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# ACTION RESEARCH

Joint Practice Development and Action Research  
across the Further Education and Skills sector



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## — *Intro*

# The Learning and Skills Teacher Apprenticeship



The Level 5 Learning and Skills Teacher Apprenticeship integrates practical experience with academic studies, including the theory surrounding teaching and learning. It is aimed at anyone who currently works in, or plans to work in the Further Education and Skills sector. This can include vocational education, training, coaching and mentoring roles across a variety of industries.

The apprenticeship is designed to develop professional teaching and learning knowledge. It will progress apprentice planning, designing and delivery skills, supporting them to become highly reflective practitioners. Experienced academics with a wealth of employer experience support apprentices to engage with teaching and learning educational theories and practice, helping apprentices to explore how to implement this in practice.

Throughout the programme, apprentices investigate the techniques involved in the design, development, delivery, assessment and evaluation of learning.

## — Intro

# Editor's Note

Welcome to the first Issue of **Action Research**, a collection of Joint Practice Development Research from the Learning and Skills Teacher apprentices here at the University of Sunderland.

Over the course of the 18-month programme, all apprentices are asked to engage in pedagogy-based research, highlighting areas of their practice they wish to further explore. This could be for a number of reasons such as supporting learner development and progression, engaging in continuous professional development (CPD) or putting into practice theory they have explored as part of their university sessions.

It is vital that this is a joint venture between their university tutor and work-based mentor, in order to ensure they fully engage with the research, have the space to explore ideas in both an academic and professional space, and to support and guide apprenticeship development.

Not only is it fulfilling seeing the confidence grow in an apprentice, but their hard work, outputs and research impact is a testament to their hard work, dedication and ongoing interest in their practice and what is best for their learners.

*Reece Sohdi*  
*Programme Leader - LST Apprenticeship*



## What is Joint Practice Development?

Joint Practice Development (JPD) refers to a collaborative process where educators work together to enhance their professional practice in a collaborative approach, developing, testing, and refining teaching strategies and approaches.

Unlike traditional top-down professional development, JPD is a bottom-up, practice-based model that values mutual learning and knowledge exchange among educators. It fosters a culture of trust and shared responsibility, encouraging continuous improvement. Fielding et al. (2005), highlights the importance of this approach in building sustainable professional learning communities, and Cordingley (2015), underscores its effectiveness in supporting deep, context-sensitive improvements in teaching practice.

# What is the Impact of Supporting Apprentices with On-Programme Progression and Timely Completion?

Emily Brady & Dawn Waugh

## Introduction and Background

This research focuses on addressing the challenges faced by healthcare support worker (HCSW) apprentices within the NHS in completing their Care Certificate Programme (CCP) on time. Delays in completing the CCP impact apprentices' ability to progress through their probation period and complete their apprenticeship on schedule. The study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of additional support measures, particularly weekly guided study sessions, in improving timely completion of the CCP and enhancing apprentices' readiness to begin producing evidence for their apprenticeship.

## Literature Review

This research is grounded in Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction (2012), which emphasise structured teaching methods to enhance learning. Key elements include regular reviews, guided practice, and scaffolding. Rosenshine advocates for daily, weekly, and monthly reviews to strengthen learners' retention of material, while scaffolding helps manage cognitive load and gradually promotes learner autonomy. Despite the broad application of these principles, the literature highlights a gap in their direct application to apprenticeship programs. The review suggests that by applying these principles, particularly in a structured and consistent manner, learners' confidence and success rates can be improved.

## Methodology

The study involved implementing weekly 1:1 discussions and guided study sessions over eight weeks with 15 new HCSW apprentices, who varied in age and experience from the North East of England. Data was collected using qualitative methods, including surveys through Microsoft Forms and documented discussions. These discussions tracked apprentices' progress and provided an opportunity for feedback. The qualitative data from these interactions were formally recorded in the learners' e-portfolios, allowing for analysis of patterns and identifying areas for improvement. The methodology aimed to measure the impact of the guided study on learners' ability to complete the CCP and their preparedness for the apprenticeship.

## Analysis of Results

The results revealed significant improvements in the timely completion of the Care Certificate among the apprentices. Timely completion rates increased dramatically, with 93.3% of the cohort meeting the deadline, compared to previous cohorts where completion rates were significantly lower. Weekly guided study sessions and 1:1 discussions were found to be effective in supporting learners, as evidenced by the reduction in concerns and the improvement in readiness to produce apprenticeship evidence. Feedback from learners indicated that the structured support was instrumental in helping them stay on track, manage distractions, and understand the expectations of the apprenticeship program.

## Discussion

The discussion highlights that the intervention was successful in improving both the timely completion of the CCP and the apprentices' preparedness for their subsequent apprenticeship tasks. The structured support provided through guided study sessions and regular reviews was positively received by the majority of learners. However, the study also recognised that not all learners benefited equally; one participant indicated that they did not find the support as effective. The research suggests that while the support was generally beneficial, future cohorts might benefit from a flexible approach that adjusts the level of support based on individual needs as the program progresses.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

The research suggests that weekly guided study sessions should be continued and possibly extended beyond the first 14 weeks of the program, depending on individual learner needs. The intervention successfully addressed the problem of delayed CCP completion and improved apprentices' readiness for their apprenticeship. Future practice should include monitoring the impact of reducing support after the CCP is completed, to ensure that learners continue to progress effectively. The limitations of the study, such as external factors like staff availability and room availability, were noted, but overall, the findings indicate that structured and regular support significantly enhances learner outcomes.

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# Does the Type of Questioning Used Impact Learner Engagement and Participation in a SEN Provision?

Rebecca Charlton & Steve Middlemiss

## Introduction and Background

This research explores the impact of different questioning techniques on learner engagement and participation, specifically within a small group of male students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) aged 17-18 in Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision. The researcher was motivated by the challenges faced in engaging these learners during lessons, leading to an inquiry into whether varying types of questioning could enhance their involvement and learning outcomes.

## Literature Review

Established literature focuses on the importance of inclusive questioning techniques and their role in enhancing learner engagement. Sherrington (2019) emphasises that all learners should be included in teacher-learner dialogues, allowing time for thinking and preventing certain learners from dominating or being overlooked. Research by Bartlett (2015) highlights the significance of providing adequate wait time after posing a question, which improves the fairness of assessment and encourages deeper thinking. The review also explores the work of Conn (2016), who underscores the importance of questioning in giving a voice to learners with autism, thereby fostering an inclusive learning environment. The study draws on these insights to investigate how different questioning strategies, such as cold-calling and the use of physical response tools, can improve engagement in SEN settings.

## Methodology

The study utilised a mixed-methods approach, involving discussions with staff, observations of the learners, learner questionnaires, and reflections from the researcher's own teaching practice. The participants were four male learners with ASD, each displaying different levels of participation and engagement. The research aimed to assess the effectiveness of various questioning techniques, such as cold-calling and the use of physical items like whiteboards, in promoting involvement. The data collected through observations and questionnaires provided qualitative insights into how these techniques influenced behaviour and confidence.

## Analysis of Results

The results indicated a marked improvement in learner engagement and confidence in answering questions. All participants showed increased willingness to participate, with specific gains in the quieter learner who previously refrained from contributing. For example, Learner L, who was initially very quiet, began answering questions in front of the group, showing significant social improvement. Similarly, Learner B and J demonstrated better turn-taking skills, allowing others to contribute. The use of different questioning techniques, such as "Think-Pair-Share" and "Show Me" boards, emerged as particularly effective in sustaining engagement and promoting interaction among learners.

## Discussion

The research confirmed that the type of questioning used can significantly affect learner engagement, especially in SEN contexts. Adapting well-known strategies, like extending wait times and simplifying instructions, proved beneficial for the learners. The findings support existing literature, such as Black & Wiliam's (2009) critique of the Initiation-Response-Evaluation model, suggesting that a more interactive and inclusive approach to questioning is essential in SEN education. The study also highlighted the importance of customising questioning techniques to the specific needs of SEN learners, noting that a one-size-fits-all approach may not be effective.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

The research concludes that diverse questioning techniques should be employed to enhance learner engagement in SEN settings. The study recommends continued exploration of various questioning methods, with a focus on adapting these strategies to meet the needs of individual learners. Future research could benefit from observing questioning techniques in other SEN provisions to gather additional insights. The researcher also notes the challenges of planning and adapting questions for different abilities, emphasising the need for sufficient time and resources to develop effective questioning strategies.

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# Does Digital Technology Enhance Assessment Outcomes in a Work-Based Training Environment?

Nick Mansfield & John McVey

## Introduction and Background

This research investigates the impact of digital technology on pedagogy, specifically within a learning environment involving adult learners in the North East of England. These learners, employed as Customer Service Advisors, range in age from 19 to 60 and possess diverse professional and educational backgrounds. The study was motivated by a need to understand whether the integration of digital tools in training could enhance learning outcomes and pedagogy. The primary research question explored whether digital technology benefits learners and how it influences their engagement and assessment performance.

## Literature Review

Compton (2021) highlights that a lack of self-efficacy in technology use is common among both teachers and learners. He advocates for a mindset that embraces exploration and experimentation in digital learning environments. Knill (2007) reflects on the historical use of technology in classrooms, noting that when used moderately, technology can enhance memory retention and make lessons more memorable. Conversely, Mathers (2023) discusses the growing trend of banning mobile phones in classrooms, as seen in countries like Finland, France, and China, due to their distracting nature. The UK government's recent initiative to restrict mobile phone use in schools aligns with these findings (DfE, 2024).

## Methodology

The research involved a comparative analysis of training outcomes from courses conducted between 2020 and 2023. For the years 2020-2022, courses were delivered with minimal technology, following standard guidelines. In contrast, in 2023, digital tools such as Plickers, Microsoft Forms, and personal laptops were incorporated into the curriculum. Formative assessments were used to gauge learners' acceptance of technology, while summative assessments measured the impact on resit rates. The sample included two randomly selected intakes from each year, allowing for a consistent comparison across different time periods.

## Analysis of Results

The results indicate a significant reduction in the average number of summative exam resits from 15-20% in 2020-2022 to just 1% in 2023, following the introduction of digital technology. This suggests that the integration of digital tools not only improved learning outcomes but also facilitated a quicker uptake of the material. The technology implemented was chosen for its simplicity and alignment with tools learners were already familiar with, such as mobile phones and online forms. These findings support the hypothesis that digital technology enhances pedagogy by making learning more engaging and effective.

## Discussion

The reduction in resit rates suggests that digital technology can significantly enhance the learning process by improving memory retention and engagement. The findings align with Knill's (2007) assertion that technology, when used appropriately, can have a lasting impact on learners. However, the research also acknowledges the potential drawbacks of over-reliance on technology, as highlighted by the negative perception of certain digital tools like mobile phones. The research advocates for a balanced approach to integrating technology into pedagogy, emphasising the need to differentiate between tools that enhance learning and those that detract from it.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

This research concludes that while digital technology has clear benefits in enhancing pedagogy, it must be integrated thoughtfully to avoid over-reliance and disengagement. Future preparations should focus on diversifying digital tools to cater to a wide range of learners and ensuring that technology is used to complement, rather than replace, traditional teaching methods. The positive impact of technology on learning outcomes in suggests that continued innovation in this area could further enhance the effectiveness of educational programs, especially in adult learning environments.

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# Do Digital Inequalities Impact Low Socio-Economic Learners and Progression in Alternative Education?

Jean Metcalfe & Chrissie Watson

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## Introduction and Background

This study investigates the impact of digital inequalities on learners and their progression within a training organisation based in the North East of England. The organisation primarily serves learners from low-income families who often start at lower educational levels. A growing concern has been the increasing number of learners who lack access to computers and rely heavily on mobile phones, often without sufficient data. The study seeks to understand how these digital inequalities affect learners' academic progress and overall wellbeing, and to explore potential solutions to support them.

## Literature Review

Cicconi (2014) discusses the use of technology in fostering a culture of social learning, while Gravells (2017) addresses the digital divide—the gap between those with access to IT and the internet and those without. Joshua (2021) expands on this by noting that digital inequalities encompass not only the lack of technology but also poor internet access, which is often linked to low income. The literature suggests that while technology can enhance learning experiences, the lack of access can exacerbate educational disparities, particularly in low-income regions like the North East of England.

## Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection. The researcher conducted surveys with Level 1 and Level 2 Health and Social Care and Childcare learners to assess their access to technology and how it affects their learning. Additionally, discussions were held with colleagues, including the IT manager and the CEO of the organisation to gain insights into the broader issue of digital inequalities in the North East and potential strategies for mitigating these challenges within the organisation.

## Analysis of Results

The results revealed that while all learners had access to the internet at home, their reliance on different types of technology varied. Those with access to laptops were more comfortable submitting work digitally, while learners who only had mobile phones struggled with online platforms, particularly in progressing to higher levels of education. All learners acknowledged the importance of technology for their wellbeing, yet the reliance on mobile data in an unreliable Wi-Fi environment posed significant challenges.

## Discussion

The findings underscore the critical role of digital access in educational attainment, particularly in regions with high levels of deprivation. The research aligns with the existing literature, confirming that digital inequalities can hinder academic progress and exacerbate social inequalities. The study also highlights the limitations of current technological provisions within the organisation, such as unreliable Wi-Fi and inadequate IT resources, which further disadvantage learners who rely solely on mobile phones.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

The research recommends addressing digital inequalities by improving the organisation's IT infrastructure, including reliable Wi-Fi and access to computers. There is also a need for more comprehensive support systems, such as providing loan laptops and mobile data to learners on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, capturing detailed information about learners' digital access during enrolment can help tailor support to individual needs. Finally, the study suggests that while technology is crucial for educational progress, over-reliance on it without addressing digital access disparities could further marginalise already disadvantaged learners. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of digital inequalities on learner progression and mental health.

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# What is the Impact of Embedding the SDGs to Foster Independence for SEN Learners in Food Technology?

Lisa Richardson & Briony Thompson

## Introduction and Background

This study aims to explore how teaching learners to cook on a budget can contribute to sustainability goals and enhance their preparation for adulthood. Conducted within a SEN provision on preparation for adulthood, this research addresses critical questions about food education, such as whether learners need to buy expensive food to prepare tasty meals, and how they can make multiple meals from a selection of ingredients. The broader context of the study involves understanding the environmental impact of food choices, including the benefits of buying British produce and reducing meat consumption. The project is rooted in the idea that by educating learners on sustainable cooking practices, they can pass this knowledge on to future generations, thereby contributing to long-term sustainability goals.

## Literature Review

Rosenshine's Principles in Action (Sherrington, 2019) emphasise the value of reviewing and evaluating academic performance to enhance understanding and critical thinking. The World Commission on Economic Development (1987) defines environmental sustainability as meeting present needs without compromising the future generation's ability to meet their needs, a concept central to this study. Additionally, William (2017) discusses the empowerment that comes from involving learners in decisions about their education, which aligns with the study's approach to teaching sustainable practices. The research also considers UNESCO's framework (2023) for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which focuses on transforming learning environments and building educator capacities to foster sustainability.

## Methodology

The study utilises a combination of practical lessons, surveys, and community involvement to assess the effectiveness of teaching sustainable cooking on a budget. The methodology includes:

- Learners are provided with a selection of ingredients and are tasked with creating meals within a budget. These lessons emphasise the importance of buying locally, purchasing only what is needed, and batch cooking for future meals. A questionnaire was administered to gauge learners' baseline knowledge about food technology, budgeting, and sustainability. Questions focused on whether learners participated in food technology lessons,

knew where their ingredients came from, understood budgeting, and were familiar with the concept of sustainability.

- The project involves engaging the broader community, including creating warm spaces and fostering a collaborative environment where sustainability is practiced and promoted.

## Analysis of Results

The survey results revealed a significant gap in learners' knowledge of food technology and sustainability. For instance, out of all 63 learners who participated in food technology lessons, only 25 (39.6%) understood what sustainability meant. The practical lessons demonstrated that while learners could create meals on a budget, their understanding of how these practices contributed to broader sustainability goals was limited. However, there was a noticeable improvement in their knowledge and skills as they engaged more with the lessons and community activities.

## Discussion

The findings suggest that while learners can be taught to cook on a budget, their understanding of sustainability requires further development. The study confirms the importance of integrating sustainability into the educational curriculum, as emphasised by the literature. The initial lack of knowledge among learners underscores the need for more comprehensive food education that not only teaches practical skills but also instils an understanding of the environmental impact of their choices. The research also highlights the potential of community involvement in reinforcing sustainable practices.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

The study recommends expanding the curriculum to include more comprehensive lessons on sustainable cooking and budgeting. Educators should focus on connecting practical cooking skills with broader sustainability goals, helping learners understand the environmental implications of their food choices. Additionally, involving the community in sustainability initiatives can reinforce these lessons and provide learners with real-world applications of what they learn in the classroom. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of such educational programs on learners' behaviours and attitudes towards sustainability.

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# Would Mandatory Psychological Safety Training Impact Workplace Communication and Wellbeing?

Claire Robinson & Lou Aisbitt

## Introduction and Background

This study explores the potential benefits of integrating Psychological Safety training as a mandatory component of employee induction within an NHS trust. Currently, such training is optional, offered only upon request or as part of leadership development. Feedback from these sessions has suggested that making Psychological Safety training compulsory could significantly enhance communication among staff, reduce incidents of bullying, and decrease grievances. The research aims to investigate whether this integration could foster a safer, more respectful workplace culture.

## Literature Review

The theoretical foundation of this study is built on Edmondson's concept of Psychological Safety (year), which emphasises the importance of a workplace culture where employees feel secure in expressing ideas and taking risks without fear of negative consequences. This environment is linked to higher levels of employee engagement, innovation, and collaboration. Additionally, the study draws on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), particularly the need for love and belonging, which supports the notion that employees who feel safe and valued are more productive. The Blackfoot Values (year), focusing on spirituality, respect, and community, also inform the study, highlighting the importance of creating a respectful and inclusive workplace environment.

## Methodology

The research involved proposing implementing mandatory Psychological Safety training during the employee induction process, followed by an assessment of its impact on workplace culture. To achieve this, pre- and post-training surveys were conducted to measure changes in participants' attitudes and understanding of Psychological Safety in training sessions. Initially, participants expressed scepticism, but post-training feedback indicated a significant shift towards recognizing the importance of Psychological Safety in their roles. The methodology focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the training in increasing awareness, reducing scepticism, and fostering a safer, more collaborative work environment.

## Analysis of Results

The results of this pilot study showed a significant shift in participants' understanding of Psychological Safety before and after the training sessions. Initially, many were skeptical, questioning the relevance and impact of the training. However, post-session evaluations revealed a positive change in perception, with participants recognising the value of Psychological Safety and its relevance to their roles. This shift suggests that the training effectively increased awareness and understanding, highlighting its potential impact on workplace culture.

## Discussion

The results highlight the importance of mandatory Psychological Safety training in creating a safer, more productive work environment. The training has the potential to enhance motivation, trust, and innovation among staff, fostering a culture of openness and collaboration. However, challenges such as time constraints, resource availability, and possible resistance from staff were noted. Despite these challenges, the hypothesis suggests that integrating Psychological Safety into the induction process aligns with the organisation's values and could significantly improve team dynamics and overall workplace culture.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the initial findings, it is recommended that Psychological Safety training be incorporated as a standard part of the induction process for all new employees. This could be extended to refresher courses for existing staff to maintain a consistent culture of safety and respect. The study concludes that mandatory Psychological Safety training has the potential to significantly improve workplace dynamics, leading to a reduction in bullying and grievances, and fostering a more cohesive and collaborative team environment.

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# Does the Integration of Structured Retrieval Practice Improve Apprenticeship EPA Grades?

Tasha Scorer & Maxine Bennett

## Introduction & Background

The research aimed to address the issue of learners not effectively retaining information throughout an apprenticeship program, which impacted their performance during End Point Assessments (EPA). Noticing the lack of structured revision opportunities, the study introduced a revision session towards the end of the programme. The hypothesis posited that this additional session would enhance learners' ability to recall past information, ultimately improving Distinction grades within the cohort.

## Literature Review

The study was grounded in theories such as Ebbinghaus' Forgetting Curve (1964), which suggests that memory of newly learned knowledge decreases significantly unless the information is actively reviewed. Research by Murre and Dros (2015) supports this, showing that retrieval practices can reinforce memory retention. Additionally, Jones (2019) argues that retrieval practice strengthens memory, making it easier to access in the future. These insights provided the foundation for the research, which aimed to test whether a single revision session could effectively improve learners' recall and EPA performance.

## Methodology

The research involved two cohorts of Business Administration Level 3 apprentices. Cohort 1, composed of internal learners already employed in substantive roles, received an additional revision session. Cohort 2, consisting of external learners new to the Trust, did not receive the extra session. Data was collected through both qualitative testimonies and quantitative EPA results from both groups. The study compared the outcomes to assess the impact of the additional revision session on information retention and overall performance.

## Analysis of Results

The analysis showed that Cohort 1, which received the additional revision session, had more consistent high scores, with multiple Distinction results. However, the comparison with Cohort 2, which did not receive the revision session, revealed mixed outcomes. While Cohort 2 also achieved Distinctions, their scores varied more widely, suggesting that while the additional session may have been beneficial, other factors such as prior experience and cohort composition may have influenced the results.

## Discussion

The preliminary findings suggest that additional revision sessions positively impact learners' performance, particularly in reinforcing information recall. However, the study also highlighted limitations, such as differences in prior experience and the varied backgrounds of the two cohorts, which may have affected the results. These factors suggest that while revision sessions are beneficial, a more consistent application of retrieval practices throughout the program might yield better overall outcomes. Additionally, the study indicated that more research is needed to address these variables effectively.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

The research successfully demonstrated the potential benefits of incorporating revision sessions into the apprenticeship program. However, it also identified the need for more frequent retrieval practice sessions throughout the program to combat the forgetting curve more effectively. Future studies should consider using cohorts with similar backgrounds to reduce variability in results. It is recommended that the program design be adjusted to include regular topic reviews and practice exams to further enhance information retention and improve EPA outcomes.

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# How Does the Integration of Gamified Target Setting Impact the Outcome and Motivation of SEND Learners?

Lee Shillito & Chrissie Watson

## Introduction & Background

This study explores the impact of integrating gamification into the target-setting process on the achievement rates of learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The research was motivated by the need to enhance motivation and success rates among SEND learners, who often struggle with conventional educational approaches. The hypothesis driving this research is that incorporating a reward-based system into the target-setting process could significantly improve the learners' engagement and overall success in meeting their educational goals.

## Literature Review

Locke and Latham's (2002) goal-setting theory emphasise the importance of setting specific, challenging goals to improve performance. In the context of SEND learners, the literature suggests that traditional goal-setting methods may not be sufficient to maintain engagement and motivation. Deci et al. (2001) further differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with the latter often driven by external rewards. Additionally, the literature discusses the effectiveness of SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely) targets in educational settings, which this study integrates into its methodology.

## Methodology

The research employs a mixed-methods approach, focusing on three SEND learners selected randomly from a larger cohort. The study was conducted over 16 weeks, divided into two phases:

- Phase 1 (Initial 8 Weeks): Learners were given generic educational targets without any associated rewards. Their progress was monitored weekly.
- Phase 2 (Second 8 Weeks): After resetting the targets, a gamified, reward-based system was introduced. Rewards were tailored to the individual interests of the learners, such as rewards linked to "Squid Game" for a learner with autism, makeup for a learner with Global Learning Delay (GLD), and McDonald's for a learner with ADHD. Their performance was again monitored weekly.

This methodology allowed for a direct comparison between the outcomes of non-gamified and gamified target-setting processes.

## Analysis of Results

The results from the study indicated a clear difference in learner engagement and achievement between the two phases. In the first phase, where no rewards were introduced, only one of the three learners successfully met their targets by the end of the eight-week period. This outcome suggested that traditional target-setting methods were not fully effective in this context.

In the second phase, the introduction of gamification and rewards initially led to similar outcomes; however, by the end of the eight weeks, all three learners had met their targets. Despite the positive results, the study also noted that the improvement in learner outcomes was closely tied to the use of well-crafted, SMART targets, suggesting that the structure and clarity of the goals themselves played a critical role in the learners' success.

## Discussion

The findings from this study align with existing research on the importance of motivation in educational achievement, particularly among SEND learners. The success of the gamified approach suggests that extrinsic rewards can serve as powerful motivators when integrated into the educational process. However, the study also underscores the importance of setting clear and attainable goals. While gamification provided a short-term boost in engagement, the sustained success of the learners appeared to be closely linked to the effective implementation of SMART targets. This dual focus on motivation and structured goal-setting may offer a more comprehensive approach to supporting SEND learners in achieving their educational goals.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that educational institutions consider incorporating gamified elements into the target-setting process for SEND learners. This approach could be particularly beneficial in contexts where traditional methods have failed to fully engage learners. However, it is equally important to ensure that the targets set for learners are SMART, as this framework appears to be crucial in maintaining long-term success. Future research should explore the sustainability of gamification over longer periods and in different educational settings to determine its broader applicability. Additionally, investigating the balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in educational contexts could provide further insights into optimising learner engagement and achievement.

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# Does the Use of All Response Systems Improve Apprentice Interaction and Participation?

Jess Waugh & Maxine Bennett

## Introduction & Background

This study investigates the issue of low interaction and participation among learners in formative and summative assessments. The central problem identified was the reluctance of apprentices to engage in traditional question-and-answer sessions, leading to decreased participation and confidence. The research aimed to determine whether the use of an all student response system, specifically Mentimeter, could enhance apprentice interaction, increase confidence, and improve memory retrieval during assessments.

## Literature Review

The study builds on previous research by Musliha (2020) and Heaslip (2014). Musliha's work highlighted that traditional question-and-answer methods often result in learners being hesitant to respond due to fear of making mistakes. The implementation of tools like Mentimeter was shown to help learners overcome this fear and actively participate. Heaslip's research further supports the notion that all student response systems can significantly increase engagement and participation in classroom settings. These studies provided a strong foundation for exploring the effectiveness of Mentimeter in improving learner outcomes.

## Methodology

The research involved two cohorts of Customer Service Practitioner Level 2 apprentices. Cohort 1, consisting of eight apprentices aged 17 to 56, began in October 2023, while Cohort 2, composed of seven apprentice aged 17 to 22, started in March 2024. Teaching sessions were divided into two halves: the first half employed traditional verbal questioning, and the second half used Mentimeter to facilitate responses. Data was collected through anonymous surveys via Microsoft Forms, learner testimonies, and observations. This mixed-method approach aimed to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights into the learners' experiences and preferences.

## Analysis of Results

The analysis revealed that 93.33% of apprentices felt more confident when using Mentimeter, and 100% reported increased engagement during teaching sessions. The data showed a clear preference for Mentimeter, with 14 out of 15 learners favouring it over traditional verbal questioning. Notably, learners who were typically quiet and less likely to participate in verbal questioning were more engaged and felt included when using Mentimeter. These findings suggest that the introduction of Mentimeter significantly enhanced both confidence and participation among the apprentices.

## Discussion

The discussion highlights the effectiveness of Mentimeter in addressing the initial problem of low interaction and participation. The increased confidence and engagement observed among apprentices support the hypothesis that all student response systems can positively impact learner outcomes. However, the study also recognised limitations, including the varied age range of participants and the fact that not all apprentices preferred Mentimeter. These limitations suggest that while Mentimeter is effective, a mixed approach combining both Mentimeter and traditional verbal questioning might be more inclusive and beneficial for diverse learner groups.

## Recommendations and Conclusion

The research concluded that the use of Mentimeter was successful in increasing apprentice confidence and engagement. However, due to the preferences of a small minority of learners for traditional questioning methods, it is recommended that educators adopt a blended approach, incorporating both Mentimeter and verbal questioning to cater to different learning styles. This approach would ensure that all learners have the opportunity to participate in a manner that suits them best, thereby maximizing overall engagement and improving learning outcomes.

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Sunderland**