.</p> <p>Talking means the ability to communicate orally ideas, opinions and information for a purpose and within a context.</p> <p>In the context of qualifications, 'communicating orally' is defined as ways of using words for transactions that are spoken (or signed through British Sign Language (BSL)), which are presented in a way that is accessible for the intended audience.</p>

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<p>2 Numeracy</p> <p>This is the ability to use numbers in order to solve problems by counting, doing calculations, measuring, and understanding graphs and charts. This is also the ability to understand the results.</p>	<p>2.1 Number processes Number processes means solving problems arising in everyday life through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ carrying out calculations involving addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division ◆ using whole numbers, fractions, decimal fractions, and percentages ◆ making informed decisions based on the results of these calculations ◆ understanding these results <p>2.2 Money, time and measurement This means using and understanding money, time and measurement to solve practical problems in a variety of contexts using relevant units and suitable instruments, and to appropriate degrees of accuracy.</p> <p>2.3 Information handling Information handling means being able to interpret data in tables, charts and other graphical displays to draw sensible conclusions. It involves interpreting the data and considering its reliability in making reasoned deductions and informed decisions. It also involves an awareness and understanding of the chance of events happening.</p>
<p>3 Health and wellbeing</p> <p>This is the ability to take care of yourself and others, and to be responsible for your learning and welfare. It includes managing your feelings, developing a positive and active attitude to life, and building relationships with others.</p>	<p>3.1 Personal learning Personal learning means being actively engaged in learning and how it can be planned, sourced, implemented, and sustained. It also includes following-up on curiosity, thinking constructively, reflecting, and learning from experience.</p> <p>3.2 Emotional wellbeing Emotional wellbeing includes taking responsibility for yourself and being aware of the impact your behaviour may have on others; developing ways to manage your feelings; developing positive attitudes and resilience; practising assertive behaviours; building confidence; and, based on an understanding of any risks, making informed decisions.</p> <p>3.3 Physical wellbeing Physical wellbeing means recognising the importance and benefits of healthy and active living and practising skills to make the most of positive aspects of activity, such as enjoyment and challenge.</p>

	<p>3.4 Planning for, and making, choices and changes This includes planning, making decisions and taking action based on achievements for the next stage in life then making a successful move to the next stage of education or work.</p> <p>3.5 Relationships This includes building various types of social and working relationships and practising interpersonal skills successfully, showing respect and a sense of care for self and others.</p>
<p>4 Employability, enterprise and citizenship</p> <p>This is the ability to develop the skills, understandings and personal attributes — including a positive attitude to work, to others and to the world's resources.</p>	<p>4.1 Employability Employability is the ability to gain employment by developing the personal qualities, skills, knowledge, understanding, and attitudes required in rapidly changing economic environments. It is the ability to maintain employment by making transitions between jobs and roles, and the ability to obtain new employment if, and when, required.</p> <p>4.2 Information and communication technology (ICT) This involves having the ability to use ICT systems and emerging technologies to handle information. It means having the ability to use the internet safely and to make informed decisions based on information obtained using technology.</p> <p>4.3 Working with others Working with others means knowing and practising what is involved in working co-operatively and sensitively with others; having the ability to recognise need and opportunity; to influence and negotiate with others to take ideas forward; being adaptable and having a determination to succeed; being able to discuss, set and meet roles and expectations in a working environment; and accessing, providing and creating information.</p> <p>4.4 Enterprise Enterprise involves having the ability to be creative, flexible and resourceful with a positive attitude to change; understanding when and how to use initiative and innovation; being able to evaluate risk to inform individual and collective decision making; and having the ability to persuade others to undertake a joint venture.</p>

	<p>4.5 Leadership Leadership involves being a role model for others; being able to take the initiative in working with and guiding others; and having self-awareness, optimism, integrity, and an open mindset. Leadership involves skills and values which develop trust in and from others.</p> <p>4.6 Citizenship Citizenship includes having concern for the environment and for others; being aware of rights and responsibilities; being aware of the democratic society; being outward looking towards society; being able to recognise one's personal role in this context; and being aware of global issues, understanding one's responsibilities within these, and acting responsibly.</p>
<p>5 Thinking skills</p> <p>This is the ability to develop the cognitive skills of remembering and identifying, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating.</p>	<p>5.1 Remembering Remembering is the ability to identify, recognise and recall facts, events and sequences.</p> <p>5.2 Understanding Understanding is the ability to demonstrate the meaning of items of information, to explain the order of events in a sequence, and to interpret in a different setting or context.</p> <p>5.3 Applying Applying is the ability to use existing information to solve a problem in a different context, and to plan, organise and complete a task.</p> <p>5.4 Analysing and evaluating This covers the ability to identify and weigh-up the features of a situation or issue and to use your judgement of them in coming to a conclusion. It includes reviewing and considering any potential solutions.</p> <p>5.5 Creating Creating is the ability to design something innovative or to further develop an existing thing by adding new dimensions or approaches. It also includes the ability to make, write, say or do something new.</p>