

Exploring the use of learning communities of practice within a degree apprenticeship through university and partnership provision while incorporating the use of inclusive principles and practice

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Learning communities and communities of practice (CoPs) are important aspects of the degree apprentice (DA) experience within higher education. DA programming differs to mainstream higher education programmes as the apprentices are 'employees' that spend most of their week working within an organisational setting. DAs in the United Kingdom are formally set 20% 'off the job' learning hours that include tuition as well as designated studies directly related to a job roles' knowledge, skills, behaviours and values.

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This presentation looks at how concepts of learning within communities and inclusive practice have been nurtured within a DA programme to develop sustainable curricular and extra-curricular elements. As a part of ongoing research being undertaken using the BSc (Hons) Professional Practice in Business to Business Sales DA, this presentation focuses on how academic providers and partners work together to deliver inclusive tuition while considering the importance of learning communities of practice that must consider participation of employers and professional organisations. Inclusive practice includes requirements outlined in the new university strategic plan and in the Apprenticeship Standards. Emerging findings from recent apprentice/student questionnaires have indicated that apprentices, especially Generation Y and Z (McCrintle, 2014), are interested in how the providers might incorporate their insights about inclusive practice into their studies and professional practice.

The presentation includes reflections from the current Programme Leaders from Consalia Ltd. and Marketing Branding and Tourism and the past Programme Leader (Education) to consider practical recommendations that could be adopted within the learning communities of practice from a Sales area of practice perspective and deliberates on what more needs to be done to create a dialogue that promotes inclusion and diversity (CIPD, 2022) within the university context.

Keywords: degree apprenticeship, university partnership, sales, inclusivity, apprenticeship standards, curriculum