

HIGH IMPACT LEARNING

Introduction

This study will use CDN's Virtual College Expo 2021 round table discussion titled '**High Impact Learning**', which took place in June 2021, as the initial focal point of current expert thinking within the college sector in Scotland. Prior discussion identified High Impact Learning as one of four key themes that the sector required to analyse in terms of identifying what if any, changes may be required to form a new perspective on the challenges and opportunities ahead.

In his keynote speech at College Expo 2021, Ollie Bray, Strategic Director, Education Scotland, described great learning as: 'meaningful, actively engaging, socially interactive, iterative and joyful.'

Key points highlighted by High Impact Learning round table panel included:

- Students appreciate the flexibility – of blended learning
- Students want consistency – in approaches to learning, teaching and assessment
- Students value the support and greater opportunities to interact – through online modes

'Modern classroom'

The response to unprecedented disruption owing to the pandemic expedited widespread change across the education sector. Concentrating specifically on FE, does the traditional notion of a 'class' continue to be driven by funding methodology linked to physical attendance on campus – in a room with a lecturer at the front? Calls to 'stop giving students what suits the college estate and timetable',

suggest that engagement is now more important than attendance. What do we do in the time, that is knowledge imparting? How do we know that learning is taking place and not just teaching? What are the key components of the modern classroom, and the wider consequences for FE?

What we know so far:

- Short presentations – less input/instruction (20 mins)
- Active and participatory work – less teaching, more learning
- More time to:
 - to check learning
 - for personalised feedback and formative assessment
 - for pastoral care (relationships)
- Students find this more motivating and encouraging
- Significant value in cultivating an authentic sense of belonging – for all
- Giving all stakeholders a say in how and what they learn (student ownership)
- Students appreciate the flexibility
- Higher level students better placed to self-direct their learning
- Challenges in engaging younger learners at SCQF levels 4 & 5 (what's happening in schools?)



RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

Where is the Modern Classroom being used effectively? How is this being done? Why is it effective, and what are the barriers?

Supporting professional autonomy in local solutions

Many assumptions were made in the transfer to online. One size doesn't fit all – gains for one area are losses for another. Support and advice continues to flood the sector, driven by a desire to 'protect'. Observers note that this leads to confusion, caution and inertia amongst teaching teams, with ultimately, things being 'done to students'.

However, there are examples of lecturers asserting their professional autonomy in the development of innovative local solutions.

What we know so far:

- Add skills, support and *time (*made possible by the Modern Classroom) to enable teaching teams to come together to decide the best approaches for their curricular area – local solutions and reflective practice
- 'Curate learning and teaching into meaningful chunks'
- Holistic learning, teaching and assessment supporting student progress across the whole course rather than (isolated) individual units
- Consistent dialogue about what is being delivered and how by teaching teams (fewer 'lone operators'). Students want consistency
- This must be facilitated and supported by trust – where there has been a long history of mis-trust from management (see discretionary time, contact hours, etc)
- Drill into data indicators – know the students
- Leadership to support what lecturers say is needed – vice principals' fortnightly meetings are progressive and ambitious.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

How are lecturers being supported to be autonomous, collaborating in the development and enactment of local solutions? Why is it effective, and what are the barriers?

Effective pedagogies

What approaches and practices are fundamental to high impact learning, whether pedagogical interaction is online, blended or in-person? Eg retrieval practice, assessment for learning, dual-coding, cognitive load, emotional pedagogy. What is working, where, why and how?

What we know so far:

- New ideas are accepted when they bring tangible improvements for lecturers
- Top-down directives can prompt resistance, work-arounds and short-cuts
- Right strategies for the right purposes. Moving away from core pedagogies and technologies for some groups/contexts
- Masterclasses and personalised contributions from industry and experts who can connect and interact through online platforms
- Meta skills – deliberate development – not collateral side-effect
- Repositioning student participation in the co-creation of contextualised and relevant learning – improves engagement. Andragogy leading to heutagogy – self-directed
- Caution on return to physical attendance – desks in rows? Pedagogical habits
- Equality opportunities for participation through alternative modes – shy and ASN have excelled. Students value the support and greater opportunities to interact.

RESEARCH QUESTION 3:

What approaches and practices are fundamental to high impact learning, irrespective of which method of delivery is being utilised? How is this being done? Why is it effective, and what are the barriers?