

Example Three – Interactive lesson packs for learning and inspiration

As part of my involvement in the 'Combined University in Cornwall Outreach Network' colleagues and I produced two lesson packs based on current research from our research group to be sent to schools across Cornwall.

Central to each pack was a lesson plan, specifically aligned to the curriculum. These took a surprisingly long time to produce as we kept overcomplicating the tasks and underestimating timings, mostly due to our lack of experience with this age range. Eventually we settled on lesson plans with various options for the teachers to use depending on the dynamic of the class and time schedule, with extension tasks for more able students.

In addition to these were a series of interactive tasks which were designed to promote active learning and participation from students with a range of learning styles (Morss 2005). Consequently, we used PowerPoint to introduce each topic and provide a framework for building knowledge, mixed with practical exercises such as structured debates with (role play) and games to simulate experimental learning and encourage a deeper level of understanding. For example, we designed the structured debate for students to learn about the different ways an area of land could be used (nature reserve, wind farm, development etc.) whilst encouraging students to find and represent their own viewpoint and appreciate others. Ramsden (1992) believes that this 'relativistic conception' i.e. understanding there is no right or wrong answer, is key to higher order thinking and advancing student learning. We used a constructivist approach (Biggs, 2003) by applying the subject material to situations the students are already familiar with to help them construct their own knowledge and challenge how they conceptualise the world around them (Ramsden, 1992).

As well as teaching the students about a particular subject, the outreach network aims to widen participation in higher education to benefit not only the students, but also the local economy and wider society. Therefore, we created a short [film](#) to introduce the holistic and industry-relevant nature of our research and our personal motivations for doing it. I really enjoyed being interviewed for this film because it allowed me to express why I think learning at a university can be great and why I love my career. I believe that making university research more accessible to school students is a fantastic way to inspire children about higher education, especially those who may not believe or be aware that they can attend. I was keen to invest my time producing lesson packs rather than visiting individual schools as I believe this to be a more sustainable and a longer-term influence for widening access to university, also recommended in the Harris Report (2010).

These lesson packs received excellent feedback from Streatham Campus and the College of Life and Environmental Sciences marketing team, who have requested packs to be sent up to Devon for use there.

473 words

Literature cited:

Biggs, J (2003) Teaching for Quality Learning at University. Open University Press/SRHE: Maidenhead.

Harris (2010) What more can be done to widen access to highly selective universities?, p. 83, available at:
<https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/Report-on-access-to-highly-selective-universities.pdf>

Morss, K and Murray, R (2005) Teaching at university: a guide for postgraduates and researchers Sage: London.

Ramsden, P (1992) Learning to teach in Higher Education. Routledge: London.