Case study: the pedagogic mentoring programme — learning to teach on the job

This Outstanding Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (OTLA) project sought to set up sustainable reflective and evaluative practice among early career vocational teachers to improve their own satisfaction and success, as well as that of their students. It was based around a well-defined theoretical model the Pedagogical Mentoring Programme Development Wheel.

At the end of the project, teachers felt that their effectiveness had increased from 69% to 80%. Learners reported greater satisfaction with teaching when practical and theoretical aspects were taught together.

OTLA2 Outstanding teaching and assessment — supported and delivered by the learning consortium

**South West Region**

What was the purpose of the project?

The primacy of vocational expertise over teaching experience or qualifications is evident in vocational departments, but as a result can negatively impact learner experience and achievement, as well as result in high levels of teacher attrition. This project was designed to address this by exploring ways of consolidating and developing early career vocational teachers’ pedagogic practice.

What did the project do?

The project focused on establishing sustainable reflective and evaluative practice among early career vocational teachers that would improve their own satisfaction and success, as well as that of their students, to achieving these aims by:

* identifying 8 early career vocational teachers to take part in the project
* experienced pedagogical mentors supporting the teachers for 3 months, by following a structured scheme of work, which included weekly one-to-one meetings and monthly developmental observations
* providing opportunities for teachers to explore new resources, try out new ideas for teaching, and considering new ways of thinking about learning.

What helped the project succeed?

Being based around a well-defined theoretical model namely the Pedagogical Mentoring Programme Development Wheel was key to success, as was having a clear idea of how the effectiveness of the project would be evaluated, which meant the intervention remained focused on the initial goals.

What challenges did the project face?

The major challenge was finding 6 unqualified vocational teachers to take part. To overcome this the project chose instead to focus on new teachers in vocational areas who had just (within one month) completed the Award in Education and Training (AET).

What difference did the project make?

The project surveyed teachers and students pre- and post-intervention. Pedagogic mentors wrote 8 teacher case studies to provide more detailed information about the process and impact, as well as informing recommendations for future practice. They suggest that focused pedagogic mentoring enhances the classroom practice of early career vocational teachers.

Teachers grew in confidence and took risks with creative and less traditional teaching strategies, which improved their own and their learners’ engagement in learning. **Teachers also felt that their effectiveness had increased at the end of the project (from 69% to 80%).** Learners reported increased satisfaction in 11 out of 12 self-reported categories by the end of the project. The greatest positive changes in their reported satisfaction were in the following categories:

* ‘My teacher has made the subject interesting’
* ‘My teacher is enthusiastic about what they are teaching’
* ‘My teacher is good at explaining things’
* ‘The criteria used in marking have been clearly explained’

Learners reported greater satisfaction with their teaching when practical and theoretical aspects were taught together, rather than in separate sessions.

One area where learners felt their satisfaction had decreased from ‘completely agree’ was ‘assessment arrangements and marking have been fair’. This was possibly as a result of improved project assessment practice and rigour.

Where can I find more information?

You can contact Tony Harris, Education Research Projects Co-ordinator, Cornwall College Camborne,

Email: anthony.harris@cornwall.ac.uk

“I am now confident in all aspects of teaching thanks to the support of my mentor who has shown me a number of ways to improve planning, delivering and assessing my future learners.”

“[The project] provided a safe space to discuss, think, reflect and then to put ideas into action.”

“My practice is now pro-active, not re-active...I have improved relationships with my learners; we now have a positive approach to theory lessons and enjoy them.”

Project participants