Teams Work Makes the Dream Work:

Do live calls motivate pupils to engage in remote learning?

Rankin Jennifer – Group 1J

Do live calls motivate pupils to engage in remote learning?

Jennifer Rankin

Group 1J

Rationale:

The construction of the Curriculum for Excellence is determinant of the improved quality of teaching and learning provisions observed within Scottish schools (The Scottish Government, 2008). This framework encourages practitioners to adopt methods of education delivery in accordance with national guidelines and expectations.

Current lockdown restrictions pertaining to the global pandemic COVID-19 have forced educators to facilitate learning in alternative ways as significant means to maintain achievement and attainment for all children. As a result, various digital systems have been utilised to act as a virtual meeting space for classes worldwide. Students are now accustomed to methods of online learning; defined as being educational experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments with internet access (Singh & Thurman, 2019, as cited by Dhawan, 2020). It is the role of teachers to establish digital learning routines and design electronic learning materials which tailor to student motivation and are conducive to learning (Lathrop, 2011).

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) outline teaching requirements to: 'use assessment, recording and reporting as an integral part of the teaching process to support and enhance learning' (GTCS, 2012). As such, this enquiry sought to clarify if live virtual calls with students helped to increase their motivation and engagement with remote learning. The data presented within this study can aid practitioners to reflect upon the use and frequency of their live meetings with pupils to support children to success whilst using digital platforms (NLC, 2020).

Aims:

The group enquiry sought to explore the impact that live calls have had on pupils' motivation to engage in learning during school closure. The intended enquiry objectives are summarised as follows:

- Investigate the current status of engagement in the virtual classroom.
- Compare levels of engagement throughout the school week.

Methodology:

These enquiries were carried out over a six-week period across Early, First and Second level classes – P.1, P.4, P.5, P.6 and P.7.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative data has been used to assess the impact of live calls on pupil motivation to engage in remote learning. All group members were using Microsoft Teams to engage with pupils and distribute learning materials. As such, the supporting application 'Insights' has been used to evidence student activity and communication whilst on the site. A variety of other methods were used to collate data, to include a questionnaire

distributed to pupils or parents dependent on the age and stage of children. This was used to assess the perceived benefits and limitations to accessing live calls and online learning. Additional comment sections were added to ensure that pupils were provided with opportunities to articulate their opinions regarding their learning and live input from their class teachers. Additional data was also collected through professional evaluation records to track virtual student attendance during live calls, resource access and work submission. This engagement tracker was adapted to meet live interaction expectations, as appropriate for each group member.

Findings:

The pupil questionnaire was created as a form of data collection to take into account pupil responses to the accessibility of Teams which allows them to engage with all that digital learning had to offer. The questionnaire was constructed with a variety of subject-specific questioning to identify possible limitations to accessing live video calls. The questions were categorised into sub-sections to focus on specific areas of interest: online access, preferred format of communication and pupil enjoyment pertaining to the topic of live calls. Of the twenty eight children within the class, twenty two written responses were received from the P7 class. Therefore, the data presented within the study reflected the views and opinions of 78% of the class.

Findings from the pupil response questionnaire identified live calls – whether that be in the form of virtual check-ins or live lessons – as being the most preferred method of teaching (See Appendix A) and communication (See Appendix B). This was reiterated by twelve and eleven responses respectively. These were followed by the use of a daily activity grid and general channel announcements with eight and seven corresponding votes.

Varied responses pertaining to the possible difficulties children were experiencing when accessing live calls were collated (See Appendix C). Seven pupils stated that the sharing of home devices posed as a significant challenge to accessing live calls. This was found to be the case with pupils within the class who had siblings in other year groups. Seven pupils stated that their parent or carer's work schedule interfered with their abilities to join the calls. Eight pupils had shared concerns regarding their level of confidence as the most imposing challenge when engaging in virtual class meetings. Few children had expressed their unwillingness to unmute their microphones and engage in dialogue during our class calls as they felt shy or anxious.

It was clear that students were most engaged when participating in interactive tasks such as PowerPoint presentation games and Kahoot quizzes. As observed in the response questionnaire, a total of fourteen pupils had chosen this feature (See Appendix D). Such activities had been implemented to motivate pupils to attend the scheduled meetings and engage in virtual interactions with their teacher and classmates.

An Excel engagement tracker was created to track student engagement. The monitoring system allowed practitioners to assess the number of times each child would access their learning resources, live calls and upload work across the school week and provide an overall engagement percentage. As shown in Appendix E, overall engagement percentages were seen to have fallen by 9%, starting from 85% in week one to 78% in week six. Live call attendance fluctuated between 69%-79% percent across all observed weeks. It is important to note that few key worker children within the class were invited to an outdoors activity week, and

therefore did not engage in remote learning. This has resulted in the low call engagement percentage observed in week five of the study.

The P7 class did not receive a live call on Fridays as their teacher would be responsible for supporting key worker pupils in the school building. Thus, comparisons can be made to assess the differences in overall engagement in days when live calls are scheduled versus not scheduled during the school day. With the exception of week three, all other observed weeks have demonstrated a decrease in overall engagement. These range from a 12% decrease in week one to a 1% decrease in weeks four and six (See Appendix F). As such, it is evident that the live calls are encouraging student engagement with digital learning and associated task submission.

This notion corresponds with professional observations made by involved practitioners during the enquiry. Participating teachers communicated with students in a number of ways in order to provide individualised support to pupils during the virtual school day. There is a clear correlation between levels of engagement in live calls and work submission as increased work submission averages were identified across all observed weeks (see Appendix E). This is synonymous with students who were willing to engage during the virtual meeting and asked for support when necessary. It was noted that a child's level of engagement in a live call reflected the standards of work produced as a result. This supports the notion that engaged pupils often perform better academically than their less-engaged counterparts (Clerkin & Creaven, 2013).

Conclusion:

This research investigation has provided valuable evidence to suggest that the implementation of live calls help to motivate students to engage in remote learning.

As reiterated by pupils in their response questionnaire, live calls provide sufficient opportunities for children to engage with their teacher and peers in a similar fashion as when present in the school building. It confirmed that students enjoy engaging in live calls and have found this to be a method of; 'staying connected' (Pupil response) during the current climate. It was noted, however, that the children most enjoyed these interactions during a specified timeframe and appreciated that the time spent completing work may be affected if virtual interactions lasted longer than anticipated.

The Excel engagement tracker provided supporting data to evidence an increase in overall class engagement on the days when virtual meetings were scheduled. This was opposed to the day when online teacher presence was not prevalent throughout the school day. A decrease in the amount of work submitted to the online platform was observed as a result of this.

The collaborative working group were satisfied that expected outcomes were met during the process of this professional enquiry. Data presented within this enquiry highlighted that the use of live calls across a range of teaching contexts maximised student motivation and engagement in the P.7 setting. However, it is apparent this was not the case across all stages and the observed successes were heavily dependent upon the age and stage of the children and associated level of teacher and parental support. Given the nature of the study, the above findings cannot be used to generalise the views of all teachers, students or parents with regards to the use of the live calls and online teaching platforms. Such findings have been summarised in context of the small-scale in which the enquiry was carried out in.
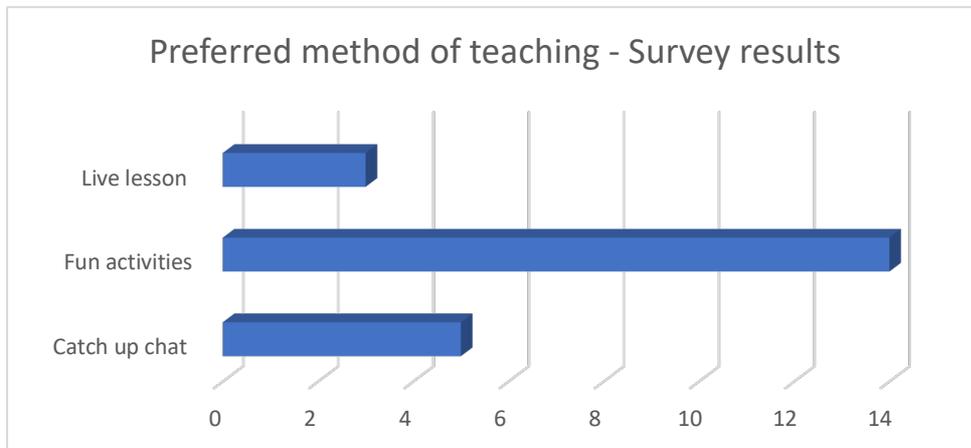
Reflective Account: Practitioner Enquiry

Implications for future practice:

Due to the limited nature of the enquiry, it would be of interest to educators to further assess the impact which live calls had on the rate of resource and work submission during remote learning. Possible challenges which may need to be overcome relate to the compatibility of devices used to engage in the virtual meeting and the predictability of internet connections to sustain attendance in future meetings. Educators must ensure that specific guidance has been given to provide children with the necessary information which allow them to access live video calls with ease. Findings presented in the National Foundation for Educational Research report (Lucas *et al*, 2020) advised that school must engage in extended liaison with families to provide individualised support and training, particularly in the initial stages of remote learning, to ensure that parents or carers understand what is expected of them and their child. Practitioners must work collaboratively with students to create virtual classroom routines which are mutually motivating and engaging. Where possible, it is encouraged to facilitate alternate group and whole class meetings to better familiarise pupils with this format of interaction. This will provide children with opportunities to maximise their confidence when talking aloud with their peers whilst using online platforms. Thus, it will help to improve the quality of interactions observed during live calls, and will ultimately be reflected in the standards of work produced thereafter.
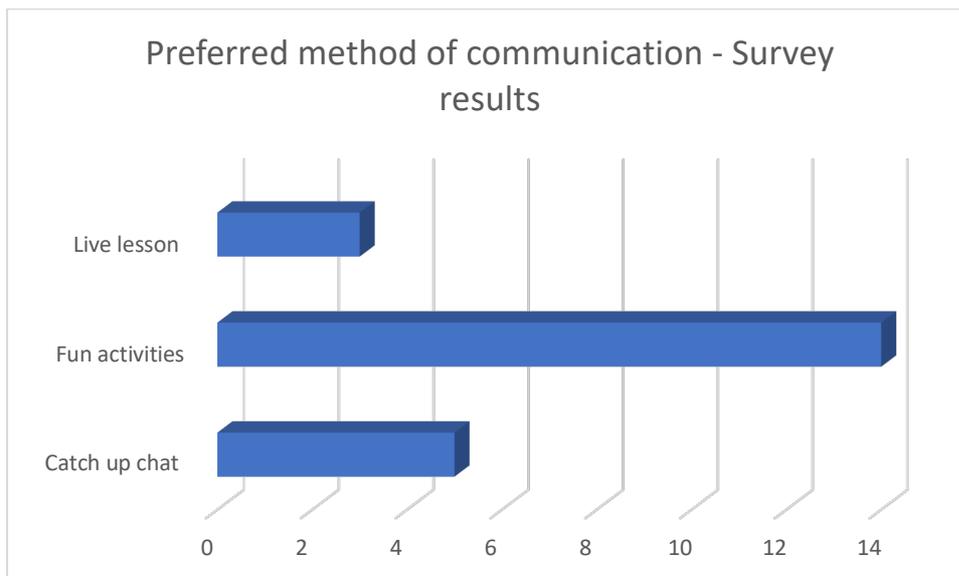
Reflective Account: Practitioner Enquiry

Appendices:

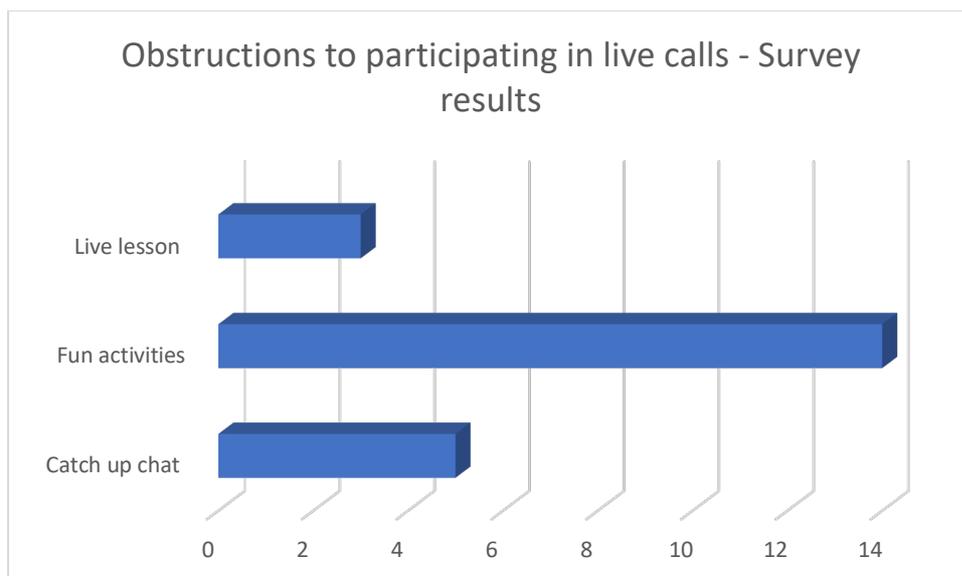**Appendix A – Pupil response survey (Question 1)**

Preferred method of teaching - Survey results

Appendix B – Pupil response survey (Question 3)

Preferred method of communication - Survey results

Appendix C – Pupil response survey (Question 5)

Reflective Account: Practitioner Enquiry

Obstructions to participating in live calls - Survey results

Category	Value
Live lesson	~3
Fun activities	~14
Catch up chat	~5

Appendix D – Pupil response survey (Question 7)

Preferred features during live calls - Survey results

Category	Value
Live lesson	~3
Fun activities	~14
Catch up chat	~5
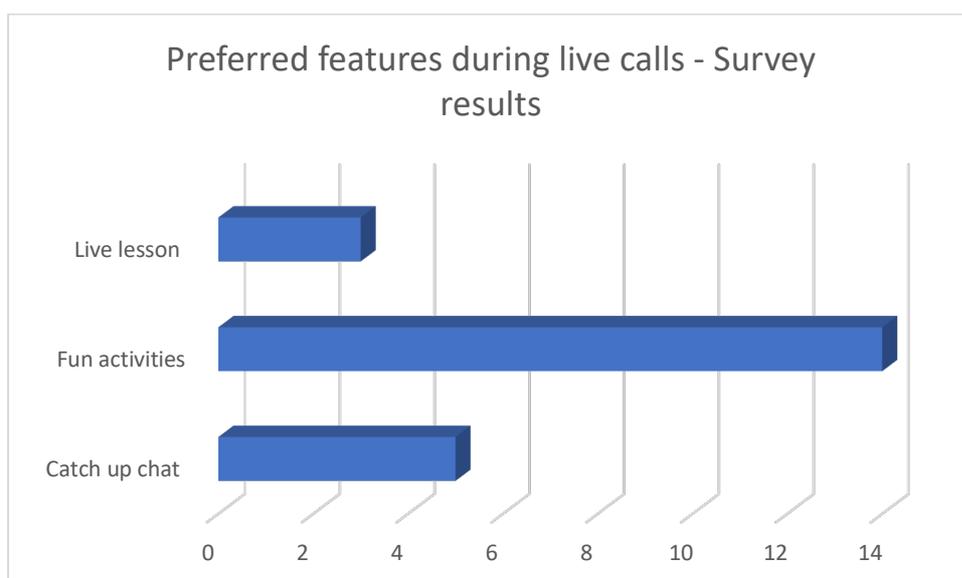
Appendix E – Weekly engagement overview.

Week number:	Daily Activity grid:	Class Call Engagement:	Work Submission:	Overall Class Engagement:
1	87%	79%	88%	85%
2	80%	72%	84%	79%
3	87%	76%	76%	80%
4	84%	69%	92%	82%
5	72%	67%	80%	73%
6	78%	72%	84%	78%

Appendix F – Monday-Friday engagement comparison.

Reflective Account: Practitioner Enquiry

Week number:	Monday Engagement – Live call scheduled.	Friday Engagement – No live call.
1	76%	64%
2	68%	61%
3	62%	63%
4	62%	61%
5	69%	64%
6	63%	62%

Reflective Account: Practitioner Enquiry

Bibliography:

Clerkin, A. and Creaven, A. (2013) [online] *Pupil Engagement. In: E. Eivers and A. Clerkin, ed., National Schools, international contexts: Beyond the PIRLS and TIMSS test results.* Dublin: Educational Research Centre. Available at: https://www.erc.ie/documents/pt2011_ch3.pdf (Accessed: 08/04/2021).

Lathrop, K, A. (2011) [online] *Impact of Student Motivation in Online Learning Activities.* University of Nebraska. Pg. 2. Available at: https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1027&context=agronhortdiss (Accessed: 11/03/2021).

Lucas, M. & Nelson, J. & Sims, D. (2020) [online] *Pupil engagement in remote learning. National Foundation for Educational Research.* Nuffield foundation. Available at: https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4073/schools_responses_to_covid_19_pupil_engagement_in_r emote_learning.pdf (Accessed: 05/04/2021).

North Lanarkshire Council (NLC) (2020) NORTH LANARKSHIRE'S DIGITAL LEARNING AND TEACHING GUIDANCE. Version 3. Pg. 4.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) (2012) [online] *The Standards for Registration: mandatory requirements for Registration with the General Teaching Council for Scotland.* Available at: http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/the-standards/standards-for-registration-1212.pdf (Accessed: 10/03/2021).

The Scottish Government. (2008) [online] *Building the Curriculum 3 – A Framework for Learning and Teaching.* Curriculum for Excellence. Pg. 3. Available at: https://education.gov.scot/media/0cvddrgh/btc3.pdf (Accessed: 09/03/2021).

University of Edinburgh (UoE) (2021) [online] *Student engagement.* Available at: https://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/staff/student-engagement (Accessed: 10/03/2021).