

'Engaging' with education through technology: supporting at risk young people with their next steps

Emma Whewell and Alison Power
Associate Professors (Learning and Teaching)
The University of Northampton

ECER 2023, Glasgow
22nd - 25th August 2023



The Context

(social justice and inclusion)



The ENGAGE programme at the Northampton Saints Foundation works with students aged between 10-16 in alternative education provision to increase confidence and boost self-esteem.



Research Question:

- How can a Participatory Action Research Project empower young people in an alternative provision setting to capture their experiences through the use of technology?

Research Aim:

- To evaluate the usability, effectiveness and impact of a digitised Student Passport (Student e-Passport).



Recruitment Strategy:

Phase 1

- Staff members working with young people were invited to join a focus group

Phase 2

- Staff members working with young people were invited to join a focus group
- Digital artefacts were harvested

Ethics:

- This study was approved by the UON FHES Ethics Committee



Theoretical Framework: Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

(Cast, 2018)

Engagement



Offer options and supports to stimulate motivation and sustained enthusiasm for learning

Representation



Present information in different ways to support access and understanding

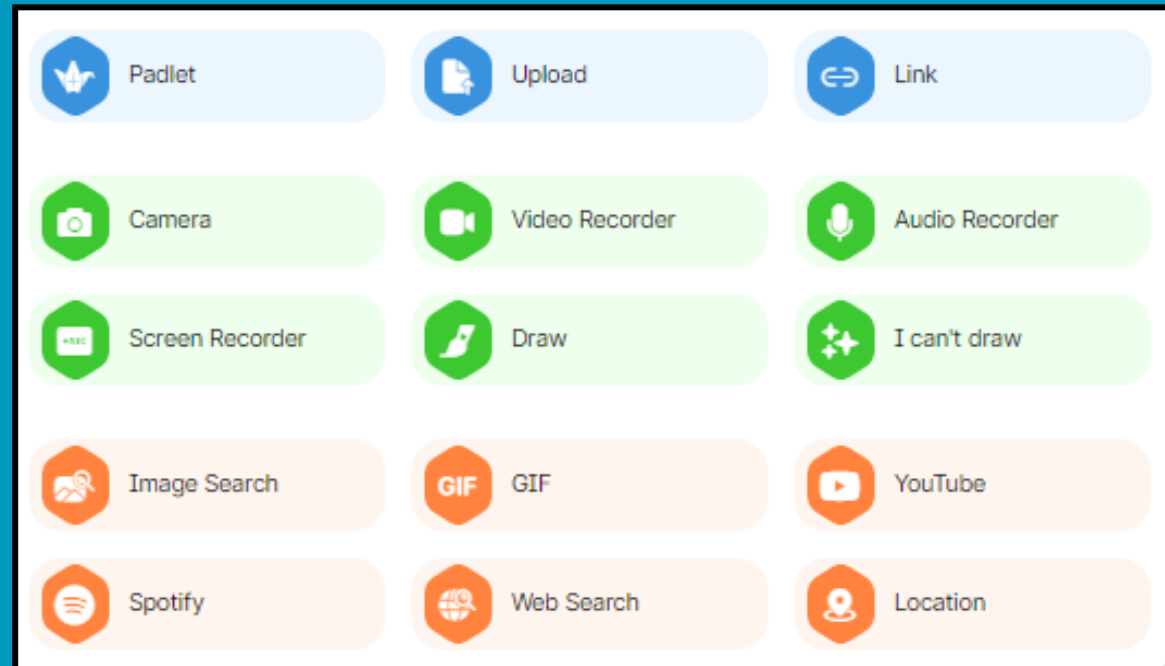
Action & expression



Offer options and supports to all so everyone can create, learn, and share



The Solution?



Phase 1 Evaluation

Logistical considerations:

- Padlet licence provided by UON
- Devices provided by UON funding source
- Internet provided by NSF

Findings (themes):

- Technology
- Student Engagement
- Communication and Support



Theme 1: Technology

'The pens did help because they like drawing and they liked, obviously, writing their own comments with the pens and stuff like that, so the pens did help basically'

'It was a bit difficult to start with because we had to kind of learn and get used to like how we use it, what gets set-up, and what we can do on it and find ways around that technical difficulties'



Theme 2: Student Engagement

'There's like being as like a breath of fresh air for the kids as well as like, because when it used to come to doing the passport is like got to that stage where the kids would be moaning and not wanting to do it. But now because there's technology involved, they're just genuinely more open minded to partake.'

'I just thought that it would be better if they had things on it already that they, were complete like steps rather than create whatever they want themselves, cause when you give them that chance they be like, 'oh, I don't wanna do it'. But as if you had stuff on it already for them to complete, they will go 'Oh yeah, actually that looks interesting. I'll do it.'



Theme 3: Communication and Support

'I think the communication's been quite good and quite quick, like between us, like when we've asked over the changes you've actually been quite nice and respondent. [...] It's been quite easy and open conversation. It's been nice.'



Recommendations

Structure

'Maybe like a story template. Like a very brief basic story template of like what their name is, how old they are? Like what their favourite thing to do is? their favourite colour, favourite food.'

- Getting to know me
- My family and friends
- How I am feeling
- My future



Phase 2 (staff and student experiences)

- Refined Student e-Passport
- Student e-Passport rolled out to other Hubs in the franchise

Changes made...

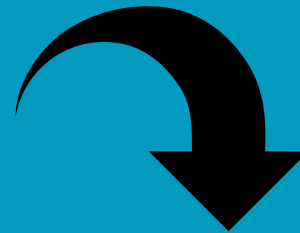
- Structured activities
- Resources for staff
- Resources for students
- Staff training across franchise
- Post 16 provision



Phase 2 Padlets



Passport



**e-Passport
Master Hub Padlet**



Under 16s



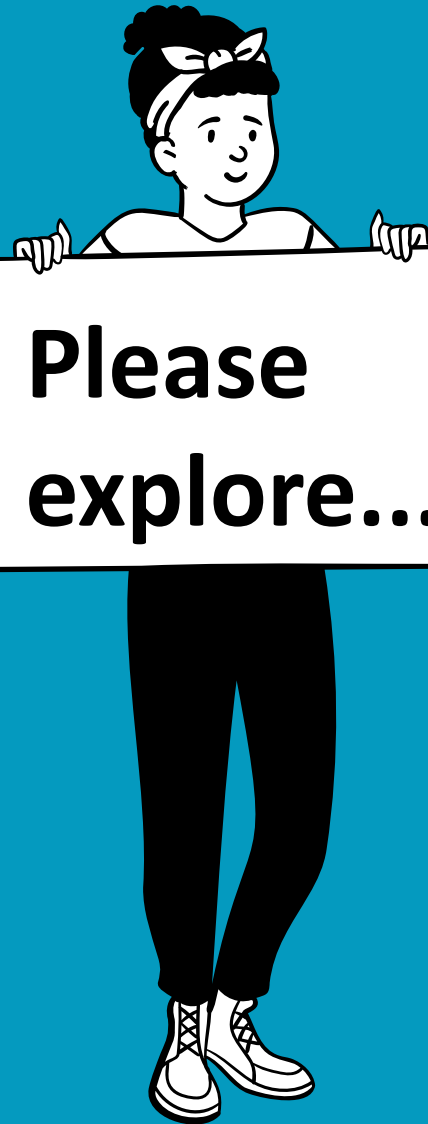
padlet



16+



padlet



**Please
explore...**

Interim feedback

- Staff found the range of resources useful
- Staff training was well received
- Students engaged with the padlet



Phase 2 Evaluation

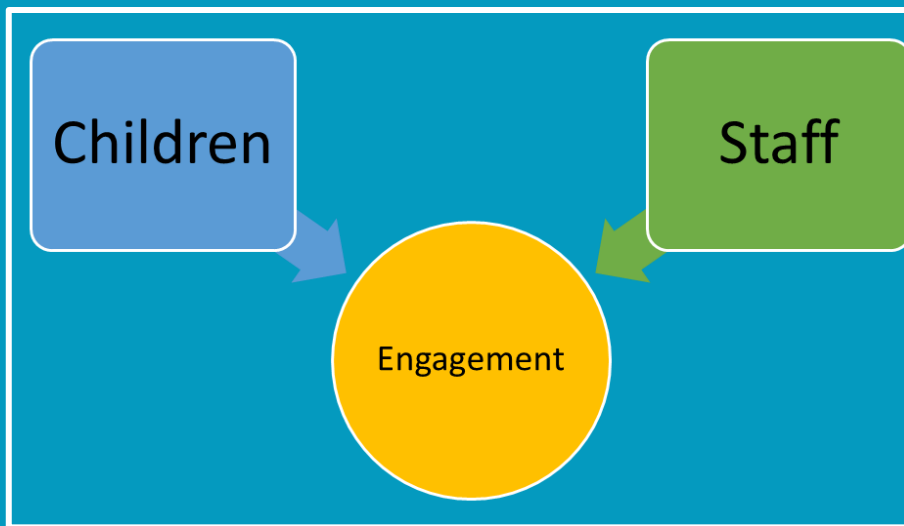
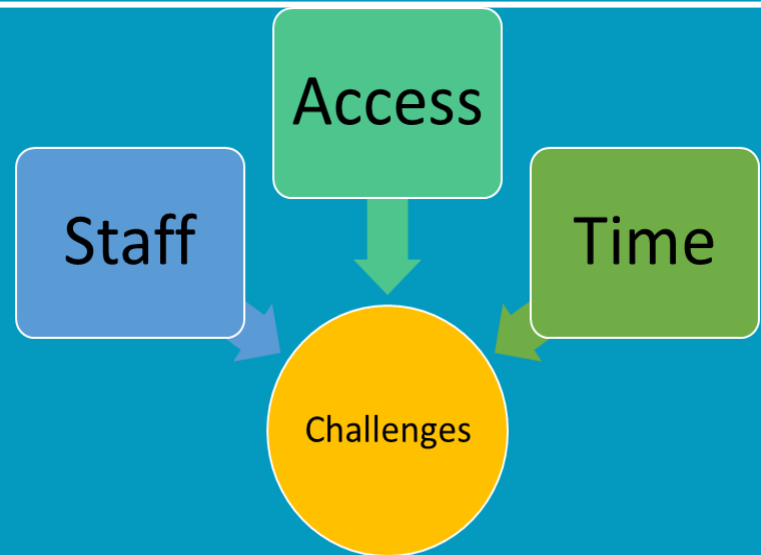
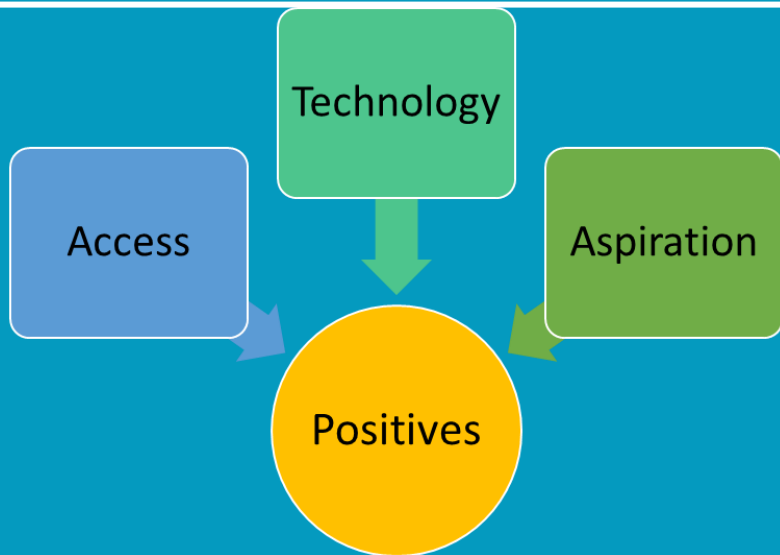
Logistical considerations:

- Padlet licence provided by UON
- Devices provided by UON funding source
- Internet provided by NSF

Findings (themes):

- Engagement
- Challenges
- Positives





Theme 1: Engagement

'...real positive feedback with the kids and the involvement of it. I think it's still been a rally positive experience'

'We had some real understanding from the staff members that were also delivering it on what was expected and what we wanted to get out of the process.'



Theme 2: Challenges

'we had some staffing changes which meant that we had different people moving around.'

'I think if we kept the same staffing group together and I think it would have been a lot easier.'

'when you've got 8 to 12 individuals with different learning needs at one time it's quite difficult to do'

'across the board in every single group they were really low ability. So I think a learning curve for us'

'So our delivery where we had two days a week with the participants last year that got stripped back to one day. So actually our involvement of time with the young people, we had not enough hours to complete their work. if it's built as part of that curriculum at the start, I think it could be a really powerful tool.'



Theme 3: Positives

'I think, from the paper based one, it was very much easier to complete and then in terms of both time aspect'

'It was very much interactive, it was, it was good to capture the moments that we've embedded into the programme.'

'It's definitely something that you know that is current and on trend and with the right individuals easy 'to manage.'

'With all of our efforts with the passport, it's enabling conversation. So in terms of improving the students and improving their outlook and improving how they feel about society and life.'



Conclusions

- Staff recruitment and retainment
- Time challenges
- Learning challenges
- UDL potential



Thank you

Any questions?

Emma Whewell

Associate Professor (Learning and Teaching)

Emma.whewell@northampton.ac.uk

@UoNPEemma

Alison Power

Associate Professor (Learning and Teaching)

Alison.power@northampton.ac.uk

@alisonpowerUK

