

Theories of learning and teaching education essay

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Introduction

I have used a Hairdressing group as my module 2 case study group. I teach them ICT core skills at level 5. They are a mixed sex group of all ages. I have analysed this group for the following: Inclusive Learning: Theories and Strategies Modes of Learning and the Learning Environment Guidance and Support Assessment for Learning Quality Assurance and Learner Success

Group Profile

The learners I am using for my case study are a Hairdressing group. There are 21 learners in the class but only 20 are studying the ICT unit at level 5 as one already has the qualification. The class is dominated by female learners however there are two males and the female majority does not seem to affect them. The age range in the group is from 16 - 40 years old. About 60% of the class had previously done the Introduction to Hair and Beauty course and achieved Level 4 ICT Core Skills. The more mature learners are new to the course and have no previous ICT experience therefore I provide extra in class support which totals to around 30mins one to one.

Theories of Learning and Teaching

I teach ICT which may suggest a Behaviourist learning theory approach where progressively sequenced achievable step by step tasks with detailed instructions allow learners to achieve their expected outcomes. Hartley (1998, in Smith, 1999) also suggests that frequent practice is required for a skill to be achieved. As much as I agree with this statement because learning and understanding ICT requires practice I believe that a more Humanistic approach can be just as successful for learner achievement. Knowles (1950,

in Smith, 2002) suggests that Informal education can be just as successful stating that by having a friendly and informal environment in an adult learning situation it will give flexibility in the learning process and will provide the best opportunities for the learners. The humanistic learning theory suggests learners are individuals and allows for a student-centred approach to be taken where the learners have more responsibilities for their own learning. I think this allows for inclusive learning by allowing the learner to choose the order of packages and outcomes so they can concentrate more on an area that they would like to expand or gain knowledge on first. There are constraints to this as a more flexible approach needs to be considered taking into account specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria stated by awarding bodies such as the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Knowles (1990, in Atherton, 2011) has an assumption that adult learners need to know why they need to learn something before they carry out the task to learn it. I have seen this in many of my classes, with young adult learners as well as mature adult learners, once they have an understanding of why and what they have to do, they have a more committed response and motivation to achieve that task.

Inclusive Learning Strategies

As staff at Angus College we have to follow a number of policies to ensure we provide inclusive learning and teaching. The Strategic Plan 2010-13 (Angus College, 2010) states that the college will ensure appropriate and fair access for all types of learners. I incorporate this into my classes by ensuring all learners have access to materials in the required format also in compliance with the Equality and Diversity Policy (Angus College, 2006)

which aims to have a fully inclusive approach in treating everyone as an individual. The Strategic plan also takes lifelong learning into account by stating that they ensure as a college they develop resilient individuals that have gained skills in life, work enterprise and learning. I contribute to this by helping the learners to develop their ICT skills that are transferable in life whether they change their career or need them for everyday personal and social life. When facilitating a class I try to incorporate all learning styles in the best way I possibly can. Everybody in the class works at their own pace so they are all at different stages. In this group the majority of the learners are happy to follow instructions from a handout with interactive activities to allow for checking for understanding and they will ask for support when needed. I also have two learners in the class that require me to sit with them as they are visual learners that require me to demonstrate the activity and support them as they carry out the activity. I tried to carry out an activity using a demonstration with whole class participation but it did not work as the learners with previous knowledge and experience found it moving too slowly for them but not necessarily slow enough for the mature learners with no experience in ICT. With this group I find it more suitable for them to work at their own pace allowing them to be independent in their own learning. Professor Dan Willingham (Willingham, 2008) has doubts that learning styles make a difference when teaching. He thinks that they work because 90% of people believe they work. In my experience I disagree with his theory for the teaching of ICT as I see the learners work better when they are learning the way they prefer to learn. As I teach ICT I encourage experiential learning for all learners across all of my classes. I agree with the experiential learning cycle developed by Kolb and Fry (1975, in Smith, 2001). The model has the <https://assignbuster.com/theories-of-learning-and-teaching-education-essay/>

following elements: experience, observation, reflection and testing. This is an essential way for learning ICT as the learners need to carry out the activity in order to understand it, they can then test their knowledge in new situations, i. e. they learn how to create a presentation in ICT but they apply that knowledge for their other vocational units when they are required to present information.

Modes of Learning

As I teach ICT Core Skills I have tried different modes of learning for students. We have handouts for all activities, all of which have formative activities which some are problem based and some just following instructions. As ICT is a practical subject area, the learners are always carrying out practical activities allowing for experiential learning, Kolb (1984, in Chapman, no date) has a theory that learning and knowledge is created through experience. I have always found that ICT has to be experienced as you cannot learn how to create a presentation for example just by reading a handout. Although I provide the learners with handouts to primarily work independently I have found peer learning and group work to be just as successful. I recently changed an activity that I would normally have the learners do independently to a group activity. I found that the learners retained the knowledge and gained more understanding through peer learning and group work as they all contributed their own experiences and some would ask questions that others may be too afraid to ask, as in Vygotsky's Social Development theory (1962, in Learning Theories, 2012). With the hairdressing group and most of my other groups I usually have at least one learner in the class that requires one to one support to get them

started in the task, this can be difficult to find ten minutes to spend with an individual learner when it is only a 90 minute class with 20 learners and some require one to one support in class. When it is difficult to provide this I then refer them through the college support system while still supporting the learner in class and encouraging peer support.

Physical Learning Environment

Scholastic (no date) states that the physical layout of the classroom should reflect your teaching style. This can be done with a general purpose class, however I teach ICT and I cannot move desks in a computing room to suit the lesson. I would like more control over the physical learning environment but this sometimes is not possible due to class numbers being too large for the classrooms. The learning Environment I currently have with my case study group is not ideal. We are in a PC classroom with 20 PC's and 20 learners. It is quite a small room and the learners have been feeling a bit cramped with not much room to move around them. I also do not have much room to move around them when I am supporting their learning. I cannot see all of the computer monitors as some are facing away from the front of the class. When I am delivering a presentation or demonstration to the class the tutor PC that is connected to the projector faces away from the learners. I have a remote control for the PC so I can control the presentation while facing the class instead of having to turn away from them when an action is required to change slides etc. I provide the best social and emotional environment where possible, Goleman (1995) tells us that there is a direct link between emotions and learning which is why I think it is important to provide the best social, emotional and physical environment where possible

to allow the learners to achieve their full potential. If a learner is feeling stressed about anything I allow them time for themselves like a short five minute break to help them clear their head to help them achieve a good emotional environment. I try to build a relationship with all of my learners to support a good emotional learning environment. I have found that having a good relationship with them gives them the confidence to ask questions in class and a good social relationship with their peers will give them the confidence to openly ask questions in front of the class. I was originally placed in a communal area of the college with this class and I asked to be moved to a more private room. I have found with previous groups that this can cause distractions from other classes making the learners less engaged and uninterested; when I have a class there it is difficult to provide a perfect learning environment with all of the distractions, I then allow the learners to listen to music through headphones if it helps them to concentrate more on their work. When it was possible I changed the room to a private classroom, hoping there would be fewer distractions for them. However the Hairdressing group enjoyed the communal environment as they had more space around them and said they felt more comfortable rather than the classroom they are in now. I usually find that some of the learners' behaviour and motivation changes when they were moved from a communal environment to a private one, with this group it was not the case as some however said they preferred the previous room as they had more space and felt less claustrophobic. I allow them to leave the room for 5 minutes if they are feeling claustrophobic to get some fresh air or a just to have a walk around to clear their minds. However, I have now found that as some have completed the unit and are no longer required to attend the class the atmosphere has changed for the

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better as there are less bodies in the current room now making it more an ideal environment for the remainder of the class. I have seen their confidence improve after they have been moved to the private classroom, before they were less confident to speak out in front of other peers around them that they were not so comfortable with.

Guidance and Support

Guidance and support encourages the learners to evaluate and achieve their own potential while they are at College. The principles and stages of guidance and support at Angus College are outlined in the Guidance Policy 17 (Angus College, no date). There are four stages of guidance within the college: Pre-Entry Guidance - Advice and support is given at the interview stage to ensure the learner is choosing the right course for them. The learners can also request additional academic and personal support for the duration of their course. Induction to college - The learners are welcomed to the college and are made aware of the opportunities and services available to them while they are learning at the college. Progression Guidance - This is carried out during personal development interviews where the learners evaluate their progress and the progression routes available to them. On-going Guidance - This is provided whenever the learner requires advice, academic or emotional support. This is on-going and will be provided when the learner requests it or if concerns have been raised by staff or students. These stages of support are set in the guidelines of the Quality Framework for Scottish FE Colleges (HMIE, 2004) to ensure all learners' needs are met to allow a positive learning experience for them. Rogers (1959, in McLeod, 2007) had the theory that if a person would need to be listened to and

understood in order for them to grow as a person. This is why it is important to have an excellent guidance and support system in place.

Contribution to Guidance and Support

When a learner brings a problem to my attention whether it is academic or personal I do my best to support and guide them. I have limitations to my role as an ICT lecturer as I am not their course tutor or leader and I have not had training to be a counsellor. I listen, give advice and point them to someone that can provide them with the help they need. Depending on the situation, I would inform the course leader if a problem has arisen. Recently I had a learner come to me saying they were stressed about their coursework, that they wouldn't complete and they had money problems at home that was preventing them from attending college. I referred the learner to the student support team and I informed the course leader that the learner had raised issues with his course work and they should speak to him about this, in the hope it would ease his stress about falling behind. I have since had feedback from the course leader that the learner now has an action plan for his coursework. Angus College has an excellent student advice centre and support team in place that are available to the learners for all aspects of guidance and support whether it is financial, personal or academic. There is also a policy in place for when extreme problems arise which is the Protection of Children, Young People and Adults at risk (Angus College, 2011), in these cases it is my duty to report them to student development as they will always be dealt with by the Student support team. I am also part of the student support system in an academic sense, in which I provide individual ICT support to learners across the college as a member of the

student development team. This is usually on a one to one basis for the learners that have requested additional support or they have been referred for help by their core skills lecturer from diagnostic assessment. In my case study group I identified two learners that would benefit from additional ICT support. I felt that I could provide this in class and I sat them together in class so they could provide peer support to each other. This class has since ended and I received feedback from this group at the end of the unit. The learners that required extra support felt that it was difficult to get the time that they needed in class due to a large class size in the beginning of the unit. As the class went on and there were less learners as some completed the unit and were not required to attend, I was able to provide more time with the learners' requiring support as less of the other learners were needing my help. They also found it useful to be in class with learners that had previous experience with the unit as they used them for peer support when I was unavailable.

External Support and Guidance

I ensure that I meet the requirements of external support by following the guidelines set in the Student Guidance and Support Policy (Angus College, 2011). When a situation is beyond my limits, I will refer them to the student services team for additional support and it is the student services team that will then assist them and can organise external support from out with the college i. e. get social work involved. At Angus College we ensure that all of the support needs of the learners and staff are met by promoting equal opportunities by following the guidelines set in the Equality and Diversity Policy (Angus College, 2006) and ensuring we follow the legal requirements

of The Equality Act 2010. I ensure that I do not discriminate against any learner in accordance with the legislation, the Disability Equality Duty from the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Angus College policies. Recently in my case study group we allowed extra class time for a learner to complete her assessments as she had some time away from college due to being hospitalised.

Assessment for Learning

Diagnostic Assessment

Every student that begins a full or part time course at Angus College will take a Core Skills Diagnostic test as by the Essential Skills Policy (Angus College, 2009). The test consists of multiple choice questions in each subject, allowing us to determine the learner's prior knowledge and what areas they have strengths and weaknesses. This then allows every learner the opportunity to be assessed at their own level of capabilities and as a lecturer I know where and when to provide support to the learner. Skills for Life Improvement Programme (2008) states the importance of diagnostic assessment because some learners have a higher level of knowledge in some areas over other areas. I think this is effective as it helps in determining any support required so the learner receives all the help we can possibly give them. The learners also have an understanding of their own level of capability and they can plan their own development needs too. As I deliver Core Skills I am responsible for carrying out the diagnostic testing for ICT, numeracy and communications for all of my own classes. The results are then passed on to the course leader and the appropriate lecturer for each core skill. I found that after diagnostic testing the learners in the

Hairdressing group had very mixed abilities. It highlighted two learners that required extra support in class and after assessing them myself by observation over the first few weeks I knew I could provide this support in class myself without the need of separate one to one support out with class time. I never just rely on the results of the core skills diagnostic test; I always use the first three or four weeks to observe the capabilities of the learners before I determine levelling of the students. With this group I adapted my teaching to doing tasks in small groups, so that the learners with extra support needs got the benefit of peer support which worked well as they all worked together and achieved their goals.

Formative Assessment

I use formative assessment every day with all learners in all my core skills classes. Whether I have given a handout or demonstrated an activity, I will always give the learner a formative activity to ensure they have an adequate understanding of the subject and to prepare them for their summative assessment. The formative assessments allow me to see the capability of each learner and allow me to determine a level of ability and understanding of each member of the class and will determine if they move forward in the next part of the unit. If a learner does not feel ready for the summative assessment then I encourage them to do some more of the formative activities first. Stiggins (2007, in Dodge, no date) urges teachers to focus more on assessment for learning to support the learning needs during the learning process of the students. He states that the formative assessments help with student achievement which I fully agree with. It brings me back to how experiential learning is vital in learning ICT skills and the formative

activities I provide are giving the learners the experience required to achieve their goal in understanding and gaining the required skill. The formative activities carried out in ICT are generally contextualised to the learners' academic field, for example, the hairdressing group are given word processing exercises on hairdressing and salons. I liaise with the course leader to ensure all of the contextualised activities are related to their studies. This helps to keep the learner engaged and allows them to see how they can use word processing in a hairdressing environment.

Feedback

I will give verbal feedback on all formative activities when time allows. In class I try to check every formative activity carried out by the learner and I give feedback by discussing how they achieved the task and I will sometimes show them alternative ways of achieving the same goal. However as some days can be busier than other it can be difficult to check the activity in the classroom. When I do not have time to check it I ask the learner to email me their activity and I look at it as soon as it is convenient. I do not like to do it this way as I like to physically speak to the learner and question them on the techniques they used. I provide written feedback in a reply email; however I feel this is impersonal and I prefer face to face verbal feedback as I can check for understanding from the learner this way. I recently had to provide feedback on a learners' presentation that she emailed me as I did not have time to check the work in the class time. The learner had a few corrections to make on their work and I explained these to her the best I could by email as I did not want her to wait until the next scheduled class one week later. When I had next met with the learner she informed me she had not checked her

emails all week therefore did not receive my feedback. I then had to sit with her and give verbal feedback on her presentation. I think the verbal feedback was better for this learner as I could give it while we were both looking at the work she had produced. Learning and Teaching Scotland (no date) states that research indicates that verbal feedback can be more effective than written feedback. Peer feedback and assessment is also effective, which happens often in class when the learners have a good relationship with each other. Although it is important for me the lecturer to provide feedback on formative assessment, I also feel it is important for the learner to provide feedback to me. If they evaluate the task and how they felt they succeeded in the achievement of the task, it helps them and I to understand why achievement of learning took place or rather did not take place.

Quality Assurance and Learner Success

Quality Assurance Framework

Quality assurance is ensuring the quality standards are fulfilled to a high standard during and before delivery. This is achieved through the process of unit design, development of material, learning and teaching methods and assessment procedures. The Quality Systems Manual (Angus College, 2011) states that the management of the college are committed to the continued improvement in the delivery of college services by applying the rules of the Quality Policy. The Angus College quality management system is certified by SGS to ISO9001: 2008 requirements. The HMIE quality framework (HMIE, 2006) is also in place for evaluating the quality of services in Scotland's colleges. My individual role in Angus College is a lecturer in the Computing,

Higher(s) and Core Skills team. However as a Core Skills lecturer I provide a service to all of the academic teams across the college, making me part of the course team for each course I teach on. I report to the course leaders and the curriculum managers for each course team and I have an ICT course leader that I report all core skills elements to. The assessments I write are internally verified by the ICT course leader to ensure they meet the standards of the awarding body. When the core skills framework changed we then sought the approval of an external verifier to ensure the new framework was being met. The course leaders evaluate their course at the end of each academic block to identify strengths and weaknesses so an action plan can be made for future improvements. These are then collated into the annual course report which then feeds into the college supplementary report which is given to the Scottish Funding Council and the board of governors. An annual review of my work is done by the curriculum manager; this establishes where further training is needed and establishes if I work to the standards set by the college and the Scottish government (Scottish Executive, 2006). There are a lot of policies and procedures with Angus College and through doing the PDA previously and the TQFE I have found myself becoming much more familiar with the policies and procedures.

How the Quality Assurance system promotes successful learning

The Quality Assurance system promotes successful learning by ensuring all teaching materials, assessment materials and delivery are of the highest standard for the learners to achieve their goals. To comply with quality standards the college has a process of internal moderation and verification

of all assessment material and developed resources are moderated to ensure they are of an acceptable standard. Regular course meetings throughout the academic year will highlight any action points within the quality indicators in the Annual Course Report (ACR), this information comes from learner feedback and lecturer evaluations from the course team. In all courses not just the case study group, course reports are created reflecting on strengths and weaknesses and making adjustments to improve the future learning and teaching. This is really important in successful learning as we always need to know ways to improve things and enhance them for the learners. From these course reports and evaluations, Core Skills have improved significantly by making the assessments and learning and teaching materials contextualised to the academic course. For the case study group I have been using some of the Hairdressing coursework and it has been integrated with core skills. For example the hairdressing students had to create a report for one of their units and they carried out the research and created the report during ICT, the report then contributed towards three units, Communications, ICT and the hairdressing unit.

My Contribution

As a Core Skills lecturer my contribution to quality assurance is important because I provide a service to the majority of the academic teams within the college. I ensure that material is developed to that team's standard and I run assessment material by the course leaders before delivering to the learners'. I have to provide to the course teams Annual Course Review's by providing information to the course leaders whose courses I deliver on by attending their course meetings and by providing unit evaluations at the end of the

block and I then evaluate the Action points from the ACR for the unit I have delivered giving them my opinion on the learning and teaching process and materials / equipment etc and what I feel needs improvement or enhanced. I think that by providing my evaluations to the other academic teams I am helping to contribute to the application of the learning and teaching standards and expectations across the college teams to maintain a level of consistency in the teaching as in Education Scotland (no date). A recent course meeting for the case study group suggested areas for more integration and collaboration with the core skills and hairdressing teams, from this we will be piloting a project for the next coming year to have hairdressing core skills fully contextualised with ICT and communications. To maintain high standards of teaching we have numerous CPD opportunities throughout the year with staff development days and learning and teaching forums where we share best practice throughout the college teams. I have also contributed to the computing teams' course reviews in the same way by providing information from unit evaluations and from learner feedback. I attend the course meetings only for the courses that I deliver to which are mainly the introductory students and the NC Computing students, however we have regular team meetings with entire team involved to share best practice and relevant resources. Not only do the lecturers attend the meetings but also a representative from the learners in the class. They contribute their thoughts and evaluations of the course and team ethos and providing feedback on how we could improve their learning experience.

Conclusion

This report has shown how I contribute to the quality of learning and teaching within Angus College to promote a positive learning experience for all of those attending our college. I am aware of how to provide the best emotional and physical learning environment and how it will help the learners' have a positive experience. I am aware of and follow all of the guidelines and procedures to ensure everything I do is of a quality standard set by the College and Scottish government.