Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru | National Assembly for Wales
Y Pwyllgor Plant, Pobl Ifanc ac Addysg | Children, Young People and
Education Committee
Ymchwiliad i Waith Ieuenctid | Inquiry into Youth Work

YW 14
Ymateb gan : Alun Davies, Cymrawd Ymchwil Cysylltiol
Response from : Alun Davies, Associate Research Fellow

This is an extract from a more comprehensive working paper that will be considered for publication by SKOPE later this year.

The Process.

CORNERSTONE is a tool for use by practitioners delivering, what in youth and community terms would be referred to as, non formal learning activities.

The learning framework is transparent and should be used to over lay any existing programme. It is not intended to be a, prescribed process.

It was developed to compliment the work of the practitioner and provide a tool for the measurement of the journey taken by the young adult learners involved in the stated programmes. The data from the learning framework would allow the practitioner to reflect on the interventions made during any series of sessions that would take place during the programme. The feedback at each assessment stage is meant to aid the future planning for the practitioner. Where appropriate, if can also be used directly with the participating young adult learners, 1 - 2 - 1. In addition, it could form the necessary evidence for managers to demonstrate the effectiveness of the programme(s) being delivered by them.

The learning framework was prepared against six cognitive or learning skills. It was deemed that these cognitive/learning skills were essential for the development of learners. The skills were also shared and discussed with representatives from the

workforce (Wales, Republic of Ireland) and whilst some skills had been labelled differently, in essence, they reflected those skills common and familiar to practitioners.

The learning framework is now being used by the main Youth Work organisation in the Republic of Ireland.

A COMMON THREAD

Is it possible to create a learning continuum between community/youth based learning and work based learning?

What are the common factors within both?

"Educational objectives stated in behavioural form have their counterparts in the behaviour of individuals. Such behaviour can be observed and described and these descriptive statements can be classified." (Bloom, S, B. (ed.) (1956, p5).

Perhaps now is an opportune time to give consideration to the relevancy of non formal learning in both of the learning environments mentioned, community and work.

It can be observed that both elements interact with their respective learners, through the youth worker and the training officer. This interaction may take place through the use of a stimulus, where the stimulus promotes behavioural change. Then this behavioural change will heighten the understanding of the cognitive/learning skills.

The research is suggesting that if there is an acceptance of these modern cognitive/learning skills, with the evidenced outcomes that can be presented, employers could be encouraged to examine their own work based training. It could suggest that at the present time, and in most cases, work based training focuses primarily on a sector specific theme or task. This may result in the learner outcomes being neglected?

Thus posing the question,

- *....is consideration being given to the individual's cognitive/learning skills?*

- Are employers aware that a separate process is taking place that can enhance the employee's learning capacity?

With a captive audience (work force) employers can improve these cognitive/learning skills and encourage the transfer of these skills from the training room into the working environment. It would be that this process is in addition to the sector specific themes and topics, thus increasing a value of the work force.

Summary

The preparation of this Working Paper take place at a time when practitioners and educators, working with disenfranchised young people and those entering the labour market for the first time, struggle to identify a standardised process that will allow them to measure and evaluate the impact of community and work based learning.

The balance that presently exists between non formal learning[1] and formal learning[2] appears to be very much skewed towards that of formal learning. Therefore, a standardised process to measure and evaluate non formal learning could contribute to a readjustment in that balance. Perhaps, there should now be a focus on the need to evaluate and measure outcomes from nonformal, informal and incidental learning, especially in this period of austerity. It has been suggested, through general discussion with the sectors, that this trend is likely to continue indefinitely with policy makers reluctant to return to excessive spending on fashionable ideas.

For the benefit of this Working Paper the following differential between education and learning is offered:

- *Education* is the giving of knowledge and information to the learner.

- *Learning* is the process of developing the necessary skills that will allow the learner to receive, translate and apply the knowledge acquired.

The overview of the reviewed youth work/community projects suggested that while those projects are mainly charged with altering unacceptable or antisocial behaviour, the outcome tended to focus more on the behaviour (substance abuse, school attendance, well being) and less on any skill acquired or enhanced.

In the working environment the training will usually address a sector specific requirement and miss the opportunity for the employer to track the learning skills that can be enhanced though the interaction that takes place between the trainers and the employees. The researcher suggests that all interventions, if structured correctly, can affect a behavioural change and influence an improvement in the learning skills.

The lack of long term evidence to demonstrate a sustained change in the individual should be noted. However, Heckman, J, J. and Kautz, J. (2013) reported that those projects that retained contact with the individual, following completion of the project, were deemed to present more sustained change.

An overview of the projects presented by Heckman, J, J. and Kautz, J. (2013) may suggest that whilst projects or programmes are set against a diverse range of outcomes, there lacked a standardised outcome against a taxonomy of cognitive/learning skills. Therefore, those skills[3] embedded in any proposed learning framework should provide the required consistency for measuring and evaluating against standardised outcomes.

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