

A 'Common Good' Curriculum for Change... Walking the Talk, Lighting Pathways Towards Better Outcomes.

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SETTING THE SCENE FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED (VI) 'OUTCOMES' FOCUSSED TEACHING AND LEARNING

The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development has for some years sought a 'formula' to 'reconcile social cohesion with economic success' suggesting essential connections to the role of social capital should be made (OECD 1998, 2001a 2001b). Within this context, unemployment rates for VI remain high, not falling much below 85% over the last forty years. Simultaneously, VI young people on average have 5-6 less friends than their sighted peers. (Carey, C. 2013). Nonetheless, VI young people are viewed as an 'untapped' workforce (Hewett, R., & Keil, S. 2015). What remains as missing, are the opportunities for VI to demonstrate their strengths and abilities towards employment (Patterson and Loomis, 2016). In this first section, I reflect on the stated 'formula' and its connected elements where the initial 'ingredient' starts with the engagement of social capital for and with VI communities of learning, focused on friendship generation and employability outcomes. I will then evidence the formula against a recent and ongoing project i.e. the development of 'I Rugby' as 'sightbox' content. What is important to draw out of the formula as suggested in Higher Education Emerging Technologies and Community Partnerships Concepts Models and Practices (Patterson, 2011) is the engagement of a surrounding values-based and 'common good' curriculum, as framed by Bowden and Carpenter, where 'the selection of relevant and specific tools varies according to the local setting and is less important to the process than the initiative's critical role in building community engagement in public education and training of future teachers' (Bowden and Carpenter, 2011 xxxii). Through this lens, the *intent* at St.Vincent's is to include VI young people as teaching and training leaders within the ideas they themselves conceptualise. Implementation of this aim relates to the sharing of such ideas through the sightbox medium with impact measured in friendship generation, increased confidence and the securing of alternative qualifications.

Connecting a Social Capital Formula

Social capital is best described by (Dekker & Uslaner, 2001) as relating to how people interact with one another. The outcomes of successful social capital have been measured by the World Bank, as encouraged by Putnam (2000) in terms of lower crime, better health, increased educational achievement and increased employment. In the

context of VI within the 'formula' it is best understood through Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' and 'field' (1977, 1993) i.e. that space where individuals or 'agents' interact with each other. Often at a disadvantage in unfamiliar settings, the engagement of community at St. Vincent's places VI learners on a 'level playing field' where the lack of physical navigation issues allows for a concentration to be placed on the learning focus at hand, and thus better highlighting opportunities for individual strengths. In our experience of the 'formula', where people interact as both teachers and learners a space is made for creative opportunities through which VI young people can explore their strengths reducing inequality.

This creative and exploratory space helps develop *human capital* in synergy with *social capital*. Human capital refers to the skills, knowledge, and experience (including creativity) possessed by an individual (or population) and viewed in terms of their value or cost to the economy. Application of the 'formula' and the collated impact reports, demonstrate this notion can work well if sufficient curriculum time can be dedicated within an interwoven 'vocational strategy'. It is the ideas emerging from such a creative space which ultimately may offer future employment opportunities for VI young people and their peers internationally (SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth). The development of such a creative space is an area for growth presented in this paper, and will be evidenced further using 'I-rugby' as an example.

Reverse inclusion works in synergy with both social capital and human capital where VI pupils are given a leading role within teaching, learning research and innovation of VI access ideas. The concept of reverse inclusion was initially introduced as a means for severely disabled pupils to work in the safe environment of their classroom integrating pupils from mainstream. The initial value seen in reverse inclusion engagement was reflected through peer interaction opportunities such as detailed by Schoger, (2006). More recently however, research (Hutzler, Chacham-Guber, and Reiter, 2013) within the context of reverse inclusion and sports indicates an increase in social skills, self-confidence and self esteem alongside increased opportunities for travel. The opportunity for travel is in itself of deep value supporting VI 'mobility' and independence. In relation to disabilities as a whole, research indicates significantly less opportunities on offer through a lack of engagement (Cook, Li and Heinrich 2015) whereas VI are singled out as having the lowest rates of participation (Augestad and Jiang, 2015). As part of the response to this, the role of reverse inclusion has grown significantly as part of St. Vincent's taught curriculum, and has been identified by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) as an 'Outstanding' aspect of St. Vincents' provision.

Reverse inclusion within the taught curriculum is delivered through the 'enriched' curriculum. In short, the school week allows on a Wednesday afternoon for a creative enrichment of pupils interests and perceived strengths. Here, pupils undertake creative workshops of choice within music, art, dance, drama, sports and environmental projects. Sighted pupils from surrounding schools attend the workshops led by VI pupils, with VI awareness opportunities woven into those sessions. This allows for VI students to grow in confidence whilst presenting in a leadership role within their area of perceived strength identified either by the pupils themselves or by teacher encouragement. This has proven to be successful with the largest impact being amongst VI girls taking those leadership roles. Individual impact reports taken for Ofsted data trails demonstrate a clear growth in confidence which can then be nurtured and signposted towards wider opportunities. What has been identified is that fostering and encouraging confidence

in this way generates creative ideas from the pupils themselves. It is at this stage a service-learning element within the 'formula' comes into play.

Service-Learning (SL) is a specific form of volunteerism. Most research on Higher Education (HE) and School partnerships focuses the impact on the HE students, with the raising of academic abilities highlighted (Jacoby 1996, Battistoni 1997). Mc Knight and Casey (2006) however saw SL as a means for HE students to engage with their communities and become civically active, whereas Burke (2010) described SL as a medium to effect change in mutually beneficial ways. Patterson (2013) identified further its value towards school aged pupils as part of their taught curriculum. Taking these forwards at St.Vincent's, SL student teachers and design engineers from Liverpool Hope University and Liverpool John Moores University have been engaged in reverse inclusion sessions as part of a social capital network. Here lies a creative space with reciprocal learning value. The 'I –rugby' ball serves as a great example of how SL as part of the 'formula' can act as a creative catalyst for innovative ideas as shall be explained later in the article.

In relation to *creativity* as part of the formula, Jones et al, (2004: 5) believe a 'clear unequivocal and incontestable answer to the question of how creativity can be enhanced is not to be found in the psychological literature'. Hall and Thompson (2007) see creativity however as increasingly located outside of mainstream structures. What I suggest through the engagement of the 'formula' is that when VI pupils are presented with enrichment learning opportunities, where they act as leaders within an area of perceived strength alongside sighted peers, wider community groups and service-learning university students, creative ideas flourish as evidenced by the quality of ideas emerging at St.Vincent's. Outcomes from this creative curriculum formula have been measured in the increased confidence of pupils, increased friendship group generation, increased participation and securing of Duke of Edinburgh (D of E) qualifications and an increase in interest and offers for work placement experiences. This increased opportunity providing VI young people with a chance to demonstrate their employability.

Evidencing the 'formula' through 'I- rugby'

In this section I report on one idea emerging from the enriched curriculum formula launched as part of the schools engagement with the UN Disability Day and the 'light up purple' movement: 'I –rugby'. 'Light up purple' celebrated the input made by disability groups to the economy (@mypurplespace) . For the purpose of this paper my intention is not to explain how the game works and functions, but rather to present the surrounding teaching and learning opportunities. During Wednesday afternoon sports enrichment sessions, the Head of Physical Education introduced the concept of designing sports access ideas as an integral part of the sessions. A group of secondary pupils wanted to play rugby. Over a series of months the pupils were given a range of sporting experiences where VI adaptations towards participation were highlighted. Entrepreneurial learning was woven into the developing sessions. A design engineer from Liverpool John Moores University volunteered to work up any design ideas into a prototype. Over 18months a complete design idea was developed and a prototype made using 3D printing technology. A wonderful learning experience in itself, which included a number of 3D printing workshops with the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The pupils put a presentation together and took the concept to a number of funding bodies, securing the funds to develop a working model with the electronic components

to the game being tested. The pupils engaged across the project invited Blind Veterans UK and Merseyside Police Officers to play the first game, where they acted as the trainers as part of the UN Disability Day. Moving forwards, the intention is to work with Blind Veterans and VI students to get I rugby included in the 2021 Disability Games to be held in Liverpool. The pupils who are taking this forwards as part of their curriculum, simultaneously embedding their engagement as part of their DofE 'Gold' Award.

The 'I –Rugby' Ball now becomes an additional component of a broader 'sightbox' project. www.sightbox.org.uk. Sightbox contains a range of access to sports, education and innovation ideas with a surrounding entrepreneurial curriculum. It includes ideas designed and generated through projects running in parallel with 'I rugby'. Funded through Rotary Clubs across the Merseyside region (District 1180) and beyond, sightboxes have been sent to VI schools in Pakistan, India, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Indonesia, Kenya, Peru, Virgin Islands, Nigeria, China and Nepal. St.Vincent's pupils are at the first stages of teaching both their sighted peers and collaborative partners how to use the content and VI pupils internationally over the internet. It is planned for VI pupils from Sierra Leone and Indonesia to attend St.Vincent's for 6 weeks in June 2019 so as to be immersed in the sightbox curriculum and peer tutor the best practice on return to their country. The impact stories are now being collated and will be evidenced against the SDGs 17, 3, 4, 5 8 and 10 (Good Health and Well-Being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Decent Work and Economic Growth , Reduced inequality).

What we are already seeing is a cross fertilisation of ideas between sightbox recipient schools. What frames the formula is the sharing of best practice and the collaboration by like minded individuals and groups with similar values; loving and serving each other with a heart for the 'common good'. I encourage you to follow our progress as it happens @StVincentsL12 @sightboxuk and @DrJohnAPatters1, perhaps adding your specialism to the sightbox content. St.Vincent's is always open to new ideas and ways forward for our pupils. It should be highlighted this is a constantly evolving project, and 'spin-offs' are consistently generated in support of individual pupils through their individual strengths. It is for and with VI pupils that we seek engagement with the 'action' research community and student teacher, design engineer and medical (service-learning) volunteers in lighting better pathways to better outcomes now, and in the future.





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