

DEMONSTRATING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY FROM EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE AT PERTH COLLEGE UHI

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INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research project was to discover to what extent principles from the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) framework had been embedded within Early Education and Childcare (EECC) programmes at Perth College UHI. The study aimed to address an identified lack of knowledge on the part of schools and colleges concerning developments in HE pedagogy, and how these complement Curriculum for Excellence.

There were three different elements to the research:

1. A narrative to describe the full range of courses and how these map against the CfE framework
2. Questionnaires to explore the views of:
 - a. Students who have engaged on courses provided by the EECC team
 - b. Teachers from the schools whose pupils are involved in the courses offered by the EECC team
 - c. EECC lecturers with regard to their awareness of the principles of CfE within the current curriculum
3. Interviews and focus groups to explore the views of current and past students (for secondary school through to HE level) to establish their ability to articulate examples of CfE principles in their learning

OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

The result of the study show that CfE principles are evident throughout EECC provision. Students at school and FE levels recognise how the teaching and learning they are experiencing supports the development of the four capacities of CfE and they appear to value it. In comparison, the students at SCQF levels 7 and 8, particularly those studying online, while still able to recognise the value of the capacities when asked specifically about them, are rather less able to articulate them. Lecturing staff are very clear about what they are doing, and why they are doing it and members of the schools' partnership appear to value the relationship with the EECC subject area of Perth College UHI; they also express the desire to see it develop further.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors come up with a number of recommendations including extending the study to include local employers to elicit their views of the effectiveness of provision in the subject area for those students who progress to employment in the sector.

They also suggest that further research would establish whether there is any ambiguity in the meanings of concepts and words with both HE and FE students. This would allow greater understanding of some student responses. In particular, the very significant issue of technology for online students could potentially skew responses in some cases.