WILD For Meta Skills

Practitioner Dissemination Report (July 2022)

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We're NCFE.
We're shaping smarter learning.

We're NCFE: an educational charity and leader in vocational and technical learning. **We combine over 170 years of education experience** with deep insight, working with a network of expert collaborators to shape smarter solutions around the greatest learning needs. In doing this, we're working for a fairer education system for all learners to power inclusivity and choice.

In 1848, we were born from the belief that no learner should be left behind. Today, we're taking up that cause with fresh energy. Our vision and goals will be achieved through:

→ Creating education for a fairer world
→ Moving towards a smarter education eco-system
→ Using our influence to shape real change
→ Promoting the idea that potential is personal.

WILD Learning exists to help people increase their Learning Power and develop the self-leadership to thrive in our complex and ever-changing world. Talk to us about our scientifically robust, research-validated, self-assessment analytic called 'CLARA' which supports a self-directed learning journey supported by our new Learning Journey Platform.

Developed through 21 years of academic research into what it takes to become an effective lifelong learner, we shine a spotlight on how people learn so that they can become the 'pilot and not the passenger' in their own journey.

We specialise in enhancing Learning Power measurably and systematically using a range of coaching tools and techniques. We work with all ages and across many different cultures supporting organic, place-based change, aligned to global sustainability.

For more information about NCFE or this report please contact:

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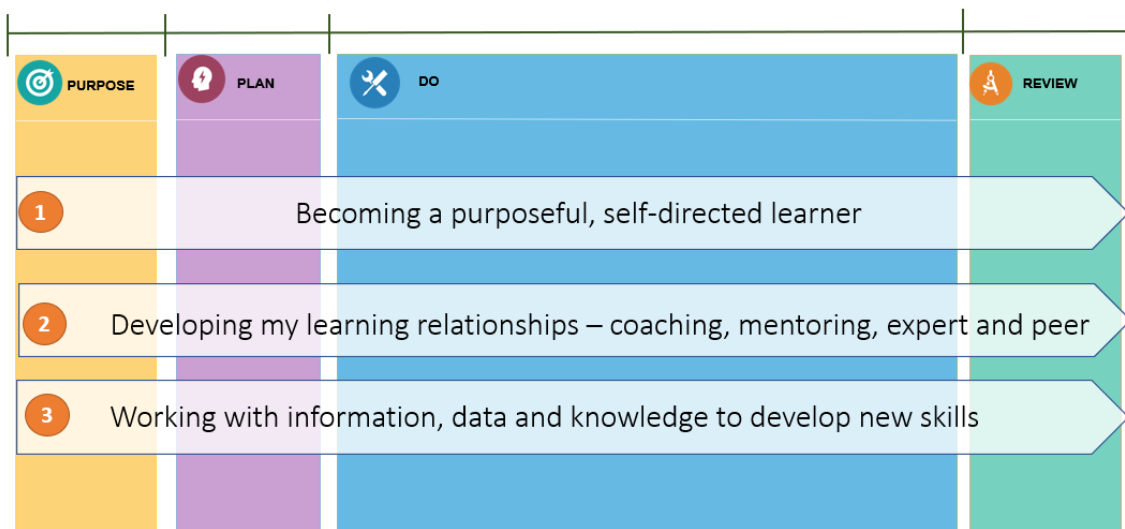
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Project Overview

This project was undertaken in partnership between NCFE and WILD Learning at Nottingham College. The project demonstrated how the use of scientifically credible learner analytics around overall 'Learning Power' and 21C meta-skills can be used as formative assessment to inform the design and delivery of work-related learning experiences for a cohort, and individuals within it, in order to enhance the engagement and outcomes of 14-19 year-old students in an FE setting.

A Work Integrated Learning Design (WILD) approach, scaffolded by Learning Power and Helix employability skills (meta-skills) frameworks and assessments, was used to create transformational change within students enabling them to attain greater insights and progress in relation to their understanding of their purpose, themselves as learners, their skills and their project within the College.

The project methodology used experiential learning cycles set within the framework of a learning journey. This Work Integrated Learning Design (WILD) approach starts with Purpose, followed by Plan, Do and then Review. In this pilot the learning journey was aligned to the project plan devised by the college.

The WILD Learning Journey 'flows of personal change'

PURPOSE	PLAN	DO		REVIEW
1	Becoming a purposeful, self-directed learner			
2	Developing my learning relationships – coaching, mentoring, expert and peer			
3	Working with information, data and knowledge to develop new skills			

Embedding Learning Power as the fuel for a Self-directed Learning Journey

WILD tested the efficacy of a multi-level approach within the system whereby tutors and students acquired the understanding of the empirically valid 8 Learning Power Dimensions together: generating a shared understanding and shared vocabulary of Learning Power. Following this professional development and informed by the student online self-assessments, tutors were supported to design more meaningful and effective learning experiences for their students to develop and embed within their project to address their personal 21C meta-skills development needs.
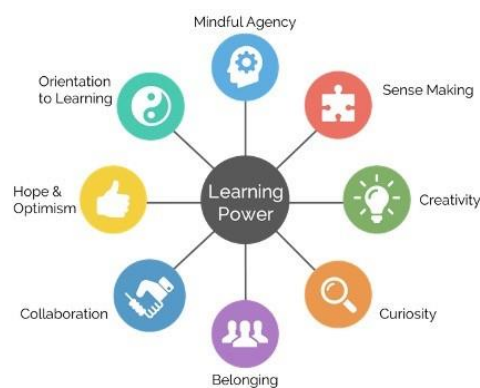

Key messages/findings

Student agency and thinking skills

WILD's thinking skills for authentic enquiry were explicitly modelled and facilitated for students to support their progress throughout their project and learning journey.

Students were engaged in regular coaching-for-learning conversations throughout the project which focused on Learning how to learn and the development of students thinking skills using the Helix self-assessment. This approach and these conversations successfully supported the development of self-leadership, learning relationships and complex problem solving in students. Data from these self-assessments evidence the change in Learning Power dimensions for students and compare the beginning of the learning journey to the end using a second self-assessment post profiling exercise. It is evident that students benefit from being the pilot, not the passenger in their own learning and when they are given the opportunity to think about learning with a consistent, common language they become more engaged.
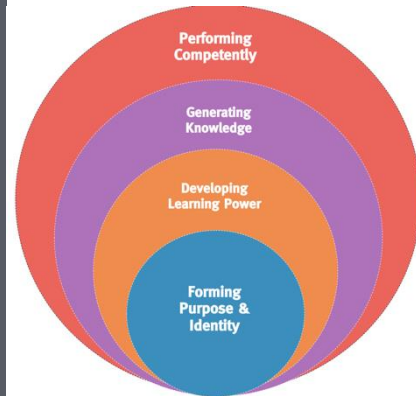
Engagement at multiple levels of the system

The project demonstrated the need for upfront engagement from the leadership teams within the College and ongoing support throughout. Getting access to work with the college and tutors to work on Purpose and Plan stage of the learning journey and embed a common language and understanding of the WILD Learning Journey approach before they launch a student project is critical.

Purpose, connecting the inside with the outside

Learning Power and Thinking sills data from the self-assessment surveys were used to inform facilitated learning conversations with students. This focussed first on students' sense of identity and personal purpose. Students were able to use their Learning Power profile results to articulate their strengths and set learning power targets for change. This data also informed the development of their thinking skills which they utilised in their independent enquiry work-related project, using thinking skills tools to identify, analyse and find solutions for the complex problem presented to them in their project brief.

Learning Journey for the tutors is critical – you can't give what you haven't got

The college tutor embarked on their own learning journey in parallel with the students. They too undertook their learning power profile and engaged in regular, weekly, 1-1 coaching conversations to explore their professional identity and learning purpose. They were invited to set targets for change and use these to think differently about their professional practice and learning design.

Co creating learning experiences based on data from learners – learning power/employability skills

Learning Power offers a unique and simple way of mapping interventions directly onto the learning power dimensions and meta-skills that the data diagnosed as most in need of development within this student cohort. WILD team members supported the FE tutor through weekly 1-1 joint planning sessions that built on their personal learning power coaching and this demonstrably enhanced the capacity of the tutor to engage more deeply with their students and to facilitate a richer and more engaging learning experience for them.

Tutors were more confident in their professional delivery of learning and better able to adapt to the student needs in the moment, calling out when students were actively using their Learning Power dimensions in working sessions. For example, curiosity was an opportunity for the group – so when questions were asked by students, the tutor felt justified in adapting their delivery of content, allowing space to explore the question further – rather than shutting the student down and moving onto the next activity on the list. Teaching started to become more dynamic, and student/learner led.

Authentic Assessment Events to measure what matters

On completion of the project the students undertook a second learning power profile and, through comparison with their first, engaged in reflection on their personal and professional development

through the project. There was an authentic assessment at the end of the learning journey cycle at which students presented:

- Their artefact and innovative contribution to the problem space.
- A personal story of significant change which illustrated the student's self-leadership, presented in narrative form.
- Evidence of the application and meaningful use and development of one or more meta skills to their project outcome.

Students experienced learning interventions that were targeted to the greatest development needs in relation to learning power dimensions and meta-skills as identified by their initial questionnaires and surveys. The learning interventions were skilfully co-designed between the college tutor and the WILD team; using the strongest learning power dimensions of the cohort as a vehicle to access the learning and maximise student engagement.

Young people developing learning relationships and belonging

A specific area of growth for student cohorts during the project was around learning relationships and

How to measure employability skills in a way that is helpful to the student

This project also tested an approach related to allowing these skills to be better understood and practiced by students. Further development of this work is ongoing, and we are keen to continue building relationships with key stakeholders who have interest in this area.

Conclusions

The many things we have learned through this project can be grouped under three key headings: student agency, professional agency, and digital capability.

Student Agency

Student agency can be promoted and developed through WILD (Work Integrated Learning Design) approaches in real-world employer engagement projects. Employability skills gain greater traction because of learner self-perception of purpose, identity and learning power.

Learner experiences, engagement and outcomes can be significantly enhanced by deeper consideration of learning design; embedding the meta skills and learning power expertise offered by the WILD team at the planning phase and introduction of the project.

Professional agency

Courageous leadership is required to develop institutions with a culture of learning that encourage and support pedagogical innovation. Given that all educational professionals are leaders, tutor agency is an essential driver of the learning design required to deliver and

assess wider student outcomes. Developing such professional agency requires a radical new approach to teacher education whereby ITT programmes train a 'new breed' of learning professional capable of designing learning experiences for students where they operate across a continuum of pedagogical approaches and prioritise learning by design.

Digital Capability

New measurement models are required that can reliably and validly capture student self-leadership, learning relationships and problem-solving capabilities. New technologies offer new opportunities which should be developed and exploited – enhancing, not abandoning, traditional outcome measures. Digital capability is key to scaling.

If you are interested in finding out more about the wider outcomes of this work and experiencing these benefits in your setting, please do not hesitate to contact us at: hello@wildlearn.co.uk