Appendix 1 – An exemplary evaluation of teachers' professional learning: a case-study.

This project evaluated how well they had achieved their aims of improving staff confidence when promoting equality and celebrating diversity. Before the project began, it was acknowledged that it would be difficult to gather convincing evidence from retention, achievement and progression metrics to measure the success of a project aiming to change teachers' attitudes towards improving learners' wider social development.

Too often, project evaluations of teacher confidence and motivation provide a rationale for the initiative and a description of the activities undertaken, together with surveys of participants' satisfaction quantitatively expressed and corroborated by selected quotes as "evidence". However, this evaluation process offered a more informed and nuanced model for similar projects.

The evaluation was both collaborative and comprehensive, and drew upon a wider range of indicators, providing a breadth of contextual background information. The evaluation included:

Part 1: Learner feedback

- Topics or issues we would like to learn more about;
- Issues that are important to us/ that we can teach others about
- What we do with our E&D learning
- Our ideas about how we can promote and celebrate E&D within our setting

Part 2: Observers' reflections

Part 3: Narratives from our core project team

The project team conducted evaluation activities with full classes of students, as they wanted to avoid the distortion inherent when focus groups of more articulate students are selected.

They documented a comprehensive range of experiences, and not just those positive quotes which applaud the efforts of hard-working teachers.

In highlighting the limitations of the project has generated a credibility and truth of experience which attracts readers to identify meaningfully with the scenarios. These quotes indicate the progress that has been made and further work that is still needed.

Through participating in the evaluation process, both learners and observers continued to explore and consolidate their diversity awareness. Learners used the discussions to disclose the personal implications of the diversity activities, and observers realised that their "noticing" in classrooms had improved.

Empowering teaching and learning communities to promote equality and celebrate diversity: Reflections from our project extension

Image Credit: *What do we do with our equality and diversity learning?* Feedback from Functional Skills L1 and L2 learners

Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is to share additional findings that stemmed from an opportunity to extend our equality and diversity (E&D) OTLA project. In light of findings from our substantive project, we were keen to involve learners more explicitly within our research, particularly in relation to how they conceptualised E&D, what they did with their learning and they felt how our settings might better promote and celebrate E&D. In addition to strengthening input from our learners, we were also keen to understand the impact of our fresh approaches to E&D, (engaging in collaborative practice; standing in solidarity; re-centring E&D and flipping the teacher/learner dynamic), each developed and embedded over the course of our project. As such, we asked staff undertaking lesson observations to reflect upon changes they had witnessed (if any), and provide a brief summary of their reflections, particularly in relation to staff confidence and learner development. Finally, we were keen to understand from core project staff how their direct engagement in our project had affected their own approaches to celebrating and promoting E&D, and whether focused time on the project had raised further questions or future points of enquiry.

Part 1: Learner feedback

Within each setting, project leads visited learners to discuss their E&D provision under four core themes: topics or issues we would like to learn more about; what we do with our E&D learning; issues that are important to us/ that we can teach others about and our ideas about how we can promote and celebrate E&D within our setting (depicted in the images below).

Image credit: *E&D discussion prompts for learners* (DBC L&S, BAC and SWDT, 2018).

The aim of our visits was to ascertain from learners how they conceptualised E&D, as this helped us understand the impact of our work as well as identify any areas where we needed to strengthen our provision. We also wanted to explore in more detail which aspects of E&D learners felt were important and meaningful to them, what specifically they wanted to learn more about and where they felt their own skills and expertise lay. Within each setting, we were keen to embrace collaborative rather than didactic forms of teaching and learning in relation to E&D and we hoped that regular consultation in this way would consolidate existing efforts to generate collective responsibility for the promotion and celebration of E&D within each of our settings.

The project leads visited learners in their own classes, as opposed to 'taking learners out' and holding focus groups or think tanks. We felt that this was important so we could understand learners' responses within the context of their usual learning routines and class dynamic (Lave, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991). We also hoped that by visiting lessons in this way, everyone in the class would have an opportunity to be heard, as opposed to individual learners being 'cherry picked' because they speak articulately or 'know the right thing to say'. We visited learners across a range of disciplines and academic levels, as well as spending time with those who accessed learning away from the main sites of our settings, including those involved in community outreach and apprenticeship learning. Although each of our settings serve predominantly white, working class communities, we were able to meet and speak with learners from a diverse range of

backgrounds, including BAME learners, ESOL learners, learners with disabilities and learners with additional needs. We also met learners across age and gender spectrums. This felt very important to us, so we could begin to understand how learners conceptualised and experienced E&D within our settings from an intersectional perspective (Bhopal and Preston, 2012; hooks, 1994), taking into account a collective, thematic understanding of E&D, whilst also paying heed to specific issues affecting groups within our learning communities.

Conceptualising E&D

Understandings of E&D varied across classes, settings and between individual learners. Some learners were able to define 'equality' and 'diversity' and explain each term in relation to 'real life' examples:

> *'It's about creating equal opportunities for everyone, and making arrangements to make things equal where they are not. Like if everybody has a reading test and one person needs a coloured overlay, you provide them with the overlay and that's equality.'* L2 Functional English learner.

> *'Diversity means different. We're all different and that's good. Like he supports Newcastle and I support 'Boro, or he's Islam and I'm no religion.'* Joinery Apprenticeship learner.

Other learners were unsure about the terminology, especially in relation to diversity:

> *'I know equality because it sounds like equal, but I don't know the other one.'* L1 Functional English learner.

> *'Is it like discriminate?'* EL3 Functional Maths learner.

A common response in relation to defining equality centred upon 'treating people equally', with little understanding in relation to reasonable adjustments, redressing structural prejudice or combatting discrimination:

> *'Equality is treating people the same.'* ESOL learner

> *'It's when everyone gets the same, black, white, traveller, you give them the same.'* EL2 Functional Maths learner

The mixed responses from learners reveal that understanding terminology, including comprehension of commonly used words (e.g. E&D, 'equality', 'diversity', 'inclusion') cannot be taken for granted. Learners had better understanding of words like 'fair' and 'difference' because these words were less abstract and detached from their everyday experience:

> *'Mainly I wouldn't say equality and diversity, I'd just say what's fair and what's not fair.'* L2 Functional Skills English learner.

> *'I want to learn but they are hard [words] to learn.'* ESOL learner.

It is important therefore that we do not take understanding of terminology pertaining to E&D (including the words 'equality' and 'diversity') for granted (regardless of the learner's academic

level). Failure to deconstruct terminology and apply it to relatable 'real life' situations may therefore inadvertently exclude some learners from full and holistic engagement in their E&D work. To better promote equality and celebrate diversity, we must first ensure that everyone understands what these terms mean and what they connote.

Topics or issues we would like to learn more about

Asking learners which topics they would like to learn more about also helped generate understanding in relation to how they conceptualised E&D, as well as revealing particular aspects of E&D that had caught their attention. Ideas were rich and varied across classes, although many learners focused on issues directly affecting either themselves or a family member, including special educational needs or employment issues:

> *'For me I want to know more about special needs so I can help my little boy with his learning.'* L1 Functional English learner.

> *'There's not equal opportunities for us because we're on apprenticeships. We get treat different so I want to know my rights like with weekend work and getting [my] hours back.'* Motor Vehicle Apprenticeship learner.

Some learners wanted to learn more about 'local issues', including cultural festivals and religious diversity:

> *'There's lots going on in our town that you don't find out about so I'd like to know more about the different festivals and events.'* EL3 Functional English learner.

In one class, some learners spoke more broadly about 'the news' and things that caught their attention. A lack of a global consciousness or awareness of world events aside from class based learning was common however, as demonstrated in the exchange below that took place between three L2 Functional English learners:

> Learner 1: *'I can't believe he's [President Trump] allowed to come, with all what he's done.'*

> Learner 2: *'Is he? I didn't even know. I don't know about politics. God's honest truth I don't watch the news or anything like that.'*

> Learner 3: *'I don't watch [the news]. Can't be doing with it.'*

Some ESOL learners brought a different perspective in relation to future learning, highlighting '*confidence*', '*friendship*' and *'understanding the human race'* as core aspects of E&D they wanted to learn more about. Some ESOL learners also spoke about *'learning English'* as a way of connecting with their local community, securing employment and avoiding isolation:

> *'Before I came I did not know anybody. I only knew my husband. Now I am learning English I can speak to my neighbours and soon I hope to have employment.'* ESOL learner.

Issues that are important to us/ that we can teach others about

In each of our settings, we asked learners to share issues they felt passionately about, whether they were occurring in their local communities or on a global scale. We also asked learners what they felt they could teach others about. Important issues tended to relate to community based concerns, such as the increased prevalence of litter and lack of facilities for young people or the elderly. Learners also spoke about lack of support or understanding about mental health issues and the impact of domestic violence within their own families and communities.

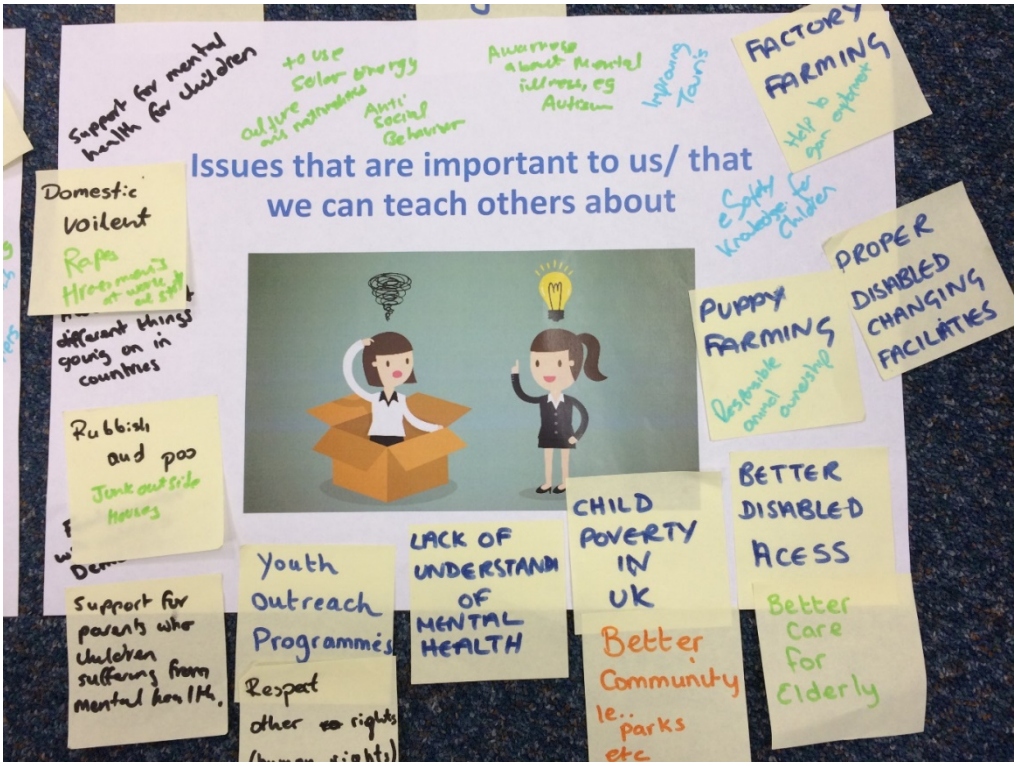

Image credit: *Issues that are important to us/ that we can teach others*. L1 Functional English

Apprenticeship learners tended to relate E&D issues that were important to them directly to their learning. Health and Social Care apprentices spoke of the importance of understanding the lives and backgrounds of those whom they were caring for, including dietary requirements as they related to religious or cultural beliefs. Joinery apprentices considered their own positionality in relation to others in the work place and how at times, their contribution was downplayed due to their age:

> *'I think its discrimination like when they're older and so they think you can't teach them anything. But they're still using all the old systems and I'm thinking, if you give me a go I'll change all your systems so they run better. We're really good at technology, apps and that, but they think because they're older they know better.'* Joinery Apprenticeship learner.

The comment above raises important questions in relation how young people are perceived in the workplace and how positionalities relating to age and 'learner status' can disempower.

In terms of what learners felt they could teach others, Joinery apprentices felt they could serve as *'role models for site life'*, supporting Study Programme and Diploma learners to understand *'how equality and diversity works on site'*. As one learner explained:

'You have to know or you could lose the contract. Like if you're working with is it Muslim contractors? Well you can't expect Friday working. Friday's at the mosque because that's their day like Sunday [is] for Christians.' Joinery Apprenticeship learner.

Other learners were connected to local charity or community groups and felt they could teach others about the work they were involved in. Some also disclosed personal experiences relating to mental ill health, learning needs and disabilities and felt that they could use their experiences to help others:

'Don't bottle it up. That's what I can teach others. From personal experience.' EL2 Functional Skills Maths learner discussing mental health.

Previous learning from our OTLA project suggested that reflecting and valuing learner's experiences and expertise within E&D work was instrumental in developing confidence and a sense of belonging within their learning setting. Building confidence in this way helps aid academic as well as social progression (Briggs, 2014; Goleman, 2004), as when learners feel valued and included, they are more likely to stay and engage in learning.

What we do with our E&D learning

The majority of learners we spoke with shared aspects of their E&D learning with family and friends:

'I love it when we learn about the issues, should cannabis be legal as a medical aid we did, and another was about divorce laws and LGBT. I go home and tell my husband what we've been learning.' English L2 learner.

'I go home and tell my kids. Half the time they laugh at me and say 'well obviously mam', they know like a lot more than me about this stuff half the time. But I like talking to them, linking up what I do with what they do.' EL3 Functional Skills Maths learner.

Some learners, inspired by debates that had taken place during learning looked up information for themselves online:

'If I'm interested, I look it up more on my phone and that.' Alternative Education learner.

'If I'm helping my son with his homework we might have a look when we're on the internet together.' Access to HE learner.

A couple of learners also mentioned applying their learning within other aspects of their lives; particularly in relation to employment or volunteering:

'It's helped me in my volunteering role. I'm more aware of equality issues when I'm working with people.' L2 English learner.

'At work I've been explaining to people why they should vote, that women died so we could vote. I don't think everyone's aware of that.' L1 English learner.

In some groups, aside from talking with family and looking up information online, there was little proactive engagement with learning (e.g. feeling inspired to engage in volunteering opportunities or donating to local food banks). This was at times because learners themselves were in a poor position to help others, needing help themselves first. This was poignantly brought to light during discussions with a community outreach Entry Level Maths group about the empty food bank box in the community hall:

> Project Lead: *'I notice there's a food bank donation box there. Is that something this class started?'*
>
> Learner 1: *'You'll notice it's empty.'*
>
> Learner 2: *'Charity starts at home.'*

Nevertheless, learners from this group (many of whom would be eligible to receive donations from food banks themselves), spoke about the importance of reducing stigma in their own areas and their active engagement in community activities, including supporting the local school:

> *'I'm on the parent's committee and this school is really good you know. Really good. People make judgements about this estate and they've never set foot here, never met anyone.'*

Learners from this group also spoke about how their E&D work had helped them feel more confident in relation to their own rights, as well as challenging others about their use of discriminatory language:

> *'I used to let it go but now I feel more confident to say it's wrong if they're calling me because of my disability'* EL2 Functional Skills Maths learner.
>
> *'Being involved in this [learning] has helped my mental health because [I've] got the help I need. I was all over the place before. This gives me something to do, like a routine'* EL2 Functional Skills Maths learner.

An important consideration when promoting and celebrating E&D therefore is to be mindful of learners' personal circumstances and contexts. Tying messages of inclusion to learners' cultural frame(s) of reference may therefore prove more successful than approaching learning in ways that feel abstract and irrelevant, (particularly perhaps when learners are from marginalised and stigmatised communities themselves). Herein lies an important balancing act, between meeting learners 'where they're at' and broadening their understanding of diverse communities around the world.

Our ideas about how we can promote and celebrate E&D within our setting

Ideas generated by learners in relation to how our settings could better promote and celebrate E&D were rich and varied. Some learners felt it was important to highlight the work their setting was already doing, including the implicit nature of E&D promotion and celebration as learners 'came together' from different cultural backgrounds and experiences to learn together:

'This is E&D. Look at us all here learning together. I would never have met them if we weren't doing this.' ESOL learner.

'We all have the same goal. To get our qualification. It doesn't matter where you're from, what religion, what country. That doesn't matter because we all want to get better with our English.' EL3 English learner.

'I've learnt a lot about different cultures from talking to people [classmates] here.' EL3 English learner.

Other learners were keen that their setting focused on *'inviting speakers in'* or *'putting on events'* as a way of promoting and celebrating E&D:

'How about a cooking celebration where everyone brings food from their home country?' ESOL learner.

Apprenticeship learners were most likely to think externally in relation to how E&D might be better promoted and celebrated[1], considering practical strategies for aligning their learning with the inclusive ethos each setting was aiming to embody, depicted in the image below:

Image Credit: *'Our ideas about how we can promote equality and celebrate diversity'*. Amalgamation of feedback from apprenticeship learners.

Ideas included having a visual presence at community events such as gay pride, becoming more actively involved in social media, teaching in local schools and using skills learnt as part of learners' apprenticeships to support vulnerable or marginalised members of their community:

[1] Perhaps this is not surprising, given the external application of much apprenticeship learning.

'We've got lots of skills now in joinery and some people their door's been kicked in because they live in a bad place and we could fix it for them.' Joinery Apprenticeship learner.

'Our course *already has a lot about equality, patient dignity and their choice about the care they want. We could teach what we know in schools as part of our course.'* Health and Social Care Apprenticeship Learner.

'A lot of old people *need help and we could use our skills to fix things up around the house.'* Joinery Apprenticeship learner.

Finally, some learners emphasised the importance of establishing a teaching and learning culture where individuality is respected, opportunities are created for free and open discussion and setting values are translated to all learners in accessible ways, as revealed in the image below that captures L1 and L2 English learners' responses:

Image Credit: ': *'Our ideas about how we can promote equality and celebrate diversity'.* Feedback from Functional Skills L1 and L2 learners

It can be seen therefore that concerted engagement with learners across settings illuminated particular themes in relation to our teaching, learning, assessment and organisational practices, and how our attempts to promote and celebrate E&D within our settings (and beyond) were portrayed by our learners.

Part 2: Observer reflections

In addition to learner reflections and insight regarding our E&D practices, project leads requested feedback from those with observational responsibilities. We were particularly interested to ascertain whether there had been any notable change in observed teaching, learning and assessment practices since our project commenced in May 2017, thus measuring the impact of our revised ways of working. As with other aspects of E&D, what we initially felt would be a simple task (comparing observation notes from before and during the project and talking with observers)

was complex, as specific changes in E&D practices were difficult to untangle from other elements of the observation process. General comments from observers within each setting seemed to suggest we were 'moving in the right direction' but that 'there was still work to be done', particularly in specific subject areas or for particular members of staff who were regarded as 'stuck in their ways'. It also became clear that observers were not always sure exactly what constituted high quality E&D provision, referring for example to 'posters up in the rooms' as evidence of observed E&D practice (regardless of whether or not these posters were used during teaching and learning or indeed, whether or not the observed staff member had put them up in the first place!). Some staff felt that staff who already exhibited excellent practice had got even better, and the processes implemented through the OTLA had essentially become a 'stretch and challenge exercise':

> *'The ones I would expect to be good were and the others were just the same as I have seen before. As always it is a subject some people really promote whereas others are keen not to get too involved… I feel as if I sound really negative. Obviously there are some fantastic tutors out there doing an amazing job but are they in the minority?'* Observer 1.

Other observers felt that there had been a shift in how E&D was promoted and celebrated, particularly in relation to 'discrete' learning:

> *'I've also found more naturally occurring E&D discussions taking place, showing the… staff can react dynamically to subjects around E&D.'* Observer 2.

Nevertheless, some observers still felt that there was a tension between initiating E&D discussions, and 'shoehorning', perhaps alluding to difficulties some staff may still be feeling in relation to finding and exploiting naturally occurring opportunities to dovetail E&D learning with subject specific work:

> *'I feel that tutors are becoming a bit more at ease when talking about activities/discussions relating to E&D however I haven't seen any examples of tutors openly starting conversions relating to E&D, British Values, safeguarding etc. although these would probably have had to have been shoehorned in for this to occur.'* Observer 3.

One observer reiterated continued difficulties for staff who taught away from 'fixed classrooms' and the main setting. This coincides with findings from our main report, which highlighted the reluctance of some staff to access resources that were available to them (regardless of their setting) via Padlet and by using portable resources such as the Toolbox Talks:

> *'I get the feeling resources are not getting through to tutors or they are and tutors are not using them. I also think it is easier for tutors to show they are implementing it when they are in a fixed classroom with resources to hand all the time. However when a tutor is moving from one venue to another sometimes in difficult conditions it can be difficult.'* Observer 4.

One observer (who was also a member of the core OTLA E&D project team) reflected upon how his own observational practices had changed since the project began:

'As an observer I have become more aware of E&D and instantly look for examples around rooms and check paperwork for any planned activities and then listen out for any discussions that may occur. As a minimum you would expect to see posters displayed for the learners to read/discuss and possible examples of planned discussions in planning documentation. Higher expectations would include having the confidence to openly discuss a topic when it occurs and not just shut the conversation down because it doesn't feel comfortable. Other examples would include planned activities that raise awareness of these topics and it's even better if these activities are embedded into the programme making them relative to the topic currently being studied.' Observer 3.

Finally, a couple of observers mentioned the importance of 'maintaining the buzz' of enthusiasm for E&D that the OTLA project had been nurturing:

'On a serious note I feel that if E and D is not kept at the front of everybody's minds it will just fade away and be just another thing tutors have to do. This project has given E&D the boost it needs and people are taking it seriously, even if not everyone is there yet!' Observer 1.

'The project has injected a sense of magic, an enthusiasm that's catching. Even some tutors I would not have expected to make progress in this area are trying new things. We need to maintain that buzz now and think about what happens next.' Observer 5.

The evidence above suggests that from an observational perspective, perceptions of impact across teaching and learning during this period of action research remain mixed. Whilst some staff observed improvements, others felt there had been little change or that predominantly, the best teachers had got even better, with little movement in staff whose E&D practices were less robust. What was particularly interesting was that in each of our settings, similar comments were made by observers, suggesting that more focused work now needs to occur with staff who especially struggle to bring E&D effectively into their teaching, learning and assessment practices,

Part 3: Narratives from our core project team

Finally, we asked members of the core project team to share stories of how their engagement in our OTLA had affected their own understanding and approaches to promoting and celebrating E&D.

'I'm picking up things I wouldn't have picked up before. Well not necessarily I wouldn't have picked up before, but I maybe wouldn't have proactively challenged. Engaging in this project has given me both a more explicit and nuanced view of E&D.' Alternative Education tutor and OTLA Core E&D Project team member.

'Before this [project] my E&D knowledge was quite narrow, like I knew about what I was interested in, like LGBT stuff and politics and things whereas now I know a lot more about a range of E&D.' Business Support staff member and OTLA Core E&D Project team member.

'My approach is completely different now, completely different. I'm more critically engaged with the issues. I'm thinking a lot more about my own positionality and how that impacts upon what I'm attempting to achieve in the classroom with learners. E&D is more co-

constructed now and less about what I think, what I feel we should be discussing.' Access to HE tutor and OTLA Core E&D Project team member.

'I feel more confident, mostly, to open up spaces for discussion during learning.' Functional Skills Tutor, and OTLA Core E&D Project team member.

Conclusion

This additional findings chapter has reported on the activities conducted and insight generated from our OTLA E&D project extension. During this time, we have learnt a great deal from our learners, who have explored how they perceive E&D and what promoting and celebrating E&D means to, and for, them. We have also generated further insight in relation to the impact of our project work from learners themselves, as they explored with us how their E&D learning became embodied within their everyday lives and practices. We also learnt from those with observational responsibilities, who shared their reflections on how they felt teaching, learning and assessment practices had changed since the project began. Finally, we returned to those who played a key role in bringing our project to life; the core E&D OTLA project team, learning from them how they felt their own E&D practice had changed as a result of their participation in the project.

There were crucial aspects of 'impact' revealed during this project in relation to high quality E&D teaching, learning, assessment and organisational practices that have potential to go amiss in the current climate of quantitatively driven educational research and policy (Maxwell, 2012, p.656). Learners highlighted for example how engaging in discussion with classmates improved their confidence, and how it helped them develop awareness regarding their rights and the range of services available to support them.

Learners spoke about how E&D spaces opened up opportunities to talk about their own marginalisation, and how sharing these stories helped them understand that they were not alone. Learners spoke about how they applied their E&D learning in the community, and how they drew upon knowledge generated *'from class'* as they applied for and engaged in employment or volunteering opportunities.

Finally, learners spoke about how the process of engaging in learning had opened them up to meeting and learning alongside people whose paths they felt were unlikely to cross in other contexts, including those from different backgrounds, religions, cultures, and with different philosophical outlooks to their own. In this sense, the very act of engaging in learning became a way of embracing diversity, as learners shared stories about their lives and developed friendships that travelled far beyond the realms of our settings. Whilst none of the learner testimonies above can be explicitly linked to prescribed notions of 'progression', 'retention' or 'achievement', it is arguable that each of these three golden threads of education are less likely to fray when high quality E&D practice is woven through each and every aspect of learning.

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