

Research Project Title:

Evaluating the impact of strategies that develop independent learning skills.

Methodology

This project involved students and their Lecturers enrolled on the On-Track Media 2015 course at Hackney Community College. This is a course designed for NEET learners who have missed enrolment or have chosen the wrong course. It runs January to July, 5 days per week, and introduces photography, web design, video production and animation. Developing these skills can become a career path for students or it can become tools to promote themselves in business or self-employment.

Built into the course units is an important link to an annual competition Cut Films where learners respond to a 'Corporate brief'. The competition asks for a 2 minute film to persuade young people not to start smoking. The success of the students on this course in winning 9 awards over the past 2 years due to the creative and professional results which consistently receive national acclaim.

The research project consisted of teaching staff developing teaching and learning activities using resources contained in the Teaching How2 website. This is a licensed product which the college purchased as a tool to aid improvements in teaching standards, and has been extensively promoted within the college.

The research sample for this project consisted of eleven students and **four** Lecturers from the Media Studies area of the college. The cohort profile is shown by gender and racial group below in figures 1 & 2. Figure 3 shows the initial assessment score of the cohort.

After agreeing to participate in the project, staff and students completed consent forms to comply with ethical research practices, a copy of which is shown below.

At the heart of the On-Track Media course is the high expectation of staff on students' achievement through stretch and challenge activities, which are designed to promote independent learning. The standards achieved by those students that successfully become independent learners raise the bar for the others on the course. Peer learning, assessment and evaluation are key to this process, where the responsibility for the work becomes owned and enjoyed by the students.

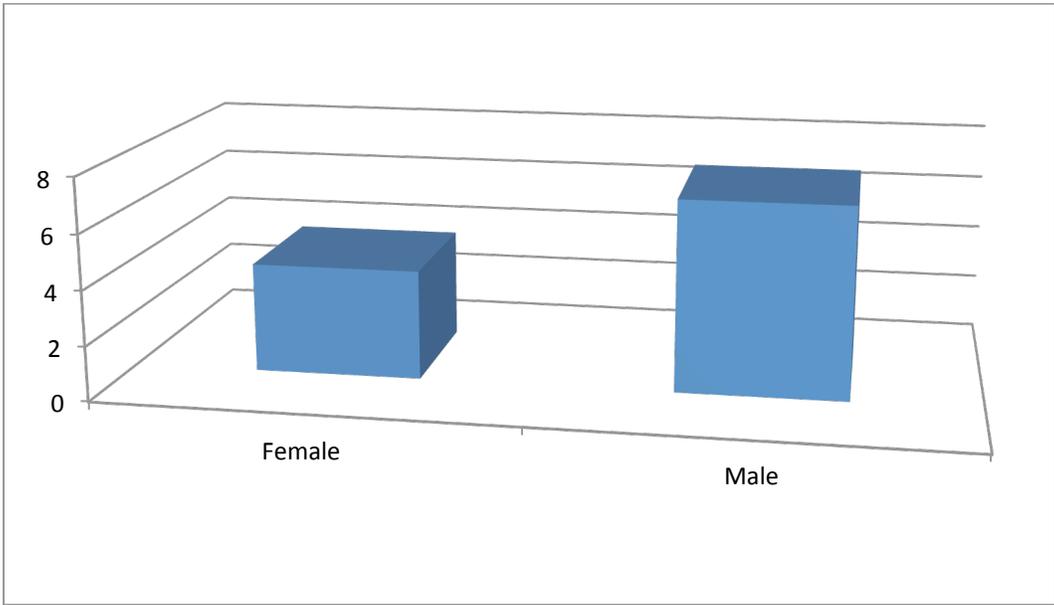


Figure 1 Student cohort by gender

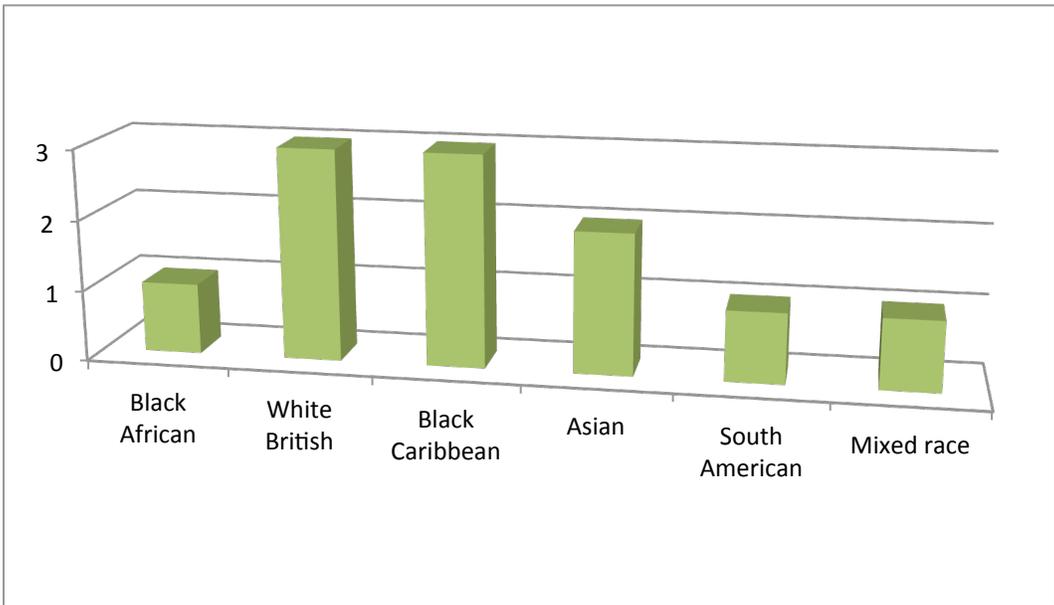


Figure 2 Student cohort by declared race

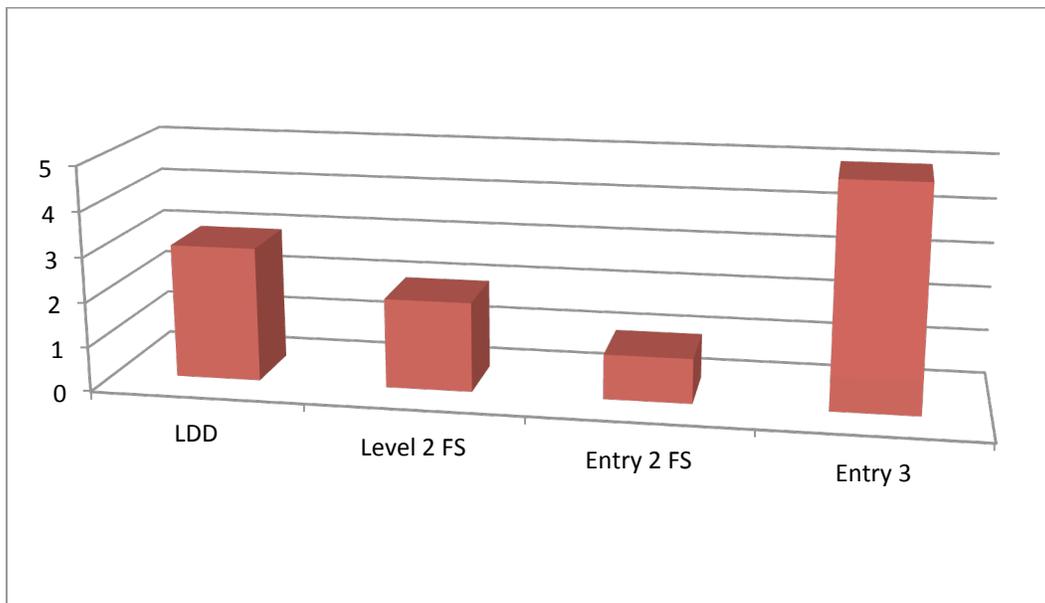


Figure 3 Cohort initial assessment level indicators

The featured work in this film is the students first project; their animation based on the theme 'daydream' . This extended part of the induction project and students worked independently and in teams to complete their work. The animation requires most in terms of independent learning as it requires research into personal themes and commitment to the stop frame process which is complex and requires consistency.

Qualitative data were gathered at the end of the course from the research participants using interviews using a predetermined set of questions, shown below, to determine the success of the teaching and learning strategies. The interviews were recorded as audio files and incorporated into a short animated film, which forms the research findings and report.

The research was affected by some issues with the course timeframe and the students involved in the research. As the course started in January, this delayed the start of the research project and reduced the time available for data collection and analysis. Also due to the nature of the student cohort as NEETs and their approach to learning, problems arose which contributed to produce significant delays in the project.

The course has seen complex issues arising around behaviour; mainly with 3 female students who became hostile in the second week. The fall out of this has seen violent threats made against staff and students. Support and counselling has been offered to one student who it turns out was suffering post-traumatic stress and undiagnosed ADHD. The group eventually have been able to find a comfortable working dynamic and the students have been informed that 5 of their films for the anti-smoking competition have been shortlisted and long listed for the regional and national awards in June.

Action Research Project 2014-15

Research Project Title:

Evaluating the impact of strategies that develop independent learning skills.

Hackney Community College has been awarded a research grant to conduct an Action Research project. You have been asked to take part in this project which is intended to improve an aspect of teaching practice within the college. It is anticipated that your role in the project will be for approximately two months. This needs your voluntary informed consent. Please read the project aims below and details of the research methods to be used. If you agree to participate in this research, please complete and sign the attached research ethical consent form.

The findings of this research will be presented at a national conference and may appear in College News and as academic articles in research journals. Your identity will be protected as all data collected will be anonymised.

Please note: You will be able to withdraw at any time from this project.

Project aims:

This research project focusses on using an on-line teaching resource to foster strategies which encourage learners in the college's Media Department to acquire independent learning skills.

Research methods:

Through exploration of the on-line teaching resource, staff will be encouraged to develop teaching and learning strategies which promote stretch and challenge, in addition to independent learning. The effectiveness of the project will be evaluated on completion, through recorded audio interviews with both students and teachers. The final report will be multimodal in design and as befitting the Media Department, will centre on using an animated film produced by the students. This animation will count as both a part of their coursework and the research report.

The research team consists of:

Project Leader: Dr Urmi Joshi

Lead Researcher: Robert Galvani

Researchers: Gill Bull, Nicola Godlieb

For more information please contact Robert Galvani in room A105, X 7111.

Attachment: Research ethical consent form.



This project has been developed and supported by the Foundation's Practitioner Research Support programme and the East Midlands Centre for Excellence in Teacher Training (emCETT)



Research ethical consent form

Full title of Project: Developing Formative Assessment for Learning in Teaching Practice

Name, position and contact address of Lead Researcher:

Robert Galvani Room A105, tel: X 7111

Please Initial Box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

I agree to take part in the above study.

I am over/under 18 years of age.

Note for researchers:
Include the following statements if appropriate, or delete from your consent form:

I agree to the interview / focus group / lessons being audio recorded

I agree to the interview / focus group / diary/ lessons being video recorded

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Action Research Project

Student audio interview questions

How have they achieved independence in their working process?

How has peer learning shaped their work?

What part does evaluation play?

What is independent learning?

How have the teaching methods used by tutors helped them advance to independent learning?

Action Research Project

Staff audio interview questions

How have you fostered independent learning?

Do students enjoy being a resource for each other? Explain with examples.

How has how2 played a part in your planning and delivery?

What is the most important factor in stretch and challenge?