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The design and evaluation of vocationally relevant informal learning resources for adults

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Social Partnership Network (SPN)

• **Vision** - To establish a network of organisations who have a shared commitment to extending higher education opportunities to all those who can benefit. To work together to develop strategies and activities that lead to the creation of a more diverse HE system - able to meet the needs of diverse learners, support workplace and lifelong learning - and enhance social mobility and promote economic growth.

• All organisations have national scale and reach, a strong commitment to WP and social inclusion and a focus on part time adult learners.
The NNCO project aims to enhance the SPN through 3 strands of activity:

1. Development of an online website;
2. Development of a suite of free online courses;
3. Implementing robust tracking and monitoring mechanisms to measure impact and outcome of project activity.

This presentation will focus on strands 2 and 3, in particular how the courses have been designed and how we plan to pilot them.
Characteristics of courses

• Introductory level (level 0)
• 15 hours of learning
• Small, bitesize sections of learning
• Each section badged
• Flexible – learners can dip in and out at will
• Mix of new and existing OER
• Co-authored by OU and relevant SPN member
• Freely accessible via OpenLearn Works
Target audiences

1. **Supporting children’s development**: For teaching assistants and other low paid, unqualified school staff.

2. **Introducing practical healthcare**: For healthcare assistants and the wider health sector workers (bands 1-4 primarily).

3. **Planning a better future**: A generic course aimed at a wide section of low paid workers, e.g. those in retail, hospitality, service industries.

4. **Caring for adults**: A social care course to support those in low paid or voluntary work in home, residential, community or family care settings.

5. **Starting your small business**: For those who want to set up, develop and sustain a Micro-Small Enterprise.

6. **Taking part in the voluntary sector**: For those interested in being involved with the Voluntary Sector.
Evaluation: What do we want to know?

• 2 parts to the evaluation framework:
  – 1) Evaluation of the resources (website and courses)
  – 2) Evaluation of the SPN network

• Evaluation of the courses:
  – How popular are the courses?
  – Who are the courses reaching?
  – How are the courses being used?
  – Do those accessing the courses move onto further learning?
  – Do those accessing these courses demonstrate any change in motivation/confidence towards learning?
  – Are the courses relevant and fit for purpose?
Approach to evaluation

a) Analytics and OpenLearn Works
   – ComScore Dax (Open University analytics system) and Google Analytics

b) Evaluation/ feedback survey
   – Survey Monkey at the end of the course

c) Measure of self-regulated learning
   – 24-item self-rating scale

d) Possible option: Tracking through to higher education/further education
   – Higher Education and Access Tracker (HEAT), a database subscription service led by University of Kent
   – Requires personal information from learners – full name, gender, date of birth and postcode
Challenges to evaluation

Reducing barriers to access: there is no requirement to enrol unless they wish to collect badges.

- Don’t know who the learners are
- Don’t collect personal information required for tracking purposes (HEAT)

No set journey through the course: learners are encouraged to dip in and out of sections in any order, and collect badges in whatever manner they wish.

- Difficulties for tracking journeys
- Difficulties for ensuring that learners carry out the pre-post measure of self-regulated learning

Short term project: requiring longitudinal study of future learning.

Low response rates: Surveys and questionnaires are known for achieving lower response rates.

- The University Survey Office has quoted a typical return of between 5-8% of questionnaires.

No control group: cannot ethicallyestrategically withhold access

- Experimental or quasi-experimental design would not be appropriate
Overcoming challenges

Reducing barriers to access:
• Attractiveness of the badge
• Optional personal information
• Confidence in the Open University brand.

No set journey through the course:
• Handholding through the course
• Situating pre- and post-measures of self-regulated learning within the beginning and end sections.

Short term project:
• Automated/sustainable data collection and analyses
• Collecting personal information from the outset to feed into later HEAT subscription
• Contact details for potential qualitative follow-up.

Low response rates:
• Embedding evaluation as an activity within the course
• Design that guides learners on a journey
• Promotion of the end of course survey.

No control group:
• Possibilities of comparing those who studied only one section/badge to those completing the full course.
Where we are now...

1. Website

2. Courses
   - **Supporting children’s development** – piloting early March
   - **Introducing practical healthcare** – piloting early March
   - **Planning a better future** – handover to LTS
   - **Caring for adults** – handover to LTS
   - **Starting your small business** – content authoring
   - **Taking part in the voluntary sector** – content authoring

*Planning for all resources to be available by end of July

3. Tracking and Monitoring
Thank you for listening...

Any Questions?

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