

IfL preparatory research to inform the work of the Commission on Adult Vocational Learning

Dr Joe Harkin
London 19 April 2012

Which teaching methods give learners the best learning opportunities?

- There is no one size fits all approach
- There is a strong consensus that effective teaching methods for vocational learning are based on realistic work problems and scenarios;
- led by teachers and trainers who have recent and relevant vocational experience

Active Learning

- The most effective teaching methods are interactive, and develop learner autonomy as well as specific skills and knowledge
- The best learning process is based on mutual respect between teachers and learners

Barriers to improving teaching approaches in vocational learning

Weak resources of:

- staff time
- realistic or simulated working environments, particularly at level 3 and beyond
- recent and relevant vocational experience of vocational teachers and trainers

Vocational syllabuses

- Are vocational syllabuses fit for purpose?
- Do they, and Awarding Bodies, encourage the use of the best, most interactive and creative teaching methods?

Linking maths, science and English to vocational learning

- There is an almost universal agreement that embedding of these skills within vocational qualifications is best practice
- How may this endeavour best be supported so that embedding leads to real progress in learners' skills?
- How may English, maths and science specialists be integrated to vocational subject teams, to give support to staff and to learners, as needed?

Teacher training, subject mentoring and CPD

- Most initial training is on generic programmes. This gives rise to a need to supplement initial training with workplace mentors, who can support teachers and trainers in their practice.
- Can the provision of vocational subject mentors be extended, as the few staff who have had them, valued the support highly?