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

Lead Partner: Lincoln College

Contact: Paul Barnes, Lecturer and Advanced Practitioner

Email: pbarnes@lincolncollege.ac.uk

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PROJECT PURPOSE

The purpose of the project was to identify current information and learning technology (ILT) skills among 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.

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 happened. It identified that teaching staff need motivation, training and a robust IT infrastructure as a starting point to modern teaching techniques with web "2.0" 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.

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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 Lincoln College 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", "looking 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 "WiFi being available and constant", "time to develop online material" and "having an IT system that is fit for purpose".

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 College and Boston College, while not actively involved with the project, are keen to look at the findings.

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 was also shown.

CONTINUED...

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

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.

For more information about this project please visit:

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