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# FURTHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS: PROFESSIONAL FORMATION & SUMMER CONFERENCE



## FES

Further Education  
and Skills

# FES PROFESSIONAL FORMATION & SUMMER CONFERENCE

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2025

9:30 – 3pm, Sir Tom Cowie Campus

Tom Cowie Lecture Theatre



# FES

Further Education  
and Skills

## Registration

9:00 am

-

9:30 am

## Session 1

### Welcome to the Conference

Andrew Buglass & FES Team

9:30 am

-

9:40 am

## Session 2

### MA

Charlotte Feather

9:40 am

-

10 am

## Session 3

### QTLS

Andrea Brown

10 am

-

10:30 am

## Coffee Break

10:30 am

-

10:50 am

## Session 4

### Career Resilience

Laura Bell

10:50 am

-

11:15 am

## Session 5

### Sharing JPD Action Research Projects

TCLT, RV113, RV304, RV404, RV416

11:20 am

-

12:15 pm

## Lunch

12:15 pm

-

1 pm

## Session 5

### Breakout Sessions

1 pm

1:45 pm

1:40 pm

2:25 pm

## Tutor Groups

Group A, Group B + DSFC, LST

2:30 pm

## Breakout Session 1 (Reg Vardy 404)

Lisa Cryer

*Are you a teacher? Or maybe you're a trainer?  
Facilitator? Demonstrator? Let's find out!*

## Breakout Session 2 (Reg Vardy 416)

Dr Garry Nicholson

*Wonderstanding and Blunderstanding: Unlocking  
Creative Thinking*

## Breakout Session 3 (Reg Vardy 113)

Martin Scott

Be the Expert in the Room:  
Your Mastery Journey

## Breakout Session 4 [1:45pm - 2:25pm only] (Reg Vardy 304):

Dr Kate Duffy

*Relational Pedagogy - Teacher Identity, Relationships &  
Judgements*

### **Charlotte Feather (she/her)**

Charlotte is a Lecturer in Professional Development and International Education. She is the Programme Leader for MA SEND & Inclusion and Deputy Programme Leader for MA Education and MA International Education. Her teaching and research interests centre on social justice in education, critical pedagogy, and the professional identities of educators. Working across the Level 7 provision, she teaches on a range of core and optional modules, both on-campus and via distance learning. Charlotte is an active advocate for LGBTQ+ inclusion in education and is Chair of the University's Pride Staff Network.

#### Session Outline

This session offers an overview of the MA Education, MA SEND & Inclusion, and MA International Education programmes at the University of Sunderland. It will outline each programme's structure, key modules, and specialist focus areas, highlighting how they support professional development and career progression in diverse educational contexts. Attendees will gain insight into entry requirements, assessment approaches, and the flexible delivery options available, with time for questions. Whether you're aiming to deepen your practice, specialise a specific area, or explore education globally, this session will help you choose the right pathway for your goals.

### **Laura Bell (she/her)**

Laura is currently a Career Development Consultant in the Centre for Graduate Prospects. In her previous role as STEMM Outreach Officer, she was part of the University's Widening Access and Participation Team promoting pathways to higher education to primary and secondary pupils. Prior to joining the University of Sunderland, Laura worked at the University of East Anglia (UEA) in their outreach team and careers service. Laura supported students to access placements and internships and generated new opportunities via business engagement. She also has experience working on youth development projects enabling unemployed young people to access jobs, training, and further education.

#### Session Outline

In this session we will define what career resilience is and consider what can impact our resilience in the workplace. We will then look at strategies to improve our resilience with the support available both at university and after graduation.

### **Lisa Cryer (she/her)**

Lisa Cryer started her graduate career as a research scientist before being placed in a local school as a 'Researcher in Residence'. She realised that the classroom was where she wanted to be and retrained in secondary Science at the University of Sunderland. After teaching in Gateshead for several years and heading up BTEC, another career change led to self-employment and starting two businesses, one in wellbeing, the other as a children's author, alongside being an Academic Tutor for the university, facilitating for the Social Enterprise Academy and working for the exam board Pearson. She has a passion for supporting the next generation of teachers as well as the next generation of learners.

#### Session Outline

Do you see yourself as teacher? A coach? A facilitator?

In this session we'll dive into what all the different titles mean to us and how the interactions between teachers and learners (and lack of!) can support you on your journey into education.

### **Dr Kate Duffy (she/her)**

I joined the university 16 years ago after spending 12 years in further and alternative education and in workforce development for the Early Years profession. My areas of special interest are ethical and moral practice, relational pedagogies, inquiry-based learning and autoethnographic methodologies. I am currently Executive Director of the International Relational Centred Education Network (RCEN).

#### Session Outline

In this interactive session, we will critically explore the pedagogical principles of the 'Manifesto for a Relational Pedagogy'. The approach aims to challenge the widely held assumption that competition = growth and provide a counterbalance to the narrow and techno-rational view of 'success' in UK education system. Together we will discuss what this would mean for your organisations, your practice, your learners and for your identity as a teacher.

### **Martin Scott (he/him)**

I am a Senior Lecturer and full time Programme Leader in the FES team in the School of Education. I joined the University in 2019 following 18 years working in local Further Education (FE) colleges. I've held many roles during this time in a wide variety of contexts ranging from teaching, support and management, in 14-16 education, maths and engineering related subjects. My final role in FE was Head of Maths having previously occupied roles such Advanced Practitioner (in Engineering), Teaching and Learning Coach and Curriculum Manager for the Engagement Team

#### Session Outline

This professional development session explores mastery learning for trainees, covering foundational concepts, pedagogical approaches, and subject-specific expertise development. Trainees will examine growth mindset principles and practical strategies for deepening learner understanding. Essential for developing high expectations, rigorous teaching practices, and becoming the subject expert who transforms learner achievement through evidence-based mastery approaches.

### **Dr Garry Nicholson (he/him)**

I am a Curriculum Manager for Newcastle City Council's Adult Learning Service, where I oversee the creative arts provision. In addition, I am an academic tutor within the Faculty of Education and Society at the University of Sunderland. My background includes teaching in both the UK and the Middle East. My PhD research explored educators' practical wisdom and the philosophical concept of Bildung (self-formation). I am also a board member of both the Global Network for Folk High School Research and the European Society for Research in Adult Development.

#### Session Outline

This workshop explores simple, playful activities designed to spark and develop creative thinking. In a world where knowledge is constantly shifting, how we learn is more important than what we learn – and the ability to think creatively is more vital than ever. Through a series of slightly random but proven tasks, participants will experience ways to think differently, challenge assumptions, and have hopefully have fun doing it. There are no right or wrong answers – just opportunities to imagine, explore and wonder. With activities suitable for a wide range of ages and settings, this session is for anyone who's ever wondered whether they'd rather fight a shark or a bear, or simply wants to build confidence in creative thinking.



The following is a collection of Joint Practice Development Research from PGCE FES trainees here at the University of Sunderland.

Over the course of the year long programme, all trainees 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 placement-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 a trainee, 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.

**Andrew Buglass** - Associate Head of School: Secondary and Further Education

**Martin Scott** - Programme Leader

**Andrea Brown** - Senior Lecturer

**Reece Sohdi** - Lecturer



## 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.

<b>Identify focus</b>	Collaboratively select a shared issue or area of practice needing development or improvement.
<b>Co-plan</b>	Jointly design the research approach, clarify roles, methods, and success criteria.
<b>Data collection</b>	Collect qualitative and quantitative evidence through observations, interviews, surveys, focus groups
<b>Reflection</b>	Analyse data together to identify patterns, successes, and areas for further development.
<b>Implement changes</b>	Apply agreed-upon changes or innovations in practice collaboratively.
<b>Evaluate learning</b>	Monitor outcomes to assess impact on teaching, learning, or other targeted areas.
<b>Share learning</b>	Disseminate findings for broader professional development.
<b>Iterate</b>	Cycle back to refine focus or tackle new challenges based on insights gained.



# INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES: SUPPORTING DIVERSE LEARNERS

## **Astora Thompson - LGBTQIA+ Treatment and representation within education**

My intention is to develop my abilities in handling LGBTQIA+ students and being able to properly support them when it comes to situations which may arise correlating around bullying or targeted harassment. The methods of discovering this would mostly come from discussion with Diversity, equity and inclusion support leads at my placement as well as connections I have access too from other formal places of further education and with this information I hope to having a stronger understanding of how students can feel vulnerable and what may assist them with focusing on learning while also feeling safe to be themselves.

## **Brad Hodgson - To examine the disparity in numbers between male and female students in A-level Sociology the extent to which this may (or may not) be having an effect on their engagement with the subject and thus attainment, and potential interventions to address these issues.**

This action research explored the underrepresentation and academic disengagement of male students in A-level Sociology at a North East sixth form. Using a mixed-methods approach, I investigated how gendered subject perceptions and early socialisation influence engagement. Weekly literacy interventions, interviews, and focus groups revealed that male students benefited from targeted academic support and more inclusive classroom environments. Findings suggest that tailored interventions can improve performance and motivation. Although limited by sample size, the study offers insights into addressing gender imbalances in Sociology and recommends structured academic support and improved subject promotion to enhance male engagement in Humanities subjects.

## **Caroline Parkinson - An investigation into how SEND learners are supported in the Further Education sector and beyond**

This research investigates whether SEND learners in Further Education (FE) are receiving effective support. A literature review revealed that over 84,000 young people aged 16–25 had Education, Health and Care Plans in 2018, with most aged 16–19. Despite this, findings suggest that government funding falls short of meeting the sector's needs. Drawing on personal experience in a SEND college, the study uses qualitative methods, including structured interviews and questionnaires with SEND professionals, to explore current support and funding practices. The aim is to identify gaps and inform improvements in provision for post-16 SEND learners in FE settings.

## **Elissa Earl & Chloe Whiteley - How can I adapt my mentoring/revision sessions and resources to have a positive impact on the engagement and attainment of neurodiverse students?**

This research explores how to better support neurodiverse students by examining their preferences for classroom resources. Recognising the teacher's responsibility to meet all learners' needs, the study used questionnaires and feedback forms to gather student opinions on lesson slide colours, fonts, and worksheet design. By comparing responses from neurodiverse and neurotypical students, the research aimed to identify which visual elements aid learning and comfort. Findings will inform more inclusive resource development, enhancing engagement and accessibility. The outcomes will not only improve the researcher's own practice but also provide valuable feedback to the wider teaching team for future adaptation.

# INCLUSIVE PEDAGOGIES: SUPPORTING DIVERSE LEARNERS

## **July Humphrey - Designing a More Inclusive Learning Environment for Neurodivergent Students in UK Further Education Colleges**

This research aims to create a more inclusive learning environment in UK Further Education Colleges (FECs) that supports both neurodivergent and neurotypical students. It explores the challenges neurodivergent learners face—such as sensory overload and executive functioning difficulties—and evaluates current inclusive practices. Despite the SEND Code of Practice mandating reasonable adjustments, implementation is inconsistent across institutions. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study gathers data through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations, analysed via both statistical and thematic methods. Findings will inform practical recommendations for improving accessibility, engagement, and academic success through more consistent and effective inclusive strategies in FE settings.

## **Lindsey Cawthorne - How can I support EAL (English as an additional Language) learners?**

This research focuses on improving communication and inclusion for ESOL and EAL students in the classroom. Motivated by a desire to support multilingual learners more effectively, the study explores the challenges these students face, including accessing academic content and integrating socially while developing language proficiency. The aim is to identify and implement classroom strategies and tools that enhance communication and promote a sense of belonging. By developing approaches based on findings, the project seeks to improve inclusivity and learning outcomes, ultimately enabling all students to thrive in a supportive educational environment where language is not a barrier to success.

## **Sharon Campbell - How is diversity and inclusion encouraged in STEM subjects, particularly for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds?**

This research investigates how diversity and inclusion are promoted within STEM education at a further education college in an economically deprived UK region. It evaluates strategies supporting students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and their effectiveness in improving attainment and progression. Using a mixed-methods approach—including staff questionnaires, performance data, and national comparisons—the study identifies key interventions such as enrichment, mentoring, and partnerships that foster equitable outcomes. Despite staff reluctance to engage, findings highlight the impact of inclusive practices on student aspirations and achievement. The research offers practical recommendations for aligning institutional strategies with national goals to widen STEM participation.

# ENGAGEMENT, MOTIVATION AND WELLBEING

## **Alisha Kirtley - Can the implementation of random name selection to cold-call learners, support their engagement and participation by minimising anxieties to develop confidence?**

This research explored the use of individually named lollipop sticks to promote engagement and participation among 16–19-year-old learners. The aim was to create a safe classroom environment where all students felt encouraged to contribute, helping to reduce anxiety around speaking aloud and making mistakes. While the intervention supported general engagement by promoting equal participation, it was not implemented for long enough to significantly impact overall anxiety levels. The study highlights the importance of fostering inclusive, low-pressure strategies to enhance learner involvement and provide teachers with a fuller picture of student understanding through more balanced participation.

## **Gavin McNeil - What factors influence student attitudes and engagement in Maths in further education institutions?**

This research project investigates the factors influencing student attitudes and engagement in mathematics in further education (FE) institutions. Despite its importance for career readiness and everyday life, many students do not continue with maths after GCSE, so understanding these factors is vital. My aim in this research is to address issues like curriculum relevance, and barriers such as maths anxiety, especially in the context of diverse FE classes. A hybrid approach will be used, combining quantitative data on attitudes and engagement with qualitative data from interviews about personal experiences. My aim from this research project is to inform my own teaching practices but hopefully inform the policies of the institutions that I am currently at placement with to enhance learner's attitudes and engagement.

## **Jack Johnston - Does using positivity and praise help to re-engage the disengaged student within the classroom and make a difference in their academic progress?**

This research explores the impact of praise and positivity on re-engaging disengaged Year 12 A-Level Politics students in a North East sixth form. Focusing on students identified through PIL data and assessment scores, the study uses both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies to raise self-esteem and support progress. Emphasising effort-based praise, the research aims to foster individual confidence and improve classroom dynamics. It also critically considers how praise, if misapplied, can have unintended negative effects. The study seeks to identify effective approaches to using praise as a tool for motivation while maintaining high expectations and inclusive practice.

## **Karis King - The 'Ideas Bank': The impact of Learner autonomy on intrinsic motivation in the GCSE English Resit Context**

This research explores the impact of learner autonomy on intrinsic motivation among GCSE English resit students, a group often disengaged due to prior academic setbacks. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, the study implemented a classroom intervention, The Ideas Bank, to offer students meaningful choices in their learning. Using a mixed-methods approach, data from pre- and post-intervention surveys and interviews revealed a modest increase in enjoyment and improved confidence, self-expression, and peer connection. However, a drop in reported effort suggests possible end-of-term fatigue. Findings indicate that fostering autonomy can enhance motivation, with recommendations for refining the approach and scaling in future research.

# ENGAGEMENT, MOTIVATION AND WELLBEING

## **Katie Crosby & Jordan Grace - Using Random Selection to encourage Group collaboration**

This study explores the impact of random group selection on collaboration in Performing Arts and Creative Media, fields where group work mirrors professional practice. Observations showed learners often chose friends as partners, limiting diverse interaction. Over 6–8 weeks, an intervention shifted from self-selected to randomly assigned groups for weekly tasks. Using mixed methods, data from pre- and post-intervention questionnaires revealed learners' changing attitudes. Initially favoring familiar peers, many grew to appreciate random groupings, especially in smaller groups, which enhanced communication and participation. The findings suggest a balanced group formation strategy that considers learner preferences while preparing them for real-world collaborative environments.

## **Tazmin Lewis & Ell Holdcroft - How does Gamification influence motivation and academic progression for A Levels and BTEC students aged 16-18 in the Northeast of England?**

This study examines whether gamification can boost motivation and academic progress among 16–18-year-old A-Level and BTEC students in Northeast England. Recognizing motivation as a key driver of success linked to engagement and well-being, the research responds to declining motivation and attendance in further education. Two quasi-field experiments in Sociology and Performing Arts classes tested whether gamification—using rewards, challenges, and collaboration—enhances motivation. Results indicate gamification may increase enjoyment and engagement, leading to better attendance and academic outcomes. The study advocates for wider use and evaluation of gamified learning to tackle motivation issues and support student progression in further education.

## **Vicky Broomfield - Examining the effectiveness of using the lollipop stick technique for student participation**

This study explores the use of the lollipop stick technique to promote equal participation and engagement in a SEND classroom. Motivated by concerns that quieter students often feel less confident during questioning, the research investigates how random student selection affects participation, anxiety, and classroom dynamics. Through observational fieldwork, pre- and post-questionnaires, and thematic analysis of student feedback, the study examines behavioural changes and shifts toward greater equity. While some students initially experienced anxiety, overall responses were positive, with fair opportunities for all to contribute. Continued use of the technique shows promise in encouraging spontaneous participation and reducing anxiety linked to being called on in class.

# CURRICULUM, LITERACY AND ASSESSMENT

## **Daniel Rothwell - How is A-level mathematics effected by GCSE maths?**

This study investigates how A-level Maths prepares learners to progress from GCSE to undergraduate studies, focusing on its starting point compared to other A-level subjects with maths components. Through in-person interviews with teachers across various A-level courses, the research examines how different subjects develop maths skills and the interplay between curricula. Analysis of interview transcripts highlights cross-curricular links and strategies used to equip students with the essential academic skills needed for university readiness. The study aims to better understand how A-level subjects collectively support learner progression in mathematics and related competencies.

## **Harry Devlin - To what extent can pedagogical interventions, designed to improve sixth form students' understanding of course structures and explicit learning skills (such as organisation, drafting, and reflection), enhance their academic agency and attainment?**

This research explores strategies to enhance sixth form students' awareness and agency in learning by addressing gaps in understanding exam structures and independent learning skills. Aiming to foster lifelong learners, improve attainment, and prepare students for higher education or work, the study shifted focus from broad resilience-building to self-directed learning theories. The methodology trials tools like course structure booklets, modelling, and Socratic questioning in small groups before scaling up. Quantitative attainment data and qualitative questionnaires and observations are collected. Early results show academic improvements, greater student engagement, and enhanced collaboration, suggesting these strategies effectively promote ownership and critical thinking in learning.

## **Kennedy Amadasun - Exploring the Causes of Nervousness and Underperformance in Mathematics: An Investigation into Learners' Experiences, Attitudes, and Teaching Practices Mathematics**

This research investigates the psychological, environmental, and educational factors contributing to mathematics anxiety and underperformance. Focusing on learners' past experiences, teaching methods, classroom environments, self-efficacy, and external pressures like parental and peer influences, the study examines how these shape attitudes and achievement in mathematics. Using qualitative and quantitative methods—including surveys, interviews, and observations—it aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the causes of anxiety and underachievement. Findings will inform effective teaching strategies and interventions to boost confidence, reduce anxiety, and improve performance, offering practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to foster supportive, inclusive learning environments in mathematics.



# CURRICULUM, LITERACY AND ASSESSMENT

## **Nataia Cranswick - Putting 'Teach to the Top' into practice: An investigation into Maths and English teachers' views of supporting mixed abilities**

This study explores Maths and English teachers' perspectives on the 'Teaching to the Top' approach (Mansworth, 2021), grounded in the Pygmalion effect and Growth Mindset theory. These frameworks suggest that high expectations and self-belief can boost student achievement and resilience. While the approach promotes challenging and inspiring teaching with support, its practical application is complex for GCSE and Functional Skills resit learners who often carry negative attitudes from past failures. Given the demotivation commonly seen in resitters, especially in GCSE Maths (Norris, 2022), teachers face the challenge of engaging students with difficult concepts they previously struggled to master.

## **Rachel Jennings - How do we improve student retention in FE maths provisions?**

This study examines the factors affecting student retention in maths courses at Further Education providers and explores strategies to improve engagement, success, and progression. It considers the influence of social class, cultural background, personal responsibilities such as childcare, work, and caring duties, as well as health issues. By understanding these diverse challenges, the research aims to identify effective preventative measures to support students in staying engaged and achieving positive outcomes in maths education.

## **Sara Devine - Does Peer Assessment enhance students' performance growth?**

This research evaluates whether peer assessment enhances student performance and development, focusing on the skills involved and its impact on learners' understanding. It investigates if giving and receiving peer feedback improves insight, particularly relevant in the performance industry, where teamwork and constructive criticism are vital. Over six weeks, data will be collected via Likert-scale questionnaires to measure student understanding before and after the project. The study targets a top-level jazz class, where learners refine their skills through peer-marked mock assessments based on set criteria. This approach aims to provide a clearer picture of progress and prepare students for industry collaboration.

## **Theo Dehavilland - Do retrieval practice techniques benefit GCSE English Language resit classes?**

This research investigates how retrieval practice techniques affect GCSE English students' long-term retention and application of key skills. Addressing the challenge of sustaining knowledge for exam success, the study integrates these techniques into regular lessons to improve recall of literary concepts and writing strategies. Recognizing that traditional teaching often emphasizes initial learning over memory reinforcement, this project promotes active recall to enhance durable learning. By strengthening students' ability to retrieve information, the research aims to boost exam performance and increase student confidence in this high-stakes subject.

# EMPLOYABILITY, WORK-READINESS AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS

## **Connor Dixon - How can teachers increase student's work-readiness skills to prepare them to work in the music industry?**

This research project aims to enhance students' employability skills by providing a realistic understanding of how the industry operates and their role within it. Through mock "commission" work, students will experience industry-like workloads, deadlines, and professional etiquette. The project addresses the common misconception that the "industry" is distant and unattainable, instead demonstrating that opportunities are accessible locally if students are prepared and proactive. This approach seeks to demystify the industry and better equip students for successful careers.

## **Jamie Henderson - Is Standardisation the death of creativity?**

This research explores the decline of creativity in art, focusing on the potential impact of standardisation.

Drawing from personal experience as both a student and teacher of the arts, it investigates whether standardisation is the primary factor diminishing creativity or just one contributing element among others.

The study aims to identify key reasons behind this perceived decline and assess how standardisation influences creative expression, seeking to understand if it is the main cause or part of a broader issue affecting artistic innovation.

## **Leon Hirst - Tracking Progress: Monitoring Student Skill Development in GameMaker through Tracker Tools**

This project examined whether dedicated support sessions and progress-tracking tools using GameMaker could improve Year 12 CDMP Games pathway students' retention and mastery of technical skills. Voluntary enrichment sessions provided a natural comparison between attendees and non-attendees, with data collected through attendance, confidence tracking, feedback, and observations. An agile approach refined progress trackers weekly based on learner input. Results showed that targeted support significantly boosted confidence and competence, with 87.5% of participants feeling confident and all initially confused learners progressing to independent work. Despite sample size limitations, the study highlights the value of learner-designed tools and support sessions in enhancing engagement, skill development, and career readiness in game development.

## **Leon McGuinness - How can project-based learning enhance engagement in BTEC Media courses?**

This research investigates the use of project-based learning (PBL) to enhance engagement, motivation, and creative skill development in a BTEC Media course. It aims to determine if PBL improves understanding of media concepts and sustained interest in classroom activities. Using a mixed-methods approach with pre- and post-intervention surveys and qualitative data from focus groups and interviews, the study examines shifts in learner attitudes and behaviors. Although limited by a small sample and short duration, the findings suggest PBL fosters collaboration, problem-solving, and independent thinking. Ethical standards were followed, and practical recommendations encourage embedding PBL to promote deeper engagement and creativity in future curricula.

# EMPLOYABILITY, WORK-READINESS AND 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS

## **Martin Cobley - Examining the strategies utilised to support learners in becoming ready for employment**

This study examines strategies used by further education sport programmes to prepare learners for the competitive sport industry. Through qualitative interviews with sport employers and educators, it highlights the importance of work-based learning, employer engagement, and external qualifications from National Governing Bodies. Employers stressed experience, adaptability, communication, and reliability as key traits, while teachers employed practical assessments, site visits, and masterclasses to address skill gaps. Comparisons with construction and travel sectors identified transferable employability practices. Despite sample size limitations, the research offers valuable insights for aligning curricula with industry needs, addressing the challenge of many qualified candidates competing for limited sport industry jobs.

## **Syeda Khaled - How well does the curriculum align with their real-world communication requirements?**

This research aims to improve teaching of speaking and listening skills in the ESOL curriculum to better prepare learners for real-world communication in professional and social contexts. Current methods often use structured but unrealistic activities, leaving learners unready for everyday challenges. Using a mixed-methods approach with interviews, questionnaires, and observations, data was gathered from both learners and educators to identify effective teaching techniques and challenges. The findings support incorporating authentic tasks and resources to create a more engaging, inclusive environment that boosts learners' confidence, adaptability, and ability to apply skills beyond the classroom.

## **Tyler Pateman-Jones - Do teachers individualise delivery through utilisation of different tracking methods, do they detriment their learners progress through using certain methods?**

This research examines methods for tracking learner progress at my educational institution, focusing on the mandatory system Etrakr and the innovative use of Microsoft Teams. Inspired by my experiences as a trainee teacher, I gathered quantitative and qualitative data from staff and learners through primary research. Secondary literature from Dylan Wiliam, Daisy Christodoulou, and Deanna T. Vaccaro informed the study. Findings suggest that Etrakr is outdated and less effective compared to alternatives like Teams, though responses varied widely. The research highlights the need for further training and investigation to develop improved tracking systems that better support student assessment and success.

# SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE

## **Annabell Jollands, Jasmine Jefferson & Vincent Scott - Can the integration of music into lessons enhance creativity, and mood?**

This joint practice development project explores whether integrating students' own music in Further Education classrooms enhances creativity, mood, engagement, attendance, and social skills while reducing stress. Filling a research gap beyond Primary and Secondary education, the six-week study acknowledges limitations like varying class sizes and lesson formats. It also considers students with mental health challenges and SEND needs, where music may create a comforting background that encourages participation. The study draws on Vygotsky's social constructivism and the Zone of Proximal Development, emphasizing how collaborative support aids mental development beyond individual effort.

## **Beth Olsen-Dugdale & Katie Chambers - Does repetitive practice improve handwriting in students?**

This action research focuses on handwriting, specifically how repetitive practice affects students' muscle memory and their work quality. To address this, allocate time in each session for handwriting practice was given and we ran targeted intervention groups. These specialised sessions included tasks with handouts featuring letters, phonetic sounds, words, and sentences to encourage desirable difficulty and improvement. More time was given for each task to reduce rushing, which often caused messy handwriting.

## **Harry McBride - Can AI help learners to develop and understand their feedback?**

For my final research project, I implemented AI to help learners develop and enhance their responses to past paper questions while providing feedback. This idea arose from a discussion with my mentor about relevance to the current curriculum. Given the common use of written feedback in English Language teaching, I saw potential for AI to improve how learners engage with and use feedback. Data was collected through qualitative questionnaires before and after the AI implementation. Although the process was brief and somewhat disjointed, the overall response was mostly positive, despite inconclusive results.

## **Hazel Hart - How do visual representations of experimental processes help students to approach AQA A-Level Chemistry Paper 3 questions?**

Year 13 A-Level Chemistry students struggled with applying knowledge in AO2 and AO3 questions, especially those involving practical experimental processes assessed in AQA Paper 3. This research examined how student-drawn visual representations affect their ability to answer such questions. Using a mixed-method approach with diagram drawing, annotation, and scaffolding sessions, the study found improved use and quality of diagrams. While overall confidence remained moderate, many students—especially neurodivergent learners—found diagrams helpful for understanding. Visualisation aids critical thinking and practical reasoning but may need to be combined with retrieval practice. Further research with larger cohorts is recommended.

# SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND CLASSROOM PRACTICE

## **Jade Surtees & Tayla Freeman - Why are learners more engaged in English and Maths activities when they don't realise they're doing it?**

This research explores challenges in learner engagement and confidence in Functional Skills English and Maths within an alternative provision setting. Mandatory lessons often face resistance due to learners' prior negative experiences and fixed mindsets, while vocational courses show higher engagement due to their relevance. Drawing on literature about assessments, mindsets, and gamification, the study uses tutor interviews to highlight that practical, embedded, and gamified teaching fosters more inclusive and confident learning environments. Findings suggest that shifting assessment and delivery towards contextualised, feedback-driven approaches can promote growth mindsets and improve achievement and engagement in Functional Skills.

## **Liam Tough - Do Note Taking Organisers Decrease The Students Need for Help During Lessons and Assignments**

This research investigates whether note-taking organisers reduce students' need for help by enabling them to organise notes more effectively and retrieve information easily. It is expected that some students will also retain more knowledge using these organisers. Providing printed organisers allows both students to track their work and the teacher to monitor note-taking, addressing issues with messy notebooks that made it difficult to identify content related to each PowerPoint slide. Initial lessons showed increased note-taking and clearer identification of who engaged. The research question has since been revised to reflect these findings.

## **Neave Cummins - Does having coloured post it notes help the student's feelings within lessons?**

This research aims to track student progress, particularly focusing on managing anxiety in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) learners. Using a red, amber, and green post-it note system allows students to silently request help, reducing anxiety and avoiding unwanted attention. Sessions will be documented with dates, activities, and student feelings to identify areas needing review and which students require additional support. By repeatedly revisiting challenging topics, this approach seeks to increase students' confidence, reduce anxiety, and foster a deeper, iterative understanding of the material.

## **Yazmin Boag - How do teachers perceive and integrate note-taking strategies to effectively support deeper learning and recall across disciplines?**

This research investigates teachers' perceptions and use of note-taking strategies to enhance learning and recall, focusing on a Further Education college, particularly the computing pathway. Literature highlights cognitive benefits of note-taking and challenges of digital methods. Findings show teachers value note-taking, but students often rely on memory, resulting in poor retention and frequent lesson recaps. While digital note-taking is common, it tends to support only surface learning if not used strategically. The study involved computing and other lecturers, plus learners, revealing a need for explicit teaching of note-taking techniques. Recommendations include developing training resources to embed best practices across the curriculum, bridging the gap between awareness and effective use of note-taking.