



Clubs, Pubs, Sleep or Study: How can we better engage with learners'?

By Lesley Strachan

April 2010

Adult learners

Previous research:

- Focus on the learners needs v what we want to teach (Wilman and Strachan, 2009)
- Everyday experiences/informal learning v taught courses or structured training (Learning and Skills Agency, 2004)
- Project based courses for skill development (McMullan *et al.*, 1991)
- Experiential learning in line with employers needs (Smart *et al.*, 1999)

Findings

Six years of research

- Re-design of units
- Changes in the way students are taught/assessed
- Managing the learners physical or virtual environment
- Learning outcomes more aligned to employers needs

Learners preferences

Three units in top 20 of 1600 annually - reasons

- Time of day important
- Interactive lectures - Response Clickers, theory is contextualized to students own life, active v passive learning
- Seminars - Computer simulation games, learning by doing (Preshing, 1991), active learning tasks, application to real life business scenarios, podcasts, web links, YouTube
- Assessments - students choose projects

Outcomes

- Improved attendance
- Improved pass rates
- Increase in student engagement
- Increased student satisfaction
- A win-win for everyone

Discussion and conclusion

- Research shows that learning needs to be meaningful and productive to students
- If not they will club, pub, sleep and not study
- Learners have needs and these should be met as far as possible so that students have a positive learning experience

What do you think?