

Action Research



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Title: How does promoting independence impact teaching and learning?

Research

Context:

Encouraging the planning and organising of investigations, setting aims, objectives and success criteria, gathering and utilising a range of evidence, and reflecting on methods.

The inquiry is looking at the whole school's approach to pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy. Pedagogy is when the learner is a dependent on the teacher for most of the learning. The teacher determines what, how, and when anything is learned. Andragogy is when the learner is independent. They strive for autonomy and self-direction in learning. Heutagogy is when the learners are interdependent. They identify the potential to learn from novel experiences as a matter of course. Learners in this instance can manage their own learning. As a school we wanted to harness these approaches and give learners the opportunities to work on self-efficacy, to be independent and to be interdependent whilst working on tasks that are commensurate to their age.

From the young learners in Nursery, Reception and Year 1 (Pod Pengwin) to the year 2 and year 3 children (Pod Pysgodyn) to the older children in years 4,5 and 6 (Pod Pry Cop) they have time to be independent and interdependent and it is called Choice and Challenge.

During Choice and Challenge learners can show case their integral skills such as

Creativity and innovation

- Encouraging openness to different ideas and ways of thinking, enabling the expression of reasoned opinions about these differences
- Critical thinking and problem-solving
- Developing the ability to think analytically and understand the past and present as well as to imagine possible futures.
- Personal effectiveness
- Encouraging teamwork and being a reliable contributor by organising and carrying out enquiries.
- Planning and organising
- Encouraging the planning and organising of investigations, setting aims, objectives and success criteria, gathering and utilising a range of evidence, and reflecting on methods.

Each pod every fortnight will give its learners tasks for choice and challenge that the learners have to complete. In Pod Pengwin learners have 4 tasks on a clipboard and they are given time and space with adult support to carry out their challenges. In Pod Pysgodyn pupils are given a clipboard with 4 tasks and at adequate times learners carry out their tasks, they then check with an adult after the task is carried out and the task card is stamped. Any loose paper or projects are kept in the Choice and Challenge clipboard. For

Action Research



the older learners, they have a Choice and Challenge book that they carry out their tasks. They can carry on with tasks from home and at appropriate times.

All teachers will monitor the progress of their Choice and Challenge every half term and feedback and report to the other pods. Observations and photographic evidence is gathered to be presented at staff meetings in order to adapt and make changes to each choice and challenge for each year group/pod. Surveys of Pupil voice will be gathered and teaching staff which each share their rationale for choice and challenge each term sharing good examples and good practice.

Questions for the Survey:

- Does your Pod do Choice and Challenge?
- Do you think Choice and Challenge has helped you to be more independent? (work on your own)
- Do you think Choice and Challenge has helped you to be more interdependent (work with others)

Aims and Objectives:

To what extent does a focus on pedagogical, andragogical and heutagogical approaches impact and further develop the pupil's independence and inter-dependence skills.

Research:

Education has traditionally been seen as a pedagogic relationship between the teacher and the learner. It was always the teacher who decided what the learner needed to know, and indeed, how the knowledge and skills should be taught. In the past few years or so there has been quite a revolution in education through research into how learner's learn, and resulting from that, further work on how teaching could and should be provided.

The idea that, given the right environment, people can learn and be self-directed in the way learning is applied is not new and has been an important teaching and learning theme that can be followed through the philosopher Heider (Emery, 1974), psychology (Rogers, 1951). The thrust that underscores these approaches is a desire to go beyond the simple acquisition of skills and knowledge as a learning experience. They emphasise a more holistic development in the learner of an independent capability (Stephenson, 1993), the capacity for questioning ones values and assumptions (Argyris & Schon, 1996), and the critical role of the system-environment interface (Emery & Trist, 1965).

Strategies:

Make choice and challenge more open by using open ended questions. Use pictures as prompts in order to promote creativity and independence.

Outcomes:

Initial choice and challenge tasks were grouped into the four categories of the integral skills, so you had a task on Creativity and innovation, another on Critical thinking and problem-solving, then Personal effectiveness and then Planning and organising. However, what we found is that this restricted the learner's creativity. The questions were too closed and did not lend themselves to promoting independence and interdependence. We then changed the questions to be more open but yet we still wanted the learners to show that they were using the integral skills.

Action Research



Another finding was that we needed to keep challenging the children by asking them questions that would lead them to deeper thinking and understanding of the task. An adult was still needed to extend and challenge the learners by questioning their approach to solving the Choice and Challenge tasks. Some learners would finish their challenges within one session and some would take 2-3 sessions in order to complete a task.

How do we show clear consistency and progression of choice and challenge throughout the school and make sure that each pod is planning commensurate to the age and that in each year group learners build on the success of their Choice and Challenge experience?

Questions arising:

How do we have open-ended questions and still show and model for the learners that using the integral skills to solve the choice and challenge tasks?

How do we show accountability and keep the onus and responsibility on the learner?

How do you ask non-leading questions, but still challenge the learner to be independent and more interdependent?

Can we simplify the choice and challenge cards by having the integral skills on the back as a prompt or checklist to help the learners?

Next Steps:

Frequency of which Choice and Challenge questions are changed was originally a fortnight however, this can restrict learning. If pupils exercise their heutagogy and self-direct themselves, they can spend a whole term on one project as they evaluate, process and refine their project. In addition, changing all four choice and challenge questions at the same time could actually slow the learning process, rather we are changing the Choice and Challenge questions one at a time. That ensures engagement and encourages learners to be productive.

Also as part of the refining process, questioning learners and encouraging them to use different ways or mediums to solve the choice and challenge questions. For learners not to see the tasks as a one of, but as multi-layered so they can try different approaches and ways to answer the questions.

Supporting Documents

* Hase, S., & Kenyon, C. (2001). Moving from andragogy to heutagogy: Implications for VET. Proceedings of research to reality: Putting VET research to work.

* Jones, C., Penaluna, K. and Penaluna, A. (2019), "The promise of andragogy, heutagogy and academagical to enterprise and entrepreneurship education pedagogy", *Education + Training*, Vol. 61 No. 9, pp. 1170-1186.

* Blaschke, L. M. (2019). The pedagogy–andragogy–heutagogy continuum and technology-supported personal learning environments. In *Open and distance education theory revisited* (pp. 75-84). Springer, Singapore.

* Halupa, C. M. (2015). Pedagogy, andragogy, and heutagogy. In *Transformative curriculum design in health sciences education* (pp. 143-158). IGI Global.