

Title

Policy versus practice: Exploring factors which influence progress with ESOL students

Methodology

Individual, semi-structured learner interviews conducted online with learners who had demonstrated issues with attendance, issues with literacy and a history of re-enrolment

Introduction & Context

Current funding methodology and government policy places significant focus on learner retention, pass and achievement rates and progress onto either further study or employment.

However, some learners, especially at the lower end of the learning spectrum, struggle to make enough progress within planned guided learning hours and, as a consequence, get 'stuck' in levels, sometimes for many years, without making the necessary progress needed to stay on-course.

Key Literature

Paton, A. and Wilkins, M. (2009) *Teaching Adult ESOL*, Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education.

Gregson, M. and Nixon, L. (2015) *Readings for Reflective Teaching in Further, Adult and Vocational Education 12.2 Unlocking the potential for improvement in Skills for Life teaching and learning at the local level*, London: Bloomsbury.

Manager's Perspective

£££ - cash is King and so much of a manager's day job is planning provision which is cost effective. This is especially true of colleges which are struggling financially. There is significant tension between meeting the needs of the learners and supporting their development by offering them a course which is fit for purpose and where significant progress can be made.

However, there are ESOL learners, especially at pre-entry, E1 and E2 who are going to struggle to progress in the time which has been planned and this impacts overall achievement rates, thus creating tensions between quality team, senior management, Ofsted and teachers.



Interim Findings and Recommendations

Learners lead often complex lives and curriculum planning needs to reflect the needs of learners with opportunities to delay formal qualification where appropriate by using methods such as RARPA or utilised qualifications

Getting to know learners really helps with individual planning and preparation which can make committing to a course easier and improve learner motivation

Making use of the 'online revolution' brought about by the pandemic can help to support those learners unable to commit to attending classes regularly

Learners need specialised help in finding provision which can best suit their needs (e.g. from an FE college to an ACL provider who has the ability to better plan for slower progress in learning)

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Curriculum Lead

*Learners' Perspective

Some learners have learning difficulties and so find spelling in particular a challenge and sometimes feel embarrassed to participate in class. Some learners have challenging life situations (e.g. single mums) which prevent them from engaging as fully as they would like to. Some learners' priorities are on ensuring a better standard of living which means that work and business interests take them away from learning and lessons and attendance is impacted and can't commit to learning as much as they would like. As a result, progress can be slower than others in class.



*With thanks to learners at West London College, E2 A, Southall