



Action research project: Exploring the impact of leisure education on the well-being of learners

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INTRODUCTION

Living in the 21st century we are bombarded by constant and rapid changes, leaving us to continuously adapt to our ever-changing landscape (World Economic Forum, 2024). Lifelong Learning (LLL) has been recognized as a vital necessity for surviving our current global climate (UNESCO, 2024). LLL is the notion that learning is an ongoing process in all stages of life through a variety of modalities (UNESCO, 2024). Legislations and policies in Wales are working towards a more inclusive and equitable LLL sector to broaden access and engagement. Confounding evidence has shown the benefits LLL has towards the well-being of individuals, communities and societies.

Well-being encompasses an individual's overall quality of life and is vital for the flourishing of human beings. In Wales we have seen the establishment of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, implementing a new strategic vision to ensure the enhancement and preservation of the people and country. This act recognises the importance of LLL and aims to work towards a more inclusive and equitable LLL sector.

My current role with Learning Pembrokeshire has sparked this inquiry on how LLL is affecting learners within the community. Looking into how LLL is contributing to the community and changes we can incorporate into our practices to increase and broaden engagement.

METHODOLOGY

A Participatory Action Research method has been adopted, allowing for a unique perspective of being an 'insider' and "to transform the conduct and consequences of our practice to meet the needs of changing times and circumstances..." (Kemmis, 2014, p5).

Participant criteria: individuals who have engaged or are currently engaging in LLL courses in Tenby learning centre. Interviews and questionnaires were utilised for data collection with a sample size of 2 and 3. A recall or retrospective measurement of well-being was applied as this allows for a more accurate evaluation of past experiences (Scollon et. al, 2004; Tov, 2018).

Interview results were analysed thematically as this method of "allows for the research to generate theory from data, rather than apply theory to practice" (McCaater, 2013), which would be the goal of this action research project

FINDINGS

Quantitative data show that engagement to LLL significantly increased learner well-being, with all 3 participants scoring a 5 in each aspect of well-being. Furthermore, results showed a significant drop in well-being scores when engagement to LLL ceased.

Qualitative Data themes:

Benefits of LLL to Well-being

- All participants reported increased levels of well-being during engagement to LLL.
- LLL has contributed to their sense of community and social connectedness.

Increase of access and availabilities

- Call for more variety of courses in learning centres to encourage engagement.

RECOMMENDATIONS



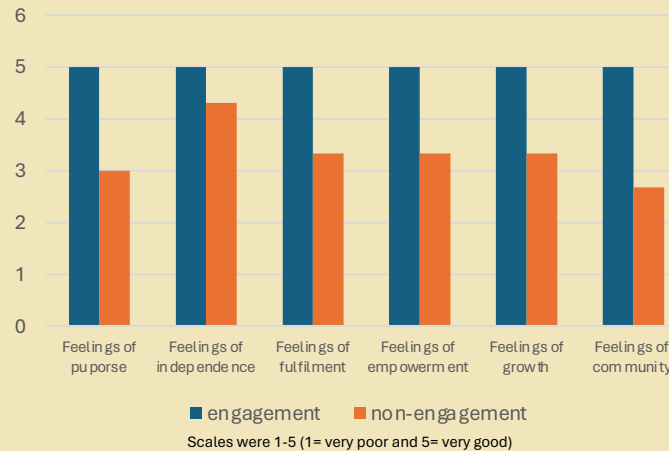
- Promotion of LLL courses on social media platforms, to increase awareness to a wider audience, which in turn can increase engagement. Especially as over half of adults aged 25-35 years old consume news and information via social media platforms (Ofcom, 2023)

- Online delivery of courses to promote access and engagement to LLL courses. Currently only 3 courses have the option of online access. Several research have suggested that online delivery of courses increases access and engagement (Dodo-Balu, 2015; Goodman, Melkers & Pallais, 2019).



- Creating video endorsements to introduce courses can allow learners to create first impressions of tutors and courses. This can be a way of reassuring individuals who may have trepidations about enrolling to a course. Studies have also shown that short form videos positively impact purchase intention, therefore increasing chances of engagement to LLL (Shen & Wang 2024).

Average scores on well-being



CONCLUSION

As expected, current findings show that engagement in LLL has positive effects towards the well-being of learners in Pembrokeshire. Recommendations presented are guided by recent findings, policies and legislations and are in line with Professional Standards (2017). Specifically, by promoting "diversity, equality of opportunity and inclusion" and "utilising evidence and research to improve practice" (Professional Standards, 2017)

This study serves as the first phase of inquiry for this action research project. Future cycles are encouraged to allow for the evaluation and reflection of the effects of the current recommendations.

It is acknowledged that the sample size is small and so further research incorporating a larger sample size is encouraged, alongside a collaborative environment integrating other practitioners within the establishment to widen the field of expertise, experience and perspective.

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